

After Silence: Improvised Music, Listening and Environmental Sound

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Abstract

This research concerns the practice of Improvised Music. It was originally prompted by a musical episode that took place in 2007 whilst I was involved in a dance and music festival, organised in Turkey by French choreographer, Yanaël Plumet. During that time in Istanbul, I participated with other musicians in a workshop about Improvised Music called ‘sound exploration’, led by the musician, Pascal Battus. By finding new playing techniques and preparing our musical instruments in different ways, we tried to remove our musical habits to discover new sonic materials. However, what I remember most is not the new sounds that we found, but rather a particular moment during an improvisation where we all stopped playing our instruments for a long period while carrying on listening as if the music had still continued. In silence, the unrelated sounds from the birds, an object falling onto the floor, the call for prayer from a minaret, my breathing, and ships’ horns from the Bosphorus suddenly came to the forefront.

To understand this experience — focusing particularly on the relationship between silence, listening, environmental sound, and Improvised Music — I have devised a method inspired by structuralism which consists of scrutinising my work over a ten-year period where I enquire about early practitioners interested in creative practices of listening and Improvised Music, and finally, create experiments to test out new practice. Through interviews, listening to other practitioners’ work, and observing and reflecting on my own practice, this research makes a contribution by acknowledging possible patterns, ideologies, or structures at work within my practice and within my field.

The research shows first that focusing on listening from a critical perspective (‘what if the ears I have and carry everywhere with me were older than I am?’ (Szendy 2008, 26) situates the layers of knowledge embedded in the practice that might define (or at least influence) certain choices when improvising. The research relativises the importance of ‘new sounds’ that, rather than overcome old ones, depend on them through archival devices and examines how awareness towards environmental sound in my practice was informed by different sources related to Improvised Music, but also to acoustic ecology,

musique concrète, and ‘deep listening’. Finally, this research suggests that if listening is the result of a combination of ‘ears’ — and the more this structure or composition will remain inclusive, flexible and unsettled as an improvisation — the more it will be possible to broaden the scope of listening awareness.

Declaration

I hereby declare:

- a. I have composed this thesis.
- b. The work is my own.
- c. The thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award.

Signed

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Introduction

My research concerns the practice of Improvised Music. I interrogate musical experience through the notion of silence and a methodology informed by creative and critical listening practices. This research was originally prompted by a musical episode that took place in 2007 whilst I was involved in a dance and music festival, organised in Turkey by French choreographer, Yanaël Plumet. During that time in Istanbul, I participated with other musicians in a workshop about Improvised Music called ‘sound exploration’, led by the musician, Pascal Battus¹. By finding new playing techniques and preparing our musical instruments in different ways, we tried to remove our musical habits to discover new sonic materials. I can recall the violinist Denitsa Mineva introducing pieces of foil between her strings, Sébastien Branche placing objects inside the bell of his saxophone, the drummer Florent Merlet hitting whatever he could find with his sticks, and Pascal Battus himself creating sounds by pulling a saz² delicately across the floor. However, what I remember most is not the new sounds that we found, but a particular moment during an improvisation where we all stopped playing our instruments for a long period of time while carrying on listening as if the music had still continued. In silence, the unrelated sounds from the birds, an object falling onto the floor, the call for prayer from a minaret, my breathing and ships’ horns from the Bosphorus, suddenly came to the forefront.

At first, I perceived this silence as the misunderstanding of a musical convention. Had the music concluded? Was there someone still playing that I could not hear? However, after a while the tension of not knowing or the feeling of doing something wrong disappeared and I asked myself: ‘what musical convention could be misunderstood within a musical improvisation or what role could be incorrectly played if there were no established rules about what one should be doing?’ With the silence continuing, I stopped thinking and listened to this strange harmony of unrelated sounds.

¹ This workshop took place during the Transit Istanbul Festival 2007 directed by Yanaël Plumet.

² A saz is a stringed musical instrument commonly used in Turkey similar to a Western lute or a Middle-Eastern oud but with a much longer neck.

Around the time I was playing in Istanbul, I interrupted a PhD in art history³ to dedicate myself more exclusively to music. A few years later, thanks to a scholarship, I had the opportunity to travel to London to resume academic research but this time in a university that offered the possibility to do practice-based research related to my own work.

Conducting research on art as an art historian differs from developing research as an artist on his or her own work. In the former, a distance intrinsically exists between the object of study and the researcher, which allows a space for reflection. As such, the beginning of my research was rather unstructured because I did not establish a distance from my practice that allowed space for reflection.

One of the main events of this research was prompted by my disappointment with the differences between the sounds I was recording and those I was playing on my musical instrument⁴. I later discovered that what I was trying to play was already somehow ‘recorded’ somewhere in my body, my mind, or in my memories. This episode showed me that I should first spell out my practice before thinking about it or creating a new one — almost like in a Foucaultian confession — to trace back the origins of what I was doing and thinking.

Experiences from past practice, identified in my work — and studies concerning early practitioners in my field — constitutes the first body of the research. The new work added (practice I and II), that tests out different approaches, constitutes the second one. The thesis reflects on these two bodies of research.

³ At University Paris 1 Sorbonne.

⁴ See page 135.

0.1 Research Question

What is the relationship between musical improvisation and environmental sounds? Are sounds made during an improvisation necessarily ‘new’? And what is an ‘external’ or environmental sound? Could these environmental sounds be considered as part of a musical experience or are they perceived as musical only inside the mind of the performer?

If the listening experience I had in Istanbul was an outcome of our previous musical improvisation, would this musical practice be able to expand one’s awareness towards environmental sounds? Would silence, therefore, be what enabled a listening experience that could be considered as a part of the improvisation itself? Or is silence actually a ‘gap’, a ‘cesura’ that indicates the fact that these two moments — the musical improvisation and the listening to environmental sounds — are two very distinct activities? Finally, would it be possible to improvise with a musical instrument — as in free improvisation — and (at the same time) to listen to environmental sounds, as in creative listening practices?

These questions aim to expand understanding about musical improvisation by using knowledge and practice developed amongst practitioners who focus their work on creative and critical practices of listening.

0.2 Methodology

To address this research question and understand similarities and differences between my listening experience in Istanbul and my practice of Improvised Music, I adopt a structuralist approach. This methodology attempts firstly to question if my listening approach as a musical improviser responds to certain rules and belongs to a certain system of practices. Secondly, I study other listening approaches that I define below as creative or critical, and thirdly, I look at possible interactions between my approach as an

improviser and listening approaches that I have studied to establish how Improvised Music practice can be informed by creative and critical listening approaches.

I investigate here in what circumstances the listening situation I experienced in Istanbul (i.e. being able to listen to a continuum of environmental sounds that sounded like an improvisation) would happen. As part of this research, it is my intention to deconstruct my experience in Istanbul to find out what the ‘ingredients’ or ‘elements’ are that made it possible. I also try to understand the system of thought behind Improvised Music and creative listening practices that might have informed my experience in Istanbul.

If components that are found can be identified as part of a particular Improvised Music or creative listening practice ‘formula’, then I could establish if the listening experience I had in Istanbul was part of my Improvised Music practice or if it was actually part of a different kind of activity. If these two approaches belong to two different systems of thought (Improvised Music on the one hand and creative listening practices on the other), this research would then focus on their possible interactions. This method might enable me to find out if it is possible to build (or if already exists) a system that includes these two possible approaches.

Contextual research helps to understand the possible different ‘structures’ involved in this enquiry. First, I question if there is a common agenda among improvisers or certain common features that might help one to identify or to grasp what this musical practice is made of. In order to gather information about Improvised Music and other practitioners’ work in that field, I have attended musician’s performances, interviewed musicians (semi-structured interviews), read available literature about their work (academic articles and books when they exist, but also internet interviews, magazine reviews and archive material), listened to their recordings, and in some cases, played alongside them.

Secondly, I am looking at practitioners I was aware of at the beginning of my research who could have contributed to shaping my listening experience in Istanbul with environmental sounds. Indeed, at that time I was, for instance, aware of the work of composer John Cage and had read and been interested in the work of R. Murray Schafer

and Pierre Schaeffer. This research considers whether my listening experience in Istanbul was exclusively informed by these practitioners or if it was the result of a possible third approach involving both Improvised Music and creative listening approaches.

This practice consists of my own work specifically designed for this research, but it also takes into account other works relevant to the research's concerns. Part of the practical experiments I have designed are performed by myself during solo performances, and some include other practitioners. Many of the performances are public so as to take advantage of audience feedback collected during informal exchanges and semi-structured interviews after the performances.

This experimental practice also tests out an Improvised Music approach informed by creative listening practices while taking into account knowledge obtained by my listening experiences. This practice tries to identify and reproduce the continuum of environmental sounds that I experienced in Istanbul. To do this, I draw attention to similar experiences that might take place around me and through other people. I also develop a listening practice to precisely understand if this experience in Istanbul was indeed related to the practice developed by creative listening practitioners.

The contextual research develops in three parts. Firstly, I draw on early research focusing on works and references I was already aware of in Istanbul. This includes the works of AMM, Derek Bailey, R. Murray Schafer, and Pierre Schaeffer. In the second part, I draw on the work of practitioners I was less familiar with at that time, such as the Berlin Reductionists, Radu Malfatti, and Onkyo. The contextual review of the third part includes the work developed by American composer Pauline Oliveros that I was also less familiar with when I started my research. This work is important for this research, as in addition to Oliveros interest in listening, she also focused her work on improvisation. The practice sections of this research are also developed in three parts. The first one concerns the practice I did prior to this research. The second one describes and analyses the practice I did when I started this research. The rest of this section concerns more recent work.

At the end of this research, I establish the nature of my experience in Istanbul. This part aims to re-evaluate questions regarding two different systems of thought and whether it would be possible to reunite them.

0.3 Key terms

Improvisation

One common definition of improvisation indicates that this is a musical practice not relying on any sort of score. This definition is problematic as it supposes that scores are always clearly identifiable, which is not always the case. For instance, in written music there exists not only a score to play the music, but also a score of the score (Obrist 2013, 62) that offers useful, but unwritten, information for playing the music.

A second definition is the one that is proposed by guitarist and improviser Derek Bailey. In his book about improvisation, Bailey defines free improvisation as a non-idiomatic musical practice. Without saying exactly what free improvisation is (for Bailey each practitioner of this music can be considered as a definition of what this music is), the author strongly relies on the differences between idiomatic music improvisation practice such as jazz, baroque music and flamenco⁵ and what he calls free improvisation that is presented as a *sui generis* activity⁶. Bailey situates his first experience in free

⁵ Composer and improviser Pauline Oliveros calls this approach, ‘historical improvisation’ (2010, 48). Bailey’s non-idiomatic approach largely detached — according to the guitarist — from time and space, evokes, what in the realm of language, is called, a glossolalia. The relationship between Improvised Music and glossolalia is not fully established but musicians sometimes use this terminology (Farrell and Parker 2004, Nicols 2007).

⁶ For Oliveros, ‘Theoretically free improvisation is totally spontaneous like the big bang of creation’. (Oliveros 2010, 57).

improvisation in 1957⁷ and identifies non-idiomatic improvisers such as Eddie Prévost, Evan Parker, or Han Bennink.

Silence

This research is interested in the notion of silence, first of all, because the experience of listening to environmental sound (during the Istanbul episode) took place when musicians stopped playing. The word ‘silence’, according to its Latin etymology, has two different meanings. It refers to what enables communication (*taceo*), and to what is out of reach of human understanding (*sileo*). According to Susan Sontag in *Styles of Radical Will* (2001), the notion of silence has been used as a model by many artists during the twentieth century to overcome what she identifies as a spiritual crisis provoked by modern society. In that context of modern culture that seems to move towards superficiality, Sontag identifies a paradigm of silence that is believed by artists to operate, according to her, as a tool for seeking authenticity. Rather than approaching silence from this essentialist perspective, this research is more interested in what Sontag calls at the end of her essay, an ironical silence. My research refers to silence as a tool to create a distance that, in this case, enables me to scrutinise my practice in Improvised Music.

Environmental sound

This work is interested in environmental sounds as they were a primordial element of my listening experience described above in this introduction. Environmental sounds refer broadly to sounds that we can hear outside of us. Often this notion implies a clear distinction between the subject and his or her environment. For instance, in his work, R. Murray Schafer distinguishes human-made and natural sounds (Schafer 1977, 15 and 69),

⁷ Historically, there are earlier manifestations of free improvisation such as in 1955, Chico Hamilton’s ‘Free Form’ (Toop 2016, 120).

and composer John Cage similarly (but without an ecological intention) separates intentional (depending on musicians' culture, tastes, memory...) and non-intentional sounds (believed to somehow be free from the musicians) (Kostelanetz 2003, 234). Following the work of composer Pauline Oliveros, this research is interested in passages between what is inside and outside and how the environment — which is understood to be external — might actually, at least partly, be co-produced by the subject.

Listening

Often, listening is referred to as being active against hearing that is supposed to be, on the contrary, a passive action. However, at the same time, according to the etymology of this word, listen is related to the verb 'to obey'. This verb, etymologically speaking, means 'to pay attention' as well as 'to serve', 'be subject', or 'give ear'. As a result, to listen in its common sense, means to actively pay attention to something but not necessarily to turn one's attention towards something critically. For instance, one might listen to a certain kind of music, political discourses or religious beliefs as a habit because of his or her education or cultural environment, rather than an active decision.

Creative and critical listening

In this research, this term will refer to practitioners who are interested in the activity of listening from a critical perspective — that is to say, as a culturally informed practice, rather than being simply a spontaneous act that might be the result of certain habits. Critical listening that deconstructs sonic awareness, as in the work of R. Murray Schafer, Pierre Schaeffer or Pauline Oliveros⁸, is potentially a creative activity. If listening is about paying attention to something rather than something else, creative listening is about playing with the listeners' attention to transform, expand or interrogate their awareness.

⁸ This list is not comprehensive as there are other practitioners who have been interested in listening early on. Max Neuhaus, for instance, developed a work called *Listen* that invited participants to find 'a new way to listen for themselves.' (in Kelly 2011, 191)

Chapter 1 Context Improvisation

1.1 Joseph Holbrooke

In this section, I talk about one of the earliest musical groups in the history of free improvisation. One of its members, Derek Bailey, wrote a book called *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (1993)⁹ which, in addition to his work as a musician, has been strongly influential among musicians until now. As I am interested in scrutinising the major influences in my practice to understand critically what free improvisation encompasses, I will analyse below the work of this early Improvised Music band.

Joseph Holbrooke was the name of an Improvised Music group created by guitarist Derek Bailey (1930–2005), drummer Tony Oxley (1938), and double bass player Gavin Bryars (1943) in Sheffield in 1963. At that time, Bryars was still a student in philosophy whilst Bailey was already earning a living as a professional musician, and Oxley was leading his own jazz quartet in Sheffield. The three musicians met through occasional commercial work in Sheffield (Bryars 2006)¹⁰. At that time, Bailey, who was originally from Sheffield, was based in London. Artistic reasons ('an above-average musical situation' (Watson 2004, 53) he had involving Oxley), a professional opportunity (a work offer he received to play in a band in Sheffield) and personal circumstances (the opportunity to stay close to his relatives who lived there) persuaded him to come back to his hometown (Priestley 1987, 1'08").

⁹ Bailey, Derek. *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1993. The book was originally published by the British Library National Sound Archive in 1992.

¹⁰ In the liner notes of the Moat recording, Bryars remembers their meeting: 'I had met Derek and Tony for the first time when the student trio that I led, with guitarist Eddie Speight, played during the interval of one of their quartet performances (with pianist Gerry Rollinson) in a pub on Eccleshall Road. At that time, they had a local bassist, Len Stewart, who played a five-string bass, with the upper C string, and who bore a remarkable resemblance to the comedian Arthur Askey (with whom I later worked!). I was invited to play with them and was given a kind of audition at Derek's house when jazz pieces containing very rapid harmonic changes, such as John Coltrane's *Moment's Notice*, were thrown at me. This baptism of fire was the equivalent of, in the days of bebop, choosing to play *Cherokee* at the fastest tempo possible whenever an intrepid outsider asked to "sit in" during a performance'.

The name of the band is borrowed from a classical music composer who was born at the end of the nineteenth century. Joseph Charles Holbrooke (1878–1958) was an ‘extremely prolific composer’ who ‘enjoyed considerable success in his earlier career’¹¹ but whose work later fell into desuetude. The idea of using this name was suggested by Bryars, who was at that time, very interested ‘in English composers, often quite minor ones, around the inter-war years’¹². For Bailey, the name of a composer associated with a long-forgotten music fit perfectly well with a band interested in developing a relatively unidentifiable, exploratory musical approach (Bailey 1993, 86).

According to Bailey, the Joseph Holbrooke trio ‘initially played conventional jazz’: Bryars calls it rather ‘a refined form of harmonic jazz’¹³ ‘and by 1965 was playing totally improvised pieces’ (Bailey 1993, 86). For Bryars, this move towards a different way of playing was influenced by the late trio of pianist Bill Evans’ work at the ’61–’62 Village Vanguard with double bass player Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian (Watson 2004, 75). Joseph Holbrooke members were interested in how bassist Scott LaFaro was able to support Evans’ piano and simultaneously create his own solo lines. In Bryars’ words, this trio ‘gave that liberated role to the bass and to the drums, a more melodic and less rigid format, a genuine interplay between the players’. The Bill Evans trio was ‘a useful example’ for the musicians from Sheffield ‘of one way in which the concept of a hierarchy of roles could be undermined’ (Bryars 2006).

Joseph Holbrooke ’65,¹⁴ the only published recording of this trio during the years 1963 to 1966, documents one of their rehearsals at Bryars’ house (Watson 2004, 80). Although it was only published in 1999, Bryars still remembers several details about the space where it was recorded.

¹¹ Composer’s notice published online by the label Naxos.

https://www.naxos.com/person/Joseph_Holbrooke/23327.htm (Accessed, 10/07/2018)

¹² Personal communication (e-mail) 07/11/2017

¹³ ‘Initially we played a refined form of harmonic jazz, and the last recordings of the Bill Evans trio — with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian — were models for us, but these served also as a useful example of one way in which the concept of a hierarchy of roles could be undermined. Examples of the kinds of ideas we used in the process of evolving from harmonic jazz to free playing are described in Derek’s book’. (Bryars 2006).

¹⁴ This is an excerpt of a rehearsal that took place in 1965 at Bryars’ place. It was released by Incus records in 1999. Joseph Holbrooke, *Joseph Holbrooke ’65* [CD]. London: Incus, 1999.

This short piece was recorded in rehearsal in the front room of my ground floor flat at 329 Crook[e]smoor Road¹⁵, Sheffield some time in 1965. It was a medium-size living room, carpeted and with an open fireplace, and was just big enough for the three of us to have sufficient space to play (Bryars 1999).

In this recording the trio plays a jazz piece called ‘Miles Mode’, generally attributed to saxophonist John Coltrane, but possibly it was originally written by bass clarinet player Eric Dolphy (Wild 1997)¹⁶. This melody borrows dodecaphonic music techniques for the first phrase is made of a 12-tone row that is then simply reversed in the two following measures. The Joseph Holbrooke trio play the melody in a different way from Coltrane and Dolphy. In the Holbrooke version, the melody is momentarily suspended by separating the two phrases with a few seconds of silence.

The 10’24” recording gives us a sense of the musical developments from ‘conventional jazz’ to ‘totally improvised pieces’ mentioned by Bailey. For instance, instead of relying exclusively on the Dorian mode on which this jazz tune is built (inspired by Miles Davies piece ‘So What’), the improvised passages in the Joseph Holbrooke version move outside of this mode:

we start playing modal, and then in the middle it goes into what is not modal, it’s kind of free, you can tell there is something else going on, and then it goes back to the tune (Watson 2004, 59).

¹⁵ An image of this house can be found in appendix 1 (page 181).

¹⁶ As indicated by David Wild in the booklet for the 1997 John Coltrane Impulse box ‘The Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings’:

‘The modal Miles’ Mode is listed on the Vanguard material as ‘The Red Planet’. Although credited to Coltrane on the 1962 album *Coltrane* (where it is named Miles’ Mode), the composition was almost certainly written by Eric Dolphy. The remarkable theme uses a twelve-tone tone-row as the source for its opening phrase (repeated in reverse — another dodecaphonic technique — in the second two measures), with the notes arranged to create a fairly tonal melody. The published name of course refers to the B dorian mode used as the basis for the solos, the same scale (although in a different key) used by “So What.” Both versions (the later, from November 3rd, issued here for the first time) feature long, tonality-bending solos from Coltrane and Dolphy’.

If we listen to the recording in detail, we can hear around 4'20" how Bryars shifts the musical situation by introducing a chromaticism that alters the Dorian mode that they are playing with. This could, again, resonate with a jazz piece such as 'So What', which is based on a chromatic shift. However, in this case, as Oxley's drums are tuned to fit the original mode, the music starts to sound particularly dissonant. Bailey, who immediately notices Bryars change, follows him but also keeps playing simultaneously in Oxley's tuning (constantly underlining the G pitch that Oxley plays on his tom). Thus, whilst Bryars initiates a new harmonic direction and Oxley keeps his original harmonic position, Bailey plays freely in between these two areas. As a result, the modal logic of this piece seems to be disrupted until finally, Bailey closes this sort of free improvisation intermezzo by briefly reintroducing the second phrase of the melody (5'08") that provides the opportunity for Bryars to start his solo.

The trio recording also shows how, during this particular moment in their improvisation, the musicians seem to be playing 'out of time'. The notion of rhythm must be considered in detail since for instance, according to Bailey, in this music 'nobody played in time but it was in time'¹⁷ (Leigh 1998, 1'10"). Bryars explains that prior to playing in that way, they developed a rigorous rhythm-work to build 'systems of trust and mutual confidence' that would be useful later in their free playing.

But sometimes Tony and I would practice alone, working on complex approaches to pulsed time, especially in order for the trio to become familiar with Tony's increasing interest in subdivisions of triplets (even when we were still playing relatively conventional jazz compositions). When we were still playing more or less conventional jazz we also practiced exchanging solos with the imperative that I should come in exactly at the end of his solo, and he find his way back after mine – Tony had a justified horror of players coming back into the music in the wrong place at the end of measured drum solos (Bryars 2006).

¹⁷ This sense of rhythm that does not imply rigid regularity evokes Roland Barthes's idea of *Rhythmos* and *idiorhythmy* (Barthes 2002).

Some years later when reflecting on his Improvised Music experience in Baileys' book, Oxley called this form of improvisation which moves outside rhythmic and harmonic conventions of jazz a 'universal language'. Silence, for Oxley, was decisive in reaching this way of playing since it would help him to get rid of a musical persona that he was not feeling comfortable with. Indeed, according to Oxley as a percussionist, he felt obliged to play in a certain way as if he was acting: "let's get swinging", Oxley says, 'was one of the percussionist's chains'. Silence ('the music started from silence' he says referring to his experience with Joseph Holbrooke) offered him the possibility — via free improvisation — to stop playing an unwanted role¹⁸ (Bailey 1993, 89).

In Ben Watson's biography about Derek Bailey, the guitarist also refers to the importance of silence in Joseph Holbrooke trio: 'We liked silences'¹⁹ (Bailey 2004, 60). According to Bailey, the Joseph Holbrooke musicians showed 'impatience with the gruesomely predictable' and developed the desire to try 'to stop the music' and aim 'for the opposite of *driving*' in the sense of being able to play in their own way. For Bailey this way of playing was about moving away from a music that 'was *all about getting it on*' (Bailey 2004, 60).

Whilst Oxley talks about musicians' chains, Bailey mentions the term 'authenticity' (Bailey 2004, 60). Silence in both cases could be understood as part of a strategy for these musicians to play on their own authority rather than use someone else's role or identity. The silence that can 'stop the music' in Joseph Holbrooke is the suspension of the melody in the beginning of 'Miles Mode', but it also has to be understood more broadly as the

¹⁸ The question of the role seems to be a leitmotiv in Baileys' career. Even before becoming an improviser, Bailey talks about his dilemma of being a musician rather than a milk-deliverer or shoe-seller. (Bailey and Priestley 1987, 50'). When becoming a commercial musician (as he could not pretend to become a jazz musician, he says) Bailey observes that in commercial bands 'there were lots of players like that' — that is to say trying things different from the scores that they were supposed to play (Bailey and Priestley 1987, 1'03"). Bailey also indicates that a collective improvisation process 'did not demand you to play a role defined by your instrument' (Bailey and Priestley 1987, 1'09").

¹⁹ Aesthetic reasons seem to meet, in some cases, with social considerations as for instance, during the Leigh interview, Bailey indicates that the quiet playing was related to the venue context: 'we played very quietly, it was not intrusive for the audience. It was people from the university. It was for them a social event (Leigh 1998, 1'05")'.

music that sounds ‘authentically’ — a form of playing moving away from ‘the inherited improvising language’ (Bailey 1993, 88).

Bailey’s book also refers to the importance of silence in Bryars’ playing, remembering ‘long bass solos where the room was absolutely silent, and actually, there wasn’t much coming out of the bass either’. Playing in ‘a very tight concentration-almost a Zen quality-in the music’, Bryars mentions indeed being interested at that time in very quiet harmonics, playing sparsely and at very low volumes with his bow (Bailey 1993, 91).

We would do things where things were very static and quiet for long periods-it wasn’t the convention of free improvisation where it starts quiet, has a busy bit in the middle and then tails off towards the end. Quite often it wasn’t like that at all — there’d be long periods of very quiet music. Some pieces where we’d play for thirty minutes and it would never get above *pianissimo* (Watson 2004, 81).

For Bryars, Joseph Holbrooke was not the discovery of a form of playing situated beyond particular idioms, a sort of musical Esperanto as suggested by Oxley. On the contrary, their playing was the result of a very specific collective language depending on the three musicians’ working procedures and training developed during the few years that they spent together within the rather musically isolated environment²⁰ of Sheffield (Bailey 1993, 92; Watson 2004, 82).

For instance, these procedures consisted of working on stopping the music by ‘not always playing on time but freezing the time at certain moments’. The trio would also play on the wrong chord during slow pieces (on the chord ahead or the chord behind) in order to create a sense of dislocation. Bryars also mentions the musicians playing long solos (Watson 2004, 77 and Bryars 1999).

²⁰ According to Bryars, the Joseph Holbrooke trio was unfamiliar with the work of John Stevens in London but they did know about Ornette Coleman’s or Albert Mangelsdorff’s music.

A quite early device was to play modally but at the same time not impose any limit on the amount of time that a player might spend improvising. That is, not to proscribe, for example, the number of “choruses” and even to move away from the very idea of “chorus” length in relation to the thematic material (here Miles’ Mode)’ (Bryars 1999).

Although Bryars ‘liked’ silence as well as Bailey and Oxley, his interest in this notion developed in a different way than the two other members of the band. As indicated in Bailey’s book, during the Joseph Holbrooke years, Bryars was already starting to look at American composer John Cage’s idea of silence²¹. Cage’s approach to silence places itself in opposition to the practice of improvisation. Whilst for Cage, silence suggests a liberating experience that consists of finding procedures for freeing sounds from musicians, improvisation, on the contrary, inevitably binds the sounds to the person who produces them²². Thus, whilst for Oxley improvisation could free musicians, for Cage, the focus of music should be oriented towards a different direction: how to liberate sounds from musicians. This is what Bryars refers to as the problem of ‘the personalising of music’²³ (Bailey 1993, 117).

Bryars nevertheless shares with Bailey the idea that music relates to authenticity, but in his view, improvisation is very likely to fail in this task. In Bailey’s book, Bryars insists on a moral dimension of music that he could not always fulfil himself. Bryars remembers how during the last months that the Joseph Holbrooke band was together, that due to his commitment as a teacher he could no longer keep up with the demands of an ‘authentic’ musical practice of improvisation:

²¹ During an interview with Bailey, Bryars remembers that ‘By about ’65 though, I was barely interested in jazz at all. At that time, I got the ’61 Cage catalogue and I ordered things every week through the local music shop’ (Bailey 1993, 91).

²² Cage explains in 1966 to Stanley Kauffman that ‘Improvisation is generally playing what you know, and what you like, and what you feel; but those feelings and likes are what zen would like us to become free of (Kostelanetz 2003, 227).

²³ In Bailey’s book, Bryars explains that ‘one of the main reasons [he is] against improvisation now is that in any improvising position the person creating the music is identified with the music. The two things are seen to be synonymous. The creator is there making the music and is identified with the music and the music with the person (Bailey 1993, 115).

When we played together regularly I was always playing, but on this occasion I think I had lost touch with the instrument a bit. And the fact that I was called upon to play just as I used to play and the fact that I was neither emotionally nor physically trained for it meant that the experience was inadequate and that I was trying to recapture something that had been happening in the past. And that seemed morally wrong (Bailey 1993, 113).

Expressing his doubts about improvisation, Bryars contradicts Bailey's idea that free improvisation does not rely on pre-existing musical material:

I had always thought that too, and that's why I admired it and enjoyed doing it with Joseph Holbrooke. But later I met musicians who gave the lie to that. I knew they were practising effects during the day and playing them in the 'improvisation' at night. And the call and response type of playing adopted by so many improvising musicians was unattractive to me. And pieces always started tentatively, something big in the middle, and then finished quietly. That sort of arc happened every time (Bailey 1993, 114).

During the last month that the band was together, Bryars remembers a concert that convinced him of the limitations of free improvisation when listening to bass player Johnny Dyani (Watson 2004, 80).

Then I witnessed some of the things that were going on in the London scene at that time. There was a bass player, for instance, who by his performance convinced me that he had no idea of what he was doing. I had always been insistent that technically I had to know exactly what I was doing on the instrument. Just achieving the 'general effect' type of playing didn't interest me. And he was doing his fantastic runs and so on and although it sounded in the genre, the appropriate thing in the context, as far as I could see he had no idea what he was doing — he was a clown. He had no conceptual awareness of what he ought to be doing. I thought he was playing a part. And when I realised that it was possible for someone to sham like that it depressed me immensely and I never played my own bass again (Bailey 1993, 113)'.

Despite these different conceptions of improvisation, Bailey suggests that Joseph Holbrooke split up due to geographical issues. Whilst Oxley stayed in Sheffield, Bailey moved back to London and Bryars went to teach in Northampton (Watson 2004, 102). The ‘ideological differences’, as Bailey puts it — between improvisation and composition — would develop later. Improvisation in the Joseph Holbrooke band is not strictly opposed to composition. As we have seen with the trio rehearsal recording, their free playing is intimately related to playing procedures that are developed within existing compositional frameworks.

Silence in Joseph Holbrooke’s work develops in two significant directions. For Oxley, silence is a useful device to ‘stop the music’, freeing musicians from their assigned roles, whilst for Bryars — by the end of his experience with the trio — silence has developed towards the Cagean position that aims to ‘free’ sounds by depersonalising music²⁴. From the early experiences of the free improvisation group, Joseph Holbrooke, we can find the themes below.

1/ Deconstruction

As we can see in their early recordings, improvisation develops from a musical situation that relies on the mismatch of conventions. Following up on the work of Bill Evans, the trio push this research a bit further by detaching totally from the original musical framework based on modes.

²⁴ For Bryars, the free improvisation ‘universal language’ suggest a musical practice made of limited structural patterns and musicals tricks.

Whilst for Oxley, Joseph Holbrooke opens up the space for a universal language, for Bryars, the trio practice related to an untranslatable experience.

2/ Authenticity

Musicians foreground the importance of playing what they want to play rather than pretending to play something that has been imposed. They notice that for instance, musical instruments are related to a certain way of playing that they would like to be rid of. Silence seems to be understood as a possible strategy to move away from stereotypes.

3/ History

Musicians, as already indicated above, developed their way of playing against *clichés*. Musical habits that musicians attempted to avoid were not only external to the improvisation scene but also, according to Bryars, part of it. Thus, free improvisers were already aware that habits and conventions that needed to be challenged also existed in free improvisation.

In relation to my Istanbul experience, the study of Joseph Holbrooke shows that very early on in the history of free improvisation the notion of silence is present. In my experience, this notion brings in a critical approach that tends to deconstruct musical practice (e.g. the critique of imposed roles mentioned by Oxley). However, it seems that Joseph Holbrooke's silence, at least as in Bryars experience, understood as an absolute of purity (sound in itself) and authenticity²⁵ (against playing roles) brings in tensions that leads to the end of the group and missed opportunities to understand improvisation as an inclusive practice, rather than the opposite as shown by the Johnny Dyani episode.

²⁵ Bailey also uses this discourse of authenticity, but he also develops an open definition of improvisation understood as people who have different musical approaches and still are able to play together. For Bailey there is a clear distinction between musicians in the 60's, less self-conscious about what they are doing according to him, and musicians in the 70's more aware of the different 'styles' of improvisation such as British, Dutch or German (Bailey and Priestley 1987, 1' 34"). Furthermore, in Bailey's narrative, the discourse around authenticity and roles is counterbalanced by the view of himself as an 'impostor'. Bailey uses this term to refer to a certain incongruity (but not musically) around the fact that when he started to play this music, musicians around him (such as Evan Parker) were much younger (Bailey and Priestley 1987, 1' 29").

Musicians do not mention environmental sounds, but they do refer to the notion of environment in a broad sense. Joseph Holbrooke seems to have created a musical environment within their relative isolation that is apparently detached from any external influences.

1.2 AMM

In this part of the research I will discuss the work of musical band, AMM, for two main reasons. The first is that AMM is one of the earliest Improvised Music bands. Their ideas have strongly influenced musicians interested in improvisation via their music, but also through percussionist Edwin Prévost's workshops that regularly take place in London and abroad. The second reason is that AMM, especially at the earliest stage of their career, were known for their interest in silence (Wright 2012, 358 and Prévost 2011, 223).

In 1965, percussionist and writer Edwin Prévost (1942), saxophonist Lou Gare (1939–2017), and guitar player Keith Rowe (1940), co-founded the free improvisation music group AMM in London. Later during the same year, they were joined by bassist Lawrence Sheaff (1940). Gare, Rowe, and Sheaff met playing in a jazz band run by guitarist Mike Westbrook (1936), whilst Prévost, also involved at that time in jazz music, met with Gare whilst playing in a hard bop quintet set up by trumpeter David Ware.

In AMM, musicians would develop a space for musical experimentation that they felt they were missing within the context of their jazz-based musical practice. Rowe, much to the surprise of his colleagues in his previous jazz group, was trying to develop unorthodox playing strategies such as using an untuned guitar, or looking at Paul Klee images, as a support for his playing in parallel to Westbrook scores.

I'd get the part from Mike Westbrook, get some idea of what the music was like, find a picture that I thought was appropriate and glue it onto the opposite page of the chart. I would play from the picture and the others would play from the dots (Tilbury 2004, 284).

In the autumn of 1966, Rowe was introduced by Alan Cohen — an old friend and fellow student from the Royal Academy of Music — to cellist, pianist, and composer Cornelius Cardew (Tilbury 2008, 283 and Toop 2016, 215). Cardew was a few years older than the AMM members and already held significant musical status for (among other things) his collaborative work with German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen (Cardew 2004, 33). While looking for musicians able and willing to play his graphic score, *Treatise* — a piece based on indeterminate notations — Cardew invited Rowe for a performance at the Theatre Royal in Stratford. Rowe later invited Cardew back for an improvising session with AMM at the Royal College of Art.

According to Prévost, AMM members were originally driven by American saxophonist Ornette Coleman's 'disobeying' of the rules of jazz (Prévost 2017 b). AMM would attempt to contravene what they perceived as the musical conventions of jazz to find their own musical path. According to Tilbury, AMM believed that Cardew, with his contemporary musical background, could help them to detach from their musical jazz influences²⁶ and initiate a musical 'voyage into the unknown (Tilbury 2004, 284).

...inviting Cardew 'was also a strategic ploy on the part of Rowe and his colleagues in their resolve to break with the strong emulative impulse to play like their black American heroes. And in order to do this the jazz idiom had to be subverted and for some improvising musicians eventually discarded altogether (Tilbury 2004, 284).

Motivations for this musical collaboration involving a composer coming from a bohemian but privileged social background, and three very young working-class musicians seemed to be, at least in the beginning, rather disparate. The AMM members had quit a jazz band to explore their own musical path more freely, whilst according to Prévost 'it had been a life-long ambition of his [Cardew] to play in a jazz band and we were the next best thing (Tilbury 2004, 283)'. According to Tilbury, for Cardew, playing with AMM was an

²⁶ Lewis (1996) draws on the paradoxical attempt by free improvisers to detach from what seems to often be their main musical influence. This will to detach from jazz can be understood as a way 'to consolidate a cohesive self-identity and collective project (Somers and Gibson 1994, 38 in Lewis 1996, 103).

opportunity to overcome his limitations towards this music he had been fascinated by for a long time.

Cardew always fought shy, for whatever reason, of the jazz performance arena. Perhaps he was in awe of the prodigious and unfathomable talent which jazz musicians seemed to possess. Like secret avatars they practiced their art with an ease and fluency which transcended the limits of his own education and experience (Tilbury 2004, 283).

