Theatre Noise

Theatre Noise:
The Sound of Performance

Edited by

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PREFACE

PATRICE PAVIS

Are we currently discovering sound? Sound in the theatre, sound in our lives, sound and what distinguishes it from noise, from speech, from silence? *Mise en scène, mise en son, mise en songe?* Staging, sounding, sounding out? At every historical moment—and these come around more and more frequently—we reach a new phase in the performing arts; an original way of conceiving of theatre, and of theorising it, is being sketched out.

Is it sound's turn? Can sound and noise be designed? Can one grasp its hidden designs? The sound design(er) thinks so. But 'sound design' precisely consists of seeing sound as something other than one more piece of design, one more visual trace. The point is to go beyond (or at least to make complete) our vision of theatre as visual *mise en scène* by way of a sonic, auditive, and musical conception of a performance: *aurality*, the counterpart and complement of visuality.

We spend our lives faced with images: they stand in our way, they guide us, and they absorb us. But we live inside the world of sound: it encompasses us, mothers us, feeds and greets us with sound and meaning—it has terrified us since we were little. It is thanks to noise and sounds that we find our position in the world, and we link sound cues with the things, places, and images that appear to us throughout our lives.

But art delights in deconstructing this patiently constructed world, dissociating image and sound: hence a glass that meows as it breaks, lips that explode as they kiss, a person's familiar voice creaking like a door, and all that is now possible on our stages! Even surrealist images never fazed us quite like this.

The discovery of the possibilities of sound in the theatre is almost unheard of; it is unexpected, since theatre was previously understood to be visual (not merely literary and destined to end up in a book, as Mallarmé thought): *mise en scène*, considered the culmination of Western theatricality, is surely visual. So why, then, after the turn of the millennium, does sound cause us to prick up our ears, like a horse ready to gallop away? Beyond hoping for a general semiological explanation of performance, beyond an

embodied and physical understanding of the actor in front of us and within us, and beyond the visuality of the world (as promoted by *visual studies;* visuality by way of the eye as well as by way of movement), what else might we find?

We had learned how *mise en scène* groups, hierarchises, or combines its signs—the building materials of an organised world. The sonic aspect certainly always had its place, but it tended to *serve* the visual arrangement, or the design (meaning the sketch and also the intention). But this conception did not take into account the unexpected and necessary resistance emerging from the world of sound, nor did it recognise a phenomenology of listening. This world of organised sound, in fact, as redesigned by theatre practitioners, 'overwhelms' the world of music, passes it on all sides, and drowns it out. Unlike music at a concert, where the musicians and the listeners focus their attention, it is not isolated or capable of being taken in isolation. The world of sound, when it is confronted and combined with the visual and the visible, consciously and unconsciously plays with visuality, as if the better to promote its own uncontrollable subjectivity.

In the theatre, sound is never pure music. Rather, and to its great credit, it is impure music. It is still steeped in what its public embodiment precisely seeks to conceal: the physicality of the performers, the unforeseeable circumstances of the performance, the listeners' more or less noisy and physical attention. To this must be added everything else: the visual setup, the acting, the improbable ballet of bodies in motion. This fortuitous symphony of bodies, of shapes, colours and lines gives sound its colour and its identity; it welcomes all sounds, all noises, and shows them around, an air that was not *(be)foreseen*, nourishing it and causing it to penetrate, as if breaking and entering, the fictional and personal universe of each viewer.

The presence of ever more sensitive sound and soundscapes in a performance coincides with another recent phenomenon of staging: relative dematerialisation. The contemporary stage, in fact, is no longer the realistic illustration of a place or a text, but at most its evocation by way of conventions. It has nothing to do with autonomous stage languages with strong visual metaphors, as seen in the 1970s and 1980s. Sometimes actors, long considered the *sine qua non* of the theatre, are no longer actually visible; they cannot even be reached with the aid of a camcorder, telephone or prerecorded video footage. The rather abstract and immaterial language of sound is thus more readily integrated into the visual representation. The dematerialisation, miniaturisation, and virtualisation of visual or gestural elements facilitate the marriage of sound and image: in

fact, they have yet to tie the knot, and lack any absolute hierarchy or definitive contract—either partner might take off at any point ...

All kinds of sounds—from unpleasant noises to the most refined melodies—are reference points in our everyday lives. They allow us to travel all around the world and appreciate its beauty, danger, or consolations. They penetrate our inner life, and mark our social existence. They disappear without a trace, or on the contrary introduce us to other sounds, other imaginary worlds. We endlessly combine them with images, bodily attitudes, and gestures. All the more, since the art of the stage, or that of music theatre, manages to combine visuality and aurality, not as the accumulation or integration of signs in a single, common spatial or sonic volume, but as a confrontation between the two structures, prompting sound and image to see or to hear each other differently. Everything depends on the artistic interactions and interstices of media that have been foreseen (or 'fore-heard') by the *mise en scène*. The art of sound design is *not* to separate the sounds from their spatial situation, *not* to separate them from the body, gesture and the spatial arrangement of the actors. Sound and music no longer have an ancillary function as regards the text or image; indeed, they are independent of them, they force them to take root in the immateriality of the sonic universe.

