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Investigating Human: Heightened Senses & Texture of Absence

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DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

**Prozkoumání lidské bytosti: zvýšené smysly a textura
nepřítomnosti**

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Praha, 2022

Declaration

I declare that I have prepared my Master's Thesis independently on the following topic:

**Investigating Human: Heightened Senses &
Texture of Absence**

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

Prague, date:

Signature of the candidate

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Abstract

The following writings explore and describe the Master-study-long investigation of human beings, heightened sensitivity, and possible texture or textures of absence in the context of three devised projects. These practical projects, undertaken in the field of theatre during the course of the author's MA studies at DAMU Prague, derived from an interest to work with abstract materials, that highlight the qualities evoking, affecting, and triggering human senses, and that share a particular quality – absence. The performances *Human Sound*, *Human Sound II: the concert*, and *Take Less Space and Disappear* are described in order to trace the process of investigating humans by working intuitively. Alongside, it considers heightened body sensitivity, practicing the imaginary, and exercising empathy as ways to connect. The hypothesis motivating this thesis is: that by using the tools of heightened sensitivity, different materialities and absence as a felt texture can be enabled. Human senses are hereby investigated by reflecting scientific, medical, and artistic knowledge, and going through the creative processes of research, devising, and presenting the artistic work.

Abstrakt

Následující práce popisuje zkoumání lidských bytostí, zvýšené citlivosti a možné textury a textury nepřítomnosti. Zkoumání bylo provedeno v rámci magisterského studia na tří projektech. Tyto praktické projekty, realizované v oblasti divadla v průběhu magisterského studia na pražské DAMU, vycházely ze zájmu o práci s abstraktními materiály. Tyto materiály vyzdvihují vlastnosti evokující, ovlivňující a aktivující lidské smysly. Navíc sdílejí konkrétní vlastnost – nepřítomnost. Představení *Human Sound*, *Human Sound II: the concert* a *Take Less Space and Disappear* jsou v této práci popsány s cílem sledovat proces intuitivního zkoumání lidí. Tato práce považuje zvýšenou citlivost těla, procvičování imaginárního a cvičení empatie za způsoby, jak se vzájemně spojit. Hypotéza práce zní: pomocí nástrojů zvýšené citlivosti lze umožnit vznik různých materiálů a absencí jako textury. Lidské smysly jsou přitom zkoumány prostřednictvím uváh vědeckých, lékařských a uměleckých. Smysly procházejí tvůrčími procesy rešerše, vymýšlení a prezentace uměleckého díla.

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A. INTRODUCTION

To better understand the text you will follow for almost a hundred pages, I would like to invite the reader to listen to this text as one would listen to music. I will guide you as well as I can, sometimes giving you jazz to listen to, sometimes classical sonata, sometimes a freestyle, and sometimes just noise. Bear with it. By getting deeper and deeper into the layers of this writing, you will find the logic, connect the dots, and experience the surround sound composition. The topics might seem far away from one another, as the rational and intuitive ways of art-making might seem, but only at first. By the time you reach the end of this thesis, I hope you will have found the point of Communication Beyond Language.

The reader might be skeptical about what some of my colleagues call the intuitive method of creating because it is harder to articulate and explain for people of different skills. It might seem that I am writing in circles describing the same things again and again, but what I am trying to achieve is getting as close as possible to them without defining them into a cage. Since I am entering the discussion about how heightened body sensitivity, practicing the imaginary, the irrational, and magic, and exercising empathy can help in finding ways to connect in the professional field of arts, I would like to position myself at once, as one of, or, at least closer to intuitive creators. I take intuition as one of the many skills, useful for connecting and communication, and as a vessel for other connectivity skills to manifest. I do not mean to practice or talk about not having a plan in the creative process, nor to criticize rational thought in creation. In these writings, I aim to deliver scientific and rational sources of knowledge, which might provide a better understanding of how humans use their senses, bodies, and minds. I wish to suggest being intuitive, emotional, irrational, empathetic, sometimes random as ways to connect.

In this thesis work, I will revise three of my authorial directing projects, devised at

DAMU (together with mentioning other, not main, or joined projects and practices) and try to guide the reader through the processes of my research and practical work, creative thought, and individual ways of creating art. Even though, during my studies for the Master's of Devised and Object Theatre, I have created, co-created, or have been a part of more than three projects, I would like to mostly elaborate on three works that I hold authorship for: *Human Sound*, *Human Sound II: the concert*, and *Take Less Space and Disappear*. I will try, through these writings, to put my own way of working, and ideas surrounding my work into a wider artistic and research context, while staying honest that there will be more active hesitation, mobility, and bouncing from one extreme end to another than one stable point of view.

Having a background and experience in drama acting and directing I tend to begin my performative works and practices from my own bodily experiences on the topic, and curiosities, employing the main tool that I as well try to develop and engage with the most during my practice – human senses: namely sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing.¹ Another tool – imagination (as well developed within the actor's training) helps me to dive deep into various topics and concepts, until the core of them and later to bring them closer to myself, to imagine how the topic resonates with my own senses, and create dramaturgical systems. For that reason, if the senses are not very explicit, not opening enough of the topic, or in case I am not directly working with them, I tend to use translation of the senses one into another. For translating one human sense into another I use imagination as a tool, together with an awareness of bodily senses that are appearing being heightened in order to allocate the sensations and transform them, or process and work with the information they bring.

I am aware that I am trying to examine and put into words something that other

¹ Although the five human senses mentioned are traditionally known, there are more human senses such as thermal, vestibular (movement), proprioception (body position), etc., but speaking about intersensoriality of humans, furthermore, I would like to mainly address the five basic senses.

people might not consider to be existing. That is why the reader might find some clarification in the *Glossary*, allocated in Appendix 1. This platform of common understanding may explain my comprehension of the terms of use in this thesis, and connect the reader to the realm of information we will be navigating in, so I would recommend the reader to set an eye there before starting with the following chapters.

I take the human senses as the main tool for making sense (paradoxically we use the same word for that in English) of the world, therefore I put great emphasis on how I can understand the material and topics I am working with through my body. For instance, while working with the concept of silence in Valtteri Alanen's project *Silence and Other Impossible Objects*², the creative team of the project tried to look at silence as if it would be an object, something material, possible to handle. And since silence appeared to mostly be having to do with sound and the sense of hearing, we were trying to investigate if there is more to it than the mere absence of sound. Instead of using the sense of hearing, I investigated silence through the sense of tactility and managed to open up multiple skin-felt sensations of silence, which would not have happened relying only on the sense of hearing. About the intersensoriality of humans, I will speak more in detail later in these writings, especially describing the processes of the projects on *Human Sound*.

Furthermore, the attempts to develop the tool of translating human senses from one to another appeared, trying to access every material taken through the body, through the sensations, and eventually to feel them generally, with the whole body. And since different vibrations or textures were considered as parts of dramaturgy in my work (or at least this is how I myself perceive them bodily), the actual, real, tangible things and objects became even too much to perceive or create with. From the very start, my focus was put more on materials, rather than objects (at first simply because of my interest in a human being amongst all, considering a human being as something

² Valtteri Alanen & co. *Silence and Other Impossible Objects* (Studio Alta 2021).

contrary to an object, like in *Human Sound* research), and on abstraction, rather than concreteness (the felt, but non-touchable, weightless, shapeless materials I preferred rather than the palpable ones). What is less to some, was more to me in the appreciation of absence. I unnoticeably began to base my practices and research on the appreciation of absence and on purely aesthetic preferences that I hold connected with and revolving around it. I attempt to find ways for absence to be involved as a felt dramaturgical texture.

For instance, the performers' role in three of my works during the studies, were inspired by human as a whole, being contrary to an object as such. Nonetheless, I did not pay interest in using the full potentiality of human performers, with all their psycho-physical properties and trained abilities, but I worked with a human presence on stage using only a few main aspects of their presence, treating the performer as only one of the elements, sometimes not even close to main. In *Human Sound* research and performances the sonic aspect of human beings and the compositional one were important, whereas in *Take Less Space and Disappear*, the human presence as contrast, figure, shape, contour, ability to absorb the light and cast the shadow, to carry and passively move the light source.

In this sense, the interest in a human from an investigative point of view was what fuelled the research and creative thinking mechanisms during these years, taking a human for no more or less than an element, together with all the other elements of the performance. The performers' presence is tried to perceive as another atmosphere, another texture, another aspect of the dramaturgy in my works, as well as will be referred to in this thesis. Certain elements of the performance that would make me feel or sense something bodily I call the texture of a particular event or unit, like gesture, scene, a combination of scenes, or the whole performance. Likewise, texture of sound (as will be mentioned in *Human Sound*) or other textures appeared

in my works. Conclusively, I claim that dramaturgy as well aims to be a felt structure for me, containing felt textures of materials I am working with.

A. 1 COMMUNICATION BEYOND LANGUAGE

A word does not mean the same thing to one person as to another; only the tune stays the same thing, awakens the same feeling, in both - though that feeling may not be expressed in the same words.³

This chapter called *Communication Beyond Language* comes as a part of the introduction in order to set a bottom line that repeated itself in all of my works at DAMU and which supports the position in the discussion I am about to enter with this thesis.

In these writings, I assign the communication beyond language to something closer to intuitive, connected to focus, concentration, bodily awareness, and practical skills that from far away might seem esoteric but from close enough – systematic and technical. Although my use of this term is assigned closer to the intuitive extreme, I see it as still manageable to go through without mystification. I hold on to the thought of bringing intuitivism into a more understandable light and of bringing it closer to the reader. I do not wish to put intuition⁴ into an uncriticizable position, instead, I would like to see it as the type of knowledge that could also be seen as applicable, amongst other types. Let me start with the quote from A. Storr's book *Music and the Mind*:

language is not only a superior means of communication between human beings, but

³ Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Letter to Marc-Andre Souchay, 15 October 1842, quoted in *The Musician's World* (London: Themes & Hudson 1965), cited in Anthony Storr, *Music and the Mind* (Harper Perennial 1997) p. 70.

⁴ Hereby, I am trying to explain that the intuition I am referring to in these writings is my personal feeling and experience, I will try to explain these sensations that guide me as well as I can, but since I did not develop a method of finding, determining, anyhow taming the intuition, I can only talk about it as my own, not necessarily connected with how any other could perceive my thinking or my work.

also an essential tool for understanding and thinking about the world. We do not necessarily think in words. The scanning and sorting of information goes on unconsciously as part of the creative process, and can certainly take place during sleep. There is no reason to confine the use of the term “thinking” to conscious deliberation. But, if we are to formulate our thoughts, express them, and convey them to our fellows, we must put them into words.⁵

In the quote given, Anthony Storr is stressing out how language is important as a uniquely human phenomenon. I might need language (therefore words and formulations) in order to communicate and express my thoughts, nevertheless, language is not the only, and without a doubt not necessarily the superior means of thinking.

As a creator, especially in a teamwork situation, I had to use the tools of communication, which might not be the same as the tools of my thinking. The frustration arose when my way of thinking did not meet the way I was trying to communicate things. While relying strictly on the communication in words, I feel like I was robbing myself of the impulses and sensations needed to let the communication into my whole body, to connect. When the words were being set aback into the background, I was more likely to feel what is being tried to communicate, because usually, different languages of thinking and wording things are being used.

Although it is difficult to balance the emotional and rational attitudes towards arts, the ones engaged in the professional field of creating or disputing art, often tend to seek rational explanations where an emotional or irrational approach would be much more beneficial. (I, of course, take for granted here that common sense and sensibility are included in the conversation.) I would like to invoke the example of music to explain my thought. It is a scientific fact that formulating words and constructing sentences are functions of the left hemisphere of the human brain. To truly listen to and

⁵ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 37.

appreciate music, though, which is thought to be the most abstract of the arts, we need to activate both hemispheres of the brain. Aesthetic appreciation can also be a way to discover order and structure, but it needs detachment from the work to do so. I quote a few lines about Wilhelm Worringer's dichotomy between empathy and abstraction:

In individuals, one or other attitude is usually predominant and, when exaggerated, leads to mutual misunderstanding. <...> Many disputes both in psychology and in aesthetics arise because each participant claims that whichever attitude he personally adopts is the only valid one.⁶

Since most of the works I realized at DAMU were considered to be conceptual live performances without a narrative line (meaning, not lacking dramaturgy, but not telling a story in a conventional sense), and I mostly worked with the materials of sound and light during the time there, the materials or my way of understanding them were sometimes difficult to grasp in words. Therefore, I needed to employ the principle of the laboratory in my works, which always is used in the process of making performance, and sometimes reflects in the finished work. As an initiator of the project, I needed to find ways to feel and experience together with the creative team, when the attempts to explain or discuss the concepts were leading to a dead end.

In my experience, the dimension of words is usually what is considered a prior means of communicating and is sometimes confused with connectivity itself. That is why a certain helplessness might occur when trying to understand or communicate with something felt, sensual, or abstract. The explanation of emotions might be sought because of the inability to read the "non-objective" categories of communication. Although, there are plenty of situations where it is necessary to use

⁶ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 39.

the tools of communication that are no longer within our possession. At the same time, it is not required from a baby or a person with brain damage to explain what they are feeling or what they mean. While crossing from the field of art into the field of healthcare, I can find a tremendous amount of situations where the tools of reasoning fail. Here, I will use some examples of medical conditions where communication beyond language is needed:

Patients who have suffered brain damage or disease may lose the ability to understand or make use of language without losing musical competence. <...> Vissarion Shebalin who, following a stroke suffered from severe sensory aphasia; that is he was unable to understand the meaning of words.⁷

Another example:

A song is a form in time. David had a special relationship to this element and could comprehend the shoe-tying process when it was organized in time through song.⁸

In these and similar situations, no words, and no “verified” ways of human communication work. And in cases like that, in need to communicate with something or someone beyond words, turning to morals, ethics, empathy, sensitivity, observation, deep listening begins to find its place. The composer and musician Donald Swann was referenced addressing the way humankind took up the means of communicating in words, rather than anything else in Oliver Sack’s book *Musicophilia*:

Swann <...> wonders: whether music might not be the unique example of what might have been - if the invention of language, the formation of words, the analysis of ideas

⁷ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 36.

⁸ Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins, *Therapy in Music for Handicapped Children* (London: Gollancz, 1971), p. 105, cited in Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 33.

had, not intervened - the means of communication between souls. It is like a possibility that has come to nothing; humanity has developed along other lines.⁹

In my opinion, to say, that the human senses are the tool for communicating with what is beyond rational, is, to say the least. Only when human is deprived of one or more of the essential senses or abilities, only then do they start to communicate indeed in a variety of different ways than using language. Only then does the purpose of generating that communication becomes really acute, and the extreme need to connect and be understood is faced. I do not mean to be radical, or say that in order to truly communicate, deprivation of some senses or abilities is needed. In a bit of a hot-headed way, I am trying to verbalize my fondness for absence (in this case, of words).

Drawing is a form of abstraction which may be compared to with the formation of verbal concepts. It enables the draughtsman to study an object in its absence; to experiment with various images of it, and thus, at least in phantasy, to exert power over it.¹⁰

Now let me become an advocate, for a short while, of the sensations, intuition, and instinct. This is where the research and laboratory of *Human Sound* started as the first authorial work I engaged with in the MA DOT program. My very honest question was: would I be able to recognize someone that I merged with, someone with whom I cultivate a relationship of thought, memory, sensation, and instinct, someone who is not alive anymore, or far away, through music?

Similar questions guided me through the process of creating *Human Sound* and later lead into the second part of the research, and a project *Human Sound II: the concert*. For the final performance, *Take Less Space and Disappear*, I chose to look into the light and its properties as materials. Staying together with a variety of qualities

⁹ Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia* (Picador 2012), p. 139; footnote 5.

¹⁰ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 2.

provided by the materials I examined during the making of three of these art pieces, I faced at times serious difficulties to name, explain, or structurize what I was working with and how. The question following me in the research processes, as well as in these writings was how to work with materials that are considerably hard to even describe as materials and how to develop sensitivity towards what is present or absent.

I would like to begin going over the projects I devised at DAMU with the work called *Human Sound*. There, I aimed to compare the human being to sound composition and examine if that is even comparable. What is the overall impression of a human being? Can we as a team of artists at least imagine that we can know a person similarly as we know a piece of music? If this piece of music would present to us, would we be able to associate it with a concrete person? Can a human being be represented by a weird, individual, and intimate composition, and what would be the “material” of which the human could be composed? What does the human consist of sonically? What sensations do we as human beings evoke in each other? Is there a way to sense beyond our bodily senses? Does all that makes us human matter in this context – our physics, movements, rhythms, emotions, wishes, dreams, purposes, ability to connect with one another and with nature, “source”, “divine”? And very primitively: could it be translated into something that is felt amongst human beings? Into something recognizable without our wordy tools – into something worldly – music?