An early AMM recording, *AMM: Live At The Royal College Of Art* (1966), shows the musicians' ambivalence towards their jazz influences and how their use of silence contributes to what Tilbury calls AMM's 'voyage into the unknown'. This early and short AMM recording excerpt (it only lasts 6'23") develops as a variation, which is a common procedure in jazz, but also as a departure, as we shall see, from a structured musical approach.

The excerpt starts with two assertive notes, a 'call' played by the clarinet that is echoed by the piano and followed by silence. The excerpt develops as a series of variation on these three initial elements: assertive notes, sonic decay, and silence. A first variation takes place as the clarinet's initial 'call' is repeated and echoed not only by the piano but also by the rest of the band. Later on, towards the end of this excerpt, the first note that was played by the clarinet is reintroduced by the saxophone player as a sustained sound that is supported by the other musicians. This return to the beginning of the 'piece' that strengthens the connection between the musicians evokes a jazz musical structure made of an initial theme, an improvisation, and a final theme.

AMM's performance during this excerpt also shows detachment from jazz-based musical strategies. For instance, at the beginning of the piece, a sequence that is made of assertive notes, sonic decay, and silence is disrupted by the introduction of a silence that is disproportionate in relation to the previous ones. Indeed, the two first silences — because they are similar in length and because they precede and follow similar sonic content — create a sense of familiarity, rhythm, and structure. By contrast, the silence that occurs

later during this excerpt (1'07") creates a sense of disruption and uncertainty, as it is much longer and moves away from the sequence 'call-echo-sonic decay-silence'.

For Prévost, silence in AMM was already, in the early days, part of their concern for developing a musical exploratory approach. According to Prévost, prior to the arrival of Cardew, AMM were already discussing²⁷ this issue. Prévost foregrounds the psychological effect of silence (Prévost 2017 b). The co-founder of AMM points out the strong sense of uncertainty that is produced by long periods of silence²⁸. These situations create a series of questions such as: When should one resume the playing? How to do that? Who should be doing it? And finally, why should silence end? The unknown produced by these moments of silence was, according to Prévost, one of the creative tools used by AMM in their early days.

AMM have been associated with silence and sometimes with the figure of John Cage.²⁹ Although the American composer's silent piece *4'33"* (1952) was created many years prior to the formation of AMM, according to Prévost, AMM musicians were unfamiliar with his work before Cardew joined the band (Prévost 1995, 12 and Prévost 2011, 223). For Prévost, Cage's silence was rather conceptual while, for AMM, silence had a 'great emotional impact'³⁰. However, in their first release (*AMMMUSIC*, 1967) silence also appears to be used in conceptual fashion. Indeed, on one of the tracks included on the LP, none of the musicians make any sounds. According to Prévost, this was Cardew's idea:

²⁷ Lou Gare also mentions these conversations: 'We used to talk quite a lot about silence, the self and inner silence but actually, when it came to it, the music could be quite violent and unpleasant but that seemed to be necessary to break through somehow to the silence sort of reality (Toop 2016, 221). Furthermore: 'You'd have this fantastic noise going on and out of it you'd get all these subtle vibrations and sound, you know, subtle sounds which you could probably only feel. You almost felt it rather than heard it and then it would end up quite often with a long silence or nothing – something very slight going on for quite a long time in the dark and you'd end up feeling quite elated (Toop 2016, 220).

²⁸ At the same time that silence would create uncertainty, noise would also have a similar effect according to Gare: 'You couldn't tell what you were playing,' says Lou Gare. 'You'd hear the sounds and you didn't know which were your sounds until you actually stopped. You'd think you were doing something, you'd stop and that would carry on and you'd suddenly realise it was somebody else making that noise. I suppose it's got much more of a physical impact in the dark – you're sort of inside the sound (Toop 2016, 220).

²⁹ Prévost remembers 'Victor Schonfield — who organised concerts of avant-garde musics, and was the first critic to write about our work—once called AMM "John Cage Jazz"' (Cerchiari 2012, 355).

³⁰ For Prévost, silence is 'a signifier of resolution' (2011, 223) which goes against the idea of a Cagean silence related to chance and detached from the musician initiative.

an attempt to disrupt the continuity of the recording (Prévost 2017 b). For Cardew, the recording was offering an artificial continuity that did not necessarily reflect the music.

Documents such as tape recordings of improvisation are essentially empty, as they preserve chiefly the form that something took and give at best an indistinct hint as to the feeling and cannot convey any sense of time and place (Cardew 1971).

As indicated by Tilbury, silence in AMM is ‘multifarious’. In early recordings by AMM we have found two of these forms of silence. In the Royal College of Art recording, there is a measured silence consisting of regular pauses that contributes to building a sense of structure. On the other hand, we have a ‘disproportionate’ silence, that on the contrary, loses the sense of structure by dissolving elements that might help one to identify the sonic features of the piece. On the first public release of AMM, this second silence, the disruptive silence, is also introduced conceptually in the form of a silent track.

From this AMM experience we notice that silence is — especially at the beginning of their career — part of the work of AMM and that it contributed to a musical practice that was inspired but at that same time detached from jazz³¹. In relation to my Istanbul experience, I am aware of the fact that AMM members had a similar experience early on: they would question themselves during silence about what to do — as happened to me during my workshop — and be aware of environmental sounds.

1.3 Spontaneous Music Ensemble

I will now discuss the work of the Spontaneous Musical Ensemble as a third historical major influence in the Improvised Music scene. However, this time I will analyse this band not for its interest in silence or environmental sounds, but for being known (maybe

³¹ Earlier Improvised Music bands can be found such as 1955 Lukas Foss group devoted to “nonjazz” group improvisation (Schwartz and Godfrey 1993, 63 in Lewis 1996, 105).

wrongly as we shall see) as somehow being the banner of a free improvisation approach against silence and quiet sounds.

The Spontaneous Music Ensemble [SME] was created in London in 1966 by saxophone player Trevor Watts, drummer John Stevens, and trombonist Paul Rutherford. The group emerged from a previous quintet that included bass players Jeff Clyne and John Ryan. These musicians regularly performed and organised evenings at the Little Theatre Club, a venue created in 1966 that became one of the main meeting points in London for musicians interested in free improvisation.

SME's first recording, *Challenge* (1966), was not strictly improvised, but rather consisted of compositions created by Watts, Stevens, and Rutherford. These pieces reflected their interest in the modern jazz scene at that time (they liked the work of Sunny Murray and Albert Ayler, for instance). As indicated by Stevens to Victor Schonfield, some of these compositions were nevertheless instrumental in leading the group towards a 'complete free group improvisation' (Schonfield 1992, part 8, 3'30").

During the interview by Schonfield for the British Library, Stevens explains how this led towards improvisation by using the example of two pieces that are part of this first album: 'Red Little Head' and 'End to a Beginning'. In the first piece, Stevens tells Schonfield that free improvisation occurs as a result of playing a melody made of short sounds that requires strong rhythmic concentration from the musician. 'Free playing' takes place when the musicians drop the regular pulse but keep playing the short sounds in a pointillist style inspired from the original melodic line. The second example consists of a melody that is made of a repeated pattern that suddenly accelerates and becomes fragmented. According to Stevens, this decomposition of the melody also leads musicians towards an experience of free improvisation.

SME's improvisation style is often acknowledged as consisting of lots of musical 'dots' being played very fast and almost simultaneously. However, there are also recordings from SME in the early '70s that demonstrate how this improvisation based on the idea of

using fragments could also lead towards a very different outcome. As mentioned by Martin Davidson — the producer of the Emanem label³² — in the line notes of the *Face Face* (1975) recording:

During the latter half of 1973, the SME was just the duo of Stevens and Watts. The two had become extremely close musically, and the music had become very austere — stripped down to the bare essentials. The end result was at times akin to one person playing two instruments, unlike so many duos which sound like two people playing solos simultaneously. This could be called minimalist music (...) (Davidson 1995).

In this music — also referred to by Davidson as ‘hyper-minimalist’— silence is used as ‘a component part of rhythmic spaces’ rather than a ‘separate thing’ (Watts 2017). During the ‘70s in collaboration with Stevens, Watts worked on pieces-exercises that focused on the interplay between sound and silence. For instance, in the piece ‘One Two’, each musician decides to play a short sound on the first or second beat. In the beginning, musicians are invited to always keep playing on the beat they have chosen, but later they can decide to start playing on a different beat if they wish. As a result, when a musician who was playing on the first beat decides to play on the second one, an unexpected silence will occur.

Another exercise called ‘Flower’ (*Framework*), consisted of working around these two beats but this time also being able to play in between them. In the recording *Frameworks*, we can hear how at the beginning of the piece ‘Flower’, the playing is spare, but progressively develops with musicians engaging more and more with the silent gaps between these two beats. These two ‘exercises’ that were part of SME musicians research in the ‘70s were later documented by Stevens in his musical manual called *Search and Reflect* (first published in 1985).

In this book, Stevens also presents his ideas about silence:

³² Emanem, is a label founded in 1974 by Martin Davidson to document Improvised Music. Chronologically, this label was created approximately a decade after AMM (1965), Spontaneous Music Ensemble (1966), and Joseph Holbrooke (1963) began.

In practice silence is always relative — as an absolute, it has no existence in life. The perceiver, within a soundless environment, will become aware of internal body sounds. In this manual therefore, when silence is mentioned it is the silence which the group has created (the ‘group silence’), which excludes the influences of the external sounds which might exist within the environment (traffic, gas fires, the wind etc.) (Stevens 2007, 61).

Stevens’ silence evokes the American composer John Cage when referring to its relativeness and to the sounds from the body (e.g. Cage’s experience of an anechoic chamber). However, in Stevens’ work, silence does not seem to involve the sounds from the environment as may be the case with Cage’s silences. This point seems nevertheless ambiguous as some of Stevens’ pieces clearly engage with what the drummer calls himself ‘environmental sounds’.

For instance, the piece called ‘Free Space’ asks participants ‘to interact³³ at a level that allows [these] external sounds to be audible’. Playing ‘on the brink of silence’ constitutes, according to Stevens, an ‘aid to achieving a sound balance’ (Stevens 2007, 61). Even though environmental sounds are not the main focus of the piece (which is more about musicians playing together), being able to hear these sounds remains nevertheless an essential ingredient to achieve this goal.

The piece, ‘Silence’, underlines this strong relationship between the notion of silence in Stevens’ work and the ability of musicians to play together. The piece consists of musicians only starting to play when there is silence and only playing one at a time. As the score says, ‘if two people start playing at the same time, they must both drop out, since neither of them is playing in a silence’ (Stevens 2007, 86). For Stevens, the piece serves to highlight ‘any musical problems and relationships within the group’ such as someone having difficulties to assert him or herself in the group or someone having the tendency to dominate the space.

³³ Similarly, ‘Suck Piece demonstrates that an intense interaction can take place at a low volume’ (Stevens 2007, 62).

In the introductory notes for 'Silence', Stevens makes another potentially ambiguous point: that paradoxically, 'there might be very few silences in it'. This statement seems to contradict the title of the work, but Stevens also indicates that 'the group may need to negotiate its own concept of silence'. If we take into consideration that silence is about 'achieving a sound balance' and that this can mean that each participant has to reconsider their own input within the group (playing more or less, louder or quieter), silence seems here to be the outcome of a collective musicians' negotiation for playing together. In Stevens' 'Silence', the unpredictable aspects depend on the musicians' decisions within the collective, and as such, 'the sounds produced by performing this piece can vary enormously from group to group' (Stevens 2007, 85).

To summarise, SME improvisation is closely linked to the idea of fragmentation. However, this does not necessarily mean playing lots of fragments continuously and loud. Within this musical approach, silence is an unescapable counterpart of sound. Being able to perceive environmental sounds is a good indicator that there is silence in the music and therefore that space is available for playing together. However, external sounds do not identify with Stevens an understanding of silence as can be the case in Cage's work. In Stevens' work, silence can also be understood as the sonic outcome of musicians' singular collective agreement that is detached from 'the influence of external sounds' and is distinct from the understanding of silence as an absence of sounds.

In relation to my listening experience in Istanbul, the work of SME seems to indicate that the silence that we experienced could have been part of our improvisation. However, in the case of Stevens's work this silence would probably have been followed by the production of a sound as in the piece called 'One Two'. In Istanbul the second beat never strictly took place as the piece ended with a long silence. Furthermore, unlike my Istanbul experience, in Steven's work silence is not directly concerned with environmental sounds. In his case, these sounds are useful in order to achieve what Stevens calls a sound balance in *Search and Reflect*, but not necessarily to be listened to in themselves.

1.4 Malfatti and Wandelweiser

Radu Malfatti is a composer, improviser, and trombonist. He has been part of the collectif Wandelweiser since 1995. His work is acknowledged for its emphasis on silence. However, the first half of his career consisted of free improvisation music that explored a broad dynamic range. The following piece of writing draws on the development of Malfatti's musical career to understand the shift in his musical interests and the specificities of his use of silence at the very beginning of his Wandelweiser period.

The beginning of Malfatti's career was shaped by his visit to London in 1969. There, he met with pioneers of free improvisation such as Evan Parker, and Derek Bailey, and with Chris McGregor and the community of South African musicians living in London at that time. These collaborations, as we shall see, reflect the diversity of improvisational aesthetics that Malfatti was, by then, interested in.

According to Malfatti's website, his first release was recorded in January 1973 in Switzerland with South African pianist and composer Chris McGregor's band, The Brotherhood of Breath. This group was an extension of McGregor's ensemble called The Blue Notes that was originally created in South Africa but could not continue due to the segregation laws that existed at that time in that country. Members of that band included drummer Louis Moholo, saxophonist Dudu Pukwana, trumpet player Mongezi Feza, and bassist Harry Miller.

Malfatti's early recording was released by Ogun, a label created that same year by South African expatriate bassist Harry Miller, Hazel Miller, and sound engineer Keith Beal to record British avant-garde jazz musicians and their collaborations with expatriate South African musicians. In *Live at Willisau* — the first Ogun release — Europe-based musicians Malfatti, Evan Parker (tenor saxophone), Harry Beckett (trumpet), Marc Charig (trumpet), Nick Evans (trombone), and Gary Windo (tenor saxophone) were invited to join McGregor's group.

The Brotherhood of Breath were playing a music strongly inspired by South African folk, jazz, and free jazz (Wilmer, 1994). For instance, the piece ‘Andromeda’ starts with a melody that evokes South African kwela musical traditions and shortly after continues into a jazz style. In ‘Kongi’s theme’, Malfatti, supported by a dynamic rhythmic section, plays a solo in a free jazz manner that alternates simple rhythmic patterns with complex serpentine trajectories.

The second recording involving Malfatti’s work as an improviser was made in September of the same year on the independent label Incus created by Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, and Tony Oxley in 1970. Incus is considered as the first independent label in the UK (Jenkins 2004, 182). It was created to supply the lack of interest from existing labels for their music in a similar way than did the Dutch label ICP created by pianist Misha Mengelberg, saxophonist Willem Breuker, and drummer Han Bennink in 1967.

The release is called *Balance* and involves (in addition to Malfatti) four other young musicians. The group was originally co-created by guitarist Ian Brighton who studied with Derek Bailey and percussionist Frank Perry who was also playing with Malfatti with South African musicians’ community in London at that time. The group also involved the cellist Colin Wood who had been collaborating with John Stevens, and violinist Phil Wachsmann, who studied classical music with Nadia Boulanger in Paris.

In the first piece of the recording, ‘Constellations of Force’, we can hear musicians playing in a way that evokes the pointillist approach of John Stevens developed a few years before with Trevor Watts. As we have mentioned before³⁴, John Stevens’ approach to free improvisation began with musical compositions leading to improvisation via the fragmentation of the melodic line³⁵. Thus, in ‘Red Little Head’, Stevens mentions that free improvisation occurs as a result of playing a melody made of dots that requires strong rhythmic concentration from the musician. A sort of ‘free playing’ takes place when the

³⁴ See chapter 1 section 1.3.

³⁵ For Frank Perry this way of playing could also be related to Klangfarbenmelodie. Instead of having one single instrument playing the ‘melody’, each part of it is played by a different instrument (personal communication 17/07/18).

musicians drop the regular pulse³⁶ but keep playing around the idea of dots, using a few snatches from the original melodic line.

In *Balance*, we can only hear the fragmented dots, but the changes of intensity and density evoke the fact that originally, in the beginning of this manner of playing, there was a melodic line with a beginning, middle, and end. As such, musicians in this recording often (but not always) start quietly with rather spare sounds and continue playing more loudly, increasing the sonic density. Often musicians would, towards the end, play less and less until there was no sound. As we have seen before this structure in ‘arc’ is identified by Bryars³⁷ in his own playing with Joseph Holbrooke.

In ‘Constellation of Forces’, at the end of these ‘arc’ trajectories³⁸ there are moments of silence that in some cases are long enough (such as in 5’20”) to create the impression that the piece has now ended. However, the piece in this case, resumes starting with fragmented and vivid sounds that develop until, finally, the musicians arrive again at a new silence³⁹. As we have also observed previously, this was also the case in early AMM recordings⁴⁰.

Unlike the Ogun recording where we could distinguish several influences such as South African folk music as well as afro American jazz and free jazz, in the Incus recording Malfatti engages with a music that, having no solos, melodies or rhythmic section, seems more detached from external influences. This music seems to connect to what Derek Bailey describes later in his book as a non-idiomatic improvisation — that is to say, a musical practice that does not identify with any existing musical genre. However, as we

³⁶ For Perry, who used to listen regularly to the Spontaneous Ensemble at the little theatre, ‘free form group improvisation’ consisted of dropping structures (melody, rhythm, harmony...) which finally resulted in a ‘blank canvas’ or an ‘empty space’ (personal communication 17/07/18).

³⁷ See page 31.

³⁸ Dynamics vary in the piece as sometimes musicians play very loud (1’55”) and sometimes very quiet (12’08”).

³⁹ This model might not always be true, as for instance, in the beginning of ‘Worsel Centrum’ musicians rather play quiet and sustained sounds. However, this could be understood as still being part of the same logic of playing but slowed down. In any case, a few minutes later (from 2’30”) the pointillist approach which is more vivid and dense is reintroduced.

⁴⁰ See chapter 1 section 1.2.

have just observed within — paradoxically — the tradition of a music without tradition there are still influences that pervades. Indeed, Balance clearly refers to the work of the older generation of music improvisers such as SME, AMM, and Joseph Holbrooke. In the beginning of the '80s, free improvisation seems to have been perceived by musicians such as Malfatti as a clearly musical form that can be reproduced and identified as a musical genre, contradicting the principle of non idiomatism. According to Malfatti this consciousness led him to start reviewing his musical practice:

The real change came in the early 1980s, when I started to reintroduce written parts in my music — I do not want to talk about “composition” yet, this will take place later... I started to be interested in more and more things that changed me from the habit I had taken to repeat myself again and again. I started to feel a certain dogmatism in the way of playing and thinking. This has been an important turning point and from there I tried to make new things. Sometimes this was uncomfortable for me, but it was necessary to push further my activities. The deeper I got into it, the more I liked it, which finally led me to find the path that I continue to follow today and that brought me close to Wandelweiser musicians (Belhomme 2012, par. 8)⁴¹.

During this transitional period, that starts in the '80s and ends when Malfatti meets Wandelweiser composers in 1993, the trombonist, in addition to his ongoing projects with free improvisation and the Brotherhood of Breath, participates in several projects that develop strategies in order to avoid this ‘dogmatism’ that he perceives. This approach to make ‘*des choses neuves*’ (new things) involves several strategies involving the use of composition.

⁴¹ This is my own translation. The original quote is ‘Le vrai changement est intervenu au début des années 1980, quand j’ai commencé à réintroduire des parties écrites dans mes travaux – je ne tiens pas encore à parler de « composition », ça ce sera pour après... J’ai commencé à m’intéresser à de plus en plus de choses qui me changeaient de l’habitude que j’avais prise de me répéter encore et toujours. J’ai commencé à ressentir un certain dogmatisme dans la façon de jouer et de penser. Ça a été un tournant important et à partir de là j’ai cherché à faire des choses neuves, et parfois même inconfortables pour moi, ce qui était nécessaire à la poursuite de mes activités. Et plus je me suis enfoncé là dedans, plus j’ai aimé ça, ce qui m’a finalement mené à trouver la voie que je continue à suivre aujourd’hui et qui m’a rapproché des musiciens du Wandelweiser’ (Belhomme 2012, par. 8).

In 1983 Malfatti recorded *Formu*, a work produced by the French label Nato run by Jean Rochard. In this recording, trombonist Johannes Bauer, saxophone and clarinet players Dietmar Diesner, and Heiner Reinhardt play Malfatti's compositions. The pieces have been written but they also incorporate moments of improvisation. For instance, the piece 'Seven' starts with a written dialogue between a soloist and the ensemble that, after a few minutes (an alarm clock rings), resumes with an improvisation from two clarinet players in the group. Their music keeps elements from the dodecaphonic language that was used in the written part, but their playing is freer in terms of rhythm. The piece 'Zwei' alternates a repeated written pattern that evokes the music of jazz saxophonist and free improviser Steve Lacy (for instance 'The Flame') and then incorporates short pointillist parts that seem to be improvised. In both cases Malfatti seems to be looking at articulations between different kinds of music such as the second Viennese school, free jazz, and free improvisation. When composing, Malfatti seems to situate free improvisation as a musical approach among others rather than detaching it from history as Bailey seems to do with his idea of non-idiomatic music.

A few years later, in 1986, Malfatti and percussionist Paul Lovens joined the band which was originally formed in 1984 by guitarist John Russell, saxophonist John Butcher, and violin and electronics player Phil Durrant. For Martin Davidson who released *News from the Shed* in 1989 with his label Emanem, this band was 'one of the best groups inspired by SME' (Davidson 2017). Indeed, in pieces such as 'News from the Shed' it is possible to hear a pointillist way of playing characteristic of John Stevens' and Trevor Watts' work.

Among *News from the Shed* inspirations we can also hear in the piece called, 'Reading the River', a silence that seems to indicate an ending but that actually, after several seconds, is followed by new sounds. This approach reminds us of early AMM recordings at the Royal College of Art in 1966. In AMM recordings we also find this silence that creates uncertainty — one not exactly knowing what will happen next, if anything.

News from the Shed also deals with the arc structure observed by Bryars in free improvisation — a suite of moments where musicians build up a sonic material that

reaches a certain intensity that is then followed by a moment of calmness and silence. Musicians in this recording seem to be aware of this structure and appear keen to play with it. For instance, the first piece on the recording starts immediately within a climax instead of a progressive build-up. At the end of ‘Stick and Stones’, instead of finishing the piece with a decrescendo or a sudden cut, the musicians incorporate both: whilst the trajectory of the piece seems to indicate a final decrescendo, a loud and short sound suddenly occurs. This sudden sound could indicate the end of the piece. However, it is then shortly followed with a subtle and rapid fade-out that brings the definitive ending to the piece.

What seems to distinguish *News from the Shed* from earlier Improvised Music approaches and *Balance* is the fact that musicians work on longer units of sound such as a few repeated notes, short patterns, or motifs that can be recognised easily and that tend to be repeated at least for a few seconds rather than immediately developed as in the pointillist flow⁴². These short ‘blocs’ of sounds are played one after the other and sometimes overlap. For instance, in ‘the Gabdash’, musicians develop independent threads that sometimes meet in a silence or a sustained sound but that mostly constitute a sort of musical patchwork that weaves together a rich sound palette made of noises and textures, but also short melodic lines produced with conventional and extended techniques as well as with electronic means. In the beginning of this piece, Russell starts by repeating the same few notes until after a few seconds Butcher develops the guitarist’s idea as a melodic line (0’23”).

Three years after *News from the Shed*, Malfatti records *Ohrkiste* in 1992 — a release involving several of the musicians he was working with in *Balance* and *News from the Shed*. The name of this album is a neologism that could be translated as ‘earbag’. In the interview with Guillaume Belhomme, Malfatti explains how this recording presents a new step in the development of his career, following *Formu*, towards composition.

⁴² The term pointillism refers here to the musical way of playing observed in the section dedicated to the Spontaneous Music Ensemble.

It became clear to me that one of the ways that would allow me to continue was to return to written music, or at least to some of its aspects. *Ohrkiste* was an attempt made in this direction. I was able to gather some of the best improvisers around me and tell them through my scores, what to do and when. That makes some difference with normal “improvisation” ... What happened is that I first listened very carefully to each of the individualities of the group and transcribed their language on paper — these things that they did by themselves. The difference — in my opinion at the time — was that they could not do these things at any time, that they would have to ‘obey’ to⁴³ a certain structure, which — I was hoping — proposed a way out of the traditional approach that consists of first emerging, then slowing down the movement then going crescendo, then decrescendo again and so on⁴⁴ (Belhomme 2012, par. 9).

This recording still reminds us of Malfatti’s ‘traditional’ way of improvising. For instance, the beginning of part three in ‘Graukanal’ clearly evokes the pointillist ways of playing developed by Stevens earlier on. At the same time, in a similar manner to *News from the Shed*, trajectories other than the arc pattern identified by Bryars are explored. As such, the first piece on the album starts with forty seconds of very quiet sounds then followed with a short but loud intervention by the ensemble.

As mentioned by Malfatti, his work in *Ohrkiste* consisted of taking into account the different individualities of the group but also indicating to them when to play to avoid ‘la traditionnelle façon de faire’ (‘the traditional approach’). The recording sounds like a collage that incorporates different musical influences like free improvisation, but also

⁴³ As indicated by Malfatti later during this interview, some improvisers such as Fed Van Hove or Evan Parker did not approve at all of this approach (Belhomme 2012, par. 9).

⁴⁴ This is my own translation. The original quote is: Il m’est apparu clair qu’une des manières qui me permettrait de continuer était de revenir à la musique écrite, ou tout du moins à certains de ses aspects. *Ohrkiste* a été une tentative faite dans cette direction. J’ai pu regrouper certains des meilleurs improvisateurs de mon entourage et leur dire, par le biais de mes partitions, quoi faire et à quel moment. Cela fait une certaine différence avec l’« improvisation » normale... Ce qui s’est passé, c’est que j’ai, au préalable, écouté très attentivement chacune des individualités du groupe et transcrit leur langage sur le papier, ces choses qu’elles faisaient par elles-mêmes. La différence – en tout cas, selon moi à l’époque – était qu’ils ne pourraient pas faire ces choses à n’importe quel moment, qu’ils auraient à « obéir » à un certain ordre, qui – je l’espérais en tout cas – proposait une voie permettant de sortir de la traditionnelle façon de faire qui veut que l’on émerge pour ensuite ralentir le mouvement avant d’aller crescendo puis decrescendo et ainsi de suite (Belhomme 2012, par. 9).

contemporary musical languages such as serialism and spectral music⁴⁵. For instance, the short intervention in the beginning evokes atonal serial music, whilst at the end of the second piece (part 9) we can hear the influence of spectral music when the musicians are playing a sustained sound.

In looking for ways to develop his musical approach to improvisation, Malfatti's approach provokes controversy⁴⁶. Participating musicians have criticised the way that the trombonist approached conducting:

Of course, some of the group members really liked this idea when others could not get used to it or even hated it. Once, Fred Van Hove told me that he was afraid of touching the keys of the piano during my pieces; Evan Parker told me that telling musicians what to do was a way of limiting them. Well yes, my dear Evan, that's exactly what I wanted to do. Even better, that's what I wanted for me. Not really "limiting" but rather lead us in a new direction, as tiny as this novelty might be. Finally, I must say that these were not "first answers" that I have made there, but rather first proposals and/or suggestions, because I believe more in proposals than in answers or solutions⁴⁷ (Belhomme 2012, par. 9).

⁴⁵ *Ohrkiste* — but also before that, *Formu* — resonates with the sampling and digital culture that develops during the '80s. Other works that evoke sampling and digital culture are John Zorn's *Cobra* (1987) and Lawrence D. 'Butch' Morris's 'conductions' (1985-2011). Morris's first conduction in 1985 included the participation of artist and musician, Christian Marclay, on turntables. Later ones involved Berlin musicians such as Axel Dörner (1995) and London improvisers, such as Evan Parker or Phil Durrant (1997). Prior to his work as a conductor, Morris remembers that as an audience member he would 'hear something happen and think to myself, I wish we could save that and use it again later in the performance.' Thanks to the signs he created, Morris was able to tell musicians, whilst they were playing, when to speed up or slow down, when to stop, resume, reintroduce a motif that had been memorised, move on to something different or zoom in into a particular sonic material. Sounding what he was listening to and playing with it, Morris's work evokes the idea of a 'digital ear' or what Szendy calls a 'plastic listening' (Szendy 2008).

⁴⁶ The John Cage epigraph in the liner notes seems to support this idea.

⁴⁷ This is my own translation. The original quote is: 'Evidemment, certains des membres du groupe ont beaucoup aimé cette idée quand d'autres n'ont pu s'y faire ou même l'on détestée. Une fois, Fred Van Hove m'a dit qu'il craignait d'effleurer les touches du piano pendant mes pièces; Evan Parker m'a quant à lui déclaré que dire aux musiciens ce qu'ils avaient à faire à tel moment était une façon de les limiter. Eh bien oui, mon cher Evan, c'est exactement ce que je voulais faire. Mieux, même: c'est ce que je voulais pour moi. Pas vraiment nous « limiter » mais plutôt nous mener dans une nouvelle direction, aussi infime que soit sa nouveauté. Pour finir, je dois préciser que ce ne sont pas de « premières réponses » que j'ai apportées-là, mais de premières propositions et/ou suggestions, parce que je crois davantage dans les propositions que dans les réponses ou solutions' (Belhomme 2012, par. 9).

The ideas developed by Malfatti in *Ohrkiste* seem to have been more accepted within his collaboration with the young musicians of Polwechsel⁴⁸ that started in 1993. For this project that released its first recording in 1995, Malfatti worked with Vienna-based guitar player Burkhard Stangl, cellist Michael Moser, and double bass and guitar player, Werner Dafeldecker. The work, *Ohrkiste*, attempts to explore the relationship between improvisation and composition. The pieces in this recording made by ‘musicians and composers who are working towards a productive tension between the poles of improvisation and composition’ are credited to Dafeldecker and Moser. As in *Ohrkiste*, *Polwechsel* also takes into consideration the musicians’ individualities in order to build the musical score. The sleeve notes mention that the composition ‘is tailored to the experimental and improvisational skills of each of the four musicians’. Finally, this work seems to incorporate postmodern approaches since it is reorganising material rather than trying to create new material: ‘The main occupation is not search, but playful use of what has been found’.

Both *Ohrkiste* and *Polwechsel* bring together different kinds of sonic material. However, whilst *Ohrkiste* tends to blur differences between free improvisation and composition, by, for instance, creating passages between free improvisation and serialism, *Polwechsel* relies more on the idea of sharp contrasts that evoke a *musique concrète* aesthetic relying on editing and collage. For instance, ‘Nord’ starts with a few seconds of white noise fading into silence, followed by a sustained note on the cello playing on the harmonics at the same time as an electric guitar plays an intermittent pitch, with both then suddenly replaced by a glissando. These short blocs of sounds with very different sonic identities come one after the other without there being time for growth or development into something else. Rare developments occur when the music uses pointillist free improvisation language as is the case during the middle of ‘Ost’ for instance. In that section (4’30”) Malfatti performs in a pointillist manner until at some point (5’00”) his playing develops into a new sonic material (high pitched sounds) before he finally returns to what he was originally doing.

⁴⁸ ‘Polwechsel’ is a technical term from electricity that means changing polarities.

Polwechsel, and to a lesser extent, *Ohrkiste*, introduce disruption into Malfatti's free improvisation language⁴⁹ via a sort of postmodern or *musique concrète* approach that strongly resonates with the culture developing at that time of Djing and plunderphonics enabled by the access to new technologies such as personal computers. However, the beginning of Malfatti's collaboration with Polwechsel in 1993 also coincides with the production of a new piece called 'Die Temperatur der Bedeutung'⁵⁰ that initiates a second wave of responses directed by Malfatti against what he has identified as 'la traditionnelle façon de faire' ('the traditional approach') in improvisation.

'Die Temperatur der Bedeutung' consists of relatively short sounds of trombone alternating with variable periods of silence for 33'20". The score of the piece indicates different techniques (for instance, it specifies which consonants should be used to blow into the instrument) that results in white noise sounds with different qualities and dynamics. The score clearly indicates to the musician when to play and when to stop. Sometimes two sounds are made simultaneously. The piece sounds very austere and homogenous as Malfatti is systematically alternating silence and white noise sounds.

This piece is reminiscent of certain aspects of both *Ohrkiste* ('Graukanal'), as it indicates instrumental techniques very precisely, and also *Polwechsel* as it consists of musical units that are highly differentiated. However, unlike *Ohrkiste* there are no linear developments from one point to another in the music and the musical sections always consist of silence and white noises-related sounds rather than a rich palette of sonic identities as in *Polwechsel*.

In an interview with Dan Warburton, Malfatti said that the piece was created in reaction to the trombonist's disappointment with free improvisation:

⁴⁹ In 1996 Polwechsel was invited by John Butcher to play at the LMC festival. Musicians such as Robin Hayward (Szlavnic 2004, 34), Axel Dörner, John Bisset, or Burkhard Beins were possibly part of the audience. See appendix 2 (page 182).

⁵⁰ The first version of the piece was created in 1993 but Malfatti recorded a different version in 1997.

I remember playing a concert in Italy in September 1993, and while improvising, I thought: “Why are you doing this old stuff now? You don’t want to do this anymore, do you?” I got sort of angry with myself a little, and on returning home, I sat down and wrote a solo piece for trombone — “Die Temperatur der Bedeutung” — *the temperature of the meaning* — precisely to avoid the old(er) stuff, to help myself overcome my routine, to leave all those things in my rucksack behind me. (Funnily enough, the first version still had too many old things in it, but eventually I managed to scrub them out one by one.) (Warburton 2014).

After this Italian concert, when Malfatti came back to Cologne where he was living at that time, he expressed his discontent about his work with Improvised Music to improviser and composer Carlo Hinderhees, with whom he was occasionally playing free improvisation. The latter proposed that Malfatti accompany him to a painter’s studio to listen to the work of Antoine Beuger and a group of composers recently created under the name of Wandelweiser⁵¹. This event was extremely significant for Malfatti, as it brought him into contact with a group of people who he thought were working in the same direction as him.

Wandelweiser is the name of a group of composers whose work, under the influence of John Cage, is often associated with the use of silence and quiet sounds. The name, according to composer Michael Pisaro, could be translated into English as “change signpost” or “change wisely”, and originally refers to the publishing and recording company established in 1992 in Hann by composers Burkhard Schlothauer and Antoine Beuger. In this group each composer develops his or her own understanding of Cagean silence. In an interview with Bonhomme, Malfatti gives the reader some indication about his own approach towards silence:

⁵¹ The aim of the Wandelweiser association was to create a network of like-minded people whose music could not develop inside the musical institutions existing at that time in Germany and Switzerland. The first people who joined the group were Jürg Frey, Chico Mello, Thomas Stiegler, and Kunsu Shim and later they were joined by Michael Pisaro, Manfred Werder, Carlo Inderhees, Marcus Kaiser, Eva-Maria Houben, Craig Shepard, André Möller, and Anastassis Philippakopoulos. Some of these members have left, and a few others have joined but the group has now stabilised to around twenty members. Although this collective consists of composers, a link with improvisation exists throughout the numerous performers of this music who have a strong practice within the Improvised Music world such as Angharad Davies, Dominic Lash, or Lucio Capece, to only mention a few. As we shall see, Malfatti is himself one of the earliest examples of this vivid, but also in his case, tumultuous relationship between the world of free improvisation and the compositional practice of Wandelweiser.

“Malfattian silence” (thanks for this flattering naming) musicians and listeners (what’s the difference?) stop breathing, maybe you should talk about this phenomenon to James Turrell. I never stopped looking in total darkness, the more I looked in the darkness the better I could see. My eyes widened, they opened up and began to see more and more. Meanwhile — I was alone in this wonderful dark room that was part of a James Turrell exhibition in Vienna — someone came in, saw nothing and turned back to leave the room saying: “But there’s nothing in there, let’s go”. I was sitting and all those wonderful colours slowly came out of the darkness. Of course, they were there before me, but until then my eyes had not allowed them to be seen. The same is true, of course, during an almost complete silence. The more you listen, the more you can hear. You open your ears and you are able to hear better and better. It sharpens our attention and our receptivity to things to come as well as to those that already exist⁵² (Belhomme 2013, par. 8).

Comparing his understanding of silence to darkness in James Turrell’s work⁵³, Malfatti refers to a musical approach that no longer consists of reorganising the music material produced by improvisers, but rather to focus on the experience of listening. Malfatti seems to propose a music that requires to be patient to adapt as in Turrell’s exhibition to⁵⁴ a situation where, at first glance, we cannot see anything. However, listening carefully one might finally realise that each silence in Malfatti’s ‘The Temperature of the Meaning’ is different as well as each one of his trombone white noise interventions. Music as a perceptual experience seems to indicate that there exist possibilities for discovering ‘new’ sounds in what is already there but cannot be immediately perceived.