With this collection of studies on noise in the theatre, a sketched outline for a phenomenology of listening, the foundations of a new discipline (objective and subjective), on sounds and *aurality* (a new notion that the book's chapters seek to establish) are clearly set out. The challenge and charm of this foundational work consists in imagining how far such a shift of sight, hearing, and body might take us. This, in any case, is the objective of this work, the first book tackling the subject: to lay a milestone for research on sound, and indeed for research on dramaturgy and staging as they are still able to function today. By giving sound (and the thousand ways in which it is articulated) a chance, sonic dramaturgy gives theatre, and not just music theatre, a new beginning. By granting noise a place, as the 'other' of organised sound (music and speech), it explodes the traditional boundaries between the different arts of performance and the stage. It lends the work a sonic and rhythmical depth that stage writing once reserved for visuality.

If music stays 'in me', then the sound attached to the visuality and the stage gestures 'enters me', only to 'come out' and 'circulate' inside all that I perceive onstage and in the world, thus enabling me to travel within these musical spaces, places that are both real and imaginary. It is up to me to understand what the sound material is telling me beyond its textual dramaturgy.

The spectator-listener becomes the hero of the day, without whom nothing is possible, irrespective of the noises this chronic troublemaker unfailingly produces, to the great chagrin of other spectators and sometimes the actors. Sometimes the noisy spectator seems to have the task of injecting some noise—but also some meaning—into the show (at points chosen by the spectator, or by the performers). In Korean *Pansori* opera, the spectator, in the course of the performance, has the possibility of making brief interjections, compliments or commentaries. Such *Ch'uimsae*, if correctly placed by a connoisseur spectator—at the right moment, and with the right energy and tone—do not interfere with the dynamics of the singing and playing, and actually strengthen and help the singer. Far from being reduced to annoying noise within the system of communication, *Ch'uimsae* form part of the sonic and visual stage event: the spectators are not abstractions and recorders, but living beings, accompanying and protecting the performance as it unfolds.

This book sketches out and creates the prototype for a new dramaturgy of sound. This will help us rethink the dramaturgy of the performance overall, the better to understand how we experience the performance: by seeing it, hearing it, and embodying it, without always being able to distinguish between these perceptions. Thus we must consider not only the 'listening eye' (Paul Claudel), but also the seeing ear, which discovers the visible and invisible worlds that sound endlessly creates or suggests.

Such is the miracle of a dramaturgy of sound: sonic writing continues to develop; sounds, words, noises, images, and gestures come together, unite, and invite us to feel (to experience) works in the making and our world in motion.

Translated from French by Joel Anderson

INTRODUCTION

LYNNE KENDRICK AND DAVID ROESNER

1. Premises

Theatre and performance studies: why so silent?

A theatrical situation, as John Cage put it in 1968, consists of "things to hear and things to see" (Cage in Kostelanetz 1970, 51). While the latter, the 'spectacle' of theatre or the visual stage has dominated the discourses on theatre histories and performance analyses, the former, the sound of performance or the acoustic stage, still deserves to be listened to more carefully. From Ancient Greece, which built theatres with optimal *acoustic* qualities, the etymology of 'persona', which refers to the actor's 'sounding through' (*personare*) the mask, to the proclamation of an "acoustic turn" 2500 years later by Petra Maria Meyer (2008), there are many phenomena that strongly suggest a closer investigation of the sonic aspects of theatre and performance.

This book is a timely contribution to this emerging field and looks in particular at the interrogation and problematisation of theatre sound(s). Both approaches are represented in the idea of 'noise' which we understand both as a concrete sonic entity and a metaphor or theoretical (sometimes even ideological) thrust. The contributions to this edited volume are indebted to a range of recent research from a number of disciplines: as there are almost no theories of theatre sound to speak of,[1] the authors have drawn upon and contextualised their work in a web of references to musicology (e.g. Attali 1985; Cox/Warner 2004; Hegarty 2007), film sound (e.g. Chion 1994; Beck and Grajeda 2008), philosophical and sociological theories of sound and/or voice (e.g. Schafer 1994; Serres 1995; Kahn 1999; Bull and Back 2003; Dolar 2006; Birdsall

[1] Ross Brown (2010) provides the first in-depth *critical* approach to sound in theatre, but most of the literature on theatre sound consists of books which either explain the historical development and current usage of sound in the theatre, or suggest ways in which to create sound for the theatre. See for example: Kaye and LeBrecht 1992; Bracewell 1993; Leonard 2001.

and Enns 2008), and phenomenologies of listening and silence (e.g. Cage 1987; Erlmann 2004; Schmitz 2008; Voegelin 2010). Noise has proven to be a truly interdisciplinary phenomenon, which has resonances and echoes in the sciences and humanities, but whose impact on and implications for live (theatrical) performance need further 'sounding out'. *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance* will be a first step.

What is theatre noise?

Theatre provides a unique habitat for noise. It is a place where friction can be thematised, explored playfully, even indulged in: friction between signal and receiver, between sound and meaning, between eye and ear, between silence and utterance, between hearing and listening. In an aesthetic world dominated by aesthetic redundancy and 'aerodynamic' signs, theatre noise recalls the aesthetic and political power of the grain of performance.

For us, 'theatre noise' is a new term which captures an agitatory acoustic aesthetic. It expresses the innate theatricality of sound design and performance, articulates the reach of auditory spaces, the art of vocality, the complexity of acts of audience, the political in produced noises. Indeed, one of the key contentions of this book is that noise, in most cases, is to be understood as a plural, as a composite of different noises, as layers or waves of noises. Facing a plethora of possible noises in performance and theatre we sought to collocate a wide range of notions of and approaches to 'noise' in this book—by no means an exhaustive list of possible readings and understandings, but a starting point from which scholarship, like sound, could travel in many directions.

