



**Title: Sound as Performance: from the Periphery to  
Performance Form**

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# Sound as Performance: from the Periphery to Performance Form

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# Sound as Performance: from the Periphery to Performance Form

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By Peter Church

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## Abstract

In the light of a growing body of work during the last decade created by performance makers that seems to foreground sound within the performance montage, this research has sought to address the emergence of sound as orientation in performance where orientation can be understood as both the performance maker and the audience approaching the work through the “frame” of aurality. In drifting across the work of practitioners making during the twentieth century who engaged with sounds ability to perform, a number of proclivities were identified that would go on to inform work that takes sound as an orientation. Namely, an engagement with audiences as the co-creators of the work, a concern with generative structures, a sense of the hauntological qualities of sound transmission and relationality in it's political guise. These factors were then seen to be structuring elements at play in *I was there...* (2010: 2013), the work considered as a case study from this practice based research. It emerged that central to the work of sound as orientation were a series of practices engaging with the nature of an audiences' encounter with a sound as orientation piece, the way in which such works create a performative subject and the political quality of the sociality they produce

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**Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of M.A. at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of candidate: Peter Church

Signature:

Date: 01 December 2015

## Introduction - Whisperings

As will be demonstrated, Performance Studies has historically failed to fully acknowledge the potentialities of sound in performance: the concern here is the gap in a consideration of sound as a distinct element of performance making rather than it being a technical matter. In recent years however we have witnessed performance scholars begin to theorise sound as an element (like other such elements as *text* in all of the term's specific and broad categories, design, set, etc.) in the palate of performance making and reception. An example of this would be, Ross Brown's *Sound: A Reader in Theatre Practice* (2010) which seeks to locate sound as a significant element in the performance montage rather than the illustrative addition to a scene that it was once considered. On the most elementary level this shift can be observed in the appearance, since the 1990s, of "Sound Designer" as a credit in productions. While steps have been made then to recognise sound in Performance Studies there is an emerging field of practice taking in such work as Ant Hampton's *Etiquette* (2004 with Rotozaza) or *The Extra People* (2015) and Tim Etchells' *Void Story* (2009 with Forced Entertainment) or collaboration with Hampton on *The Quiet Volume* (2010) that utilise sound not just as a significant element in performance montage but as the point of orientation for the process of performance making. It is this emerging tendency towards sound as an orientation that this study will address.

Sound then has most often been located as an adjunct to the main business of theatricality, a ghostly presence at best, an ornament: this study seeks to draw out the hints and potential of sound itself to perform and will sketch a history of this tendency in (mainly) western practice during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As well as excavating sound in performing and as performance this thesis draws attention to and begins to theorise a tendency in contemporary performance to

take sound as the orientation point in the creation of performance. By sound as orientation, I mean how both performance maker and audience approach the work through the “frame” of aurality, just as the maker and spectator of physical theatre approach the work through physicality. These orientations serve both to generate a specific mode of engaging with the work and raise a set of opportunities as to how we think performance. Sound as orientation does not preclude the utilisation of other elements within the performance montage but by foregrounding sound shifts the hierarchy of production away from the visual, the textural or the physical to locate sounding as the founding impulse for a work.

Moving from the perspective of practice based research this study seeks to identify new potentialities for sound in performance and propose “sound as orientation” as a particular emergent form that might open up fresh ways of seeing, hearing, thinking, reading and making performance. Additionally, this study seeks to identify sound’s potential to perform, and to consider how sound and aurality may enable us to think and view performance from a fresh perspective.

“Sound as orientation” refers to work that is time based, dependent on an audience experiencing the event live, and engages with a site as performance material since sound is always in dialogue with the resonant space it sounds. “Sound as orientation” detournes expectations around performance itself, de-prioritizing the visual and interrogating the nature of embodiment. Works such as Rotozaza’s *Etiquette* (2004) Rimini Protokoll’s *Calcutta in a box* (2008) and Mkultra’s *And Counting...* (2010) all prioritize the auditory and develop distinctive “compositional” dramaturgies. These works have been made by artists in the field of performance and while clearly in dialogue with Sound Art, each of these works marks its own distinctive orientation.

One that focuses on the process of performance as opposed to Sound Art's focus on the process of sound production, that is concerned with the liveness of the audience/performer relationship and performative phenomena. As Hampton states:

The Quiet Volume was above all looking at the phenomenon of silent reading by thinking of it as a primarily acoustic process. Usually we think of reading as a visual thing: we see words on the page and decode those words into imagined scenes. But to get those words off the page in the first place, we need to sound them out - in our heads. And to do that there needs to be a voice, and we were above all looking at what that voice might be, whose it is precisely, and whether it's possible in some way to talk about it or share it. So you could say the focus on sound was in parallel to quite some attention being given to performative processes.

(Hampton, 2015)

To propose "sound as orientation" might have seemed radical a short a time ago but would now seem almost self-evident. This is in part due to the emergence of Sound Studies as an academic discipline. A very crude metric of this is that in 2010 there were no general Introductions to Sound Studies available while currently there are six, either already published or due to be published in the next year including Sterne's *The Sound Studies Reader*. (2012), Hendy's *Noise* (2013), Goldsmith's *Sound* (2015) Ball's *Sound Studies* (2013) Pinch & and Bijsterveld's *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2012). Sound studies courses and departments have been established at a number of institutions including University of the Arts London, Southampton University and Princeton University. What were only whisperings of an awareness of sound in the field of performance studies has now been loudly declared in a series of conferences and publications within the field of Performance Studies that demonstrate this emerging focus upon the sonic: sound and theatre conferences at the University of Montreal and at the university of Bayruth in 2012, in 2010 an issue of *Performance Research* 'On Listening,' David Roesner's collaboratively written books *Composed Theatre* (2012) and *Theatre Noise* (2011). Indeed, Roesener has pointed specifically to scholar Petra Maria Meyer proclaiming of an "acoustic turn" across the arts in her book of this title (2010), an increased awareness

of and engagement with the aural. However, his concerns in his own writing and in gathering a collection of writings around sound in theatre coalesce around the theatrical and around musical theatre whereas the emphasis in this research is on sound rather than music and on performance rather than theatre. This study distinguishes performance from theatre as that distinctive strand of practice which emerges during the 60s in the Anglo American tradition and has been referred to variously as Live Art, Devised Performance or Postdramatic theatre. That is, work that problematizes theatrical representation interrogates the hierarchy of production and prioritises process as much as production. None the less, it will be obvious from the examples cited that while sound is an emerging field internationally a thesis of this length must work within a limited horizon and for this reason, that horizon will be practice by UK artists and academic thought within the Anglo-American tradition where sound has been studied far more widely.

Since 2000 the social turn towards performance installation, relational aesthetics and one-on-one performance have all expanded performance's engagement with questions of sociality and spatiality. Sound is always already spatial since its reverberations are determined by the space it functions/sounds within and these same reverberations serve to locate listeners in relation to each other and the sound source, generating sociality. Referring to Sound art, the philosopher Salome Voegelin states that

A philosophy of Sound Art must have at its core the principle of sharing time and space with the [...] event under consideration. It is a philosophical project that necessitates an involved participation, rather than enabling a detached viewing position, and the [...] event under consideration is by necessity considered not as an artefact but in its dynamic production.

(Voegelin, 2010, p. xii)

The social turn in art seems to be giving way to a political turn following the global crisis of 2008 whose effects have only really impacted in the last four years. This

political turn for sound studies and for sound as performance can be seen in the occupations of Theatre Valle in Italy and of Embros Theatre in Greece and in performance work such as Needcompany's *Deer House* (2010) and Christophe Meierhans *Some use for your broken clay pots* (2013). Concerns with spatiality and sociality position the social turn on the cusp of becoming a political turn and sound's entrainment with these concerns may signal that the sonic turn is embedded in the wider political turn. As Jacques Attali puts it, "Listening to music, listening to all noise, is realizing that its appropriation and control is a reflection of power, that it is essentially political" (Attali, 1985, p.6).

This thesis seeks to explore such concerns through both theoretical engagement and practical explorations bringing together radical musical/performance from the late nineteenth century to the present, sound art in the 1980s, current practices of headphone theatre and my own evolving practice. Therefore in what follows the reader might experience diverse descriptions and registers as this work seeks to engage with wider considerations that formulate the field of sound in orientation today.

This research seeks to discover how taking sound as orientation allows a concern with aurality to open up particular perspectives on the performative event: specifically it seeks to articulate how this impacts on audience perception, the construction of the performing subject within the work and the specific mode of sociality such work generates.

Chapter One provides an overview of the methodology utilised in this research and provides a literature review that moves across the fields of performance Studies and Sound Studies. Chapter Two considers how sound performs and taking the foundational moment of Cage's *4.33* (1952) as a starting point identifies a set of

coordinates across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries where sound performs. These instances are considered from the perspective of practice and audience experience while using the theoretical tools of Performance Studies to pick them apart. Chapter Three considers how sounds perform from a practice-based perspective focusing on Mkultra's *I was there...* (2010 & 2013). The work is again considered from a practice and audience perspective while this time the theoretical tools of sound studies and philosophy are used to analyse the work and think performance from the perspective of aurality. Finally, the conclusion attempts to identify some defining qualities for performance that takes sound as orientation and to open up pathways for future research.

Chapter Two follows much writing around sound by taking Cage's *4:33* (1952) as a starting point. In contrast to the studies by Brandon LaBelle (2006) or Douglas Kahn (2001) or David Toop (1995) which approach *4:33* from the perspective of music it is here studied as a piece of performance. Having begun to address how sound (and silence) might perform Chapter Two pursues the nature of sound performance across a set of co-ordinates which traverse the borders of spiritualism, music halls, art music, sound art and theatre. While these co-ordinates or sound events might form the pre-history of "sound as orientation" there is no attempt to construct a canon of works for inclusion within the horizons of "sound as orientation" or to provide a genealogical history such as LaBelle's *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2006). Rather, following Toop (1995), this chapter is a drifting across a rhizome in search of tendencies, of clues, of proclivities. The sound events described are all framed as they would have appeared to a live viewer and are drawn from contemporary accounts of the works to allow the reader to have a "first hand experience" of the works addressed without the patina of significance that certain works have acquired and to consider them from the perspective of Performance Studies. Some of these sound events were experienced and/or created by the author

in the course rather than as part of the research. The first person “I was there” position is also taken since the case study in Chapter Three focuses on Mkultra’s *I was there...* in which the performers describe performances at which they were not present as if they had been there. In describing this piece the performers engage in and offer to the spectator the opportunity for “imagined listening.” The use of “imagined listening” in this chapter puts the emphasis on the audiences’ experience of the work and the situation of performance which despite Voegelin’s call to focus on the ‘event under consideration’ (2010, p. xii) is too often ignored in the writings of Sound Studies but is central to sound as orientation.

A reflective element is also present in Chapter Two but one that emerges from the thought of practitioners and therefore also focuses on the ‘event under consideration.’ This section of Chapter Two seeks to draw out tendencies latent in the sound events identified in order to prepare the ground for the explicit emergence of these proclivities in the work that is studied in Chapter Three.

Following Chapter Two’s consideration of how sound performs Chapter Three focuses on how performance sounds where sounding is understood as a verb. Chapter Three consists of a case study of work created by this researcher in a professional context, specifically the sound as orientation piece *I was there...* Through reprocessing testimonies of performances seen by people in their forties, fifties, sixties and seventies via digital technology and through the mouths of performers in their teens and twenties, the piece problematizes the embodiment of witnessing, the subjective voice, presence and ghostliness, the relation of rehearsal and performance, the nature of listening and speculation and how sound as orientation plays across spatiality and sociality. Then following Attali’s (1985) point above some of the political consequences of “sound as orientation” are considered.

## Chapter One - Sources

### 1.1 Context and Methodology

The research methodology used for this study incorporates different methods and approaches, from qualitative, observational and participatory approaches to library based research and practice based research in order to draw out why both audiences and artists are engaging with sound as an orientation point for performance at this time and to theorise the consequences that such an orientation might have for how we think or re-think performance. The library based research embraces the emerging sub-field of Performance Studies that deals directly with sound in performance but since this is a limited and emerging field it also moves beyond this horizon to draw on thought from Sound Studies, and from Art Studies' discussion of sound art and Philosophy.

Sound as we now understand it is deeply enmeshed with technologies of sound so while writing about and around sound dates back to antiquity – Aristotle discusses music as mimesis in the *Poetics* (1992, p. 3) – it is with the post World War II wider access to technologies of sound production and reproduction that writing about sound, as opposed to music, began to emerge as a specific field of study and here one might think of Pierre Schaeffer's writing in relation to *Musique Concrete* for example *In Search for Concrete Music* ([1952]/2012). Scholarship around sound continued to be spread across a wide range of disciplines including Musicology, Sociology, Anthropology and Art Studies during the post war period with, for example, Schafer's work on soundscapes during the 70's defining itself as Acoustic Ecology. Beyond the academy there was a growing concern with sound in music journalism as punk transitioned into post punk, synth pop and noise music with the British magazines, *The Face* during the 1980s and *The Wire* during the 1990s publishing

the writings of Rob Young, Ian Penman Chris Bohn and David Toop It was Toop's *Ocean of Sound* published in 1995 that brought the postmodern *immersion* in sound to wider attention and which explores the works of a group of practitioners on the margins of music and fine art working with sound such as Brian Eno, Max Easterly, Laurie Anderson, Phillip Jeck, Alvin Lucier, and Christian Markley whose works transcend categorisation. It was Toop who curated one of the first exhibitions of sound art in a British Gallery when he put together Sonic Boom at The Hayward gallery in 2000.