⁵² This is my own translation. The original quote is: « silence malfattien » (merci pour cette flatteuse appellation) musiciens et auditeurs (quelle est la différence ?) arrêtent de respirer, tu devrais peut-être parler de ce phénomène à James Turrell. Je n’ai jamais arrêté de regarder dans le noir total, plus je regardais dans l’obscurité mieux je pouvais voir. Mes yeux se sont agrandis, ils se sont ouverts et ont commencé à voir de plus en plus. Pendant ce temps – j’étais seul dans cette merveilleuse salle obscure qui faisait partie d’une exposition de James Turrell organisée à Vienne – quelqu’un est entré, n’a rien vu et a fait demi tour pour quitter la salle en disant: « mais, y’a rien là-dedans, allons-y ». Moi, j’étais assis et toutes ces couleurs merveilleuses sont peu à peu sorties de l’obscurité. Bien sûr, elles étaient là avant moi, mais jusque-là mes yeux ne leur avaient pas permis d’être vues. La même chose est vraie, bien sûr, lors d’un silence quasi complet. Plus tu écoutes et plus tu es en mesure d’entendre. Tu ouvres tes oreilles et te voilà en mesure d’entendre de mieux en mieux. Cela aiguise notre attention et notre réceptivité aux choses à venir comme à celle qui existent déjà (Belhomme 2013, par. 8).

⁵³ The dark room that Malfatti mentions in his interview where it is almost impossible to see anything could have to do with Turrell’s ‘Dark Space’.

⁵⁴ An exhibition about James Turrell work took place in Vienna in 1998.

Malfatti's work shows that as early as 1973, Improvised Music would incorporate Improvised Music languages within the practice; it was already a genre and nothing like non-idiomatic musical activity. First Malfatti's recording shows very well how, already at that moment, different musical styles are established (Bailey, Stevens, and AMM) and younger musicians start to develop a 'postmodern' way of playing that consciously or not blends the different manners that have been created earlier. Malfatti's career has developed around this 'postmodern' paradigm incorporating into his music many different genres until in the '90s, around the time he met with Wandelweiser composers, he developed a new kind of work based on listening. Malfatti transposes in the realm of sound the work of Turrel by creating situations that allows one to be 'Listening to yourself listening'.

The turning point in Malfatti's work, his return to composition, and his interest towards listening and silence, is motivated by a disenchantment towards his experience of free improvisation. For Malfatti, from the 1980s onwards, free improvisation became a musical practice that is always the same. To challenge 'the traditional way of doing' in improvisation⁵⁵, Malfatti explores the field of musical composition. In that area, on the one hand, he explores a postmodern approach that brings together different musical languages and sonic materials. On the other hand — and this is the direction that he comes to favour — Malfatti concentrates, under the influence of Wandelweiser composers, on a music that actively takes into account the perceptual experience of the listener.

Malfatti's work is important to me because it emphasises the musical experience from the perspective of listening, and at the same time, still involves the use of musical instruments.

⁵⁵ To move away from a postmodern musical approach that uses different styles from different periods, Malfatti reinvests the musical discourse of modernity based on novelty and change.

1.5 Reductionism

This section will focus on a movement known as Reductionism that, at the end of the '90s, developed a form of improvisation dealing with, among others, aspects such as silence, quiet dynamics, slow pace, and the sounds from the environment. By discussing London-based Reductionism practitioners, who were collaborating from the beginning with other scenes, I will also talk about artists developing similar strategies around the same time in Berlin, Vienna, and Tokyo.

Following the different elements of my experience in Istanbul, this review continues with five different sections. First, I will be paying attention to the question of making new sounds in improvisation. The starting point of my improvisation in Istanbul was the research of new sounds by exploring the capacities of our instruments. I would like to examine this feature among Reductionist musicians. Would the activity of researching 'new' sounds end up necessarily drawing our attention towards the sounds from the environment? Or, on the contrary, are these two activities detached from one another and maybe even opposed?

After this first part I examine how the notion of silence is considered by musicians referred to as 'reductionist'. As explained in the introduction, during the Istanbul episode when we stopped playing, I started to pay attention to the sounds around me. This part asks if silence among Reductionists is responsible for shifting the attention to the sounds that are not produced by the musicians.

The third part of this literature review examines how Reductionists engaged with the sounds from the environment in their work. In my experiences in Istanbul, we did not simultaneously play with our musical instruments while listening to these sounds. This research considers passages between sounds around us and sounds created by musicians. I would like to know what strategies are developed by Reductionists to bring together these two worlds.

A fourth section will draw on the nature of Reductionists' listening. Are there particular ways of listening — perhaps already explored by Reductionists — that at some point during the Istanbul experience made it possible to focus on the sounds from the environment? During the Istanbul episode when the musicians stopped playing, I experienced a relaxed state of mind and a strong sense of awareness whilst listening to the environmental sounds. Can that feeling be related to some sort of meditative practice? This final part of the literature review will look at how Reductionists engage with this idea of a contemplative musical activity.

I/ Sounds

During my improvisations in Istanbul, before we started listening to the sounds from the environment, all the participants were attempting to make and play with sounds that they were unfamiliar with. For instance, as already mentioned in the introduction, I placed a fine layer of paper on the bell of the saxophone to muffle the sound; the violinist Denitsa Minerva introduced pieces of foil between her strings; and Sébastien Branche placed objects inside the bell of his saxophone to reinforce and diminish certain frequencies.

Finding 'extended techniques' on their instruments is also one of the features of Reductionist musicians. I am strongly impressed by the Berlin-based trumpet player Axel Dörner. Londoner improviser Phil Durrant, who plays live electronics and acoustic violin, remembers 'a whole London gig without [Dörner] playing a single natural trumpet sound' (Bell 2005, 35). Dörner⁵⁶ can produce breathing sounds with his instrument resembling the white noises produced by an analog television set, sonorities that could evoke the roaring of a motor engine or high-pitch sounds that you would normally associate with electronic music instruments. Each of these are sounds that, at a first glance, appear to be homogenous, but when played repeatedly for a long period of time, reveal themselves to be full of differences.

⁵⁶ During the mid-'90s, Dörner visited London several times to play or listen to concerts such as the one organised during the LMC festival in 1996 (Beins 2011, 363).

Violinist Angharad Davies, who lives in London and has also been linked to this Reductionist musical approach (Bell 2005), explains this phenomenon as follows:

Playing one note, it's just a phase. I am seeing how a sound evolves, because it never really stays the same, it develops. I am trying to find lots of different layers within that sound, not hearing it as one note (Bell 2005, 39).

Harpist Rhodri Davies also refers to this exploration of sounds with his musical instrument when talking about 'getting the harp sounding like a saxophone or violin' (Sani 2002, par. 11). Davies has been "preparing" his harp since 1997 under the influence of bassist Simon Fell, pianist Chris Burn, and composer John Cage. What seems to be at stake in this research with preparation and extended technique, seems to be for Davies, the idea of breaking down romantic and folk music stereotypes associated with his instrument. As Davies indicates, 'I'd always had an inkling that [the harp] had more potential for exploration'. The exploration for new sounds seems to be a response to the harp world dominated by clichés 'and all those values that were inflected on me from a very young age' (Pinsent 2005, par. 21).

This exploration of the instrument is linked to the struggle with the typical image of his harp and is reflected well in this anecdote, where Davies attempts to listen to the sound of his instrument from inside:

When I play with an orchestra, and we're tuning up before the performance, I'm usually competing with the tympanies and basses who are trying to tune up at the same time! The only way I can tune is by pressing my ear against the soundboard to hear the notes. So I've had this connection with the sound inside the harp for a long time (Pinsent 2005, par. 2).

2/ Silence

In my Istanbul experiences, the musicians often stopped playing for long periods of time. Reductionism⁵⁷ is similarly associated with silence⁵⁸. As indicated to musician and music journalist Dan Warburton, by the harpist Rhodri Davies — one of the first in the UK to be associated to this movement — ‘with certain groups I am working with silence and maybe we have two or three minutes of silence within the piece which can be incredibly intense’. Davies, during the same interview, evokes a situation of silence that similarly evokes my experiences in Istanbul. As he says, ‘[i]t’s also interesting when a piece has finished but the audience doesn’t realise it’s finished, and it takes a really...really big strain to start again, because the preceding piece is still in the air, and to actually play again is difficult’ (Warburton 2002). In my own practice we did not have an audience but partly our silence could be explained by the fact that we were not sure if the piece had come to an end, and the fact that it was difficult to start a new piece. Davies’ work at that time⁵⁹ also connects with what I have done in Istanbul when he refers to a silence that ‘engulfed the space’. In Istanbul there was also this feeling that a ‘beautiful and heavy’ silence suddenly started covering everything around us when we stopped playing. Finally, Davies emphasises a state of mind during his playing that ‘demanded a lot of attention’ and focus which is also something that I experienced in the Istanbul silences.

When visiting Tokyo in 2001, multi-instrumentalist Mark Wastell and close collaborator of Rhodri Davies found an even more intense experience of silence than in London, ‘an

⁵⁷ As is often the case in art history, the names of movements are sometimes created retrospectively and do not always reflect the intentions of those artist who have been associated with that terminology. As such, tuba player Robin Hayward, one of the initiators of this musical movement warns us: ‘Reductionism was always a term that was applied from the outside. It might have been more useful to find a term that described what the music focuses on rather than the means it may have used for a time to achieve such focus’ (Beins 2011, 227). For Dörner, ‘what we call ‘Reductionism’ is actually an extension of my playing. So when I play concerts where fewer types of sound happen, and there is a lot of silence, then for me it’s an extension of my playing’.(Beins 2011, 362). For Mark Wastell it was a useful term for musicians to promote their work (Wastell 2017). You can see an example of this promotional material in appendix 3 (page 184).

⁵⁸ George Lewis notes that experiments ‘that presaged the arrival of the so-called Reductionist improvisers’ took place early on in the United States with groups like the Leo Smith-Anthony Braxton-Leroy Jenkins Trio (Lewis 2011) that released *Silence* in 1975 (recorded in 1969 in Paris).

⁵⁹ For Rhodri Davies, Reductionism only lasted from 1997 to 1999. Towards the end of that year, ‘the music was beginning to take on a more recognisable form and risked becoming a new idiom (...) The music could turn into a competition of who could play the least and use the longest silences’ (Beins 2011, 73).

absolute stillness’ as he says. In a venue called Off Site — created in late June 2000 by musician Ito Atsuhiko, and curator Ito Yukari and dedicated to Improvised Music and art exhibitions — performing musicians developed a musical approach characterised by long periods of silence. As stated by a regular member of the audience, this musical experience was arduous: ‘there might be ten minutes of silence so you have to really be patient’. For many, the music at this venue was incomprehensible. However, and against all odds, listeners who ‘couldn’t fathom what was going on’, ‘returned numerous times’ to Off Site to ‘articulate or comprehend why [they] enjoyed it’ (Plourde 2008, 280).

3/ Environment

The tuba player Robin Hayward — also involved in this reduced way of playing and interested in silence — decided, unlike Davies and Wastell, to leave London in 1998 and move to Berlin. This decision was made shortly after meeting with trombonist Radu Malfatti⁶⁰ (who actually did not live in Berlin, but Cologne) and trumpet player Axel Dörner. According to him, one of the advantages of playing music in Berlin relies on the architectural features of its musical venues. As Hayward explains, in Berlin flats ‘with their high ceilings and wooden floors, also lends itself well to putting on informal concerts’. Compare these to flats that we imagine are rather quiet in London, Hayward says, ‘the scene is often forced to retreat’ to the ‘carpeted rooms above pubs’ (Szlavnic 2004, 35). Davies also stresses this point: ‘[a] lot of London improv gigs are in rooms above pubs, and the music has to compete with jukeboxes and people talking, and it’s just so intrusive. It’s impossible to have any kind of focus, let alone a focus on small sounds or silences. So, any space where I don’t have those sounds is beneficial’ (Sani 2002, par. 6). For Hayward, ‘many of the sounds I have developed in Berlin would be virtually inaudible [in London]’ (Szlavnic 2004, 35).

⁶⁰ ‘A turning point for me was meeting and playing with the trombonist Radu Malfatti’. (Szlavnic 2004, 34)

However, one of the features of Reductionism that interests me since it connects to my experience in Istanbul, is related to the sounds from the environment. According to Hayward, who is obviously not referring here to a London pub-sound environment, silence at the period of Reductionism used to be an ‘invitation to let coincidental sounds of the environment join’. As Hayward adds, this movement was not interested in developing any musical narrative⁶¹ and as a result ‘the focus on the present moment also implied openness to the other sounds that might be taking place in the environment during the improvisation’ (Beins 2011, 223).

During a tour in Germany in 1998, Davies engaged with the sounds from the environment in his playing. Along with musicians Phil Durrant (who plays live electronics and acoustic violin), percussionist Burkhard Beins, and guitarist Michael Renkel, he discovered that when playing in a noisy venue instead of increasing the volume as musicians usually do, ‘playing quieter had the potential to draw the listener in’. Thus, during a concert in Hamburg where the trains were passing over the venue, musicians ‘decided to play only when [they] heard a train approach and stop playing when the train disappeared’ (Beins 2011, 71).

Radu Malfatti describes a similar experience in 1999 when playing with Thomas Lehn and Phil Durrant. The venue of that concert was a school hall in Germany covered by a huge plastic roof (“Dach” in German). Malfatti remembers that during the concert

there was a storm going on and the rain falling on the roof made such an incredible noise that nobody in the audience could hear a thing! Then the rain stopped, the sun came out and the roof started to crack in the heat. After a little while, the rain started again... I enjoyed the concert a lot! (Warburton 2001).

⁶¹ By the end of 1999, Hayward was, on the contrary, starting to reintroduce narrative elements and ‘by 2000 felt in a cul-de-sac with the very reduced, static music [he] had been producing’ (Szlavnic 2004, 37).

Unlike the sounds from the pub that are not ‘beneficial’⁶² to him, Davies explains that other kinds of sounds positively affect his playing. During an open-air concert in France in a small village called Mhere with Wastell, Durrant, and pianist Chris Burn⁶³ said ‘you could hear dogs barking, a cat mewling next to the stage and a bike going round the village’. Davies describes the effect that the environment has on his playing as ‘interesting’. The harpist adds that he likes, unlike some other improvisers who are more self-contained, to ‘think of my music as responding to the environment that I am in, not in a call-and-response way, but being sensitive to the room that I’m in and the sounds around me rather than playing the same in every situation’ (Pinsent 2005).

Similarly, Davies refers to a playing experience in 2005 with recordist Jean Pallandre ‘who has these fantastic microphones and a creative approach to recording’. As Davies recalls in company of clarinet player Xavier Charles and Angharad Davies they ‘were dotted in some woods in north London with all these passers-by looking at us strangely! And Jean would walk around with his mics’. For Davies this was again an ‘interesting process to play in that environment’. As a result, Davies says ‘I had to play completely different in relation to the sounds around me’ (Pinsent 2005).

Davies’ three experiences described above, provide two different examples where improvisation can be related to the sounds from the environment. In the first one, a listening situation is provoked that draws the listener in by making it difficult to hear what

⁶² Similarly, for Malfatti ‘surrounding noises of traffic, birds, fire brigades, helicopters, wind and so on are quiet ok, but, it’s true, a really noisy crowd is quite different story and I don’t find it very easy to perform in front of one. Somehow, I have the feeling that I am forcing something upon the « listener » which s/he doesn’t want to hear anyway, so I’d rather stop torturing them’ (Warburton 2001). This also evokes Onkyo musicians interest in environmental sound, but dislike of sounds made by the audience (Plourde 2008). More recently, Sachiko M told me that she was not so upset anymore with noises coming from the audience, and Malfatti described to me a very enjoyable experience where the audience, first extremely noisy, became progressively quiet as they realised that a musician was playing.

⁶³ Burn is a pivotal figure since he invited Davies and Wastell to play with him in a group (Chris Burn Ensemble) that made it possible for them to meet with Phil Durrant. Durrant was, according to Wastell, ‘extremely important to the development of lowercase [a term that is sometimes use instead of Reductionism] music in London’ (Margree 2016). Another instrumental figure is guitarist John Bisset who became a friend of Buckhard Beins when he visited London in the mid ‘90s and frequently travelled to Berlin. In Berlin, Beins replicated Bisset’s concept of his London venue called 2:13 that became an important meeting point for ‘Berlin Reductionism’ in Germany (Bell 2005, Blažanović 2012, Beins 2011). Paradoxically, Bisset was not interested in the musical developments taking place at the Berlin 2:13 (such as a tendency to bring in instructions into the improvisations) and distanced himself from this movement (personal communication 2018).

the musicians are playing due to the sounds from the train. In the two other experiences, Davies explains that the sounds of the environment affect his playing and contribute to him not just playing the same thing and being sensitive to the place that he is in.

Paris-based saxophone player Jean-Luc Guionnet explained to me that one of his musical strategies for improvising consists of considering sounds made by musicians he plays with at the same level than any other sound he can hear in the environment (Guionnet gave me the example of a truck passing by) (personal communication 2015).

4/ Listening

Another point that connects the Istanbul episode with Reductionism is my interest in investigating the extent to which listening was significant in my musical experiences, and how it did or did not relate to my musical playing. For Davies, Reductionism ‘came purely from listening, not from concepts’. This statement contrast with the fact that, according to Hayward, in Germany musicians used to talk a lot⁶⁴ about the music, whilst in London he found only a very few people were willing to discuss the music critically (Szlavnic 2004, 35).

This fact does not diminish the importance of the significant role of listening in this musical way of playing. For trombonist Malfatti, listening even goes beyond the musical practice⁶⁵. Answering a journalist about whether he is interested in ‘listening to the world of sounds around us’, Malfatti acknowledges this capacity as a ‘blessing’. Malfatti

⁶⁴ ‘Apparently it takes Berliners visiting London a while to get used to the fact that each concert is not followed by hours of verbal analysis’ (Bell 2005).

⁶⁵ If we look at a musical piece such as ‘Sprachlos’ that is basically made of repeated sounds and silences, we could say that Malfatti has been strongly influential in what we understand now as a definition (from a formal perspective) of Reductionism. Far from being a point of no return in relation to the pointillism of British Improv, this kind of music sounds to me, on the contrary, as a slow version of the same approach. As such, the dots or small units of sound that were often (but not always) played fast in Stevens’ and Watts’ music are still present but are being played extremely slow. We can perceive this progression from pointillism towards ‘Reductionism’ in groups like News from the shell and Polwechsel. The music of Malfatti, rather than developing this ‘Sprachlos’ approach and embracing Reductionism, shifts radically towards a different paradigm more interested in perceptual experiences than an idea of non-idiomatic improvisation.

continues by developing a theory about listening that consists of increasing awareness by playing or challenging our routines or habits for focusing our attention on what surrounds us: '[w]hat happens if we elevate the known into the realm of unknown, the unimportant into the realm of important? We sharpen the consciousness and I think we then are able to become aware of the acoustic environment surrounding the music — and: the music itself!!' (Warburton 2001).

5/ Meditation

In my experience of listening to sounds from the environment in Istanbul, there was a calm evocation of a sort of meditative state. This state was also identified by one of the Reductionist musicians in one of his texts. Hayward refers to this topic whilst talking about concert series at the Zionskirche in Berlin that were organised by composer Carlo Inderhees from 1997 to 2000. According to Hayward, during these events 'it seemed that silence was used partly as a way to structure time, and partly as an invitation to meditation, taking very literally Cage's aesthetic of music's purpose being to sober and quiet the mind' (Altena 2012, 185). Inderhees is member of a group of composers called Wandelweiser that was created in 1992. Trombonist Malfatti, who is also part of this movement, refers to 'the meditational aspect of certain human knowledge', which is essentially talking about the capacity of being sensitive, or not, to sounds from the environment.

When reading interviews about Reductionism, it does seem that this was a musical movement developing against their musical predecessors. The work of drummer John Stevens, considered as the creator of a reactive way of improvising (sometimes called 'plinky plonk'), was at that time understood as the model to avoid. Reductionism introduces novelty as being led by a new generation of musicians coming from different

musical backgrounds and playing relatively unusual instruments within that scene⁶⁶. However, through their idea of doing something other than their predecessors⁶⁷ by following the characteristics of their instruments, Rhodri Davies — and using listening techniques that evokes more Schaeffer’s reduced listening or acoustic ecology or Oliveros’ deep listening than free improvisation (such as Angharad Davies when listening to a single note) — these musicians are also reproducing the idea of the early figures in improvisation of not doing the same thing but exploring ‘something else’⁶⁸.

Reductionism is interesting to me as it sometimes meets up with environmental sounds, like in the case of Rhodri Davies during his outdoor concert. However, apart from the case of Jean Pallandre’s specific projects with field recording, there is no specific interest towards this musical aspect.

1.6 Onkyo

In late June 2000, musician Ito Atsuhiko, and curator Ito Yukari, created a space in Tokyo called Off Site dedicated to Improvised Music and art exhibitions. The so-called Onkyo musicians performing there developed a musical approach characterised by long periods of silence. As stated by a regular member of the audience, this musical experience was arduous: ‘there might be ten minutes of silence, so you have to really be patient’ (Plourde 2008, 280). For many, the music at this venue was incomprehensible. However, and against all odds, listeners who ‘couldn’t fathom what was going on’, ‘returned numerous times’ to Off Site to ‘articulate or comprehend why [they] enjoyed it’.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Tuba (Hayward), violin (Davies), or harp (Davies) were not so common instruments in the in the scene, but they were not totally absent.

⁶⁷ According to Ignaz Schick, in the German context there existed a real difficulty for young musicians to find recognition as the oldest generation of improvisers (with exceptions such as Sven-Ake Johansson) were not interested in their music and would not allow them to play in their venues or festivals (personal Communication 2018). In the case of Hayward, it seems that, due to the musical approach in the UK, he would actually play less in London than in Berlin. Thus, he might produce the impression amongst Londoners that his musical aesthetic was more radical than it really was (Szlavnic 2004, 34).

⁶⁸ Paradoxically, the disconnection in Improvised Music is a way of being connected to its history. Along with AMM who were taking their distance from Ornette Coleman or Joseph Holbrooke from Bill Evans’ trio, Reductionists would do the same with their predecessors in the musical scene.

⁶⁹ Plourde, 'Disciplined listening', p. 282.

At Off Site, Onkyo musicians shared the same space but did not have an understandable way of communicating. As declared by the Off Site performer Nakamura Toshimaru, ‘when I play with other musicians, I don’t play with them’ (Novak 2010, 46). The lack of interaction made it difficult to grasp in which ways musicians were creating a collective musical identity. Onkyo music interrogates where the social boundary is situated that makes the music audible.

Regarding the fact that the roles of the musicians were blurred, the musical territories also became less distinct. Musicians performing at Off Site developed a ‘panacoustic listening’ — to borrow Peter Szendy’s expression⁷⁰. They could hear and overhear all sounds occurring during the concerts without being upset by their source. During talks with the musicians after the performances and through publications and internet blogs, the audience was also taught how to include almost any sound within the performance⁷¹. For David Novak, the music at Off Site used to be ‘a mix of performed and environmental noises’ where sounds like ‘the whistle of the tofu vendor and the wooden clappers of people calling “beware of fire”⁷²’ were part of the concert. Likewise, just as Wim Wenders’ angels in his film *Wings of Desire* are able to overcome the boundaries of what can be heard (perceiving human thoughts), Off Site’s listening crosses ‘the often-open door’ of the venue to include, as part of the music sounds from elsewhere.

During the same period in Europe, Reductionism was also concerned with silence and environmental sounds. Inspired by John Cage and his interest in the notion of silence, the trombonist Radu Malfatti declared during a 2001 interview that ‘what is needed today is not faster, higher, stronger, louder but to know all about “the lull in the storm”⁷³. The

⁷⁰ Szendy, Peter. *Sur écoute. Esthétique de l’espionnage*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2001.

⁷¹ As observed by Plourde at Off Site, any sound was admitted excepted the ones not produced by the musicians within the space (like the sounds from the audience or the air conditioning). In Plourde, ‘Disciplined Listening in Tokyo: Onkyo and Non-Intentional Sounds’, p. 290.

⁷² These sounds are mentioned by Nakamura Toshimaru in Novak, ‘Playing Off Site’, p. 39.

⁷³ Interview with Dan Warburton in Paristransatlantic, <http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/malfatti.html> [accessed 25 July 2014]. Similarly, John Cage has declared: ‘I wanted to be quiet in a non-quiet situation’. In Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, p. 235.

harpist Rhodri Davies, remembering the sound during a concert of ‘dogs barking, a cat mewing next to the stage and a bike going round the village’, acknowledged during another interview made a year later the ‘interesting’ effect that the environment has on his improvisation⁷⁴.

Similarities between Reductionism and Onkyo show that it would be wrong to consider Tokyo’s musician’s work as detached from any external influence. On the contrary, through their interest in environmental sounds, their dislike of interaction and intentionality, and their focus on silence and sounds for themselves,⁷⁵ Onkyo musicians seem to clearly converge with the concerns of an international music avant-garde likely to have been inspired by the work of composer John Cage. For instance, Cage’s interest in ‘sounds for themselves’, not created intentionally by musicians or coming from the environment, is widely known. In regard to improvisation, Cage’s views were generally negative, but he nevertheless remained interested in exploring an improvisation that could be considered as ‘an absence of intention’ (Kostelanetz 2003, 225)⁷⁶. As Reductionists, Onkyo musicians can ‘speak’, through their silent Improvised Music, an international language of musical experimentation⁷⁷. Yet, despite the correspondences, Reductionist’s and Onkyo’s silence does not seem to respond to the same logic of action. While Reductionists refuse to follow an avant-garde path — the fatigue and limitations of their predecessors — Onkyo’s musicians have built their silent music and accepted the practical restraints of playing at Off Site.

⁷⁴ Interview with Dan Warburton in *Paristransatlantic*, <http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/davies.html> [accessed 25 July 2014].

⁷⁵ ‘Onkyo’ means sound in Japanese.

⁷⁶ Kostelanetz’s book (2003) about Cage brings together some of his ideas about improvisation. According to Cage, silence relates to the unknown (‘where sound can be born at any time’ p. 230); while, on the contrary, improvisation engages with the already known (‘improvisation is generally playing what you know’ p. 227) Nevertheless, Cage also considered at the beginning and end of his career that it could be possible to experience the unfamiliar through improvisation as ‘an absence of intention’ (p. 225) when ‘finding ways to free the act of improvisation from taste and memory and likes and dislikes’ (p. 90).

⁷⁷ Perhaps the main statement of Reductionism and Onkyo in Improvised Music is not simply a new musical form interested in silence, but the fact of bringing this practice, against Derek Bailey’s ideas, within the field of experimental music. As Bailey says in his book ‘the attitudes and precepts associated with the avant-garde have very little in common with those held by most improvisors’. He continues saying that even though innovations are made with this music ‘the desire to stay ahead of the field is not common among improvisors’. Bailey concludes, emphasising that ‘as regards method, the improviser employs the oldest in music making’ (Bailey 1993, 83).

When mentioning its origins, Reductionists have elaborated their narrative around the figure of an historical crossroad pointing out the future and past. For instance, in the early '90s, as a result of listening to the recordings of the first generation of improvisers from the early 1970s, the tuba player Robin Hayward acknowledged the necessity for a change. Referring to improvisations 'containing lots of energy', he remembers: 'I couldn't help thinking that much of what I was hearing live was still being produced within a similar paradigm'⁷⁸ (Altena 2012, 185). In a similar manner, the harpist Rhodri Davies recalls that during his beginnings he could also identify these 'first-generation musicians'⁷⁹ having the 'tendency to play all the time, to fill the space with frantic screechy-scratchy improv'. Unhappy with that 'paradigm' associated with the beginnings of improvisation Davies, like Hayward, decided 'to focus more on different paces, silences and reduced material'⁸⁰.

Likewise, Malfatti situates himself within the Improvised Music scene by identifying and rejecting the existing practices to introduce a 'new' approach attentive to quiet sounds. In his discourse, assembled according to a modernist paradigm that separates the new from the old, Malfatti draws a line between the 'old stuff', the 'stagnation', the 'inertia', the 'old lads', the 'routine', the 'hopelessly old fashioned', the 'well-trodden paths', and the 'regressive' that correspond to the 'active' and 'energy loaded' improvisation and, on the other side, the 'true avant-garde', the 'new fipgressive', and the 'up to date' that reveals his music to be interested in silence⁸¹.

⁷⁸ Hayward's experience of listening to Improvised Music recording occurs exactly at the same time as the founder of Emanem, In 1995 Martin Davidson began to publish recordings from the '70s in compact disc format. Listening to Improvised Music as part of an archive is significant since, according to Boris Groys (2014, 21), 'the demand for the new arise primarily when old values are archived and so protected from the destructive work of time. Where no archives exist, or where their physical existence is endangered, people prefer to transmit tradition intact rather than innovate (...).'

⁷⁹ This expression has been borrowed from the Hayward interview.

⁸⁰ Interview with Dan Warburton in *Paristransatlantic*, <http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/davies.html> [accessed 25 July 2014].

⁸¹ Interview with Dan Warburton in *Paristransatlantic*, <http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/malfatti.html> [accessed 25 July 2014].

While Malfatti associates his silent musical practice with a ‘critical analysis or issue-taking with our cultural surroundings’ (‘we are surrounded by noises and sensory stimulation’)⁸², Toshimaru Nakamura, an Onkyo related performer, explains that musicians at Off Site ‘were only playing quietly because the neighbours would have complained if we played any louder’ (Novak 2010, 52). As mentioned by anthropologist Lorraine Plourde in her article about Off Site, this venue ‘occupied a small two-floor wooden house, with similar noise restrictions to that of apartment buildings (apâto), in which sound easily penetrates the adjoining houses and apartments’ (Plourde 2008, 280). David Novak mentions that Off Site ‘occupied one of a handful of small traditional wooden houses hastily rebuilt in the years after World War II’. Whilst Reductionist’s silence is presented as an artistic outcome of modern times by means of a terminology borrowed from the tradition of the historical avant-gardes, Onkyo’s silence is foregrounded in a very pragmatic and unglamorous way in relation to a dated and small place.

Reductionists’ statements point out silence as part of a strategy, common to any avant-garde artistic group to overcome the limits of the art field⁸³ and establish a position in it. According to Michel de Certeau, in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, a strategy is ‘the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power can be isolated from an environment’ (De Certeau 1988, xix). Identifying ‘the other’ Malfatti, Hayward, and Davies detach themselves from a former environment to create a new one. Connecting with De Certeau’s description of a strategy they ‘assume a place that can be circumscribed as proper and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it’.⁸⁴ On the other hand a tactic is described by Certeau as ‘a calculus which cannot count on a “proper” nor thus on a border-line

⁸² Warburton, *Paristransatlantic*.

⁸³ According to Pierre Bourdieu, a field is a ‘space of positions’. The artistic field ‘is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces’. The structure of the field is ‘the structure of the distribution of the capital of specific properties which governs success in the field and the winning of the external or specific profits (such as literary prestige) which are at stake in the field’ (Bourdieu, 1993, 30).

⁸⁴ I believe that the notion of silence is the ‘proper’ that gives to Reductionism its originality. Simultaneously ‘silence’ also represents the limits of its originality since that ‘proper’ is largely indebted to the composer John Cage.

distinguishing the other as a visible totality' (De Certeau 1988, xix)⁸⁵. Onkyo's sounds getting into someone else's place (the neighbor), musicians have to develop their logic of action according to the will of the other. Silence and quiet sounds are part of a tactic that 'manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities"' (De Certeau 1988, xix).

According to Lorraine Plourde, the music played at Off Site 'was often half-jokingly called by some as *oyaji* (old man music), referring to — in a slightly derogatory manner — the person living adjacently'. Ito Atsuhiko who co-created the venue 'credits Off Site's neighbour's constant noise complaints for indirectly creating this new form of music' (Plourde 2007, 280). Paradoxically, it is the non-listener, the one that is not coming to the concerts, the one that does not understand it according to a musical criterion, the one that, at the end, introduces in the musical field a way of listening differently. Since there is no 'border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality and the "tactic insinuates itself into the other's place"',⁸⁶ Onkyo's silence results in a way of listening through the ears of someone else: the (non-intentional) listening of the 'old man'. By blurring the margins of a community of listeners with different agendas, the 'Off site listening' also blurs musical territories.

Onkyo's silence has been informed by the international concerns of an Improvised Music scene, that in the Western world, enters the field of the experimental music avant-garde by pursuing the discourse established by American composer John Cage around the notion of silence and reacting against a so-called first generation of improvisers. Yet, Onkyo's silence does not simply imitate reductionist concerns nor foregrounds local specificities, like Zen's quietness that could be easily readable for a western audience. Onkyo's silence gains its singularity as being the result of a particular tactic playing with the unknown and unpredictable 'non-listener' that displaces the concerns of the international Improvised Music scene 'off site' within the specific context of a venue in Tokyo. Silence's distinctiveness in Onkyo's music relies on musicians' inclusion of the 'non-listener'.

⁸⁵ I have added my own modifications to Steven Rendall's original translation.

⁸⁶ Original text in French says: 'la tactique n' a pour lieu que celui de l'autre'.

In relation to my Istanbul experience what interests me in the Onkyo episode is that they also take into consideration environmental sounds, and at the same time, they improvise with their musical instruments. In Onkyo's work the production of sounds is not simply related to how musicians can hear environmental sound but, following Onkyo's narrative, it depends on the way musicians imagine how other people (their neighbours) perceive sounds. Onkyo's work implies that learning about the diversity of listening (such as the way their neighbours might perceive the sounds musicians are doing) also involves a process of teaching these discoveries to their audience (explaining to their public about the importance of environmental sound in their music)

1.7 Conclusion improvisation

Far from being unusual, the interest in silence amongst Improvised Music practitioners has been significant since the start of this musical practice. This is seen in AMM as part of their exploratory approach; however, according to Prevost, they lost interest in it when they began learning from Cage. It is also seen in SME as a counterpart to sound, through Joseph Holbrooke as a way of stopping role play (Oxley), or as part of Bryars' way of playing (certainly influenced by Cage). For Malfatti and the Reductionists, it is part of a discourse of change and modernity, and for Onkyo it is situated within a local narrative.

Environmental sound is recurrent in some of their work. For AMM these sounds are sometimes perceived during the moments of silence. For instance, during an AMM outdoor concert, musicians stopped playing and audience and performers spent, according to Prévost (Personal communication 2017), a long time listening to birds. For Stevens, it is part of a listening method that aims to create group balance. In his exercises, Stevens dismisses an interest in environmental sounds for themselves, but acknowledges them as an 'aid to achieving a sound balance' (Stevens 2007, 61). For Malfatti and the Reductionists, these sounds sometimes occur during a performance and are welcome, but not aimed. This was seen during Malfatti's recorded concert that was later named *Dach* when released (with the rain falling unexpectedly on the roof of the venue), and Rhodri

Davies' outdoor concert in France which contained unanticipated dog-barking, mewing cats and bicycle sounds (see chapter 1 section 1.5). For Onkyo, these sounds occur as part of their quiet music and their specific way of listening that identifies their scene (a local narrative). Musician Nakamura Toshimaru refers to sounds that could be perceived during concerts at Off Site, such as the whistle of the tofu vendors (see chapter 1 section 1.6).

Environmental sound could be defined here in many ways. It could involve sounds from outside the concert hall coming in, such as the rain, or, when playing outdoors, the sounds of animals or events occurring in the area such as a bike passing by. However, apart from being considered as something that is simply situated around oneself spatially (such as birds, bikes...) these sounds can be first of all understood as physically heard at all times (and it can be a bird but also a saxophone harmonic) but that are not necessarily audible in the sense of one focusing attention on them.

How can sounds that are heard (but remain inaudible) become noticed by musicians and an audience? In the context of the Onkyo musicians, environmental sounds are those that become audible thanks to a discourse. The sounds of the whistling tofu vendor could certainly be heard by musicians and the audience during the concert, but they were not necessarily audible according to the Onkyo musician's narrative until the musicians taught their audience (through internet blogs and conversations) about the possibility of including these sounds as part of the music.

Not all musicians would agree on this. For instance, guitar player Derek Bailey — even though he wrote a book saying this — would rather take his distance with the elaboration of a discourse for 'only an academic would have the temerity to mount a theory of improvisation' and 'improvisation has no existence outside of its practice' (Bailey 1993, x). Improvised Music here joins Sontag's description of silence as the need for the ineffable to reach some kind of 'authentic' experience — to borrow a terminology also used by Bailey (Bailey 2004, 60).