B. PROJECTS

1. HUMAN SOUND

The performance *Human Sound* was the work of the first year, second semester devised at the Academy of the Performing Arts in Prague, starting with its initial research phase in the end of January 2020. It has become and still is an on-stage, live audio (and performative), almost a concert/stand-up formant-taking experience. *Human Sound* aims to combine performative and audial mediums to offer the audience a possibility to listen and to better understand the music of their own bodies, thoughts, memories and therefore to enable deeper listening and understanding of one another. It approaches humankind from an investigative point of view, as consequently connected with everything around. It invites to listen to different layers of human existence and to comprehend the human body, movement, thoughts, emotions, dreams, goals, memories, ideas, and connectivity as intertwined ecosystems.

Human Sound performance is filled with thinking streams and feelings of a Taiwanese performer En Ping Yu and transformed into a polyphony of sounds by a Finnish sound artist Valtteri Alanen, creating an experience of different tracks playing from a layer of consciousness. The two performers are bonding through sound and with sound, affecting one another and bringing various textures from the thinking process of a human being.

At the beginning of the performance, we first let the audience sit in silence for quite some time. This long silence moment is important for the preparation to listen and to connect. It sharpens the presence and senses of the audience, while they are in the darkness by themselves listening to their own breathing and creaking of the chairs. As John Biguenet writes in his book *Silence*:

Perhaps it would be more precise, then, to invite guests to experience that which surpasses language, not silence itself but a form of silence in which language is forced to remain mute.¹¹

Slowly and gently the first played sounds glide into the quietness. They are so microscopic that it is hard to understand what we are listening to. The chain of body sounds is presented in parallel with the like-wise slowly appearing light forming a circle over a table with colored lights coming from the sound equipment placed on it. Calmly the first performer, a musician, a translator, stands up from the chair in the audience and comes onto the stage. He arranges the volumes and starts weaving the sounds together into a composition. At the same time, another circle of light begins to form on the left side of the stage, and the second performer standing up from the seats of the audience steps into it.

From now on, there are two people on stage, and the connection between them. One (En Ping Yu) is the voice, and another (Valtteri Alanen) is the composer. What comes after is the concert-like performance: the scenes are compositions weaving together the sounds taken from different layers of the human body, presenting voice as a texture, and topics talked about as different qualities of music. After each “track”, each scene, the listener goes further and further away from the narrative, away from the meaning, reasoning, and logic of speech, and begins to sink into the music of human existence played to them.

In the way we thought about it, the prologue of the performance was the “long silence” scene. In the silence, the quiet chain of sounds appears, as the first shadows on the stage. After that “the composer” and “the voice” come on stage and do a short intro, which we called the first scene: a short composition of prerecorded sounds escalating in complexity and tempo. After a short pause, the audience hears

¹¹ John Biguenet, *Silence* (Bloomsbury 2015) p. 53.

Ping's voice for the first time. Usually, she would start with some noise, clearing her throat, or just checking the microphone. The performance had an outlined dramaturgy, but the content of it would be improvised, so from the performer's side, most of it would be built on the spot. Following that she would very slowly start weaving the sounds into the almost subconscious stream of thought, from not making sense into making more and more sense, then into constructing sentences, then into fully conscious. This "method" of naming sonic textures we found together with Ping when already rehearsing the performance, and trying to create the escalation of the stages of her talking. It was important to arrive into speech and to segregate the noises, senseless words, the shortcuts of thought from conscious deliberate speaking. It would be difficult to access for Ping with the audience present, but with the right amount of rehearsing, this sequence would work. Somewhere along this weaving, Valtteri would start looping and live-processing the sound emitted to the microphone by Ping. He would compose and escalate the flow of these sounds, taking each word or noise Ping makes as material for music. This on-the-spot composing would mirror its effect back to Ping, she would try to be sensitive to the composition as it is at the given moment and add the needed vocal material as they go. It was a beautiful step-by-step collaboration and building of something new. The first composition would end at the highest peak. Again there would come a pause, correction of microphones if needed.

The second scene we called "the day". The performers carried out a joined improvised composition translating all that they did the previous day into sounds. At the same time, they listened to each other and, since most of our days, we spent together, searched for places to join each other sonically. It resembles singing in a duo when one knows their part but has to listen to the whole composition as well. After "the day", again a short pause.

In the third scene “topic 1”¹² came out of a series of experimentation and improvisation with Ping’s talking and Valtteri’s mixing of the music. It would be Ping’s thoughts on the topic she feels strongly about, again escalating from vague thoughts into emotional speaking, together with an almost club music live mixed by Valtteri. The almost club music that I am talking about would appear in a certain manner: the kick drum would be processed from the prerecorded sound of Ping’s heartbeat, teeth, joints, and eyelashes, all used as percussive elements. Her running steps, the sound of hair being brushed, the swallowing of water, all processed or raw prerecorded sounds would add up into the body of a “track”. Valtteri would create different musical compositions for each scene each time we showed the performance, from the same *Sound Collection* we prerecorded at the beginning of the research. The “songs”, “tracks”, or compositions in each of these scenes would become longer and louder, adding together more complexity. Now Valtteri could use all the sounds, prerecorded from the *Sound Collection*, or delivered on the spot by Ping, together with sentences, and all the material Ping produced during this show, this improvisation.

The fourth scene would begin with a game suggested by Valtteri in the creative process. The performers for a moment changed their roles. Ping would go to the mixer and Valtteri would be exposed to the audience. He would put on the headphones and at first, the audience in the speakers, the same as Valtteri in the headphones, would hear the prerecorded body sounds of Ping, randomly selected to play by Ping at the mixer. Valtteri would have to show the sound using a gesture or a dance move, or initiate the same sound with his body. It would grow into a weird expanding choreography, with a raising tempo and amplified movements. The audience unnoticeably would stop hearing the sounds from the speakers as Ping would take the microphone and start playing sounds, not from the mixer anymore but

¹² Wanting to include a vaster range of layers into this scene’s composition, I asked Ping and Valtteri to think of the acute topics that they feel emotional about. Once we had a long conversation during a rehearsal where we talked out the topics we feel strongly for. After that, we categorized and wrote down two lists of topics to choose from. The first list was “topic 1”, and the second was “topic 2” list. From these lists, I would ask Ping to choose several for each performance.

unmediated, directly from her body. We would whiteness this change and the more focused, slowed-down reactions of Valtteri. Now the curiosity and awareness would really open up as one has to listen closely to feel the sound. Ping would stand behind him and the connection between these two performers, the listening would rise. Usually, here a very intimate connection would be established. The rhythm would slow down and reach the atmosphere of thick air. Slowly Ping would start whispering words into the microphone. Valtteri would hear them from the headphones and would repeat them as if Ping was putting words into his mouth. This latter part of this scene or the overlapping beginning of another scene, had something heartbreaking and robotic about it, something helpless in the attempt to voice somebody else standing behind you. If Ping would start talking about racial or gender problems it would stand out in such a contrast that the one voicing these problems is a seemingly young and healthy European man.

This later scene would flow into a conversation or more of a fiery discussion between the two of them, impelled by the “topic 2” from Ping’s side and fuelled by Valtteri. Now they are allowed to connect in a simple human way, expressing their emotions and opinions, and talking vividly with one another. Now there are two voices, two approaches, and two people’s dynamics creating this composition. I believe that undefined thought sometimes can be more precious than that of clear determination. Stripped by its formulation and development, it is given in the absence of filters that those thinking processes sometimes provide. It is unmasked, raw, and some might say random, but as I believe in connectivity, the random with added emotional value can form the most special and curious connections of all kinds.

After they have said enough, the performers would collectively present the last composition: the first precomposed, thus fixed, piece. The composition is the only finished one that we had at that time. It was made by Valtteri, from the *Sound Collection* of Ping’s sounds. As the music was played, the performers would leave

the stage and go back to the audience seats, and the lights would go out one by one, as slowly as they were brought up in the beginning. And we would end in the darkness, again listening to the sound chain taken from the Pings body. This time as an epilogue.

1.1 LAYERS

In the description of the project *Human Sound*, I have mentioned the sounds coming from the different layers of a human being. Now, in order to deepen the understanding of the project, I would like to explain, what are those layers and how did they come into play with the performance we were making. For the wish to translate a human being into sound, automatically some questions were raised: what is human? What does a human consist of? What is the human “material” that later could be translated into sound? The process of thinking about the gradually starting research became a sort of alchemy where there was a need to collect and categorize the human being as a whole. In order to answer these questions, and to explain to the rest of the team the perspective of the human being as a whole, I had to present a structure into which we will research. The search for structure began even before the research phase of this project, in late autumn of 2019. There was a fear involved, that by reducing humans to an assemblage of working parts, we are also neglecting the very essential: that the different combinations at different times can create something new. I was fearing that I was neglecting the very humanity by assigning each part a property to be registered. I needed to create a personal tool that would help me analyze human as a character, suiting my artistic investigation. There came the structure consisting of what I call 7 layers of human being which helped me to word better what we were trying to do. I will try to describe these layers:

1. Physical layer – our physical body. We tried to capture and record every sound, even the most silent, that is generated by the human body. This layer includes

sounds such as: swallowing, stomach gurgling, breathing, blinking, etc. It excludes the sounds generated by voluntary movements. The team already had to make some exceptions at the beginning of recording sessions: the attempt was to record microscopic sounds like skin regenerating, nails, hair and teeth growing, joints and bones cracking, salivating and tear accumulating, lungs and other inner organs functioning, blood streaming through the vessels. Unfortunately, we could not reach every sound we could imagine, so we had to cheat our own system: to represent skin in this list we had to use the contact mike being dragged over it, to record hair we had to comb them and include some deliberate movements.

2. Ether or movement layer – the sounds were coming out of voluntarily generated movements such as running, walking, sitting down and standing up, laying down, rolling, scratching, sneezing, coughing, farting, burping, clacking of the teeth, clapping hands, etc. Also, this layer manifests itself as electromagnetic waves, which are felt 1–2 cm around the physical body of a person. These waves we also wanted to record at the beginning of the project, unfortunately – unsuccessfully.

3. Layer of emotions – according to Paul Ekman¹³, there are 6 main emotions: fear, anger, joy, sadness, disgust, and surprise. Without going into mixing and different shades of these emotions, we tried to represent the 6 mentioned above. Instead of recording the emotions expressed in words, we wanted to record the specific ways of crying, laughing, gasping, wailing, sighing, etc. That seemed to us as the most objective way we could think of at that time to represent this layer. A layer of

¹³ Paul Ekman is an American psychologist and professor emeritus at the University of California, San Francisco who is a pioneer in the study of emotions and their relation to facial expressions. <...> Ekman's interest in nonverbal communication led to his first publication in 1957, describing how difficult it was to develop ways of empirically measuring nonverbal behaviour. He chose the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute, the psychiatry department of the University of California Medical School, for his clinical internship partly because Jurgen Ruesch and Weldon Kees had recently published a book called *Nonverbal Communication* (1956). Ekman then focused on developing techniques for measuring nonverbal communication. He found that facial muscular movements that created facial expressions could be reliably identified through empirical research. He also found that human beings are capable of making over 10,000 facial expressions; only 3,000 are relevant to emotion. (Wikipedia, accessed June 25th, 2022).

emotions is also responsible for wishes, desires, as well as rhythms of gestures, and voice timbre.

4. Mental layer – responsible for thoughts, thinking, beliefs, knowledge, constant or repetitive thought patterns, ideas, dreams, imagination, endurance.

(As you can see, from the fourth layer, the confusion adds to how one would be able to translate these attributes of each layer into sounds, or how to even trace the attributes needed, such as repeating thought patterns, beliefs, and imagination. Here we faced the first serious obstacle in our attempt to collect the sounds from human being and had to correct the stream of the process a little bit. More in the chapter *Process, Aims, and Obstacles*, on page 27.)

5. Purpose layer – character, personality, feelings, tastes, values, preferences. This layer also holds essential topics in human life, such as love, death, life, hope, home, friendship, trust, sensitivity, empathy, etc. (There is a description of what Plato considers to be Ideas,¹⁴ overtaken by Schopenhauer. It is beautifully resonating to my modification of the layer of Purpose. Schopenhauer claims that Idea is some example of the ideal, be it Justice, Goodness, Love, Truth. They could only be entered if the person would detach oneself from the mundane actualities.¹⁵)

6. Connection with others layer – this layer determines one's ability to connect with living or nonliving creatures. It includes the ability to connect not only to other humans but also to things, plants, animals, and otherness. This layer I consider already quite philosophical, taking into account human wishes to connect to objects and things, as in Descartes, who was aware of the challenge of understanding reality and 'how we can truly know anything about the world of objects.'¹⁶

¹⁴ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 207.

¹⁵ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 134.

¹⁶ Aaron Fine, *Color Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Bloomsbury 2022), p. 156.

7. Connection with the source layer – this layer represents the person's connection with the source, whatever we consider it to be: energy, cosmos, higher consciousness, God, the divine, nature, love, creativity, or other. It gives the ability to connect with something unknown, go beyond the mundane, and admit the temporality and limitlessness of humankind and of oneself.

Each and every one of these layers, according to my hypothesis, could be developed to a different extent within every person. Some layers can be underdeveloped or overdeveloped, or in some cases, not developed at all. Conclusively, the composition of these functioning layers would be the composition that could be translated into sound, therefore into a musical composition. Each layer would have sounds assigned to it, and the extent of the functioning of the layer would be represented by the activeness of the sounds.

The practical process of the work of collecting the sounds started almost as a socio-anthropological experiment at the end of January 2020. The team of the project was trying to record as many sounds of one human (En Ping Yu) as possible. Realizing that we will not be able to record all the sounds from each layer, as well as facing the controversy of not being able to translate them objectively, also being affected by the pressure of time we stayed with the sounds we managed to gather using differing microphones. After cleaning these sounds we had an active *Sound Collection*, the material flexible enough to be formed and composed of. Later in the process, when staying with our *Sound Collection*, we experimented with sounds a bit more. We tried to translate the video of En Ping Yu dancing into a noise composition assigning a different sound to each of her body parts and processing the video so, that as she dances one can hear each body part as it is being moved. Another try-out was the experiment on the tones of voice when speaking. We started the process of the project with a short three-question video interview session with each team member. Later, we took this interview and processed it to the point where one cannot

hear speech anymore, only the pitches and rhythm of the voice.

One of the discoveries from this later experimentation was how significantly the rhythm was imprinted into humans' bodies and voices. The pitch, melody, and harmony does not share the same significance as the rhythm, which is noticeable by eliminating the words from one's speech. Rhythm is rooted in the body so much that it organizes the way we speak and breathe and it is utterly audible in the recordings we made. The heights and lows of the melody and harmony also were noticeable, although I dare to speculate that the amplitude of the tones and the tempos one is speaking in depends as well on the arousal one is experiencing at the given moment. Emotions when flowing easily can color one's voice and expand the range of speaking.

All in all, in the course of developing the work, the objective has been generated for the audience to feel what sound is, to start listening with the whole body, and to let the information stream through their senses. This is the main reason why I think all the attempts to live stream this performance, especially in the pandemic conditions, were close to failure: because it was important for the sound waves to reach the skin of the listener, to resonate there, and this trait is severely diminished with the chain of technology involved. As I mentioned previously, the intersensoriality and the connection between skin and sound were largely involved in the bringing together of this piece. Of course, we also kept the main objective: to translate some aspects of human existence into sound.

1.2 THE SKIN AND SOUND CONNECTION

Now let the reader get back to some terms I would have to introduce, to better understand how a human being could be a felt sound composition. At the same time, I will explain the principle understanding of the skin's connection with sound in the

development of my works *Human Sound* and *Human Sound II*. Furthermore, I would describe and give examples, of how sound and skin are interconnected, leaving aside synesthesia and similar phenomena.

Sound can be felt as different textures touching the skin in which a human is contained physically. In a sense, skin becomes a surface for sound to bounce to. Therefore, sound can be not only audible but felt, because it touches the skin with its sonic qualities (textures). The skin-felt textures of sound can be applicable in the context of discussing the conditions of hearing impairments or deafness. When the auditory apparatus is damaged or off, the body becomes the unit surfaced by skin, which allows hearing ability to be partly replaced, as the waves of sound of differing qualities resonate in the body, disregarding the pitch. A performance by Joel Teixeira Neves and a deaf actress Silva Belghiti called *Listening*, crosses exactly the aspects I am trying to describe here.¹⁷ I would like to place some thoughts about the human senses, especially how the tactile sensation is connected with the growth and formation of a human being, the psyche of a person. Mostly I am writing about infants, but with the notion, that as humans grow up, they lose some or all of the intersensoriality. In a way, I offer to set one foot back to infancy, in order to regain some of the useful connectivity, sensations and in ways of communication.

For a newborn, in their time of infancy, the skin serves as a membrane, providing the function of containment. Without having a capacity for thought, the infant can only use the bodily capacities to make sense of the world, with the sensations coming through the body. Even though until a certain age a child is not distinguishing their senses one from the other (they feel intersensorially), the skin is hugely involved in all of the sensations a child is able to perceive and becomes a surface for the sensory impulses, including the sound impulses.

¹⁷ More about the performance *Listening* the reader can find in the Appendix 2.

