

La résonance des ruines

Text for the new work for ICTUS

„Sonority essentially resounds: it is in itself resonance. One could say that echo is part of the sound, that it belongs to its immanence (...). Resonance is inside of sound itself: a sound is its own echo chamber (...). The ancient Greek êkhêô, from which “echo” comes, means to “make noise” as well as “to resound”. (...) A sound is always returned, restored: it is restored from itself to itself.

Jean-Luc Nancy, Foreword to “Listen: a history of our ears” by Peter Szendy

If sound is always resounding and returned to itself then what is the possible sound of the ruins and how to work among them?

The drastic violence of the present time makes it necessary to interrogate how we inhabit the world we are living in while (re)thinking the (inter)relations and interactions we might be involved with. This is sometimes what artists try to do. Within the Great Acceleration that is currently being experienced, the devastating destruction of humans and non-humans, social structures and the biosphere are happening at such a velocity that it becomes difficult to consider a possible future outside the nightmarish perspective of an exponential catastrophe unfolding irrepressibly while many bored consumers stare at their cell phone screens like monitored zombies. The global and corrupted hegemonic machine has proven so far being fundamentally unable to regulate, limit or moderate itself by any sorts, thus the absolute finality of its very existence seems more and more likely to be self-annihilation, leaving behind vast continents of sickness, pollution, death and destruction. A field of ruins that is.

As soon as I attempt to think about possible sound to focus on, I try to imagine how do ruins sound like and if we could create a wall of bare frequencies resounding in the space like a gigantic collapsed architecture destroyed by its own hubris. These are the imaginary sounds I currently have in mind.

Perhaps, we might even discover a hidden potentiality of restoring what can be restored. *Music is the healing force of the universe* once sung Mary Maria Parks on the marvellous Albert Ayler’s recording of the same name.

On yet another level, learning to live in a field of ruins is not deprived of poetical potential and might even be a somehow enlightening endeavour while searching for the cracks and the interstices in between the concrete, the steel and the plastic remains, hopefully discovering hidden places where the *mauvaise herbe* can unfold.

Antoine Chessex, August 2019

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« Voici une atmosphère étrange créée par tes machines analogiques. Un écho ? Une résonance ? Le temps est élastique. Tout devient mystérieux. Le passé, le futur et le présent se mêlent et se traversent mutuellement. La bande transforme le temps. Les textures des instruments acoustiques se mélangent pour devenir une masse grouillante. C'est la plasticité du son. Le devenir de la matière sonore. La machine te sert d'interface pour communiquer avec le dehors. Tu tords les sons qui deviennent autant d'univers de désolation. L'écoute est un instrument. Chaque traitement que tu provoques décrit un labyrinthe sonore dans lequel nous errons toutes, désorientées. Une cathédrale engloutie, monumentale, comme éventrée, gît dans son propre reflet. Les sons vrillent l'air comme des tourbillons de fréquences t'emportant vers une ivresse magnétique infectant ta propre perception. Les masses sonores deviennent menaçantes, elles infiltrent la cochlée tel un poison acoustique. Le temps n'existe plus ou peut-être est-il devenu élastique ? Tu pilotes tes machines comme un vaisseau spatial explorant l'infini. Le modulateur en anneau devient un monde en soi, comme un changement d'échelle permanent. La touche « play » de ton enregistreur à bande déclenche une interface vicieuse qui ouvre des portes dans ton cerveau, lui-même une sorte de chambre d'écho vertigineuse. La répétition de la boucle se désagrège à chaque nouvelle génération, telle la corruption d'une mémoire qui disparaît. Tout est tension. Est-ce le sol ou le ciel ? Un bourdon drone tes oreilles et te rappelle à ce monde qui peu à peu s'efface. Tu es dans un rêve éthéré fait de diverses temporalités juxtaposées, t'attirant irrémédiablement au plus profond de brumes auditives hallucinantes. Le son est comme une mémoire inversée. Tu deviens la résonance ».

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auditory science fiction for
the ensemble ictus

antoine chessex



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Context:

This is an auditory science fiction describing a desolated, dangerous and uncanny landscape investigated by a few humans and non-humans trying to realise its cartography. Each action by the instruments (like singular characters) contributes to an overall atmosphere that is utterly weird, mysterious and menacing. The sounds describe a state of abstraction blurring the boundaries between creepy atmospheric dreams, fading memories, intense nightmares and violent Hyperreality that is gone all wrong.

Meet the characters:

Adrien: The trombone is a foghorn, an acousmatic voice in a sea of mist, like a wailing siren lost in vast territories and condemned to sing the chant of fear ad eternam.

Hanna: The cello is pure ominous tension. It is the subtle horror menacing to unfold at any time, albeit staying suspended like a concrete menace: the disturbing sensation that the worse is still to come.

Jean-Luc: The DX7 is abstraction. It is an entity blurring reality. It is the plasticity of sound resounding strangeness and mystery like a static digital being.

Gerrit: The percussion is the architecture of time: sometimes quaking dangerously, sometimes already collapsed. It is also the earth shattering, the sounds of tornadoes, the tsunamis advancing irrepressibly or the fragile human structures menacing to fail.

Jérôme: The electronic is the interface transforming all voices into a choir of desolation, like the transducer between humans and non-humans. It is the elastic machine tearing holes in the fabric of reality as well as the spaceship navigating within time paradoxes.

The sum of the soundscapes is what we are aiming for. It is the fluid collective space we would like to explore. A mass of sounds describing a hallucinating auditory architecture performed by a multifragmented schizophrenic intersubjectivity.

Performance notes:

All instruments are amplified. Long hall on trombone, bass drums, floor toms and snare. The trombone uses delay, harmonizer and distortion pedals.

The timbres and programming of the DX7 are left to the choice of the performer, although the textures should fit the dark global atmosphere of the piece. The modulation and the data wheels can be used ad lib to transform textures, however, all clusters and gestures should have a continuous and homogeneous static quality, not changing too fast, but taking the time to unfold, to morph slowly.

The drum setup features a ride cymbal resonating (with a rivet or a chain to have sustain), a snare, a set of crotales from C to C1, a bass drum, hi-hat and two floor toms.

The performers on stage are performing in the dark (scores on tablet or small lights to make possible to read the notes).

All systems flow in each others fluidly like a plastic entity morphing continuously. The arrow means to keep the given pitch/cluster till a new pitch is given.

The duration is given for each system: performers navigate with a timer. The score is an orientation not a regime of truth: *Ascoltando*.