In practice, that idea seems to be confirmed by the work of some practitioners. For instance, by continuing to play or remain silent, it looks like musicians can perform environmental sounds. This was the case at the concert with Malfatti and his collaborators' when they started noticing the sounds of the rain hitting the roof of the venue they were playing at, as they could have interrupted the concert and resumed it later. By deciding to keep going, they gave the sounds of rain a form within the context of a musical experience. That could be also the case with AMM when they stopped playing during their concert for a very long time, making audible the sounds of the birds within the musical experience.

It nonetheless remains unclear if the discourse — that, in the case of Onkyo — is explicit whether it necessarily needs to be articulated with words to become operative. That is indeed one of the main ideas of Foucault or Bourdieu who both say that discourses, the set of ideas that give meaning to an experience and frame the way one perceives the world, exist beyond their manifestation in words by being incorporated into the practice itself.

Chapter 2 Context Listening

2.1 Acoustic Ecology: R. Murray Schafer

To better understand the context in which the Istanbul listening experience took place, I would like to present some of the ideas of Canadian composer, R. Murray Schafer. Around the time of this first experience involving environmental sounds, I was reading his book called *The Tuning of the World*, which focuses on this topic. Below, I will present who R. Murray Schafer is and some of his ideas that resonate with my research.

R. Murray Schafer was born in 1933. He studied at the Royal Conservatory of Music and the University of Toronto in 1952. He then lived in Vienna and in London where he studied informally with the British composer, Peter Racine Fricker, and wrote the book, *British Composers in Interview*. When Schafer returned to Canada he began teaching at Simon Fraser University. With grants from UNESCO and the Donner Canadian Foundation, he set up the World Soundscape Project in 1969 to study the relationships between people and their acoustic environment.

Schafer created the term ‘acoustic ecology’ which ‘is concerned with the relationship of sounds to their environment’ (Schafer 1992, 119). According to Schafer, when this relationship has become unbalanced one can speak of noise pollution. For Schafer, modern societies often go hand in hand with loud environments and that can pose a real threat to humans’ hearing and general well-being. The work of Schafer consists of developing awareness towards environmental sounds to face ecological issues related to sound.

To develop this awareness, Schafer has created a set of exercises. Many of them can be found in his book, *A Sound Education*. Thanks to these exercises, experienced listeners would be able, according to Schafer, to ‘tune’ the world harmoniously as if environmental sounds were part of a musical composition. Below you can find a description of some of

the exercises mentioned in this book that resonate with my research and listening experience in Istanbul.

2.1.1 Observing sounds

The exercises below emphasise the practice of observing and measuring sounds.

To become aware of the soundscape, Schafer developed a series of exercises that consist of measuring how often a sound is repeated in a certain place. In exercise 7 (p.24), Schafer gives the example of someone standing on a busy street corner and counting car horns for ten minutes per hour over a nine-hour period. Exercise 8 suggests the possibility of doing the same activity but selecting other kinds of sounds such as barking dogs or passing motorcycles.

Exercise 61 (p.87) consists of repeating one word for a long period of time. Schafer explains how to do this piece and as well as its effects. He asserts that the fact is that the more one repeats a sound and gets to know it, the more ‘it takes on totally new and unexpected meanings’. For instance, when repeating (for several minutes) the word ‘animal’ at a certain point, the word ‘ceases to signify anything and just seems to hang in the air as a meaningless sound object’.

In exercise 63 (p.91), the Canadian composer shares a sonic phenomenon with participants which was previously observed by the Greek philosopher, Zeno. Schafer quotes Zeno as saying, ‘when a kernel of corn is dropped on the floor it makes a particular sound, but if a whole sack of corn is dumped on the floor it makes a sound that is not the sum of all the individual kernels of corn, but a totally different and seemingly unrelated sound’.

Exercise 84 (p.120) consists of conducting a survey to know what the sounds are that disturb a community. The idea then is to contrast the results with the existing legislation

available in that place. If there is no anti-noise legislation another exercise would consist of drawing a model by-law, reflecting the findings discovered thanks to the survey and sending them to the local authorities.

Exercise 92 (p.130) invites participants to reflect on pleasurable sounds by asking themselves ‘in what specific way does your park provide pleasant attractions for the ear?’

2.1.2 Remembering and imitating sounds

In exercise 10, Schafer invites participants to find a continuous sound (Schafer gives the example of an electrical or ventilator hum) and then hum this tone whilst moving away from the original source. When returning to the point of departure, students would have to compare their hum with their original model and reflect on the similarities and differences.

Exercise 32 (p.52) consists of paying attention to a sonic action that involves throwing a crushed paper ball against a wall. Careless listeners, according to Schafer, would only notice and remember the moment when the ball strikes the wall. Attentive listeners, on the other hand, would notice many other details such as the sound of the arm being raised or even the sound of the paper leaving the arm. The description of sounds made by the ‘careless listener’ illustrates ‘how weak our ability to remember sounds accurately has become’.

Exercise 43 (p.63) invites participants to create ‘nature concerts’ that consist of imitating sounds from a rural or urban environment with one’s voice. Quoting an ethnomusicologist, Schafer says this kind of practice is common among aural societies. The point of developing this practice is that it is ‘only by uttering (outring) that can we demonstrate that our perception has been complete and accurate’ (p.63). Making sounds is, in this case, a sort of evidence of our listening.

Exercise 56 (p.81) also engages with the practice of imitation. In this case Schafer asks his students to use their voice to imitate a very specific sound such as a bamboo chime, an alarm clock, or a mechanical toy. According to Schafer, attempting to imitate and reproduce a sound is how one is able to comprehend its parameters. In his opinion, this practiced is linked to the training of musicians who ‘spend many hours imitating musical sounds’.

Exercise 76 (p.107) is concerned with the training of aural memory. Schafer suggests that the teacher should give students a word at the beginning of the day and ask them to repeat it later the same day or the next. Another exercise (number 77, p.108) asks students to remember a musical tone. Schafer recalls an episode where he asked students to remember a pitch and then to sing it all together the next day. He mentions that the tension in vocal chords could be a method to remember the pitch. When asking students to sound back the tone the next day, Schafer describes it as ‘an exquisite chromaticism’.

2.1.3 Listening to Silence

Exercise 17 (p.36) is about silence. It consists of declaring a moratorium on speech for a few hours. Schafer links this exercise with world philosophies and religions that ‘recommend periods of silence and contemplation to counteract the haste and confusion of our lives’. Schafer also refers to silence ‘as a means for achieving clairaudience’ that involves, for him, ‘exceptional hearing abilities, particularly with regard to environmental sound’ (Schafer 1994, 272). Quietness, according to him, is also a way of finding more things to listen to.

Further on in his book, Schafer continues working on the notion of silence but this time from the perspective of its meaning (see exercise 70, p.100). The exercise for students consists of completing the following sentence: ‘Silence is...’. In addition to this instruction, Schafer includes some examples from previous workshops in his book. Children he worked with during these workshops told him that ‘silence is thinking’ or

‘silence is daydreaming’, whilst some adults declared that ‘silence is boring’ and ‘silence is emptiness’. According to Schafer ‘the attitude of the adults seems more negative than those of the children’. Schafer also asks, ‘if other cultures might see more positive values in silence’⁸⁷.

Exercises 71 (p.102) and 72 (p.103) are also concerned with silence, as Schafer asks students to make a movement without making any sound. Schafer indicates that if a person makes a sound he or she ‘should freeze, analyse why the sound occurred and try to avoid making it again’. He further suggests that this exercise is particularly suitable for ‘unruly groups of people’ as ‘they can be brought to a point of absolute concentration while doing them’.

2.1.4 Imagining sounds

In exercise 88 (p.125), Schafer asks students to ‘find a sound to enhance the environment of your home’ whilst exercise 89 (p.127) indicates the opposite action: ‘eliminate a disagreeable sound from your home (...)’. In the instructions that go with the first exercise, Schafer indicates that these exercises are useful for soundscape design. Moreover, this work, which consists of ‘orchestrating’ the sounds of our everyday, should be made by all. To do this, Schafer explains that one must first ‘learn to listen; then we learn to think about sounds; and finally we begin to organise them in more satisfying patterns’.

Schafer’s exercises support the idea that it is possible to change one’s way of listening. However, rather than suggest that there might be different ways of listening, one gets the impression that what he is teaching us is his way of listening. Observing sounds involves objective parameters (such as counting sounds in exercise 61), but it also involves subjective parameters (such as what a pleasant sound is in exercise 92). It seems that in

⁸⁷ In *The Tuning of the World*, Schafer had already answered this question as he evokes — through Lao-tzu; Jala-ud-din Rumi, Bedouins and people he met in Persian villages as well as the Indian mystic Kirpal Singh — these other cultures which are supposed to be more sensitive to silence (Schafer 1994, 258).

some cases the distinction is blurred, as for Schafer, certain sounds that are linked to modernity seem to be objectively unpleasant. The tuning of the world that these exercises aim to achieve seems to consider harmony as a universal concept. Different systems of tuning are not necessarily taken into account by Schafer's musical practice, and consequently, the different ways in which listening can be manifest.

Schafer's exercises directly relate to my experience in Istanbul as they deal with listening to environmental sounds. With Schafer's exercises it is possible to make sounds and to listen to environmental sounds as part of the same practice. This seems to indicate that my experience in Istanbul was actually one single activity and not two different practices alternating. However, from Schafer's perspective, it seems that there is a way of listening that one should learn — the correct one — whilst in free improvisation, musicians seem on the contrary, to be against any sort of stable definition or set of established musical values. Furthermore, in free improvisation unexpected sounds are sometimes loud and uncanny and this does not always connect with the idea of 'pleasant attractions for the ear' and harmonious sounds mentioned by Schafer. Would it be possible to develop a practice that, as in Schafer's work, includes listening to environmental sounds and making sounds but without necessarily building this practice around the figure of a 'good' listener?

2.2 Reduced listening: Pierre Schaeffer and Michel Chion

Around the same time that I was discovering the work of R. Murray Schafer, I also became particularly interested in Pierre Schaeffer's — and a few years later — Michel Chion's ideas. In this next section, I will refer to Pierre Schaeffer's 'reduced listening' as developed by composer Michel Chion, in his book, *Le son, traité d'acoulogie* (1998).

Pierre Schaeffer (1910—1995) was a French engineer and music composer who developed new ways of making music by using technologies available at that time in radio studios. Schaeffer's music used recorded sounds and electronically-generated sounds that were

edited and processed in the music studio. One of his first music compositions, ‘Étude aux chemins de fer’ (1948), consists of different recordings of trains. As the sounds used in *musique concrète* could not be measured and named like those made by musical instruments, Schaeffer created a system of description and classification that he called Solfège of the sound object (Chion 2016, 169). Sound objects are defined in Michel Chion as ‘every sonic phenomenon and event perceived as an ensemble, as a coherent whole — and heard by means of reduced listening, which targets it for itself, in-de-pendently of its provenance or its signification’ (Chion 2016, 171). In Schaeffer’s system, any sound could be part of a musical composition as long as it was detached from its cause. ‘Reduced listening’ in Schaeffer’s terms, is a manner of paying attention to sounds ‘for themselves’ without taking into consideration the cause that has originated them.

Michel Chion (1947) was Schaeffer’s personal assistant in the early ‘70s at the National conservatory of Music. His book, *Le son, traité d’acoulogy* (1998), is inspired by Schaeffer’s most important concepts such as the sound object and reduced listening. As the title suggests, this book is particularly interesting to me as it emphasises how listening works⁸⁸. Below, I will foreground significant findings on listening by Chion that are useful for my research.

2.2.1 Language, performative listening and silence

In his book, Chion stresses the role of language in the experience of listening. According to Chion, ‘the ear canal’s structure allows the privileging of frequencies within the range of human speech, while it tends to eliminate or attenuate sounds that are apt to impede verbal comprehension, namely, bass frequencies’ (Chion 2016, 19). Often, Chion uses the word *entendre* (hear) that in French also means to understand (*comprendre*), as if the activity of listening had to do with the act of decoding sounds. For Chion, the world becomes ‘legible’ because one has good descriptive tools:

⁸⁸ According to Chion, acoulogy ‘is the science of what one hears considered from every angle’ (2016, 210).

When it is a matter of abstract objects, the richness of our descriptive references renders the visual world legible to our eyes. The visual world no more than the sonic world is given to us as structured from the outset. Rather, this structuration is a product of education, language, and culture' (Chion 2016, 60).

According to Chion listening is performative: 'when things are said, their manner of being changes' (2016, 13). Naming is, for the composer, a deconditioning exercise that allows 'a new type of preperceptual expectation and a much more elaborated structuration of listening' (Ibid, 28). Chion suggests that hearing (*entendre*) is 'already a form of making' (2016, 57), which seems to relate to Alfred Tomatis' idea that 'one can only emit vocally what one hears' (Ibid, 15).

Whilst discussing the work of Cage, Chion argues that silence is a sound that doesn't speak (2016, 49). This does not mean an absence of sound, but he seems to refer to sounds that are unprocessed, raw, or unfiltered⁸⁹. What he suggests is that, 'in a sense, an infant hears more objectively than we do insofar as he or she does not yet filter the sonic whole in order to extract the useful signal' (Chion 2016, 13).

2.2.2 The audition of sounds

Below, I have gathered significant observations made by Chion on the perception of sounds in relation to frequency, noise, silence, and movement. He states that 'audition is easier and more detailed at a low or moderate sound level than at an elevated one' (2016, 22). He also indicates that 'bass sounds mask more than high-pitched sounds' (Chion

⁸⁹ Chion's discourse evokes the idea of a continuum of sounds that could be compared to what I experienced in Istanbul. Following his ideas, it is probably due to my knowledge of Schaeffer ideas that I was able to perceive these sounds and give to them a meaning: 'The Schaefferian criteria provide the means (...) to begin to perceive units, points, and lines within the apparently undifferentiated continuum of the audible universe. Needless to say, it is not a matter of little landmarks placed here - and there, and we cannot reduce everything that is presented to our ears to these basic forms. But in order for the apparent sonic "flux" to little by little change in appearance, it suffices that it be punctuated, carved up, partially structured by the forms that we peel away from it and by the sound maps and more or less shifting types that we learn to delineate within it' (Chion 2016, 60).

2016, 26). Furthermore, for the composer, high-pitched sounds pass through other sounds more easily than low-frequency sounds.

Chion indicates that noise is necessary to appreciate the clarity of music. The sounds of a guitar, for instance, would be reinforced, thanks to the noises produced by the finger when touching the strings. Chion indicates in his book that any musical system requires what is located outside of it and seems to be foreign (Chion 2016, 63). In addition, he suggests that a sound that is moving is easier to locate than one that is static. If the listener moves the head, the sound will change (especially if that is a high-pitched sound). Also, a sound that moves away becomes a different sound (it is not simply the same sound, but softer according to Chion).

Chion also asserts that ‘the sound that you stop hearing or producing releases or allows other sounds, which you previously could not make out, to come into perception’ (2016, 85). He argues that ‘a sound must be silenced in order for another to exist’. Chion observes that the silence that follows the interruption of a sound gives the impression that this silence is listening to us (2016, 61). Silence makes our listening more accurate but also give us the impression that something or someone is listening to us. Silence, according to Chion, is ‘like a bright light illuminating us’⁹⁰.

In his book, Chion explains that listening is not simply an activity of passive recognition, but it is also, in a way, about rebuilding or restoring the sounds we can hear. For instance, ‘an octave is as a rule perceived as shorter and more compressed in the high range than in the middle’ (Chion 2016, 22). As a result, when listening to music one corrects (unconsciously) this effect to compensate this deformation. Chion also refers to the ‘cocktail party effect’ to describe how the process of listening involves ‘making’ sounds (p.27). In situations where one cannot perceive all the sounds that are produced during a conversation because of noise, ‘listening’ recreates the missing sounds.

⁹⁰ ‘An exceptionally quiet environment puts us in a position to be able to make out the smallest sound, but also to be able to be everywhere heard. Silence is then like a bright light illuminating us. This silence makes us vulnerable with respect to the sounds that we make, whereas the sound [bruit] of another’s voice is like a mask in relation to any sounds [bruits] that we produce’ (Chion 2016, 91).

According to Chion, one does not strictly listen to a sound from the beginning to the end, but rather just to the beginning. He explains that the ear, after a few seconds, anticipates how the sound will end. Consequently, it is much more surprising for the ‘ear’ to pay attention to the beginning of a sound than to its ending. For Chion, all sounds are continuous or linked to each other. It is in the process of listening that one separates one sound from another. For Chion, perceiving sounds involves a process of pre-perception. One does hear sounds, or rather recognises them, according to a grid of existing sounds already heard in the past or similar to those already heard. ‘The ear’ restores sounds, rather than inventing them.

From Chion’s ideas, we can note that language is fundamental to the process of listening. If one does not understand a sound (*entendre*), he or she might not be able to produce it or even hear it. Nevertheless, it remains unclear if, for Chion, the language of sounds is universal or does change according to different cultures. For instance, is the diversity of languages linked to the diversity of ways of perceiving sounds?

If sounds are always continuous, it might be that in my Istanbul experience I would have been able to, for a few moments, hear this continuity and experience a sort of pre-language listening or listening without hearing (in the sense of *comprendre*). However, if what we can hear is informed by language, how could I have ignored — during the Istanbul experience — what I had learnt from R. Murray Schafer’s literature about environmental sound?

2.3 Sound in itself: John Cage

John Cage was an American musical composer (1912–1992) who studied with the Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg. Cage developed musical strategies based on the opportunity ‘to approach each sound as *itself*’ (Kostelanetz 2003, 232) as he considered

that relying on their own taste would lead musicians to represent themselves, rather than making any music.

One of his most renowned works is *4'33''*, a piece that consists of 'silence'. *4'33''* is, according to Cage, a piece inspired by the American composer Charles Ives' 'romantic essay about sitting in a rocking chair, on the front porch looking out toward the mountains, "listening to your own symphony"' (Kostelanetz 2003, 234). This work evokes my Istanbul experience where musicians were not producing any sounds with their musical instrument, and thus they potentially became aware of environmental sound.

Below I will present some of Cage's foundational ideas about improvisation, environmental sound, and silence to scrutinise if — following the similarities between my Istanbul episode, when listening to environmental sounds, and *4'33''* — Cage's ideas have shaped my own musical experience involving environmental sounds. The information below is drawn from the book *Conversing with Cage* (Kostelanetz 2003).

2.3.1 Improvisation

John Cage has, on numerous occasions, criticised the practice of improvisation. He states that 'if [improvisers] do anything, then they do what they remember or what they like' (Kostelanetz 2003, 224). Moreover, he argues that the problem with improvisation is

the return of things that have been learned or to which one has become accustomed — sometimes consciously, deliberately, sometimes insidiously. Phrases thought to be original are only articulations heard a long time ago (Kostelanetz 2003, 229).

Cage's derogatory views on improvisation are well-illustrated by an episode involving himself, students from the University of Chicago, and Afro-American musician Joseph Jarman, from the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). During this meeting, Cage recalls in Kostelanetz's book that he attempted to explain to

musicians how to play without relying on their musical habits. For Cage, a particularly recurrent habit among improvisers consists of reacting to each other. In Cage's account of this episode, the composer explained that during the rehearsal they succeeded in achieving positive results by, for instance, playing far from each other and moving through the space randomly. However, Cage indicates that when they presented their work in front of an audience, musicians started to rely again on their musical habits. For example, he says that 'when they got loud, they all got loud' (Kostelanetz 2003, 228).

For Cage, Jazz music and improvisation had an intrinsically musical problem as they were letting musicians express themselves at the expense of what he calls, 'sound for itself'. In jazz what we can hear are musicians tastes rather than sounds. Sounds appears in Cage's discourse as an autonomous sphere. However, studies by George Lewis (1996 and 2008) and Rebecca Y. Kim (2012) show that, on the contrary, Cage's 'sound for itself' was permeated by the social environment of the composer. By rejecting the sounds of improvisation, Cage seems to perpetuate or at least resonate his discourse and musical approach with 'the history of sanctions, segregation, and slavery, imposed upon African Americans by the dominant white American culture' (Lewis 1996, 93).

Cage's aversion to the practice of improvisation has nevertheless not always driven his work. In his early musical career, before even starting to study with Schoenberg, Cage remembers he 'began an entirely different way of composing which was through improvisation, and improvisation in relation to texts: Greek, experimental writing from *transition* magazine, Gertrude Stein and Aeschylus' (Kostelanetz 2003, 57). Likewise, when he wrote his *Sonatas and Interludes* between 1946 and 1948, Cage also used improvisation. As he explained:

There I had a written structure so that I knew the length of the phrases of the piece from the beginning to the end. I placed objects on the strings, deciding their position according to the sounds that resulted. So, it was as though I was walking along the beach finding shells that I liked, rather than looking at the ones that didn't interest me. Having those preparations

of the piano and playing with them on the keyboard in an improvisatory way, I found melodies and combinations that worked with the given structure (Kostelanetz 2003, 62).

When Cage began to consider improvisation more positively again later on in his career, it was part of his difficult challenge consisting of ‘finding ways to free the act of improvisation from taste and memory and likes and dislikes’ (Kostelanetz 2003, 90). Cage calls this approach a ‘music of contingency’ (Ibid, 26 and 60) or a ‘structural improvisation’ (Ibid, 228) that is ‘an improvisation in which there is a discontinuity between cause and effect’ as well as a musical practice ‘that is not descriptive of the performer’ (Ibid, 225) and is located ‘beyond the control of the ego’ (Ibid, 227).

Cage’s ideas are in favour of improvisation and embodied in works such as *Inlets* (1977), *Branches* (1976), and *Child of Tree* (1975). What defines these works is the fact that, firstly, improvisation takes place within a certain structure. In *Branches*, this structure is temporal for the duration of the piece (8 minutes) is strictly defined (performers use a stopwatch in certain pieces such as *Child of Tree*). Secondly, as Cage points out, improvisation takes place by the fact that performers must use instruments that they are not familiar with. In *Child of the Tree*, performers must make sounds with plant materials that are amplified with contact microphones and sound systems (Kostelanetz 2003, 88). Similarly, in *Inlets*, performers don’t have much control over the final sonic outcome as they work with conches filled with water. As Cage indicates, when manipulating a conch, ‘you tip it and you get a gurgle, sometimes; not always. So, the rhythm belongs to the instrument and not to you’ (Kostelanetz 2003, 90).

2.3.2 Environmental Sounds

Environmental sounds are, for Cage, what he calls non-organised. These are sounds that can achieve structural relationships that are out of reach for composers:

(...) when you look at all those possibilities of formal or structural relationships, you see that European music has used only a tiny number of them, whereas if you simply listen to environmental sound you're over and over struck by the brilliance of non-organization (Kostelanetz 2003, 60).

When talking about environmental sounds, Cage sometimes refers to nature: '[what] I have done, which it seems to me is what nature has done, too, is not to make a fixed score' (Kostelanetz 2003, 232). However, the important aspect for Cage is the fact that the relation between sounds does not rely on the composers' choices, whatever the cause of the sounds might be. Thus, any sound, 'natural' or not, can be valid for the composer: 'When I have three sounds, I don't think that one must come first, and the next, and then the other, but that they can go together in any way, and that's exactly what happens to the birds and the automobiles and so on' (Kostelanetz 2003, 232).

During a conversation with two journalists who asked him about the 'ideal environment' (referring to the work of R. Murray Schafer), Cage replied by pointing out the differences between these two terms: 'The environment is there and the ideal is in your head' (Kostelanetz 2003, 232). For the composer, environmental sounds seem to be the opposite of sounds that one can hear in the mind, or idealise, or represent mentally⁹¹. These internal sounds are, in Cage's perspective, to be avoided as they connect with former musical approaches:

It has been thought in the past that music was something that existed in a person's mind and feelings and that he wrote it down and that he had heard it before it was audible. My point has been that we don't hear anything until it is audible (Kostelanetz 2003, 231).

⁹¹ About the problem, according to Cage, of imagined sounds see also Kahn 1997, 559 and 590.

2.3.3 Silence

Cage's understanding of silence echoes his interest in environmental sounds, as again, this has to do with sounds that, for him, do not rely on a composer's decision: 'By silence I mean the multiplicity of activity that constantly surround us. We call it 'silence' because it is free of our activity' (Kostelanetz 2003, 234).

Silence can refer to quiet sounds (i.e. a leaf falling from a tree) but also to loud sounds (i.e. a traffic jam), as long as these sounds are not intentionally ordered by the composer. Silence, for Cage, is a matter of acceptance: 'What silence is, is the change of my mind. It's an acceptance of the sounds that exist rather than a desire to choose and impose one's own music' (Kostelanetz 2003, 233).

For Cage, silence implies that musicians take a step back. 'What's so beautiful about this kind of situation' according to Cage, 'is that it is not focused, it is not directed. It is not pushing' (Kostelanetz 2003, 235). Cage evokes an experience he had during a Quaker meeting that illustrates this idea: 'I once went to a Quaker meeting — with silence — and found myself thinking of what I should *say*, that is, how to dominate the meeting (Faustian!) — and then I realised that was not the point — not to dominate, but to listen' (Kostelanetz 2003, 234).

From Cage's perspective, silence implies the idea of something unpredictable. As already mentioned earlier, the sounds that cannot be predicted are, in Cage's discourse, opposed to jazz improvisation: 'The problem that jazz raises for me, at the level of rhythm, I repeat, is that I am bothered by its regularity. I prefer the rhythm of what I call silence where sound can be born at any time'⁹² (Kostelanetz 2003, 230). Cage has challenged existing musical approaches during the second half of the twentieth century by suggesting that music can exist without musicians making any sounds. The work of Cage develops an

⁹² Going outside of the discussion on the social and historical context of jazz, Cage seems to develop an essentialist understanding of sound and silence.

interest in environmental sound as these sounds exist, according to the composer, beyond the musicians' intention.

According to Susan Sontag, the artistic tendency during the twentieth century to use chance and silence relies on the idea that modern culture has led individuals to an 'alienation of consciousness' (Sontag 2001, 24). In Cage's work, the notion of silence seems to counterbalance this effect by removing the influence of social and cultural structures to enable a direct face-to-face interaction with sound. Cage argues that improvisation, since it is the result of musicians expressing themselves, is likely to be informed by cultural and social influences. Therefore, his ideas evolve around a musical utopia in which sounds are detached from any external influence⁹³.

However, in Cage's work this idea that composers' decisions should be removed from musical activity so that the social structures would not influence musical ones, is contradicted by the composer's relationship between his ideas about silence, 'non-organised' sounds, and his own social environment. Following George Lewis's analysis, Cage's dislike of jazz improvisation, within the context of the segregationist society in the United States of the time, does not reflect a utopian reality situated beyond historical contingencies. On the contrary, his disesteem for jazz seems to be connected with the discrimination towards black people prevailing in American society.

In relation to my Istanbul experience, there are two important aspects that evokes Cage's work. Firstly, the improvisation workshop we were doing consisted of trying to rediscover our musical instruments. As such, by preparing our instruments to produce unpredictable sounds we were maybe not so far from Cage's idea of a 'structural improvisation' and 'music of contingency'. Secondly, by listening to the continuum of sounds in Istanbul and not making sounds with my musical instrument, I could have been listening, like Cage, for sounds for themselves.

⁹³ As Sontag indicates, 'to compensate for this ignominious enslavement to history, the artist exalts himself with the dream of a wholly ahistorical, and therefore unalienated art' (Sontag 2001, 15).

What differentiates Cage's work from my experience in Istanbul is his way of opposing environmental sounds and representations in the mind. It is one of my hypotheses that I could hear environmental sound in Istanbul because I was already familiar with Schafer's acoustic ecology ideas. In that sense, the environmental sounds I could hear in Istanbul were not opposed to representations in my head (as Cage argues), but on the contrary, it is possible that these representations in my mind were making the environment become audible to my ears.

2.4 Sonic Meditations: Pauline Oliveros

In May 2015, I initiated a study group on Pauline Oliveros' *Sonic Meditations*. This seminal work was created in the early 1970s, followed in the 1990s by a practice entitled 'deep listening'. *Sonic Meditations* are text scores, designed by the composer for being accessible to musicians and non-musicians, and which consist of 'recipes' for making sonic experiences (Altena 2012, 155).

Over the last three years I have co-organised approximately 50 sessions that have involved around 100 participants. Most of the time we have met in the Springfield Park bandstand or a yurt situated in St Katherine's Precinct in Limehouse. Occasionally I have run this workshop in other venues in London such as at Cafe Oto or Goldsmith's College, as well as other cities like Madrid, Saint Petersburg, Porto, Margate, Vigevano, Reading, and Jerez.

The premise for studying these compositions stems from the desire to know if Pauline Oliveros' practice could inform my own research, as she was simultaneously interested in improvisation and a listening practice involving environmental sounds.

2.4.1 Warm up

Pauline Oliveros' listening practice was created at the same time that her interest in the body began to inform her work. For Oliveros, listening involves the whole body and not simply the ears. As a result, the listening practice that she developed begins with a physical warm-up.

The study group practice starts with exercises that I have learnt from previous workshops I have done with the artist Ximena Alarcón, dancers Yanaël Plumet, Martina Conti, and Karina Shcherbakova, and more recently, with Pauline Oliveros' former collaborators, Heloise Gold and Leila Ramagopal Pertl. During these exercises — especially the ones involving breathing — I can often hear environmental sounds such as trains, birds, planes, cars, or people, voices or movements⁹⁴. This practice indicates that physical warm-up and relaxation, or the release that follows tension, might contribute to enhancing attention towards environmental sounds⁹⁵. This perhaps evokes my Istanbul experience, as the listening to environmental sounds was preceded by a long improvisation that involved a certain degree of tension and physical commitment.

2.4.2 For Annea Lockwood and Alison Knowles

On the 31st of May 2015⁹⁶, I performed the piece, 'For Annea Lockwood and Alison Knowles', by Pauline Oliveros. This piece asks participants to focus their attention on environmental sounds by keeping the first sound one can hear after reading the score in their mind⁹⁷, for at least half an hour. While performing, I realised that it could be difficult

⁹⁴ These sounds are more specific depending on location and time.

⁹⁵ We all have certainly experienced that when a continuous sound ceases (e.g. an electric hum) one can suddenly hear the sounds that were covered until then. Relaxing the body and diminishing inner thinking and speaking activity might have a similar effect.

⁹⁶ Sonic Meditation session 2

⁹⁷ Prior to Pauline Oliveros, artist Yoko Ono had been working on a set of instructions involving - similarly to *Sonic Meditations* - mental procedures. In her book *Grapefruit*, Ono develops this form of conceptual art through different practices including dance, painting and music. For Ono, creating art 'in your head' allows liberties that might not be possible otherwise. Indeed, with this kind of work 'a sunset

to keep one sound in mind for a long period of time, as other environmental sounds and thoughts could be very distracting. The first time I experienced this piece, I was in Springfield Park and could hear the sound of a crow. Whilst being cognisant of that sound, I was very quickly aware of hearing a polyphony of sounds in the park — many other crow-sounds, but also people walking in the park.

This piece introduces the idea that through the imagination, environmental sounds are not necessarily strictly detached from the listener. In Springfield Park I could hear sounds from the crows that were imagined, and others that were sounding outside of me. In this piece, these two kinds of sounds were playing together. In Istanbul, perhaps some of the sounds I thought I could hear in the environment were also resonating or even being produced or reproduced in my imagination⁹⁸.

2.4.3 Zina's Circle

'Zina's Circle' is a piece that asks participants to form a circle and hold their hands. A 'leader' then sends a pulse by pressing the hand of his or her partner. The person who receives the pulse will then repeat the gesture of pressing the hand of the person next to them. When everyone has repeated this gesture, the pulse should then come back to the 'leader'. As each participant presses their partner's hand, they simultaneously shout the sound 'ha'. When the pulse has travelled around the circle, the score indicates that the 'leader' should wait 'for a long time' before starting this process again. The score also indicates that after each round, the duration of waiting should diminish progressively,

can go on for days. You can eat up all the clouds in the sky. You can assemble a painting with a person in the North Pole over a phone, like playing chess'. The origins of this approach can be traced, according to the artist, to 'the time of the Second World War when we had no food to eat, and my brother and I exchanged menus in the air.' (Ono 2000, ch.7)

⁹⁸ The fact that to hear a sound one needs to know or understand it or build a representation of it, is confirmed by the experience of deaf people who recover hearing thanks to cochlear implants. Thanks to this technology deaf people can hear sounds but they cannot differentiate one sound from another until they learn about each sound in particular. As such in the beginning it is likely that with the implants one might hear an unarticulated continuum of sounds. Artist Juan Isaac Silva has been developing his work around this experience. c.f. artist project called 'Lend Me Your Ear' <http://www.prestametuoido.com/> [Accessed September 14, 2018]

until in the end the gaps almost disappear, and the sound created by passing the pulse is almost continuous⁹⁹. During the gaps that take place — especially at the beginning, in-between two rounds — it is interesting to observe that environmental sounds seem to become more noticeable¹⁰⁰. In a similar manner to the warm-up, it might be that the relief after an intense state of concentration brings attention towards environmental sounds.

2.4.4 The Unison Piece

The ‘Unison’ piece is strongly inspired by *Sonic Meditation XVI* and consists of sounding one’s breathing, then paying attention to other participants’ sounds and finally negotiating a unison. On the 10th of May 2016, I performed this piece in Springfield Park¹⁰¹ and two of the participants expressed the difficulty they had in hearing themselves. In the very beginning, one thought that what he could hear was not his sound, but after a few minutes, he realised that it was. Another participant mentioned that he did not know what sound he was making, and at some point, he felt that the sound he was making was actually the sound produced by a plane. A third participant mentioned that when he was making his sound, he could hear environmental sounds more clearly. In this case, he was referring particularly to bird sounds. In my own experience, I have been able to observe that, in many cases when performing this piece, I could also hear environmental sounds particularly well.

It seems that this piece builds up a certain regularity (the first part consists of sustained repeated sounds) whereby environmental sounds stand out as events or contrasting sounds. Perhaps due to the participants’ focus on one very specific sound, environmental sounds become a sort of distraction and stand out. Either way, environmental sounds are not necessarily wanted, but still they become part of the listening experience.

⁹⁹ In document 2 you can hear the gaps and the voices taking place around the middle of the piece.

¹⁰⁰ This might be due to the contrast between the intensity and strong focus of attention that takes place when pressing the hands and the relief that follows when the loud shouting ceases. This effect is similar to the one described above when describing the warm-up exercises.

¹⁰¹ Sonic Meditation session 19.

2.4.5 Sonic Meditation XXIV

During the *Sonic Meditations* gathering in Springfield Park¹⁰² on 12th of June 2016, I performed the piece ‘Sonic Meditation XXIV’. As the score indicates, participants should ‘focus [their] attention on an external source of constant sound’ and ‘Imagine alternate sounds while remaining aware of the external source’.

For this performance I decided that the sound of people walking would be the constant sound I would focus on. My imagined sounds included sustained notes that were sometimes part of a melody, white noise, explosions, rocks, bells, percussion, and voices. In addition to my imagined sounds and the constant external sound I was focusing on, I could also hear environmental sounds such as trains, birds, bicycles, children voices, and different qualities and rhythms of people walking. This piece reinforces the idea that when concentrating on a particular sound, other environmental sounds can come into your awareness just like in the piece ‘For Annea Lockwood and Alison Knowles’ or ‘The Unison’ piece.

2.4.6 Rock piece¹⁰³

I performed ‘Rock Piece’ in the Limehouse yurt¹⁰⁴ on the 23rd of March 2017. This piece asks participants to listen to sounds from the environment, select a pulse, and reproduce it by hitting two rocks. Listening to one sound being played regularly foregrounds all the other pulses in the environment that are different. This piece, requiring concentration to a regular pulse, also gives the opportunity to listen to other sounds that are made by different participants, as well as environmental sounds that consist of other kinds of pulsations.

¹⁰² Sonic Meditation session 22.

¹⁰³ This piece is not part of the original Oliveros *Sonic Meditations* and was created by the composer in 1979. Nevertheless, it does resemble the sonic meditation ‘Removing the Demon or Getting Your Rocks Off’.

¹⁰⁴ Sonic Meditation session 31.

2.4.7 Environmental dialogue

On the 6th of April 2017, we performed several pieces including one called ‘Environmental Dialogue’ in the Limehouse yurt¹⁰⁵. This piece invites participants to ‘become aware of sounds from the environment’ and then ‘gradually begin to reinforce the pitch of the sound source’. During this piece I made a short sound extremely loud to reinforce the pitch of my sound source (that was a single electronic high pitch sound I could hear in the background). When I stopped I had the impression that I could hear environmental sounds more clearly than before.

This might be due to the contrast between the loud sound and environmental sounds that were rather quiet. To play loud sounds is perhaps akin to covering your ears¹⁰⁶. Playing loudly, you suddenly cannot hear beyond yourself anymore. Thus, to stop playing or to cease making a loud sound seems to be similar to uncovering your ears and being suddenly able to hear again. In relation to the Istanbul listening experience, I don’t recall if we played loud sounds during our improvisation, but that could be one of the reasons why I had the impression I could hear environmental sounds acutely after we stopped playing.

