

Foreword

Dear Readers,

The relation between sound and listening entails one of the most intriguing philosophical riddles: if a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to perceive it, does it still make a sound? The riddle is based on George Berkeley's (1685-1753) manuscript *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) and until now, no agreement on the answer has been reached. As people have debated the answer for over 300 years, it is definitely not the aim of this special issue of *Documenta, een tijdschrift voor theater* to solve this riddle. On the contrary – in one way or another, all contributors to this issue question the relationship between sound and listening. Their contributions originated in the context of the doctoral school *Sound & Listening on the edge of music, performance, film and new media*, a five-day platform that took place in May 2019.

With this doctoral school we aimed to gather doctoral researchers – both practice-based and academic – and artists, to share work and thoughts on sound and listening in the field of music, performance, film and media studies. We introduced the participants to a phenomenological perspective that enabled them to question and (re)think the functioning of sound and the possibilities of listening. During the week it was of the utmost importance to always start our adventure with a shared listening experience, in order to refrain from isolating sound as a side effect of the image but instead fully acknowledge its particular meaning-making potential in perception. In order to expand the phenomenological framework, we asked the participating scholars to focus on some key concepts that characterised their way of dealing with sound. In small workshops taking place in the afternoons, we tested the relation between different the keywords and diverse sonic situations. We dialogued about the implications of those key words for a phenomenological approach to sound and listening on the intersection between academia and the arts. We encouraged the participants to be both generous and greedy, stubborn and accommodating, while we facilitated a place to play, a situation to momentarily change our milieu and challenge our perspectives (Merleau-Ponty 136 & Ixxiv).

From thinking in and through sound and listening, new opportunities, questions and ideas arose for both academic and practice-based

research. In the aftermath of the doctoral school this special issue of *Documenta, tijdschrift voor theater* presents you some of those valuable insights and questions. Each contribution highlights how several aspects or key concepts addressed in the doctoral school resonate with that particular author's own field of research.

Musicologist and dancer Martine Huvenne (BE) opens this volume by introducing you to the phenomenological framework she presents to her students at KASK, School of Arts in Ghent. Currently, Huvenne teaches at the film department and coordinates the European Postgraduate in Arts in Sound (EPAS). The programme of the postgraduate training hands the students tools for approaching and investigating sound as an independent artistic discipline. During the doctoral school Martine shared that same phenomenological framework, one that she has been building for years, with our participants. Now it is your turn to familiarise yourself with this framework. In a combination of baselines derived from Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Shaun Gallagher and others, Huvenne subscribes to and stresses the importance of experience, perception and the body. She invites us to (re)think (about) how sound functions in our highly visual culture. The framework offers a first step to open up the ocularcentrism that dominates the domain of film. It functions as a tool to search for new possibilities to work and think in and through sound, not only doing so in the context of film, but also in the domain of performance, new media and music.

In *No time for caution*, scholar in performance studies Elizabeth Tack (BE) immediately takes up the challenge of Martine Huvenne and operationalises some of the phenomenological baselines in her analysis of Christopher Nolan's (1970) film *Interstellar* (2014). She decomposes the fragility of the music and reveals how through the embodiment of the listener, the diegetic use of sound functions as a question about the emotional state and involvement of the spectator on the one hand and functions as a permanent guidance in listening on the other hand.

Cognitive musicologists Bavo Van Kerrebroeck (BE), Mattia Rosso (IT) and Pieter-Jan Maes (BE) deal with the emotional state and involvement of the spectator and performer in a live context. From their cognitive perspective they question the perks and difficulties of the phenomenological framework for a systematic approach to

musical interactions. Based on their own research practice, they confront the quantitative or subjective values of phenomenological research with the quantitative or objective data gathering of embodied music cognition – and argue for a complementarity of both. After an elaborate theoretical outline, they briefly present four research projects (two supervised by Pieter-Jan Maes, and two research projects executed by Van Kerrebroeck and Rosso themselves). Based on the early stages of these projects they suggest that the complementarity between quantitative coordination patterns and subjectively felt qualities of musical interaction can enforce the impersonal mode embedded in perception (Merleau-Ponty 215).

As the editor of this special issue, it might appear strange to incorporate a contribution of my own. But as I was a full-time participant – with the same obligations, privileges and restrictions as the rest of the group – those five intensive days of thinking and exploring together with peers expanded my framework in such a way that I finally found the courage to explore the expression that the touch of sound is more than a metaphor. In the eponymous article, I confront my experience of the auditory choreography *Hear* with Merleau-Ponty's *phenomenology of perception*. In causing a confrontation with my own habit of perceiving, *Hear* helped me to reveal a resemblance between the erection of hairs on my arms and the reaction to sound in the inner ear. The generated insights stress the importance of my listening body and its functioning in the corporeality of a group of audience members and performers.

