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1 Introduction

Sounds are never just their source: they are the product of what is emitted and its mixing with the world. They unfold, resonate, reverberate, reflect, and refract, reaching a listener to describe the space they in which they find themselves, its materiality, size and shape, the origin of the sound, and the listener's position.

Listening is different to hearing. Hearing refers to the, 'physical means that enables perception [of sound]'.¹ To hear is to 'understand the sense', to understand what is perceived by the ear, as language or as information.²

To listen on the other hand, is to, 'give attention to what is perceived',³ to be, 'straining towards a possible meaning and consequently one that is not immediately accessible.'⁴

Spatial Listening is a collection of text scores that manifests as a workshop and performance practice. It is concerned with sounding and listening in relation to the acoustic properties of spaces as a way to sonically know, understand, and meditate on the built environment.

These scores are intended for anybody who wishes to engage with them.

They are organised into four categories:

The first category involves singing the resonant properties of spaces.

The second category involves creating impulses and listening to their spatial responses.

The third section involves playing in temporal resonance with echoes.

The fourth section involves playing in temporal resonance with reverberation.

It is advisable to try the first score in each category before moving on to others.

Practice these scores in a multitude of spaces, in public and in private

Practice them as workshops

Use them to make performances

String scores together to make walking performances through a number of spaces

Practice them as solo meditations

Practice them as group meditations

Before practicing the scores, engage with the activations that follow as a way to arrive into the body, as a way to arrive into listening, and as a way to arrive into a group dynamic.

¹ Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (USA: Deep Listening Publications, 2005), p.xxii.

² Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (Fordham: Fordham University press, 2007), p.6.

³ Oliveros, p.xxii.

⁴ Nancy, p.6.

2 Activations

Body Activations

Shaking Out

Having removed footwear, start by standing on your leading foot, and shaking your other foot so that it ceases to be clearly visible and becomes blurry. Gradually extend this motion further up the leg, first by shaking the foot and lower leg up to the knee, and then the whole leg up to the hip. Repeat this process with the other leg. Next, shake one of your hands so that it ceases to be clearly visible and becomes blurry. Extend this motion further up the arm, first to the elbow, and then to the shoulder. Repeat this with the other arm. This activation may be done with multiple limbs at once.

Mountain Stance

Stand with feet shoulder width apart (this can be measured by placing two fists in between the feet). Soften the knees and relax the shoulders. Arms are relaxed by the sides of the body, and the gaze is soft, focusing on nothing, but seeing everything.

Figure of Eight

Adopt the mountain stance. Make wide, flowing, figure of eight motions with both hands in the horizontal plane at roughly hip height. Gradually begin to add width to this motion, being aware of the way it slightly stretches muscles in the legs and upper body. Gradually begin to take the motion upwards with this increased width, until your hands are flowing in figures of eight above the head. Next, gradually take the motion downward until your hands are circling around your feet, feeling the stretch in the calf and hamstring muscles. Play with this motion, expanding it in the vertical plane, follow it where it leads.

Turning Motion

Adopt the mountain stance. Commence a repeated motion in which you first turn the body to the right, turning on the heel of the right foot and raising on to the ball of the left foot. Then turn to the left, turning on the heel of the left foot and raising on to the ball of the right foot. Arms are loose, swinging by the side. Exhale as you turn and breathe in as you come back to centre. Bend the knees slightly with each turn. Next with feet planted on the floor, and arms still loose turn left and right from the hips. Next, interlock arms in front of the body, turning left and right from the upper body. Finally, readopting the mountain stance and keeping the body relaxed, carefully turn and then tilt the head from side to side.

Extreme Slow Walk

The rule with this exercise is that no matter how slow you are walking you can always walk much slower. Begin in the mountain stance. As slowly as possible, step out with your leading foot, placing the ball of it on the floor in front of you. Very carefully begin to transfer your weight onto this foot, feeling the outer edge and the pad of the foot gradually make contact with the floor. Repeat this process, paying attention to every single sensation.

During the extreme slow walk, listen attentively to the sounds in the environment.