There is a departure from the everyday notion of noise purely as nuisance and disturbance as well as its usual narrow definition *ex negativo*, as not sound, not music, not intelligible signal. Jacques Attali has thus defined noise as "the term for a signal that interferes with the reception of a message by a receiver, even if the interfering signal itself has a meaning for the receiver" (Attali 1985, 27).[2] If noises are "the sounds we have learned to ignore" (Schafer 2004, 34) in order to avoid its interference, then this books deals with noise(s) that cannot or should not be ignored, that raise questions, render the production and reception of acoustic signals problematic as intervention or friction and thus force us to reflect on the preconceived distinctions of signal and noise. The theories and case studies presented here investigate how theatre, as a place, an event or a

[2] See also Gareth White's chapter in this book (chapter XVII).

communicative convention, (re-)negotiates certain aspects of noise including those that might be excessive, unwanted or unintended, not meant or not meaningful. They examine how theatre makes the distraction or distress of noise productive, and affords experiences of materiality as well as abstraction, of subjectifying immersion as well as objectifying de-familiarisation.

This book and its contributors thus propose a radical re-think of noise, not just in relation to the perception or production of, but in our understanding of theatre. The *ex negativo* of noise is not only refuted but reversed. In theatre and performance, noise becomes effective and even productive. Moreover, theatre has the capacity to challenge and alter our understanding of noise and its place in the theatrical soundscape. As Ross Brown (chapter I) proposes,

> theatre should feature prominently as the artform whose self-contained microcosmic scope, whose intermediality and whose governing conventions, whether adhered to or departed from, expose and make play of the interactions between noise, signal, silence and the corporeal subject more than any other.

The notion of noise in theatre as interference is relatively new, as Jean-Marc Larrue (chapter II) points out, prior to the advent of sound mediation, noise was an intrinsic part of "performance's sound universe." Indeed it is theatre's subsequent resistance to sound reproduction technologies as a form of noise that drowns out the "consecrated" (Larrue) place of theatre, that this book sets out to refute.

Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance owes its title and initial concept to both a seminar and subsequent conference organised by the Central School of Speech and Drama (London) in 2009.[3] Following these events we have curated and strategically invited for this book a range of developed ideas and positions from theatre directors, performers, sound designers, musicians and academics from different disciplines who engage in practice professionally as well as a form of research. These map out the field of theatre noise and will hopefully stimulate further and even more far-reaching discussions about its relevance for theatre and performance aesthetics, processes and histories.

[3] In November 2003 Ross Brown convened a seminar entitled 'Theatre Noise' for the London Theatre Seminar series. See http://www.theatrenoise.org.uk/index.html (accessed April 5, 2011).

How to read this book

For the organisation and dramaturgy of *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance* we thought of two metaphors from the world of sounds: the audio patch bay where a diverse range of inputs and outputs are interconnected in multiple ways with coloured cable, or alternatively the emerging webs of connections that websites like *last fm*, or software like *iTunes* with its 'genius' function, create between songs because they have something in common: a genre, style or musician.

So while this book *can* be read from beginning to end, it is actually not constructed as a linear narrative, nor organised in larger units or parts (which again would have prioritised some interrelations over others) but instead seeks to 'patch' multiple connections between single chapters, and find 'genius' type correlations. Some of these we will draw out and develop in the following section, others may emerge individually for the reader. The experience may be similar to the often described 'cocktail party effect'—a psychoacoustic phenomenon described elsewhere in the book[4], which describes our ability in 'noisy' surroundings, to 'tune into' different conversations around us and foreground them while suppressing and filtering out others.

2. Patches and Correlations

There are a number of connecting themes and resonances between the following chapters. You will find, for example, that many chapters approach theatre noise from historical and philosophical perspectives. In addition, echoes can be perceived between different ways in which sound and noise become central aspects or entry points for the analysis of performances. And finally, there are those connections which foreground the experiential aspects of theatre noise with a particular interest in audience(s): some of the pervasive themes here are: sound and immersion, sonic interactions between stage and auditorium and the variety of ways of listening that come into play in the theatre.

We will now tease out in more detail the implicit and explicit dialogues in this book based on the following correlations and patches, or through-lines and territories of theatre noise. Commencing with the beginning and end of all sound in *silence*, next we trace the connection of theatre noise with bodies and materials by drawing together adumbrations around

[4] See also Ross Brown's chapter in this book as well as Barry Arons "Review of the Cocktail Party Effect" at http://xenia.media.mit.edu/~barons/html/cocktail.html (accessed March 15, 2011).

embodiment, the bruiteur/Foley artist, materiality, and *vocality*. We then focus on structural and semiotic aspects of theatre noise under themes of *musicalisation* and *production of meaning,* explore its relation to sight and site in *sound and vision* and *space,* and turn to theatre noise and audiences in *immersion, interaction,* and *listening*.

Silence

All sound, noise, music and utterance begin and end with silence. Silence is the continuous counterpoint, the defining 'other' to theatre noise, sometimes as a manifest absence of sound, sometimes more philosophically as an idea and ideal. Particularly after John Cage's famous observation that there can be no absolute silence, Brown speaks about the "anxiety of silence" (chapter I)—the anticipatory quietness of a large audience—and questions whether the widely accepted convention for a silent and seemingly undistracted audience, is really what the theatre needs and speaks of an "unhealthy phobia" expressed by the strict conventions for silent auditoria.