These various fields of study began to coalesce after the millennium under the rubric of Sound Studies which Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld defined in 2004 as 'an *emerging* interdisciplinary area that studies the material production and consumption of music, sound, noise and silence and how these have changed throughout history and within different societies' (2004, p. 636 [my emphasis]). The emergence of Sound Studies as a field can be tracked through Toop's entry into the academy via an AHRC funded Research Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts in 2004 and is now Chair of Audio Culture and Improvisation at the University of the Arts London.

In the light of the emergence of Sound Studies during the noughties other fields began to pay greater attention to sound within their spheres and so we see Patrice Pavis ask of Performance Studies in 2011, 'Are we currently discovering sound?' (Kendrick & Roesner, 2011, p. X). Writing on sound and performance had prior to the turn of the millennium been mainly technical handbooks – Bracewell's *Sound Design in the theatre* (1993), Collinson's *Stage Sound* (1976), Napier's *Noises Off: a handbook of sound affects* (1962) – but following the publication of the range of books and journal articles cited in the Introduction it can now be said that within Performance Studies there is an emerging sub field of research which engages with sound.

That this is an emerging field creates both opportunities and issues for the scholar working in this area. It is too early to state which are the key texts in this area and which strands of thought demand our attention while the relatively small range of publications means that there are large areas of this sub field as yet unexplored. These areas include the one that this study focuses on – sound as the orientation point for creating a performance as used by practitioners who self-identify themselves as coming from the field of theatre/performance such as Hampton, Etchells and Rimini Protokol. While there is writing in the field of performance studies relating to performances that orient around sound the examples are often drawn for practitioners whose works are more comfortably identified as falling within the fields of sound art or music – Misha Myers consideration of Janet Cardiff's work (Kendrick & Roesner, 2011, p. 70-81) or Roesner's writing on the work of Heiner Goebbels (Kendrick & Roesner, 2011, p.149-163). As indicated in the Introduction, while these analyses successfully consider the performance of sound art or music as theatre they do not address the work this study engages with, namely, work by performance makers that proceed through aurality. Another issue for the scholar seeking to address sound as an orientation in performance arises when trying to decide which perspectives beyond the horizon of performance studies are relevant to the consideration of work by theatre practitioners. In the following paragraphs the rationale for the choices informing this study will be detailed and the methodology of the study reviewed.

While drawing upon a number of theoretical tools from Sound Studies – Chinon's modes of listening (1983), Cascella's conception of sound as an absence tied to memory (2012, p.101-102), Lastra in relation to phonographic and telephonic sound (2012, p. 248) – this study falls outside of the project of Sound Studies through a purposeful embracing of the broader field of elements composing a performance.

There is then a tendency in Sound Studies to read the aural as a signifying structure onto itself while this study is concerned with sound as one signifying structure among the many used by performance and how it might function as an orientation point in marshalling those other signifying modes such as the visual, the embodied and the textual rather than as taking over from them. It is arguably, this tendency to promote the aural that has led to a tendency in Sound Studies and in Art Studies around Sound Art to elide the performative aspects of sound. It is notable that there is very little writing in Sound Studies on the theatre or performance and that when Art Studies considers Sound Art it elides the performative aspects of work for example in his discussion of Cage's *4.33 La Belle* (2008) omits to consider the role of the audience as co-performers of the work.

In an almost parallel move Performance Studies' embracing of sound tends to approach sound as music. Hans Thies Lehmann (2006) identifies musicality as a defining quality of postdramatic theatre, Danijela Kulezic-Wilson rethinks Beckett as music (Kendrick & Roesner 2011, p33-43). A counter move to this can be seen in Kendrick & Roesner entitling their book on sound in performance as *Theatre Noise* (2011) thus moving to the opposite pole in considering sound as that which disrupts and destabilises theatre, as the noise complicating the signal. In contrast this study seeks to consider performance rather than theatre and to consider sound as a phenomena rather than in one of its guises such as music or noise.

For this reason Voegelin's writing on sound as "that which does" (2010) grasps the attention of the performance studies scholar since she imagines sound as that which performs. While other philosophers have picked up on the nature of listening, "listening strains towards a present sense beyond sound" (Jean Luc Nancy, 2007, p. 6) or sound as sensation "It seems [...] reasonable to suggest that the sounds directly perceived are sensations of some sort produced in the observer when the

sound waves strike the ear” (MacLauchlan, 1989 p. 26) or sound as representation (Casati & Dokic, 1994), Voegelin’s conception of sound as phenomena/event makes it particularly suited to the analysis pursued here.

Alongside thought relating to sound drawn from Sound Studies, Art Studies and Performance studies, this research draws heavily on the thought of practitioners, in doing this it seeks to recognize the renegade nature of sound as orientation in current practice, and it’s attempt to rethink theatre as a hauntological process. The hauntological being a trope in recent writing around sound, particularly that of musician/theorist Mark Fisher (2014). Here conceptions of presence are challenged by “the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive” (Davis, 2005 p. 373). This move and view also echoes the emergence of Sound studies from non-academic sources such as *The Wire* and Toop’s writing. Since sound as an orientation in practice has yet to be theorised the thought and processes of those involved in the field are central to this study hence the decision to present an extended case study of a performance as the subject of Chapter Two.

Practice as research and practice based research were when introduced into the academy somewhat controversial in that some academics were concerned as to how such work would generate new knowledge. Some artists entering the academy failed to grasp that this was the purpose of research in an HE context and thought that simply inquiring into what a new piece of work would be would constitute research. These controversies have been well rehearsed and the number of books now available detailing practice as research and practice based research would suggest that we are past the point of controversy – Barrett & Bolt *Practice as Research* (2010), Sullivan *Arts Practice As Research* (2005) and Nelson *Practice As Research In The Arts* (2013). None the less it is worth locating the sense in which practice based research is used in this study. Following Nelson (2013) practice based

research here is understood to indicate that “knowing-doing is inherent in the practice and practice is at the heart of the inquiry and evidences of it” (2013, p.10) and that, as Haseman argues, practice based research “describes what practitioner-researchers do, captures the nuances and subtleties of their research processes and accurately reflects their research process [...] Above all it asserts the primacy of practice and insists that because creative practice is both on-going and persistent; practitioner researchers do not merely ‘think’ their way through or out of a problem but, rather they ‘practice’ their way to a resolution” (Haseman, quoted in Nelson 2013, p.10).

In discussing practice-based research scholar Susan Melrose (2003, 2005, 2006) pays close attention to the angle from which the researcher approaches their material and has differentiated between expert “spectators” (the writer-academic) and expert “practitioners” (the performance maker-researcher). The expert spectator approaches the material as already made and produces knowledge from the position of the spectator; in contrast the expert practitioner who produces knowledge from within the horizon of practice. The expert spectator theorises from an angle that looks back, while the expert practitioner theorises from an angle that combines “continuity with futurity”(Melrose, 2006, p.126).

Robin Nelson quotes Marina Abramović arguing that the artist’s knowledge and her knowledge in particular comes from experience. “I call this kind of experience ‘liquid knowledge’ it is something that runs through your system” (quoted in Nelson, 2013, p.12). Building on this thought Nelson suggests that through “know-how”, the expert-practitioner advances “doing-knowing. Further, this “practical” knowledge production necessarily forms a different mode of thinking and theorising since it signifies a different orientation and engagement with knowledge.

While recognising the usefulness of Melrose's distinction between the expert-spectator and the expert-practitioner in relation to a more traditional mode of performance where the auditorium and stage are separate spheres, this study takes as its focus a work that intentionally blurs the separation between doer and spectator since it is a durational/relational work in which doers and spectators interact and thus interrogate their respective functions within the performance situation. Therefore, this study moves across the perspectives of spectator, maker and doer in its thinking of and through practice.

Crucially, in conceiving the work that constitutes the case study for this thesis, this researcher was cognisant of the theoretical frameworks relating to Sound Art practice and sought to generate a work that arose from the traditions of performance while engaging with issues of aurality, that is, the work was driven by research concerns as much as by creative concerns. Having addressed the role of practice in this thesis it now seems important to discuss why the approach of using a single case study has been taken.

Writing from the perspective of Social Studies, Feagin et al. in *A Case for the Case Study* (1991) present the case both for case studies and for the single case study as legitimate modes of research. They define the case study as "an in-depth, multifaceted investigation using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomena [...] The case study is usually seen as an instance of a broader phenomena"(Feagin et al., 1991, p. 2). Further, considering anthropological research they define qualitative study as "field research, relying on first hand observation over a long period of time and undertaken by a participant observer, one who observes and analyses but is also inevitably a part of the process observed" (ibid, p. 4).

While not devaluing quantitative analysis Feagin et al. point to the risk of a collection

of random data across a number of selected data points in contrast to the more holistic approach offered by the single case study of capturing in detail a particular phenomena within a social context (ibid, p. 8). As they put it, “a case study of a single phenomena [...] over a long period of time, allows the observer to examine social action in its most complete form” (ibid, p. 9). They also point to the single case study as “lending itself to theoretical generation [...] suggesting new interpretations or re-examining earlier concepts[...] in innovative ways”(ibid, p. 13). They argue that “the study of a single case may help illuminate how more general processes work” (ibid, p. 16). Feagin et al. are clear that while there are risks of generalization when developing an argument from a single case study there are also risks of a lack of specificity in a sample of many cases leading them to the conclusion that both approaches have validity and that the choice of sample style must be related to the nature of the research undertaken (ibid, p. 22).

Feagin et al. perspective has influenced the decision making process in the approach to the use of case studies in this thesis. Since sound as orientation is an emerging field of practice there is not an over-abundance of work to be studied but more to the point if a case study was to allow the necessary generation of theories about the field and to provide an in-depth account of the process involved, then a single case study of a single performance phenomena seemed the most effective route to take particularly given the length of an MA thesis. Given the need for relying on “first hand observation over a long period of time [...] undertaken by a participant observer, one who observes and analyses but is also inevitably a part of the process observed” (ibid, p. 4) the choice to draw upon the author’s own work as a practitioner was ideally suited to meet these criteria and is offered with the hope of achieving the kind of holistic examination of a phenomena Feagin et al. argue for.

Finally in this section, some attention must be paid to the style of writing in this study.

Toop's coining of the phrase an 'Ocean of Sound' was, as Brown acknowledges, key in his understanding as a sound practitioner/scholar of sound as immersive (2010, p.1). Yet for Toop the image of the ocean of sound is not simply a metaphor for listening but also a structural principle in his research and writing, "the narrative jumps, loses itself and digresses". (Toop 1995, p. ii) Echoing Abramović's thought of "liquid knowledge" Toop points to sound as "predominantly fluid [...] non linear" (1995, p. iii) and thus his writing reflects this as it drifts across history, practice and theory. This study also seeks to reflect the nature of its subject – sound – in its structure and so adopts a similar rhizomatic drifting across time and space but also across the perspectives of the listener, the performer, the performance maker and the practitioner-theorist.

It should also be noted the approach of Chapter Three is not one of applying theoretical models to the understanding of a performance but rather an attempt to think out from the performance, to explore what modes of perception are engendered by the work, how it constitutes the performing subject within it and how it utilises the nature of sound to drive a sociality within the space of performance. Again in choosing this option I am following Toop although in this case I follow the self-reflexive model of *Haunted Weather* (2004) where Toop moves outwards from personal narrative to accounts of the process of making art works to how those artworks allow us to think wider social relations. The style of writing undertaken consciously seeks to generate a practiced-based experiment in theory writing

## 1.2 Literature Review

Before moving on to consider sound performing a literature review of material relating to sound in the theatre will serve to show the scholarship leading up to the acoustic turn in Performance Studies. This review leads towards practitioner Peter Sellars'

reassessment of the possible role of sound in performance and many of his comments foreshadow the contemporary performance work which takes sound as a point of orientation that will be considered in later chapters. A brief review of Sound Studies' thinking through of listening precedes this since listening is central to this study.

Michel Chinon's work and in particular his article *Guide des objets sonores: Pierre Schaeffer et la recherche musicale* (1994) articulates a range of listening modes. In articulating these modes Chinon consciously build's on the analysis of listening offered by Schaeffer, the founding practitioner of music concrete in the 1940's. Schaeffer/Chinon log three modes of listening: causal, semantic and reduced listening.

Causal listening is that which seeks to link the sound heard to its causal source - the buzz of the fly leading us to look around for the insect. Such listening seems to be the source of the indexical use of sound in theatre. Semantic listening finds meaning in a particular sound on the basis of its position within a system of sounds - the ringing of a bell during a church service. The symbolic use of sound within the representational machine of theatre draws precisely on such a system of sounds. Reduced listening focuses on the sound itself rather than its source or meaning is the one aimed for by Schaeffer in his compositions such as *Etude aux Chemins de Fer* (1948). This piece reprocessed sounds recorded in train yards on the outskirts of Paris. Schaeffer identified a number of procedures for the reworking of recorded sound including:

The sound object: "isolating a sound from its context, manipulation it and thus producing a new sound phenomenon which could no longer be traced to its cause" (Schaeffer, quoted in Chinon, 1983, p. 2).