Breath

Grounded Breath

Adopt the mountain stance. Close the eyes. Bring awareness to the breath. Breathe naturally. Begin to visualise breathing in from the floor and out through the crown of the head and on the next breath, breathing in through the crown of the head and out through the floor. Repeat this breath sequence steadily and with each repetition, breathe out further into the ground and in from further below the ground; out further into the sky above the crown of the head and in from the sky further above the crown of the head.

Jumping Breath

Inhale as your feet leave the ground, exhaling as they land back on the ground. Keep the rhythm and consistency of jumps steady. Practice this in sets of ten, resting for a few breaths between sets.

Voiced Breath

Adopt the mountain stance. Bring awareness to the breath. Breathe naturally. Gradually begin to deepen and lengthen the breath, feeling the stomach swell as you breathe in engaging the diaphragm, and retreat towards the spine as you breathe out. Once a deep and steady pattern of breath has been established, gradually begin to elongate the exhale. After a time, begin to voice the exhale on any pitch and vowel sound, perhaps alternating pitches and vowel sounds over time.

Group Exercises

Walking in Space at Different Speeds

The group walk constantly such that everyone is always distributed equally and filling empty gaps that arise in the space. One member of the group may serve to verbally specify the walking pace from 1 to 10, where 1 is the slowest walking pace possible and 10 is the fastest walking pace possible. Groups should maintain even spacing at all speeds. Keep the gaze blurry, use the peripheral vision. Always move at a consistent speed. Always keep moving.

Maintaining a Circle

The group form a circle in the centre of the space. The goal is for the whole group to be moving, but never losing the exact shape of the original circle. Movement takes the form of pairs of people swapping place. This is initiated by any two people making eye-contact, followed by physical affirmation (usually with a nod), that they are going to swap places. There is no limit to how many people can be in motion at any given time.

Passing a Clap

The group form a circle in the centre of the space. One player starts by passing a clap to their left or right. This clap is then passed around the circle. The aim is for the clap to move as fast and as seamlessly as possible, with very regular time intervals. The time intervals reflect the attention and awareness of individual members of the group. Imagine when you are passing a clap that you are transferring energy passed to you by the clap that came before. Face in the direction of the oncoming clap to receive it and pass it onward in the direction of travel.

Moving-Touching

In this game, every member of the group should be constantly moving around the space, but in order to move each person must be in physical contact with another member — or members — of the group. If there is no contact, then movement is not possible. One member of the group may serve to verbally specify the walking pace from 1 to 10, where 1 is the slowest walking pace possible and 10 is the fastest walking pace possible.

Circle Singing

The group of people form a circle in the centre of the space. They establish a sung drone at a pitch which is comfortable for everyone in the group. Breathing is staggered. The drone should be constant but people may breathe whenever they like. One by one, either moving clockwise or anti-clockwise, people in the group take it in turns to sing a different pitch against the drone for the length of one breath whilst the drone is maintained by the rest of the group. The group should sing at a volume that enables the pitch and quality of each individual voice that sings against the drone to be clearly heard. This may continue for as many revolutions as feel comfortable or useful.

Moving, Singing

This is both a piece and an activation. For a minimum of three singers, trained or untrained. To take place in any space, indoors or outdoors, private or public, where participants are able to move uninhibited whilst wearing blindfolds.

Members of the group distribute themselves throughout the chosen space and put on blindfolds.

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Movement occurs only in order to make contact with others in the space.

Pitches are sung only in order to be heard by others and in order to hear others.

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In order to move, each person must sing a single sustained pitch for the duration of the time that movement takes place. It does not matter what the sung pitches are, so long as that they are within the comfortable singing range of each individual. The quality, pitch, and volume of the sound should be relatively consistent during a phase of movement. Each person should breathe well before they start moving.

As each participant is moving and singing, they listen carefully for the locations and trajectories of other participants with the goal of making physical contact with them (in a way which is comfortable for, and agreed by, all members of the group).

When two (or more) people have made contact, they should stop and take as much time as each of them needs to catch their breath, before starting the next phase of moving and singing.

New movements should always be underpinned by a different pitch to the previous phase of movement, though it doesn't matter if pitches are repeated through the course of the piece.

Some phases of moving and singing might last for a matter of seconds, whilst others will last longer than a breath. If this is the case, then the person in question should breathe in order to extend the length of the sung pitch for as long as is necessary.

