

The touch of sound, more than a metaphor: The inscription of the listening body in the corporeality of a group

-- Leonie Persyn --

About a year ago, someone told me: "Don't forget that the touch of sound is more than a metaphor." The sentence stuck in my mind for over a year and triggered several questions. What is the touch of sound exactly? Why do we use it as a metaphor? The answer to those questions definitely is not an obvious one. Each time one of these questions crossed my mind over the last year, I remembered one particular moment during *Hear* (2016), an auditory choreography by Benjamin Vandewalle and Yoann Durant, where I got goose bumps all over my body. In this article I want to track down what happened exactly during that moment of piloerection: the appearance of goose bumps, the erection of small hairs, by stretching the metaphor to a corporeal experience and endowing it with a phenomenological touch.

Introduction

With their auditory choreography Vandewalle and Durant explored the materiality of sound and its trajectory between, against and through different bodies (Caravan Production, 2016). Hear was performed by a different group of volunteers each performance, who stood in the midst of a blindfolded audience. Being blindfolded in advance of a performance does not correspond to any regular audience practice, but in the context of Hear it proved to be a necessary condition to experience the materiality of sound and to inscribe the body in the corporeality of a group, which consisted of performers and audience members. With the help of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of perception* (1945; 2014) and through an investigation of that particular moment of piloerection, I will trace the inscription of my own listening body in the performative context of Hear.

In the first section of this article I take a look at the uncommon practice of blindfolding and how it interferes with what Merleau-Ponty would identify as habits of perception. The observation of those interrupted habits brings me closer to my listening body and will help to clarify how I position myself in a situation of discomfort, through listening. These are necessary and preparatory steps to diving deeper into the functioning of piloerection and its importance for the inscription of my listening body. The complexity embedded in those diminutive seconds of experiencing goose bumps do not only require the description of my experience and the artistic choices in the performance Hear, but also demand a methodological framework on the edge of phenomenology, philosophy and neurobiology. In order to formulate some answers to the touch of sound I mainly draw from Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of perception* (1945; 2014), Mark Patterson's *The senses of touch. Haptic, affects and technologies* (2007) and Matthew Hertenstein's *The handbook of touch* (2011). This interdisciplinary framework enables me to reveal a resemblance between the erection of hairs on my arms and the reaction to sound in my inner ear.

After this, I repeat my description of the same moment in my experience of Hear, but focus on the influence of what happens on my perception and functioning as part of a group of audience members in the midst of sounding performers. This variation makes it possible to link the moment of piloerection to the ability of grooving

together and results in a conclusion about the importance of what Merleau-Ponty would call 'a perpetual contribution of my subject's corporeality' (265) to the context of *Hear*.

Away from my habit of perceiving

17 April, 2018. Tonight is the performance of *Hear* in a chapel nearby STUK: House for dance, image and sound in Leuven. It is a sunny Spring evening and together with fellow audience members – whom I have never met before - I am waiting outside in the front garden of the chapel. After waiting for about fifteen minutes choreographer Benjamin Vandewalle briefly introduces us to the piece. He explains how each of us will be blindfolded and guided inside the performance space shortly after. And so, it happens

Once I receive the blindfold, I hesitate, just like the people around me. Nervous laughs and giggles fill the front garden. I put on the blindfold. Although it feels soft, it also feels uncomfortable, due to the slight pressure on my eyes. I close my eyes, which makes me feel a bit more relieved. I hear the festival that is going on in the park behind me, bicycles passing by, birds singing, footsteps approaching and fading.

My listening sharpens. My attention increases and shifts. I no longer focus on what is happening in front of me, but rather listen sideways and to the activities behind my back. Due to this shift in attention my body seems to fall backwards once in a while. Since I have put on the blindfold I constantly have to negotiate my centre of gravity. Slowly it becomes more silent around me, an auditive sign that many of the fellow audience members have already been guided inside. I wait and listen, but I can't hear if someone is approaching me. Out of the blue I feel how someone puts a hand on my shoulder and gently takes my hand. My guide has arrived. The guide leads me towards the performance space, the mild movements that are transferred to my hand indicating in which direction to proceed. We walk slowly. The atmosphere changes as soon as we enter the performance space: the temperature drops, and a rustling sound fills the entire space. My right hand is placed on a chair; I have arrived at my seat. Once I sit down, I start to listen more carefully. The rustling sound locates itself on the left side of my body. It sounds rich. The density

of the rustling opens up and closes. It is constantly transforming, like a swarm moving through the air. I think to myself: “I am ready.” But actually, I still feel quite uncomfortable and I don’t know if I am ready at all.

