

The Embodiment of Sound in an Intermedial Performance Space

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Abstract

*Digital technology has merely reinforced the importance of the human body and the physical in live performance.*²

In this paper I aim to describe the working process of a creative collaboration between electronics composer Oded Ben-Tal³ and myself as performer, involving interactive audio technology. Methods, tools, terminologies and subjective experience all present some meta-technical issues that will be raised with regard to a project essentially embedded in the medium of sound theatre (a performance concept that draws attention to the phenomenological qualities of sound, music and theatre) and installation.

Coming from a background of theatre, performance and acousmatics, I shall examine the work from the perspective of these disciplines. Documenting the process of exchange at each stage allowed for an ongoing analysis of methods that were used to facilitate communication and developmental procedure within the larger context of a multimedia performance project. As an example of developing performance practice, this took the form of a choreographic installation encompassing dance, video, animation, visual design and virtual worlds, and was entitled *Ukiyo: Moveable Worlds* <http://people.brunel.ac.uk/dap/ukiyo.html>

I will focus on the use of language and systems as cognitive tools for research, as well as on some phenomenological aspects of performing together with technology, such as acting / reacting, action / sound, 'self / other'. Meta-technical ideas will be explored with regard to the spatial and temporal considerations involved in this kind of process: the acoustic, the three-dimensional, absence/presence of

a sound source and its evolving relationship with the visual elements of performance. According to post-human philosophy it is these parameters of technology, belonging to a cognitive system, that have caused our human functionality to expand.⁴

In this case the key sound sources stemmed from a bandoneon (a musical instrument similar to the accordion) and the voice. They were combined with choreographic movement and a wearable costume that incorporated wired and wireless systems of amplification into its design. Sounds of an acoustic nature were thus transformed through the use of technology, into several *extended* instruments in space. This shared artistic space, where audience, performers and sound are considered in a parallel relationship, offers a very different premise for a work's reception and perception when compared to traditional performance practice. What is seen is not necessarily heard (and v. v.) and certainly not experienced in the same way by all.

My presentation will include a performance of some of the live sonic material followed by recordings of its electronic transformation into a re-embodied form.

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² Richards, J. 'Getting the Hands Dirty',
Leonardo Music Journal, Vol. 18/1, 2008

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⁴ Hutchins, E. (1995) *Cognition in the Wild*,
Cambridge: MIT Press.