At any time, a participant may pause to take a break, or simply to listen, re-entering when they feel comfortable.

The piece finishes for each singer when they are satisfied with the experience.

The piece finishes when there are no singers left.

3 Voice and Modal Resonance

For Someone Who Has Never Performed a Resonance

For solo vocalist of any singing ability.

Find a resonant, enclosed space, with bare stone, concrete, brick or similar surfaces: Staircases, bathrooms, corridors, caves, car parks, underpasses, cubicles, galleries, abandoned buildings, basements, garages, chapels, churches.

Position yourself in one of the corners of the space (if it has corners), so that your brow rests at the point where the walls meet. If the space doesn't have corners, rest your brow against a wall.

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.

1. Starting anywhere in your vocal range, and keeping a relatively constant volume, begin to sing a sliding tone moving up or down as slowly and consistently as you can manage. As you do this, listen intensely for changes in the volume, quality or spatiality of the sound (if you don't hear the space respond, slide slower and listen deeper; if you still don't, move somewhere else in the space and try again; if you still don't then find another space and try again). When you experience a change, no matter how small, focus all of your attention on exploring this resonant area:
2. Use the breath to structure the entries in this process: Stick to one gesture per breath. In between breaths, digest what has just passed and consider what is next to come.

Using slow and consistent sliding tones, methodically tune in and out of this resonant area from pitches below and above it, all the time listening deeply to the way in which the space responds. Develop this tuning process, each time making the pitches above and below ever closer to the centre, until you are completely focused on the exact point at which the resonance is at its strongest. Singing long tones on this pitch, very gradually change the shape of the aperture of your mouth in order to make many different vowel sounds, moving seamlessly and slowly from one to the other. After a time, sing only the vowel sounds which provoke the strongest response from the space. Begin to reduce the volume at which you are singing to the lowest you need to make the space speak. Begin to vary the length of the tones that you are singing. Find the points at which there is the least of your voice and the most of the space.

When you are satisfied with your exploration of this resonant point, resume the first process in order to find new one. Build up a vocabulary of every point across your vocal range where you find resonance. After having done this, move between these points, exploring them further and in the process, creating a melody of sorts.

When you are satisfied with your exploration, find another point in the space, or another space, and begin again. Conduct these explorations throughout your life in all manner of different spaces. Every consecutive time that you perform this piece, perform it with the memory of the previous times.

For a Group of People Who Have Never Performed a Resonance

For two or more people. To take place in an enclosed, resonant space, with bare stone, concrete, brick or similar surfaces: Staircases, bathrooms, corridors, caves, car parks, underpasses, galleries, abandoned buildings, basements, garages, chapels, churches. There should be no more singers than the number that can distribute themselves through the space such that each person can clearly hear the resonant response of their own voice as well as the voices of all others in the space.

The group distribute themselves throughout the space in this manner, each person positioning themselves either with their brow resting at the point where two walls meet or, or if the space doesn't have corners, then resting forehead or brow against the wall.

Each person closes their eyes, takes a few deep breaths, and in their own time begins the following process:

1. Starting anywhere in your vocal range, and keeping a relatively constant volume, begin to sing a sliding tone moving up or down as slowly and consistently as you can manage. As you do this, listen intensely for changes in the volume, quality or spatiality of the sound (if you don't hear the space respond, slide slower and listen deeper; if you still don't, move somewhere else in the space and try again; if you still don't then find another space and try again). When you experience a change, no matter how small, focus all of your attention on exploring this resonant area:
2. Use the breath to structure the entries in this process: Stick to one gesture per breath. In between breaths, listen to others. Digest what has just passed and consider what is next to come.

Using slow and consistent sliding tones, methodically tune in and out of this resonant area from pitches below and above it, all the time listening deeply to the way in which the space responds. Develop this tuning process, each time making the pitches above and below ever closer to the centre, until you are completely focused on the exact point at which the resonance is at its strongest. Singing long tones on this pitch, very gradually change the shape of the aperture of your mouth in order to make many different vowel sounds, moving seamlessly and slowly from one to the other. After a time, sing only the vowel sounds which provoke the strongest response from the space. Begin to reduce the volume at which you are singing to the lowest you need to make the space speak. Begin to vary the length of the tones that you are singing. Find the points at which there is the least of your voice and the most of the space.