The closed groove: “by cutting into a groove on a disc rather than it spiralling centripetally, forming a circle that it is destined to repeat” (ibid p 3). In other words, creating a sound loop.

The cut bell: “For example, the attack from the recording of a bell is erased. Leaving only the ensuing resonance, and then closed groove technique to this resonance” (ibid, p.3). The sound is further unmarred from its source since a large part of our recognition of a sound is due to the particular envelope of that sound - its qualities of attack, sustain and decay.

These techniques amongst others constitute musique concrete’s methodology and aim to lead to an engagement with sound as sound by the listener. Such immersive embodied engagement with sound as a world and as a way of being in the world would seem to relate to Sellars proposed ontology outlined below.

Schaeffer himself was unhappy with *Etude aux Chemins de Fer*, “With the trains I was far removed from the domain of music and, in effect, trapped in the domain of drama” (Schaeffer, 2012, p. 21). It is precisely what frustrated Schaeffer that opens up the possibility of not sound as drama but sound as orientation in performance making - the sound object becoming the sound event. Before looking at how this occurs in practice in the following chapters we need to review how theatre has figured sound.

Beyond music and the voice sound’s historic role in theatre is encapsulated in the phrase, “noises off”, that is, sound effects. This sounding can be seen dating back to the Ancient Greek theatre and the use of a *Broneteion* to make the sound of thunder through the Romans use of bronze balls cascading down a wooden tube to produce a similar effect, Medieval theatre’s use of “fire cannons” all the way up to the first use of the phonograph to reproduce a Baby’s cry in a London theatre in 1890 (Collinson

2008, p. 109). The invention of recording tape in 1935 allowed the collating of complex layers of sounds and a blurring of the boundary between music and sound effect. What might be notable here is that across the sounding machines of the Greek theatre, Victorian spectacles and modern sound design there is a degree of “slight of ear”, that is the simulation of a “realistic” sound effect by means of a simulacra. These “slight of ear” effects stand in a paradoxical relation to their semiotic function within the theatre. As Drever Brown (2010, p.190) has observed such “noises off “have an indexical relation to their perceived source, that is, the sound of thunder signifies the presence of a storm. Sound would then seem to have been absorbed into theatre’s representational mechanism. While such a reading based in Peirecian semiotics seems valid up to a point, it occludes the atmospheric affect that sounds may have within the theatre □ their ability to engender an embodied response that bypasses interpretative readings. This interpretation of sound’s role in theatre is embraced by Napier who writing in the mid twentieth century notes that as well as sounds demanded by the text or implied by the text, there is a third kind of sound; “those which specified by the playwright or not, assist the atmosphere of the play” (Napier, 1936, p. 44). Writing 23 years later Burris-Meyer, Mallory and Goodfriend expand considerably on Napier’s taxonomy of theatre sound,

Sound in the theatre has the following functions

- 1) To transmit the human voice in speech or song (adequate audibility is always the first requisite).
- 2) To establish locale (bird song, traffic noise).
- 3) To establish atmosphere (wind and rain).
- 4) To create and sustain mood (combination of devices used for locale and atmosphere; distortion of speech; soft music)
- 5) As an independent arbitrary emotional stimulus (music).
- 6) As an actor (the voice of the LIVING NEWSPAPER).
- 7) To reveal character (the unspoken aside).
- 8) To advance the plot (sound bridges between scenes or episodes).

These effects may be undertaken singularly, in combination, independently, or counterpointing or enforcing their equivalents in the visual component of the show.

(Burris-Meyer et al.,1959, p14)

In the same year as this was published David Collison is credited as “Sound Designer” for the season at the Lyric Hammersmith in what seems to be the first use of this term. The expanded possibilities indicated by Burris-Meyer et al. (1959) and the expanded function indicated by Collison’s title seem to stem from the same technologies of sound production that theatre appropriated from radio and film. None the less sound as such is still mainly considered a technical aspect of theatre rather than a creative endeavour and, as the paucity of publications through the twentieth century relating to theatre sound indicate, is considered to be at the lower end of the production hierarchy. Indeed it will be another seventeen years before another key publication dealing with sound and that will be Collison’s own *Stage Sound* published in 1976. Collison’s taxonomy of sound differs little from Burris-Meyer et al. In fact, his description of the sound designer’s practice does not move away or change from the symbolic use of sound that has heretofore governed both the use of indexical and atmospheric effects. The first commercially available sampler – *The Computer Music Melodian* went on sale in 1976 but it was three years later before the polyphonic sampler that would revolutionise the recording industry became available – *The Fairlight*. From this point digital technologies increasingly took over from the analogue in both production and reproduction. These technologies allowed high end processing that had previously only been available in expensive recording studios to be accessed via home computers and the new relationship with sound introduced by the Sony Walkman began the process of “sound tracking” life itself. The impact of these technologies can be felt in the seismic shift in the sense of sound’s potential in the theatre proposed in the introduction to Kayne and Lebrecht’s *Sound and Music for the theatre* (1992, p.1-12). This reconceptualization of theatre sound is put forward not by a sound designer but the director, Peter Sellars. The hierarchical nature of theatre production already noted may make it strategically advantageous that this call to action comes for the figure often perceived to be close to the top of the production pyramid, the director. More crucial in this instance may be the history

of the particular director making this call, Sellars at this point in time had experience of working with hip hop artists as part of the Los Angeles Festival of which he was the artistic director (LA rappers The Jalapenos) and, perhaps most significantly, of working with The Wooster Group on the early stages of *Frank Dell's The Temptation of St Anthony* (1988). LeCompte is more commonly associated with the interfacing of video and performance in The Wooster Groups work but there was a concomitant work with sound at first under Jim Clayburgh and then later under John Collins through whom this element of the work arguably reached it's apogee in *To You, The birdie!* (2002). Sellars then has been exposed to a particular re-assessment of sound itself and the nature of its production. Sellars' introduction is then a manifesto for a new kind of theatre sound, indeed a new kind of theatre.

We exist in a universe of sound...and we can't stop listening...Sound evokes place not space. That is to say sound is where we locate ourselves, not physically but mentally and spiritually...it is our greatest experience of intimacy, it transports us, it invades us...

We are beyond the era of "noises off". Sound is no longer an effect, an extra, a garnish supplied from time to time to mask a scene change or ease a transition. We are beyond the era of door buzzers and thunderclaps. Or rather, door buzzers and thunderclaps are no longer isolated effects, but part of a total program of sound that speaks to theatre as ontology.

(Sellars in Kaye & LeBrecht 2009, p.iv)

Sellars here allows sound to think, to actively constitute a way of being, a way of being in the world and prefigures Toop's concept of sound as immersive (Toop, 1995). He signals the mutability of sound as digital artefact and the collapse of the distinction between music, sound effect and noise that this will entail. He also inaugurates the possibility of sound as a matrix that can shape theatre itself and thus opens the conceptual space that sound as orientation will seek to occupy.

## Chapter Two – Sound performing: formatting a new topography

### 2.1 Sounding out

Toop's methodology of rhizomatic drifting across an *Ocean Of Sound* (1995) is a good schema for analysing sound and how it is created. While some theorists distinguish sound composition and narrative Toop's model integrates both into a single ontology consisting of and in typical avant-garde fashion, characterized by the fusing of process, content, technology and process into one continuous non-hierarchical form. A sampling of works that subscribe to this model reveals the overlaps between different expressions of sound as well as the liminality of the spaces and acts that this thesis argues as constituting the domain of sound as orientation.

Name of Performance / Act: 4.33

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Composer - John Cage      Performer – David Tudor

Venue: Maverick Concert Hall, Woodstock, New York

Duration: 4 mins 33 secs

Date(s): August 29, 1952

Format: Concert

Source: Gann, K. (2010) *No such thing as silence: John Cage's 4'33"*. London, Yale University Press. p1-31

A pianist walks onstage. He sits down at a piano and looks at the score in front of him:

I

Tacit

II

Tacit

III

Tacit

To be played in a concert situation by any musician on whatever instrument that they are skilled in. Any duration.

(Cage 1952, p.2)

The pianist raises the lid of the piano. The performance lasts four minutes and thirty-three seconds

In his introduction to *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art (2006)* LaBelle proposes that in order to begin to develop an understanding of Sound Art we must not consider sound as quailia (sense perception) but rather as a sound event. While Kahn (2001) reminds us that what was acceptable sound was contested throughout the nineteenth century through the attempt to differentiate music and noise □ those sounds which are acceptable within the concert hall and those which are not. Music defined as sound that is organised and domesticated while noise is defined as aberrant and feral. Cage's composition clearly plays into and amongst such concerns. None the less, as long as critics focus on 4.33 as music or non-music, as sound or silence they are caught in the very binaries Cage seeks to dissolve. Cage does not appropriate all sound into music as Kahn claims (2001, p.13) nor does he seek silence and a sublimation of sociality (ibid, p14). Rather, Cage insists that sound be an event, something happening in a particular time/space in the presence of bodies and itself generated by bodies. To put it another way, it is 4.33's demand to be recognised as performance and not music that determines its significance. The potency of Cage's piece in *performance* is its indeterminacy. This indeterminacy is

usually understood as an indeterminacy of content since any sounds may occur during the performance of the piece but surely the more significant indeterminacy is in terms of its relation to an audience in that it simultaneously invites an audience to attend in silence within the institution of art music and invites them to sound in order to perform the score fully.

Tacit is a term in orchestral writing often used in relation to percussion, it is not a silence but a pausing of the explicit sounding of an instrument within an ensemble – it is not a nothing or a silence it is an active playing within a collective creation – it is making space for others to enter, to be active. 4.33 as performance launches its audience into performance and into both a critical reflection on the institutions of music and the institutions of society. If I as audience member am silent, am I enjoying the piece according to the rules of the concert hall or am I failing to play my part. Can I be silent? Should I be silent? Who has been silencing me in this space? What constitutes this space? Who does the work in this work? What is my part?

With the recognition that silence is coterminous with sound, in that silence exists as the ground from which sound springs and to which it ultimately returns, Cage developed a compositional strategy that favoured coexistence ahead of opposition. Silence preceded and exceeded sound and by so doing dissolved the binaries of sound/silence into a form of continuity. One point of silence, then is to dissolve the oppositional by freely allowing other voices to be heard.

(Katz, 1999, p. 231-252)

Name of Performance / Act: *Dawn – traditional raga*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Unknown

Venue: Ibis Hotel Euston, London, England.

Duration: 50 mins

Date(s): 21 April, 1999

Format: Impromptu performance

Source: Author's own experience

There are three of them sitting on the single bed. The oldest in his eighties the two younger men in their fifties. They are wearing Gap sweatshirts that were bought for them in Wales to keep them warm. The sweatshirts are a couple of sizes too large but they had not brought any warm clothes with them from India so these will have to do. It is the first time these men have been abroad. Through the small sealed hotel window I can see the first signs of dawn in the London sky.

The senior man takes an audible breath and begins to sing. A sounding of the dawn, a morning raga. Slow and unhurried, the vocal pattern spreads outward like a web, looping and turning on itself. The younger men join in. One holding the drone note around which the two other vocal lines will move. Each vocalist working with just five notes, working in the space between the western conceptions of composition and improvisation. Such a challenge was marked by jazz saxophonist Albert Ayler who reacted strongly against the composed/improvised dichotomy, he pointed to composition's association with the head, with white European men, reflection and coldness while improvisation was associated with the body, specifically the black male body, with spontaneity and with heat. Ayler refused to be defined by this binary and insisted that his practice constituted 'spontaneous composition' (Downbeat magazine November 1966, p.52).

The web of voices spreads further and the drone note begins to reverberate in the tiny space of this chain hotel bedroom. I am aware that I need to get them to the airport in time for their plane home and that I have not asked how long this raga lasts. The words are in Sanskrit and date back roughly three thousand years. Words and melody never written down but transmitted orally from generation to generation, from master to neophyte who in turn becomes the master and passes the tradition on to another generation. The work is highly structured, ancient and freshly created in the

moment, in the situation of performance, in this case an Ibis Hotel. These three men are the only living beings that know the entire cannon of this tradition – roughly 50 hours of music if performed back to back, each raga lasting somewhere between 20 minutes to over an hour, in performance a number of ragas are woven together in a sequence. On the drive back from Wales we had discussed the effect of a raga on a listener; from Schechner (2006, p.234) I was familiar with the term Rasa used to indicate an embodied emotion state in Kathakali performance but rasa (literally juice or sap) is also a state of attendance that the listener to a raga (literally hue or colour) enters through the performer's moment to moment weaving of spontaneous composition.

The rising sun moves on. A hue floods the room. There is time enough to catch the flight.