This assumed correlation between silence and compliance is dispelled by John Collins, who shifts the emphasis from the innate capacity of silence for meaning, to its *theatrical* potential and effectiveness. He describes Elevator Repair Service's experiments with "super-charged silence[s]" (chapter III) as a vehicle for sonic anticipation and discusses how various pieces have successfully exploited the power of silence in performance. Danijela Kulezic-Wilson discusses in particular the *dramatic* and *musical* purposes of silence in Samuel Beckett's plays and in *Play.* Here, multiple silences shape our experience of passing time and help to rhythmically organise the performance: "the function of silences in this play is more structural than expressive" (chapter IV). Where Kulezic-Wilson draws out attention to silence as an instrument in guiding our diachronic reception, Katharina Rost adds a focus on its *synchronic impact*: she describes how silence as a relative experience in contrast to the loud sounds of smashing bottles against a wall in Luk Perceval's *Andromache* brings different sonic layers to our attention and exposes more silent noises in a kind of "acoustic close-up" (chapter V). Silence thus becomes an integral part of her phenomenology of noise. Conversely, for Alice Lagaay it is the "intrinsic relation to the possibility of silence" which "distinguishes voice from noise" (chapter VI). Her "(negative) philosophy of voice" claims that voice cannot sufficiently be defined by activity—silence for her is not the absence of utterance, but the moment of

potentiality of utterance. In articulating this threshold of silence, Lagaay also reminds us of how loudly the absence of sound can "speak".

Embodiment

Rost also reminds us of the etymological connection of 'noise' to the *body*: "the word 'noise' has derived from the Latin word *nausea*, meaning seasickness" (chapter V). Throughout the book authors make striking observations on the physicality of sound and noise, countering the naïve assumption that sound is invisible and intangible. Misha Myers, for example, analyses the relationship between listening and touch through Roland Barthes' suggestion of "a return to the tactility or embodiment of hearing" (chapter VII). Pieter Verstraete adds to this interpersonal physicality of sound the dimension of spatial embodiment: "By placing the sounds we relate to them through our bodies and confirm our own positions. Hence, any disembodied voice calls for an embodiment with which we try to solve the auditory distress" (chapter VIII). He follows Steven Connor's assertion that "sounds are always embodied, though not always in the kind of bodies made known to vision" (Connor 2005: 54). George Home-Cook draws our attention to the idea that attention itself is,

> fundamentally, a dynamic act of embodiment […]. The word 'attention' derives from the Latin compound adtendere, meaning, 'to stretch.' Hence, at the very core of the notion of attention is the idea of a kind of embodiment that entails a dynamic movement through space. This movement is not only imaginal but actual (chapter IX).

Theatre noise is a physical phenomenon. Where the visual conventions of theatre are often designed to make audiences forget about their own physical co-presence with the performance, it is almost inevitable that the acoustic sphere will remind them of their proximity: the (physical) distress felt by excessive noise or the inability to hear and the many noises that can be read as intrusive (the air conditioning, the whispering audience neighbour etc.).[5] But it is not only the audience members' bodies that are

[5] It is probably not by accident that two iconic German theatre productions which started in silence, Michael Thalheimer's *Liliom* (Hamburg 2000) and Einar Schleef's *Salome* (Düsseldorf 1997), were often greeted by audience members offering sarcastic or openly angry shouts of "Lauter!" [Louder!/Volume!] and by a quickly increasing volume of the audience's own 'noises' (murmuring, coughing, rustling, shifting etc.). Interestingly the effect was the opposite in Danny Boyle's National Theatre production of *Frankenstein* (2011) where, for several minutes the main and only character onstage, Frankenstein's monster, learnt how to stand and

brought into focus through theatre noise. There is also a parallel, we would argue, between Cage's re-evaluation of noise in music and, for example, composer Harry Partch's enhancing of the status of the body and the musician's corporeality in (performing) music and the theatricality this affords. In both cases there is a traditional discrimination between what is considered an interference with the 'actual', 'pure' signal, which both Cage and Partch challenge in different ways, as Tim White explores in detail (chapter X). Theatre noise, as a consequence, is not only concerned with the sound of performance, but also with the performance of sound, and the theatrical implications of noise's intrinsic relation to embodiment.

The *bruiteur*/Foley artist

Historically, theatre sound and noise are not only embodied but also personified and a key example of this is the *bruiteur*—'noise-maker'—or 'Foley artist.'[6] An interloper from silent cinema, this pianist's side-show accompaniment provides illustrative sound effects equipped with an array of rudimentary props which, as Adrian Curtin points out, provided irresistible opportunities for comic performance, including "'punning' or 'kidding' the film in the manner of a vaudeville drummer who would call attention to himself and to the whole apparatus of sonic accompaniment as part of the show, as another potential attraction" (chapter XI). Situated adjacent to—and crucially outside the performance event (whether film or theatre)—this creator of sound effects had much potential as a foil for the form of theatre. Brought onstage, the *bruiteur* blatantly reveals the actuality of sound effects' production, a sort of sonic diegesis, and in doing so gains a strategic amount of theatrical and dramaturgical control. Apollinaire's maverick, one-man "People of Zanzibar", Curtin suggests, disrupts the visual 'reality' of the performance, by dint of remaining 'outside' the drama and yet visually present amidst the action and as such, "the thing seen and the thing heard are disjointed as the aural and visual registers vie with one another" (chapter XI).