In other words, the skin of the psyche is not only a tactile skin, but an auditory skin, an olfactory skin, a gustatory skin, and a visual skin. Or, to use a metaphor that Anzieu himself uses, the skin of the psyche is in many ways like the skin of an onion (Anzieu, 1989, p. 215). That is, like the skin of an onion, the skin of the psyche is structured by layers that interlock one with the other. According to Anzieu, then, the senses of sound, smell, taste and sight interlock with the sense of touch to form the skin of the psyche.¹⁸

Since sound itself is a wave of a particular length, it can possess different characteristics, such as meter, rhythm, intensity, volume, pitch, tone, etc. These characteristics all together create what I call a texture of sound, bouncing to the surface of the body, the skin. Sounds generally have textures that evoke certain emotional reactions, or in some cases, bodily, tactile-felt reactions too.

One of the earliest of the many skins by which the child is surrounded, he writes, is a metaphorical skin or envelope of sound, formed by the echoing interchanges between the mother's voice and the child's own sounds. At this early point in the child's development, there is no clear distinction between tactile and auditory sensations, and the sensations of being held, stroked, and patted are experienced in terms of the soothing, containing, enclosing contours of the voice, while the voice itself becomes something palpable.¹⁹

As Anzieu's work with a number of patients makes clear, the 'skin of sound' or 'skin of words' can function as a substitute psychic envelope when a stronger and more supportive one is, for whatever reason, unavailable.²⁰

¹⁸ Marc Lafrance, *From the skin ego to the psychic envelope: An introduction to the work of Didier Anzieu* (Palgrave Macmillan 2013) p. 13.

¹⁹ Steven Connor, *Seeing Sound: The Displaying of Marsyas*, This is the text of a lecture given to mark the inauguration of the MA in Text and Image at the University of Nottingham, 16 October 2002, <http://www.stevenconnor.com/marsyas/> accessed July 14th , 2020.

²⁰ Lafrance, *From the skin ego to the psychic envelope*, (2013) p. 15–16.

Ellen Dissanayake, who teaches at the New School for Social Research in New York, was arguing that music originated in the ritualized verbal exchanges between a mother and a child during the first year of their life. She writes that the most important components of language are actually the ones that are concerned with emotional expressiveness rather than conveying factual information. 'No matter how important lexicon-grammatical meaning eventually becomes, the human brain is first organised or programmed to respond to emotional/intonational aspects of the human voice.'²¹ Another resource I would like to mention is the one of Anthony Storr. In his book *Music and the Mind*, the author writes about the connection between the body and sound, analyzing the need of humans to be aroused. He explains how human beings crave arousal just as much as they crave, on the contrary, sleep. The physiological reactions of the body, when the person is being aroused include the electrical resistance of the skin being diminished, the pupil of the eye dilated, the respiratory rate changes into faster or slower, or else becomes irregular, blood pressure tends, as the heart rate, to increase. The muscular tone increases as well, often adding the physical restlessness. What he is convinced of is that there is certainly closer relation between hearing and emotional arousal than there is between seeing and emotional arousal. He again explains that listening is natural to an even unborn child in the womb, who can startle from the sound of the door being slammed. David Burrows referenced in the book writes that the mother's heartbeat and breathing are among the earliest indications babies have of the existence of a world beyond their own skin.

The first psychic envelope Anzieu describes in *The Skin Ego* is the 'sound envelope'. This envelope is set in motion by the auditory sensations associated with respiration – sensations that enable the infant to experience itself as a container that fills itself and empties itself. <...> In order for the sound envelope to be strong and supportive, it must be constituted by an array of both manageable and meaningful sounds – that is, sounds that are neither excessive nor impersonal. If the sounds emitted by the

²¹ Ellen Dissanayake, *Music as a Human Behaviour: a Hypothesis of Evolutionary Origin and Function*. Unpublished paper presented at the Human Behaviour & Evolution Society Meeting, Los Angeles, August 1990, cited in Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 9.

caregiver are excessive, they are more likely to invade than to envelop the infant's psyche and, as such, are more likely to tear and perforate it. Similarly, if the sounds <...> are impersonal, they are less likely to be experienced as responsive and, as such, are less likely to serve as the foundation of primitive reflexivity.²²

Combining all these pools of information presented, the surface of the skin is receiving a certain texture of sound, which serves (voluntarily or not) as an impulse, and therefore evokes a reaction. Why is it important? In the same way, as we can discuss the care-full touch, we can discuss care-full sound and care-full listening, by placing attention, and intensifying the focus on our senses. It is easier to imagine our skin being torn by an excessive sound than our psyche, simply because the skin is something physical, tangible, and therefore not requiring proof of existing. If we reached an agreement of some sort about the effect the sound can have on the skin, body, and psyche, we can move along to investigate what kind of reactions the texture can cause to the surface, and revise the ways of treating and using our interconnected senses.

1.3 REACTIONS: AROUSAL, PAIN, PLEASURE

As mentioned in the previous chapters, every impulse our bodies receive with their senses is generating a reaction. Although in the quote below it is talked specifically about music, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the sounds and how they influence human senses for a brief second before they become music.

It is generally agreed that music causes increased *arousal* in those who are interested in it and who therefore listen to it with some degree of concentration. By arousal I mean a condition of heightened alertness, awareness, interest, and excitement: a generally enhanced state of being.²³

²² Lafrance, *From the skin ego to the psychic envelope*, (2013) pp. 14–15.

²³ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 24.

Furthermore, the author explains how arousal is connected with peaks of emotions:

This is at minimum in sleep and at its maximum when human beings are experiencing powerful emotions like intense grief, rage, or sexual excitement. Extreme states of arousal are usually felt as painful or unpleasant; but milder degrees of arousal are eagerly sought as life-enhancing.²⁴

Arousal, as written by Anthony Storr, is similar to excitement, and in my understanding evokes and forms certain emotions. The reaction to an impulse comes first and can be recognized within the extremes of “pain and pleasure”, which are remarkably similar in a physiological way. The condition of arousal can be pleasurable or distressing according to its intensity. Sexual arousal, for example, and aggressive arousal have in common fourteen psychological changes. The team of A. C. Kinsey found out that the physiology of anger differs from the physiology of sex only in four aspects. There are more differences, nevertheless, separating the state of fear from the state of anger or sexual arousal.²⁵

Speaking about musical arousal, playing and listening to music as well holds significant differences in the way sounds affect our bodies. But for now let us stay with the ways the human body perceives the sound, and come back to the texture of the sound as stimuli and impulse.

Here, I would like to illustrate how is sound felt like a texture with the example of the temperature felt on the skin. I would like to insert some fantastic, not yet scientifically supported addition, inspired by my favorite aunt’s constant complaining about her cold hands and feet. It might help me explain the sound as a texture better. You see, my aunt thinks that her blood vessels are so close to the surface of her body that whatever weather conditions her skin meets, it reacts to it very quickly and strongly.

²⁴ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 24.

²⁵ Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Cloyde E. Martin, Paul H. Gebhard, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* (W. B. Saunders, 1953), pp. 703–5.

For instance, if she is exposed to normal Lithuanian winter weather and gets cold, it can be really difficult and can take a very long time to bring her back to her normal warm body temperature. The same happens with the heat: on a hot summer day, her body heats up swiftly and keeps the heat, without ordinary thermoregulation, creating stress for the body. Now, my aunt is also convinced that I inherited this “thin skinniness” from her. What is connecting to the writing of this thesis is that, if there would be scientific proof, that humans are experiencing the sound partly through their skin, does it mean that the “thin skinniness” makes you hypersensitive to sound? Of course, blood vessels are not the only thing important here. We can talk about the nerve ends and placement and a lot of other variables. My point was, that body, the embodiment of sound is long forgotten in the discussion, even though it seems obvious that if we have to use the body to make the sound, in the same way, we have to use the body, in fact, all of our body to listen.

So, let us say, that in this example, the skin as a surface is receiving some stimulus, and of course from there immediately comes the reaction. The temperature, hot or cold, is the stimulus, and how my aunt’s body feels is the reaction. Followed by the bodily sensation comes emotional sensations: “I lose my energy when I am cold, and I feel passive and sad.” Or: “I am refreshed, I am active when I am cold”. The extreme version of heat would be burn. The extreme variant of cold would be freezing. In these extremes it is easier to imagine temperature as a texture – at first, these two extreme temperatures seem similar in how they feel, because of the neuron ends which receive them. But once our skin distinguishes one from another, it starts to develop (let us say) a lower-key reaction. By lower-key reaction, I mean that it is not the immediate reaction our body gets, but the one it develops after some time.²⁶ This means that after the arousal comes to the distinguishing phase where the body “realizes” how it feels and can generate the reaction. The body can “decide” if it

²⁶ I am using these obvious examples of temperature because it would be much more complicated to explain it using the examples of the high and low pitch for instance, but I mean to compare high and low pitch with high and low temperature.

is pain or pleasure that it is feeling and again react accordingly. So if we say that a reaction is what was caused, for example, emotion, then the distinguishing comes in between the arousal and the emotion, in between the texture hitting the surface and the effect our body generates.

All mentioned above is an involute of lightning-quick processes, and I am mentioning all that to support how the awareness of one's body is the key to reacting to the music, to listening with one's whole body. Emotion always comes only after the reaction, even later, if ever, the feeling forms. These small, unnoticeable steps of processing mentioned above have gaps. What I am trying to do with awareness is lessening the gaps in between these steps, so that the emotions and the chain of reactions could flow non-stop and clearly, so there would not be anything in the body blocking the flow of stimuli and the body perceiving through its senses.

This kind of sensitivity and awareness we as young actors were trained to gain using Grotowski's method of imprints, later *via-negativa*. There as well the aspiration was to lessen the gap between the stages of the reaction, so that the whole-body reactions and emotions could flow freely through the body and so that the actor could "make food" out of every sensation they perceive.

All the exercises <...> must be performed without interruption, without pause for rest or private reactions. Even short rests must be incorporated as an integral part of the exercises, whose aim is not a muscular development or physical perfectionism, but a process of research leading to the annihilation of one's body's resistances.²⁷

1.4 PROCESS, AIMS, AND OBSTACLES

Soon after the idea of *Human Sound* was spoken about and the team started to

²⁷ Jerzy Grotowski, ed. Eugenio Barba, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Routledge 2002), p. 146.

gather in January–March 2020, there appeared several problematic points. Firstly, the sounds of the first layers guided us as much as we could follow: we recorded everything that we knew, heard, or imagined making a sound. There were attempts to record the growth of hair, and nails, the renewing of skin, the blood traveling through the veins, but we left it for the times to come when we could enjoy not-yet-affordable or not-yet-invented equipment, and not-yet-achieved collaborations with the hard science professionals in laboratories surpassing our expectations. All in all, it wasn't a project about science, even though characteristically science, or the attempts to comprehend scientifically the human being, took a big part of this project.

In the research phase still, in January and February 2020, there were attempts to translate medical charts and records to take the scale of music to the next level. The approach that I as a generator of these ideas took was to record everything that is possible from the human body, with the means that are accessible and later translate it into music. (I do, in fact, understand all of these concepts: science, ideology, art, politics, and so on, as being different languages, build to perform and represent different needs of humans. We can say that this was maybe a naive call for a universal language, or experiments towards explaining the indivisible, craving for a system to comprehend the world and us as creatures. But in fact, I do not think of music as a universal language, and nor do I wish to find one. I do not wish as well to romanticize the idea of music, and to highlight the position of music in arts was not an aim of this performance.)

Secondly, not only did the lack of equipment fail us in this atopic idea, but also we faced rather quickly in the process that we cannot record the later layers of a human being. What was named as “emotions” or “thoughts” could be still moderately interpreted in an artistic way, but how would one record “purpose in life” or “ability to connect”? Finally, it would have been impossible to do it without interpreting the already existing interpretation of layers, and starting to interpret over interpretation

would have been the same as jumping into a rabbit hole. Our invented method of composing had unfixable gaps.

Thirdly, anything we will record, and no matter how many and what sounds we would gather, the composition, the creation, the oeuvre will be left for an interpretation of the composer to assemble. And that makes another human being a translator. That makes a composer a mediator, a middle-person, that would make the whole composition an interpretation, a very earthly opinion of the music writer. We thought about adding it as a layer of composers' interpretation, but not when everything else is holding on to fringes of interpretation too.

When together with the performers we started rehearsing this piece in February 2020, our first attempt was to make enough space, enough silence to even prepare an audience for listening and feeling.

You'll hear your heart beating, sometimes you can hear your lungs, hear your stomach gurgling loudly. <...> The more silent the environment, the more you become the sound.²⁸

We wanted to give the audience the luxury of enjoying the silence and spending a moment with themselves. After some time of this silent being together in a dimmed space where one cannot see much, the body starts to be activated, it feels like one is becoming electric, more sensitive to everything around. We wanted to prepare the audience to listen to this concert/performance made out of human being because it was not a regular performance. The three of us were basing our rehearsals on P. Oliveros's *Sonic meditations* and *Quantum Listening* practices, trying to create exercises that would help to stay aware during our existence on the stage. Later, we aimed to build a connection between two people on stage step by step, with a certain

²⁸ John Biguenet, *Silence* (Bloomsbury 2015) pp.19–20.

sensitivity, with silence, pause, listening, and mutual understanding.

Another important part was understanding how concert works in a musical realm, not a performative one. We decided if the performance is going to be about sound, we have to draw the spectator's attention from spectating to listening. They had to activate all their body to listen with all of their body. It was going to be a concert-like performance where one could feel the sound traveling and touching them.

If you are a Buddhist listening leads to the "Buddhaverse"; if you are a Christian listening leads you to the word of God; If you are an artist listening leads you to your material and to shape the material. If you are a scientist listening leads you to theory and experiment.²⁹

Also, in order to hear those ultra subtle sounds that human bodies make, we had to be aware of not polluting the space with too much noise from other bodies, which having a lot of audiences is something to beware of. In the end, when many people hold their breath to listen to something faint but magical happening in another body, I wish to believe that experience like that can trigger a person to listen to their own body with the same focus.

As a dramaturgical strategy, inspired by the format of the concert, we started using shorter pieces of this "music" we were creating, songs. So the scenes became "songs" through which the two people on stage could communicate with one another. We wanted to activate all the layers from the human being mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, not only to use the sounds recorded from them. Repetition of these "songs", every time deepening the meaning and emotional intensity was another strategy we used.

²⁹ Oliveros, *Quantum Listening*, p. 14.

We left the dramaturgy of the performance open at large, outlining only where the parts should change and what feeling, atmosphere, and dynamic we wanted to evoke in each part we have been exercising. But everything else we left for improvisation. That was the best we could do to keep the piece alive and in flux.

What started to be interesting to us at the end of the making of *Human Sound* project, was how is it different if one knows somebody or loves somebody, or holds them as a complete stranger. That was the problem that guided us from the mainly biological examination and translation of the human being into something felt. Relationships were responsible for our feelings for people. One is not able to empathize with all the humanity and the relationships decide what tool kit would we see as appropriate to use for the souls we love. We will come back to this later when starting to examine the second part of the *Human Sound* performance, *Human Sound II: the concert*.

1.5 THE COMPOSER: HEIGHTENED SENSITIVITY, RELATIONS

In this chapter, I would like to determine the role of the composer in the work *Human Sound*, which later echoed as a result in the second part of the *Human Sound* research and the project *Human Sound II: the concert*. This time I will focus on the hypersensitivity to sound in order to better revise the role of the composer in the project series *Human Sound*.

With heightened listening ability one can detect the slightest differences in sounds. This enables acute voice recognition, echo detection, spatial location, etc. Such heightened

listening substitutes auralization³⁰ for visualization (or seeing) by creating sonic pictures, etc.³¹

The reaction to sounds can differ from person to person. The amount of noise pollution is enough for some to feel threatened and overwhelmed by it sometimes. For a person hypersensitive to sound (this also can matter to people suffering from PTSD or other mental conditions) it might be difficult to deal with it all at once and make a selection, filter out the relevant sounds from irrelevant ones. Here, the inclination of making an order from the overwhelming mass of sonic information arises. It is just an assumption, and not a new one, but it seems to me that a lack of something or sensitivity to something might point out the greatest talents born out of the need to deal with the specific trigger.

Let us call a person in need to create order out of the chaos of sounds a composer. Other than the need to organize the sounds there has to be a serious ability to focus on listening to simultaneously occurring sound impulses as one whole and one by one, as different parts of the whole. But talents and abilities are not so much of interest to me, as the attempts of meaningful wordless communication is. To comprehend the project we were trying to create, the composer had to adopt a certain glance at a human being as a weird composition of sounds, rhythms, noises, and pitches overlapping one another.

The role of the composer was important in *Human Sound* and *Human Sound II* because of one simple reason: we were about to give our ready-made material for the performance, the *Sound Collection*, to the people that had to organize it at their own discretion. Not only did the composers have their own agency in the

³⁰ Auralization is a vivid imagination of sound, similarly as visualization is a vivid imagination of image.