Name of Performance / Act: *EVP (electronic voice phenomena)*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Friedrich Jürgenson

Venue: Front room, Town House, Sweden

Duration: 10 secs

Date(s): 1959

Format: audio recording

Source: Hollings, K. (2011) 'Electronic voice phenomena', *The Wire*, 323 Jan 2011, p28

Since he is a radio producer he has access to one of the first models, a truly portable recording device around the size of a picnic basket. That morning he had gone into the woods behind the house to record the birdsong as dawn came up. The birds are wonderfully clear in the recording, some wind has also been picked up by the microphone and 2 minutes 40 seconds in another sound can be heard. It seems to

be a woman's voice, a voice no longer young, she calls "Friedel. Friedel". There had been no one in the wood while he was recording and he had not heard any voice at the time. Yet there it is on playback. His mother's voice. She had always called him "Friedel" as a pet name until her death three years ago. Of course, had he told someone this story they would not have believed him but how could they deny the reality of this voice on tape.

Name of Performance / Act: *Piano Piece for David Tudor 1*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Composer – La Monte Young. Performer – David Tudor

Venue: New York

Duration: Unknown

Date(s): October 1960

Format: Concert

Source: Nyman, M. (1999) *Experimental music: Cage and beyond*. Cambridge University Press. p76

A pianist walks onstage. Looks at waiting grand piano. Exits. Returns with a bale of hay and a bucket of water. He continues until it is clear either that the piano has eaten and drunken its full or until it is clear that the piano is neither hungry nor thirsty.

As Hannah Higgins has pointed out "Fluxus is better understood on its own terms as producing diverse primary experiences and interactions with reality plain and simple...situating people radically within their corporeal sensory world" (2002, p.59-67). Contemporaneous and collocational with the development of Happenings, Fluxus sound works are influential in the shift away from the representational towards task based performance in the 60s that will lead to Performance Art in the 70s. Crucially they avoid some of the extremes of the later in relation to the body under duress to open up a space where it is the spectators engagement with their own

corporality that is at stake, their own sensing. “Whereas [...] Happenings aim to create a total art in which performer and spectator converge to form an art event, for Fluxus such antics are replaced by literal actions whose presentation shuffles the perceptual viewpoint of what art and music are” (LaBelle 2006, p.61) or indeed, what art and performance might be. By breaking the circuit between the representational function of art while still keeping available an aesthetic level beyond the action engaged – its sounding – Fluxus works sidestep a year zero approach to the performative while radically shifting the relationship of artist, art object and spectator. Such soundings always exceed the limits of the symbolic while retaining a possibility of the poetic thus inserting the question of how reality is constructed into the spectator’s experiencing of an actual and often quotidian action.

Name of Performance / Act: *One walking, others joining*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Peader Kirk

Venue: NOW tent, Wilderness festival, Oxfordshire.

Duration: 2 hours

Date(s): 11 August 2014

Format: Workshop

Source: Author’s own experience

Given that this is a UK summer festival I am, of course, wearing wellington boots and listening to the rainfall on the tent. Sound has always been a core part of my practice as a theatre maker – as a “ground” to anchor an improvisation, as a counter texture to question the existing emotional tone of a strip of performance material, or as a borrowed structure in shaping a piece. Since I did not set out to make a narrative theatre story structure was of little use to me so early pieces were structured around the form I was familiar with having been in a post punk band – intro, verse, chorus, verse chorus, middle eight, verse, chorus, outro. Over time this gave away to more

complex forms such as Ornette Coleman's Harmolodics improvisational structures and Brian Eno's Generative Music principles.

I am in the tent to set up for a workshop I am running as part of the festival. First, the sound system. I vaguely remember bringing a box of records with me to the first rehearsals I led as a director but these soon gave way to cassette tapes – more portable but almost impossible to find the exact point in a track that you were looking for - these in turn gave way to CDs – oh my god, I can carry twenty albums with me – and then the iPod – Oh my god, I can carry my whole record collection with me – and now an iPhone with an uplink to the Cloud – all of recorded music. It is my iPhone that I am hooking up to the sound system but I won't be using any recorded music today, I will be growing my own.

“One of my long – term interests has been the creation of ‘machines’ or ‘systems’ that could produce musical or visual experiences [...] to make music with materials and processes I specified, but in combinations and interactions that I did not” (Eno, 1996, p. 330). “Generative music” was the name Eno gave to the output of such systems. Initially made using physical tape loops (later digital loops inside a computer program such as Logic), Eno wanted to create music that surprised him as much as the listener, and to hand over some of the creative process to a self – generating system. Each loop is created by the composer and each loop is of a different duration, all are started at the same moment so as to generate in combination a piece of music the composer has not intentionally created. A 2 – minute loop playing alongside a 3 – minute loop will generate a 6 – minute piece before the material begins to repeat. A 2 – minute loop, plus a 3 – minute loop, plus a 4 – minute loop would generate a 24 – minute piece. The first piece Eno created using such a system was *Discreet Music* (1975) and similar systems was subsequently used in his series of Ambient Music albums starting with *Ambient 1:*

*Music For Airports* (1978). On the liner notes for the later album Eno defines ambient music as “an atmosphere, or a surrounding influence, a tint [...] able to accommodate many levels of listening attention; it must be as ignorable as it is interesting” (Eno, 1978).

The rain continues to fall and on my phone I open an app created by Eno and Chivers, *Scape* (2012). I want something that sits inside the sound of the rain and that will form a ground for a first movement improvisation by the group based on moving together while retaining contact with the back of your right hand to the back of your partner's left hand. I select a *Scape*, I start by adding a “background” these play continuously though their placing within the mix varies over time – I choose the background of horizontal lines and a low drone starts. I add an element – elements can be placed anywhere within the visual interface – the *scape* – and each element follows a rule set, for example, “Play two notes, then wait for ten seconds. Only play if everything else is silent. Stop if a bell is playing. Play whenever the nearest element stops.” The elements I add are two pyramid shapes, a c shape and two square elements. *Scape* lets you hear the consequences of your choices as you go though not how they will play out fully so you get a sense of the overall tone of the piece – I change one square for a different selection and reposition it in relation to one of the pyramids so the two become a combined element. The piece seems a little dominating in the tent so I switch the background for a more intermittent unit and settle on the result saving it as “rain music.” The backgrounds and elements in *Scape* are like musical seeds and once the piece is set to play the interaction of these seeds produces a growing shifting piece of music for as long as you let it play.

Rain sound and *Scape* blend into one. People begin to arrive. Wet. Ready.

Name of Performance / Act: *Dawn*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Doctor Monck

Venue: Front room, a town house, Huddersfield

Duration: 30 minutes

Date(s): 1898

Format: Séance

Source: [Carrington](#), H (1907). [The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism](#). Boston, Herbert B. Turner & Co. p. 199

There are eight people sitting around the table. The curtains are drawn. On the table is a music box. The clergyman calls on the Spirits to manifest. Silence. He calls once more and this time untouched by anyone the music box begins to play.

One of the other sitters declares that he knows that this is nothing but trickery and that as a stage magician he knows full well how these effects were produced. The clergyman protests, rises and moves to leave the room. The magician blocks the door at first but as another person enters from the clergyman exits, goes to his room upstairs and locks the door.

The magician and the owner of the house bang upon the door of the room and getting no reply break the door in. The window is open and the clergyman has made his escape leaving behind a second music box on a strap which had been attached to his leg and when pushed against the leg of the table a lever activated it and the table had then acoustically conducted the sound to the reverberant space of the second music box.

Name of Performance / Act: *I am sitting in a room...*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Alvin Lucier

Venue: Front room, Town house, Middletown, Connecticut.

Duration: 45 minutes

Date(s): 1969

Format: Audio recording

Source: Alvin Lucier (1990) *I am sitting in a room...* [LP] Los Angeles: Lovely Music

Liner notes written by Nicholas Collins

A man sits in front of a microphone connected to a tape recorder. He begins to speak. He speaks with a stutter on words beginning with “r” and sometimes on words beginning with “s”.

I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed. What you will hear, then, are the natural resonant frequencies of the room articulated by speech. I regard this activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but, more as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have.

(Lucier, 1990, liner note)

At the end of this text he stops the tape recorder rewinds the tape and presses play on that machine he presses record on a second machine. He repeats this process 32 times over 40 minutes. By the end of this process a high – pitched melody fills the room. Words have become sound.

Name of Performance / Act: *Then I kicked her*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: The Lurkers and their audience

Venue: Pier Ballroom, Hastings

Duration: 1 hour 15 mins

Date(s): 11 Nov 1978

Format: Rock concert

Source: Author’s own experience

The heaters are not on and we are all packed in the tightly in front of the stage. Less out of adulation than a desire to keep warm. There are about fifty of us. On stage there are four of them, The Lurkers.

The set is coming to a close and they play the one song of theirs that we know well. Actually, it is not quite their song. It is a version of the The Crystals *Then he kissed me* (1963) rerecorded in 1967 by the Beach Boys as *Then I kissed her* and now performed by The Lurkers as *Then I kicked her*.

There are so few of us that the one armed bouncer can not be bothered to give his usual response to someone attempting to climb onstage – a swipe to the head with the stub of his right arm. It is somewhere during the first chorus that we discover this as one of us joins the singer at the microphone. More bodies climb onstage; two by the bassist, one by the drummer. Three dancing. The drummer passes the boy with him a drumstick. The boy plays along. More bodies onstage still no response from the bouncer. The guitarist takes off his guitar places it on one of the audience shows him the chords. “I didn't know just what to do. And so I whispered I love you. And she said that she loved me too. And then I...”

Over the course of about ten minutes the fifty of us in the auditorium migrated onto the stage, one of us taking over on bass, another of us on guitar, three people banging the drums and the rest of us shouting the chorus again and again.

By this point the four members of the band are standing in the auditorium watching us performing their song. And then the reverse osmotic flow takes place over another ten minutes until we are back in the auditorium and they are alone on stage. “And then I kicked her.” A single power chord to finish the song.

The Crystals Then he kissed me London records 1963 produced by Phil Spector

Beach Boys then I kissed her Capitol records 1967 produced by Brian Wilson

Name of Performance / Act: *The Orchestre Militaire Electro – Moteur*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Johann Baptist Schalkenbach

Venue: Lyceum Theatre, London

Duration: 10 minutes

Date(s): 1864

Format: Variety Performance

Source: Wilson, D. (2014) 'The electric music hall.' *The Wire*, 364 June, p 35

A musician walks onstage. On stage is an instrument: The Orchestre Militaire Electro – Moteur. Central to it is a keyboard and a set of buttons located above this. The musician sits at the keyboard and begins to play The Storm sequence from Rossini's *William Tell*. The initial single notes are picked out on the keyboard and the sound of a wind harmonium is familiar, as the chords begin to enter the piece a new sound emerges a cross between a harmonium and an accordion. Stranger sounds enter as the piece builds The horns close to the keyboard begin to sound then we hear birds, distant church bells, and galloping horses. The drums onstage begin to play themselves and around the auditorium thunder begins to sound, above us we hear the sound of rain and at the climax of the piece actual lightening flashes across the stage.

The musician is also the inventor of the Electro – Moteur, Johann Baptist Schalkenbach. He had recently assisted the Davenport Brothers in their spiritualistic stage performance and some of the audience wondered aloud whether Scalkenbach's music also accessed powers from the spirit realm.

Name of Performance / Act: *Launch of Edison's recording device*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Thomas Edison

Venue: Menlo Park, New Jersey

Duration: 1 minute

Date(s): 1878

Format: Audio recording

Source: Hollings, K. (2011) 'Electronic voice phenomena', *The Wire*, 323 Jan 2011, p30

A man stands beside a machine. He shouts into the horn attached to the machine. A piece of tinfoil turns on a cylinder. He resets the needle that has moved across the foil and cranks a handle. His voice returns, this time emerging from the speaker. "Mary had a little lamb. Its fleece was white as snow. And everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go." The man had recently lost his wife, her name had been Mary too, Mary Edison. He believed that his new invention would let him contact the dead.

Name of Performance / Act: *Seedbed*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Vito Acconi

Venue: at [Sonnabend Gallery](#), New York

Duration: 15 days

Date(s): 15–29 January 1972

Format: Gallery Performance

Source: LaBelle, B. (2006) *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*. London & New York: Bloomsbury. P 110-116

A ramp has been installed in the gallery. It is constructed of the same wood as the floor and takes up half the room. You enter the space and walk along the real floor

before walking up the ramp. Your footsteps echo in the space beneath the ramp. That space is not empty. There is a man there. He is there every day for eight hours. The performance will last for three weeks. You can here his voice “you’re pushing your cunt down on my mouth. you...you’re using your tits down on my cock...you’re ramming your cock down into my arse...(now and then you hear me come: I’ve done this for you, I’ve done this with you, I’ve done this to you)” (LaBelle, 2006, p.115) He is masturbating. He is fantasising about you or what he imagines of you from the sound of your footsteps. ‘Under the ramp, I’m lying down, I’m crawling under the floor over which viewers are walking, I hear their footsteps on top of me...I’m building up sexual fantasies on their footsteps, I’m masturbating from morning to night...’ (ibid, p.112) . . . you’re on my left . . . you’re moving away but I’m pushing my body against you, into the corner . . . you’re bending your head down, over me . . . I’m pressing my eyes into your hair . . .I can go on as I think of you, you can reinforce my excitement, serve as my medium (the seed planted on the floor is a joint result of my presence and yours). You can listen to me; I want you to stay here; you can walk around me; walk past me; come back; sit here; lie close to me; walk with me again” (quoted in LaBelle 2006, p.110)

Name of Performance / Act: *Record without a cover*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Christian Marclay

Venue: Front room, town house, Hastings

Duration: 18 minutes 25 seconds

Date(s): January 1986

Format: Audio recording

Source: Author’s own experience of Marclay, C. (1985) *Record without a cover* [LP].