These first moments of *Hear* clearly do not correspond to a regular theatre routine. The blindfold especially obliges me to breach with my habit of perceiving. First and foremost because it violently eliminates my sense of sight. The blindfold ascertains the anonymity of my perceptions. Even more than when I do see, my perceptions are “presented to me as anonymous” (Merleau-Ponty 223). I am no longer able to locate my own perceptions precisely because I cannot visually indicate their source. As soon as I am blindfolded, my ears constantly switch between different sounds. Each time their suddenness surprises me, as these sounds must have been there already before I was blindfolded. The obstruction of my sight and the suddenness of the sound ‘offer my ears with an [increased] anticipation of sensation’ (219). It is exactly in this anticipation that my raised attention takes root. It makes me cautious for what is happening behind me and underwrites my inability to respond to the suddenness of the sounds approaching me. The fact that I constantly have to negotiate with my centre of gravity thus originates from the obstruction of my visual perception habits, caused by the blindfold. The shift in dominance from seeing to hearing makes me address my sense of balance and confirms Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s predicate that “hearing communicates with other senses” (239), because it confronts me with things and people that sound. The confrontation with the other(s) reinforces the production of a certain solitude I experience while waiting for my guide to arrive. According to Merleau-Ponty, solitude and communication are inseparable from each other and always define two moments of the same phenomenon (376).

At this moment I yet know what that phenomenon is, but my presumption that the solitude I experience stems from the loss of sight, is confirmed. The blindfold enforces me to re-habituate, to adjust my habit of perception. Habit then has to be understood in the way Merleau-Ponty defines it in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945; 2014):

Habit expresses the power we have of dilating our being in the world or of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments.(144)

Re-habituating to a blindfolded way of perceiving in *Hear* demands a removal from my visual being in the world and asks for the incorporation of new instruments in my perception. I need to explore the senses, which are normally dominated by my sense of vision, and I need to explore different possibilities to combine and rebalance the experiences acquired by my ears, my noise and my sense of touch and balance. I have to address all parts of my body and make “[my intentions and gestures] participate in the voluminosity of my own body” (Merleau-Ponty: 144). Only when I do so, I will ‘allow’ my body to re-habituate to another way of perceiving and “to be penetrated by a new signification” (148). This was the thing I wasn’t sure about, once I was seated on my chair. How could I open up my body and allow for a confrontation with new significations? Is it what happens when I sharpen my listening?

To formulate an answer to these questions, in the next section, I will recall how the blindfold imposes the anticipation of non-visual sensations. According to Merleau-Ponty, these are exactly those anticipated and anonymous sensations that will reveal a new existential rhythm through which I can relate myself to another (way) being (in the world) (221).

A situation for my listening body

In order to analyse my listening, I need to be able to step back into my experience of attending *Hear* on 17 April. In an effort of retracing my experience and situating my listening body, I materialised my experience of *Hear* in a paper scale model. This model helps me to situate, re-experience and analyse my listening within the performative situation of *Hear*. The scale model combines sounds, spaces, trajectories, positions, forms and specific moments of the performance.



Figure 1: Scale-Model: materialisation of my listening experience.
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Figure 2: Bird's perspective on the Scale Model: materialisation of my listening experience indicating where I was (a.), where I thought I was (b.) and the rustling sound which filled the room in the beginning (c.) of the performance.
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Now back to 17 April. So there I am, sitting on a chair somewhere in the chapel (a/b. in Fig. 2) while trying to anticipate the upcoming sensations. The only thing I can do is focus on what I hear. The rustling sound (c. in Fig. 2) goes on for a while and starts moving. It comes closer and spreads out. I calm down. The movement carries me around for a while and then fades into softer textures, which are situated closer to the ground (d. in Fig 2). Their softness feels close to my body. I even bend my head towards the ground a bit, left or right ear down, depending on where the sound is coming from. During this sequence the same sound travels between the audience members. It constantly shifts between near and distant. The near feels very close and almost graspable. While when I perceive a sound as distant, I fail to distinguish its location.