³¹ Pauline Oliveros, *Quantum Listening: From Practice to Theory (To Practice Practice)*, p. 7, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/arena-attachments/736945/19af465bc3fc3c8d5249713cd586b28.pdf> accessed June 30th, 2022.

performance, but they also were about to make even more material for us to work with, or leave us to deal with the results of the human translation into sound. But back then we did not know yet if the compositions will be our final stop, or just another set of material to investigate. Of course, the sounds themselves could have been considered music already. But the nature of this project was to establish the human-to-human relationships upon music-to-human processes. Therefore, the composers' role was essential for us. Here we came to another set of investigation sessions. The project team wanted to know how much the composer-human relationships can determine the sound of the composition. For that reason, we invited the composers who had contrasting relationships with En Ping: her twin sister, her partner, her classmate and friend, a student from the same cultural sphere as her who was distant to us at that time, and herself.

When getting closer and closer to the composition making, the question of the composer's participation became so acute that another set of questions has derived. How can we ask somebody to translate a human being? Wouldn't it contradict the whole idea of this investigation? We wanted to be as far away from interpretations but the interpretation is inevitable in working with something so abstract as music. Interpretation will inevitably be generated by the organizer of sounds. And finally, upon what characteristics depends the composer's approach on the person they compose on?

No doubt, through the recording sessions of the *Sound Collection* until March 2020, the *Human Sound* team had grown certain attachments to these sounds, as well as certain ways of listening and finding sounds in the human body. The attempt, from the very beginning of the project, was to avoid any personal interpretations (or any interpretations at all) and to collect a raw and isolated collection. Firstly, we refused the need for personal stories, memories, and facts in the investigation of human and in the project so far. The one and the only person whose body sounds we recorded

was En Ping Yu, but we deliberately asked her no personal details, except her ability to simply be human with all of the attributes of the layers we talked about in the previous chapter. Later on, because of “topic 1” and “topic 2”, personal emotional stories got their way back into the performance, but in a different form. As textures of voice, noise, and sound, as sense and in contrast – senselessness.

In the end, the project *Human Sound* developed as the composition of different layers of human being, however, the actual musical compositions we intended to create did not find their way into the first part of the performance at once. For when the compositions were created we decided that they are worth a separate process and investigation of their own. Hence, the second part of the performance series *Human Sound II: the concert* derived from working with the compositions on En Ping Yu.

2. HUMAN SOUND II: THE CONCERT

Human Sound II: the concert is a continuation of an ongoing research on the sonic world of humans. This time we are creating an experience of a concert made out of musical compositions produced by various composers trying to express the existence and their relationship with one particular person – En Ping Yu. A bigger part of the compositions was created using sounds only from a sound collection recorded from En Ping Yu's body and movement. To compose these pieces the creators used different methods, the compositions later turned into chapters and were combined with different media to experience this concert. The *Human Sound II* experience for one person opens up into a concert of human body music and a different stretch of musical imagination, over-layering one another to bring the audience back to their own selves.

The concert *Human Sound II* would start with the audience's arrival. It was priorly announced that this concert is special in the way that it is a concert for one person. Usually, in a live performance, one would expect that the concert for one person means that it is actually taking a format of a one-on-one show. Here, the main aspect is the solitude of a person left together with their own body and music in an empty room. There are instructions to follow appearing, but since the spectator feels they are left alone in the room, they are free to easily ignore them if they wish. While reading this thesis we can half-jokingly call it a “none-to-one” performance.

The audience is met at the door, shortly instructed about the entrance and the space, and let into a dark room, lighten only with a red table lamp placed on the floor. Vaguely one can see a little “island” in the middle of the empty space, composed exclusively for one audience member. There is an armchair with a small blanket pointing to a white wall, a carpet on the floor in front of the armchair, a glass of water next to it, and headphones connected to the iPad. Nothing changes in the space as

the person sits on the chair, and puts on the headphones.

The person entering is instructed to put the headphones on and play prerecorded sounds from Ping's body as an introduction, until they feel like stopping, then to put down the headphones and the iPad. The sounds in the iPad are pictured as a game: one can press on a differently colored square to hear the sound, guess where was it recorded from, and later find out that they can play different sounds at once, loop them, or repeat them with holding the button. As a continuation of the previous project *Human Sound*, this time the audience can have a bit of control over the composition and let themselves play with it. As this short preparation is going to an end, the spectator is putting down the iPad and is ready for the concert. After some pause, the words of a poem appear on a white wall announcing the start of it. After that, another set of words, this time giving instructions on how to listen to the upcoming piece of music, and how to engage. The instructions and other texts are being communicated during the whole performance, not as a part of a particular composition necessarily, but as a part of the whole show. It serves as a different layer of language in this musical performance. Musical compositions are followed by interruptions of silences, leaving space for the echoes of thoughts, imaginary sounds, or traces of music remaining.

2.1 COMPOSITIONS, HUMAN PRESENCE

I would like to list down what the compositions that the concert contained of were, and describe them one by one. We shall take off from the moment the audience puts down the introduction game on the iPad. Soon after the first text appears on the wall, very slowly and with no sound. It is the poem *I Sing the Body Electric* by Walt Whitman³². Let us consider it, again, as a prologue. After we give enough time for the spectator to read it, there follows the first composition.

³² Whitman, *I sing the body electric*. The reader can read the full excerpt we used in the Appendix 3.

The 1st and the 2nd compositions were created by Valtteri Alanen from the *Sound Collection* we made at the beginning of the research on *Human Sound* and as a starting point of the *Human Sound* performance. In the first composition *Blinking*, the base sound and the rhythm was Ping's eyelashes hitting the contact mike. At first, asked only to count the times they themselves blink, later on, the audience members are immersed in an association of something moving, traveling, and seeking, all while listening to the composition. At least, these were the associations and the images we described when we first started devising with the compositions. By the end of the composition, we hear Ping's voice expressing a fragment of thought about the weight of the soul. It disappears with another blink.

After a pause, the 2nd composition, which we called *The Heart* would start. The base of this piece was the heartbeat of Pings. Even during the process of recording the so-called "sound bank", we have noticed that the heartbeat has one specific feature: to synchronize with the low beats from the music. That is what essentially creates arousal. It is the heartbeat repeating the beat of the music, resonating in the body together with the beats, that is affecting the listener. There was a great surprise in our approach to music when we realized the effect of the music on the body, especially the heart. Even the slightest change in the heartbeat would evoke the synchronization in the listener, therefore they could arrive into the emotional state of En Ping Yu while we recorded her heart. Actually, we hold records of several versions registering Ping's heart. Weirdly, listening through them, one can feel where Ping herself was more relaxed and when, for example, extremely sad and stressed. The last recording we made of her heart was taken the night before she had to leave for Taiwan because of the pandemic. Consequently, while listening to this heartbeat recording, we ourselves would start feeling stressed and sad, not initially knowing from what time it was taken. That corresponds strongly with how the babies react to their parents' heartbeats. If the parent is calm and relaxed, the baby more likely to

sleep next to their chest, but if the parent is worried, no matter how softly spoken and gently caressed the child would not calm down.

We wanted to impersonate the sound of Ping's heartbeat with a sensitive touching of the wall. The instructions given to the audience are asking to take 6 steps forward, raise their hand in front of them, place their palm on the wall, and close their eyes. Soon, the composition and the heartbeat would start, letting the audience member feel the heartbeat of Ping resonating while touching the surface of the wall. They would connect through the sounding of their own heart and the sound of Ping's heart resonating through the wall they were touching. It is a very moving experience and after that many audience members listened to how their own hearts sounded for a while.

I have to include the notion that during the laboratory period which I talk about in connection to every work I undertake, we have worked experimentally and quite intuitively. The team would gather in somebody's house or outside and we would simply listen to the compositions writing down all the sensations, associations, images or memories it brings to us. Then we would try to see what is repeating in all of our impressions and stay with it for a while, listen again and discuss. This would continue until we would reach the "core", the repeating pattern, the aspect of Ping or kinds of relationships we thought were audible in a composition. Later we would try to create exercises that would bring back the sensation we felt while listening to the composition. We would try out those exercises in our team and again discuss how they affected us. At later points in assembling the concert, we included objects, drawings, and writings as another form of association.

But let us get back to the compositions. The 3rd composition was created by Gabriele de Seta, Ping's romantic partner. Gabriele created a characteristically very different composition from the ones before, which had an almost exalted, quickly

changing rhythm, and lasted for more than ten minutes. We filled this composition with attention-requiring tasks for the audience and cut it silent in the middle of a quite dense sonic intensity. After this composition, there needs to be a moment to breathe and calm down because one might feel like they ran a marathon mentally and emotionally.

There was forsooth another presence, not yet mentioned, which would present itself during the performance and was essential in the *Human Sound II*. It existed as the 4th composition and was shifting the content of our concert. After the three first musical compositions, which were composed by different creators from the *Sound Collection* provided by our team, overlaid by the instructions and texts appearing on the wall, the audience member already had the chance to go deeper and deeper into recognizing something vivid and something in common from all of them. This is where the pattern shifted in this performance.

Now the door of the space would open and Ping would moderately come into the room, gently putting the chair beside the audience member, and sitting there to stay. No music is played. This was the most magical and the most important moment in this performance. There was no other task given to Ping or appearing on the wall for the audience than to be together in the room. Ping would not do much, and would not try to interact or initiate any action. She would just sit and listen. Soon enough some of the audience members would follow her and discover the subtlety of the music of each other's bodies, and just staying still. Some would start feeling restless with no action and would try to invent their own ways of listening to Ping's body or their own. Nobody felt the need to talk, nobody tried, as far as I remember, and even if they did, the words leaving their mouths would seem almost too inappropriate to continue sounding. It was the most beautiful composition happening here and now, which is as well the most difficult to describe, the audience was proposed to connect to the actual presence of Ping. When she leaves the room and the composition comes to

an end, the last bit of time they stay before the next part is the bit of absence. The bit aesthetically most pleasing to me here, is the one where the audience can experience the disappearance and feel in between, still recalling the echoes of Ping's presence but yet registering that she is not there anymore.

After the composition of human presence, the poem shows itself again. And we hear the first notes of the piano. It is a change in the current for this performance because bringing in a musical instrument provides a totally different texture of sound than we experienced before and got a bit used to. But what the reader has to know is that the means of composing depended on the composer in this process. Therefore, when one of the composers Anthony Tsang, refused to compose out of prerecorded sounds of Ping, we organized an experimental piano workshop, which he felt comfortable about. The piano composition, the 5th one in the concert, was devised and recorded during this workshop and was special in a way.

In the room where the piano was, we darkened all the windows, Anthony and Ping sat at the keys. Anthony asked Ping to close her eyes. They would play together and try to create a dialogue from the soundings. It did not matter if the sounds would be conventionally beautiful, develop into a melody or any kind of structure, all that mattered was the listening and communication through the keyboard as a surface for sound. While this composition sounds there are texts of Ping introducing herself, as well transcribed from the first part of the performance series *Human Sound*. She talks about her name and how she hears it, which parts of her name she familiarizes herself with the most, which ones she is fond of, or how people holding different relationships towards her would call her.

So finally, we reveal to the audience member the person behind this concert, the main human material of our work in her own words appearing. They had the chance to experience this introduction all in all, in a very decomposed way, where they would

hear Ping's voice, but through the recording, would touch her heartbeat, but through the wall, would feel her presence, but without talking, in silence, listening. We considered this performance providing the ground for connecting, where the mediums and impulses were suggested.

2.2 LANGUAGE

The creative team was thinking for a long time about how to make a concert where the audience member is left alone in the room, but where some perspective or angle of reading, a key to unlocking the compositions is still suggested. The aspect of language in this performance presented itself in two ways. The first way was instructive: the audience member will read the short sentences suggesting to them how to interact with their own body so that the experience of the musical composition they are listening to would benefit from this interaction. It was initiated to help directing the listening and the attention of the listener in two directions – inwards and outwards (possibly at the same time). It is all in all quite a complicated task, so we wanted the audience member to be able to relax and spend time with themselves to better find this effect of expansion. That is why (but it's not the only reason) their being alone in the room was important to us. When I am talking about the outwards focus, I mean that the person had to be open enough and attentive to receive the compositions made from human body sounds, to possibly read the structure of the musical composition, the sounds from Ping's body, and be affected by it. Also, possibly read the relationship, or the emotional part of the composition. On the other hand, inwards focus would let them listen to the sounds their own body is making (how do one's clothes touch the skin, what sound do the eyelids make when we blink, what is the rhythm of our heart beating at the given moment, does it correspond with the music?) and overlay it with what they are hearing from the loudspeakers.

The second way how the language presented itself, and how it was helpful was compositional. We wanted to create a layer of reading words inside one's head as music and overlap it with the given musical composition. That is why some of the texts appearing were not instructions, like “scratch your leg really slowly”, “drink some water”, “stand up” or “shoot air out”, but, for example, Ping’s talking about her partner, her name, about hugs in *Human Sound* performance transcribed or a poem on humans’ body. We wanted to subtly give the audience member the agency to participate in the composition by directing their attention to the things one easily can miss.

Recent neurological research questions whether silent reading actually is silent. Evidence grows that the brain interprets “silent” reading as an auditory phenomena.³³

A perceptual system originally designed to inform us of spatial relationships by means of imposing symmetry can be incorporated and transformed into a means of structuring our inner world. For example, writers who ‘hear’ their sentences as if read aloud tend to write better prose than those who merely see them.³⁴

With these examples given, I am trying to draw the reader’s attention to that there are different kinds of audience members: the ones who will “hear” the text presented to them, and the ones who will “see” it, while reading it in their heads.³⁵ Hearing the text in ones head means having the text which is presented in written form voiced in inaudible words (usually by ones own voice) while one is following it with their eyes. At the same time, I would like to highlight that this ability to “hear” the text in ones

³³ Biguenet, *Silence*, p. 62.

³⁴ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 41.

³⁵ An exciting conversation can be held about when the humans started developing consciousness and how prior to that the “voice in their heads” was considered God’s or ancestors interference. See, for example, the podcast *Stuff You Should Know* episode *Thrill to the Stunning Bicameral Mind Hypothesis*.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ie/podcast/thrill-to-the-stunning-bicameral-mind-hypothesis/id278981407?i=1000575009866> accessed August 8th, 2022.

head is different from what we call “imaginary sounds”, and was the one we wanted to employ in *Human Sound II: the concert* with opening up the aspect of texts.

Imaginary sounds in this performance are the ones that the audience member is paying attention to or is fantasizing about, imagining in their head, triggered by the instructions given or the sounds they actually hear in the composition. An example of the imaginary sounds would be if the spectator is presented with the textual instruction “hold your fist very tightly” and as a result would start imagining how do the nails incised to the skin of their palm would sound like while holding the fist. Another example I could give is the way the instruction “listen to your own breathing” can draw attention to the sound our clothes make rubbing against our skin while we breathe or the way our bottom frictions, pressed to the surface of the chair.

2.3 ALONENESS

Of course, the sole listener's suited in the room response to a musical piece to some extent depends on their state of mind at a given moment, and the way they experience music might derive from the projection of their own emotions rather than being a consequence of the music they are hearing. By leaving the audience member alone in the room, we wanted to grant the extent of relaxation and some willingness to experiment with the sounds of one's body, of participation in the concert with nobody around. We needed to minimize the exposure that the theatre scene or even spectatorship as a social situation results. Also, we wanted to take away the comparison which usually happens in the audience, the questioning “if I am doing it the right way?”. We wanted to leave the audience alone and safe with the music, and in some sense, with Ping. We found it important to see with this piece, how much can a person connect to or communicate through music. Does this translation from Ping into the concert work?

What happened in the room when the audience started to be given these small tasks and interact with them was extraordinary. Slowly and carefully people are playing with their own presence in the weirdest ways. When suggested to “shoot air out” at the end of the 3rd composition, some are able to make themselves laugh, some sit and touch their chest long after they step back from the wall where Ping’s heartbeat resonated in the 2nd composition. Some try to listen to their own burping very attentively as if they never met themselves before, as if they are trying to surprise or shock themselves. It is comparable to meeting your own persona for the first time or having a date with yourself, longly wished for. There was only one audience member I remember who ignored the instructions given. It was a German audience member from a showing in Giessen, where he stood during all the time of the performance facing the wall in between two loudspeakers. He later explained to us that he wanted to feel the sound, so seemingly the best place to experience it was standing where the sound hits one's body the hardest. Other audiences more or less confirmed the role of the solitary listener. They did not strive for music’s social functions as outlining the significance of social events or bringing some social solidarity. Nobody even tried to look if anybody is hiding in the room for once, nobody curiously tried to find out how is this concert working, or how it is arranged, even though the possibility was open considering their announced aloneness. Certainly, there are some ethical questions at stake here: people, when feeling left alone in the room, could interact with their bodies according to their imagination. Was it naive to expect that nobody will try to challenge the performance with their aloneness? Did we leave this freedom to decide how far can they go for themselves? The largest part of the audience members was inclined to explore the intimacy of being alone in the room, or with another, “invisible” person, transmitting themselves through sounds. I guess, the space as well contributed with its arrangement, being centered and focused, subtly hinting to relax, leaving a minimum of possibilities to do anything else than follow.