New York: Recycled Records.

It is a 12-inch clear vinyl record with words just legible when you angle it in the light.

“Record without a cover. Do not store in protective package. 33 rpm. Christian Marclay. Manipulated records on multiple turntables”(Marclay, 1985). And further detail of where it was recorded and by whom and other details spiralling into the centre of the disc.

Surface Noise. A lot of it. Possibly a beat. Definitely a beat. A Jazz break heard through the static. Overlaid with modernist chords and more percussion that is out of sync. An anti-tune. A samba beat now. Half recognised snippets of film music and TV theme tunes. A Tom and Jerry cut up of the last 50 years of popular and art music buried under the surface noise etched into the vinyl by each playing, each transportation, each day without any protection. The state of being coverless overwriting what was recorded on the vinyl with the vulnerable history of this record.

Name of Performance / Act: *Vexations*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Composer - Eric Satie. Performers include [John Cage](#), [David Tudor](#), [Christian Wolff](#), [Philip Corner](#), Viola Farber, [Robert Wood](#), MacRae Cook, [John Cale](#), [David Del Tredici](#), [James Tenney](#), [Howard Klein](#) and [Joshua Rifkin](#)

Venue: Pocket Theatre, New York.

Duration: 18 hours 40 minutes

Date(s): September 9, 1963

Format: Concert

Source: Nyman, M. (1999) *Experimental music: Cage and beyond*. Cambridge University Press. p32

A musician comes on stage. Sits at the piano and waits. The score in front of him is barely a page long. At the top of it is a note to the player, “in order to play the theme 840 times in succession, it would be advisable to prepare oneself beforehand, and in the deepest silence, by serious immobilities” (Satie, 1893). After some time he lifts

the lid and begins to play. The piece will continue for eighteen hours and forty minutes.

Name of Performance / Act: *Intonarumori*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Luigi Russolo

Venue: Coliseum Theatre, London

Duration: 10 minutes

Date(s): April 1914

Format: Variety Performance

Source: Wilson, D. (2014) 'The electric music hall.' *The Wire*, 364 June, p 32

A group of musicians walk onstage. It is important to remember that this stage is a variety theatre. The posters list the musicians alongside acrobats, comedians, singers accompanied by a more conventional orchestra and 'the screening of some short Bioscope films. This concert does not take place in the arena of high culture although there will be a concert for an invited audience of critics at The Savoy before the musicians return to Italy.

The first night had been difficult. The audience jeering from the sight of the box shaped wooden instruments with their horns and crank handles but then audiences and often came to a first night specifically to jeer. It is important to remember that whilst there are some jeers on the third evening there is also listening and applause.

Russolo's argument in *The Art of Noise* ([1913]/2005, p. 20) that noise comes into the ear and consciousness through the industrial metropolis leads him to suggest the reader takes a journey with him 'Let's walk together through a great modern capital, with the ear more attentive than the eye, and we will vary the pleasures of our sensibilities by distinguishing among the gurglings of water, air and gas inside

metallic pipes, the rumblings and rattlings of engines breathing with obvious animal spirits, the rising and falling of pistons, the stridency of mechanical saws, the loud jumping of trolleys on their rails, the snapping of whips, the whipping of flags.' Predating the Situationist practice of the derive by fifty years and coming from a movement on the opposite side of the political spectrum to the leftist artist of the 60s Russolo none the less shares a sense of the sounding of a city walk as performative and generative.

Name of Performance / Act: *Dawn*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer:

Venue: Bell Laboratories. New Jersey

Duration: 1 minute

Date(s): 1962

Format: Scientific demonstration

Source: Toop, D. (2004) *Haunted Weather*. London, Serpent Tails. p111

It is night and there is static in the air, literally, it raises the hair on the back of your neck. There is so much of the room taken up with cabinets of electronics that are leaking electricity into the air that the six people present are a little squeezed in the only clear space at the centre of the room. Five of them work there, the sixth is a visitor, the author Arthur C Clarke. All of them are sweating because of the heat the cabinets give off. Unlike in the movies there are not rows of flashing lights on the cabinets though there are reel to reel magnetic tapes encoding information but in reality they turn slowly rather than spinning frantically. One of the consoles in the centre clearing has a musical keyboard embedded while others have rows of dials and switches. The man at the keyboard begins to play a familiar melody and as he begins the pattern for a second time one of the other men flicks a switch and a voice begins to sing "Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do. I'm half crazy all for the love of

you. It won't be a stylish marriage. I can't afford a carriage. But you'll look sweet upon the seat. Of a bicycle built for two" (Harry Dacre, 1892). The voice comes out of the same speakers as the music; both are creaky, half there and half not. Music like this and a voice like this have not been heard before; both are generated by the machine that all the cabinets and consoles together constitute. The author is so impressed that eight years later he will write the same song into a scene for the film of *2001* (Kubrick, 1968) but instead of a voice coming into life that scene features a voice going out of life. The ghost in the machine as it fades from existence. Can ghosts die?

Name of Performance / Act: *spectra*

Artist(s) / Maker / Producer: Ryoji Ikeda

Venue: Victoria Tower Gardens, London.

Duration: 8 days

Date(s): 4-11 August 2014

Format: Sound/Light installation

Source: author's own experience.

Documentation at <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/spectra/>

It is around three in the morning but the park is busy. Some people moving between the lights, some lying on the grass looking up and some in small groups talking in whispers. A medium to high pitched hum like a cicada loops and over the top of this higher pitched blips are scattered, infrequent rasps and about every fifteen minutes a brief section with sub bass notes that shake your chest. The forty-nine searchlights form a twenty-metre grid. From here you can see the individual beams but from a distance across London there seems to be one single beam projecting up into the sky. The light appeared 7 days ago at dusk and will be turned off this morning at dawn.

I choose my spot with care for where you locate yourself in relation to the speakers creates a specific interference patterns between the sine waves that make up the piece so each visitor hears a version of the piece unique to their ears, I lie on the grass, look up at the lights, at the thousands of moths moving like snowflakes in the beams.

## 2.2 Listening In

These co – ordinates track a tendency in sound, out of the nineteenth century across the twentieth and into the twenty first. In tracing this tendency the aim has been to sidestep the seeming default position in sound scholarship to locate Cage and 4.33, in particular, as a foundational moment, a tendency visible in both Kahn (2001) and LaBelle (2006) rather the aim has been to situate Cage within a continuum. Instead of seeing Cage as a radical break from music into sound the excavation of “illegitimate” performances such as spiritualism in the nineteenth century locates his practice within an on – going investigation as sound qua sound. There is no suggestion here that Cage was aware of these practices although his interlinking of sonic, and spiritual concerns might be seen to have parallels with spiritualism: “I wanted to be quiet in a non-quiet situation. So I discovered first through reading the gospel of Sri Ramakrihsna and through the study of the philosophy of Zen Buddhism [...] that [...] a quiet mind is a mind that is free of its likes and dislikes”(Cage, quoted in Khan, 2001, p.174).

Spiritualism’s performances mark the embedding of sound as phenomena within performance and a realisation of its extra – musical drive exploring resonance and timbre beyond the field of instrumentation. Spiritualism’s sounding then finds its way into variety performance through acts such as the magicians Maskelyne and Cooke who under the guise of exposing spiritualism’s techniques of sounding introduce a new set of sounds beyond the musical into the theatrical sphere to supplement the already existing practice of ‘noises off (see 1.3 below for a fuller examination of sound in theatre). Johann Baptist Schalkenbach the inventor of the Orchestre Militaire Electro – Moteur used similar technology to accompany Maskelyne and Cooke performances and was not averse to using the suggestion of supernatural intervention in promoting his own performances. The Orchestre Militaire Electro –

Moteur stands as a precursor to the synthesiser exploring electric sound en route to electronic sound.

Schalkenbach rejects Western art music's suspicion of representational sound and indeed embraces such sounds at the same moment where the industrial revolution and technological warfare introduce previously unheard noises into the human ear. Schalkenbach choosing to call his invention Orchestre Militaire Electro – Moteur marks warfare's contribution to the sonic at the turn of the twentieth century. A contribution that is fully marked in Russell's *Art of Noise*, championing of the sound of the battlefield (2005, p.13). The various intonurii of the futurist orchestra draw upon similar technology to Schalkenbach, namely that of the Claxton. The Art of Noises is often located as part of a fine art tradition linked as it is to Futurism but can be seen to have been presented in the same context as the "illegitimate" performances of stage illusionism and electric music at least during their English visit.

Also feeding into the development of early modernism was the exposure of western artists to non-- western forms hence the inclusion here of Indian classical music and Satie whose experience of the gamelan at The Colonial Exposition of 1889 in Paris. According to Satie's own testimony this encounter shifted his sense of musicality. This experience also led directly to a development of a static durational music which generates an atmosphere. Satie's explorations of Furniture music have been cited by Eno as precursors of Ambient and generative music.

The performance of Satie's Vexations referred to above was organised by Cage and was performed by a relay of musicians including some of his students from his Composition class at The New School. Students of this class include Michael Kirby, La Monte Young and George Brecht. Cage's focus on the sound event might then be seen to lead to both Happenings and Fluxus concentration on sound in performance

with Fluxus stripping away the more spectacular elements of Happenings to engage with task based work.

Central to sounds liberation during the twentieth century is the technology and practices associated with phonography which must be understood as both playback and recording system. Edison's first commercial phonographs combined both of these functions and once again opened into the ghostly as the possibility of a voice from somewhere else divorced and played back independently of physical presence became an everyday phenomena. This latent haunting is drawn out more fully in Electronic Voice Phenomena researchers use of recording technology as an "objective" proof of the spirit realm. The example of Jurgenson's field recording of birdsong revealing the "voice" of his mother being the foundation recording of EVP manifestations. Such questions of fidelity and originality are problematized by turntabalist practices in the late twentieth century ranging from hip-hop to plunder phonics to Marclay's sound works.

Phonography and the voice meet in Lucier's *I am sitting in a room*. Spiritualism's exploration of spatial resonance returns to haunt both this work and Acconi masturbating beneath the sounding board of a false floor. Voice and its embodied source are also brought to the fore in these works as well a participatory role for the audience. Acconi implicating the visitor in his fantasies and Lucier exploiting the locational and relation qualities of a particular space. The Situationist derived tactics of punk, 'Here's three chords now form a band' further expand sound's drive towards the participatory and relational. The IBM computer producing the first computer voice and its borrowing by Arthur C Clarke for the "death" of Hal in 2001 aligns the voice, technology and the hauntological.

Finally the most recent co – ordinate, Ryoji Ikeda's *Spectra* re – engages with many

of these concerns – noise/music, the ghostly quality of sound, generative structures, duration, phonography, relationality, site specificity, the nature of listening and task based work – while also marking sounds' migration across these coordinates from small gatherings of people in front rooms to the most widely attended public art event of 2014 visited by over a million people. The set of artistic concerns located through these co-ordinates will be seen to play out in the work considered in Chapter Three, drawing a link between performance that sounds and sound as performance.

## Chapter Three – Sound as Orientation: a case study

### 3.1 I was there...

*I was there...* was commissioned by The ICA London and first performed there on May 2010 as part of a weekend festival of performance curated by Tim Etchells and Ant Hampton. Subsequently, in May 2013 the piece was remounted and reworked for Ars Captiva/ Turin Jazz Festival and presented in the Natural History Museum of Turin, Italy. In its performance contexts *I was there...* moves across and blurs the lines between fine art (ICA, Ars Captiva), live art (Etchells and Hampton), and music (Turin Jazz Festival) while also suggesting an engagement with archaeological processes since Etchells and Hampton's programme was subtitled *The Pasts of Performance* and the site for the Turin version was a natural history museum. Despite this blurring of lines the work has always been presented as a piece of performance made by a theatre maker.

Within a gallery space twenty seven young performers aged between seventeen and twenty three years old are seated on chairs arranged in rows facing the entrance way, the first row contains one chair and the last contains seven so the chairs are in a v-shaped pattern. Three performers wear brightly coloured t-shirts: red, yellow, green, brown, blue, pink and just one of them in the centre of the configuration, in black. This arrangement consciously echoes the layout of balls at the beginning of a game of pool thus signalling the ludic nature of the work. The first row consists of one chair and this chair is empty. The second row contains two chairs both occupied by a performer while opposite these two chairs and with their backs to the entrance are two more empty chairs. The third row contains three chairs and three performers and three more empty chairs facing them, and so on until the seventh and last row. The rows form an inverted pyramid spread across the floor of the space when viewed

form above.