When you are satisfied with your exploration of this resonant point, resume the first process in order to find new one. Build up a vocabulary of every point across your vocal range where you find resonance. After having done this, move between these points, exploring them further and in the process, creating a melody of sorts.

Each person should spend more time listening to others than singing. Listen to them listening. Learn from them. When an individual is satisfied with their exploration of a given part of the space, they may move to a different part of the space and begin the process again. The piece stops for each individual when they are satisfied with their exploration. The piece stops when no singers remain.

4 Impulse

Dispersed Impulses: Moving

This piece is for a group of any size. It may take place in any space or set of spaces, public or private, inside or outside. It may also be used to move through a series of spaces as part of a walking performance.

Each player should be equipped with an identical hand-held percussion instrument — either wood or plastic — which when sounded is capable of acoustically exciting the chosen space or spaces.

In their own time, players begin to walk freely at a consistent speed, evenly covering the entirety of the chosen space or spaces. Players' walking speeds needn't be consistent with each other.

Each player plays single, loud impulses at a set interval of c. one impulse every 7-12 steps. Each player decides their own interval without telling others. Players must stick very strictly to their time interval.

At any time, individual players may stop moving and playing, re-entering when they wish.

The piece finishes for each player when they are satisfied with the experience.
The piece finishes when there are no players left.

Variation

- This piece may be performed solo

Dispersed Impulses: Fixed

This piece is for a group of any size. It may take place in any space or set of spaces, public or private, inside or outside. It may also be used to move through a series of spaces as part of a walking performance.

Each player should be equipped with an identical hand-held percussion instrument —either wood or plastic— which when sounded is capable of acoustically exciting the chosen space or spaces.

In their own time, players begin to survey the space(s) by walking and periodically sounding their instrument, whilst listening intently to the returning impulse responses, with the goal of finding an acoustic area which is interesting to them.

As this goal is achieved by each player, they respectively position themselves where they are best placed to excite the area or phenomenon in question.

Each player plays single, loud, impulses at a set interval of c. one impulse every 7-12 counts. Each player decides their own interval without telling others. Players must stick very strictly to their time interval. Players' counting speeds needn't be consistent with each other.

There should only ever be one player exciting a given part of a space or spaces at a time.

At any time, individual players may stop moving and playing, re-entering when they wish.

At any time, players may begin to search the space for an alternative acoustic location and begin sounding again on the same or a different count to the last time.

The piece finishes for each player when they are satisfied with the experience.
The piece finishes when there are no players left.

Variation

- This piece may be performed solo

Circle Moving Outward

This piece is for a group of any size. It takes place in an open, outdoor space bounded by reflective surfaces, such as a public square, industrial yard, playground, amphitheatre, or sports court.

Each player should be equipped with an identical hand-held percussion instrument — either wood or plastic — which when sounded is capable of acoustically exciting the chosen space.

The group makes a tight circle in the centre of the space. One player begins the piece by initiating the passing of a loud impulse around the circle, player by player, to their left or right at an interval of c.8-10bpm, or every 5-6 seconds. This impulse is passed round the group until the time interval between impulses, and the volume of all impulses is relatively consistent.

At this point (to be defined intuitively by any member of the group) players begin to take one step away from the circle every time they make an impulse.

Players may face in any direction when they make an impulse.

The focus of attention should remain on the changing sound.

Players stop moving and sounding when they have reached the limit of the space.

This exercise may be repeated in many different spaces.

Variations

- Repeat this process in a series of different spaces one after the other.
- Have two or more circles starting in the same space where, between the circles, players take it in turns to sound.
- Repeat this process starting the circle in different places within the same space.

5 Reverberation

A Song Composed of a Single Person's Life

To be played in all manner of large and small reverberant enclosed spaces.

Assemble one or numerous wood or plastic percussion instruments that when struck are capable of exciting the chosen space sufficiently to produce a reverberation. If using more than one instrument, chose a selection with different sounds, pitches and sound radiation patterns.

Settle comfortably somewhere in the space, sitting or standing, and have the instrument or instruments arranged in such a manner that they may all easily be played from where you are.

Take a few deep breaths and allow the gaze to blur, focusing on nothing in particular.