2.4.8 The Greeting

Another performance I did at the Limehouse yurt was on the 18th of May 2017¹⁰⁷, and it was called, ‘The Greeting’. This piece asks participants to arrive thirty minutes earlier, to imagine a sound, and focus on it mentally until a participant who could not arrive in advance enters the room. At this moment, participants should voice the sound in their mind for a while and then resume the mental concentration until another participant enters the room.

¹⁰⁵ Sonic Meditation session 32.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Sonic Meditation XIX’ ask participants to cover their ears.

¹⁰⁷ Sonic Meditation session 35.

This meditational waiting can last for a few minutes, but on that occasion, it lasted for a longer period. On that day, we began the piece knowing that one of the regular participants was supposed to arrive shortly. However, this person was eventually delayed and could not arrive on time, so we ‘waited’ for her for approximately an hour. Doing this exercise shows that for certain people like myself, it is not easy to keep the same sound in mind for a long period of time. The sound I had in my mind was often transformed by sounds I could hear around me such as trains, people, cars, or planes. This piece shows that attention towards environmental sounds can be triggered thanks to an activity that is not necessarily aiming to perceive them. In the case of my Istanbul listening experience, the perception of environmental sounds was different as I did not perceive them as a distraction.

2.4.9 Collective Environmental¹⁰⁸

‘Collective Environmental’ asks participants to find an interesting place of listening and then share it with the rest of the group. This piece reveals how each member of a group listens to a place from a very different perspective. A ‘collective environmental’ piece can enable one to discover sounds that he or she might have not noticed by listening alone. This happened to me when I performed this piece with Sébastien Branche in Leipzig on 9th of July 2017. When Branche would describe the particular sound of a bird he could hear in the background, then I was able to perceive it myself thanks to his description. This piece thus shows that listening can be influenced by the description of sounds. Thinking of my experience in Istanbul, I wonder then if I would have been able to perceive environmental sounds if I had not previously read the literature by Schafer and Schaeffer.

¹⁰⁸ This piece is not part of the original Oliveros *Sonic Meditations* but was created by the composer around the same period in 1975 (the piece was revised in 1996).

2.4.10 Energy Changes

This particular piece invites the performers to listen to the environment as a drone by including ‘the external sounds’ but also the internal sounds (such as the nervous system, blood pressure, or the heart beat). At some point when being triggered by a sound, the score tells participants to make a sound in one breath or a cycle of like sounds. In August 2017, I participated in a festival called Supernormal that takes place a few kilometres from Reading (Braziers Park). During these two days of workshops, I performed with a group of participants the piece called ‘Energy Changes’.

As the score invites participants to pay attention to external sounds, I was focusing my attention on sounds I could barely perceive. At one point I voiced a very high-pitched sound and it was just after I could hear someone (a child I think) making a very similar sound. This sound, I could hear afterwards, resembled a response to what I was doing, but of course, it could not be the case had it not been possible for this person to hear what I was doing (my sound was relatively quiet and the sound I could hear was coming from far).

This episode might be related to the experience I had previously with Sébastien Branche when working on ‘Collective Environmental’. Along with his description of a bird sound which helped me to perceive that sound, it might be that the high-pitch sound I made also focused my attention on sounds that were similar. In relation to my Istanbul listening experience, it could be that the environmental sounds I could hear were not totally unrelated to our playing but influenced by what we could perceive when producing certain sounds with our instruments. ‘Energy changes’ evokes my listening experience in Istanbul, but it foregrounds attention not only towards environmental sounds, but also towards ‘internal sounds’ that I was (until then) not aware of.

Sonic Meditations offers a broad range of approaches in order to listen to environmental sound. The pieces were created following a distressful political atmosphere for the author that led her to retreat for a year. During that time, she did not play concerts — and during

her private practice only played drones on her accordion, focussing only on one note. *Sonic Meditations* are to me a way for the author to engage again with the world by developing a musical approach that focuses on healing but also on different ways of engaging with the environment. The environment in these pieces could be understood in my opinion as the 'outside world' from a social and political perspective. This music proposes a way to pay attention to the environment from a critical perspective, as for instance, when performed within the context of feminist events to support women's right movement (as Oliveros did many times).

From my study of *Sonic Meditations*, there are certain tendencies that I would like to foreground. Firstly, language, as well as sound, can act as a sign to draw one's attention toward other sounds. This was the case when performing 'Collective Environmental' but also 'Energy Changes'. Perhaps this is why I could hear sounds in Istanbul, as Schaeffer's book consisted of a description that could draw my attention towards these sounds. Secondly, environmental sounds can be perceived unintentionally. For example, when focusing on one single sound, environmental sounds might be heard in contrast or as a sort of distraction. This is the case with 'Zina's Circle', the warm up exercises, and the 'Unison' piece.

Thirdly, when making a sound with regularity, this action draws attention towards environmental sounds as in the 'Unison piece', 'Sonic Meditation XXIV', 'Rock Piece', and 'The Greeting'. However, this did not strictly happen in the Istanbul experience. Additionally, it seems that attention towards environmental sounds is created after a moment of tension or a loud sound. This was the case in 'Zina's Circle', the warm up, and 'Environmental Dialogue'.

Lastly, whilst in my previous work environmental sounds referred to what I thought was external to me, with the *Sonic Meditations* practice I have learnt that in a piece such as 'Energy Changes', 'The Greeting', and 'For Annea Lockwood and Alison Knowles', the environment can be made of internal sounds. This can refer to the sounds from the body

(‘Energy Changes’), but it also includes imagined (‘The Greeting’) or remembered (‘For Annea Lockwood and Alison Knowles’) sounds.

Studying *Sonic Meditations* offers several approaches to understanding my experience in Istanbul:

1. Rather than looking at the separation between external and internal sounds, *Sonic Meditations* proposes ways of connecting them by, for instance, paraphrasing environmental sound or mentally sounding from the environment¹⁰⁹.
2. Rather than focusing the attention on playing new sounds, these pieces develop awareness to ‘hear a whole universe of sound in a single tone’ (Altena 2012, 155).
3. Rather than distinguishing between sounds made by musical instruments and sounds produced by a bird or a plane ‘in the environment’, these pieces focus instead on being able to hear all sounds.

2.5 Conclusion — listening

As we have seen, artists interested in creative listening practices engage with environmental sound in different ways. In the environment, Schafer gives sound meaning in relation to his ecological concerns. Chion and Schaeffer both elaborate on a system that enables one to articulate (and therefore, for them to perceive) the sounds that are not considered within the traditional *sofège*. Cage incorporates environmental sound within what looks to me like a sonic utopia¹¹⁰ that ‘frees’ sound from social and historical

¹⁰⁹ Imitation can be understood here as a process that tends towards a model but does not reach it. Instead of copying a sound, the sonic meditation is an experience of listening to sound. *Sonic Meditations* enable one to distinguish between the idea of a sound and the experience of listening to this sound. Paraphrasing a sound is understood here as a manner of listening to a sound in depth.

¹¹⁰ As well as utopia refers to a place detached from time and space, similarly Cage’s ‘sound for itself’ exists in the air without considering — it relies supposedly on chance — the context of its production.

bonds¹¹¹. And finally, Oliveros develops a practice of listening that challenges the definition of listening itself (paying attention to certain sounds) by attempting to actually listen to all sounds.

If we compare these approaches to free improvisation, we can observe some similarities. The ‘sonic utopia’ of Cage resembles improvisers’ tendency towards a disconnection from any other musical approach. Also, it shows the fragile and weak frontier between listening to ‘new’ or utopian sounds and actually missing the acknowledgement that the valuable work of musicians from different backgrounds can bring (like Bryars’ episode with black South African double bass player Johnny Dyani, or Cage meeting with black sax player, Joseph Jarman, from the USA).

However, they are also separated by the fact that the approaches of Schaeffer and Schafer tend to define, articulate, or situate sounds (within a language, new Solfège or an ecological narrative¹¹²) whilst Improvised Music seems, on the contrary, to attempt to escape¹¹³ — as its first *raison d’être* — any sort of definition, established genre, or settled frame. Pauline Oliveros’ work — that challenges boundaries and definitions¹¹⁴ and is still interested in improvisation and environmental sound — seems to reconcile these two worlds.

But what exactly are these two worlds? If we look at ancient Western narratives about the origins of music it is thanks to a group of blacksmiths that philosopher Pythagoras was able to discover musical tuning (Meyer 2014, 49). It could appear ironic that during the twentieth century it was finally possible, thanks to composers such as Cage, to

¹¹¹ It is not a contradiction to link utopia with experimental music as the two terms, utopia and experimentation, are, to some extent, two sides of the same coin. For sociologist Zygmunt Bauman ‘When Sir Thomas More penned his blueprint for a world free from unpredictable threats, improvisation and experimentation fraught with risks and errors were fast becoming the order of the day’ (Bauman 2007, 95).

¹¹² We can also include here the ‘sounds effects’ described by Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue in *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds* (2006).

¹¹³ Regarding escapism, writer Ursula Le Guin asks the following question: ‘the direction of escape is towards freedom. So what is “escapism” an accusation of?’ (Le Guin 2017, 83)

¹¹⁴ By incorporating sounds from the mind, dreams, memories and developing an inclusive understanding of sound: ‘My body is sound’ and ‘the earth is also sound’ the composer says (Oliveros 2013, 1-2).

acknowledge environmental sounds within the musical realm, when actually, according to early musical narratives, these ‘noises’ were actually the source of music.

However, what seems more relevant here is not the history of when noise became music, or music became noise, but how listening, as a cultural practice, operates the distinction between sounds, and therefore, between what could appear as being ‘two worlds’. As shown by cultural studies, listening to a sound (rather than another) is part of cultural practice that intends, consciously or not, to build identities within a social group and frame an understanding of what reality is. Recent work by Jonathan Sterne, for instance, develops around the idea of a sonic scarification. Listening to extremely loud sounds is not simply understood as a way of potentially hurting one’s ears, but as part of a social rite that enables one to become part (or not) of a social group (Sterne 2018). The idea that there would be different worlds (such as noise and silence or improvised music and environmental sound) needs to be re-evaluated by taking into account the position of the subject who is listening to these sounds.

If we look back at the work of Pauline Oliveros which emphasises different ways of listening, we could think of Barthes’ understanding of a utopia: ‘that of a world in which there would no longer be anything but differences, so that to be differentiated would no longer mean to be excluded’ (Barthes 1994, 85). The possibility proposed by Oliveros — to listen to all sounds by emphasising infinite ways of listening — has significant consequences from a political perspective. Oliveros’ proposal emphasises her creativity through the ways of listening that she has invented, and strongly resonates within the feminist context of the 70s in which women in music had less opportunities to become composers. To be a deep listener, that is to say a composer who creates ways of listening, overcomes (or *déjoue* to borrow Barthes terminology) the paradigmatic couple that separates, on the one hand, men as sound-makers and women as listeners.

Schafer’s work is extremely important to reflect on in regard to the notion of environment from an ecological perspective, but it does not necessarily critically consider, as in Oliveros’ work, the perspective, structurally speaking, within a social context of the

subject. Thus, acoustic ecology builds an ideal listener to reorder the sounds of the planet that fall in step, rather than subverts the social structures that are performed in the practice of listening. Significant work done by researchers including Sterne shows how, indeed, the figure of this ideal listener can be traced to the hi-fi culture that developed in North America after the Second World War. Being in an immersive sonic environment that situates one in the centre of sound — to hear everything in detail — is linked to the construction of masculinities amongst the North American middle-class who attempt to control domestic space through sound (Sterne 2015 and Keightley 1996).

What results from this analysis is the fact that discourses, as a set of ideas that enable one to decode an understanding of the world, can be located in the practice of listening and do not need to be articulated in words. In the following pages, I will look further at how these findings manifest in my experience in Istanbul, in my other works prior to starting this research, and in practice that I have developed within the context of this investigation.

Chapter 3 Early Practice

The early practice section refers to the work that I completed before I started my academic research. To describe the context of my practice at that time will help to situate the context of my listening experience in Istanbul. What was my understanding of improvisation and listening before I started to interrogate these two terms?¹¹⁵

3.1 Improvisation

3.1.1. The Mostoles workshop (1)

For about four years (2008–2012) when I was living in Madrid, I had the opportunity to use a working space in Mostoles music school. Mostoles is a city situated about twenty minutes by train from Madrid. I would go during the week to spend approximately three hours there in the morning. During these sessions, I would normally start by doing physical exercises, then I'd play sustained notes and explore my musical instrument by following the three different methods described below.

Often, I would try to imitate sounds that were made by saxophonists I was interested in, such as Jean-Luc Guionnet or Stephan Rives. In most of these attempts, I actually discovered for myself new ways of playing with my instrument¹¹⁶. For instance, trying to

¹¹⁵ Previously I had been playing very different kinds of music such as jazz or classical music. I studied music in high school as well as in the music conservatoire (Nadia and Lili Boulanger Paris 9) and in private jazz music schools. I had the opportunity to attend workshops with musicians and dancers such as Eddie Prévost, Alain Savouret, Ernest Dawkins, Sophie Agnel, Barre Phillips, Maggie Nicols, Lê Quan Ninh, Pascal Battus, Julyen Hamilton, Frédéric Blondy, Katie Duck, Mary Oliver, Fred Frith, François Jeanneau, Ruswell Rudd, Bernard Lubat (...). Furthermore, I have been working in a jazz big band and several dance companies.

¹¹⁶ As Michael Taussig observes, 'in imitating, we will find distance from the imitated' (Taussig 1993, xix in Moore 2016, 59).

In Leigh's interview for the British Library, Bailey also evokes his experience with imitation: 'I was very good at imitating'. It is known that most of the musicians related to jazz do exercise through imitation. Furthermore, Bailey did a transcription work of Anton Webern's music as well as compositions directly inspired by the Austrian composer (Fell, 2018). We could also mention the similarities between saxophone player Evan Parker and La Monte Young, as well as the one between the latest and John Coltrane. Imitation is not understood here as copying but as a continuation of the playing (for there is distance between the

find out how to produce extremely fast short sounds with the instrument, I would end up focusing my attention on the neck of the saxophone (the upper part of the instrument that is connected to the mouthpiece). Developing this style of practice on the neck of the instrument to produce very fast staccato, I was unable to reach my initial goal, but I actually realised that by adjusting the breathing pressure and the position of the lips I could emphasise textural parameters of sound.

During these sessions I would also study multiphonics¹¹⁷ using the book of French saxophonist Daniel Kientzy, who wrote a book about multi-phonic techniques on the saxophone¹¹⁸. I had known about this book for many years and was already working on it before moving to Madrid. In addition to learning these techniques, I was also trying to create special finger positions and explore how, by using more or less pressure on the saxophone with these techniques, it would be possible to create sounds (multiphonics) that were unfamiliar to me.

According to Pierre Schaeffer (*Solfège de l'objet sonore*)¹¹⁹, it is because you hear (or recognise) a sound that you might be able to produce it with your instrument. When

model and the imitation). In the British Library interviews, Bailey also talks about a traumatic episode in a restaurant where he was asked to 'reproduce' the guitar solo of Bill Haley's 'Rock Around the Clock'. The 'end of playing' (having to copy rather than imitate) happens chronologically for Bailey — around the same time that he stops his career as a professional musician (playing in restaurants and music studios) and starts performing internationally free improvisation.

¹¹⁷ Technique in which several notes are produced at once.

¹¹⁸ Kientzy has dedicated part of his work to share with other musicians the instrumental techniques that he has discovered on the saxophone. In appendix 4 (page 185), you can find a reproduction of my working notes related to Kientzy's book.

¹¹⁹ Observing sounds from Schaeffer's perspective changes one understanding of the instrument. For instance, one learns that a sound exists on the instrument called C medium. However, when playing this sound on the instrument and changing the dynamic, one realises that even though the note is still called a C medium, in fact the sound is so different that it could be named differently. For Schaeffer, the 'dynamic is one of the factors of timbre' as 'contrarily to what is generally taught the harmonic content is not the only criterion of instrumental timbre; often the dynamic envelope is much more characteristic' (Schaeffer 1967 CD2 tracks 27–37).

In the field of free improvisation, trumpet player Axel Dörner — whose sounds often evoke more electronics instruments than the trumpet itself — described a very similar understanding of sound. For Dörner, sounds are substantially different depending on the dynamic (personal communication 2018).

Using electronic resources to manipulate sound, Schaeffer demonstrates that dynamic is a major factor in musical instruments' sound identity. In his radio studio, Schaeffer takes the sound of a flute, changes its dynamic profile, and suddenly it sounds as if it were the sound of a piano (an instrument that has a similar harmonic timbre as the flute). Dörner's ways of playing (he uses special instrumental techniques) transforms the identity of its trumpet to evoke more the sound of a machine or an electronic instrument.

learning how to play an instrument one would learn about certain types of sounds (such as the pitch) but will also dismiss others (such as the timbre)¹²⁰. Reading his ideas about dismissed areas of sound I would, for instance, pay more attention to the timbre when playing myself. This approach leads to creating sounds on the instrument that do not necessarily correspond with general expectations about how a saxophone might sound.

A typical exercise would consist of playing a single simple sound and trying to listen to the different components of this sound, apart from its pitch. For instance, I would focus on the tiny noises produced by my breathing when blowing on the mouthpiece, or carefully observe its harmonics¹²¹. If listening is about making a decision about what to pay attention to, Schaeffer's approach is an attempt to modernise traditional ways of listening that emphasise (decides to pay more attention to) certain parameters such as the melody or the harmony. In that sense, there cannot be listening without silence and even maybe silencing. Oliveros's idea of listening to all sounds might appear as contradictory: how to listen to all sound for listening implies to make choices? It is to me a rather more beneficial and useful utopia than attempting to listen to all sounds as it can challenge, stretch, unveil, or play with the boundaries of our attentiveness. Whilst Schaeffer's reduced listening benefits attentiveness by expanding the range of parameters that one can take into account when paying attention to sound, a pitfall of any musical practice would be to 'reduce' listening attention to only one kind of musical practice or approach¹²².

¹²⁰ For Chion, a causalist definition of timbre is insufficient (such as saying for instance that the sound of a guitar is its timbre). Pierre Schaeffer's ideas about reduced listening foregrounds the attention towards parameters that are not taken into account in traditional solfège. For instance, to refer to the quality of the sound, a musical score will often simply indicate what musical instruments should be used without considering parameters such as its harmonic timbre or dynamic profile.

Rather than reducing sound to a vague notion of timbre (which we could also argue leave a certain freedom to the musician in relation to the score), Schaeffer develops a series of seven morphological criteria in order to better understand what a sound is.

¹²¹ Experimental musical approaches seem to touch upon the divide between the image of a sound and the experience of it. As a result of this sonic experience (e.g. listening to sound through Schaefferian approaches), the identity of a musical instrument can be affected. What the identity of a saxophone becomes when one focuses his or her attention on the 'the tiny noises produced by (...) breathing when blowing on the mouthpiece'.

¹²² A piece such as Pauline Oliveros' 'Saxual Orientation' relies on the wide range of musical possibilities offered by the saxophone that includes reduced listening, melodies, idiomatic, and non-idiomatic improvisation.

During these sessions in Mostoles, I would also explore techniques on the instrument. One of them consisted of blocking the lower keys of the instrument and using the free hand as a trumpet player, or a trombonist would do when applying a mute on the bell. This discovery was the result of these work sessions, but also of chance, and of my collaboration with Sébastien Branche. Indeed, Branche was actually using (but with a different finality) the tool that I would then use for blocking the saxophone keys¹²³.

3.1.2 Trashvortex workshop

During the years I was living in Madrid, I had regular practice meetings with saxophonist Sébastien Branche either there or in Paris. In France we would often meet at Trashvortex, which was a space in Paris dedicated to experimental music. People running this space included musicians Xavier Lopez and Mathieu Garrouste. The venue was a former architects' studio that had been transformed into rehearsal studios.

During one of these sessions, I remember we were exploring methods of playing in an extremely spare manner. This approach related to our interest in listening to environmental sounds, but also as a matter of exploring musical methods that we were not familiar with. Indeed, originally our duet was interested in medium to forte sounds and did not often include silence during the improvisations. In Trashvortex, on the contrary, we might only play one sound over several minutes.

We noticed that the less material we were using, the more these sounds would be perceived accurately. Rather than sequences involving a great variety of sounds and dynamics that would develop for long periods of time¹²⁴, this manner of playing would

¹²³ This technique was developed thanks to a *détournement* of existing sax key clamps originally created as a care product for the instrument. A video made at the Vortex jazz club in 2011 documents this technique. Relentless at Mopomoso, the Vortex jazz club, 17th of April 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZMg8G7YJ8Q> [Accessed September 17, 2018]

¹²⁴ We would also notice that the less material we used the more our music would be playful. For instance, using only two sounds each for a long period of time during an improvisation could create an interesting tension in relation to the way a third sound would come in, for instance.

isolate sounds by playing them repeatedly or in between long periods of silence, to let one observe them in detail.

Strategies involving ‘spare playing’ were meant to push forward our improvisations by introducing new approaches. However, awareness of what to play would also introduce tensions. Each time we heard material from the past, it would create doubt in us.

3.1.3 Galerie Limitis Solo concert

On the 4th of November 2011, I was invited to play a solo concert at the Galerie Limitis located in Paris. This concert was curated by musician Seijiro Murayama. During this event I remember that — especially at the beginning of the concert — I paid careful attention to silence, environmental sounds, and the sounds I was making. This moment reminded me of what I experienced in Istanbul. However, as the concert progressed, I introduced playing techniques (such as circular breathing) that I think diminished the awareness I had when the concert started.

This experience drew my attention to possible effects on my playing related to the presence of an audience — as if I was listening through the ears of someone else; it seems that the audience would alter my playing. It is likely that during this performance, I tended to play sophisticated techniques and continuous sounds (rather than silences) as a way of responding to possible expectations from the audience¹²⁵. I also recall that using all these techniques was sometimes physically uncomfortable. For instance, making a loud sound

Thus, by ‘playing less’ with this duet there was a vertical dimension consisting of listening to sounds in depth, but also a horizontal approach as the relationship between the two or three sounds we were using would build sonic histories.

¹²⁵ These expectations were certainly imagined but maybe relied on a certain Improvised Music ‘common sense’ or *doxa*. Thus, it might be possible that I was, at that point, influenced by the belief that Improvised Music would depend on the elaboration of extended techniques. In any case we have already seen that as early as 1973 it was already possible to identify ‘idioms’ of free improvisation such as AMM, Bailey, or Stevens ones (c.f. the section about Malfatti chapter 1 section 1.4).

For trombonist Radu Malfatti, it is not the audience that affects the musicians’s playing but rather the musicians themselves that tend to change their playing in front of an audience. Due to this ‘pressure’, musicians, according to Malfatti, tend to rely on their musical habits. For Malfatti, scores are a good strategy to avoid this situation (personal Communication 23-01-2018).

with circular breathing for long periods of time could be very demanding. This experience started to draw my attention to how certain playing techniques on the saxophone could affect the body¹²⁶. In further work, when playing, I would pay attention to sounds as much as to my body. When I make a sound how does my body react to it? Does it create tensions, pain, relief? ¹²⁷

3.1.4 Eddie Prévost workshop in Madrid

When I was living in Madrid I had the opportunity to meet percussionist Eddie Prévost during a workshop organised by the collective Musicalibre at the music school, Aula de Musicas. This music collective was created in 1995 by musicians Pedro López, Wade Matthews, Belma Martín, Chefa Alonso, Barbara Meyer, and journalist Chema Chacon.

During this workshop, we did a Prévost exercise that consisted of playing duets following two rules:

A/ play with the other musicians

B/ explore the instrument to make new sounds

As Prévost explained, the workshop was designed to provide an opportunity to take risks and try musical approaches that one would not necessarily really feel inclined to develop in front of an audience.

It is true that there was no audience in the workshop. However, musicians themselves could be considered an audience. As a result, at that time still I think it was very tempting

¹²⁶ Regarding the way his musical practice has affected his body, saxophone player Peter Brötzmann declared in Wire magazine: 'I push things quite a bit, I push my playing, I push my lungs. My lungs are fucked up because I push too much air through the mouthpiece' (Keenan 2012, 41).

¹²⁷ These questions were directly inspired by my practice of Pauline Oliveros' 'deep listening'. However, early on, I had already started to integrate a body practice in my work thanks to my collaboration with dancers.

for me to show other participants what I had previously discovered on my saxophone, rather than focusing on Prévost's exercise.

3.1.5 Murmuration at Cafe Oto

In October 2012, I performed at Cafe Oto, a venue in east London that was founded in 2008 and regularly showcases experimental music. That night, along with other musicians, I played 'Fields Have Ears' (4) by Michel Pisaro¹²⁸ (a guitarist, composer, and member of the Wandelweiser Composers Ensemble). Wandelweiser was created in 1992 to further explore the musical possibilities initiated by John Cage's silent piece called 4'33". Our performance of 'Fields Have Ears' — which is for large ensembles — happened during Murmurations on an evening focused around Wandelweiser music (organised by Simon Reynell, the creator of an influential musical label, Another Timbre, dedicated to experimental music.).

For this performance I prepared a few sounds required by the score but did not know exactly what the outcome of this piece would be. It involved many participants; I felt uncomfortable with the use of the watch to keep the time. Furthermore, I had not been using a score for the last 2–3 years. In my previous experiences, using a score within the context of an improvisation was too distracting for me.

If a score offers a space for free improvisation that, for instance, is followed by a written melody, it is difficult to simultaneously focus on the present moment and be oriented to the future to prepare for the written music. This might mean that rather than experience sounds here and now, one might have to think of sounds in relation to what is about to come, according to the score. This obviously does not mean that the music involving a score is less interesting or that this kind of work has nothing to do with improvisation.

¹²⁸ See score in appendix 6 (page 188).

However, it seems that the state of mind or the kind of concentration involved in free improvisation is different than in musical compositions that involves improvisation¹²⁹.

Pisaro's piece asked performers to play sounds that alternated with long moments of silence. To do this, I followed the indications of a score that required the use of a watch to keep time. In the beginning I had difficulties paying attention to the sounds as I was concentrating very hard on keeping time and reading the score. At that point, the articulation between the sounds we were playing, and the moments of silence, seemed very clumsy. However, a bit later during the piece I became more attentive to the sounds we were making. It seemed to me that these sounds merged perfectly with the squeaking of a door being opened in the venue, the breathing sounds of several members of the audience, and the creaking of a chair that someone was moving.

This piece invites musicians to pay attention towards environmental sound. However, in addition to this, I think that by telling musicians when and what to play also creates a certain distance between them and the sounds that they produce. As a result, one has a sense of what he or she is going to be doing, but at the same time, the collective outcome is unpredictable (i.e. what would be other musicians sounds and how will they merge?). The piece draws attention towards musicians' sounds in a similar way than one would pay attention towards environmental sound.

In this concert I clearly had a very similar experience to what I heard in Istanbul (the continuum of sounds). This was possible not only when listening during the silences of the piece, but also when playing my own instrument. However, even though this piece incorporates aspects of improvisation (you could choose what sound you would do), it

¹²⁹ If we push further the idea that, against all odds, in certain circumstances there could be free improvisation styles and even scores (for instance, inspired by AMM, Bailey, and Stevens playing), then the discomfort that occurs to me between a composition which incorporates improvisation could be compared to the one that would occur if someone decided to play a piece made of two different scores. In this case, the opposition between improvisation and composition would lose importance and improvisation could be emphasised as a musical practice that is made of different scores.

cannot be identified with the practice of free improvisation because it very precisely describes to musicians, when to play and when not to¹³⁰.

During my early instrumental music-focused practice, I was able to find a similar experience to the one I had in Istanbul. However, this happened within the context of a composition and not during Improvised Music. In my Improvised Music practice, it seems that sometimes the presence of an audience (in workshops or concerts) would rather stop me from listening to external sounds and make me concentrate more on the sounds produced by the saxophone, using sophisticated techniques that were sometimes physically uncomfortable¹³¹.

3.2 Listening practice

3.2.1 The Mostoles Workshop (2)

At the end of the workshop sessions in Mostoles, I would continue working outside the music school building to practice listening exercises inspired by R. Murray Schafer. One of these exercises would consist of listening to sounds which were very close by and very

¹³⁰ In his text about improvisation, the composer Cornelius Cardew (1971) indicates that scores can help improvisers play sounds that they are not familiar with. In my experience with the Pisaro piece, I did not feel the usual discomfort when playing a composition involving improvisation. I did not have the experience of playing sounds I was not familiar with but rather experienced a way of listening to sounds made by musical instruments and environmental sounds that I was not so familiar with when improvising.

¹³¹ At Eddie Prévost's workshop, the AMM drummer told participants once that he would not play differently in front of an audience. Although it is not always easy to do this (even in the workshop I think that there is an audience) it seems that when being focused on an action to accomplish (such as in the workshop when trying to find a sound that matches another musician but that at the same time is unfamiliar to us), one does not think so much about the audience. In a way one becomes him or herself the audience of the musical process that is being carried on.

I had a similar feeling when performing Thomas Schmit's fluxus piece called 'Zyklus'. Even though the action in itself was apparently very simple (pouring water inside a bottle repeatedly for a very long time) I was so focused on carefully achieving this action that I would not think of audience expectations. I would also not try to do anything special as each time I was pouring the water in the bottles, by doing it attentively, my attention would be drawn by the small details and infinite variations of water being poured into the bottle.

It seems that, more than the sounds that are created, what is important here is the attentiveness towards these sounds. However, in the case of the workshop it seems that this attentiveness towards sound can also result in the production of sounds.

far away. Another exercise consisted of creating a map of the sounds I could hear around me such as the birds, the cars, the fountain, or the people passing by¹³². Informed by Schafer's approaches, I would pay attention to environmental sounds within a musical perspective¹³³. Following Schafer's ideas, birds, cars, and people passing by all encompassed a musical composition¹³⁴.

3.2.2 The Caravan Project

In July 2010, I travelled from Cappadocia in Turkey to Aleppo in Syria with¹³⁵ a group of dancers, musicians, and visual artists invited by dancer Yanaël Plumet. During our stay in Aleppo, I proposed that participants should gather in the old city to listen to environmental sounds. To do this I suggested they listen to the sounds that were close to, and very far from, each participant. Then, I invited participants to focus their attention on sounds they could perceive in between these two boundaries.

One of the participants, a musician, did not like the experience because for him nothing was taking place. However, a few days later, the same musician did appreciate a

¹³² See appendix 7 (page 190).

¹³³ For R. Murray Schafer, the world is like a musical instrument. Unfortunately, according to him, modernity (e.g. industrialisation) has made this instrument sound out of tune. To tune this instrument again and hear a harmonious composition people need to learn how to listen in order to make less noise (reducing factories, cars, airplanes...) and find an adequate balance between sounds and silence. Schafer's musical composition, books, and exercise promotes this idea of a harmonious relationship between the sounds created by humans and those who are understood by Schafer as being 'natural'.

It is difficult to embrace Schafer's ideology within the context of Improvised Music as this often rhymes with sounds that, from the perspective of a classically-trained musician, might be perceived as noise and disharmony. This is, for instance, the case when Rowe transforms Paul Klee's paintings in scores for the Mike Westbrook jazz band, when AMM musicians play with extremely loud sounds in such a way that nobody can listen to each other, when John Stevens and Trevor Watts deconstruct melodies to play a pointillist improvisation, and when Bailey, Oxley, and Bryars abandon the musical structure of a jazz tune to play 'freely'.

This problem can be looked at differently if considering critical notions such as harmony, disharmony, noise, silence, in tune, or 'out of tune'. Social and historical circumstances will, for instance, transform the way a sound is considered harmonious or not (Arnold 1983), how an instrument should be tuned (Barbour 1951) or when it would be necessary or not to have silence for listening to music (Johnson 1995).

¹³⁴ This experience also evokes sound walks created in the 70's by composer and sound artist Hildegard Westerkamp as well as the work of composer Pierre Mariétan and artist and musician Max Neuhaus.

¹³⁵ Sound recordings made during this project have been presented online.

<http://www.frameworkradio.net/2018/05/641-2018-05-13/>

performance in Istanbul involving an outdoor stage with musicians playing along to recorded environmental sounds¹³⁶.

3.2.3 The Sound Massage

During the 2007 dance and music festival in Istanbul organised by Yanaël Plumet, I experienced musician Pascal Battus' Sound Massages. This performance consisted of Battus meeting with audience members one by one in a separate space. For about ten minutes, Battus would produce sounds by placing his instruments next to the ears of audience members. Sounds being produced so close to one's ear would give the impression of being immersed in them.

3.2.4 The Florence Sound Walk

In May 2011, I went to the 5th international *Forum Klanglandschaft* (FKL) symposium on soundscape that took place in Florence to present a film called *Three Times in Beyoglu*¹³⁷. In the film we could see a person walking on one of the main streets of Istanbul (Istiklal) and hear the sounds she was recording during this walk using binaural microphones¹³⁸.

During the symposium organisers encouraged us to participate in a sound walk. I remember walking around a small forest but also entering a supermarket with my eyes closed (we were holding the hand of a person who could see). During this experience I

¹³⁶ In my experience, I have met musicians who were interested in so-called field recordings and *musique concrète* but none who were interested in a practice which, first of all, focused on listening. My experience with Soundwalks as those initiated by Westerkamp rarely involved people coming from the Improvised Music scene. Furthermore, even though there are now several PhDs on free improvisation (Callingham 2007, Saladin 2010, Blazanovic 2012, Lexer 2012, Wright 2013, Scott 2014, Arthurs 2015), there are no works focusing on the two practices.

¹³⁷ This video can be watched online: <https://vimeo.com/15421213> [Accessed September 15, 2018]

¹³⁸ These are microphones that actually resemble earphones. Binaural recording is a method of recording that uses two microphones, arranged with the intent to create a sensation for the listener of actually being in the space where sounds were recorded.

had the impression that sounds were louder. This particular way of listening seemed similar to the one I experienced when recording environmental sounds and listening to them with earphones¹³⁹.

Compared to my Istanbul workshop, the listening experience in Mostoles was similar as it brought together sounds that I thought were unrelated (cars, birds, voices...). However, in Mostoles I suggested possible links and relations between sounds to myself, whilst in Istanbul I observed this relation without apparently taking part in foregrounding these links. In other words, it seemed that in Mostoles I was making the composition, whilst in Istanbul I had the impression that this sort of composition existed already. The sound 'massage' seemed opposed to my workshop experience as I could not hear any environmental sounds; instead, it was like the sounds were inside me. It could be suggested, however, that this experience involved an environment that is internal rather than external.

The Aleppo experience cast a doubt on the possibility of bringing together 'natural' environmental sounds and instrumental sounds. It seemed that this link would be more widely accepted thanks to the mediation of a recording device and a speaker. In the Florence sound walk I experienced that being part of an activity dedicated to listening and closing your eyes seemed to work as a method for amplifying sounds.

¹³⁹ This evokes again a form of reduced listening that involves the removal of visual information to enhance the perception of sounds. Closing your eyes is a way of listening which narrows your attention towards sounds. This practice evokes Schaffer's reduced listening, but also AMM sessions where musicians used to switch off the light (Wright 2013, 113). In the case of Schaffer, related practices (for instance, musician Francisco Lopez gives his audience a blindfold) consist of focusing on sounds for themselves by trying to avoid its cause. In the case of AMM, it is probably more related to the interest of improvisers in blurring who is making what and not relying on traditional jazz roles. About musicians' roles in AMM, see for instance, Wright 2013, 76. If these two approaches invite the listener to close their eyes, it does not mean that listening necessarily implies detachment from sight as is shown, for instance, in Schafer's exercises (1992).

3.3 Improvisation and listening

3.3.1 Mamori Art Lab

In 2009, I went to the Amazonian rain forest near Manaus (Mamori Lake) to join a field recording workshop organised by artist Francisco Lopez, who is a Spanish experimental music artist and who has worked on musical projects based on field recordings for the last thirty years. Later when I returned to Madrid where I was living at that time, I created a piece called ‘Confluencias’ made of recordings of the Amazonian forest and an improvisation with the saxophone recorded live in the studio.

During the working process, I first created a layer with the rainforest recordings and then I recorded an improvisation on top of it three times to create three different versions. The sounds made with the saxophone echoed the sounds that were recorded in the rain forest. For instance, in the first part of the piece I played sustained notes with the saxophone that mingle with the continuous subaquatic sounds made by certain fish. These fish did not effectively sound but they were producing an electromagnetic field that, when being recorded with a hydrophone¹⁴⁰, would sound in the recording as low frequency sustained tones.

When trying to decide what version to use I accidentally mixed the three saxophone improvisations that were originally supposed to stand alone, and finally chose to keep this version¹⁴¹. This ‘accident’ brings together the etymological meaning of improvisation (what cannot be predicted or seen in advance) with Cage’s idea of an improvisation that, thanks to chance, would not depend on the likes and dislikes of the performer¹⁴².