The performers are asked to focus on the point ahead of them where the eye line of a spectator sitting on the chair opposite them would be, to focus on that absence as a space of potential presence and encounter, to look but also to expose themselves to a potential gaze. The performers are asked to embrace stillness and silence rather than to be still and silent. Along the right hand wall of the gallery are a row of chairs facing into the space occupied by the "guests", along the wall of the entrance way and the left wall of the gallery a row of empty chairs for the audience.

Silence settles. The doors are opened to the audience. Some stand around the edges of the space. Some sit in the chairs along the walls. One or two sit facing a performer who makes eye contact with them. Although no request for silence has been made of the audience there is little talk.

After five minutes the first guest sits in the empty chair in row one at the apex of the pyramid of performers. The microphone on their lapel is plugged into an mp3 recorder. I stand in front of them visible to all performers and to the audience. I raise my right hand in a gesture reminiscent of a conductor and then drop it. The guest begins. They have five minutes in which to tell a story. The story of the performance which changed them □ in the ICA version the guests were from the world of performance so tended to speak of theatrical/live art experiences, the guests in the Turin version were the musicians from the jazz festival so they tended to speak about musical performances. In both cases there were guests who violated their disciplinary boundaries, performance people who spoke of a musical performance, jazz people who spoke of a theatrical experience and those who went beyond narrow definitions of performance to speak of a meal or a wedding. In both cases the guests were aged between forty and eighty.

The guest may spend as much of the five minutes as they wish deciding which story to tell. They may speak for as long or as short a duration within the five minutes as they like. Any silence should be considered a part of what they are doing. They should aim to tell us about the world at the time of the performance, themselves at the time of the performance, the setting for the performance, the moment in the performance that remains with them and the audience around them. They should not tell us how or why this performance changed them but rather focus on the facts. They should remember that classically a story has a beginning; a middle and an end but know that we are not in the classical period. They are informed that they will receive signals to indicate when they are half way through, when they have one minute left and when they have fifteen seconds left. Five minutes is the absolute limit put upon them.

At the end of the first guest's performance that guest vacates the front chair, a technician passes the recorder used to record the first guest to row two where it is set to play back and plugged into a splitter/amplifier which feeds in-ear headphones located in the left ear of each performer, each performer in row two also has a recorder plugged into a lapel microphone. The second guest sits with a fresh recorder attached to their lapel microphone. I raise my hand and drop it. The guest in row one begins to tell their story. By this point the audience have begun to grasp the structure and some draw close to listen to the story being told by the guest. At the same moment the playback of guest one's story is heard by the performers in row two and they begin simultaneously and as best they can to reproduce the words spoken and to use those words to communicate and build a relationship with the audience member sitting in the chair opposite them or, if no one is there then to speak to and make eye contact with the nearest audience member standing close by. Meanwhile the performers in rows three to seven embrace stillness and silence. At

the end of five minutes the guest in row one and the performers in row two fall silent. The guest vacates their chair. A new guest sits. Recorders are passed from row one to two and row two to three, set to play back connected to earphones. The third guest sits. My hand drops. Rows, one two and three activate. The audience now ready to sit in front of a speaking performer or sitting in silence sharing eye contact with a performer who has yet to speak. We are fifteen minutes into *I was there...*

The performers have been through a two-day workshop on in ear performance during which they have encountered a number of principals that inform the work since the workshop was practice led these principals are encountered through the body and lead to an embodied expertise.

- Speak what you hear as you hear it □ you are like a spirit medium channelling a voice that comes to you intimately and flows through you to emerge from your mouth. You are a vehicle.
- Whatever you hear and speak is correct. You cannot be wrong since you have privileged access to your sense experience. What you say must make sense for you though. You cannot speak something that makes no sense for you since you are engaged in an act of communication. You are an agent.
- Speak what you hear but not how it is spoken, the intention behind the words emerges from your relationship with the person you are speaking to and making eye contact with. What is passing between you, what situation do you find yourselves in? The text is a pretext for a specific interaction between two or more people discovered through it's appearing moment to moment.
- Mistakes are a moment of creation (Eno, Etchells)
- Although the words are fed to you by an internal voice you are the one who voices them. The words belong to you in the moment of speaking them although the memory you speak is not yours. Engage with an effort of remembering. Engage

with the “I” spoken of as yourself. Do not pretend that this is the case but engage with the possibility even though in the end you may reject it.

- Repeat everything that you hear although most of this will be words the focus of the work is sound not syntax. If you hear a breath make your own breath audible, if you hear a laugh let yourself sound, if you hear thinking try to make that audible.
- Speak only as loudly as you need to for the person you are addressing to hear you. Although you are in public you are sharing an intimacy.
- The silences are as important as the sounds.
- The moments between play back are like tennis players coming to the sideline for a drink and to wipe their face.

These principals are not imparted through the workshop but are co-discovered in testing the nature of the work collaboratively. Each iteration of the piece had some variations in the exact principals employed. Each workshop also sought to develop a more discreet method of signalling the guest to speak and the performers to press play or record then my hand gesture but in both cases we came to decide that this gesture should be public and crucially also serves as a signal for the audience to perform in relation to the performers. My hand drops. Rows, one two, three and four activate.

The audience are free to come and go as they please during the three-hour duration of the piece and are free to position themselves where they wish within the space. Up close and in connection with a performer or a guest or at a small distance, observing a row of performers negotiating the same source text or at a greater distance taking in a number of rows or the whole room as a kind of tower of Babel. The visual focus and sonic focus of the audience are closely matched within the experience and under their control. {Cf: different modes of listening/spectating below}. In both the London and Turin versions of the piece it was unusual for an audience member got up during

a performers iteration of a story rather the pattern of behaviour that the audience established for itself in both case was to sit opposite a performer during a change over, remain with them for the duration of that iteration and then shift position for the next round. Most often at the end of a performer's iteration the audience member would initiate some kind of physical contact □ a hand on a shoulder or the offer of a handshake – and thank the performer. On being questioned audience members explained that they're grateful for the sharing of a private memory, despite the fact that they were well aware that the memory shared was not personal to the performer. Some audience members choose to sit with one performer for the duration the piece while others would follow a source as it flowed back from the guest to the last row attending to its mutations through iteration. Row five activates along with one, two three and four.

In the research leading up to the ICA performance of *I was there...* various durations were tested for the length the guest were allowed to speak and slightly differing briefs were experimented with (for example, the request to describe the world at the time of the experience was a late discovery). The unexpected element emerging during these trials was that regardless of the age of the guest the story of the performance that changed them tended to be of a moment from their late teens or early twenties. This discovery led to the decision to use older people as the guests in order to emphasise the temporal distance between the body speaking and the memory shared. Similarly, the decision to have the guests tell their stories in the present tense was also made emphasise this difference: "It is 1970. I am twenty years old and I am standing outside the Roundhouse in North London. I am soaking..." A body in it's fifties or sixties or seventies taking of itself as being twenty. Once these decisions were in place they led to the choice of using performers actually in their late teens or early twenties since the body speaking now matched the experience described but the year of iteration did not – this was not 1970 but 2010. My hand falls. Row six

activates along with the others.

In explaining the process of *I was there...* to potential guests I found myself using metaphors such as “This is a memory machine” or “It’s a kind of electronic Chinese Whispers” or “It’s a music composition without any notes”. The piece is indeed a mechanism, a machine but for me it is not the digital recorder players or the headphone splitters that are the key technology here but the interfacing of them with human beings as performers and audience. The inability of the performers to be 100% accurate coupled with the attempt to be accurate re-introduces surface noise and glitches into the digital artefact thereby emphasising the performers “meatness” in the midst of a mechanism. The growing distortions that flow and build through the repeated iterations of a piece of material seem both to increase the ratio of noise to signal while also stripping the material back to its base phenomenological position – the transmission of an experience of a state of being. One of the guests at the ICA was Director Ruth Ben Tovim who after having contributed her material took a break from the space for thirty minutes and on returning choose to attend the work by standing at the end of a row and listening to all the multiple iterations of a piece of material as one. She thought the story told intriguing and wanted to speak to the Guest who had delivered the original. Her partner, Ben Yaeger, who had remained in the room the whole time, informed her that the story was in fact hers, “Forget what is being said and listen to its music. It has the song of your voice, the rhythm of your thought and the texture of your shock” (Ben Tovim, 2010).

The eighth guest sits in the single chair at the front of the room. I raise my hand and as it falls the eighth and final row activates for the first time along with the others. We are 50 minutes into *I was there...*

For the next hour and fifteen minutes “guests” continue to enter the mechanism and

feed in stories that are reprocessed through the consciousness's and mouths of the performers, meaning shifts and slips and the room tries to remember that moment... That moment when the promoter turned round and said "You don't have any arms". That moment when Ornette turned melody upside down, when the audience walked out, when we danced naked to that record, when he looked me in the eye, when the blood flowed, when they charged across the field, when we were on Hastings pier, when I was there.

After two hours and fifteen minutes no new guests enter the system and one by one the rows fall silent over the next forty-five minutes, silence growing in the space as the waves of sound recede. The audience participate in this process, previously happy to chat quietly amongst themselves they too now fall silent, many of them choosing to sit opposite a now silent performer or against a wall. Row seven are coming to the end of their final iteration. Sounds now as present as words – a long drawn out breathe, a rasp that might once have been a laugh, the sound "neh" repeated twelve times in rapid succession, a smacking of lips. The last performers fall silent and embrace stillness. Five minutes later for the last time I raise my hand and as it falls the performers stand and leave the room.

Documentation of *I was there...* in both of its iterations can be found in Appendix II

### 3.2 Perception, Subjectivity and Sociality

The Lament, moreover, exudes a staged quality with no claims for authenticity...groups of women *who know how to weep* enact the Lament on behalf of the family of the dead. Witnesses report how each Lament sounds as if it were not an individual women *really* crying but another one, or any other one, *anonymous and dreamy*, who gives voice to the refrain expressing someone died. For De Martino the woman who vocalises the Lament embodies *the ritual presence of a very particular regime of psychic duality*, where she does not pour out an autobiographical image: she is the image distorted, reiterated, projected, reinvented and echoed in clusters of words

and recurring patterns. The shaping of the weeping woman's voice has to do with remembering and returning; with the fixed rhythmic gestures that move her voice, where the regularity of rhymes and formulaic quality... outline the limits within which human presence can be reaffirmed, in spite of incommensurable death. It is an example of the formal power of being against what moves on in nature, unmeasured. The stronger the fixed repeated form, the stronger the individual stories woven into this form appear, as they exceed it and perpetuate it.

(Cascella, 2012, p.120-121)

In discussing De Martino's analysis of the traditional Italian funeral practice of Lamenting Cascella draws out both sonic and performative elements: the grain of the voice, atmosphere, repetition, staging, embodied knowledge, questions of the real and the fictive, questions of identity relating to the performative subject, audience perception, patterns of sociality, compositional patterns, rhythm and voice, presence and absence, memory, remembrance, the individual and the collective, and a certain ghostliness. To understand all the ramifications of sound as orientation's potential a through going treatment of all these aspects would be required but given the limited ambit of an MA dissertation this study focus on three of these areas: audience perception, the performative subject and patterns of sociality.

Unsurprisingly, given his generally conservative viewpoint, Scruton in *The Aesthetics of Music* (1997) wants to sharply mark off sound from music and music itself from any necessary perceptual intertwining with material cause. Music according to Scruton (consciously or not, borrowing Pierre Schaeffer's term) is acousmatic, that is, an abstract, immaterial highly organised series of tonal sound that are the intentional object of an imaginative perception. Such a conception echoes some of the earliest theorisations of sound in the western tradition by Plato and Pythagoras that uses music/sound as a semi-divine music of the spheres; crucially such an idealist approach occludes the performativity of sound. As Hamilton has argued in *Aesthetics and Music* (2007) such concepts of "pure" music ignore key experiential aspects of our perception of a sound event namely, timbre, spatiality and visuality. To perceive a

sound is to perceive a quality of sound and that quality is tied up with the material nature of the object producing that sound, sounds have a directionality and a decay rate that relates directly to spatiality and finally sound perception sits within a suite of sense perceptions that make up the experience of a sound event. It is this often neglected sense of the performativity of sound that sound as orientation foregrounds and it is therefore with an audience's experience of a sound event that an analysis of *I was there...* will begin. In passing, it seems worth noting that our terms for those who experience a performance bifurcate around aurality and visuality – audiences/spectators. The term audience is most often used in this thesis but if there were some term that captured the multi-sensory encounter with the performative, this term would be preferred.

Models of audience perception of a performance tend to emphasis either semiotic or phenomenological accounts but even accounts such as Zarrilli's (2004, p. 655) which move across semiotics and phenomenology share the underlying assumption that audiences are in some sense engaged with a performance that already exists from which meaning/experience is drawn. Drawing on sound studies conception of listening as exploration and it's identification of a range of modes of listening might both provide a model for how sound as orientation distinctively engages audiences and enrich existing models of spectatorship in relation to performance.