Collins describes his early career as a sound designer as a "real-time Foley artist" (chapter III), typified by his efforts to source re-purposed

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walk in silence, merely grunting attempts. The contrast may be explained by the heightened respect the British audience grants to (celebrity) actors (Benedict Cumberbatch and Johnny Lee Miller), but we would argue that it was nonetheless the extended relative silence that made for a particularly captivating and memorable beginning of this show.

[6] Jack Foley inaugurated the art of creating everyday sound effects for Universal Studios in 1927.

sounds to illustrate the live action on stage and timing these to create moments of "slapstick synthesis". Yet Collins' *bruiteur* is interactive, a mistimed effect can incur a wrathful exchange with the performer calling attention to the live production of the theatre event, which Collins describes as "a truth within the artificial reality of the production." Such clowning with unwanted, misplaced sounds is an engagement in the extraneousness of theatre production; a utilisation of noise. As his role developed, Collins delved into noise, incorporating the groaning "noisy behemoth" that was The Wooster Group's set, and later as director, sampling the noisy soundscapes surrounding performance spaces, an act aimed to "gain control of that noise" but which was more overtly a reclamation of it, "the real aural environment."

Both Collins and Curtin assert the function of performance; that the theatrical *bruiteur* and the interactive sound designer operate as a performer, a player in the sound of performance. Indeed the *bruiteur*/Foley artist is an exemplar of the redefinition of sound related roles in theatre production. As Eric Vautrin points out, the complexity of technological advances in sound design mean that the sound artist is no longer "'just' a performer, an engineer, or even a composer, but all three at once" (chapter XII).

Materiality

The notion of embodiment and the figure of the *bruiteur* suggest a strong personal and human dimension of sound and noise. Theatre noise is certainly physical but not only in a bodily sense. It is also a phenomenon strongly embedded in a history and aesthetic of materiality and technology. As a medium it has both resisted and innovated aspects of its acoustic dimension and has explored material as noise and noise as material. Vautrin, for example, provides a concise history of sound production and amplification in the theatre and points us to the fact that,

> sound does not exist outside of that which creates it, be it the performer or speakers. Sound matter can essentially be defined as a series of resistances—between the instrument and sounds; between the performer and the gestures they know only too well; between the flow of sound and the space it meets, speakers and resonances in space, resistances which modulate the electric flow etc.—a resistance to reducing sound to a representation, paradoxically (chapter XII).

This resistance indicates the material nature of the theatre event, its liveness, the human and mechanical effort and process it takes, the creaking of the theatre machine. Whereas Larrue discusses materiality in the

context of intermediality and interartiality,[7] Rost chooses a phenomenological approach. In her attempt to describe and analyse the sound of breaking glass in Perceval's *Andromache*, she talks about "sound materiality that consists of timbre patterns" and suggests how timbre might be captured in analysing the sound of performance (chapter V). David Roesner (chapter XIII) and Tim White (chapter X) shift the emphasis again by looking not only at the materiality of sound, but of sound *production*: with respect to different performance practices (those of Heiner Goebbels, Pat Metheny and Harry Partch) they investigate the 'noise' of making music and the physical, technical and material efforts of sound production. Noise here becomes part of the paradigm of self-reflexivity that characterises the postmodern: by exhibiting the materiality of sound performance and using the irritations and friction caused by toying with conventional expectations, these artists remind the audience of the fabricated and material condition of the kind of performance of which they are part.

Lagaay (chapter VI) and Zachary Dunbar (chapter XIV) discuss the materiality of vocality and here, specifically, aspects of how voice as material interrelates with the production of meaning and musicalisation (see also *Vocality*). Lagaay argues that,

> any thematisation of voice implies an attunement to the manner in which the voice is not just a transparent medium for language, insignificant in itself, but that in its very materiality a voice may clash with—i.e. disrupt, undermine, or comment on—the main propositional content of what a speaking person is saying (chapter VI).

Dunbar further describes how the departure from the propositional content of utterance may lead to a musical appreciation of vocal sound and cites Andrew Gibson in saying, "to deal with the voice *per se* in drama would be to deal with [...] material questions of timbre, cadence, emphasis, and vocal nuance" (Gibson 2001, 711-12).

Vocality

The theatrical potentiality of voice material is one reason why the term 'voice'—which suggests the transmission of signal, a certainty of sound—is jettisoned in favour of a more appropriate keyword for this book, 'vocality': this encompasses the plurality of matter and utterance, body and grain, sounds and silences, and noises that might constitute the production of and audience to 'voice'. Contributors focus on aspects of

[7] Larrue uses this term following Moser 2007.

vocality, including vocalisation and utterance in order to problematise the primacy of voice; its semantics, semiotics and ethics become questionable.

The arrival of theatre sound technology was—and continues to be—considered an attack on voice. Larrue's history of mediatic resistance captures the essence of the problem caused by mediatised sound as an "assault on the actor's 'presence', which is so deeply connected to the theatre's episteme" (chapter II). The plethora of ways in which sound was mediated—considered in this book as mediatised, remediatised, dematerialised, disembodied and acousmatic—disrupted the primacy of the actor's dramatic voice by, as Larrue asserts "causing [in theatre] the first historic split between the voice and the body." The relegation of voice makes way for vocality as a part of the *material* of theatre. Specific chapters consider its material functionality, whether voice *as* material (Dunbar, Kulezic-Wilson and Kendrick), or the act of *making* voice material (Verstraete) (see also *Materiality*). Furthermore, the decentralisation of dramatic voice in turn provides a refocus on a vocality that functions theatrically, as a medium (Lagaay and Myers) whereby voice is considered an intersubjective, performative phenomenon, somewhere between the material body and the immateriality of sound.