Begin the piece by striking an instrument to create a single, loud sound. Listen intensely to the reverberation that is created. Make the next sound at the precise moment when you perceive the reverberation tail to have completely died away. Listen intensely to the reverberation that is created. Make the next sound at the precise moment when you perceive the reverb tail to have completely died away.

Continue in this manner for as long as you wish. Every sound made should have a similar intensity. In situations where multiple instruments are used, they may be struck in any order and needn't be used with equal priority.

At any time, stop the process, change your orientation, or location in the space and start again.

At any time, move to a different reverberant space and start again.

At any time, change instruments and start again.

Every consecutive time that you perform this piece, perform it with the memory of the previous times.

Variation

- This piece may be performed as a duet. In this case, players should be back to back so that they don't visually anticipate each other's intentions to sound.

A Song Composed of a Single Person's Life - Moving

To be played in all manner of large and small reverberant enclosed spaces, or series of adjoining spaces.

Acquire a wood or plastic percussion instrument that when struck is capable of exciting the chosen space sufficiently to produce a reverberation tail.

Holding instrument in one hand and stick in the other, begin to walk around the space or through the series of spaces (incredibly) slowly. Walk with either bare feet, or shoes that make no sound when they come in to contact with the ground. Walk without direction or purpose. Allow your gaze to blur, your eyesight to focus on nothing in particular. Breathe.

Begin the piece by striking your instrument to create a single, loud sound. Listen intensely to the reverberation that is created. Make the next sound at the precise moment when you perceive the reverberation tail to have completely died away. Listen intensely to the reverberation that is created. Make the next sound at the precise moment when you perceive the reverb tail to have completely died away.

Continue this process for as long as you wish, moving around the space all the time. Every sound made should have a similar intensity. Explore all areas of the space or spaces. After a while, focus all attention on listening and none on sounding or walking.

At any time, stop the process and change instruments before starting again.

At any time, move to a different reverberant space and start again.

Every consecutive time that you perform this piece, perform it with the memory of the previous times.

Variation

- This piece may be performed as a duet.

A Song Composed of a Number of People's Lives

For a group of three or more. To be played in all manner of large and small, reverberant enclosed spaces, or series of adjoined spaces.

Each player should be equipped with a single hand-held, struck percussion instrument — either wood or plastic — that when struck is capable of exciting the space or spaces with sufficient power to create a reverberation.

Players distribute themselves through the space or series of spaces and settle comfortably.

Players all put on blindfolds and take a series of deep breaths.

One player begins by striking their instrument to produce a single, loud impulse. Players all listen intently to the reverberation tail that is produced, each individual aiming to sound their instrument at the precise moment that it is perceived to have completely died away.

The game continues in this manner. All sounds should be loud enough to excite the spaces in which they occur. It is, of course, possible that multiple players will sound at once.

At any time, a player may stop actively participating and listen to the rest of the group.

At any time, a player may remove their blindfold, move (quietly) to another location in the space, put their blindfold back on, and re-join.

At any time, a player may change their instrument and re-join.

The piece finishes for each player when they are satisfied with the experience. The piece finishes when there are no players left.

6 Echo

Playing an Echo

[N.B. players should attempt this piece before trying others in the echo collection]

For solo player. To take place in any outdoor space where echoes arise.

Assemble one or numerous wood or plastic handheld percussion instruments which when struck are capable of exciting architectural spaces sufficiently to return echoes. Survey spaces by moving sounding and listening, with the goal of finding a clear echo.

Settle comfortably in the location where you are best placed to produce this echo, either sitting or standing. Begin to play this echo, either on one of your instruments or by striking a surface of the space:

To play an echo, begin by making a sound and listening to intensely to the returned sound or group of sounds. Make another sound at the precise moment when these sounds have subsided. Make this process continuous, achieving a constant and regular call and response between you and the space.

Over time, begin to vary the dynamic with which you play, as well as the timbre of your instrument.

If you perceive the temporality of the echo to have changed at any stage, adjust your playing to compensate for this.

When you are satisfied with your exploration of this particular echo, survey the space(s) by moving, sounding and listening, with the goal of finding a different echo.

Play this echo using the same or a different sounding means.