The fact that music can temporarily alleviate loneliness combined with the observation that it can affect relationships between both performers and listeners, raises an interesting question which goes far beyond the limitations of psychoanalytic interpretations of music as a substitute. Are our encounters with music in any way comparable with encountering persons?³⁶

This question above is the question raised throughout all the time of research on *Human Sound*. It is still open to this day, and while making the performances we try to involve ourselves in the process of existing with this question. Although, neither with my works nor with these writings do I want to suggest that music can be a replacement for personal relationships. Rather it can serve as an exercise of imagination, or bring value to inevitably having an impersonal dimension, together with a proposition of looking at humans from a musical point of view.

Having in mind that music-making together is an irreplaceable way of achieving closeness, as well as the possibility of experiencing music in solitude simply clarifies and underlines its effects upon the individual listener, with the performance *Human Sound II* we wanted to achieve both: strengthen the musical effects and achieve closeness. Surprisingly, and without deliberately designing the aloneness of the person sitting in an armchair, we incorporated the choice they make as soon as the instructions on the wall present themselves. The choice is of taking a role: to become a listener or to become a composer. Both were equally valuable and brought different benefits to the experience.

We need both empathy and abstraction: the capacity to feel our way into a composer's mind and the capacity to stand back and judge the music objectively.³⁷

³⁶ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 111.

³⁷ Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 115.

The listeners' role is comparable to an observers' and analysers'. They can get inside the suggested composition to pick out and categorise various aspects of it and perhaps even draw conclusions about the relationship between the composer and the composed. In any way, they exist together with the compositions and information suggested creating liaisons. In public, a listener might want to be completely separated from all one's neighbours and mute the surroundings. In order to stay cocooned within their individual experience, they might shut all of their sharing mechanisms, but they cannot erase the effects of crowd responses nevertheless. That would limit the connection possible between the music and the one experiencing it. Never the less, the listener is crucial for the music to gain its power, they are the fundamental part of the circuitry. The composers role in this performance, bridges between what we suggested as compositions (and as "the Pingness" in music), who they are, and what part of themselves they are willing to offer. We can compare the existing in this role to a spiritual seance: without opening a part of oneself as a bridge, the dialogue with the beyond will not happen. There will simply be no transformation, no "third" party appearing between the suggested and the received. The wrong kind of "surprise" would have closed the bridges for this circulation, and the choice of being a composer would have been gone.

There were audience members who later on described the *Human Sound II* experience as sensitive, sensual, bringing attention to the micro-world of the body. There was another type of reaction during this performance, which we did not see coming but which was important regarding the effects the performance can have, unseemingly. To one of the audience members, the bodily tension and the direction of focus to the depths of human sonicity were too much to bear. By the end of the performance, they left the room without experiencing the ending. We were given feedback afterwards about the overwhelming effect of the performance, especially if one is not on the best terms with their own body. For somebody sensitive enough to the topics of body, gender, sexuality, sensuality, eroticism, medical treatment,

aloneness, togetherness, and everything that these sounds might represent, staying in a room densely filled with trigger enhancing sounds taken from a human body, and leaving no other choice than to be with oneself might be very challenging. This brings us to the effect of the aloneness and the solitude of the audience member in this performance. For some people, it is scary to stay with themselves, it is uncomfortable to be pointed out their harshest triggers, some might feel intimidated by the sudden appearance of Ping in the room. And although I understand and accept the problematic reactions to this piece, I cannot overlook the new points of view this reflection brought to the understanding of how this performance works.

I would like to again come back to the topic of arousal, which I disputed earlier in my writings. Arousal, I will repeat, can have negative connotations as well as positive, as we are deeply moved by tragedy too. It is the tension and unpredictability that brings the person the arousal. But it has to be always remembered that emotional arousal is partly non-specific and the emotions can overlap and change one another quite easily. Music might alter one's condition from one mood to the other but I would not argue with the ones claiming that music has exaggerated rather than changed the mood on some occasions.

2.4 THE PERFORMER

At this point, the reader might already be wondering how can one write about the reactions of the audience from a certain perspective. How do I know all these reactions, if there was no one performing the concert, if the audience was really left alone in the room? Well, the team was not actually absent from the room where it happened. Again, I would like to write about two aspects of the presence of the performer in this specific piece.

The truth is that the performance was not entirely none-to-one, there was a secret to

it. The secret might seem silly, but for us, it made sense and in its silliness, it brought many treasures worth mentioning. So the performer in fact was in the room all the time. Throughout the duration of the performance, we needed to find a corner in the space, where one person from the team would sit in deadly quietness together with the equipment needed, and play the concert, reacting to the presence of the audience. On no occasion would the performer playing the concert reveal themselves until the very end of the show, and even after the show ends – no. It was crucial that the audience member would not know about another person in the room. And with this existing together in the same space, we did not want merely to have a secret, neither did we observe or judge the reactions of the audience or their interactions with the surroundings. In fact, we barely could see the wall with a projection through the gap, and the audience member would remain invisible to us most of the time. The person in the room was needed simply because of one technical reason: to play the instructions on the wall on time and to observe if the instructions are appearing at the right moment. We got ourselves into a consequential sequence of dramaturgy, where maintaining the dialogue and the timing between the instructions given and the choices of the audience member was indispensable. We would be unable to establish communication or connection without the assurance that the instructions are flowing organically and that we understood the answers, reactions, and tempos of the audience.

It did not need much, only one observer of the wall where the instructions were appearing. The tension lay elsewhere: it was so important that the person reacting to the instructions would not break the disguise of the performer, that sometimes I would start wondering if the relationship we create is not between the person hiding and the person witnessing, instead of the person witnessing and the compositions.

As in our team we assigned roles to each other, I became an almost constant hiding performer, Valtteri technical support, who was supposed to get called if anything goes

wrong, and Ping was the performer waiting for her turn. What brought these great values and insights to the performance was that I was able to experience how the timing I have to sense and the impulse-reaction chain that I have to maintain create a circulating connectivity and a certain rhythm of the performance while staying almost immobile throughout all the duration of the show repeatedly. And indeed, it was a different communication with each spectator. It made me contemplate this hidden presence of the hiding performer. Certain aliveness of the performance, the spark in it perhaps could not be created by only technically programming the equipment to work, and solely by calculation and preset timing. Time, in fact, is the aspect that brings rhythm and organics, which, if lost will deprive the audience of bonding with the piece. Music structures time, it imposes order, synchronizes the peaks of emotions, as well as establishes a flowing impulse-reaction circulation necessary to recognize the aliveness in interactions. In some sense, the hiding performer was in charge of another kind of composition: the musical flow of the whole performance.

I have to admit that the performance, where I was executing the score of a concert was in the end the one that required awareness of my own body, actions, and processes the most. To be fully aware of oneself while in action seems impossible, but the stillness and quietness bring the very factual presence of one's own body. The more you try to control it, the more audible and felt every gurgle of the stomach and breath through the nostrils feels. If the musical compositions brought a different sensation of time to the audience member, you can be sure that it brought ten times stronger awareness and sensation of structuring time to the hiding performer, trying to sneeze with no sound at the highest peak of the composition, not to move a muscle in the silence and to create some physical techniques of pressing the computer button so that the finger would not stick to the plastic surface. Sometimes I wonder how much this charged presence of the hiding performer is really influencing the experience for the audience member. Especially together with thoughts about one's personal space and the heightened sensitivity towards whatever is coming to

that space, no matter the visibility, or materiality of it. Somewhere in the back of my head, I believe that subconsciously we can feel the presence of another even though we cannot register their being.

3. TAKE LESS SPACE AND DISAPPEAR

The third and final performance important as an authorial work during my studies at DAMU was a change of direction from navigating through the auditory sensations and abilities of humans and leaped over to examine light and its qualities. Although, it did not get too far away from investigating human senses, only from a slightly different perspective than in previous works. The performance was presented like this:

Take Less Space and Disappear is a perceptual journey towards the basics of one's senses. It quizzes our visually-centred worldviews through a liminal space of haptic light: the meeting point of the performer, an object of glass, and an unassuming torch. The sensation of color, light, and shape is as close to immaterial as our everyday senses can take us, but in this performance, light becomes something almost audible, color something tangible, and shape all-encompassing.³⁸

The project *Take Less Space and Disappear* focuses on the topic of immateriality, weightlessness and borders of sleep using light and its qualities as materials. Exploring the contrast between light and darkness, the ongoing flow of shifting shapes and colors, reflection, light's traveling and breaking into the surface, and how the space and state of a person involved in this flow can variate. I, as a solo performer in this piece, worked with sources of light, reflective surfaces, and objects, fog, as well as dimmed, "underwater" sound, and through a focused presence and the factuality of my body, was guiding the audience from the dark space into the memories of lightness and almost dream state of mind. Together with me in the team there was Valtteri Alanen as a composer and a dramaturgical aide, Chun Shing Au was a video and camera person, Carmen Lee advised about the lights and Snaefridur Sol Gunnarsdottir was responsible for the set and costumes. Together we

³⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/events/520131513052641> accessed July 22nd, 2022.

were creating dreamy landscapes that do not exist in the fringes of reality, according to some audience members.

The audience would come into a dark empty room and be laid down on the mattresses around the performer's area. We tried to cast only as much light as it is needed for them to find their place and sit down. Once the audience is placed, all the light is eliminated from the room. There is a long pause of complete darkness for the people to grasp the darkness and to realize that for no matter how long they would try to get accustomed to it and see at least the contours of each other, that moment would simply not come, there is simply no light in the room for the eyes of the audience to get accustomed to. I would sit there, next to the wall, in the complete blackness and wait until I would feel this realization, that the invisibility is not going anywhere, to come to the space, then, in the speed of a slowed down movie, I would stand up and move soundlessly into the middle of the room. As slowly and quietly as before, I would take the first source of light out of my pocket and gleam it pausing on the way, until I light it up to keep. It was a small dot, a mini LED lamp, the size of my thumb nail. It would open up a very limited amount of space with light, so little, that it will not be enough even to see the silhouette of me as a performer. The small light would travel as a distant satellite in the sky around the black room guided by my hand, until it would flicker back into darkness, but only for a short moment. The small dot in the endless darkness was replaced with quite a wide white circle coming from a flashlight, framing the contours of a person (me as a performer) into itself. From there the audience is introduced to flickering and ever-changing "images" and "sculptures": the physicality and contrast of my body (and its shade) together with light coming from different angles in a snapshot-taking manner. As the scene gets its increasing rhythm, some tension, and its humour, the sound of the clicking flashlight stops for a short while and I would introduce the first color, red. With the circle of red I would color the room and everybody in it, touching them with colored light, slowly moving the torch, seemingly like painting, followed by the soft distant soundscape.

Until this point the soundscape taking off from the softest of white noise, increasingly into a swaying architecture of heavily processed lullabies, now it begins to arrive into a more dynamic, unpredictable body of sound, made out of different types of water sounds, like dripping, flowing, leaking, streaming, accompanied by processed sounds of thunderstorm. By rotating in slow-motion I would get behind the gallery window – a narrow box of glass accessible from inside the room. There, with a layer of see-through glass, and the colorful glass objects hanging, the light of the torch casts multicolored transparent strokes all over the space. By bringing in more torches and synchronizing the soundscape to this vivid and emotional flow of appearing and disappearing colors, we would immerse the audience into the life of colors, chasing one another, on the surface of the walls, ceiling, floors and all over their bodies. The room would become filled with colors and sound.

As the audience is submerged in the phases of another worldness, and beginning to be lulled into the “half-sleepy, half-awake” state of focus, I would as slowly as ever climb out from the glass box, walk over the room, and reach for the glass doors in the corner to open. Usually, the audience would be caught by the flickering colors and not notice that the whole entrance, the gap between the glass door and the wall, would be filled with thick white smoke, which with the stroke of my hand I would release from its container and let it flow in the waves of spherical clouds into the room. By this time, I had only one torch lighten with the color blue and I would scan the textures of the fog waves, as I would open another window filled with fog, to finally sink the room into the fog completely.

This transformation also marks the point where I as a performer disappear into the fog for the first time, the waves of all overtaking white mass swallow me for a moment as I slowly travel from point to point. Again the performer is appearing in the middle of the space, only this time the audience can barely see me in the new texture of the room. As the ripples of fog are spreading gradually and consistently into the

room, they give it a different color and a different feeling to the space itself. The audience cannot really see each other anymore, they are surrounded by the whiteness of the foggy air. The fog evenly floating in the room brings out another scene – the coloring. Now, bringing the elements of light to the space one by one, we finally can grasp the room whole. With the equally slow and rotating movements I carry in the colors to outspread and melt into the fog. As I point into the camera which is connected to the projector, the color I apply takes a wide range and fills the room through the consistency of the fog entirely. The coloring becomes a slow and weird dance, where the components are both, the room colored, and the performer with the light sources emitting the beams resembling turning glowing flowers. It seems like dancing with the colors would impact the environment as the performer introducing a different color also changes the air around with it. After this color composition in the space had reached its climax, I take away the colors one by one, leaving the audience again in a black and white room, only now everything they entered to has changed: the distances, the texture, the directions, the limits of the space, the colors, the sharp corners of the architecture. The room seems endless as the borders of it are erased with the soft mist. The audience is left with the performer holding the torch above their head, seeing the white figure appearing and disappearing in the fog, scanning the space with everything that just happened in it. For the last time we arrive into the slowed down clicking of the torch touching the performers body with light as in the beginning, only we cannot perceive the space in the same way anymore. The fog makes this performer, this mover of the light sources and colors seem like they are in search for something that they cannot ever find, gloomed by this shape shifting world, as the torch is redirected outwards to the space, until finally the light from the torch dimes out and the audience is left in the darkness again or where they have travelled to in their minds. During the performance, the room is becoming a map, in finding ways and connections between the space, different textures, light sources and the performer. The space is being shifted and the audience is given the chance to travel through their memories and

sensations triggered by this ongoing flow.

3.1 IMPORTANCE AND INSPIRATIONS

Concerning the project *Take Less Space and Disappear*, I would like to give some reasoning why this performance and this whole chapter are considered of importance in these writings.

First of all, the research on sound and humans could have never ended or never given me the confidence to determine that in fact what interests me as an artist is something deeply felt, though weightless, non-tangible, in some cases, not visible, or even not explainable. It could have labeled me for a long time as a “sound person”, “sound artist”, which I believe I was already labeled in the familiar circles. The research on light, which was the basis of the performance *Take Less Space and Disappear*, was my courageous shift from making another performance about the sonic life of humans, into examining another material, light. This shift has proven to me the aspirations of working with other materials of a similar kind, no matter the criticism, as well as showing me how suiting the intuitive method I am applying is, to the materials I desire to work with. Turning away from the sound and experimenting with light supported the variety of my interests, without framing me into one artistic pattern, which with time can be difficult to step out of. It gave me the reasoning for my wishes to work more diversely, vastly and to challenge myself out of the known.

Second of all, the process of making this performance, no matter how devastating some parts of it were, taught me about being patient and knowing one's artistic timeline. There were times when the “staying with the material” aspect was criticized, but in the end, for the process and not the result of it, was the most fruitful period of time, and one cannot rush these processes for the sake of the result, I believe. Crucially, spending time, just plainly sitting in the darkness with the objects or

subjects of one's choice, thinking, digesting, sometimes not doing anything just staying, is a form of gathering material, of creating this field of knowledge around oneself, this aura that does not end with the physical borders of one's body, and which is readable on stage like nothing else. The form of the performance can appear quickly, the material will find its way to, so to say, materialize, formalize itself. But the content has to be gathered and felt, which requires patience and time.

I had this immobilizing experience when I realized that unwantingly, this performance will have to be my solo work, because of the time I have spent with the material. The people I wanted to invite to perform were no less talented or interesting on stage, but I felt that they do not know the material the way I know it by spending time with it, and there is no way to explain to them, inform them, or show them of what I have found. It is peculiar of how much it is present, even though in the professional field, informing the actors or performers is sometimes considered time-saving, and simply enough to act.

Thirdly, I have found out how far can the following of one's unexplainable intuition take you, and how productive the endeavor to follow it without questioning is. The performance *Take Less Space and Disappear* was supposed to be an installation in a huge white cube, it was supposed to immerse the audience into the color, it was supposed to be “just beautiful”, and powerful only in its aesthetics. The truth is, that I myself did not know all the uncountable ways “only” aesthetics can evoke thought and sensations, how much it can empower.

As an inspiration for the project *Take Less Space and Disappear* I found Ann Veronica Janssen's³⁹ works greatly exhilarating and no matter how many artists I have discovered working with light or color, I could not find anything as elegant, minimalistic and seemingly speaking to me personally. As a matter of fact, different

³⁹ <https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/ann-veronica-janssens-to-walk-into-a-painting> accessed January 6th, 2022.

patterns arose as inspirations, not only the immersion in a color theory, but the connection of light and color in photography, fine arts, sculpture, architecture. A particular photographer Henrik Saxgren⁴⁰ and how he dealt with his craft was a crucial inspiration too. A choice to wait for the right photography to come was not only reasoned by overproducing of pictures, shortage of tape or other practicalities, but above all it was caused by the sensitivity to capture the peak of the event, by the awareness of the passing time. He would be ready with his camera, all set up, and when the right moment arose, he would capture it, using the space without intruding or altering the behavior of the ones in the space. If we can say so, photography is the extension of our visual memory, one of many tools of observation. The camera is useful in investigating how subjects structure their particular perceptual worlds. This is how these inspirations opened up different angles of performativity, thinking, and inclusiveness of other branches of art into the performance *Take Less Space and Disappear*.