Material vocality is predicated on the multitude of shifts in theatre genre, most recently in the emergence of the postdramatic which, as Dunbar explains, requires a structured approach, a particular "praxis […] of musicality" in which "the intonation of speaking might veer between intentionality and objectivity, naturalism and melodrama, phonetic utterance and semantic conceptualisation" (chapter XIV). Rost's analysis of Perceval's *Andromache* finds vocality is not a "culturally coded signified like vocal speech" (chapter V) but one component of the material sounds against which the central sound event of intrusive noises is played out. Vocal sounds are amplified and audible but merely a part of a range of body noises. Similarly Lynne Kendrick (chapter XV) investigates the materiality of the deaf actor's production of voice as entirely embodied, subjectively generative, a component of the material of the aural placing of sound.

Verstraete also explores the making of voice material, and claims that the aforementioned emphasis on embodiment is a strategy for the auditory realisation of the disembodied voice, which requires a "voice-body" (chapter VIII) as a means of coping with auditory distress (see also *Embodiment*). Thus there is an intrinsic link between vocality and the body. Similarly, Myers asserts that "the voice has an embodying power to produce bodies" (chapter VII). For Myers, in the audiowalk, the voice (whether live or recorded) is the material of the event but one which

speaks “from within the listener’s own body” (Stankievech in chapter VII). The artist’s voice is atopic, “sonically displaced” and reposited in the percipient, emerging as “the sound of inner speech” but not that of the receiver, dialogically it entangles with the percipient’s own “inner monologue”. The making material of voice is an interiority of vocality, developed by Lagaay whose version of the inner voice is distinct from thought, carries a moral and ethical authority which invokes and cannot be ignored. It is a particular phenomenon of a “sound that lacks acoustic resonance” (chapter VI).

Noise impacts upon and/or emerges in these diverse approaches to vocality. For instance, intrusive noise designates vocality to its material function as sound (Kulezic-Wilson); noise feeds forms of postdramatic speech as “a continuum between a theatre noise and a concert song” (Dunbar), and noise is the vocal discourse of intersubjectivity (Kendrick).

Musicalisation

One aspect several authors identify and investigate is that the attention to sound and noise brings not only the acoustic but also more specifically the *musical* aspects of theatre into earshot. Thus, musicalisation as a range of strategies for the organisation and disorganisation of theatrical media, of exploring and exploiting the sensual, formal, rhythmic and melodic qualities of all elements of theatre, becomes another through-line of this book. Several authors explore music, sound and noise as key materials, symbolic strategies and working principles in creating performances (composing, devising, choreographing, writing etc.) and discuss instances of theatre striving to become music and—the implicit alternative—to become noise.

Kulezic-Wilson, for example, suggests that Samuel Beckett’s work, particularly his experiments with language and form, led to “its musicalisation on a number of levels, subverting the primarily semiotic function of language in theatre and inviting alternative modes of perception” (chapter X) and goes on to analyse how film-director Anthony Minghella transformed “the metaphor of music as a model for language into actuality and extend[ed] the process of musicalisation to screen.”

Verstraete extends the notion of musicalisation to the “postdramatic stage” and sees it as an attempt “to break free from certain confinements of the text, as an authoritative voice in the theatrical construct” (chapter VIII) and also argues, in contrast to Hans-Thies Lehmann who “stresses the instrumentalisation and control of sound”, that “musicalisation brings a great deal of uncontrollability by means of the interventions of sound and

the auditory distress it creates". Musicalisation, therefore, should not simply be seen as an attempt to replace one system of coherence (language, character, narration) with another (rhythm, melody, form), but a shift of emphasis of how meaning is created (and veiled) and how the spectrum of theatrical creation and reception is widened. Dunbar further historicises these aspects of musicalisation, particularly with respect to a long lineage of music-word relationships. He cites Roesner who argues that "musicalisation re-introduces a 'full range of textual potential: as rhythmical, gesticulatory, melodic, spatial and sounding phenomenon *as well as* a carrier of meaning' (Roesner 2008, 3)" (chapter XIV).

Production of meaning

In the production of meaning, sound, silence, aurality, vocality, musicality and noise all agitate received ideas of ocularcentric theatre semiosis. Myers clarifies this potential by demonstrating how a "theatre of sound […] challenges prevalent conceptions of meaning" (chapter VII). Contributors remind us that meaning is multiple (Dunbar), but that this multiplicity is contingent on the sonic; meaning is musically denotative (Kulezic-Wilson, Roesner, Tim White) noisy (Kendrick, Verstraete) and derived from noise (Brown). Indeed, noise is often referred to as the basis of meaning beyond or anterior to signal and logos, as Serres asserts that ceaseless background noise "may well be the ground of our being" (Serres 1995, 13). Brown elaborates, "noise [is valued] not as an antithesis to reason, but as the necessary condition within which meaning manifests, the entropic state from which and to which all returns if left unchecked" (chapter I).

Theatre noise, on the other hand, is more overt than the embryonic background or residual matter of meaning. Its agitatory affect disrupts and repositions meaning. For Rost, the intrusive sonic effect, like noise, arrests the listener "it has or obtains the power […] to capture the audience's attention, with or against their will" which has an impact upon "how meaning is constituted within that performance" (chapter V). This direct relation between noise and the production of meaning is also characterised by an excess of noise which can abandon the audience in its midst. Curtin concludes that Apollinaire's aesthetic of visual and acoustic noises creates a "noisy surplus" in which "meaning is a structured free-for-all" (chapter XI). Verstraete's concept of "auditory distress" captures this effect of vocal excess and its disruption of meaning; it is "an austere metaphor that corresponds to the act of response in the spectator, in order to relate to the

impulse of auditory intensities by means of meaning making" (chapter VIII).