Repeat this process throughout your life, in all manner of different spaces and with all manner of sounding means.

Variation

- This piece may be realised as a group where individual players engage in this process in the same space or series of spaces, with no regard for each other. Ideally, players would have different sounding instruments in order that echoes are not confused between players.

Playing an Echo – Moving

For solo player. To take place in any outdoor space where echoes arise.

Acquire a wood or plastic percussion instrument that when struck is capable of exciting the chosen space sufficiently to return echoes.

Holding your instrument in one hand and stick in the other, begin to walk around the space or through the series of spaces incredibly slowly. Walk with either bare feet, or shoes that make no sound when they come in to contact with the ground. Walk without direction or purpose. Allow your gaze to blur, your eyesight to focus on nothing in particular. Breathe.

Whilst walking, begin to sound your instrument at slow, regular intervals. As soon as you hear an echo which you can comfortably play, begin to play it.

Stay with the echo as it as you move and it changes. When it no longer exists or is no longer playable, return to sounding your instrument at regular intervals until another echo emerges.

Over time, learn the space, eventually walking routes through it where the strongest echoes may be articulated.

Repeat this process throughout your life, in all manner of different space and with all manner of sounding means.

Variation

- This piece may be realised as a group where individual players engage in this process in the same space or series of spaces, with no regard for each other. It would be crucial for them all to have different sounding instruments so that echoes are not confused between players.

Reflective Polyrhythms

This piece is for a group of any size. To take place in an open, outdoor space or series of spaces bounded by reflective surfaces, such as a public square, industrial yard, playground, amphitheatre, or sports court. Each player should be equipped with a hand-held percussion instrument — either wood or plastic — which when sounded is capable of acoustically exciting the chosen space. These instruments should either be identical across the group, or all different.

Starting at one, a number is assigned to each member of the group.

Player one surveys the space(s) by moving, sounding and listening, with the goal of finding an echo that they can comfortably play. They then begin to play it. Once player one has established their echo, player two surveys the space(s) in the same manner to find a different echo. A 'different' echo could be an echo produced from a different surface to player one, or an echo produced from the same surface, but at a different distance from that surface. They then begin to play it. The piece accumulates in this manner until all players are continuously and simultaneously playing different echoes. At this point, player one begins the cycle again, surveying the space for a new echo. Every new polyrhythm should be left to settle for a time before a player begins to survey the space for a new echo. Players may return to echoes that have already played, or that others have already played through the course of the piece.

Each player should always keep their awareness on their own echo. If a player 'loses' their echo, which is to say they become unable to play it for any reason, then all players should stop and begin the cycle afresh.

Players may spread through a space as far as they like, as long as they are within earshot of each other.

The piece finishes for each player either when they are satisfied with the experience, or when they run out of stamina. The piece finishes when there are no players left.

Variation

- This piece can be used to move through a series of spaces as part of a walking performance.

Daisy Chain

For two or more players.

To take place in an open, outdoor space or series of spaces featuring reflective surfaces. Each player should be equipped with a different hand-held percussion instrument –either wood or plastic– which when sounded is capable of acoustically exciting the chosen space.

Counting from one upwards, a number is assigned to each member of the group.

Player one surveys the space(s) by moving, sounding and listening, finding a strong echo that they are able to comfortably play. They begin to play it. When this is established, the second player locates themselves in a different location in the space where they can comfortably hear the returning sound from player one. They begin to play on every returning sound from player one, matching exactly the volume of the returning sound as they perceive it. If sounds made by player two create their own distinct echoes, then the third player locates themselves in a different location in the space to player one and two where they can comfortably hear the returning sound from player two. They begin to play on every returning sound from player two, matching exactly the volume of that returning sound as they perceive it.

This process continues until it is not possible for more players to join. When the whole group is established, the daisy chain should be maintained for as long as possible.

When it breaks, the group should stop, find new positions in the space and start again. The listening focus of each player is always on the returning sound which dictates their playing.

At any time, players may reassign numbers.

From daisy chain to daisy chain, the players should experiment by varying their spatial relationships to one another, in terms of distance, angles and relationality to the surrounding architecture.

Variation

- A version of this piece may be conceived of where each additional player may take the returning sound from any other player as their cue.