Suddenly a new sound occurs (e. in Fig 2), and it is immediately followed by a second and different sound (f. in Fig 2). I am hearing two different sounds simultaneously now. Their tempo and rhythm increases, while the soft and smooth undertone of the rustling sound disappears. Each time one of the new sounds appears, it demands my attention. Although each time the sounds seem to come from somewhere else, they mostly remain at ear level. Once in a while they sound together and generate a certain density. In the midst of such a moment of density, I am surprised by a short popping sound (g. in Fig 2). It multiplies and spreads around the room. I recognise the spatialisation and development of this sound, it reminds me of the moment when you notice it has started raining. The popping sounds playful. I smile.

More sounds enter my hearing. Some are new and unfamiliar to my listening experience. Others I recognise from earlier on. My auditive experience becomes more layered and I stop questioning where I am. I perceive a high-pitched whistle, a sound completely different from all the ones before. Its discrepancy, compared to the sound before, demands my focus. For the first time the sound travels higher than my ear level. My spine elongates and I almost spread my arms wide open. It feels as if someone lifts the roof from the chapel's walls and when the whistling sound starts to slowly turn, I even imagine the walls opening up, away from each other. I can almost smell grass. I see blue and green. The space I experience expands in several directions.

The whistle catches my ear, “I deliver over [...] my entire body, to this manner [...] of filling a space named blue or red” (Merleau-Ponty 219). For Merleau-Ponty such envisioning of a sound equals the experience of a (new) modality of existence (243). The moment I see blue and green during *Hear* and experience the expansion of the performance space, my body allows for and synchronises with that new modality. According to Merleau-Ponty, “I echo the vibration of the sound with my entire sensory being” (243). The ‘virtual movement’ of the walls, the ceiling, my spine and arms thus reveals itself as the “foundation of the unity of my senses” (Merleau-Ponty 243). The whole voluminosity of my body is involved: my mind, spine and arms “are addressed and escape from anonymity” (Merleau-Ponty 111). I can finally re-habituate. For the first time I am completely free from my visually dominated being. I feel at ease in my new (and blindfolded) habit of perception. My body opens up. Now I am ready to listen. By stepping out of anonymity my non-visual senses make themselves ready to be penetrated by new significations. In this acknowledgement of its voluminosity my body “appears as a power for action within the frame of its own anatomical apparatus” (Merleau-Ponty 111). This appearance of my listening body originates in and through a strange tension between different time dimensions: the virtual movement my body produces, is a movement through which “my body ties a present, a past and a future together” (Merleau-Ponty 277). It is the moment in which my body rebalances my sense of vision, sound, smell, touch and balance. The virtual movement signalises the transcendence of my body and indicates when *Hear* transforms into a situation (Merleau-Ponty 173) that I can cope with. The tensions between vision and the other senses, between what was, what is and what will happen is a necessary condition to persist in the situation.

More concretely, to persist implies that my sensations are intentional (Merleau-Ponty 221) and that I not only remain open for new significations penetrating my body, but also that I familiarise myself with those significations (Merleau-Ponty 221). I listen to the existential rhythm my sensations propose (221) and that are characterised by various intentional arcs between tension and release. Or, in other words, the intentional arcs help me to situate myself both within the relationships between my senses and within their relationships with intelligence, sensitivity and motricity (Merleau-Ponty 137). Due to my bodily sensations, I perceptually engage in the situation.

The intentional arcs of the proposed existential rhythm generate contemporaries, which ensures that my perception offers me a field of present. The field of present offered in *Hear* ties in with the dimensions of both the here and there and the past, present and future (Merleau-Ponty 277). A re-habituated perception thus expands my field of presence and gives me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the milieu projected around me and creates the possibility to change my position. It compels me to 'take up the situation' (Merleau-Ponty 270) to tacitly sense the motives and organisation of *Hear* as a (choreographed) situation for my listening body.

My listening body and its moment of piloerection

Now that I am engaged in the situation and I start to listen, sounds triggering my imagination, I (virtually) move. The whistling goes on for a while and I enjoy each subtlety of my listening experience. It feels as if due to my willingness and the opening up of my body, the moment of whistling expands in time. I experience a suspended moment of release.

Strangely enough I do not notice when the whistling stops. It fades out and only after a while I notice it isn't there anymore. Similar sound textures to those at the beginning of the performance fill the room. They sound fuller, richer, clearer and closer to my body. The sounds seem to move around more. They travel through space and around my body.