Myers and Verstraete also assert the function of audience in the production of meaning. Through "earpoints" not "viewpoints" Myers' "percipient" is the "locus of meaning creation" (chapter VII). Verstraete adds that "meaning making is necessarily an embodied effect" (chapter VIII): the audience's act of making sense out of noise. Yet, such embodied, actualised responses to noise should not divert attention from the fakery of theatre and the function of sound in its illusion. Collins' captivation with sounding differing spaces by sampling, amplifying and incorporating extraneous noise is driven by a fascination with disturbing what is and isn't 'real' in theatre production, the result of which is "a charged ambiguity neither provable as real-world fact nor dismissible as mere design" (chapter III). This has nothing to do with realism, but its opposite, the fabric and fundamental fakery of theatre in which any meaning is entirely manufactured. Collins argues that sound, above all elements of theatre, in its capacity to extend, exceed and exist entirely exterior to the limiting physical properties of theatre, is in truth "the best liar" (chapter III).

Sound and vision

Collins' chapter is one of several contributions in which the relationships between the acoustic and the visual stages play an important role. These chapters look at the often polyphonic and contrapuntal tensions between "the thing seen and the thing heard"[8] (Heiner Goebbels) and the separations, collisions and interferences of meanings. Theatre noise is also about how the acoustic and the visual sphere bleed into each other and how effacing the separation can be made productive, both creatively and analytically. For example Curtin and others discuss the consequences of a 'noises on' practice, which makes the traditionally hidden sound production visible and puts a face to the noise (see also *The bruiteur/Foley artist*). In the case of Apollinaire's play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, which Curtin analyses, this practice subverts "the supposed normality and logicality of sound making" and calls attention to "to the conventionality of sonic mimesis" (chapter XI). Here, the productive friction results from relating a sound (thunder) to the vision not of its imagined source (dark clouds) but of a man with a sheet of metal.

[8] This was the title of Heiner Goebbels' keynote at the Theatre Noise conference at CSSD, April 2009. See http://www.theatrenoise.org.uk/pages/keynotes.html #heiner (accessed April 6, 2011).

In contrast, Collins reflects on his sound practice with Elevator Repair Service and The Wooster Group (chapter III) and describes the theatrical effects of separating sound and vision artificially and stimulating confusion by reproducing the sound that the audience expect from the onstage action *offstage instead*. In doing so he plays with the inevitable discrepancies and synchronisation problems, not least for comical effect.

In her "(negative) philosophy of voice" (see also *Vocality*), Lagaay develops the idea further that sound and vision have more than a dialectic relationship, that theatre can actually facilitate a use of "eyes *as* ears, ears *as* eyes" (chapter VI). She concludes that the "enigma of voice in fact suggests […] that a real challenge of theory/theatre is precisely to understand, grasp and bring to expression the intrinsic, chiasmic interrelation of these various dimensions". This resonates with Home-Cook's observations that seeing and hearing are not dialectical and dichotomic, but engage in complex interplay. He cites Tim Ingold's assertion that looking is not the enemy of listening but its facilitator: "it is the very incorporation of vision into the process of auditory perception that transforms passive hearing into active hearing" (2000, 277). This form of attention also has spatial implications, to which we will now turn.

Space

"The *there*ness of sound, its "outside quality", is a matter of time and space. What you are hearing, in fact, *is* time and space" (Smith 1999, 7). Bruce R. Smith's theory of sound is that it is manifest through time (frequency), and space (amplitude). Smith's phenomenology of sound, its "*here*ness", is in the ear, where "the physical facts of time and space become the psychological experience" (Smith 1999, 8). In concurrence contributors to this book suggest that theatre sound is fundamentally spatial, it designates and even creates theatre space, yet this spatiality is not the arbitrary property of sound but is designed and directed, it produces the space(s) of performance. As such, the distinction between the production and reception of sound, which Smith argues to be an unhelpful difference of sound ontology and the phenomenology of its experience, is somewhat mixed in theatre practice.

Brown's 'aural paradox' draws attention to the assumption that a sound is first created and subsequently resounded in space. Sound is *of* space, as Brown points out, the initiation of sound—for instance the bell chime—is not the sound itself but its origin, its cause. The actual sound is "spatial, and these spatial qualities are part of the environment within which the conceptualised event-object of the bell figures" (chapter I). Ontologically

sound necessitates space "because the spatial characteristics of a sound (its reverberation and resonance) are *not* separate to the sound, they *are* the sound". The experience of it is also its ontology. On a similar note Marie-Madeleine Mervant-Roux explores a "quasi spatial sonosphere" exemplified by the phenomenon of audience to the act of listening in Castellucci's *Inferno* as a form of "hearing of hearing" (chapter XVI). In accordance with Brown, Mervant-Roux stresses that theatre sound is not an object to be perceived, but a tangible spatial event. Sound is not an illustration of, but is constitutional of the theatrical space. Home-Cook goes as far as to suggest that the act of listening is a formation, or even a transcendence of, space. Listening in the theatre is a particular "phenomen[on] of felt space" in which,

> we experience sound to be located neither at a fixed source nor at our ears; neither out there nor in here, but rather, we experience both ourselves and the sound we perceive within a heterotopic zone, a no-space which is constantly *on the move* (chapter VIII).