¹⁴⁰ A microphone that can record sounds underwater.

¹⁴¹ In document 4 you can simultaneously hear two saxophone sounds: a sustained sound and a high pitch sort of trill sound. The sustained sound stops at 15” whilst the trill goes on until the end of the excerpt.

¹⁴² Artist Concha Jerez asked John Cage about chance procedures: ‘but what if after applying all the chance procedures the final outcome does not satisfy you? Would you let the work as it is to respect the chance procedures, or would you change it? — Of course, I would change it’ Cage replied to her (Jerez, personal communication 2017).

3.3.2 Lavapies

In 2009 I met with saxophone player Sébastien Branche to practise in a small park located in a residential area of Madrid city centre, called Lavapies. In the Lavapies Park we improvised with very quiet sounds and very long periods of silence. During this session I remember an intense moment of concentration and a certain tension about not really knowing when exactly to play, or who should play first, or if it would be adequate, or to actually not play at all. When silence lasted for several minutes, it seemed that it was not necessarily worthwhile to resume playing. I also asked myself, ‘why should we introduce saxophone sounds in the sonic environment of this park?’¹⁴³

3.3.3 Tierno Galvan

When I was living in Madrid, I used to practise in a park called Tierno Galvan several mornings a week for approximately a year, situated in the South of the city. In the mornings, this extensive park was particularly quiet as very few people were going there. However, in the background it was also possible to hear a highway and a train station close by.

During these sessions I started by doing a physical warm up, then I would spend the rest of the session playing sustained sounds, whilst listening to environmental sounds. During this practice, I focussed my attention on the quality of the sounds I was producing, the way they resonated in the park; and, I also paid attention to environmental sounds. In that park I could hear birds, dogs, people passing by, but also the distant sounds from a

¹⁴³ I have since then made many other works in public spaces, sometimes organised by institutions. For instance, in 2015, I created a piece for Kaffe Matthews sonic bikes called ‘Sax changes’ that consisted of a bike with speakers playing back sounds that I had recorded in a park in the previous days. Some people did not like the idea that we were introducing sounds that somehow did not belong to that place. Are saxophone sounds in a park considered ‘sacred sounds’ in the Schafer sense as long as they are supported by an official organisation? To me these sounds make sense as long as there are people willing to listen to them. When people do not want these sounds, it can lead to interesting reflections, painful negotiations, or creative outcomes such as the music made at the venue, Off Site, in Tokyo.

highway and a train station dedicated to rail freight transport. One exercise would consist of playing slightly below the sounds I could hear so that I could both play sounds on my saxophone whilst perceiving the environmental sounds¹⁴⁴. This would help me to situate my hearing threshold and sometimes would help me to discover new sounds on my saxophone¹⁴⁵.

3.3.4 Don't listen to the saxophones

On the 30th of June 2010, I performed with Sébastien Branche as part of a sound art exhibition that took place in la Casa Encendida in Madrid. This venue is dedicated to exhibiting visual arts, but also organising live performances. For this event, we proposed a sound walk to the audience in the city centre of Madrid that started in front of the Reina Sofia Museum and ended in Tirso de Molina square. During the walk, we intermittently played our saxophones.

In this performance we attempted to share our environmental sound listening practice with an audience¹⁴⁶. To do this, I created a listening score that suggested twenty-nine different ways of listening¹⁴⁷ during this event. One of these suggestions consisted of not listening to the saxophones. In one version we made of this piece in Amurrio (Spain), we entered a basque pelota¹⁴⁸ playground and people in the audience asked the players to stop their game (whilst the sounds they were making were actually very interesting to us).

¹⁴⁴ In the context of a conversation, Pierre Maréchaux reminds us that for Plutarch, to cease speaking allows one to hear what someone else is saying, but also (referring to Barthes) it also allows one to listen to his or her own listening (Plutarque 1995, 82). Another reason to stop 'speaking' or ceasing to make sounds is described by Peter Szendy in his analysis of Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain*. As the main character of the film is followed by another man in a museum, he sometimes stops walking (and therefore ceases to make sounds) in order to locate the sounds produced by the man who follows him. With this information in mind, he can decide what direction he should continue walking to escape from the man who pursues him (Szendy 2007, 92).

¹⁴⁵ Often, when reducing my volume to play softer than my accompanying musicians, my sound will actually change. Playing softer can lead to a more unexpected outcome than trying actively to find a 'new' sound. This was discovered thanks to my practice of listening to environmental sounds and my practice in Improvised Music at Eddie Prévost's workshop.

¹⁴⁶ A video showing excerpts from this performance can be found in document 5.

¹⁴⁷ See appendix 5 (page 186).

¹⁴⁸ Name for a variety of court sports played with a ball using one's hand.

In relation to my Istanbul workshop listening experience, the Mamori art lab work suggested the possibility of a relation between environmental sounds and Improvised Music sounds as part of a recording. In my experience this process involved letting chance take part in the compositional work. Furthermore, this work cast a doubt on the nature of recorded environmental sounds — as in the case of the hydrophone, the microphone would actually produce sounds rather than simply record them.

The Lavapies experience resembled the one I had in Istanbul. However, in this case we were playing the instruments and by playing very quiet sounds at the same time, we could also hear environmental sounds. During silences I would ask myself mental questions about the music being played. In the work I did in Tierno Galvan Park, I was able to engage both with environmental sounds and those made with my saxophone. However, the sustained sounds I made seemed to me, at that time, very similar and did not conform to the idea I had of free improvisation as something more closely related to John Stevens' pointillism, or Frank Perry's Klangfarbenmelodie.

During the saxophone sound walk in Madrid city centre, I remember that when we played I was more focussed on the sounds produced by the saxophones, rather than on the environmental sounds. When walking around the city without playing, I would then have a sense of the sonic environment. Playing and walking simultaneously makes the experience of a reduced listening difficult. This might be related to the fact that when one is walking, he or she is focusing attention on many other aspects than sound. In a city, particularly, one has to be aware of potential dangers (such as cars) and cannot simply 'let go' to only focus on sounds as it can be the case during a safe space like a concert¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁹ However, as certain Sonic Meditation pieces show (such as the walking piece 'Native'), but also as suggested more broadly in the deep listening practice, the problem is not movement itself. On the contrary, listening to the body (also mentioned above in the Galerie Limitis episode), can be part of a listening activity. Regarding the issue of the site, the Florence sound walk shows that strategies can be found to create a safe space for listening, in spite of the potential danger of a site (in Florence we were closing our eyes but holding the hand of a person who could see).

In Madrid, I was considering that our sounds for that walk and the listening scores might offer the audience a listening experience involving both kinds of sounds, but I did not experience this mix of sounds consistently¹⁵⁰. For instance, is the saxophone producing a way of listening to sounds that favours what is made by the instrument and excludes other kinds of sounds? Is the musical instrument already a form of score?

3.4 Conclusions Early Practice

In the years prior to my research (but subsequent to the Istanbul listening experience), I identified two main influences in my work: that of the notion of new sounds in Improvised Music, and the listening experience of R. Murray Schafer's acoustic ecology practice.

First of all, in relation to Improvised Music, I can trace this interest for new sounds and playing 'something else' back to early experiences of AMM¹⁵¹. As we have seen in the contextual review, AMM explored different ways of playing with their musical instruments, and nowadays still, Prévost invites participants to his workshop to explore their musical instrument to find out something new.

Later on, Malfatti would spot how important it was for improvisers he was working with to affirm their singularity¹⁵², whilst Reductionists, as we have also indicated earlier, would affirm themselves in relation to their predecessors (such as the work of John Stevens) and use terminology which explicitly refers to the notion of 'new'.

¹⁵⁰ This can be explained by the previous note concerning walking and the special awareness required in the city. It can also be related to the attention that I sometimes had to put in order to make sure that the collective walk in the city centre of Madrid was running smoothly (by, for instance, paying attention to the pace and the orientation).

¹⁵¹ We could nevertheless mention that other early improvisers did not share this interest for the new. For instance, Bailey seems less concerned with the 'new', since for him, 'the desire to stay ahead of the field is not common among improvisors. And regarding method, the improviser employs the oldest in music-making' (Bailey 1993, 83).

¹⁵² In Malfatti's experience, free improvisation would be a problem when musicians would play the same note or would play similar instruments (personal communication 2018).

The notion of ‘new’ sounds needs to be critically scrutinised. According to philosopher Boris Groys,

[t]he demand for the new arises primarily when old values are archived and so protected from the destructive work of time. Where no archives exist, or where their physical existence is endangered, people prefer to transmit tradition intact rather than innovate (2014, 21).

As mentioned in the contextual review, it was because of his experience of listening to early recordings of Improvised Music that Robin Hayward perceived the importance of making something different. Paradoxically, new sounds affirm themselves as being detached from something else: they suggest a sharp cut from the past, but at the same time, they emerge from a knowledge of what has happened before.

In the case of Hayward, the recording — as part of a physical archive — enabled him the distance to elaborate a critical understanding of the musical scene and create something ‘new’ in the sense of Groys. However, what happens when the archive is not clearly identifiable as an object? An example of that is proposed by philosopher, Paul B. Preciado, who uses the term *somathèque* to refer to the archive as a set of practices and knowledge that defines subjectivity and that locates into the body (Preciado 2013, 389). Another example proposed by critical sociology refers to a set of practices — the habitus that the individual performs ‘naturally’ without being conscious that these gestures and ways of thinking are the result of a ‘score’ historically and socially defined (Louis 2016, 31).

If the subject is the archive, as suggested by Preciado, how does one become aware of it? Philosopher Eribon, suggests a method that he calls socio-analysis consisting of making the history of one’s self from a social and cultural perspective. According to Eribon, knowing how your subjectivity is made by tracing the history of one’s influences can enable you to ‘improvise’ by moving outside the definitions of the known self (2019, 23). Another method, in order to perceive the structures or the environment that shapes one

frame of perception, is proposed by psychologist Jean Piaget. According to Piaget ‘only when there is some sort of dis-adaptation does the individual become aware of structures’ (1971, 99). We could also look at Piaget’s dis-adaptation that reveals structures from a sociological perspective rather than psychological. According to Ernaux, ‘The trouble, the uneasiness, the consciousness arises when there is a divorce between the habitus and the field (...).’¹⁵³

During the Istanbul episode, I had not yet developed the analysis in this contextual review about the history of my practice. However, the impression of non-conformity experienced in Istanbul when listening to environmental sounds after a musical improvisation suggests the presence of two different systems of thought, belonging to two different structures or archives, that suddenly overlap.

Another understanding of the notion of ‘new’ is proposed by Gregory Bateson, in his book, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. As reminded by Bateson, the term *cliché* comes from the technical vocabulary of printing to refer to a stereotype:

It's a French word, and I think it was originally a printer's word. When they print a sentence they have to take the separate letters and put them one by one into a sort of grooved stick to spell out the sentence. But for words and sentences which people use often, the printer keeps little sticks of letters ready made up. And these ready-made sentences are called clichés.

Later, Bateson explains that to create ‘new’ ideas one needs to break these *clichés*:

But if the printer wants to print something new — say, something in a new language, he will have to break up all that old sorting of the letters. In the same way, in order to think

¹⁵³ Own translation. The original text is : ‘Le trouble, le malaise, la conscience apparaissent quand il y a divorce entre l’habitus et le champ (...).’ (Louis 2016, 31)

new thoughts or to say new things, we have to break up all our ready-made ideas and shuffle the pieces (Bateson 1987, 25-26).

That approach of shuffling the pieces evokes works mentioned in the contextual review such as *Polwechsel*, *News from the Shed*, *Balance* or *Ohrkiste*. As we have seen in these recordings, musicians play with musical material that is not necessarily new (as it evokes the work of previous practitioners), but that is presented in a new order.

Bateson's shuffling of the pieces evokes a Lucretian order that would rely on chance (the atoms in *De rerum natura* that fall and sometimes connect randomly to each other) to create new forms. On the contrary, for Eribon, what is situated outside of the already-known does not depend on chance but on the analysis of how subjectivity has been produced. Are improvisers' experience the result of chance or the result of ideas that have been internalised? Did I experience listening to environmental sounds in Istanbul as a shuffling of the pieces of my practice (Improvised Music and creative listening practices) or through a learning process?

According to Audre Lorde, 'there are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt (...)' (2018, 34). Paraphrasing the poet, we could say that there are no new sounds but new ways of making these sounds felt. The way we feel is, according to audio culture studies scholar Jonathan Sterne (referring to Marx), the product of history (Sterne 2013, 5). We learn how to listen and how to recognise sounds. In the contextual review, we have seen, for instance, musicians who taught their audience how to listen to environmental sounds (see chapter 1 section 1.6).

In relation to the experience of Istanbul, we can distinguish the event itself that might have happened by chance and the recognition of sounds as potentially being part of a musical experience that resulted from the internalisation of ideas, such as those from Schafer, that had been learnt.

My practice resonated with acoustic ecology by, for example, mapping sounds of a place as Schafer had done previously. However, whilst in my work there was no intention of evaluating that quality or the interest of the sounds I could hear, R. Murray Schafer intentionally built up a sensitivity in his work that defined what ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sounds of a place were for designing the ideal soundscape. Nevertheless, in my case there was a questioning process about the interest and meaning of having, or not having, sounds of a saxophone in the sonic environment.

Acoustic ecology principles of tuning, harmony and balance of sounds are linked to early principles of music. Indeed, during antiquity, ideas such as the music of spheres developed by Pythagoras argued that there existed a universal equilibrium that manifested through sounds the good order of the world (Schafer 1977, 15). Based on this principle of a cosmic sonic order, musical techniques were developed based on the possibility of healing a person by creating balance within the body using sounds (Burnett 2000). A ‘good’ sound or a ‘bad’ sound could be therefore justified thanks to this idea of balance and tuning. However, what are the criteria exactly for finding this equilibrium?

According to this view, the criteria could be defined by some sort of superior entity that, in the case of the Greeks, could be understood as a divinity, whilst in the case of Schafer, it refers to the world or an idea of nature. In any case, this position to define a good sound is partly detached from the subject who simply acknowledges or re-establishes a balance — an order that pre-exists him or her. However, recent sound studies question this non-neutrality of the subject in acoustic ecology that brings us back to antiquity. Jonathan Sterne traces the figure of the listener in acoustic ecology, as already mentioned earlier (see chapter 2 section 2.5), to the hi-fi culture that developed in North America after the Second World War and the of construction of masculinities amongst the North American middle-class (Sterne 2015 and Keightley 1996).

On the contrary, in Improvised Music the practice seems to challenge this central position of the subject. Stevens' exercises, for instance, develop the idea of a definition of what balance is, not by relying on one person in the group, but on all its members. This is also the case when defining what the meaning of silence is as a group (see chapter 1 section 1.3). The decentring of one self as the reference point for what the meaning of a sound is, is exacerbated in early experience of AMM that shows, as remembered by Lou Gare, how band members would lose their sense of self:

‘You’d hear the sounds and you didn’t know which were your sounds until you actually stopped. You’d think you were doing something; you’d stop and that would carry on and you’d suddenly realise it was somebody else making that noise. I suppose it’s got much more of a physical impact in the dark — you’re sort of inside the sound’ (Toop 2016, 220).

In the case of Improvised Music, rather than building a subjectivity that relies on the control of sound through listening, a few signs suggest, on the contrary, a subjectivity that seems to vanish or that is being deconstructed. This deconstruction of the self can be read as part of a musical experimentation, but it also can be related, using a sociological lens, to the social background of musicians.

First, we can note indeed that Improvised Music is a practice initially developed mostly by musicians coming from a working-class background and related to jazz (see British Library interviews with Prévost, Bailey, Stevens, Rowe or Watts). To become a musician is already to avoid a social path that, as Bailey explains for himself, would mean, for instance, working in a factory or becoming a milk-deliverer (Bailey and Priestley 1987, 50'). As a musician, one could become therefore ‘something else’.

Furthermore, to engage with a musical practice that involves a high degree of abstraction and complexity in relation to forms, emphasises aesthetic values that usually correspond, according to sociologists, to the taste of dominant classes (Louis 2016, 31). Finally, being a ‘non-idiomatic’ musician aspiring towards playing ‘something else’ or getting rid of former musical roles can be understood within a process of suspending his or her identity

(or as Eribon says ‘to pull out oneself from what history has made of us’¹⁵⁴), neutralising the mode of sensing the world that is linked to the way one subjectivity has been socially produced. A form of desubjectification, in the sense of distancing oneself from a musical identity linked to inherited ways of playing, manifests in Improvised Music when one is not able to recognise him or herself, as in the Lou Gare example mentioned above.

The meaning of sounds relies on the identity of the listener that manifests through the practice of listening. In the case of acoustic ecology, it involves being in the centre of sound and controlling the organisation of sounds as if they were in a sonic panopticon. In the case of Improvised Music, being inside of sound and not exactly knowing what one is listening to involves a process of desubjectification that supposes the possibility of a transformation of the subject.

In the early practice, certain works such as the Pisaro piece at Cafe Oto, particularly drew my attention as they resembled my experience in Istanbul. However, this work at that time, seemed to me to be more linked to the practice of composition — the understanding of which remains problematic. This early practice reflects doubts in my work about parameters that distinguish composition from improvisation, as well as a focus on the notion of the environment from the perspective of the individual looking ‘outside’ of themselves.

This desire to pay attention to what is situated beyond oneself can be explained by Foucault’s ideas around utopias. It is in the body itself that the idea of a ‘somewhere else’ lies. For instance, as stated by Foucault, ‘this skull, the back of my skull, I can feel it right there, with my finger. But see it?’ (Quoted in Jones 2006, 231). In the realm of sound, we could say something similar: in the sounds that apparently surround me or even in the sounds I produce, there is similarly a ‘back of my skull’.

¹⁵⁴ Own translation. Original text is : ‘(...) s’arracher à ce que l’histoire à fait de nous.’ (Eribon 2019, 117)

The socio-analytic perspective of Eribon focuses on finding strategies for understanding what is actually situated in the ‘back of the skull’. That research is concerned with embodied knowledge that affects ways of thinking and sensing the world. Doing that work, Eribon will trace his own past (see his book *Retour à Reims*) in order to emphasise the idea that individuals are strongly (but not irremediably) defined by their social history (Eribon 2019, 114). Inspired by Bourdieu (and specially by *La distinction*), this current of thought foregrounds that there is no such a thing as a strict separation between the individual and the collective (Louis 2016, 41) or the internal and the external (Eribon 2014, 37).

What would historically be older than I am — that within a musical context, has shaped my sensibility towards environmental sounds? As we have mentioned previously during the contextual review, the work of Pizarro situates within a musical movement called Wandelweiser that is closely related to the work of composer, Cage (see Chapter 1 section 1.4). That could explain why, when performing this piece, I also experienced environmental sounds and that it reminded me of the Istanbul episode. However, as we have also noted previously, my experience in Istanbul was believed to be more informed by Schafer rather than Cage.

These two composers knew each other but did not share the same approach. Indeed, for Schafer, listening to environmental sounds is part of a cultural transformation, promoting listening habits that would re-establish a harmonious sonic order. For Cage, on the contrary, environmental sounds figure a place of freedom (‘the brilliance of non-organization’ as he says in Kostelanetz 2003, 60) where sounds exist for themselves as long as they don’t depend on musicians’ tastes (because, again, they are believed to be corrupted by culture and social influences).

How could I recognise myself in this Pizarro history (by emphasising similarities with the experience in Istanbul) when it actually relates to a composer, Cage, which I thought, seemed to clearly diverge from my own path? Three aspects suggest that the Istanbul experience was informed not only by my interest in Schafer and his acoustic ecology

approach, but also by the influence of Cage. First, Schafer himself was actually influenced by Cage and appreciated his work even though the American composer had no interest in the work of the Canadian composer (see chapter 2 section 2.3.2).

We have also mentioned in the contextual review that early improvisers knew about Cage. Nevertheless, they quickly detached from his work (Prévost, Personal communication 2017) or actually abandoned improvisation to join him (see Bryars chapter 1 section 1.1). A negotiation between these two positions (improvisers and Cage) seems impossible for early practitioners. However, in fact, there are similarities, such as when Gare describes a situation where musicians lose their sense of identity and therefore do not play intentionally (see Lou Gare quote above).

Later generations of improvisers have a different position towards the work of Cage. Pascal Battus, who was leading the Istanbul workshop, is, according to my notes from that time and a more recent interview with him (personal communication 2018), influenced by the work of the American composer. Indeed, his playing relies on musical devices that only allow relative control by the musician, echoing Cage's 'structural improvisation' that we have studied previously in the contextual review (see chapter 2 section 2.3).

The study of the Pisaro piece foregrounds the complexity of the historical influences that are involved in the construction of my own listening experience. If we look at environmental sounds as the reference point, we can see that from the perspective of an improviser it would be more meaningful to engage with the work of Schafer, as for Cage, environmental sounds are the opposite of improvisation. However, it seems nevertheless that rather than only one, both influences from Cage and Schafer (even though they are distinct), are present in the Istanbul experience.

For the Amazonia piece, the music composition did partly rely on chance rather than free improvisation. As we have seen before in the contextual chapters, chance, in music, is a

construction that needs to be looked at critically. Rather than pay attention to the environment, 'chance' or non-intentional approaches seem to separate sounds from their social, political and historical context.

Chance, through the figure of Cage, has mostly been put forward as a manner for musicians to detach themselves from cultural influences that would spoil the perception of 'sound for itself'. Improvisation, within that interpretation, is ineffective for musicians without even noticing it for they play what they already know. The problem, according to Cage's ideas, is that when musicians are expressing themselves during an improvisation, culture is actually speaking through them. 'Sounds in themselves', that can only be reached thanks to indeterminacy, are situated beyond culture and social predetermination according to this system of thought.

Cage's discourse resonates with critical sociology theories. According to Bourdieu, acts that seem to be spontaneous are in fact the result of social predeterminations. As already shown in the contextual review, this is also the case for Cage's chance. The opposition of Cage to improvisation cannot be understood without taking into consideration the context of American segregation and issues of social progression for African American people. For Cage to distance himself from jazz and improvisation, considering that as already indicated earlier he was not opposed to it in the earlier stages of his career, is the result of a very specific social and historical context rather than the product of chance (see chapter 2 section 2.3.1). We could also note that relying on chance to supposedly detach himself from culture could also be understood through the lens of Cage's homosexuality as a response towards a repressive and intolerant social environment.

Is improvisation dominated by culture as suggested by Cage and therefore distinct from chance? Among improvisers we can actually find similarities with Cage's ideas. For instance, when Derek Bailey speaks of non-idiomatic music (Improvised Music) that is detached from any other genres (like jazz or flamenco), his discourse resonates with the Cagean idea of 'sounds for themselves' for he claims that Improvised Music might situate

beyond specific cultures. Free improvisation has always existed, and will always exist, says Bailey in his book (Bailey 1993, 83).

The idea that improvisation is opposed to ‘chance’ — because instead of detaching from a cultural context this musical practice is pervaded by it — can also be discussed through the biography of pioneers of Improvised Music. For many of them coming from a working-class background, Improvised Music, as already mentioned earlier, can be seen as one of the potential social routes for detaching themselves from social determinations. If Bailey had been determined by culture, by his memories and tastes, a sociological lens would suggest that he would not have become a musician interested in complex and abstract musical forms. On the contrary, his musical practice seems to be (rather than the product of culture) what brings Bailey towards a form of resistance to culture that, in the case of Improvised Music, relies strongly on the erasure of its origins and identity.

What this analysis suggests is that chance and improvisation are not as distinct as Cage suggests them to be. Both Cage and improvisers are willing to situate music within a space of freedom rather than being defined by social predeterminations. However, Cage has a more structural approach, for he sees culture as a system that completely takes over the individual. In order to escape from this cultural structure, Cage uses chance. Early improvisers develop, on the contrary, an approach that evokes existentialism and humanism, for they believe in the possibilities of the individual to free him or herself. However, this ‘humanist’ approach incorporates its own critic for it links the process of self-reinvention (by playing ‘something else’) to a process of desubjectification (by moving away from inherited playing roles that define the subject).

An analysis of my early practice does not solve my research question, but it does contribute by unpacking the context in terms of theory and practice in which this initial interrogation about Improvised Music and environmental sound arose. Further research will attempt to find a way to solve the problem that arises from this early practice analysis. How can one engage with a way of listening influenced by acoustic ecology that situates the subject in the centre of sound (with views of controlling it), and be an approach that,

as it is the case in improvisation when looking towards a 'new' sound, is interested in what seem to situate beyond the limits of the subject?

Chapter 4 Research Practice I/II

This section critically and reflexively analyses significant practices undertaken as part of my doctoral research. It looks at my practice from a perspective that tries to incorporate both Improvised Music and creative and critical listening practices.

4.1 Research Practice I

4.1.1 Relentless in Springfield Park

In the summer of 2013, I recorded an improvisation with Sébastien Branche, a Leipzig-based French saxophone player, in Springfield park's bandstand. This improvisation included several long moments of silence. When listening back to the recording, I can hear the sound from a machine¹⁵⁵ during our silences — probably located in the park — that we had not noticed when we were playing. Even though we did not expect this sound to be recorded, it nevertheless fitted well to our perception with the rest of the sounds that had been recorded¹⁵⁶. Sébastien Branche's response to the recording is that he remembers the sounds of the planes passing approximately every five minutes. He also mentions that for him, paying attention to 'the external sounds' is important for the development of his own approach to playing the saxophone. He asks: 'what am I listening to? How to

¹⁵⁵ It is very common in Springfield Park for staff members to use different sorts of machines (to cut the grass, to water plants, to remove the leaves) to maintain the park. To think of this park as a quiet place in terms of sounds would be far from reality. Planes fly over every two-three minutes and trains pass by regularly, often activating their horns. Somedays hundreds of children gather in the main field to play games and they make loud sounds when encouraging each other. Birds such as crows, parakeets, woodpeckers, swallows, or song thrush also contribute to the lively sonic atmosphere of this place.

¹⁵⁶ In document 7 we can hear impacts probably produced by the park workers (44'') as well sustained low frequencies created by an engine (1' 08''). This second example reminds me of the experience of Zina's Circle as when the sound of the saxophone ceases (1'07''), sounds from the environment emerge. Similarly, in Zina's Circle I could hear environmental sounds emerging when participants would cease to emit sounds. This faculty to perceive environmental sounds rather than simply depend on silence, seems more likely to result from the passage from sound to silence.

underline it for myself thanks to the saxophone? How to create opportunities for playing thanks to these external sounds? What do I decide to imitate, to contrast, to use as a counterpoint, to ignore, to consider as a trigger, to hide, to unveil, to underline etc...?’ (email 9/12/16).

4.1.2 The Workshop Series

In September 2013 I was invited to play with Eddie Prévost, Ross Lambert, Hutch Demouilpied, Tony Hardie-Bick, Tom Wheatley, Tom Mill, Sue Lynch, and Grundik Kasyansky as part of the Workshop Series concerts at the Cafe Oto project space. This event aimed to present work made by musicians participating in the Improvised Music workshops organised by Prévost on Friday evenings at the Welsh Chapel to the public. The Cafe Oto project space is a small building located a few meters from the main music venue.

During the concert, there was at some point, a very long silence that reminded me of the listening experience I had in Istanbul. For a few minutes, nobody played. First, I felt tense not knowing if I should continue playing, or if it indicated the end of the piece. However, after a few seconds I did not worry anymore and started listening to environmental sounds. For instance, I particularly remember the cracklings of the wooden structure of the building that I had never noticed before.

Unlike the experience in Istanbul, after a few minutes of silence (similarly to the AMM recordings from the Royal College of Art), one musician resumed playing and we all followed him¹⁵⁷. According to one of the participants, this part of the improvisation resembled the work of AMM¹⁵⁸. I noticed that during this second part I was not able to

¹⁵⁷ Within the context of the workshop, one of the suggestions made by Prévost consists of playing with the other musician.

¹⁵⁸ I don't exactly know to what aspect from the AMM music this musician was referring to. During this second part I was using a long cardboard cylinder that I adjusted to the saxophone to make very low sustained sounds. Maybe the musician was thinking of the AMM 'laminal' approach consisting of 'layered textures' (Prévost in Smith and Dean 1997, 69).

perceive environmental sounds any more. This could be due to several reasons such as the fact that I was mostly paying attention to the sounds I was making, the fact that I was also rather focusing on sounds that were made by other musicians, and maybe also the fact that the sounds made by musical instruments were much louder than the environmental sounds.

4.1.3 Bandstand Meditation

I organised a public event on the 28th of September 2014 involving Improvised Music and ‘deep listening’ practice. Deep listening is a practice created by composer Pauline Oliveros, which is concerned with ‘listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear’ including ‘the sounds of daily life, of nature, or one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds’ (Oliveros 2010,73). This event included Angharad Davies¹⁵⁹, a violinist interested in experimental and Improvised Music, and Ximena Alarcón, a researcher and artist interested in deep listening practice.

For this event I asked Ximena Alarcón to introduce deep listening in the Springfield Park bandstand. Having done some research about bandstands, I wanted to foreground the relationship between this kind of architecture and the practice of meditation. According to Marie-Claire Mussat, bandstand designs¹⁶⁰ were inspired by Chinese pavilions dedicated to meditation and in a similar way, deep listening is closely related to Oliveros’ previous work, *Sonic Meditations*.

With this event I also wanted to find a path that might connect my interest in Improvised Music with the listening practice developed by Oliveros. One of my aims was to see if deep listening could bring certain practices into Improvised Music performance, such as

¹⁵⁹ An excerpt of this performance can be found in document 8.

¹⁶⁰ Mussat explains that originally bandstands were ‘nothing more than a garden pavilion, that of the Chinese garden introduced in the eighteenth century in England in the landscaped gardens, and it owes its festive use to the “pleasure gardens”’ (Mussat 1992 and 2002, 325). The Springfield Park bandstand was built in 1905.

the bodily ‘warm ups’ that I find very useful for concentration and listening, but which are not very popular among musicians and never taken into consideration by audiences¹⁶¹.

4.1.4 Sarah Hughes AMM

In the winter of 2014, I participated in a recording of Sarah Hughes’ piece, ‘Architectural Model Making’, a musical project supported by Simon Reynell’s label Another Timbre, in Springfield Park. Sarah Hughes is an artist and experimental music performer and composer based in the UK and has been collaborating with composers from Wandelweiser such as Michael Pisaro.

During the work on Sarah Hughes’ piece I intended to record the sounds of the saxophone in Springfield Park combined with sounds I could hear around me such as the birds, the trains, or the planes regularly passing in that area. The way I decided to perform this piece¹⁶² consisted of moving progressively very close to the microphone, to being very far from it. In document 10 we can hear the saxophone near the microphone (34”), and in document 11, it is far from it (34”).

4.1.5 MKII Re-Birth

At a musical evening called *Re-birth* organised by curator and musician, Mark Wagner, on 20th of April 2014, I gave a solo performance at MKII, Clapton. During the concert I started by making a mezzo forte sound and then left it in silence. I did not know what to do and so I repeated the previous note, but a bit quieter. Then I stopped again and began

¹⁶¹ According to James Johnson, audience behaviour is very coded and far from being only defined by music itself. For instance, he asserts that musical venues used to be noisy in Paris before the French Revolution. Silence was introduced by the new social class ruling the country (the bourgeois) as a concert etiquette that would distinguish them from the former class in power, the aristocrats (Johnson 1995).

¹⁶² Even though this experience was extremely inspiring, I decided not to publish my recordings. On the website of the musical label ‘Another Timbre’ can be found recordings of this work by other performers. <http://www.anothertimbre.com/sarahhughesamm.html> [Accessed September 15, 2018]. See score in appendix 8 (page 191).

to hear environmental sounds around me. I could hear water, the noise made by chairs, a child, and small repeated noises as if someone was hitting something, a pipe. I resumed playing a sustained sound but very quietly. I then came back to silence again. I could feel the audience listening, and I had the sensation that they were very attentive. I wondered if they would become tired of this situation. One person left the room. I could hear someone come in and say hi to a friend. I remained silent. I wondered if I was imposing this attention upon silence to the audience. Suddenly, I placed a speaker on a drum set next to me. The speaker created a continuous sound that vibrated on the drum. By doing this, the sound reference that I was aware of was not environmental anymore but rather the continuous sound produced by the drums. I let this device sound by itself for a while, and during the rest of the performance, I made a few noises slightly above the sound of the drums, and later a bit below the speaker level.

4.2 Conclusions Research Practice I

In this section, I reflect on what the differences are between listening during playing and listening to the recording of what was played in two instances — with Branche in Springfield Park and recording Hughes' piece. I also reflect on the differences between the idea of sound and the experience of it, and how silence affects the performer's role.

In listening to the recording with Branche in Springfield Park, I observed an unexpected correlation between sounds we made with saxophones in the bandstand and environmental sounds from outside the bandstand. This connection depended on the external 'ear' of the microphone as it did not always reflect what we, as musicians, were listening to whilst playing. In this experience, what surprised me when listening to the recording is the fact that I could hear many sounds that went unnoticed during the actual performance. The differences between recorded sounds and my memory of the sounds, created a space for ones I did not remember and these appeared as new or unexpected.

Composer Pauline Oliveros describes a similar experience in several articles and interviews. For Oliveros, this experience foregrounded the possibilities of expanding her listening:

I have been training myself to listen with a very simple meditation since 1953 when my mother gave me a tape recorder for my twenty first birthday. The tape recorder had just become available on the home market and was not so ubiquitous as it is today. I immediately began to record from my apartment window whatever was happening. I noticed that the microphone was picking up sounds that I had not heard while the recording was in progress. I said to myself then and there: “Listen to everything all the time and remind yourself when you are not listening” (2010, 75).

But is it really possible to listen to everything? As we have seen previously (see chapter 4 section 4.1.3), listening is a cultural practice that relates to the way one is engaging with the world. For instance, listening to music in silence in the Opera is related to, according to Johnson, the identity of Bourgeois who wanted to distinguish themselves from aristocrats in France during the XVIIIth century. For Eribon, the discipline of the body (in this case, to remain silent during a concert) is a technique of individuation that results in the production of an identity (2019, 277) . What kind of identity would imply listening to everything?

Musician Pascal Battus develops a different approach from Oliveros. According to Battus, during the workshop in Istanbul, the microphone does not indeed record everything, but instead selects certain aspects rather than others in a similar way as a camera. When it comes to microphones, they are not objective or neutral tools. They represent the perspective of those involved in the creation or use of this technology, such as the engineers who designed them or the technicians who operate them. As such, recording implies a perspective or way of listening to sounds and not a universal or objective frame of perception.

For Battus, a person, unlike a microphone, can actually listen to everything, and as a musician the task consists of deciding where to focus his or her attention. When playing, the musician decides to foreground this sound rather than another. But how does a musician decide how to frame sounds?

In the contextual review we have seen many different ways of selecting or framing sounds. In the case of reductionist musicians, we have seen that their approach implied the selection of rather quiet and sustained sounds that would suddenly be interrupted without any apparent collective consensus. As indicated in the contextual review, German reductionists developed their work in the context of an opposition between an older generation playing regularly in festivals and different venues dedicated to Improvised Music, and a younger generation struggling to find spaces to play and be recognised (see chapter 1 section 1.5 part 5). If we look at this relation between two generations of musicians from the critical lens of sociology, German reductionists' way of framing sounds appears as a form of distinction — to borrow Bourdieu terminology — that introduces a different habitus¹⁶³ within the field of Improvised Music (see definition in chapter 1 section 1.6).

Branche and Hughes' recordings, which were made for documentation purposes aimed at socialising these works, also show different ways of framing sounds; but in this case, these different perspectives are observed within the same musical experience and not as two opposed choices. The sonic experience occurs here not because of a particular decision on how to frame sounds, but because of the possibility, through the recording, to observe two different ways of framing sounds. In the case of Branche, this happened during the moment of listening to the recording. This experience would show the different perspectives between the live playing experience and the sounds documented by the microphone. In the Hughes' piece, the live playing involved a simultaneous imagining of the final recorded outcome whilst playing and the perspective of the microphone.

¹⁶³ According to Annie Ernaux, habitus 'is an embodied class relationship that makes one to act, produces judgements and strategies that remains unconscious' (Louis 2016, 31). Original text is 'L'habitus c'est le rapport de classe incorporé qui fait agir, qui produit des jugements et des stratégies inconscientes.'

But how can this experience be shared for someone listening to a recording and will not have in mind the two different perspectives of framing sounds? Could it even be possible to maintain two ways of listening simultaneously? Isn't one necessarily opposing the other? From the perspective of Bourdieu sociology, each way of engaging with the world opposes one to another: 'What I like is to dislike what others like'¹⁶⁴ (Louis 2016, 60).