Suddenly I hear people in the distance in front of me. A lot of them. They are screaming, or no, wait, they are laughing. Or are they just talking? They come closer, they accelerate, and the volume of their voice becomes louder. A crescendo. The sounds pass (h in Fig. 2). I listen and embody their movement. Piloerection occurs: the hairs on my arms erect. A short shiver descends down my spine. I am confused and focus on the diminuendo of the voices. The next thing I really listen to are low men's voices singing.

Piloerection is the erection of small hairs on the body that occurs due to short, mostly unexpected and uncontrollable contractions of the small muscles at the base of our hair follicles, according to Merriam-Webster (2020). Piloerection emphasises my body as my

“general instrument of understanding” (Merleau-Ponty 244), it actualises the texture of my skin as a phenomenon of expression and shows how passive touch presents the state of my own body (328). According to the article “Sensory Processes of Touch” written by neuroscientists Aislyn M. Nelson and Ellen A. Lumkin in the *Handbook of Touch* (2011): “Light [or passive] touch is a perceptual combination of pressure, vibration, stretch and hair movements” (36). Nelson and Lumkin distinguish three steps at the basis of touch transduction and describe what happens from the moment in which forces “impinge upon touch-sensitive cells in the skin” (38). This impingement starts the transmission of sensory information to the brain through “the opening of mechanotransduction channels” (38) and the depolarisation of cells by electric signals (38). This particular process of passive touch is situated mainly in our largest organ, the skin (3), but also occurs in other organs, for example in the hair cells in our inner ear. The erection and movement of the hair cells in the inner ear are at the basis of our hearing apparatus. A closer look at the functioning of the hair cells will establish the importance of touch for listening. The hair cells are located in the stala media – in between the tectonial and the basial membrane - of the organ of cortic (Fuchs 214). Due to the vibration and pressure of the surrounding membranes, the hair cells start to move and the mechanically gated channels open (Fuchs 217; “Organ of Corti”). This enables K⁺ ions to enter the hair cells, which in turn opens the calcium channels and enables the entered calcium to trigger the neurotransmitters. Last but not least signals are sent through the nerves toward the brain (Fuchs 217; Organ of Corti). Only through this transduction of touch in the inner ear, I am able to hear.

This similarity between piloerection and the hair cells in the inner ear is particularly interesting in the context of *Hear*. It demonstrates my being in the world and indicates that piloerection becomes a form of embodied cognition. It occurs when I “experience the accord between what I aim at and what is given, between intention and realization” (Merleau-Ponty 146). During the moment of piloerection the sound effectively touches me, it shows as a sonic phenomenon that “encounters an echo in me” (330). In other words, at the moment of piloerection, “I echo the vibration of the sound with my entire sensory being” (243). The sounds transfer the movements of the performers into the virtual movements in my experience. These virtual movements lie at the basis of my unity of senses, which in

turn facilitates the accord between my intention and the realisation of the movements. The appearance of the accord between intention and realisation indicates that, at the moment of piloerection, touch is more than a physical contact with the skin.

In his book *The senses of Touch* (2007), Mark Paterson distinguishes three main modalities that intertwine within touch: proprioception, a kinaesthetic and a vestibular mode (4-6). These modes open up “the manifold of touch” (1) because in the moment of touch, my perception situates my body in space (proprioception mode), generates a sensation of (virtual) movement by activating the smallest muscles of the hair cells (kinaesthetic mode), and enables my body to obtain information about balance, acceleration and deceleration (vestibular mode) (Paterson ix). In the context of my listening experience of *Hear*, Paterson’s concept of the manifold of touch discloses how – during listening – body parts do not just function in parallel and simultaneously to each other, but instead “envelop each other” (Merleau-Ponty 100). Due to the manifold of touch, the moment of piloerection is characterised both as “active movement and passive receptivity” (Paterson 30). It situates my body on “the spectrum between sensing and being sensed” (31), between proximity and distance.

In the piloerection, “the invisible corporal genesis of (the voluminosity of) my listening body becomes visible” (Louppe 73). This characterisation of piloerection is based on French dance philosopher Laurence Louppe’s definition of a gesture. For her a gesture “carries the full intensity of the whole body” (73). The characterisation of piloerection as a gesture clarifies my confusion after the moment of piloerection, because as Merleau-Ponty suggests: “the gesture is in front of me like a question, it indicates to me specific sensible points in the world and invites me to join in there” (191). The fact that the confusion did not really bother me means that I accept the invitation, that I “plunge into the presence of [my body’s] materiality” (Voegelin 101). I no longer simply hear, but I listen, which means I “do not deduce and synthesize knowledge from what is given but create a sensuous understanding” (Voegelin 61) of the full intensity of my situated body. Through my listening I understand the sense of piloerection. It is exactly in my listening that the proposed existential rhythm of the gesture and the sensible coincide (Merleau-Ponty 192, 221). This rhythmic coincidence makes my listening groove, because I “feel the coherence of various rhythmic elements” (Roholt 4).