3.2 THE SPACE

I would like to begin expanding into this chapter about the performance *Take Less Space and Disappear* by introducing the reader to the vast study made by Edward T. Hall. Edward T. Hall was a researcher on Proxemics, which deals with investigating the space, how humans are using the space, and how it is in effect with their behavior, communication and social state, within the context of culture. The concept of space I hold utterly important in writing about this performance. We will soon see how the space connects with human senses, communication, perception and the performance I am introducing here.

In the light of what was mentioned in the chapter about communication beyond language, a human being is continually impulsed by various stimuli of non-verbal

⁴⁰ <https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/henrik-saxgren-an-intimate-space> accessed January 14th, 2022.

information. Hall claims that, although all people perceive space through their sensory devices, cultural frameworks mold and pattern their behavior. Therefore, cultural environment is a crucial factor to consider when commenting not only on how human senses are connected with space, but also on how the senses are communicated. In principle, everything about human existence or behavior can be associated with space. A human's sense of space is a combination of many sensory inputs: auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, thermal, and olfactory.

In the book *Understanding Cultural Differences*, Hall determines the space in these words:

Every living thing has visible physical boundary—its skin—separating it from its external environment. This visible boundary is surrounded by series of invisible boundaries that are more difficult to define but are just as real. These other boundaries begin with the individual's personal space and terminate' with her or his "territory."⁴¹

It is of importance to mention that Hall divides the space into intimate, personal, social and public, and then into horizontal and vertical distances. If we take intimate space, which is the closest to our skin, it is usually where the whispering into ones' ear, the smell of ones' breath, the touch of ones' skin, the details in ones' face, the temperature of another's body or body parts are allowed to reach us, in specific occasions are welcome or, on the contrary, unwished for, repulsed. This is where one usually must have the most control over invitation of somebody else. Personal space is usually what we call our home, where our family and closest friends are allowed to be. Depending on the closeness of the relationship the factual distances within this spectrum can vary. Social space is usually used with the people who one is familiar with but not necessarily close. It includes coworkers, acquaintances, etc. Public space is the comfortable distance where one might not have close relationship with

⁴¹ Edward Hall, Mildred Reed Hall, *Understanding Cultural Differences* (Intercultural Press, Inc.1990), p.10.

the people around them, in the public speaking situation, public gathering, crowded shopping mall, etc.⁴²

What is of interest is that even though the distances of the so-called borders of these zones can vary, and it is explained to be derived from cultural differences, the zones stay under the same categorisation. It means that people culturally and personally can have differing thresholds of interaction or communication in factual distance, and even of senses. Like any other study, dealing with the communicative processes of humans, proxemics structures and not necessarily contextualises the behaviours of humans.

Both animals and man, <...> require, at critical stages in life, specific amounts of space in order to act out the dialogues that lead to the consummation of most of the important acts in life.⁴³

My small personal observation recently was that tactility has something to do with almost all of other human senses, by weaving in its presence and activating the largest organ of the human body for its exigence. For the senses that I was investigating through my artistic work, and together with other creators (for example, with En Ping Yu we examined the olfactory sensations in her performance *Sensorium: Take a Break from Being Human*⁴⁴), I discovered that only smell has less to do with tactile sensations, even though, if I consider body temperature as the attribute connected to skin and as carrying olfactory information, then it makes me think that senses are all inseparably intertwined.

Speaking about odours, there is an interesting moment in the topic: usually the perfumes and different fragrances are applied to the skin behind the ear, on the inner

⁴² <https://laofutze.wordpress.com/2014/01/03/e-t-hall-proxemics-understanding-personal-space/> accessed July 15th, 2022.

⁴³ Hall, *Proxemics [and Comments and Replies]*, p. 86.

⁴⁴ En Ping Yu, *Sensorium: Take a Break from Being Human* (Hybernska Gallery 2022).

part of the wrists, on the neck or chest, on the places of ones' body considered to be intimate and only allowed to be reached for people with whom one holds special relationship. If somebody violates the borders of these spaces with the intrusive smell, for example, the body experiencing this violation starts reacting, feeling uncomfortable, thus similarly as in noise pollution, olfactory pollution can be overwhelming and cause rejection. Vertical distances are not so important in this sense, because they are responsible for hierarchical relationships. In horizontal distances people usually communicate with non-verbal codes, though. These non-verbal codes are named after the senses and can include the distances between each other: tactile code includes the way we touch each other, the reaction to body warmth; visual code includes eye contact; auditory code – the volume of ones voice; olfactory code determines the odour people carry and the distance the odour is receivable for a fellow human.⁴⁵

After explaining a little bit more about the study of Edward T. Hall, I would like to draw some parallels between the space, the human senses, and art forms connected in the following section.

3.3 SPACE AND SENSES

<...> the transactional psychologists have demonstrated that perception is not passive but is learned and in fact highly patterned. It is a true transaction in which the world and the perceiver both participate. <...> The artist is both a sensitive observer and a communicator. How well he succeeds depends in part on the degree to which he has been able to analyze and organize perceptual data in ways that are meaningful to his audience.⁴⁶

David Byrne, while talking about how architecture helped music evolve, starts from

⁴⁵ From the podcast with a Lithuanian researcher of smells, perfumer, chemist Laimė Kiškūnė, *Odor adventures*. <https://soundcloud.com/kvapu-avantiuros> accessed July 15th, 2022.

⁴⁶ Hall, *Proxemics [and Comments and Replies]*, p. 90.

the way he, as a young artist began to play and later recorded his songs in small, seemingly oppressing places. Acoustically they were not perfect, so to speak, but the perks included the essential possibility to explicitly and accurately hear if the band sounded according to their artistic wishes or not. The space would not cover the sound, but on the contrary, would rip it from the disguise, let one hear all the mistakes sharply. That triggered not only perfectionism in Byrne's mind, but also thought building, followed by questioning how the contexts, spaces, environments can shape and influence the music people create. As you can perhaps foresee, cultural behaviour in composition is taking its place as important, as already mentioned in E. T. Hall's research. D. Byrne compared the rhythmical, loud sounds of music made in Western Africa, in vast, flat, sandy open air environment, opposing to rooms that could create reverberation and confuse those rhythms to the music written for the Gothic Cathedral, and played with no key changes, prolonged notes, almost no rhythm. 'The room flatters the music, it actually improves it', Byrne says ⁴⁷. J. S. Bach was composing some of his music in small German chapels, which in fact were wooden, so the sequences of notes played one by one on an organ could weave into polyphony remaining the authentic sound of each melody. In his essay *How does space shape sound?* Greg J. Smith explains the space-sound relationship even better:

Every space (a room, building, lung, organ, cave, instrument, street, etc.) has its own acoustic character—its own capacity to mould sound—owing to its shape, size, and material composition. Reflections, for example, produce echoes. When accumulations of echoes—big and small, loud and quiet—begin to overlap and blur together, we call it *reverberation*. A bathroom, for example, has a short, sharp reverberant character; whereas the sounds that fill a gothic cathedral may move, swell, and linger for ten seconds or longer. Every space also has a built-in potential to be excited by specific vibrational frequencies. That is, they may ring, hum, or "sing" when particular tones are

⁴⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6uXJWxpKBM&t=3s&ab_channel=TED-Ed accessed May 20th, 2020.

struck within them. This phenomenon is known as *resonance*, and every object or space (including rooms, buildings, bodies, instruments, etc.) has its own resonant frequency.⁴⁸

Other than composers and musicians, writers, authors of literature can open up (different kind of) spaces in readers mind. It is debated about the success of a writer depending on how well they can evoke spacial images in the readers sensory pattern with the descriptions they create. Here are some examples of how writers access the spacial imagery of the reader:

Mark Twain was fascinated with spatial imagery and its distortion. He set out to create impossible spatial paradoxes in which the reader "sees" intimate details at incredible distances, or experiences spaces so vast that the mind boggles at comprehending them. Most of Mark Twain's distances are visual and auditory. Kafka, in *The Trial*, emphasizes the body and the role of kinesthetic distance perception. The vitality of St. Exupery's images is in his use of kinesthetic, tactile, olfactory, and auditory perceptions.⁴⁹

Hall as well debates about the art from the painters' perspective comparing Hobbema with Rembrandt:

The distinction made by Gibson (1950) between the visual field (the image cast on the retina) and the visual world (the stable image created in the mind) is essential to the comprehension of the differences in the work of two artists like Hobbema and Rembrandt. Hobbema depicted the visual world perceived in the same way a scene outside a window is perceived, as a summary of hundreds, if not thousands, of visual fields. Rembrandt, in contrast, painted visual fields. In effect, he made static the scene which is generally perceived in an instant.⁵⁰

⁴⁸<http://www.surroundingsound.ca/essay-one.htm> accessed June 20th, 2022.

⁴⁹ Hall, *Proxemics [and Comments and Replies]*, pp. 90–91.

⁵⁰ Hall, *Proxemics [and Comments and Replies]*, p. 90.

We can see from the examples given, how spaces influence the sensory apparatus of humans, and vice versa, at the same time influencing the cultural dimension, the forms and abilities of communication and creativity. In the beginning of the process, the team of *Take Less Space and Disappear* was imagining the space for the performance more as a sensory deprivation room, neutral enough to let the subtleties of the weightless materials communicate with the audience. This choice proved itself right and for the premiere we chose a small, white-walled, cube-shaped gallery space, with a glass wall looking to a calm street, warm enough to work and maintain a comfortable body temperature for the audience, and not surprising with intrusive smells. After the premiere though, the team took a step forward in thinking about the space, and risked showing the performance in spaces with a clear signature, such as a synagogue, or a low ceiling basement, reconsidering the site-specificity of the performance.

3.4 PERFORMER-ELEMENT

The particular aspect of being a solo performer as well as the director of the performance *Take Less Space and Disappear* took its own difficult stand, especially because this project was closely connected with optics and the sensation of light. From the moment I found the interest and excitement in working in a dark room or outdoors at night, the light and darkness participation in the research and rehearsing process for this project took high demands. It began to feel like it has to be related to photography in some way. Of course, the inspiration derived partly from there, but there was also the need (as well as in photography there is a need to actually see the photographs), for the rehearsal process to be seen. The most challenging part was that I could sense how the working with light is to me, while experimenting with it, but I needed to see what is happening as well from a more distant perspective. To get ahead I needed either to substitute somebody into the dramaturges' position, or into

the performers' position. I could not observe and be observed at the same time all by myself. In that respect, all of the rehearsals, run-throughs and experimentation sessions were video recorded and it would take me hours to playback and pick out the working parts. The experimentation can take hours of consistent focus, but there was nobody to feel how the audience feel, staying with me in the room. Therefore, I would probably never recommend being a solo performer and a director in the same piece, as it is time, energy and motivation consuming with benefits perhaps more questionable than obvious.

What I think is repeating in all or most of my authorial works, is the usage of the performer as one of many elements.⁵¹ With this claim, I mean that I do not aim for the performer to employ their full potential as actor, character, persona, or even participate fully performatively. I easily give up the psychological life of a performer, the emotional life is usually undetermined, waiting for the impulses to spontaneously affect the performer, the relationships towards other elements are also left unexpressed deliberately, and the role of the performer activates only in connection with those other elements of the performance. Like in *Human Sound* performances, where I worked with performers as possessing or being sonic materials, emitting sounds with everything they are involved in, or only for the potential of sensing the musical composition and enabling the recordings in the right manner for the communication to happen, in *Take Less Space and Disappear I* (the director) use myself (a performer) as a contrast, silhouette, figure, mover of the material. I am treating the performer figure here as a visual and kinetic element, bringing the right tempo into the composition, and occasionally – the right shape, so to speak. My movement is so slow and so passive, that it is welcoming for all the other elements to overshadow the human presence in this performance. At the same time, I am giving myself the pleasure of exploration within the performance, to investigate what kind of tactile impulses can I get from the touch of these weightless materials – light and

⁵¹ Please read and compare the Appendix 1: *Material(1) - Immaterial - Element(1)* and *Element(2)*

color on my body, how illuminating some parts of my body and leaving others the dark can be, how can directing the source of light someplace distort the perception, and challenge the senses of the audience and of my own.

3.5 COLOR, TRANSPARENCY, REFLECTION, PATTERN

What is color? Admittedly, we do not know. Color lies in the juncture between mind and body, consciousness and external reality, science and theology. <...> Let us take warning, then, and watch that even as we try on one theory and then another, we never presume, to force color absolutely within a box. And let us take inspiration as well. Color will be our muse, a powerful goad to more imaginative thinking. With color in mind we will not find ourselves gathering ideological moss.⁵²

Before the investigation of light and objects emitting or reflecting light began, just after I got strongly inspired by the color white and the works of Ann Veronica Janssens for the project *Take Less Space and Disappear*, in October 2021, I started testing the application of colors on a foreign body, using the sheets of colored paper lighten from under with the small table lamp, asking if the person owning the body feel what is being done to them and would perceive information of any sort from the different colors I was applying. It was ridiculous as I think now about these sessions, to ask the person laying on a carpet in a dark room, if they could feel the differences between the experiment no.1, no.2, no.3, no.6., etc., when I previously have asked them to close their eyes too. But in the end of the process the wish to apply light and color in the space and on a body merged together and found its meaning in the performance.

In *Take Less Space and Disappear*, different sources supporting the development of the project had stated lightness and darkness followed by red, to be the primary

⁵² Fine, *Color Theory*, p.5.

colors. That was inevitably connected (through research) with how color was involved in different cultures, history and overall understanding of the universe. In a broader context of society, black, white and red came to be primary colors much before the modern days, and before Newton's color theory.⁵³ We wanted to find out if there is a chronology in the way people perceive colors from birth and what it means to them, what colors can evoke sensually. In this time we learned that newborns first of all see the world in black and white, later shades of red adds to their vision, after which the other basic colors follow. Similarly as in the *Human Sound* research, in a sense, we wanted to travel back or rather access the infancy, to nourish our understanding of how human senses and perception work from the very beginning, to gain a better understanding of the potential the material we were working with has to offer. As mentioned before, getting to know the development phases of people during their growing up and the roots of human perception might help us comprehend different behaviours of humans. Hereby, I would like to highlight that the nature and the usage of color is mostly culturally determined within the frame of meaning, and trying to avoid the discussion about the meaning of colors I would like to say that it varies the same way as the perspective. Having determined that, I would like to admit that there was a lot of color studying involved in the process of the performance making, which did not have much meaning in the final result. We wanted to emphasize not the meanings or narratives that colors can take on, but highlight the inevitable evocation of associations and wonder the color causes, therefore, we focused on the sensation of the color instead of the different meanings it carries out culturally.

The usage of color in this performance was crucial in several ways: we wanted the audience to "travel", to get into the "never-stopping-ness" of light, to experience some level of in-between state, liminality. Also, in order to shift, change, turn their perception of the space they are in, we wanted to use the space as a surface. The idea was that with the help of light we could apply color to the space directly, as if we

⁵³ Fine, *Color Theory*, p.124.

would be applying paint on a canvas. Only in this case the colors would be all around and moving, and the “painting” in the space would be created live, on the spot. Not having the space needed or the means to try it out, I decreased the scale of the space and used a cube of glass, a terrarium for lizards as a model of a room. That way I could rehearse on a smaller scale. At first seeming like a great idea, later it began to fail me: I would not feel anything progressing or inspiring me to continue. Accidentally, because of a large mirror standing next to the cube in a Farm Studio space where I had one of the many try outs, and the light casted on it, a long reflection crossing over the wall and the ceiling appeared. It opened up spaces in my imagination and I immediately started experimenting more, at first in different rooms, bringing in various light sources and reflections, and then outside, into a distance of nature surroundings or walls of the buildings at night. The option of having video projection (as just prerecorded and applied on the walls), as well as the principles of live cinema, which we considered including, thinking they might enrich our work, would reject the element of live participation in this project, and in the end, the element of participation of the performer, the live moving of light and color, the exploration of the changes of the space on the spot became key elements. The idea of this project, amongst many, was to create a constantly moving, ever changing space of light and color, a flowing image the audience could enter to, a mirage starting in an empty room, and after all of the transitions returning to an empty room, a window, a tunnel, a pathway to communicate our inner reality.

It was obvious for me that *Take Less Space and Disappear* would be a very colorful performance, but color only found its way accompanied by light, which was the main investigative material. As the interest in light only grew, color was one of its attributes presenting itself through the objects we were using. It is true, that we did not only want to bring the color into the performance, but it was a consequence of using objects that light could go through, and together with the color and (some of the) patterns, those objects had to possess another certain quality – transparency.