An argument which enhances a view that admits the possibility of listening from multiple perspectives comes from the position of the researcher him or herself, for they gather a multiplicity of perspectives when studying how different groups and individuals frame their perspective of the world. In artistic practice, pieces such as Oliveros' 'collective environmental' where each participant shares a place of listening (see chapter 2 section 2.4.9) could be considered a similar space to engage with multiple perspectives. In this piece, one can observe other participants' ways of framing sounds without necessarily emphasising one against another. It might be therefore impossible, as a person, to listen to all sounds but, indirectly, listening to all ways of framing sounds could also be a method for increasing listening awareness and eventually fulfilling aspirations aimed at listening to everything.

The experiment in the bandstand¹⁶⁵ with Alarcón did resemble my own listening in Istanbul during the deep listening practice, but when the concert started it became more difficult to listen to environmental sounds. At that moment, I was so focused on playing with Angharad Davies and was particularly attentive to the difficulties in making sounds as quietly and precisely as she was.

As we have seen in the contextual review for Davies, sounds are constantly evolving and changing. Her playing is processual in the sense that after making the first note, the music is then developed by her following and listening to the way that sounds evolve and transform. As she said during the interview quoted in the contextual review, sound is a development, whilst a note is just a phase.

¹⁶⁴ Own translation. Original text is 'Mon goût c'est le dégoût du goût des autres'.

¹⁶⁵ This refers to the Deep Listening exercises that we did in the beginning (Chapter 4 section 1 part 3).

A note could be understood here as an idea of sound, something that can be usefully referred to as a sign, but that fails to fully convey what a sound is (the fact that it develops and transforms). On the contrary, what Davies refers to as ‘development’ is an experience of sound that gets closer to sound as a moving ensemble of layers, but it is difficult to define for it appears to be constantly changing.

Translating musical terminology into philosophical terms, a note can be understood as a concept, that, according to Barthes, finds identity in non-identity and a development as the sensible; and what, according to Eribon, is diverse, multiple and situates in a constant becoming (2019, 84). Does Improvised Music exclusively concern the sensible? According to Bailey’s non-idiomatic approach, it is not possible to define what Improvised Music is for because as we have seen in the contextual review, for him each musician is a definition of improvisation (1993, 83).

However, as we have also seen in the contextual review, it exists in Improvised Music moments when this practice can nevertheless clearly be identified (see chapter 1 section 1.4). The paradox in Bailey’s discourse is that on the one hand, improvisation seems to be transcendental (it has always existed), and on the other hand, it is also immanent (each improviser is a definition of improvisation). As described previously in the contextual review, Hayward and Malfatti’s experience reflects an opposition between Improvised Music as immanence (what improvisers decide it to be) and as transcendence (what improvisation is in its essence beyond contingencies).

Davies’ understanding of sound as a note that potentially is in development solves this issue. On the one hand, a degree of transcendence remains for the note can be recognised. However, the playing involves a departure from this note towards something else, a becoming that depends on a contingency related to the singularity of Davies’ decision to frame sounds (for instance, by emphasising certain harmonics rather than others).

During the MKII concert, I experienced silence as a space of uncertainty and tension, a feeling which was transformed as I stepped back from my role as a producer of sounds and put myself into the position of a listener in a similar mode as Schafer's exercise. I was then able to perceive the attentiveness of the audience, as well as the environmental sounds.

In the contextual review (chapter 1 section 2), we have seen how silence in the early work of AMM contributed by disrupting the structure of conventional musical pieces and allowed for a space for musicians to move towards what they called 'something else'. Silence can be understood in my own experience as a starting point to observe the relationship between sound as an idea (for instance, the note) and sound as an experience (or what Davies refers to as a 'development'), as part of a method of moving towards 'something else', or what we could also call a sonic experience.

What is this 'something else'? Are environmental sounds 'something else'? According to Sontag, artists interested in the notion of silence during the 20th Century are responding to a spiritual crisis provoked by mass culture in society (Sontag 2001, 24). Through silence, artists would be able to access, as we have mentioned earlier in the contextual review, a degree of reality supposed to be more authentic. For Cage, the response would consist of elaborating on a strategy that neutralises subjects' decisions, for individuals' taste is believed to be distorted by culture. Following this system of thought, environmental sounds are understood to be non-intentional within the performance context and they give access to an authentic experience.

However, are environmental sounds really detached from one's self? Are they non-intentional or authentic? In the case of urban sounds, for instance (Cage particularly appreciate the 'silence' of cars and planes), sounds reflect the social order of a group of people in a certain place at a certain time. The fact that sounds cannot be attributed to one specific individual does not mean that there is no intention behind it. From Schafer's perspective, the issue is actually to fight against sounds presented inaccurately as non-

intentional (sounds of planes for instance), when actually they depend on political, economic and social decisions (see ‘sacred noises’ in Schafer 1994, 271).

It is therefore questionable whether Cage’s environmental sounds are non-intentional for that would mean ignoring how these sounds have been produced and how they respond to an economic, social and political reality. Furthermore, in the context of the concert hall, silence is not something that is situated beyond time and space. As reminded above, silence in the concert hall has a history that has been studied by, among others, historian James Johnson. Without identifying with it, listening to silence in a concert hall resonates with the practice of listening to music in silence. Listening to environmental sounds in a concert hall in the middle of the 20th Century engages with the history of listening as a cultural practice, rather than situates it beyond history and culture.

For improvisers, ‘something else’ consists of playing something that no one is expecting you to play which can also involve, as mentioned by Oxley, changing one’s role, or as indicated by Prévost, to reinvent oneself. The question of roles is crucial for it is linked, according to Erribon, to the way one engages with the world: ‘roles, that is to say social categorisations, are waiting for us and seize us. They shape our bodies and our gestures; they structure our thoughts up to the depth of the unconscious’¹⁶⁶ (2019, 171).

Listening to ‘something else’ can be understood as a critical approach towards sounds that involves the subject in relation to his or her position within a specific context. In the case of Oxley, silence is what triggers a critical distance towards his position as a drummer and which allows him to step back and explore a different way of being through the way he uses his musical instrument (see some of the musical procedures in chapter 1 section 1.1). Cage’s silence disrupts the historical structure of listening to silence-environmental sounds within the concert hall. ‘Something else’ does not exist ‘for itself’, but in relation to a specific context (playing drums or listening in a concert hall).

¹⁶⁶ Own translation. The original text is ‘les “rôles”, c’est à dire les catégorisations sociales, nous attendent et s’emparent de nous. Ils façonnent notre corps et nos gestes; ils structurent notre pensé et notre impensé, jusqu’au tréfonds de l’inconscient.’

If listening implies a way of engaging with the world (as for instance listening to music silently in a concert hall during the 18th Century in Paris), listening to ‘something else’ suggests transforming one’s identity or ‘role’. ‘Something else’ is not situated outside of culture or beyond history as sometimes suggested by practitioners’ discourse (Cage, Bailey), but rather in relation to it. In the case of Improvised Music, developing procedures of desubjectification (by not playing the role of the drummer, adopting a non-idiomatic approach or being inside of sound) engages the subject with other kinds of self-inscription into the world.

4.3 Research Practice II

This section refers to the Improvised Music practice that was developed after I started to study *Sonic Meditations*.

4.3.1 Solo practice

Resonancias

On the 27th of May 2015, I participated in ‘Resonance’ at the Museo Reina Sofia (Madrid). The event consisted of two solo saxophones — Jean-Luc Guionnet and myself — taking place simultaneously in two different locations of the museum. ‘Resonance’ was a series of sound events announced as ‘concerts for another listening’ curated by Jose Luis Espejo during 2015. Jean-Luc Guionnet is a French renowned musician and artist within the experimental and Improvised Music scene.

During this performance I attempted to listen to the furthest sounds I could hear (akin to the first concert at MKII). I also began to play sounds on the saxophone as a method of

listening to the place I was performing. Each time I played a sound I carefully observed how it resonated in the venue, which had a tall spiral staircase¹⁶⁷. Since the sounds were resonating in these stairs, people situated on different floors could hear me as well as I could hear them. As a result, it was possible to hear the comments of museum visitors related to the performance at the same time as the sounds were produced¹⁶⁸. A member of the audience indicated that when I was using my voice at the end of the performance, I was transforming myself into a saxophone¹⁶⁹.

The musical instrument can be understood here as a sort of microphone to draw attention to a place. Even though the instrument does not record sounds it somehow amplifies certain sounds from the environment. Silences that follow the playing strongly contribute to this phenomenon. When the saxophone sound ceases, the ear is somehow still alert, very sensitive, and looking forward to perceiving more sounds. If the saxophone silence lasts, environmental sounds might start to emerge into listeners attention.

MKII Jealousy party

I performed at *Jealousy Party* at the MKII Gallery (London), on the 19th of June 2015. The Jealousy Party was organised by curator and musician Mark Wagner, based in London, and MKII is a studio space in Clapton hosting exhibitions and experimental music concerts. The performance began with a very long silence. Then I made a short and loud sound and listened to how it reverberated in the gallery space. The playing alternated between accidents (such as at 8'06" when my low frequency sound slipped towards a multiphonic and then a high pitch sound), decisions that I made to change the sound myself (for instance I introduced a pitch change at 8'32"), and a listening process that consisted of following certain features I could perceive in the sound that I was playing

¹⁶⁷ In document 13 we can hear a research process that attempts to bring together two different sounds I found when listening to how the saxophone resonated in that space. In document 14 we can hear in the background, saxophonist Jean-Luc Guionnet, as I was walking in his direction.

¹⁶⁸ Listeners' comments or thoughts in their mind could also be considered as environmental sound.

¹⁶⁹ In appendix 9 (page 192) can be found an image of the notebooks that I have been using to record information.

repeatedly¹⁷⁰. In this case, I tried to follow high-pitched sounds that led me to the multiphonic you can hear from 10'20''.

During this solo saxophone performance, I also tested a method of improvisation based on a strategy of listening to the furthest sounds I could hear from the venue I was playing. By trying to imitate a very tiny high pitch sound¹⁷¹ produced by something or someone somewhere in the area of Clapton, I produced a sound with the saxophone made of several notes at once that I hadn't expected to produce and may have never played before¹⁷². An audience member was sensitive to the fragility of the situation where I sometimes did not play anything for a very long time in front of the audience. According to this person, I was not 'hiding behind the instrument' and he mentioned the term 'persona'¹⁷³. Finally, a second person noted that this performance was 'cinematographic'¹⁷⁴.

¹⁷⁰ In document 16 we can hear a process that starts with a low frequency sustained sound, which then leads me to a new sound that is repeated a few times, and finally, before moving to a new section, returns to the low frequency sound. The 'new sound' derives from the first sound I played. In a way, it is what I could hear when listening to this low frequency sound resonating in the gallery (this process lasts around 15 minutes).

¹⁷¹ During a conversation with Wandelweiser composer Antoine Beuger (personal communication 2018), it was interesting to note the importance for him of aiming for some kind of action within the musical process. Previously, I had a similar experience when performing Fluxus pieces such as *Zyklus for Water-Pails* (1962) by Tomas Schmit that consists of pouring water from one bottle to another. Also, to a certain extent, Prévost's indication during his workshop (playing with other musicians and finding new sounds) can be experienced as a sort of activity to fulfil. This is a very different feeling than 'just playing' as it is sometimes the case in free improvisation. During the MKII performance I could say I was focused on achieving a listening action.

¹⁷² This statement refers to my perception towards what I was playing on that evening. Whether this is accurate or not it reflects well a common place among certain improvisers that consists of discovering 'new sounds', making something 'new', playing music as if it were the 'first time', always being original and never copying others. In the history of Improvised Music, we have seen early on that this idea of 'new' does not exist by itself but is linked to the notion of authenticity (c.f. Joseph Holbrooke, for instance). Anecdotes from John Russell mentioning musicians who criticise his music have similarities with Derek Bailey's work or Malfatti's memories about musicians complaining to him because he was playing the same note as them, illustrate well this tendency.

¹⁷³ The word 'persona' comes from Latin and refers to the idea of wearing a mask to perform a character in the context of theatre. This term evokes the free improvisation narrative in which musicians do not play roles or imitate other musicians. See AMM page 34 and Joseph Holbrooke page 24.

¹⁷⁴ This person was referring to the ambiance that surrounded this event (the room was a bit dark, calm, and mysterious) and the suspense created by the long periods of silence. In my opinion, this could also apply to the fact that each period of sound or silence is like a sequence. It exists sometime during the silence that triggers my sound (e.g. the high-pitched sound from Clapton) and creates a link, but when the sounds start, it introduces a very different atmosphere. When the silence returns it is like a new episode for environmental sounds that one can hear are different from those that one could hear during the previous pause.

Archway

In June 2015¹⁷⁵, I participated in ‘Aestivation’ at Archway, Central Saint Martins’ MA fine art studios. This solo saxophone performance took place during an open studios event organised by MA fine students from Central Saint Martins. This performance consisted of playing loud sounds with my saxophone in a very large space comprised of several artist studios. After playing these sounds, I would listen carefully to how they resonated in that venue and then remain silent for a while before starting again. During the silences, I observed coincidences between the sounds I was playing and the sounds I could hear around me. For instance, I could hear the brakes from a bike, the siren from a police car, and an unidentified electronic machine that coincided with the saxophone notes I had played just before. This created the illusion that the environment was ‘responding to’ or echoing the sounds I had just made¹⁷⁶.

In document 18 we can hear a research process that resembles the one in Resonancia and Jealousy Party. Similarly, at some point during the performance, a sound transforms into something else. In this process I tried to listen as far as I could until I would hear a sound that would draw my attention. From that point on, my playing consisted of reaching this

¹⁷⁵ On the 24th of June 2015

¹⁷⁶ This performance evokes the Istanbul experience, but in this case, the sounds I am making alternate with long periods of silence rather than having only one silence. In this case it seems certain that the environmental sounds I can hear are related to my previous playing. As already mentioned previously (c.f. Reina Sofia performance) this could be related to the attention activated by the saxophone playing that remain or even increases when suddenly the instrumental sounds cease. In a way the ears are still actively listening to the saxophone when actually there are no more sounds being produced. A similar experience can be found when performing Pauline Oliveros piece ‘Zina’s circle’ that alternate moments of intense concentration and sound production with moments of silence. See ‘Zina’s Circle’ page 92.

Thus, it seems now clear that there is a relationship between the sounds produced with the musical instrument and the perception of environmental sound that follows when the music ‘stops’. However, it remains unclear if the sounds that one can perceive (in this case the brakes from a bike or the siren from a police car) ‘respond’ in some ways to the saxophone playing or if there are just random sounds that could be heard in that place at that moment.

sound¹⁷⁷. This playing resulted in unexpected outcomes for I was not expecting to find the exact sound I made at the beginning (15”), nor the one I reached in the end (2’19”) ¹⁷⁸.

One member of the audience appreciated a movement which consisted of bringing my finger from my lips to a small radio because there was ‘no interruption ‘between the two movements’. Another member mentioned a link between my way of using the saxophone and the work of the saxophone player Jean-Luc Guionnet ¹⁷⁹.

In this process where I explored the limits of my listening, audience members were not informed about what I was doing. I did not share this ‘score’ with them as I was not looking at it myself as such (although it did become clear later that it could be considered a score similar to Oliveros’ *Sonic Meditations*).

Audience feedback indicates that listening is subjective and as such, everyone might be paying attention to something very different. In Oliveros’ approach, participants in pieces such as ‘Collective Environmental’ share what they were listening to at the end of the performance. This moment of sharing the listening experience builds up or moves towards (as in my own experience with Sébastien Branche described earlier in this research) what we might call a collective listening subjectivity.

¹⁷⁷ If I could hear this sound in the beginning somewhere around me, later it continued existing in my memory. This process of integrating in the playing remembered sounds resonates with many of Oliveros’ *Sonic Meditations*. I have developed my interest in Oliveros’ *Sonic Meditations* into a booklet of text scores called *Friendly Algorithms* (a copy of which can be downloaded thanks to this link: http://arturvidal.moonfruit.com/friendly-algorithms/4594465282?preview=Y;use_flash=1)

¹⁷⁸ This experience evokes to me Ferrari’s piece *Presque Rien 2A* that is also referred to later in this work (See page 149 and appendix 10 page 193). In that work Ferrari depicts himself and Brunhild Ferrari looking for a sound in the forest but eventually finding a different and unexpected one.

¹⁷⁹ Performance notebook number 4 24/06/15.

Cafe Oto

A few years ago¹⁸⁰, I gave a solo saxophone performance at Cafe Oto which was part of the experimental electronic nights curated by the Spanish musician and UAL PhD candidate, Laura Plana Garcia. Before starting this performance, I did a body warm up as I have learnt by practising Pauline Oliveros' work. During the performance, I listened to my surroundings for a few minutes to get a sense of the place I was in. I only started playing when I could hear a sound that seemed to be odd in that place¹⁸¹. I then attempted repeatedly to imitate that sound with my saxophone (which was tiny, high-pitched and very sharp). I stopped playing when, often by chance, an event occurred during this repetition. This event would be, for instance, a harmonic of the sound being reinforced (maybe due to the pressure on the mouthpiece) and changing the quality of the sound¹⁸².

Each time I returned to silence, I experienced a change in my sonic perception of the surroundings. For instance, if during the first silence I could mostly hear people walking outside the venue, during the second silence, I rather noticed the police sirens coming from Dalston, and then during a third silence, I was attentive to the recorded music being played in a bar situated on the top floor of our building¹⁸³.

In terms of audience response, one person liked the moments during the performance that seemed austere. He also identified parts of the presentation at the end that were more ornamental (which he did not like), as well as the fragility of the situation — long periods where I played very little or nothing at all in front of the audience. Amongst the audience someone also mentioned similarities between my performance and La Monte Young's

¹⁸⁰ On the 16th of July 2015.

¹⁸¹ The sounds that trigger my attention during these exercises could be compared to what Roland Barthes defines as a *punctum* in photography: '*punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole-and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me) (Barthes 1981, 27). I do not have the impression of choosing these sounds, but they somehow hit me (or bruise me as Barthes would say).

¹⁸² The 'imitation' process I have been developing here leads to the production of a sound that appears different from the previous one and 'new' to my practice. When this happens, I listen to the 'new' sound for a while and then return to silence.

¹⁸³ This change that evokes episodes or sequences were referred to as 'cinematographic' during the MKII performance. See MKII concert page 144.

work, *X for Henry Flynt*, due to the fact that I was repeating a similar sound continuously for a long time.

In the Istanbul episode, I encountered a problem where my experience as a musician producing sounds, and my experience as a listener at the end of the performance, were very detached from each other. I had the feeling that you could be a musician producing sounds or a listener paying attention to existing sounds, but it was difficult to be on both sides. The experience in Madrid reinforced the idea already initiated in the first MKII concert gallery that, on the contrary, listening to environmental sounds could consist of a method for improvising with a musical instrument.

In the Clapton concert, rather than trying to bring together external sounds and instrumental sounds (as I was trying to do in my realisation of Hughes's piece), here I attempted to imitate and amplify sounds that were almost inaudible. This had a very positive result as I could at the same time bring together the Istanbul experience of making new sounds and listening to the environmental sounds. This did not happen simultaneously¹⁸⁴, but rather one after the other (first listening and then playing), and it involved me playing alone.

In Archway, rather than simply juxtaposing these listening and playing experiences (as in my Istanbul episode) I was increasingly interested in observing the process of listening itself. By making loud sounds and listening to how they resonate in that space, I paid attention to the sonic outcome as well as the way in which I was perceiving sounds. For instance, it seemed that my ears 'would try' to find similitudes between the sounds I produced and the external sounds from the environment I could hear.

In the Istanbul episode, the sounds made by musicians and the external continuum of sounds were two separated worlds of systems apparently responding to two very different logics. In the Cafe Oto performance, attempting to reproduce the tiny sounds that had

¹⁸⁴ I have found similarities between this way of playing and the score created by composer Pauline Oliveros called 'Environmental Dialogue'.

drawn my attention in the environment created a new sonic environment that then ceased as I became attracted anew by a different sound. In this case, I used the same approach of listening to environmental sounds as I did to my own sounds (informed by the former)¹⁸⁵.

With this series of solo performances, I found a method that involves listening to environmental sounds whilst still being part of a musical improvisation. In order to do this, I have been developing listening exercises inspired by R. Murray Schafer's practice, but I am using them as part of a sonic experience as in Pauline Oliveros' *Sonic Meditations*. Listening to very distant sounds, waiting for a sound to trigger my playing, and finally playing a sound on the highest or lowest register of my instrument register has worked effectively. This method, based on a process of listening to environmental sounds, has enabled me to make 'new' sounds with my instrument. In the next section I will analyse an experiment that aimed to develop this practice within a collective playing context.

4.3.2 Collective practice

Thus Continues the Night in my Multiple Head

In June 2015, between the Springfield Park bandstand and the Walthamstow marshes, I participated in a public event called *Thus Continues the Night in my Multiple Head*. This consisted of a walk in a large area where three saxophonists improvised by paying attention to the sounds they could hear in their surroundings. The title and the project are

¹⁸⁵ To summarise the Cafe Oto performance:

1 Listening to external sounds (the furthest tiny sound)

2 A *punctum* triggers my playing on the saxophone

3 I try repeatedly to imitate this sound

4 Progressively this sound transforms until I start to perceive it as an environment.

5 A new *punctum* (but this time coming from the saxophone) draws my attention and a return to silence.

I did not share this 'score' with the audience as it was written retrospectively (it was in fact discovered progressively while playing). More recently, I have continued to develop strategies for improvisation that takes into account different ways of listening that can evolve or transform during playing.

inspired by the work of the French composer, Luc Ferrari, called *Presque Rien*, which refers to a practice of listening that at the same time strongly relates to the idea of the unexpected¹⁸⁶.

My intention was to reproduce the solo experience I had in the MKII gallery and the Reina Sofia museum which explored the possibility of listening to other musicians as I was listening to the environmental sounds. This attempt resonates with a conversation I had with Guionnet where he told me that he sometimes listened to musicians he was playing with in the same way he listened to a car passing by. During the performance I asked three saxophonists to play a solo improvisation in three places situated between the Walthamstow marshes and Springfield Park. Musicians were asked to allow themselves enough silence before making any sounds, to let their playing be triggered by something they could hear in their surroundings. Since players were situated far from each other, it was sometimes difficult to tell if we could really hear them playing, or if the sounds were created by our imagination, or if it was something else such as a plane located far away. An audience member mentioned that some parts were more like a performance and others like a meditation. This person also mentioned that it was an intense experience for them walking in the marshes and not being sure from where and by whom the sounds were produced¹⁸⁷.

Although the feedback from the audience was interesting in terms of the relationship between listening and imagination, the experience from my perspective was not fully achieved. As you can hear in document 20, the place I was playing in was very resonant and as a result, I played more with the acoustics of that space (I was playing under a bridge) than with listening to environmental sounds. In this excerpt we can hear how, similar to *Resonancia*, a process of sounding the space (listening how the saxophone resonates) develops by trying different sounds (there are more variations here than in *Resonancia*) until eventually my attention focuses on one sound (1'17'').

¹⁸⁶ For a fuller account, see appendix 10 (page 193).

¹⁸⁷ Performance notebook 4.

Saxophones in the Marshes

On another occasion between Springfield Park bandstand and the Walthamstow marshes, saxophonists Rachel Musson, Caroline Kraabel and Ignacio Cz performed a piece consisting of a text score inspired by my solo performance. Audience members were given a map¹⁸⁸ of the area and listening scores produced collectively during a *Sonic Meditations* workshop. The three saxophone players performed very far from each other and were invited to follow five different approaches that were inspired from my solo performance:

Moment 0

Just listening

Paying attention to the sounds from the place you are

Suggested method: Listen to the sounds close to you (breathing, memories...) and little by little pay attention to the different sounds situated around you (wind, people walking, bikes ...) and finally to the sounds situated as far as possible (sounds from a car passing very far, sounds from the sky, imagined sounds from the future...)

Moment 1

Play a short sound and observe how it resonates within the place you are

Repeat 2–3 times keeping the same sound or choosing a new one

Moment 2

Amplify (as loud as you can) the furthest sound you can hear

To do this use the highest or lowest range of the instrument

Repeat as many times as needed until you manage to imitate the sound or consider that this is impossible

Moment 3

Play a continuous sound quieter than the quietest sound you can hear

This sound should probably be inaudible to the audience and maybe even to yourself

¹⁸⁸ See the map in Appendix 11 (page 196).

Moment 4

Play a long continuous sound and observe how it resonates within the place you are
Repeat 2–3 times keeping the same sound or choosing a new one

These instructions were the result of a previous *Sonic Meditations*' workshop and consisted of different methods of listening in the marshes invented by the participants. In this collective practice, these text scores operated similarly to the work of Pauline Oliveros. In other words, they were recipes for sonic experiences. The outcome of these experiences was difficult to predict because — for mainly cultural and physiological reasons — nobody listens in exactly the same way.

In terms of responses from the musicians, one said it was not easy to perform in front of people that were merely passing by and not there exclusively for the performance. An audience member mentioned that he would have preferred to have more indications as to how to experience the piece, as he found the text scores were insufficient. Using a similar idea, I organised 'Saxophones in the Marshes 2' with Sue Lynch and Adrian Northover on 25th of August 2016. In document 22, we can hear the sounds of saxophones from distance¹⁸⁹.

Thus Continues the Night in my Multiple Head demonstrates that for the audience and performers, this piece created a certain ambiguity about who was producing the sounds they could hear. The following question arose amongst the audience and the players: 'am I listening to the saxophone? Is it actually the sound of a train or a musical instrument? Am I really listening to this or is it my imagination?' This experience shows again that the roles of listener and improviser are not so clearly defined, and that the listener is also co-producing the sounds that they can perceive.

¹⁸⁹ During these second performances, musicians progressively became closer to each other at the end of the piece.

In relation to my Istanbul experience, the collective playing experience shows that it is possible to bring together environmental sound and instrumental sound. In this context, this is due to the ambiguity that is created from the distance that separates the musicians from each other in the outdoor performance. In my own experience it seems that the sounds I can perceive in the environment within this performance are those that resemble what I am playing on my instrument. The saxophone sound draws one's attention towards sounds in the environment that are similar.

4.4 Conclusions research practice II

In the solo practice, playing is triggered by a listening exercise that involves environmental sound and results in unexpected sounds made with the saxophone. With this practice there exists a clear link between environmental sounds (ones I am listening to at the beginning of the playing) and a musical playing that involves unexpected sounds (being triggered by my listening exercise, when I play I don't exactly know how my saxophone will sound).

This practice is informed by the ambiguity of what is external or internal, what is heard in the environment and what is imagined. Sounds produced with the saxophone are unexpected as they rely on these ambiguities and the passage between environmental sound and sounds created with the musical instrument. The boundary between environmental sound and sounds made by the performers, is thin. Within this practice, environmental sound can be heard as a musical improvisation, while sounds of the saxophone are perceived as a soundscape.

But to what extent are these sounds unexpected? And does that mean that these sounds are also new? As we have seen with Groys' model of the new, the distinction between the old and the new relies on an existing archive. In the case of Hayward, we have seen that in knowing about this archive (recordings of Improvised Music from the 70s), he created

something different from that listening experience (which was absent from the recordings he had listened to and the live playing he had seen in London), that therefore, would appear as new.

This process implies that all sounds not belonging to the existing Improvised Music 'archive' can be considered as new. However, this does not exclude the possibility that, actually, those believed to be 'new' sounds would have been played in the past, but not necessarily recorded or released. This is the case with the spare playing experiments developed by Stevens and Watts (chapter 1 section 1.3) which are never mentioned by reductionist musicians' discourses when referring to the work of SME.

If we look back at this practice and contemplate the research journey, we could note that the experience that originally triggered this investigation was the result of a listening experience that did not coincide with the expectations I had regarding the practice of Improvised Music. Listening to environmental sounds without playing the instrument for long periods of time was not, for me, something new, but it was new within the context of a musical improvisation. What the original practice did in Istanbul was to disrupt my habits in the musical practice, as well as suggest that habits did exist within the context of improvisation. The contextual review has confirmed this by showing how in the history of Improvised Music, musical idioms started to circulate quickly after this practice emerged (see chapter 1 section 1.4).

My research initially began by focusing on environmental sounds as objects detached from the performer. However, practice has shown (such as in 'Saxophones in the Marshes' but also in the experience of recoding Hughes' piece) that sounds perceived in the environment are in fact relying on the perception of the performer. As was indicated by Chion, we can only play what we can listen to (see chapter 2 section 2.2.1) and what we listen to, following philosopher Szendy, depends on a history that is older than ourselves (Szendy 2008, 26). Revisiting approaches developed by Didier Eribon, what his theories foreground is that there exists an historical structure of listening (Eribon speaks of looking rather than listening in Eribon 2019, 165) that makes sounds audible or not.

The solo practice that was developed within the context of this research focused on listening exercises as a strategy for playing in spite of these structures (so to eventually be able to play what is not yet audible to oneself). What this practice shows is that working on the way one listens (rather than trying to make 'new' sounds) is where improvisation actually sits. Listening differently was developed by focusing on my original experience in Istanbul (listening in silence to environmental sounds), but also as already said above, by looking at techniques from other disciplines such as Deep Listening or Acoustic Ecology.

According to Eribon, discipline is what forms an individual (2019, 277), and consequently, what enables him or her to perceive the world in a certain way. For Cage, 'improvisation is rarely a discipline' (Kauffman, Cage and Alfred 1966, 46), but as we have seen in this research, that statement is inaccurate. In the context of Improvised Music we have identified within my practice (and other practitioners' work) very specific ways of producing sounds and, for that is correlated, very specific ways of listening.

The solo practice that I have developed in this research consisted of identifying the discipline within my practice (and particularly the discipline of listening) that I was not necessarily fully aware of. So the problem is not so much to know if there is a discipline in improvisation, but rather to know if one is aware of its existence and to intervene in this discipline by, for instance, integrating listening practices inspired by other disciplines.

The solo performance can be understood as a praxis in the sense that it is an activity that overcomes inherited ways of playing and historical listening structures by playing with the definitions of the existing practice. It is within the experience of listening during an improvisation without making sounds with the instrument (an experience that lasted several minutes before sounds were finally produced with the instrument) that I was able to understand what was not available to me through listening to other practitioners or reading about them. If the production of sounds, as suggested by Chion, could be understood as a trace of listening, the sounds resulting from improvisation could be

understood as the trace of a listening experience designed for developing a sensibility beyond one frame of perception.

Within the collective practice, it was interesting to observe the way the audience (but also the musicians) was perceiving sounds made by the performers. It seems that those sounds were sometimes clearly heard, and at other times, they were rather imagined. As they explained to me, some audience members mistook the sound of a train or plane with the sound of a saxophone in their mind, which might suggest that the listener constructs sounds he or she can hear.

But how does a listener construct sound? As we have seen previously, a musician such as Battus frames certain sounds as part of his listening strategy. In that sense, musicians decide what sounds they want or do not want to become audible (see chapter 4 section 4.2). However, at the same time, we have also mentioned that listening is built by historical structures that individuals are not necessarily aware of (such as listening in silence within a concert hall). Thus, the listener is not necessarily conscious as a subject in making the decision to frame sounds. According to Eribon, a subject is the product of a social order (2012, 14) that shapes her or his way of sensing the world. Szendy, refers to historical structures of listening when saying that ‘my ears are older than I am’ (2008, 26).

If the subject is the product of his or her environment, understood broadly from a social and historical perspective, what is perceived ‘outside’ is actually part of him or herself. As Eribon puts it, ‘the inner world is nothing more than a product inscribed within us (...) of the long frequentation of the outside world (2014, 37).’ We could therefore ask if Battus is framing sounds by himself or rather being defined by his environment. Indeed, his musical approach that involves a lack of control on the production of sounds resembles Cage’s ‘structural improvisation’ that we have studied in the contextual review (see chapter 2 section 2.3.1). One significant aspect that distinguishes both works and situates Battus’ approach within a process of desubjectification in regard to Cage’s historical influence, is that this lack of control, mentioned above, alternates with moments of

extreme control and precision in the production of sounds (Personal communication 2018).

Considering the analysis above, if the listener as a subject is the product of his or her environment, the Improvised Music practice discloses via the practice, these structures. To do that, practitioners create strategies that provoke dis-adaptation (following Piaget) or uneasiness (following Ernaux) to achieve a process of desubjectification and self-reinvention (Eribon). If the task of the musician is to frame sounds, as mentioned by Battus, then to play sounds is a manifestation of one's listening. To improvise is to be aware of the determinations that listening is made, getting rid of the weight of inherited disciplines and finding strategies to deal with them.

As a result, the listener does not strictly construct sounds but creates the conditions for listening beyond the possibilities originally offered by his or her environment and thus frames sounds in a different way. This can mean transforming one sensibility by developing a discipline to listen beyond a swing drummer, as in Oxley's experience, or beyond Cage's as in Battus' work, or moving away from the arc structure in *News from the Shed*.

Conclusion

This research has focused on an experience that took place in Istanbul several years ago involving Improvised Music and listening to environmental sounds. I have been using it as a model to try to understand similar experiences and to reflect on my Improvised Music practice. To do this, I have tried to deconstruct this event by looking in detail at what appeared to me as its main components.

1. Types of silence

In the Istanbul episode, silence played an apparently important role. Through this research, I have been looking at other types of silence that could help me understand its meaning or function.

In AMM, we have seen that a ‘disruptive silence’ was a strategy to move away from musical structures (such as jazz), believed to be too well known. Whilst SME developed a strategy for improvising ‘freely’, which consisted of fragmenting the melody into very tiny pieces (the playing referred to in this research as pointillism), AMM diluted the structure during the early stages by engulfing it within unusually long periods of silence.

In Joseph Holbrooke, we came across a ‘liberating silence’ that enabled certain musicians like Oxley to get rid of their ‘roles’. Instead of playing the normative role of a drummer who rhythmically supported the band, Oxley would first remain silent and then play as part of a collective voice aiming to challenge any hierarchical order.

In that same band, Bryars developed a different approach towards silence through his interest in the music of John Cage. For the American composer, silence equals free sounds because they are detached from a musician’s intentionality. As long as a musician’s intentionality is not involved, silence can be anything: a traffic jam, the sound of a plane. Whilst for Oxley silence represents the end of playing (in the sense of refusing ‘imposed’ musical roles), for Bryars, silence leads towards the end of improvisation, for in the context of Cage’s ideas, this musical practice is always bound to a musician’s intention.

‘Cagean silence’, as suggested by Sontag, denotes a twentieth-century paradigm in which artists attempt to solve a ‘spiritual crisis’ provoked by modernity. In this case, silence

figures as a certain purity and beauty, as it is believed to have not been ‘polluted’ by modern society. However, as George Lewis and Rebecca Y. Kim suggest when using the notion of silence, Cage’s work also internalises dominant values in segregated American society at that time.

In the work of John Stevens, we found the idea of a ‘relative silence’. In one of his score-exercises, Stevens says silence is whatever the musician agrees it to be as long as it helps them to reach a musical balance. This idea of silence, understood as a tool for enabling a sound balance, is also what R. Murray Schafer stands for in his acoustic ecology discourse. However, whilst in Schafer’s approach silence does not depend on a musician’s subjectivity but on criteria that could be measured, Stevens’s piece illustrates the idea of silence as a social construction that one, as an artist, can play with.

2. Listening strategies

To understand the relationship between Improvised Music and the practice of listening to environmental sounds, I have identified several listening strategies among other practitioners.

Looking at the work of improvisers I found what could be called a ‘differential listening’, consisting of moving away from the already known *cliché*, or in some cases (but not for all improvisers), what is considered by practitioners themselves to be ‘old’. Early-Improvised Music practitioners such as AMM, Joseph Holbrooke and SME have been listening to musical forms that differ from jazz and free jazz. We could also observe this ‘differential’ approach through the negative appreciations heard by Malfatti during his career around musicians repeating the same sounds, playing similar instruments or evoking the style of another player. We can also notice a similar listening approach in the case of Hayward, Malfatti (again) and musicians associated with reductionism when elaborating discourses that distinguishes the ‘old’ from the ‘new’.

The notion of the ‘new’ has been critically scrutinised with arguments about how it has developed in Improvised Music relative to what already existed and was known within

that field. Learning different ways of listening can contribute to building the experience of listening to something ‘new’.

In this research, we have learned about ‘disciplined listening’ — referred to by researcher, Lorraine Plourde, as an educational training mode, designed by Onkyo musicians to teach their audience how to listen to their music by incorporating certain environmental sounds. In Onkyo’s listening, street sounds from Tokyo are welcome to join a musician’s performance, whilst others, such as those made by the audience or the air conditioner, are dismissed.

The work has also come across the reduced listening of Pierre Schaeffer which elaborates new terminology to enable listeners to pay attention more accurately to sounds. Using a different language changes our perception of sounds. It ‘reveals’ the complexity and variability of sounds when speaking in terms of grain, facture, sustainment or mass, rather than relying only on the name of an instrument or the name of a note.

R. Murray Schafer has also developed an extensive method for listening differently which is built around an ecological narrative. Schafer’s ‘ecological listening’ assumes that there is an ideal way of listening that results from the understanding of the ecological crisis. By being able to perceive all sounds, one can become aware of the environmental issues and push for a transformation of the soundscape. As we have seen in this research, the limits of this approach are related to the fact that positioning the subject in the centre of sound can lead to a misleading representation of the world, for it would map the sounds of the world without ever locating the listener on that map.