The contribution of photographer Krien Clevis (NL) deals with the question how researchers and artists think through media. As a photographer, Clevis' work has been embedded in the previously addressed ocularcentric dominance. But throughout the development of her artistic practice she started questioning that dominance. She became curious about starting a dialogue between her photographs, sound, geography and history. Recently she has started to ask herself questions such as: how can we think through image and sound? How do different media converse with one another? What could sound add to the genius loci of a photographer's artistic research? With a walk along the development of her own artistic research and especially a reflection on the works *Limbo* and *Footsteps of Piranesi* Clevis suggests that it is the knowledge of silence that creates and stimulates a profound listening to our genae loci.

Subsequently, sound artist Inge van den Kroonenberg (BE) gives us an insight into the discovery of such a knowledge of silence. In her writings she reflects on the mediation of sound, silence, time and place during the development of *Ce qui précède voir*. More precisely she describes and deconstructs the role of her own listening in this particular creative process. Inspired by sound artist and sound ecologist Hildegard Westerkamp, van den Kroonenberg defines her creative process as *soundwalking*: a creative practice in which listening equals a way of working that reveals the environment and generates a profound ability to notice (Westerkamp 2006) and to pay attention. Kroonenberg's contribution reveals how listening for *Ce qui précède voir* creates "a sense of inspiration, excitement and new energy" (Westerkamp).

The portfolio section of this issue provides you with tools for a creative listening practice to different media of your own. It aims to reveal the environment of the doctoral school or, put differently, the collage of contributions invites you to experience your own soundwalk on paper. It has been constructed as "an opportunity to let the world [of sound and listening] in, without any compulsion to respond" (Westerkamp). I hope it offers you a sonic sense of inspiration and excitement and enables you to "listen without expectations, assumptions or judgement" (Westerkamp).

The first guide on your listening adventure is photographer Krien Clevis. She invites you to listen to her photographic work *Limbo* and look at images from her artistic research for *Footsteps of Piranesi* and to think-through-media. With her contribution she thus asks you what you hear in-between image and sound. Can you hear the *genae loci* of the images? Does Clevis' knowledge of silence resonate in your own listening practice?

Thinking in-between sound and image is exactly what the second guide and independent radio maker Katharina Smets aims for with her podcast on the creation process of *Fotograf (2018)*. *Fotograf* is a documentary performance that Smets realised in collaboration with Inne Eysermans and Ingrid Leonard and deals with an unresolved story of Smets' grandmother, which was captured in over 100 photographs. During the creation process of this performance, Eysermans, Leonard and Smets travelled to places they recognised from the pictures. In this contribution, Smets reflects on that adven-

ture. Scan the QR-code and listen to Katharina retelling the story of a quest for sonic places of memory.

Your soundwalk on paper continues with multimedia artist Anouk De Clercq and her dialogue with the medium of film. In her contribution she gives you the opportunity to discover what possibly hides behind the visual aspects of a film. With *Black*, she has developed a film on paper. In this imaginary trip in darkness she confronts you with a written voice-over on a recurring black screen. How will you deal with this paradox of a full but empty darkness and a voice-over that speaks in silence? How do you open up your listening towards the ambiguous relation between what you see and hear?

In *Listening out for the ambiguity of reliable things*, sound artist and philosopher Salome Voegelin presents the reader with the score of the lecture performance that she staged during *Sound & Listening on the edge of music, performance, film and new media*. She continues the challenge to explore the appearance of ambiguity between the visual and the audible. While reading you can re-experience and even re-perform her lecture.

Your soundwalk on paper ends with a contribution by sound artist Anna Raimondo. She hopes that at the end of this portfolio you will be ready to negotiate your own listening. In *Towards gendered listening*, Raimondo provides you with tools and questions to have a closer look at your own open, widened or newly discovered listening practice. Put yourself out there and play.

I am happy to close this portfolio by offering you the closing words I read on the last day of our doctoral school.

As an appendix to this special issue, Steff Nellis wrote a review on *Luisterrijk der letteren. Hoorspel en literatuur in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, a new book edited by participant Siebe Bluijs and his colleague Lars Bernaerts.

I hope you discover the joy of listening through reading.

Leonie Persyn
Guest editor

Works cited

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