In Chapter One of *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound* (2010) Voegelin draws out sounds potential to engage a subject in sensing "listening is not a receptive mode but a method of exploration, a mode of walking through the sound work. What I hear is discovered not received, and this discovery is generative, a fantasy: always different and subjective and continually present now" (Voegelin, 2010, p. 111) Listening is in this way contrasted to looking which relates to a scene over there that I make sense of. In listening 'there can be no gap between the heard

and hearing' while in looking there is seeing and what is seen, there is an over-there. Structurally *I was there...* accentuates a process of discovery inviting an audience to choose between a range of interactive possibilities – listening to the overall sound world, listening up close to one voice or in the medium distance to a number of voices iterating related material. The listening of the audience is doubled and intensified by the listening of the performers attending to their in ear feeds. As an audience I am reflexively aware of both my exploration of a sound world and my listening to listening. This “challenges notions of objectivity and subjectivity, and reconsiders the possibility and place of meaning”(Voegelin, 2010, p. 120). An over simplistic rendering of aurality and visuality is to be avoided here, aurality is not being promoted over visuality (see Sterne's comments below) but rather is being considered as a partner to visual perception, one that unsettles the stability of the visual. Of course, performance studies embraces performance as a multi sensory experience but conceptions of embodiment have tended to emphasis the physical while too often viewing the spoken as text whereas an opening towards sound as sound might let us “hear not the body of the text but the body of the [speaker]”(Voegelin, 2010, p. 163).

*I was there...* plays between objectivity and subjectivity in both its appeal to aurality and it's relation to memory. As the programme note stated “our access to landmark performance works is often not through the experiencing of them ourselves but the retellings of them by those who were there. These retellings are in themselves performances. Performances that re-member and inevitably distort the event” (Kirk, 2010). Performance is deeply bound up with memory since as Schechner observes all performance is “restored behaviour” Schechner (2006, p. 14), that is, something remembered and re-enacted. In *I was there...* the guests are engaged in an act or remembering, and while the performers are not remembering lines in a traditional way memory intervenes in the moment to moment channelling of the in ear feed, in

the moment between hearing and speaking and in the on-going act within an iteration of “making sense” of the whole. The audience are inevitably aware of these overlapping layers of remembering and of the difference between the human act of remembering and the ability of the digital technologies used to record and playback flawlessly again and again. The uncertainty of recall is thrown up against the audience’s own subjective hearing and the objectivity of experience, as Voegelin argues

“in the experience of our own generative perception we produce the objectivity from our subjective and particular position of listening, which in its turn is constituted by the objectivity of the object at a prior moment of hearing, subjective and particular [...] produced on the spot, together in difference, any prior objectivity and prior subjectivity is invested in this monetary and complex production but does not subsume it”

(Voegelin, 2010, p. 233).

Knowing the subjectivity of what is remembered and the subjectivity of their own hearing the audience are none the less engaged in an encounter with an objective sound world and a lived experience of encounter. “Subjectivity and objectivity are partners rather than adversaries”(Voegelin, 2010, p. 241). Meaning making is here subsumed under the event of sounding and hearing. Meaning arises from the event and not the information carried by the sound, a formulation that harks back to Eno’s wish for ‘the audience to do at least half of the work.’ It should also now be clear that “work” in his formulation refers both to the labour of creation and to the thing produced by that labour. Sense is produced through the act of listening and not through the reception of an object’s attributes. As the guest makes sense, the performer makes sense and the audience member makes sense all working through an active listening.

Listening itself should not be considered as homogenous and *I was there...* seeks to activate a range of listening modes. Lastra (2012, p. 248) has identified two often-competing models of sound recording and reproduction, the phonographic and the telephonic. The phonographic aims for total accuracy in recording a sonic event while

the latter sacrifices accuracy for intelligibility – the sound quality on a phone is poor in terms of accurate reproduction of a voice but is intentionally so in order to ensure that what is being said is more easily discernible. The phonographic approach models the sound event as that in which all elements are equally valid while a telephonic approach models the sound event as possessing a hierarchy in which some elements are more important than others. *I was there...* plays between these two models of reproduction with the mp3 recorders working telephonically through near play back but the playing back of this through a live voice returning complex phonographic qualities to the reproduction yet phonographic qualities that bear no relation to the sound of the near playback which the audience never hears. In effect, the performer becomes a translator of the telephonic into the phonographic for the audience. They are a speaker in two senses, that of the one who speaks but also that of a speaker in an audio system. Drawing attention to the quality of sound recording that Altman foregrounds (Sterne 2012, p. 228-9) namely that it does not as commonly assumed reproduce sound but rather applies technology and its conventions to represent sound. The question of signal to noise ratios also comes into play in how the audience listen. As we saw in chapter one Chion (1983, p. 2) has made clear there is not one catch all mode of aural attendance but a range of ways of listening: causal listening in which we pay attention to the sound in order to discover its cause or source, the buzzing of a fly. Semantic listening in which we pay attention to sound in order to grasp a message being conveyed, while this mode of listening is most often deployed in relation to the human voice it is not exclusively so – the sounding of a siren conveys a message. Reduced listening (named as such following acoustamatic music pioneer Pierre Schaeffer) in which we pay attention to the sonic qualities of a sound event, “the traits of the sound itself regardless of its cause or its meaning” (1983, p. 2)

Although sound as orientation foregrounds aurality it retains performances

engagement with the visual, the embodied and miss en scene thus we might borrow sound studies modes of listening but speak of them as modes of spectation. It will be seen that *I was there...* invites all of these modes of spectation while also often problematizing them. Causal spectation would seem to locate each individual performer and guest as the cause of the performance event but the in ear visible on each performer and the absence of the guest through all of the re- iterations of their text problematizes the claim to being the causal origin. Is the ever unheard by the audience audio track playing into the ear of the performer the actual cause or is it the temporarily absent guest whose ghost moves through the room or given that each iteration is unique to the performer are we drawn back to them as the cause and might that in the ends explain the need of the audience to thank the performers after an iteration? Semantic spectation is clearly in play in the audiences attending to the content of the story but attending in this way becomes more problematic as the material flows back through the space and semantic sense begins to breakdown and mutate. As words begin to approach the quality of music what sense can semantic spectation hope for? Thus semantic and reduced spectation are constantly having to negotiate their status in the audiences relation to the work: the wash of sound in the whole room pulling us towards reduced spectation while the up close encounter with a performer encourages us to engage in semantic spectation. Simultaneously the further back in the room, the further back along the rows, one moves in an encounter with a performer the stronger the pull to put aside the semantic and enter reduced spectation as the semantic content of the iteration becomes thinner due to the repeated iterations of the same material. Khan titles his early work on sound in Avant-grade art, *Noise, Water, Meat* (2001) to reflect three qualities of sound in art – it's transgression of the bounds of "music", it's oceanic immersive quality, and it's rootedness in the human body. The modes of spectation available in *I was there...* move across these three fields of experiencing allowing a floating wayfinding through the piece as sound (not music) or a direct body to body encounter which

problematizes the nature of identity; who is speaking, for whom and to whom.

Having considered the audience's discovering of the work as a calling into being of a topography that brings into play questions of subjectivity and objectivity the focus will now shift to a discussion of the performative subject brought into being by the work.

Once again wariness is needed in confronting the paradigms of visuality and aurality as Sterne (2012, p. 9) warns regarding the "audio-visual litany," his set of too common presumptions regarding the senses and hearing and vision in particular, for example, "hearing tends towards subjectivity, vision tends towards objectivity, hearing brings us into the living world, sight moves us towards atrophy and death" (Stern, 2003, p.15). As Sterne acknowledges "The problem with this litany is that it elevates a set of cultural precautions (prejudices, really) to the level of theory" (Stern, 2003, p. 15). While recognising this problem we may yet try to theorise how models that prioritise the visual or the aural have consequences for the understanding of the subject in relation to the work and the work in relation to the subject.

Returning to the Wests founding text on performance and considering Aristotle's construction of the concept of an artistic work in *The Poetics* (1992, p. 4) we can locate a paradigm that begins with the mimetic and the visual. Aristotle begins his discussion of art works by giving the example of a painter whose works are so like life that insects attempt to feed on the flowers. Before going on to define drama as the imitation of actions he proceeds to attempt to expand the realm of mimesis beyond the visual by claiming music's origin in the imitation of birdsong. The initial construction of mimesis in relation to the visual takes a basic position of similarity – the painting looks so much like a real flower that it can be mistaken for it if we simply look – it is not at all clear that music can be mistaken for birdsong in a similar way or that the masked actor on the stage can be mistaken for an agent in the lifeworld.

None the less, mimesis is to some degree embedded in our readings of performance. In considering how paradigms of listening might let us rethink performance no presumption of aurality's preparedness over visuality is made but rather an attempt is made to open up additional readings of the performative through aurality.

As the most through going attempt in recent philosophy of sound to think through the nature of the sonic subject Voegelin's work in *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (2010) will form the core of this discussion. Voegelin at times sounds as if she has bought into the "audio-visual litany" such as when she claims that "I can stand in front of a painting and discuss it loudly and confidently with my fellow gallery visitor, when I speak during a sound performance I obliterate what I talk about" (2010, p. 99). At first read this claim seems to be a simple confusion of categories – talking in the face of the visual will cause no significant perceptual disruption while talking over the aural clearly will – but Voegelin is making a point regarding the paradox of aurality: "that we do not hear the same" (2010, p. 99), since there is no object in front of us there can be no assumed agreement. It is this carefully nuanced sensibility that makes Voegelin's argument worth considering in some depth here, the consequences of her position will then be read into the process of the performers within *I was there...*

Voegelin draws our attention to the intersubjective nature of sound, 'in sound the object does not exist before its perception' (2010, p. 101) so that the very act of listening produces both the subject and the object of the sound event, that is, listening produces both the work and the self; "subjects and objects producing themselves reciprocally" (2010, p.40). So that

When the solitary subjectivity is understood as part of the aesthetic sensibility produced through sound, and when, conversely this subjectivity is appreciated in its [...] generative autonomy then we will come to understand the radical value of sound to shift not the meaning of things and subjects, but the process of meaning making and the status of any meaning thus made.

36) (Voegelin, 2010, p.

Voegelin requires a philosophy that “practices” experience rather than “explaining” it since in such reciprocal production between subject and object certainty must be abandoned. In this approach to knowledge she echoes Gramsci’s desire for a “shift from knowing to understanding, to feeling and back again from feeling to understanding, to knowing” (quoted in Cascella, 2012, p. 33). In promoting the active agency of the listener, of listening as an act of discovery in the world, Voegelin is not dismissing the agency of the composer of sound for the “reciprocal intertwining of the ‘I’ with the sonic life-world produces a transient and fleeting subject, en par with the sounds of its composition”(2010, p. 93). The composer is thus doubled “composer as producer, composer as listener” again echoing Eno’s desire that the audience do at least half the work. Voegelin understands that while listening happens for the subject that intersubjectivity implies a political relation with others, “the sonic self finds the collective from his solitary agency of listening through his body rather than through language” (2010, p. 94) and that this is a political positioning “in the sense of a political [...] sensibility that understands the visual substantial of ‘I’ and ‘You’ and ‘them’ to be an illusion and prefers to work on the basis of fragile ‘I’s passing in the dark (2010, p.94).

Consequently I know that I will not necessarily understand my fellow men nor be understood. That does not mean I will not try, it just means that I work from the acceptance of misunderstandings into the occasional understanding, the moments of coincidence; that is humanity in its dynamic production rather than as a historical ideology and artefact. There is meaning but not necessarily a shared sense of perception thereof.

(2010, p.100)

For the performer in *I was there...* the perception of sound is also the need to sound, the object (material) of their performance does not exist until it comes into the ear and in that coming into existence for their ‘I’ and the coming into existence of their

multiple 'I's the intersubjective nature of the work begins to manifest. The listening 'I' of the performer coming into being along with the work, the 'I' that is the performer in task as themselves, the 'I' of the performer becoming persona as they speak this material, the 'channelled 'I' of the guest whose material this was (for the material is no longer self-identical having been mutated by the multiple listening/speaking 'I's of the subjects/objects it has been passed down through to arrive at the 'I' of this iteration), the 'I' that consciously works to understand and inevitably misunderstands and in so doing is an agent of change owning its generative autonomy, the 'I' of the performer as they always already observe themselves in performance – coaching and assisting, the 'I' of a body struggling to keep pace with words that tumble through and out of it, the 'I' in the process of meaning making as they move from feeling to understanding but are always suspicious of knowledge for how would they know this moment that they speak of since this moment was not lived by them but in this speaking as 'I' of these events happening to them becomes theirs and seeds another 'I' passing through the darkness of the coming into being of the text in listening, intersubjectively coming into being along with those multiple 'I's of the performer performing.

The performer is alone in their listening to the in ear feed since it is essentially private but also alone in their listening to the public sound of the room through their other ear because 'we do not hear the same' (see ref above). And this is a vertiginous feeling, almost all of the performers experienced a sense of falling during the performance. A period of time where their relation to the floor, to the sounds around them, the words in their ear and their sense of themselves began to turn around themselves, at risk of collapse. The multiple 'I's coming into being seeking knowledge and certainty when all there can be is understanding when you practice experience rather than trying to explain it, when the performer becomes a philosophical actor negotiating their score as a mode of discovering the world.