The deep listening work by composer Pauline Oliveros also involves the idea of perceiving all sounds in detail. However, this practice resonates differently from Schaeffer’s. Taken from a female perspective during the 1970s, listening to the world evokes a way of engaging creatively with it, whilst women are barely socially acknowledged outside of the domestic space.

3. Research and Practice

Our research journey began by asking questions about the relationship between Improvised Music and environmental sounds. Below I outline the main findings.

Silence in this research operated in a way that could evoke Oxley's experience with Joseph Holbrooke's. For Oxley, silence was a liberating opportunity in the sense that he could get rid of what he perceived as the normative role of a drummer — a position tightened within a musical hierarchy that limited his possibilities as a musician. In this research, silence drew my attention towards the significance of listening and its complexity within the practice of Improvised Music.

Within what listening framework, do I perceive sounds created with a musical instrument and within so-called environmental sounds? What silence did in this research was to trigger an interest towards listening as well as a desire to study how depending on listening strategies sounds can be perceived in many different ways. It also allowed me to reflect on the roles and representations in Improvised Music.

In this research I have looked at how a musical practice based on the elusiveness of sounds was inscribed within myself. I have been trying to recover the meaning of these different inscriptions from the past as if my body was a parchment on which several codes of listening had been written on. In so doing, I have gathered information concerning R. Murray Schafer's acoustic ecology, Pierre Schaeffer's *Solfège* and several approaches by improvisers who have influenced my own practice (Prévost, Bailey, Stevens, Malfatti, Davies, Hayward and so on...).

After unpacking all this information, I have been trying to write down or code a way of paying attention to sounds that takes into account the different ways of listening that, in the beginning of this research, I perceived as being separate. As a result, this research has developed a procedure for listening to environmental sounds (testing out the limits of my frame of perception) as a strategy for improvisation.

This procedure consists of an analysis that draws the connections between environmental sounds and the conditions of possibility, making these sounds become audible. How is it

possible for me to hear such a sound in the environment? As this research has shown, it is thanks to a learning process (in my case notably involving Schafer's approaches, but not only his) that it became possible for me to become aware of environmental sounds. As a result, in this research the separation between internal and external sounds has become less relevant for what seems 'outside' one self; the environmental sounds are audible thanks to what is 'inside' the subject (the intellectual references and artistic practice that draws one's attention towards sounds), and what is 'inside' the subject depends to a large extent on his or her social external influences.

The environment therefore is at the core of what the subject is, rather than being something separate. Testing beyond one's personal perception involves, first of all, looking at one self from a perspective that includes other subjects' perceptions and that situates within a broad historical and social context (so strategically, it would mean to engage with a practice of decentring oneself through other subjects perspectives and an understanding of where, when and how one is historically and socially situated). This process not only shows how attention is paid to certain sounds (birds, cars, planes, saxophones or whatever ...), but also how one has become aware of them and found strategies to transform his or her ways of listening to the environment. In my experience, I started to analyse my Improvised Music practice by first engaging with listening practices such as acoustic ecology. In this work the environment is not simply a type of sound, but rather an awareness towards sounds that is situated outside of one's practice for it creates a certain uneasiness (Louis 2016, 31) or dis-adaptation (Piaget 1971, 99) that enables one to become conscious of where he or she is socially and historically situated within the musical practice.

As we have seen in this research, the practice of listening is strongly related to identity (see for instance, Johnson's analysis of listening). Through who, what, when and where I listen, I constantly recreate and verify the image of who I am. By listening to environmental sounds as Schafer, I place myself within an ecological concern, but also within the history of hi-fi culture and the construction of modern masculinities in the United States. However, as we have seen, Improvised Music tends, on the contrary, to question identities and established roles even though it has also developed its own identity

and specific roles through history (those for instance, analysed and criticised by Hayward or Malfatti). By paying attention to environmental sounds via the Schafer influence, I have myself detached from the role of an improviser by looking towards a practice that, by then to me, was unfamiliar within the context of Improvised Music.

The work of composer Pauline Oliveros has been particularly influential as it has drawn my attention towards intentional sounds (memories or imagined sounds) that until then (and maybe under the Cagean influence) I had not been able to acknowledge. Firstly, this influence has been significant for pointing out subjectivities in the experience of listening. Secondly, it has drawn my attention towards an intersubjective listening strategy for improvisation based on the observation of differences between sounds occurring mentally (such as the memory of environmental sounds) and sounds produced with a musical instrument.

The research and practice have both helped me scrutinise my own listening (influences from other artists), as well as look at other ways of listening (within the context of Sonic Meditations workshops, for instance) and invent a specific way of listening as a strategy for improvisation. The strategy of this work involved a starting point to define my own listening. A theoretical definition consisted of descriptions and analysis of my artistic influences and musical no-go zones (for instance, unusual long periods of silence). Practical explorations consisted of long periods of silence listening to the edges of perception through listening scores during solo performances (e.g. listening to the furthest sound you can hear) and situations involving listening to distant sounds during the collective practice. Listening to what is tiny, distant, ambiguous or almost imperceptible is part of a method aiming to take into account any sound parameters that used to situate beyond my frame of perception. This method also involved listening to environmental sounds that were ‘reproduced’ (in the sense of aiming towards a sound but not imitating) on the musical instrument (in the solo performance, for instance) and exploring the idea of listening through the ears of someone else (in Oliveros’ ‘Collective Environmental’ — thanks to Onkyo musicians’ narrative and during conversations with musicians and the audience after pieces such as ‘Saxophones in the Marshes’).

One of the consequences of this research is to consider that if what one listens to in the environment is a mirror of subjectivity, to search for the sounds that surpass this way of listening contributes to a re-appropriation of the self. Improvisation as a discipline for transforming sensitivity is, in this research, the sonic outcome of a way of listening ‘freely’, for the boundaries of its historical and social structures have been defined in order of being recognised (by identifying musical patterns for instance) and possibly crossed (by playing differently or ‘something else’). This idea of improvisation, resonates, again, with Oxley and Hayward decisions of developing their work towards a certain direction (Oxley playing drums ‘freely’ and Hayward playing quiet and spare sounds) as a result of an understanding of what was perceived by them as ‘chains’, to borrow Oxley terminology (but we could translate this into Eribon vocabulary and say ‘historical and social determinations’), in their musical practice.

This research was motivated by an experience that particularly drew my attention: listening to environmental sounds within the context of an Improvised Music practice. Thanks to analysis supported by tools borrowed from sociology, I could understand that this discomfort or uneasiness that occurred to me at first in Istanbul (see introduction) was related to a dichotomy between a way of doing (in this case, not playing for a long time whilst listening to environmental sound) and the context in which this gesture occurred (an Improvised Music practice relying on the production of sounds with musical instruments). In sociological terms, this experience can be articulated as a divorce between the habitus and the field.

Similar experiences could be developed amongst acoustic ecology practitioners by, for instance, trying to map in more detail which ways, following Sterne (2015) and Keightley (1996), sounds perceived in the soundscape are performed by a cultural frame of perception related to the history of modern masculinities. Listening ‘through the ears of someone else’, as sometimes explored by music improvisers (see chapter 1 section 1.6), or exploring techniques of desubjectification (see for instance, AMM procedures in chapter 1 section 1.2) could contribute as tools for deconstructing the figure of the ‘ideal’ listener in acoustic ecology and expand the definition of the soundscape.

In *Improvised Music*, the question around ‘the inherited improvised languages’ (Bailey 1993, 88) could be re-evaluated by framing it from the perspective of ‘inherited listening structures’. This approach already exists to some extent. For instance, in Prévost’s workshop, listening to other musicians’ way of playing also means paying attention to how someone else is listening and therefore to engage with a different listening approach than one’s own. It also means incorporating the historical structures of listening that might be built-in within the ‘score’ of a musical instrument or a place (see for example, the use of harps, violins and tubas among Reductionists practitioners and the expressed differences between playing in a London Pub and a Berlin flat or gallery). Stevens also considered listening techniques, as shown in his book *Search and Reflect*. These approaches could nevertheless be pursued with further thanks to improvised music workshops that take advantage of the knowledge developed in this research about listening in musical improvisation and making use of recent findings within the field of sound studies.

In order to understand this experience, the research consisted of rebuilding the scaffolding or edifice that supported it. To do that I have been looking at history (Cage, *Improvised Music*, acoustic ecology, deep listening...) as well as the social context of my practice (the relations between musicians’ generations in *Improvised Music* for instance). What I have found is a significant difference between listening as a construction of subjectivity (as the subject being in the centre of sound in acoustic ecology) and strategies for desubjectification common among early improvisers (being ‘inside of sound’ or ‘losing’ identity as in AMM experiences), but not always among musicians who have ‘inherited’ this musical practice through listening to recordings or attending workshops.

In this research I have questioned my identity as an improviser by engaging with the gestures and thoughts coming from listening practices such as acoustic ecology. As a listener ‘in the centre of sound’, I have been building a practice influenced by *Improvised Music* that consisted of decentring myself by paying attention towards the margins of my frame of perception (mapping the furthest sounds from myself). Final conclusions suggest a practice of improvisation that relies on listening to the environment as a strategy for

scrutinising the construction of the musical subject, his or her point of listening, his or her sensibility and improvising by stepping outside, around or consciously within one's historical and social listening structures. The research practice shows that creating ways of listening can transform the relationship between the subject and his or her environment. The consequence of this is not simply an awareness of sounds in the environment; it actually transforms oneself as a subject by developing his or her sensibility.

As we have seen in this research, the act of listening asserts, tests or verifies one's subjectivity or identity through sounds. Early practitioners of Improvised Music have developed strategies for an appropriation of the self, thanks to a process of desubjectification that relies on strategies for playing 'something else' (long periods of silence as AMM, deconstructed melodies in SME or ambiguous tonalities with Joseph Holbrooke...). One of the difficulties that was spotted in this research through analysis is the fact that Improvised Music is not, per se, a strategy for reworking sensibility, but it can also be an aesthetic determined by history.

It is within that context where I situated my own approach which consisted of paying attention to environmental sounds as something external to sounds produced with musical instruments during an improvisation. However, research has shown that there is no such a thing as a strict separation between what is believed to be internal, and what is external. What appeared to be more significant are the influences that shape one's subjectivity in order to sense the world. In this research I have situated improvisation as part of a process that consisted of scrutinising the boundaries of one sensibility and the possibilities for reframing it by, for instance, including in my practice ways of listening developed by acoustic ecology, *musique concrète* or deep listening. Further research will expand the strategies for playing with subjectivity, through ways of listening, by developing intersubjective approaches.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

This image corresponds to the address indicated by Bryars where Joseph Holbrooke used to rehearse (google maps).



Appendix 2

LMC program from 1996

Monday 27 May

POLWECHSEL
Werner Duldécker, double bass, guitar
Rado Malafist, trombone
Michael Moser, vibraphone
Burkhard Traugl, electric guitar

With one foot in the conservatoire and the other in free-jazz, the Viennese quartet POLWECHSEL produce terse compositions of uncanny detail and precision. Inspired by the notion of "trusting the sound," the ensemble produce extreme sonic events at once delicate and aggressive, playful and sharply focussed. A major force in contemporary notions of the radical development of new music, Polwechsel's members have worked variously with Tony Oxley, Heiner Goebbels, Tony Coe, Maxime and others. This is the group's UK debut.



HACO
Haco, voice, sampler, percussion

Even within the extraordinary melting-pot of contemporary Japanese music HACO stands out as an exceptional singer and songwriter. Founder of avant-rock combo After Dinner, a group embodying a "light" attitude which consciously embraces and critiques both kitsch and experimentalism, Haco has for the past decade stretched and broken the notion of the pop song. In her music a surface fragility is belied by a canny sense of structure, while the content of her lyrics is fantastic and hallucinatory. As well as working as a soloist, Haco's recent collaborations have been with Sam Bennett, Tom Cora and Peter Hollinger. A new solo CD is forthcoming on the Reik Megacorp label.



RICHARD BARRETT & MARY OLIVER
Richard Barrett, electronic keyboard
Mary Oliver, violin, viola

RICHARD BARRETT is one of Britain's most prodigious young composers. His works have been performed by the Arditti String Quartet, Ensemble Exposé, Elicion Ensemble, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Ian Pace and others. A member of the groups Furt and LOOS, he is currently professor of electronic composition at the conservatorium of Groningen. MARY OLIVER is equally active in contemporary composed and improvised music. She has premiered works by Cage, Teitelbaum, Xenakis et al; and has played in new music ensembles including Schismatics, Musikfabrik NRW and Ensemble Köln.



CLUB OFF CHAOS
Dirk Herweg, guitar
Jaki Liebzeit, percussion
Boris Polonski, synthesiser

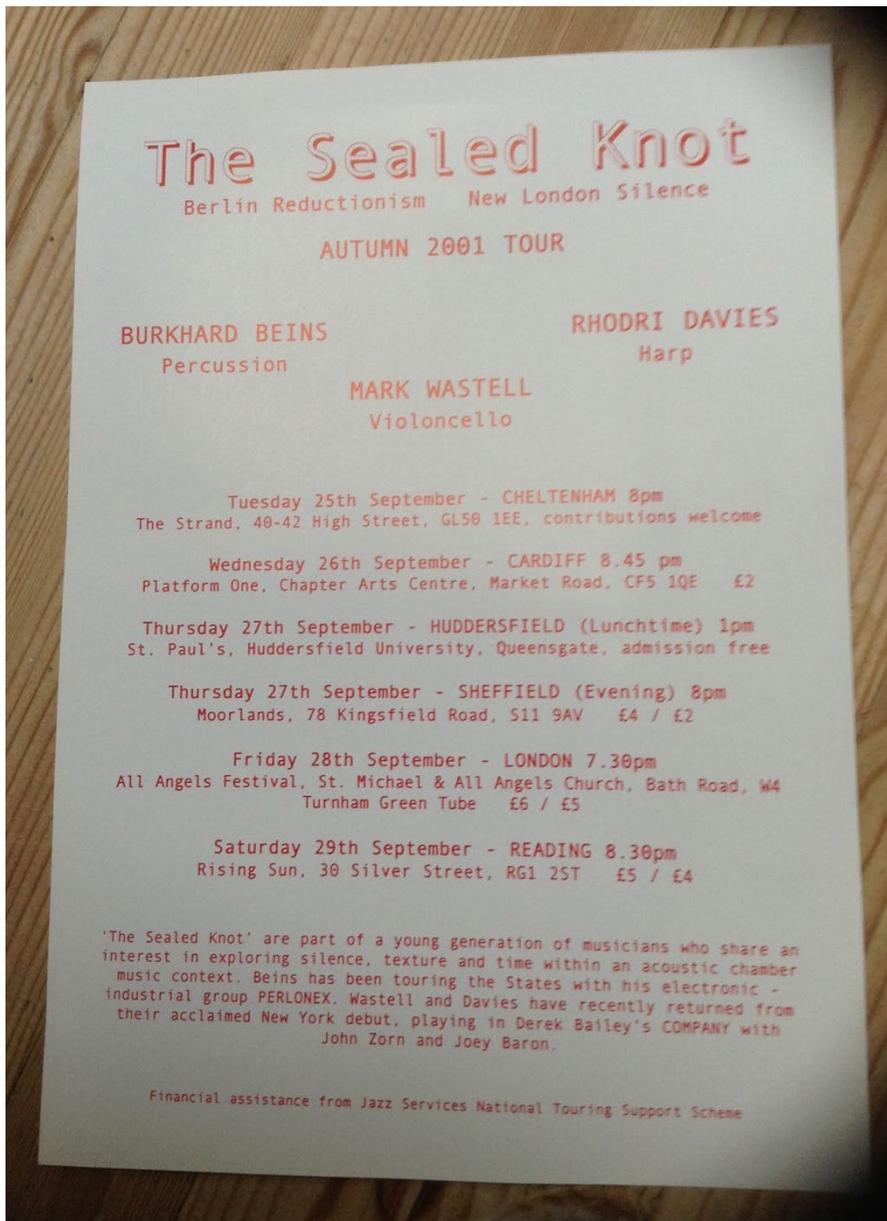
JAKI LIEBEZEIT is best known for his distinctive role as drummer in the legendary German group Can. From his roots in free-jazz in the early 60s through his superlative polyrhythmic work with Can to more recent collaborations with Phantom Band and Jah Wobble, Liebezzeit has remained one of rock's great stylists. CLUB OFF CHAOS sees him swap the traditional drum-kit for a looser array of percussion, and plunge into uncharted territory beyond musical categories, accompanied by two young collaborators, Dirk Herweg and Boris Polonski. The trio makes its debut tonight.





Appendix 3

Promotional material for The Sealed Knot tour



Appendix 4

Working notes based on Daniel Kientzy book about multiphonics

son multiplex
~~son multiplex~~

	1	1	1
	2	2	2
	3 B}	3 B}	3 B}
①	4	4	4
	(5)	5	5
	7	7	E}
	ok		7

plus
parallèle

son aigre
v. étouffé

1
2
3 B. B}
6
(7)

	1		
	2		
	3 B}		
②	4		
	6 7		
	ok		

~~son aigre~~ rapide

	1	1	
	2	2	
③	3 B}	3 B}	↔ 3 B} B
	4	4	4
≈	6	6	6
	7 ok	7	7 Tc

Appendix 5

Listening methods proposed to the audience for the performance « Don't listen to the saxophones! » (30/05/10)

Guía de escucha

Escucha corriendo

Escucha desde el suelo

Escucha saltando

No escuches los coches

Escucha los coches

Escucha una conversación

Escucha una sirena

Escucha una radio

Escucha una bolsa de plástico

Escucha un animal

Escucha un sonido hasta que desaparezca

Escucha un maquina

Escucha dos sonidos al mismo tiempo

Escucha tres sonidos al mismo tiempo

Escucha solo un sonido

No escuches los pájaros

Escucha los pájaros

No escuches nada en particular

Escucha todo al mismo tiempo

Escucha lo que quieras

Escucha como quieras

Escucha cuando quieras

Escucha tu escucha

Escucha los saxofones y otro sonido al mismo tiempo

Escucha los saxofones y dos sonidos al mismo tiempo

Escucha solo un saxofón

Escucha pasando de un saxofón al otro

Escucha solo los saxofones

No escuches los saxofones

Appendix 6

Michael Pisaro score *Fields have Ears*

To Sarah and Patrick

A slow change in the environment.

- *From outdoors to indoors ...*
- *It starts to rain ... or to clear ...*
- *The light and sounds at sundown ...*
- *From the forest to the sea ...*
- *The last day of summer with the first feeling of Fall in the air ...*

The group should select one of these changes (or another they decide upon).

The piece is organized into periods of silence and periods of sound (see chart following this page). Duration is 27'40".

The sounding sections should just be distinguishable from the silent sections, as if it was a very slight indentation into the character of the silence.

During the sounding sections, sounds may be sustained for the duration or may be intermittently repeated. While each performer does not need to play the whole time, there should be sound from the ensemble throughout the section. Performers will need stopwatches or some kind of general timing system to coordinate beginnings and ends of sections.

Each player should find two kinds of sound on whatever instrument or means they use to realize the piece.

A.) The first sound should in some way be suggestive (to the player) of sounds, environments or resonances heard in one state.

B.) The second should be suggestive of sounds from the same environment that has undergone a change of state.

Within A.) or B.) the sound may change slightly (in pitch, timbre, duration, but not loudness).

Each player, independently of the others, determines when over the course of the 17 sounds they make, they will switch from A.) to B.).

Fall, 2009

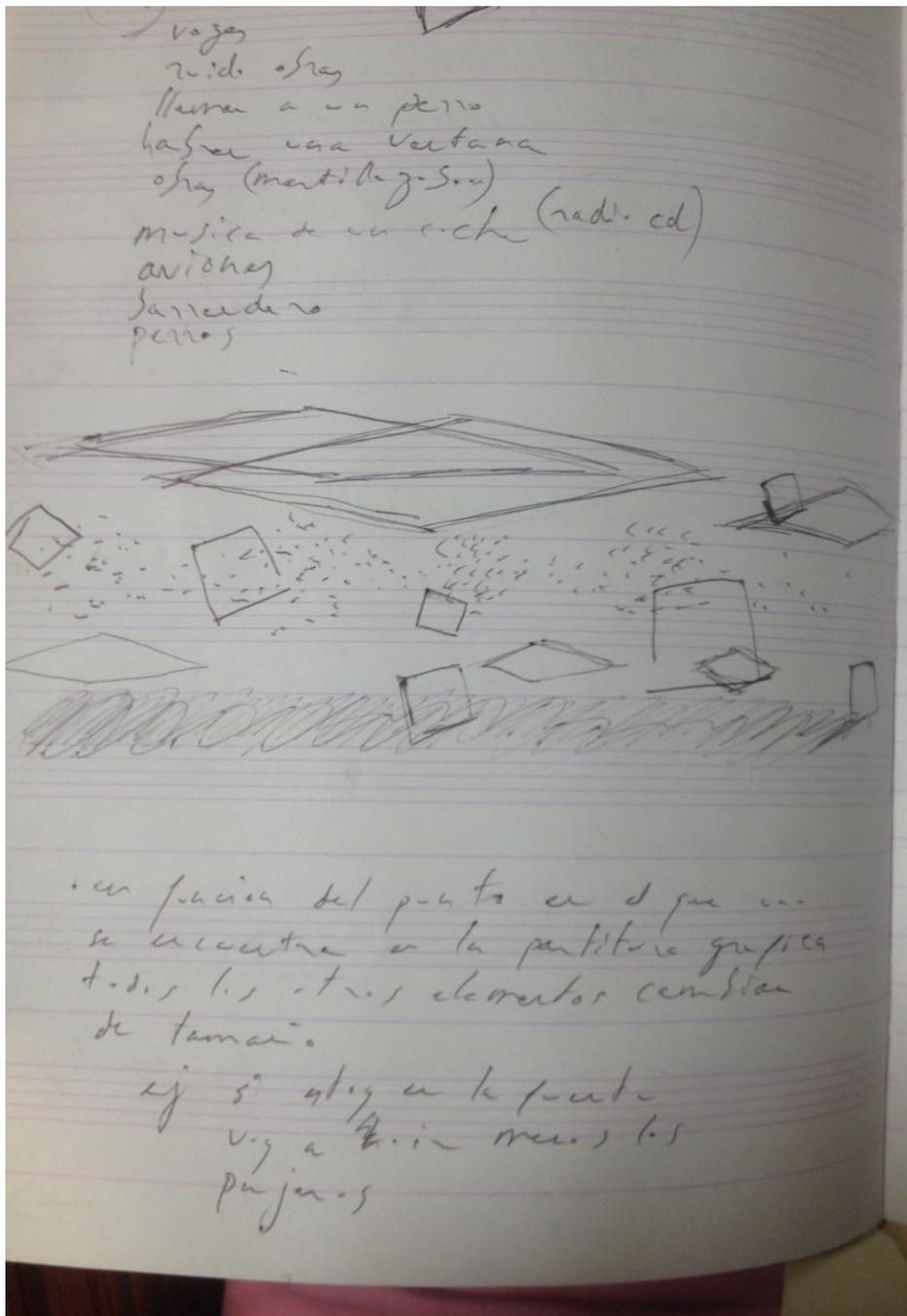
fields have ears (4): timing chart

section	start time	kind	duration (seconds)	sound event
1	0:00	silence	34	
2	0:34	sound	42	1
3	1:16	silence	18	
4	1:34	sound	52	2
5	2:26	silence	44	
6	3:10	sound	8	3
7	3:18	silence	22	
8	3:40	sound	72	4
9	4:52	silence	34	
10	5:26	sound	26	5
11	5:52	silence	60	
12	6:52	sound	12	6
13	7:04	silence	22	
14	7:26	sound	54	7
15	8:20	silence	8	
16	8:28	sound	86	8
17	9:54	silence	40	
18	10:34	sound	4	9
19	10:38	silence	36	
20	11:14	sound	66	10
21	12:20	silence	40	
22	13:00	sound	96	11
23	14:36	silence	24	
24	15:00	sound	22	12
25	15:22	silence	4	
26	15:26	sound	102	13
27	17:08	silence	20	
28	17:28	sound	76	14
29	18:44	silence	56	
30	19:40	sound	118	15
31	21:38	silence	52	
32	22:30	sound	158	16
33	25:08	silence	30	
34	25:38	sound	92	17
35	27:10	silence	30	

end: 27:40

Appendix 7

Graphic representation of the Mostoles soundscape



Appendix 8

Sarah Hughes score Architectural Model Making

ARCHITECTURAL MODEL MAKING
FOR SIMON REYNOLDS

FOR ONE OR TWO PLAYERS

ALL TIMES APPROXIMATE. PLAY WITHOUT TIME KEEPING DEVICE

16 MINUTES TOTAL TIME

1 - SILENCE TO F
2 - SILENCE TO MF
3 - SILENCE TO HP
4 - SILENCE TO P

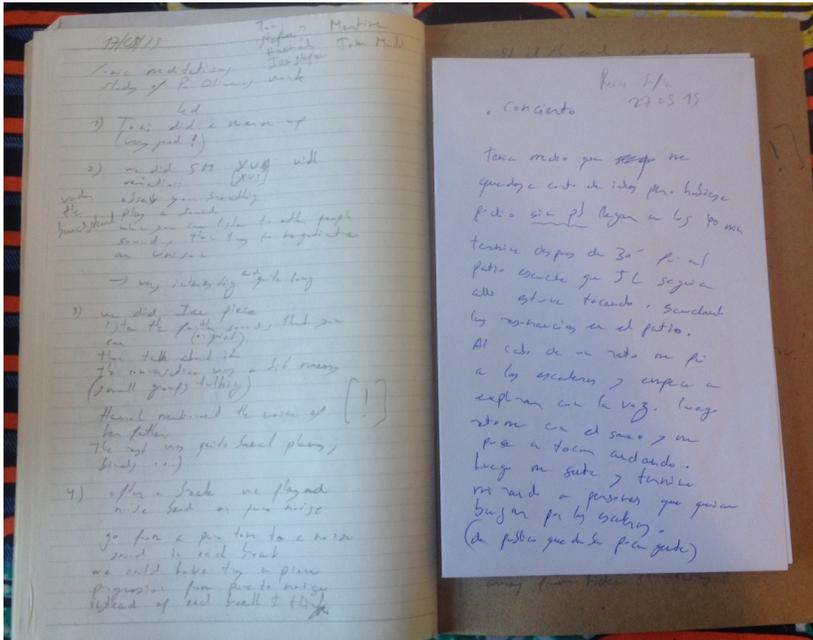
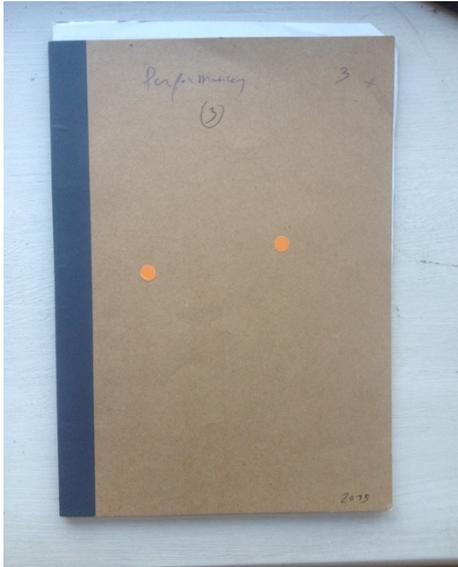
OTHER PROPERTIES OF SOUND MAKING MAY BE USED; FOR EXAMPLE PITCH, TEMPO, SPECTRAL DENSITY, NOTE DURATION, ETC.
A SYSTEM FOR DIVIDING EACH PROPERTY INTO QUARTERS SHOULD BE DECIDED UPON IN ADVANCE WITH DYNAMIC EXTREMES RUNNING FROM 1-4.

THROUGHOUT, CONSTANT SOUND. THIS COULD BE ATTENTION DRAWN TO THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SOUNDS OR SECOND PLAYER CREATING AN IMPEDIMENT TO THE SOUNDING ENVIRONMENT CHANGING OCCASIONALLY BY A SLIGHT DEGREE.

SARAH HUGHES
2013 2/2

Appendix 9

Performance notebook number 3



Appendix 10

Text about Luc Ferrari music piece *Presque Rien 2 A*

Ascoltando (sotto voce)

It was only at night time, and in the semi-obscure of dark forests and caverns, that the ear, the organ of fear, was able to develop itself so well, in accordance with the mode of living of the timid — that is, the longest human epoch which has ever yet existed: when it is clear daylight the ear is less necessary. Hence the character of music, which is an art of night and twilight (250).

The Dawn of Day, Nietzsche¹⁹⁰

The music piece *Presque Rien 2 A* (1977)¹⁹¹ suggests the presence of the composer Luc Ferrari and his companion during a night walk. During this ‘music promenade’ — to borrow this term from Ferrari — I can hear several voices. The first is the one of Ferrari himself. He speaks aloud from a certain distance as if he were sharing his thoughts: ‘I try to define and penetrate a landscape. This is not easy’¹⁹². The second voice is that of his companion. Hearing the sound of a car passing by she whispers: ‘This is not good here’. To this Ferrari replies again, ‘no, it is not good here’ but this time, he is no longer detached from the scene: speaking in his mind, he is engaged in a dialogue with a quiet voice. The last voice is that of the night birds. The purpose of Ferrari and his companion is to identify the place where birds emit their sounds in the night. *Presque Rien 2* is about listening to unlocated sounds.

¹⁹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, New York: The MacMillan Company, [1879] 1911, p.243.

¹⁹¹ Luc Ferrari, *Presque Rien*, Paris: Musidisc, CD 245172, 1995.

¹⁹² All quotes from Ferrari's *Presque Rien* are my own translations.

Luc Ferrari not only proposes some interesting sounds to listen to, but principally he provides the listener with his own listening. With his inner voice which speaks aloud, Ferrari stages in *Presque Rien 2* his own listening: ‘I can hear the night birds but I wonder where they are? In which direction...I cannot...’ In the foreword of Peter Szendy’s book called, *Listen: a History of Our Ears*¹⁹³, the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy proposes to expand musical terminology with the marking *ascoltando* (‘listening’). This notation would indicate ‘to play while listening’. This view is later developed by Peter Szendy in his book to acknowledge listening as the music itself. For Szendy, music history has forgotten musicians who were primarily listeners. Using the example of DJ’s, he opens up a space to highlight music arrangers and any listener putting a CD on a music player that music, as a creative act, already sits in the action of listening. Ferrari’s *Presque Rien 2* converges with the idea of a ‘music promenade’ as a sort of live mix made with the sounds encountered during the night walk.

To find his way in the darkness, Ferrari and his companion follow the sound of the night birds. Sometimes it is possible to hear them very clearly. They resonate in the twilight as if they were the sound of a radar. But at other times, says the companion, ‘we can almost not hear them anymore’. ‘Hearing’ has to be considered in this context according to two different definitions. First, it means that the sounds cannot strictly be heard relying on the definition of hearing as a physiological process, as defined by Roland Barthes. Secondly, we also need to consider Jean-Luc Nancy’s definition referring to hearing sounds which are legible within a specific framework known in advance. Ferrari and his companion dismiss the sounds which are too familiar — like the distant rustling of the cars — preferring to walk towards those sounds that they cannot hear well, understand, locate, or expect. They are listening to silence as the unexpected and the unfamiliar.

Presque Rien 2 is built on the variation of different voices. The voice of Ferrari who speaks aloud offstage, the quiet voices of the dialogue on site, and the silence of the night which encloses the night birds and many other sounds (dogs, insects, trains, church bells,

¹⁹³ Szendy, Peter. *Listen: A History of Our Ears*, New York: Fordham University Press, [2001] 2008, p. ix.

cars, steps...). These different voices alternate according to a regular rhythm which is eventually disrupted around the end of the piece. Suddenly Ferrari states aloud in his mind: 'In the night I am getting closer to the night birds' but he continues *sotto voce*: 'We must walk even closer'. From then, the whispering reigns and suddenly the unheard sound of a 'bizarre insect' arises. In the musical realm, the term *sotto voce* indicates that musical instruments are required to play softly to foreground another voice. In Ferrari's piece, which is a sort of live mix of the sounds of the night, this is also the case. It is because the composer and his companion are quiet that the outstanding sound of the 'bizarre insect' can emerge. Yet, in the narrative of our musician as a listener, *sotto voce* could also be applied. It is not only because Ferrari and his companion move away from a familiar sound (the sounds of the cars); but because they commit to an unfamiliar way of listening (the 'music promenade' or sound walk) that they can listen, partly relieved of reference or framework from the past, to the unheard. Listening to silence is, in the experience of Ferrari, an attempt at listening to *sotto voce* to enable a forthcoming sound.

Conclusion

The modalities of listening to silence are diverse but they all encounter or reflect the contradiction inherent to the two terms. What can be heard is situated on the side of the familiar or the already known, whilst silence encloses those sounds which are like a lost object without context, utility, or a completely settled definition. Listening to silence defies the limits of perception playing with the cultural boundaries which govern us. The meaning of listening to silence is situated within the sphere of creation; that is to say, an area in which the sense exists prior to its socially agreed definition.

Appendix 11

Map given to the audience for the performance Saxophones in the Marshes



List of works mentioned in this thesis

2009 Mamori art lab workshop
2009 Trashvortex workshop
2009 Tierno Galvan workshop
2009 Lavapies workshop
30th of June 2010 Don't listen to the saxophones
25th of July 2010 Recordings and listening session in Aleppo
4th of November 2011 concert Galerie Limitis
7th April 2011 Concert Vortex/Mopomoso with Relentless
2011 Three Times in Beyoglu (video)
15th October 2012 Murmuration Cafe Oto
2013 Relentless in Springfield Park
September 2013 Workshop series concert (Cafe Oto project space)
28th of September 2014 Bandstand Meditation
Winter of 2014 Sarah Hughes
20th of April 2014 MKII re-birth event
27th of May 2015 Resonancia Reina Sofia museum
9th of June 2015 Thus Continues the Night in my Multiple Head
19th of June 2015 MKII Jealousy party
24th of June 2015 Archway concert
16th of July 2015 Solo Cafe Oto
26th of July 2016 Saxophones in the marshes
May 2015- Now Sonic Meditations Workshop practice

Documents

Link to download the files:

https://www.icloud.com/iclouddrive/0EneW8cw2Ym5hm-LCIXt3KuBA#Documents_Artur_Practice.zip

1 Zina's Circle 5'43"

2 Zina's Circle Excerpt 1'

Recorded by Stephen Shiell on the 5th of August 2017

Performed by The Study Group

3 Confluencias (Mamori Art lab) 5'40"

4 Confluencias (Mamori Art lab) Excerpt 32"

Recorded by Artur Vidal and Slavek Kwi in November 2009

Composed and performed by Artur Vidal in January 2010

5 Don't Listen to the Saxophones [video] 10'

Filmed by José Luis Espejo on the 30th of June 2010

Edited by Maite Camacho Perez

Performed by Sébastien Branche and Artur Vidal

6 Relentless [Bandstand recording] 18'53"

7 Relentless [Bandstand recording] Excerpt 1' 52"

Recorded by Sébastien Branche.

Performed by Sébastien Branche and Artur Vidal

8 Bandstand Meditation 5'37"

Recorded by Artur Vidal on the 28th of September 2014

Performed by Angharad Davies and Artur Vidal

9 Architectural Model Making 15'02"

10 Architectural Model Making Excerpt A 46"

11 Architectural Model Making Excerpt B 44"

Recorded by Artur Vidal on the 11th of February 2014

Performed by Artur Vidal and composed by Sarah Hughes

12 Resonancia 42'40"

13 Resonancia Excerpt A 1'49

14 Resonancia Excerpt B 1'09

Recorded by Juan Carlos Branca and Patricia Avila Garcia on the 27th of May 2015

Performed by Artur Vidal

15 Jealousy Party 22'13"

16 Jealousy Party Excerpt 56"

Recorded by Artur Vidal on the 19th of June 2015

Performed by Artur Vidal

17 Aestivation 17'51"

18 Aestivation Excerpt 2'50"

Recorded by Artur Vidal on the 24th of June 2015

Performed by Artur Vidal

19 Thus Continues the Night in my Multiple Head 24'59"

20 Thus Continues the Night in my Multiple Head Excerpt 1' 51"

Recorded by Artur Vidal on the 9th of June 2015

Performed by Artur Vidal (on this recording) Sue Lynch and Sébastien Branche

21 Saxophones in the Marshes 17'43"

22 Saxophones in the Marshes Excerpt 55"

Recorded by Karina Shcherbakova on the 25th of August 2016

Performed by Artur Vidal, Sue Lynch and Adrian Northover

(A previous version was performed on the 26th of July by Rachel Musson, Caroline Kraabel and Ignacio Cz)