Whom am I grooving with? The corporeality of a listening group

According to philosopher Tiger C. Roholt groove indicates a shared sense of buoyancy between engaged listeners (113). I am not sure if I share something the moment my listening grooves, but despite this uncertainty I endorse sound artist and philosopher Salome Voegelin's claim that "listening is never separate from the social relationships that build the fleeting circumstance of hearing" (1). This means that the social relationships within the performative context of *Hear* encourage my listening and that at the moment of piloerection, during the brief accord, I hear myself within the social context defined by a group of performers and audience members. While listening I am part of a "tangible and substantial cultural experience" (Leigh Foster x), I consider my bodily reality as part of the corporeality of a group. With this reading of my listening I acknowledge that my body gesticulates and at the same time insinuates "mobility and articulability" (Leigh Foster x) within a group. Consequently my listening defines piloerection as a gesture and confirms how it "carries the full intensity of my body" (Louppe 73) But it also expands piloerection toward the geste as "an utterance situating the gesture in the evolution of the human community" (Louppe 73). In the context of *Hear* this human community exists of performers and audience members. Both actively influence and activate my listening space and experience. But how did this human community evolve during my listening experience? Let's go back to the very beginning of *Hear* in front of the chapel.

I am attending the performance on my own. I did not bring a friend and except for the people performing I don't know anybody in the front garden of the chapel. The audience is scattered around, but for one reason or another we all stay close to the fence, as far as possible from the chapel. Some of the audience members talk and most of us enjoy the last sun. In front of me is a professor with his students. By eavesdropping I can understand that they are law students. It surprises me. The atmosphere amongst the audience is soft and full of expectation. The moment choreographer Benjamin Vandewalle speaks up, everyone in the front garden abruptly stops his conversation and concentrates. As he continues and explains how each of us will receive a blindfold (s)he is supposed to wear a little fuss arises and spreads around. Excitement and discomfort seem to clash, but eventually we all put on the blindfold.

Once blindfolded I can hear the others around me, I hear clothes rubbing against each other, a cough, a sneeze, a laugh, ... All those sounds help me to not give in to the temptation of removing the blindfold. It is as if the others through those sounds are saying: you are not alone in this situation and we feel as uncomfortable as you do. I hear how one by one my fellow audience members are guided inside the performance space. Out of the blue someone gently puts a hand on my shoulder. Although I am surprised by it, I am also relieved. There we go, I think. I know because of the explanation from a few minutes earlier that I am accompanied by one of the performers. The relief offered comes from someone I did not see before, a performer. I still feel uncomfortable, but I easily undergo the guidance.

As soon as I am guided inside, I sense the shelter of a roof and walls around me. What I hear changes. There are no birds anymore and the music of the festival that is going on in the park decreases in volume. But I hear a rustling sound filling up the space. I sense that a lot of people are present in this room, more than only those I waited with. I can't pin down how many we are occupying the space and I feel overwhelmed. Due to these changes my uncomfortable feeling peaks and I focus on my breathing. Something I always do when a space feels (too) crowded. I am not part of a particular group anymore, I feel as in a state of transition, in between two groups: the audience member I shared my waiting with and the performers I did not encounter before the show.

The auditory choreography evolves, and sounds spread out in space, they generate air and room. I relax little by little and gain comfort in the situation. I feel movement around me. My neighbour coughs. I am disturbed, it sounds close, closer than I expected. For a second I lose my attention, I shuffle around on my chair in an effort to distance myself from the cough and regain my attention and comfort. The cough raises my awareness of the performative situation, which I temporarily had forgotten.

New sounds come in, it takes a while but again I forget where I am and with whom. Despite or maybe even as a result of my ignorance I am totally at ease. I am completely absorbed by my listening. At that moment the piloerection arises. I smile. I sense my own listening and my bodily engagement in that listening. I am no longer absorbed or lost. In the moment of piloerection, I sense how others are nearby

as if the hairs on my arms are antennae that explore the space for others listening simultaneously. There is no longer a disruption between the ones I shared my waiting with and the performers I didn't encounter in front of the chapel. We seem to engage in listening, and I feel as if we start to listen as one group.