Sound as orientation therefore constitutes a situation. One in which the audience wayfind through an emergent topography of performance while the performers simultaneously negotiates their sense of self within that landscape and in relation to an audience. The space called into being by the performance is thus one of sociality, which is the final area for consideration in this chapter. What distinctive space of sociality is generated by sound as orientation and what are the politics of encounter within this landscape.

Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) seeks to identify a tendency in fine art arising during the 1990s and the publication of Bourriaud's book itself then initiated a spreading of this tendency the performance community, for example, the work of Punchdrunk or of DreamThinkSpeak. Bourriaud defines relational works as "art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space"(2002, p.14) The key artist Bourriaud uses to exemplify relational aesthetics is Rikvit Tiravanija referencing such works as *Untitled 1999* (David Zwirner Gallery, New York), a full size replica of the artist's New York apartment constructed in an gallery and offered up for the public's use during the entire duration of the exhibition. The potential of relational aesthetics to intervene in the world has been questioned Hal Foster who states "politics are ascribed to such art on the basis of a shaky analogy between an open work and an inclusive society, as if a desultory form might evoke a democratic community or [...] an egalitarian world [...] collaboration, too, is often regarded as good in itself [...] today simply getting together sometimes seems to be enough" (Foster, 2006, 193-194). While relational aesthetics is open to such challenges it should be noted that Bourriaud himself has doubts

The supreme separation that affects relational channels, represents the final stage in the transformation to the "Society of the Spectacle" as described by Guy Debord. This is a society where human relations are no longer "directly

experienced”, but start to become blurred in their “spectacular” representation. Herein lies the most burning issue to do with art today: is it still possible to generate relationships with the world, in a practical field art-history traditionally earmarked for their “representation”?

(Borriaud, 2002, p.

9)

Some critics such as Claire Bishop have contested the nature of the encounter in relational artworks asking ‘what does ‘democracy’ really mean in this context?’ (2004), such critiques have led to the suggestion that this social turn in art has been overtaken by a political turn since the global collapse of 2008. While this contains some truth in terms of the actual artworks described under these headings it ignores the quote from Bourriaud above. The underlying question in relational aesthetics was not how do we generate relationships with each other but how do we generate relationships with the world and Bourriaud’s quoting of Situationist Guy Debord points to the nature of relational aesthetics as always already political.

LaBelle, in his introduction to *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2006) makes an argument for sounds inherent entanglement with sociality. He begins by pointing to the fact that sound is always in more than one place at once, when I speak that sound is ‘in my mouth, around the space it reverberates within and in your ears; sound is a spatial event (2006, p.x). Secondly LaBelle points to sound as something that occurs between bodies, “sound is produced and inflected not only by the materiality of space but by the presence of others [...] the acoustical event is also a social one” (2006, p. x). Finally LaBelle points to the public nature of sound, “listening is thus a form of participation”(2006, p. xi).

Now while this is correct it can be seen that if this is all there is to sounds propensity to the social then the criticisms that have been made regarding relational works political failings would come to bear strongly not only on Sound Art but also on performance works taking sound as orientation.

Crucially, works of sound as orientation are again and again concerned with the playing out of sound through a performer/participant rather than directly into the space or playing sound into the performer/participant rather than into the space. *I was there...* being an example of the former while Hampton's recent *The Extra People* (2015) is an example of the latter.

Scholar John Mowitt's reflections on *The Sound of Music in the Era of its Electronic Reproducibility* (2012, p. 213-225) may serve to explain why this is such an important factor in our understanding of the nature of spatiality/sociality generated by sound as orientation. Mowitt is attempting to articulate the importance of reproductive technology on the social significance of music reception and uses the 1970s US television adverts for Memorex recording tape to facilitate this, focusing his analysis around the strap line "Is it real or is it Memorex?" Mowitt points to the move inherent in the commodification of sound as recording whereby we see the "priority of cultural consumption over cultural production" (2012, p. 214) so that the reproduction comes to hold greater commodity value than the original indeed that the qualities of the electronic reproduction (which necessarily distort the original) come to be supersede the qualities of the original so that it is the "human faculty, memory, that is being [...] delimited" (2012, p. 216). Indeed, "what is at stake here is less a particular memory than memory as such" (2012, p. 217). For Mowitt this development puts at risk Attali's inherently political claim that "all music, any organisation of sounds, is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality" (1985, p.6). If this is the risk in the era of tape recording then the era of the digital bit threatens to collapse "the modes of production, reproduction and reception" (2012, p.220). In particular Hewitt emphasises the fetish of noise reduction in the digital age and how even when noise proliferates it is rapidly recuperated and channelled in a manner that lets the industry profit from it' (quoted in Mowitt, p. 221). However, Hewitt does not view the

situation as irredeemable since while

The 'post industrial' mode of production, in its effort to convert our life contexts into usable information, seeks to extend the domain organized by bit-centered technologies. However, just as the production of needs always exceeds the capacity of the mode of production, the production of information always proliferates noise which exceeds the organising capacity of the bit centred system.

(quoted in Mowitt, p. 221)

From this position Mowitt returns to the question of the subject constituted by sound since the "logic of the bit [...] can condition but not determine its outside, the subject that arises under its influence stands in a field where it is exposed to 'others'" (2012, p. 222). Sound is then reconstituted as "a cultural practice whose oppositional character derives from its ability to engender subjects who are predisposed towards others" (2012, p. 222)

The attraction of sound as orientation for performance makers at this time of crisis may then relate to the possibility that such work allows a political positioning, a creating of a listening/spectating community which exceeds the attempts of commodification to rehabilitate it. The political positioning of sound as orientation does not derive from its subject matter but rather from its use of sound as a tool to open up the artwork as something that is brought into being in its spectation (the sound is not over there it is in my ear), so that meaning arises from the event and not from the information transmitted. Central to the event is the intersubjective self generated by the performer as they channel audio material, simultaneously sounding and listening: not expecting to be understood but willing to try. Living moment to moment with the emptying out of memory by the bit and their own effort to re-member a memory, negotiating a space where noise overtakes the logic of the bit and where that noise is our shared attempt to hold on to what matters and to make a sense together "things seem both alien and familiar, like a dream mixing past experience with anticipated

trauma”(Hampton, 2015). The work articulates memory as a communal act of sounding/listening rather as Schechner casts ritual (and as the citing of lamenting hoped to indicate there is ritual in play here) as “collective memories encoded in action” (2006, p. 52). An act of memory that anticipates the trauma of performance and of life, that we forget and are forgotten but a trauma held at bay in the moment of listening together. Throughout the twentieth century performance shifted its orientation from naturalism to theatricality to physicality to happenings to task based work to multimedia integration in an attempt to constant evade rehabilitation to continue to use culture as a weapon to intervene in the life world. Sound may be the latest focus for reorientation as we move fully into the twenty first century.

The case study pursued in this chapter has sought to draw out both the performative processes and compositional montage of a work that takes sound as its orientation. The consequences of these processes and their particular engagement with aurality were then considered from the perspectives of audience reception, the performative subject and a politically engaged sociality. What remains to be considered is the implications of this for sound as orientation, the question of the performers hauntological manifestation in the work and what areas of further research might be appropriate. It is these issues that the conclusion will address.

## **Conclusion – Ghosts in the machine**

In the light of a growing body of work during the last decade created by performance makers that seems to foreground sound within the performance montage, this research has sought to address the emergence of sound as orientation in performance where orientation can be understood as both the performance maker and the audience approaching the work through the “frame” of aurality. It has also sought to review the critical engagement with sound undertaken by Theatre/Performance Studies. It has also sought to supplement our understanding of sound within the performance montage by drawing on sources for Sound Studies and Art studies. In order to give a sense of the long tail leading into this emergent practice a drifting across sounds performing in the twentieth century was undertaken proceeding through a fusing of process, content, technology and historiography. This drifting succeeded in revealing a series of shared concerns across the examples of sound performing considered as can be seen below. Finally a detailed case study demonstrated how sound as orientation might result in distinctive modes of perception of a work, creation of the performative subject and the construction of sociality. Sound as orientation was seen to have the potential to shift the hierarchy of production away from the visual, the textual or the physical to locate sounding as the founding impulse for a work. This thesis as noted already sought to contribute to underdeveloped and emerging field of study that exists in between sound art, performance making, site-specificity and relational work. As such this thesis explored histories and practices across these fields and within my own practice in order to critically examine the potential of liquid/experienced knowledge to provide a framework for both practitioners and academics seeking to address this area of practice.

In reviewing literature dealing with sound in the theatre it was demonstrated that almost all of this writing pre 2000 had focused on sound as technical matter, as an ornament to the production or “noises off”. Since the millennium the growth of Sound Studies within the academy was seen to lead to a fuller articulation of the nature and potential of sound as a cultural medium. This growth triggered an acoustic turn in the arts and in theorising about the arts by academics leading to a growing strand of writing within Performance studies that considers sound as significant in an understanding of the performative, in particular the work of David Roesner (2010, 2011). However such work has tended to focus on the performativity of Sound Art, music as theatre or the musicalisation of theatre in postdramatic work (Lehmann, 2006)

In drifting across the work of practitioners making during the twentieth century who engaged with sounds ability to perform, a number of proclivities were identified that would go on to inform work that takes sound as an orientation. Namely, an engagement with audiences as the co-creators of the work, a concern with generative structures, a sense of the hauntological qualities of sound transmission and relationality in it's political guise.

These factors were then seen to be structuring elements at play in *I was there...* (2010: 2013), the work considered as a case study for this from a practice based research. Rather than applying theoretical frames to dissect the case study this research sought to think out from the work towards wider considerations including the nature of an audiences' encounter with a sound as orientation piece, the way in which such works create a performative subject and the political quality of the sociality they produce. In relation to the first we can say that the distinctive nature of audience engagement in sound as orientation derives from its generative structure and that musician Brian Eno's invitation for “the audience to do at least half of the work” in making a work is realised through the distinctive nature of aurality: sound is

as much out there as it is in here, it is in the world and in my ear, it forces me to approach the work as a field coming into being, a field to be discovered rather than an artefact awaiting decoding, I travel through it and I call it into being. The nature of the performative subject is problematized in sound as orientation through its repeated use of earphones as a mechanism for feeding the performer: who speaks here and with what authority and for whom? Thus the authority of the speaking subject and their attempt to make themselves understood is questioned. In the case of *I was there...* this is amplified all the more by its Chinese whisper generative structure which steadily and purposeful introduces more and more surface noise into the system. The subject is, in the end, constituted by their performance of the desire to be understood in the always impossible demand that this makes on an other. The classical autonomous subject imagined as one able to control, organise and manipulate the world is broken down and an intersubjective perspective opened up where the attempt to be understood is more important than the power of the subject to dominate the world since the “I” is reintegrated into a world where there is a you and a me and others. This opening into sociality creates a possibility for realignment away from late capitalisms imperative to consume and from the digital commodification of the subject towards a politicised being together where “I” am enabled to understand myself through the attempt to understand others in their sounding.

This study operating from within practices based research has then demonstrated that there is a historically underexploited potential for sound in the process of performance creation and reception and that performance makers and audiences who choose to engage with this possibility may well open up new circuits in the potential of performance. Crucially, sound as orientation may enable us to rethink a politically active performance culture where it is not the content of the work that seeks to draw attention to the nature of the circumstances of our co-existence as

mediated by dominant ideologies but the form of the work which challenges these ideologies and models alternatives. By identifying this possibility for both scholars and practitioners this research seeks to recommend an on-going engagement with performance as political action beyond the sphere of representational politics and thus to make possible again the thought of a different social organisation that late capitalism has sought to silence. To return to Jacques Attali's gelling of sound, "listening to music, listening to all noise, is realizing that its appropriation and control is a reflection of power, that it is essentially political"(Attali, 1985, p.6).

The limitations of this study have meant that only one case study has been examined and clearly there is more work to be done in this area. The work of Lundahl & Seidl, Ligna and Duncan Speakman would fall under the rubric of sound as orientation and their particular respective encounters with institutional space, communal listening, and landscape would enrich our understanding of this field of practice. There is also a theoretical thread in this research which deserves further attention: at a number of points during this study the hauntological has been brought into play but as yet the full implications of this perspective have not been unpacked. Hauntologies concern with the reprocessing of culture and our haunting by a past imagining of a different future clearly relate to the issues around memory raised in the replaying of digital recording through the consciousness of live performers that is typical of sound as orientation. There is work to be done on how such thought might inflect our understanding of presence in performance. Sound as orientation would seem to hint at another kind of performative actualisation similar to that found in possession where the performer is considered to be activated by a presence riding them rather than by their own being; a sense of performative actualisation which recognises that presence is always in dialogue with absence, that alongside the performer there is a ghost. Exploring these areas as part of further research would sharpen our

understanding both of sound as orientation and of Performance Studies articulation of performative agency.

In spite of being long neglected, sound is now drawing growing attention from both performance practitioners and scholars as a significant element in the performance montage. Artists taking sound as an orientation are reopening the circuits of formal, political and social engagement pursued by the historical Avant Garde. Commodity Capitalism will no doubt move to rehabilitate this resistant practice but for the moment the realm of sound as orientation offers an opportunity for resistant practice.

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Appendix

Documentation of *I was there...* can be found at

<https://mkultraperformance.wordpress.com/sound/>