Outside the theatre walls, in other spaces, sound is the means by which performance spaces are designated. Gareth White demonstrates how the participatory, 'relational' territories of site-specific theatre are created and maintained by the producer's auditory control. Spaces are initially sonically configured—soundscapes for instance enforce mute meandering or alternatively invite specific vocal interaction—and are frequently deterritorialised by means of sonic assaults, a form of "noise as […] a coup de théâtre" (chapter XVII). Furthermore sound can be the very means by which the performance space is created. Myers inverts the notion of the sound of theatre to "a theatre of sound" (chapter VII). A "theatrical auditory space" which displaces that basic element ordinarily assumed essential to the inauguration of theatre—the co-presence of actor/audience. At another extreme, in music theatre, sound populates the entire stage space, materially and aesthetically, becoming the sonic, visual and theatrical elements of the performance, even interpolating the role of the performer. As Roesner demonstrates, Goebbels' colossal musical machinery and Metheny's sonic cyclorama "exploit the sheer space [they take] and the spectacle produced by the both intricate and enormous apparatuses by using them as theatrical set design" (chapter XIII). This sonic occupation of space is far from static; as Roesner suggests, such a scale of "musicking" mimics the properties of the stage and dramatic

space[9] including "theatrical dramaturgies of expectation, entrance and revelation."

Liberated from signal or object, these theories of the spatiality of sound find noise within their circumference. Noise permeates the audio-walk (Myers) in ways not permitted in the sound-proofed, sterile, "ashamed" (Brown) theatrical space. Moreover, noise is a necessary element of the theatre soundscape. For instance, though Gareth White makes the point that actual noise—of the audience and the performance— is organised, he makes the intriguing argument that its incorporation is an essential element of the relational aesthetic; the potential disruption this invokes. "There is something reciprocal about the invitation of noise—unsettling the audience through participation also brings chaos into the work itself" (chapter XVII).

Immersion

The idea of immersion in relation to sound is, according to Jeanne Bovet, "considered a given fact of 'natural' auditory perception" (chapter XVIII) but shouldn't be confused with any undiscriminating passive mode of perception. Bovet adds: "Immersed in the theatrical sound event, the audience member hears everything, but listens selectively". Brown argues along similar lines when he suggests: "The phrase 'immersed in sound' evokes some kind of ethereal trip or amniotic ambience but my experience of aural immersion consists in the uneasy relationship between listening and hearing" (chapter I). He calls this mode of perception an "anxious dialectic between engagement and distraction" and thus points us to the kind of oscillating experiences that sound and noise afford the audience.

Analytically, it is the potential of sound and noise to be both omni-directional and simultaneous that is challenging. Bovet (chapter XVIII) reminds us of Walter Ong's observation that "sound immersion makes the hearer intimately aware of a great many goings-on which it lets [him/her] know are simultaneous but which [s/he] cannot possibly view simultaneously and thus [has] difficulty in dissecting or analyzing, and consequently of managing (Ong 1981, 129-30)."

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[9] The terms 'stage space' and 'dramatic space' are used to specify different manifestations of space in theatre. The stage space is the actual stage area, the dramatic space that which is read by the audience as well as the stage and its inhabitants. The dramatic space is a place of convention as well as the production of meaning. For example see Ann Ubersfeld's theory of spatial function in McAuley, 2000, 18.

Both Bovet's and Gareth White's performance analyses demonstrate the importance of sound and noise with regard to the shifting "micro-politics" with which immersive strategies create "imbalances in the audience-performer relationship of the conventional model of theatregoing: the performers retain authority over the action, while the spectators retain the right to stay out of the action, to watch and hear it" (chapter XVII). Immersion is thus not only a specific spatial-temporal exploration of what sound *can* do, but also a factor in performer-audience relationships and interactions.

Interaction

Consequently, quite a few authors show particular interest in the question as to what role noise plays in the interaction between stage and audience. Mervant-Roux (chapter XVI) interrogates the "artificial partition of space" where supposedly one part, the auditorium, is silent (see also *Space*). In her study of audience noises she discovers the importance, variety and function of the auditorium as a soundscape in its own right and how the audience's "sound of listening" forms a vital part of the co-presence and interaction that distinguishes theatre from other art forms.

Gareth White (chapter XVII) investigates more normative concepts of where and when audiences are *meant* to interact by means of sounds—laughter, applause, stomping etc.—and then develops, with Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics, concepts of interaction particularly in immersive theatre production such as those by *Punchdrunk* or *Shunt* and the risks and benefits they contain (see also *Space)*. Brown echoes and historicises the notion of audiences that interact not least by breaking the perceived "needs [of theatre] to police the silence of its audiences and criminalise those who offend against its conventions" (chapter I).

Kendrick adds a further dimension to this when discussing the aesthetics of access facilitated by the aural strategies of Graeae Theatre Company. Interaction with the audience here escapes precisely through the discursive use of noise, which provides access *and* critiques the "banality of accessibility" (chapter XV).

Interaction, however, is not restricted to the relationship between performer and audience, but also between actors and instruments (Tim White, Roesner) or other sound sources (Vautrin, Collins) or different voices (Kendrick, Lagaay, Myers) and can be said to amount to a theatrical quality, that is uniquely due to the *sonic* circumstances and choices of the individual performances.