Transparency became essential for light to be present together with color. The light would never stop traveling and would never be seen unless it is presented with an obstacle in its way. That obstacle, and the objects I as a performer was working with, had either to let light through for it to be seen, or let it bounce off of itself, reflect it. In the end, transparency became conceptually significant, as it drew most of the teams associations into a fantasising about the places of different gravity: underwater world, space, dreams. Intuitively, soundscape of the performance was composed including the associations with the underwater, later, the body of the performer adopted qualities of underwater movement, and glass bottles, as usually containing liquids, were used instead of plates, plastic or anything else we could have preferred. Transparency I would consider as a possible liminal state too: where something is visible but not entirely, almost or seemingly disappearing but still there, with no clear indications to which side it should be “continued”, appearance or disappearance. It is seemingly stuck between appearing fully and brightly and disappearing out of ones’ sight.

Together with transparent objects, reflective objects existed in all the tryouts and even made it to the final selection of qualities. The constant moving of the mirrors or combinations from mirrors, shiny crystals, reflective paper and other small objects would create a multiverse of cosmic shapes interacting and interchanging together, traveling through the surfaces of the room. Visual pattern of moving reflective figures seemed fantastic, mesmerising, and alien, all at once. But even though the part with the reflective surfaces did not make its way to the final version of the project, through its participation it crystallised the topics, modes and dramaturgical journey of the performance we could follow. By contrasting with its atmosphere to all the other qualities and parts of the performance it drew our attention to the right kind of atmosphere: because of it we knew what kind of spell we wanted to cast and what visual pattern categories we had at hand.

I think there is every reason to believe that human beings are innately sensitive to eyespot patterns, as they are to bold tonal contrasts and bright colours, especially red, all of them features of the canoe-board design. These sensitivities can be demonstrated experimentally in the infant, and in the behavioural repertoire of apes and other mammals.⁵⁴

The canoe-board described here by Alfred Gell, is the example of how people can react to skilfully crafted object or a piece of art as if it was casting a spell on them, as if it had magical powers. The impression of visually enticing patterns, colors, shapes and forms can bring somebody witnessing very far from imagining the step-by-step process of crafting the piece itself. It is no secret of what was believed back in the days: that photographers could take away a piece of ones soul through the portrait, or posses some sort of power over the photographed, likewise in the context of painting or drawing; or one of my late neighbours stories about how they as small kids hearing the radio for the first time, were not let to listen to it by their mothers, who would cover their ears, and take them home getting in panic about “the devil speaking out of the box”.

Not only humans are sensitive to the visual patterns, but throughout the history (and in the sources I have managed to find) they have been noted to associate color with these three coeval human phenomena: ‘of gods, spirits, and supernatural forces; of quantity, direction, and measurement; and of spoken words and written symbols.’⁵⁵

It is widely agreed that ethics and aesthetics belong in the same category. I would suggest that the study of aesthetics is to the domain of art as the study of theology is to the domain of religion. That is to say, aesthetics is a branch of moral discourse which depends on the acceptance of the initial articles of faith: that in the aesthetically valued

⁵⁴ Alfred Gell, *The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology* (1992) cited in Fiona Candlin, Raiford Guins (eds), *The Object Reader*, (Routledge 2009), p.213.

⁵⁵ Fine, *Color Theory*, p.31.

object there resides the principle of the True and the Good, and that the study of aesthetically valued objects constitutes a path toward transcendence.⁵⁶

One of the first proponents of abstract painting, Wassily Kandinsky who is thought to have synesthesia himself, able to hear color and see sound, writes that the main effect produced by observing colors is psychic. It causes deep, inner emotional vibration traveling through the channel developed physically, which reaches the soul.⁵⁷ He interestingly mentions that infinite red, for example, can be only imagined or visualised, but not actually realised in physical reality, or in front of human eyes, feeding the origins of the idea of the performance, when my wish was to be surrounded and let other people be surrounded by color white. Those who have heard about chromo-therapy though, know that color can have a very definite effect on human body, especially when tried to be applied treating various nervous diseases.

3.6 LIMINALITY, IN-BETWEEN, BECOMING, TIME

The exploration of light and color touching the body of the performer and gradually “unlocking” the architecture of the space is an important aspect of the performance *Take Less Space and Disappear*. Together with the "slow-motion" movement and the guiding presence of the performer, the audience is taken into the state of dizziness, where liminality, borders of sleep can be found, and the borders of oneness/togetherness disappear. Adding the elements (such as a small spot of light, a beam of the torch, color, texture, rotation, fluidity, appearance, and disappearance) to the space one by one and scanning through, registering each shift until the spectator is left alone in a moment of tranquility.

⁵⁶ Gell, *The Technology of Enchantment*, p.213.

⁵⁷ Wassily Kandinsky, *On the spiritual in art* (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, for the Museum of Non-Objective Painting 1946), pp. 41–43.

The liminal space, or in-between state of mind was where we tried to arrive with the audience in this performance. It began with thoughts about transition, and the constant moving of light. What fascinated me was the shapeshifting and traveling that light endures, the speed so fast, that can captivate and bring tranquility into the human mind, as well as the opposite – the danger, the extreme, the burn. The journey from darkness to lightness was also remarkable, in the context of graduality, and all that comes in between two extremes, two climax points. The liminality of sleep, as in in-between-awake-and-sleeping gave connotations with several attributes of states a being can enter: dream, vision versus reality, dizziness versus alertness, awareness of the space one is in versus complete disorientation, memories (for example of who one is, where they are, what they did right before) versus becoming oblivious, as well as with the already mentioned formal states: blackness into whiteness, one color into another, transparency.

Remarkably, the same quality of light that for me determines it as an “eternal traveler” (radiation) also contributes to the liminality in a way: there is no point the light has to arrive to, no cause of becoming into anything else.

Whereas it is natural in English to say “It is,” Greek grammar allows for the rather bald assertion “Is.” This “Is” is contrasted in the Greek mind with “Becomes.”⁵⁸

“Becomes” (genetai) taken absolutely means “comes to be”; taken copulatively it means “turns into,” as when we might say of the sky at sunset “the blue becomes red.” The meanings <...> are never entirely separable, for when blue changes into red there is a coming to be of red.⁵⁹

From a clear notion that the sky is blue to the clear notion that the sky is red, there is a vast breadth of liminality, transition, in-between state of becoming. This state in a

⁵⁸ Fine, *Color Theory*, p. 40.

⁵⁹ Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato* (Bantam Books 1986), p. 93.

sense fascinated me by its indeterminacy. The place (or a state of mind) where it is impossible to put the finger on anything, where one can find no prove or fact, seemingly nothing static, nor stable, is an attractive, interesting and comfortable place to be for me. Perhaps, the change and diversity cause the impulse for finding different forms of communication than words and formulations, which I consider static enough.

Finally, since liminality is closely connected with time, in my understanding, or even what I could call flexing of comprehension of time, I would consider it left aside the usual terms discussed when we talk about theatre, for example. Progression, development, evolving, arch, arrival are frequently used terms when art professionals engage in discussions about theatre pieces. For me, it was more interesting to see time from the perspective of liminality, in between arrivals, where nearly nothing is determined, and the felt, almost palpable transitioning from one to another takes place. Therefore, appearance and disappearance in the performance *Take Less Space and Disappear* I would consider factual ending points, yet in between those points is where the suspension and the power occur.

3.7 DISAPPEARANCE, APPEARANCE, ABSENCE

The aspects of appearing, disappearing and absence I would describe as difficult to explain but essential in the performance *Take Less Space and Disappear*. Renata Valčík, a co-author of a sonic exhibition with a Japanese sound artist Tomoo Nagai *Shadow of Notes*, names their work as casting no shade.⁶⁰ Sound, she says, cast no shade, so it is impossible to know its shape. When in the process of rehearsing the performance *Take Less Space and Disappear*, I was trying to describe to the composer Valtteri Alanen, what kind of soundscape is important for me to involve in the performance, and we drew a parallel between all my works, noting that every

⁶⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/nana.valc> accessed July 24th, 2022.

time the materials I worked with had a trait in common – they are weightless. Actually, even the name for the performance we found by listening to the song *Just a Cloud* by Lusine and Vilja Larjosto, where the lyrics of the chorus blended into: ‘I wish that I was just a cloud, take less shape and disappear’. I don't believe I have described here yet, that the first and main inspiration for this project I got while sitting in the plane, high up in the air, flying. I was staring at the clouds for a while, the plane was in and out of white fluffy fog of the sky and I contemplated relaxingly about how rare it is to be surrounded by, even entirely swallowed by color white. Color white, the weightlessness of clouds and the feeling of light, travelling with no stopping were what made me imagine the different affects color, lightness, darkness might have and made me think that human beings can also be comparable with visual aspects of light and color. I was not trying to involve any kind of psychology into this performance, deliver a metaphor of living and dying, being born and slowly passing away. However, the audience coming out of the white foggy room after the premiere of it would open up about the ideas they have stayed with in the end of the performance: perhaps this is how it feels to be born, or when you die.

Death, as silence, emptiness, lightness or darkness, as weightlessness, as color, and all of the immaterial materials I was trying to describe in these writings, in my experience deal with absence which is one of the most beautiful experiences for me in some sense. What I am trying to explain is that absence I use as one of the most powerful tools in the creative work that I do. I see its potential as mighty as the potential of the presence. They are two sides of the same coin in my artistic vocabulary. Compositionally, absence is leaving space for every other component to breathe, it can prepare, sharpen one's senses, and enhance the subtleties. The absence of sound (a pause, for example), or absence of visual stimuli in *Human Sound* projects would only exaggerate the sounds we were making, the absence of light in *Take Less Space and Disappear* would only contrast the only light existing in the space, the absence of movement of my body would only clear out the importance

of being touched by light, would only emphasize the sensations that I most of the times prefer to draw the attention to.

I am also happy to fantasize about how absence can be a sign of a different kind of presence. It is not that something is gone, just because it is out of our visionary, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory or gustatory fields. Especially, what is out of the visionary field, for a while or for good, some might take as non-existing anymore. That is what I find the most interesting to work with, claiming that perception can also be wrong, senses can also fail or be developed to different extents. There was one research that I found, that sent goosebumps over my body, and that made William Calvin (the author of the following quote) change their professional field from physics to physiology:

The story starts even earlier, in 1938, when H. K. Hartline studied frog retinas and their response to winking lights. He found that each optic-nerve "wire" responded to far more than just one spot on the retina -- it was a whole patch (which he called the cell's "receptive field"). It would fire a train of spikes in a staccato manner whenever the light was turned on, but then settle down, not acting much different than in darkness. But when the light was finally turned off, it gave another burst of activity, a cellular version of "Hey! Who turned the lights off?" This OFF-response was a puzzle, though not unrelated to the problem of feeling your wristwatch's absence just after you remove it from your wrist and all those flattened hairs start popping back up.⁶¹

If the theory is right, it might mean that humans can sense the absence the same bodily way as they sense the presence, that absence in an actual sensation. That perhaps would come with no surprise for somebody dealing with loss for a long period of time, the absence has its own felt presence, which would be perhaps too difficult to explain.

⁶¹ William H. Calvin, *The Cerebral Symphony. Seashore Reflections on the Structure of Consciousness* (University of Washington 1989), <http://williamcalvin.com/bk4/bk4ch6.htm> accessed July 22nd, 2022.

E. CONCLUSION

Now, after completing this journey through various inspirations, readings and writings, creative scheme striking and tracing, scanning various characteristics of people, searching and finding different forms of communication and common understanding, experiences, thinking together and apart, as well as organizing rehearsals, negotiating performing venues, scheduling showings, I have finally grown into completing multiple interdisciplinary and contemporary artworks during the three years of studying (under the Covid crisis). I would like to take a chance to conclude the topics surrounding this thesis and summarise what I have been staying with during this time.

I have written about human senses, heightened sensitivity, and communication beyond language, to show that what is important in arts, in my understanding, is to connect with a variety of means possible or imaginable. And the forms of communication can be fitting or not, right or wrong, used and reused again, repeated, understood or misunderstood, used through participation, experience, through all kinds of knowledge, and imagination as long as they help to keep the connection. I have contextualized my reasoning through referring to artists and scientists, in order to widen my own and the readers' horizons, and I have contemplated absence as a felt texture, dramaturgical strategy and a possible bridge of connection.

I have started this thesis by giving a short introduction to how it might be easier for the reader to perceive these texts devoting my hope that it was of help. I have stated that I will follow the text and the text will lead me, and not the other way around, in order to stay truthful to the listening of and staying with the material practice I sincerely try to take with me as I go out of this particular institutionalized realm of creating. As the text was guiding me while writing, I consider myself justified for contradicting myself at times, since the thought processes I follow seem more likely

to be an orchestra and not the solitary melody, and I consider it to be human nature too. Mistakes are human and practice generates theory, as Pauline Oliveros states⁶² and I agree alongside, considering myself not being able to talk about the concepts I talked about without having accomplished my practical works.

At the beginning of these writings, I stated that I have found during the time at DAMU, abstract and seemingly immaterial materials more interesting to me, and that generally my interest is in human as opposing the object. I would like to expand this thought, as it became a summarising one during the filling of the pages, and think a bit more about the human, object, material, immaterial, performers and actors as subjects demanding agency.

In this sense, anything weightless is already a material that could be felt, and furthermore anything it does becomes more important and more interesting than what it is.⁶³

Using materials that are hard to grasp, and even harder to handle can be called immaterialism, but at the same time it urges me to ask: perhaps it can be called extreme materialism too? My curiosity lies in the so-called eternal materials, and in the fringes of agency, where perhaps, I could go unstoppable to test the powers and abilities of these materials about to open up, and how these forces change in different combinations. It happens so, that somewhere in the combinations I engage with, there will be always something considered human, human-like, or of human.

The point is not to subtract humans from any given situation, but to focus on the way that humans are themselves ingredients in a symbiosis rather than just privileged observers looking on from the outside. We must remember that humans themselves

⁶² Oliveros, *Quantum Listening*, p. 18, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/arena-attachments/736945/19af465bc3fcf3c8d5249713cd586b28.pdf> accessed June 30th, 2022.

⁶³ Graham Harman, *Immaterialism* (Polity Press 2016), p. 14.

are objects, and that they are richer and more momentous as objects the more they are not the mere product of their time and place, but push back against whatever circumstances they face.⁶⁴

I have to agree with the thought above, where G. Harman is philosophizing over objecthood. I shall agree not only about the human being as an ingredient in the symbiosis, as I find it in the process of my own art-making but also about a detail mentioned: human is richer with their presence while in resistance. This for me is corresponding with the image of a hero on stage. A hero is interesting only while fighting with inner or outer forces of their existence. I take human presence on stage seriously while giving it well-earned agency of carrying out the atmosphere, and authentic textures of theirs, as I believe that only a human on stage is able of creating them. The tool for opening up that agency can be considered the awareness and mastery of letting the senses through the body and employing them for the matter of artistic activity.

Heightening the body's senses can help access the intuitive, sensual, and emotional – all as different languages of the same consciousness, the variety of ways to connect with one another. In the projects created, the objective was always led by the notion that theatre, as any art, in my opinion, has to be felt and lived through, experienced, therefore sensed. So, in eliminating the logical and understandable, explainable and making gradual sense, maybe it is fruitful to bring the audience closer to the unknown, chaotic, adventurous, sensual and felt. In all cases, the making of one's own method in the process of making a performance is the main creative guiding force.

Another way of reaching the densely felt dimensions is time and focus: spending attentive time with the materials, paying attention and registering sensitively, creating

⁶⁴ Harman, *Immaterialism*, pp. 54–55.

intimacy between any material and a human being investing all these properties. In the end, starting from the sensory, mental, or even extrasensory – all these skills are worthy of development for professionals in arts, I think, because of one simple reason: all these skills will eventually lead to communication with whatever one chooses to communicate with. I see connection and communication in this context as a third thing, as a wire through which the current can flow. This is for me a sort of magic, and the way I see magic, is very similar to the way I see arts. Both can uplift and have their own objectives or purposes, and both require exceptional skill to achieve these objectives to a larger extent.

The enchantment of technology is the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form. Art, as a separate kind of technical activity, only carries further, through a kind of involution, the enchantment which is immanent in all kinds of technical activity.⁶⁵

As Alfred Gell thinks of enchantment as casting a certain spell: a spell of mastery, of exceptional skill, which is so unbelievable for ones perception of the world that one seizes to see the involute of skills used, actions applied and time invested to achieve this mastery. They would rather skip a beat and simply call it magic. I would have to highlight that magic, as another form of knowledge, alongside religion and science, deserves proper respect, which I think is lacking even in artistic circles, opposing magic to logic, especially in academic circles. Believing in magic does not make a person irrational, and the contrast between magic and science is not between irrationality and rationality, but rather people work with differing forms of logic which are regarded as radical. Magic, in its defense, encourages holistic view of human, linking them to the planet through practical and moral relationships.⁶⁶ Magic gives agency to living and non-living through participation, and that I see as mostly important, in the context of my own artistic practice. Magic also has another attribute

⁶⁵ Gell, *The Technology of Enchantment*, p. 213.