After the singing voices, I hear the sound of someone detaching a blindfold. I wait. A performer takes off my blindfold. I am not seated where I thought I was. I have to adjust to the visual confrontation with all those people. I look to my right. The man next to me says something about the performance, I can't respond with words, I just nod my head and smile. Once every one of the audience members is released from the blindfold the last performers disappear. It remains silent for a while, before the applause hits in. It feels strange to applaud, it doesn't feel as the appropriate sound quality. Performers enter the performance space and disseminate in between the audience. The audience applauds. We no longer listen together, the group dissolves again in performers and audience members. Immediately after the applause my neighbour utters: "they were more than I expected." I remain seated for a little bit longer.

The cough of my neighbour equals the most striking moment in this evolution of a community within the performative context of *Hear*. Something happens there: I become highly aware of the performativity of the situation and of my listening. The sound of the cough and its proximity confirms the presence of other bodies. The fact that I can hear how my neighbour tries to hold and stifle the cough confronts me with the intentions and consciousness of those other bodies. In his *phenomenology of perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes that such "a confirmation of a foreign consciousness in front of my own [...] immediately turns my experience into a private spectacle" (360). My neighbour's cough "shatters the confidence I enjoyed in the solitude" (369) of my listening. The moment of the cough reveals how "solitude and communication must be two moments of the same phenomenon" (376) and confront me with the fact that "every perception is a communication or a communion" (334). It confirms the other's presence and existence and gives me a glimpse of the other's intention. Before the coming into awareness, the social aspect of my listening "existed silently and as a solicitation" (379) to tune in. I can only recognise the solicitation as such and tune in when I allow my body to respond to the solicitation. In

the case of the cough I don't tune in, on the contrary I shift my attention to the sounds produced by the performers. Although I don't tune in to the cough, I can't cease to be situated in relation to it. I change my position; I refocus my attention on the sound produced by the performers. I tacitly sense how the performers, too, have to re-organise after the cough and suddenly I realise they are obliged to listen in order to sound.

But when do I tune in to the sounding and listening of the others present in the performance space? In order to answer that question, I have to take into account Merleau-Ponty's remark that "our relation to the social [...] is deeper than every explicit perception" (379). In the context of *Hear* this means that there has to be more at stake than for example the explicit perception of my neighbour's cough or the most surprising and catchy sounds produced by the performers, before I tune in. From the start to the finish of my experience, I am related to the social context of *Hear*. Even when I do not explicitly perceive the other, we all (performers and audience members) co-exist. Our coexistence remains implicit.

During the moment of piloerection, I encounter an echo of the sonic vibrations in my sensory being. These vibrations are produced by the movements of the performers. Their qualities are not only defined by the form, scale and materiality of the space but also by the listening, presence and position of each performer and audience member. According to architect and philosopher Brandon Labelle the echo makes the reverberating presence of sound "material and dimensional" (7). This implies that the reverberating presence of the sounds in *Hear* reflect and rebound the sounds produced by the bodies of my fellow audience members and the performers. Or in short: The others become present through the materialisation of their sounds in the echo. Through this echo my fellow audience members and the performers become proximate. In the moment of piloerection, I echolocate the others and situate them close to me. For a short moment of time we closely and implicitly coexist in the same situation. The (moment of) piloerection thus characterises as instantaneous: a point of ending and beginning at the same time (462). Piloerection is the moment in which the temporal dimensions of past, present and future touch upon and intertwine with the spatial dimension here and there. It is the moment in which my listening space and the listening space of the others, both performers and

audience members, envelop each other. It is the moment in which we tune in and in which our listening starts to groove. The moment of piloerection is then and there where we put ourselves at play, where we “amuse ourselves in (inter)changing our milieu(s)” (Merleau-Ponty 136). Due to the fact that piloerection is instantaneous – it almost simultaneously appears and disappears – to put myself at play implies that I constantly have to start over again. In order to groove I have to perpetually contribute and communicate with the world in a corporeal way (265). Because only when I allow the corporeality of the group to “speak to the reciprocity of my body” (Durham 4), I fully acknowledge my body as an interface between the representation of audience members, performers, and the materiality of my own listening. Only then can I tune in and experience how my listening grooves along with the listening of performers and audience members. The moment I tune in, I inscribe my fully acknowledged listening body into the corporeality of the group that comprises the social context of *Hear*.

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