⁶⁶ Chris Gosden, *The History of Magic*, (Penguin Books 2021), pp. 3–33.

that I consider important in comparison with art making: since participation is its crucial aspect, it opens up another way of connectivity and possibly communication.

Not only has human intelligence been rethought, so also has the possibility that many other living things might enjoy the means to communicate and understand each other: trees may have social lives, and octopuses or birds may display creativity and novel behaviours in response to changing conditions. Human intelligence is one element of the broader intelligence of the world, in that people must be constantly responsive to the world around them, both living and non-living.⁶⁷

Communication Beyond Words which lays in the beginning of these texts is just another attempt repeated throughout these writings to emphasise that there are various forms and ways of connecting and communication worth mastering and using in arts making. Listening with ones' whole body, exercising empathy, becoming a better listener to music or better reader can benefit greatly for becoming a better listener to other people, the world, oneself. Following materials that are hard to follow can mean practising deep listening to them, awareness, applying ones whole senses, staying with them, caring for them, being curious and applying that curiosity in order to explore gently, and not exploit, concur, or utilize. About empathy, humanness and human species Kae Tempest says:

We are empathetic beings who feel for each other. Our ever success as a species is rooted in our ability to be aware of each other's needs, to notice each other's pain and to experience deeply felt physiological and emotional empathy.⁶⁸

During these writings I rotate in circles surrounding the same topics, trying again and again to find the right words. But since I have no ways to know the reader engaging with my writing, I can only suggest as vast of a variety of attempts to connect in

⁶⁷ Gosden, *The History of Magic*, p. 32.

⁶⁸ Kae Tempest, *On Connection* (Bloomsbury House, 2022) p. 47.

different words, phrasings, and formulations. There will be always things that Eglé-the-writer will not know about the writings until somebody will be the one laying their eyes upon the text, committing, connecting, and discovering. I see the art itself being connective and communicative and I am hopeful that by discovering and practicing different forms of connectivity I could eventually keep the crucial parts of it translucent, without losing anything to words.

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D. APPENDIX

1. GLOSSARY

ASSOCIATION is a term repeated in my work. The fluidity of association enables the making of connections and shortcuts amongst different pools of information or points of view. Association can be a shortcut itself – suggesting the solution, image, sensation, texture, and memory from an unexpected pool of information. Impulse can be an association. Association can be an impulse.

I have spoken much about personal associations, but these associations are not thoughts. They cannot be calculated. Now I make a movement with my hand, then I look for associations. What associations? Perhaps the association that I am touching someone, but this is merely a thought. What is an association in our profession? It is something that springs not only from the mind but also from the body. It is a return towards a precise memory. Do not analyse this intellectually. Memories are always physical reactions. It is our skin which has not forgotten, our eyes which have not forgotten.⁶⁹

Association is also a very helpful tool when trying to translate one sensation into another. I often brought in different associations and comparisons when trying to describe what kind of sensation the sound or color could bring to the skin, or describe the textures of different parts of the performance. In projects like *Silence and Other Impossible Objects*, *Human Sound* series, *Take Less Space and Disappear*, or *Sensorium: Take a Break from Being Human*, bringing in the associations and imagining the shift from one sensation to another, for my part, served almost as the main method of creating.

DECISION-MAKING / CHOICE For intuition to manifest, make sense, and be used in any practice, there is decision-making involved. We can imagine a Choice as a faster

⁶⁹ Jerzy Grotowski, ed. Eugenio Barba, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Routledge 2002), pp. 225-226.

sibling of the Decision. Sometimes choices can be made without really having time to decide, but we cannot make a decision after making a choice on the same matter. In our practice, as art makers, decisions and choices are extremely important. Even though we claim to be led by reasoning and rationalism, most of our decisions are made intuitively.

Here it gets more complicated: if some sort of feeling (let's say intuition) makes one decide in one way or another, and even further – make a choice – it has to be some atypical, strong feeling. Of course, in any case, nobody says that rational thinking is not included in this process. But if the main impulse to choose comes from intuition, it has to be registrable. Nobody would base their choices on intuition if they wouldn't feel something driving them to make those choices. Where it gets interesting for me, is when the intuition is well trained and can serve as a muscle. Therefore, intuition derives from a signal (the one some tend to ignore, or wish to ignore, because it's not rational) – a clear bodily sensation.

DRAMATURGY is a composition of shapes, forms, textures, and atmospheres deriving from the material chosen to follow, create and experiment with, and research on. In case the material is very abstract, as it usually is in my work, what is derived from it is also very abstract, subjective, intuitive. I take that dramaturgy is a felt structure, composition, or a perceivable system.

ELEMENT(2) is any possible part or component of the composition (shapes, forms, textures, etc.). There is a choice or decision-making involved in making certain elements active parts in the composition, or dramaturgy. Elements deriving from the materials chosen to work with are like different categories, aspects of the same material of choice. Elements different from the ones deriving from the material chosen (such as contrasting, repeating, interrupting, conflicting, complimenting, highlighting, mocking, etc.), are added to the composition as dramaturgical or

compositional. Different elements can also be used as transitions between scenes, chapters, textures, verses, songs, etc. There can be different tools used to compose the elements, as well as different strategies.

For example, in the performance *Take Less Space and Disappear* the elements I chose to work with were light, darkness, and contrast between them, shadow, color, reflection, transparency, texture, pattern, performer, fog, space, and sound. Most of these elements derived from the material I chose to work with – light, and were the qualities of it. There were some, though, such as the performer, sound, space, and fog, that were used as not deriving from the material, but needed in the combination with the other elements.

INTUITIVE I can determine two sorts of intuitions present in my work: the one coming from past experiences (the event occurring is repeating itself, therefore causing similar or same conditions will result in meeting similar or same results; expecting the same results from repeating what already caused them in the past) and the immediate one (the sensation of rightness in direction, rationally unsupported feeling of connection, all captivating completeness, when suited in the pool of information already gathered). Intuitive is flexible and can change according to new information, changing of time (which is anyway inevitable), inviting different associations. Intuition is also another kind of intelligence. In fact, the ability to access one's body, memory, and mind in a heightened way I call intuitive. Making connections amongst different pools of information enables to create shortcuts in thought. These shortcuts expresses themselves as a sensation, a feeling, when it is hard to trace back or how something connects together step by step, rationally, but generally and totally it makes sense.

The neural processes underlying that which we call creativity to have nothing to do with rationality. That is to say, if we look at how the brain generates creativity, we will see

that it is not a rational process at all, creativity is not born out of reasoning.⁷⁰

Intuition can be a shortcut when explanation step by step is not needed, where a feeling of completeness, as when the painting is complete, finds itself. It could be compositional and address the need to stop the action, take a pause, make more space, or lessen the amount of elements. It creates a similar sensation to when playing a game “warm-cold”, where you can exercise navigation through the impulses.

Intuition is knowledge that can come from experience one registers, or does not register. Strong intuitive skills sometimes can be compared with esoterics or magic, because the knowledge goes beyond the ordinary ability to follow the involute of applied skill.

MATERIAL(adj) – IMMATERIAL – ELEMENT(1) In the research and practice realised during my time at DAMU I found out I am drawn to make certain attempts to categorise creative sources, find the general order of things, reach for transformation, or some particular way of working with human and non-human entities. Deconstruction and reassembling, dividing, determining parts – these are the methods more easily used with something concrete and already put together, something of parts. One of the objectives repeated in my works was to use these methods with consistent and fluid, non-tangible materials. Merging a “larger scale”, unfamiliar, hard to deconstruct material (e.g. sound, light, temperature, air, etc.) with something easier to comprehend, or something more familiar in its structure or habitude (e.g. performer, musical composition, architecture, etc.) is a principle I use in my work, which in a sense enables me to open up an aspect, an angle of a very general material.

⁷⁰ Rodolfo Llinas, *I of the Vortex*, (MIT Press 2001), cited in Sacks, *Musicophilia*, p. 112.

Therefore, something material(adj) in my practice is something tangible, palpable, concrete and describable in amount, weight, height, width, volume, texture, appearance, and other objective qualities. Something immaterial, on the contrary, does not have fixed, concrete or determined physical qualities mentioned above. Usually, it is something that I call “possesing absence”, for example, weightless, shadowless, non-tangeable, non-graspable, non-palpable, etc.

Element(1) I consider to be one of the Classical elements. They typically refer to water, earth, fire, air, and (later) aether, which were proposed to explain the nature and complexity of all matter in terms of simpler substances. Ancient cultures in Greece, Tibet, Japan, and India had similar lists, sometimes referring in local languages to "air" as "wind" and adding a fifth element, "void".⁷¹ They find their place next to what I call immaterial materials, but I think they deserve their own separate category.

MATERIAL(n) – another kind of material is what I devise with, and is in my creative work a main source for producing an art piece. It can be general and undividable, but what matters the most is how it is treated. So, some materials, like for example rice, can be a puppet, an object or a material, if it's many, but since it is tangible and possible to handle, it can be called material(adj) material(n). During my time in MA DOT program, materials that I have worked with were mainly: sound, light, color.

RANDOM is an intuitive selection, in which it is hard to find the rational explanation, reasoning, or connection to why it was chosen. Choosing or letting something act randomly is giving the permission for, and allowing the material to come first, in a way. It is the following of the material and work by allowing yourself to be rather perceptive than delivering in the situation of directing. It is trusting that the material

⁷¹ The term and description taken from Wikipedia, *Classical Element*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_element accessed June 25th, 2022.

and the different combinations that you have invested in have their own agency and intelligence and the only mission of yours (at times) is to let it flow and observe.

SENSES – the senses that I focus on in these writings are sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. By trying to grasp their origins and working mechanisms, I give them agency as one type of the intelligence, which is active to an extent depending on individual development, consciousness, and usage in practice.

The development of the senses and the education of the emotions through the arts are not merely desirable options. They are essential both for balanced action and the effective use of the intellect.⁷²

SOUND COLLECTION is the name given for a sound bank the team of *Human Sound* recorded in the beginning of the research for my first project at DAMU. We have recorded sounds of Ping's body, aiming to cover different layers of her existence: physical, movement, emotional, mental, purpose layer, connection with others and connection with the source.

SURFACE is what one is applying the material(n) in/on, what is affected by the material(n). Sometimes the material(n) and the surface needs a mediator and that in my works usually becomes a performer. The surfaces of my work were: the human body (skin) in *Human Sound*, human mind (imagination), the human body (skin), and the wall of the room in *Human Sound II*, the space (the room) in *Take Less Space and Disappear*.

TEXTURE in this thesis is a name for a sensation of a bodily reception reaction to a sensory stimulus. When talking about how the dramaturgy can be a composition or a system of different felt textures, I refer to the human ability to feel the sensations

⁷² John Blacking, *A Commonsense View of All Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 118, cited in Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 16.

caused by very abstract stimulus. For example, in this thesis I argue, that the texture of absence can be felt, like other textures, with the tools of heightened sensitivity and imagination.

TEXTURE OF SOUND Texture of sound can be a feeling evoked by certain sounds or noises that would navigate through the body, bring sensations to the skin and could be identified by giving associations or naming the quality of the sensation. It is similar to how dancers determine the moving quality as doing something, changing ones body into something, like stretching, melting, balancing, stone, water, fire, smoke, etc. Or how different odours are categorized as “green”, “earthly”, “oceanic”, “floral”, etc. It has a lot to do with imagination of the quality and can, in my understanding, be applied to any of the senses. We used this “translation” a lot in *Human Sound* research, where some sounds had pointy, stretched, soft, bubbly, sharp, silky and other textures.

2. EXAMPLES OF RELATED WORK IN *HUMAN SOUND* PROJECT

SAAMI YOIKS

My first encounter with Saami yoiks happened long after the performances *Human Sound* and *Human Sound II: the concert* was released. My attention was drawn to the performance live-streamed on the internet, under the University of the Arts Helsinki, Sibelius Academy⁷³. The concert was the first in a series of the artistic doctoral research process. We spotted on the live stream as a colorfully dressed person sang jumpy notes on the stage accompanied by the jazz band. It was a Saami-born Anna Näkkäljärvi-Länsman⁷⁴, who was about to get a doctorate degree, performing the collision of Saami yoiking and contemporary music as one of the performances of her research.⁷⁵

For those unfamiliar with Saami yoiking, I will briefly determine what are Saami people and what is Saami yoiking. The Saami are indigenous people from the northern part of Scandinavia. They inhabit Sápmi, their preferred name for Lapland, and adjacent areas of northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland as well as the Kola Peninsula of Russia. Unique Saami culture is considered to be threatened with extinction, but nevertheless being held upon to these days.

One of the most treasurable cultural expressions of Saami is the yoiking of Saami. As an art form, each yoik is meant to reflect or evoke a person, animal, or place.

The sound of yoik is comparable to the traditional chanting of some Native American cultures. Yoik shares some features with the shamanistic cultures of

⁷³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdVeNDdIsI8&ab_channel=UniartsHelsinki accessed 4th of July, 2022.

⁷⁴ <https://www.annamaret.fi/videos-annamaret> accessed July 5th, 2022.

⁷⁵ <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/events/anna-nakkalajarvi-lansman-luohteilbmi/> accessed 4th of July 2022.

Siberia, which mimic the sounds of nature. Music researchers believe yoik is one of the oldest continuous musical traditions in Europe.⁷⁶

The Sami yoiking tradition which I discovered pretty late in the process, has strongly resonated with my creative aspirations and has several touching points with the project series on *Human Sound*. The aspect of representing, activating, or echoing something with the embodied sound is corresponding with the attempt to translate the human being into sound. The most surprising and intriguing aspect of Saami yoiking was that one can yoik a particular person and no other person can be sonified by the same yoik. Within Saami culture, it is understood in a sense to not represent, but to be the person it is about. By improvising sound the Yoikers can create an imprint of a specific person or place, which can be thought of as their signature. It is worth mentioning that the Yoikers are evoking the person or a place through yoiking, but not singing about them. A yoik is specifically told to be not a song.

Ursula Länsman of the Sami group Angelit defines the yoik thusly:

A yoik is not merely a description; it attempts to capture its subject in its entirety: it's like a holographic, multi-dimensional living image, a replica, not just a flat photograph or simple visual memory. It is not about something, it is that something. It does not begin and it does not end. A yoik does not need to have words – its narrative is in its power, it can tell a life story in song. The singer can tell the story through words, melody, rhythm, expressions or gestures.⁷⁷

It is interesting for me that the yoiking practice which is considered to be shamanistic and was even forbidden in the Christianisation of Saami is similar to casting a spell through the singing or voicing technique that one is using. Similarly to any charm making, the performer of the yoik has to be very skilled and perform a certain

⁷⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joik> accessed 4th of July 2022.

⁷⁷ <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/sami/diehtu/giella/music/yoiksunna.htm> accessed 5th of July, 2022.

composition of actions, expecting that the composition would “click” and would call up the expected outcome. No wonder it was considered to be magic.

LISTENING* and *WITNESS TRIBUNE

Another example that perhaps would be placed on a conceptually same shelf as the *Human Sound* projects was the one I experienced in the autumn of 2021 when working as an intern in a festival *Homo Novus*⁷⁸ in Riga, Latvia. The performance was called *Listening* and it is described as a live art solo performance that introduces the audience to sound frequencies and means of communication that are easily disregarded in human interaction.⁷⁹

This performance that I had the chance to experience intrigued me in several ways. It was working with sound taking the approach complimenting my research on *Human Sound*. The author of this work, Joel Teixeira Neves, was investigating the sense of sound waves touching one's body, and how deaf or hearing impairment having people experience sound through touch. The performance had a platform with water under which the low-frequency speakers were placed. The only performer on stage was a deaf actress Silva Belghiti who created a dancing conversation in sign language during the course of this performance. In *Listening* the audience placed all around the performance area can experience sound waves traveling through the material the creators chose - water. The low sound frequencies would be played prior to the performer showing up on stage. The sound would move the water creating a parallel of how a human skin would move.

⁷⁸ <http://www.homonovus.lv/eng/> accessed 5th of July 2022.

⁷⁹ <https://cargocollective.com/joelteixeiraneves/KUUNTELEMINEN-LISTENING> accessed 4th July, 2022.

Another performance from the same festival, called *Witness Tribune*⁸⁰, would display an uplifted rack to sit for the audience and experiment with the combinations of different sounds in various atypical natural and urban locations. This site-specific performance would offer differing concerts in spaces such as the cemetery of soldiers at night, the seaside at the sunset, the industrial building in the middle of a hot day, etc.

Here the interaction between the time of the day, the space, and music is important, and how different combinations of these elements can open up multilayered experiences. Poetry and word art are also a big part of this performance which corresponds to how the words pronounced echo in the space they are pronounced in.

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<https://baltics.news/2021/09/10/homo-novus-witness-tribune-at-the-location-of-the-radio-interference-towers/> accessed 5th of July, 2022.

3. *I Sing the Body Electric* BY WALT WHITMAN

1

I sing the body electric,

The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them,

They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,

And disarrange them, and charge them full with the charge of the soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves?

And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who defile the dead?

And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?

And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?