

Music Thinking Process: Unfolding the creation of the piece *Résonances manifestes*

HUBERT GENDRON-BLAIS

Department of Philosophy, McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada
Email: hubert.gendron-blais@mail.mcgill.ca

Beyond the social and even the human, sound opens onto the intertwining of movements animating the lived experience. A sonic epistemology considers not only that the acoustic ecologies are enunciative of social relations and power dynamics, but also that they tell about the way reality is lived, experienced, organised: they are *expressive*, in themselves. This means, for an epistemology of phonosophy, that every perception of a sound implies a conceptual movement, which carries a mental dimension that could become the material for another thinking practice, for a *sophia*. This article approaches music as thinking in itself: a thought of the sonic. This affirmation will be expanded through the contribution of process philosophy (Whitehead, Deleuze and Guattari, Manning, etc.), which allows a musical event to be considered as an ecology, produced by the encounter of a multiplicity of bodies (human, sonic, technological, etc.). The processes of capture of forces involved and the different techniques required to increase the expressive potentialities of the musical assemblage will be unfolded through the case of *Résonances manifestes*, a improvised music piece based on a sound score composed of field recordings from autonomous demonstrations.

1. INTRODUCTION

It takes time
to find something you're
thinking of, but in the course
of looking for it all sorts of
things come up that one was
not looking for. You might
call living in chaos an
exteriorization of the mind.
It is as though the things in
the room, in the world, in the
woods, were the means of thinking.
(John Cage 1961)

Almost thirty years ago, during a conference in Los Angeles, philosopher, activist and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari illustrated his concept of ethical-aesthetical paradigm by showing how performance art could be of help in analysing the then raging Gulf War. The ethical-aesthetical paradigm consists broadly in an epistemological perspective starting from the knowledge elaborated in the domain of the

arts to study other domains (politics, history, science, etc.) (Guattari 2011).¹ Considering the level of complexity attained by many contemporary problems (may they be on the political, cultural, or social level), and among others the explicitation of the crucial role of affect and aesthetics in recent world politics, the aesthetic-ethical paradigm could be increasingly useful when approaching issues related to community, expression, identity and the relation to the environment.

The ethical-aesthetical paradigm proposed by Guattari is not only a philosophical posture: it is a political and ethical affirmation that pushes us to rethink research-creation as a transversal proposition that generates new forms of experience and knowledge by putting emphasis on the creative aspects of the different practices at play, and on the *agencements*² that enunciate the diverse collective expressions in a given environment. The project of research-creation that will be unfolded here seeks to activate conjunctively the creative potentialities of thought and the reflexive dimensions of music in such a way that both influence, reverberate and resonate with each other in a surprising and constantly renewed way, in a pragmatic and speculative movement of thought close to the event, its ineffable and extra-linguistic dimensions.

¹In an interview a year later from this intervention, Guattari (and Johnston 2000) felt the need to bring some precision to the concept: 'I do not propose an aestheticization of the social. I refer to art as a paradigm which highlights three types of problems: that of processual creativity, of the permanent questioning of the identity of the object; that of the polyphony of the enunciation; that of autopoiesis, that is to say of the production of foci of partial subjectification. This type of paradigmatic cocktail is something very important in the field of science, in the social field, for the recomposition of *agencements* of enunciation. And art is a kind of avant-garde, like a military commando, which is there at the heart of the problem' (Author's translation).

²The concept of *agencement* (usually translated as 'assemblage') elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari names the set of interrelated components coming into relation in the production of an event, an enunciation, etc. The concept will not be translated here because, as Erin Manning explains, '[the term] "assemblage" has too often been read as an object or existent configuration, rather than in its potentializing directionality. This is why I return to the French term here. *Agencement*, which carries within itself a sense of movement and connectivity, of processual agency' (Manning 2016: 123).

This approach allows us to consider music as a form of thought in itself. If music implies a refinement of the perception of sounds, a creative work of organisation of some sonic elements of reality, it may also then be considered as a thinking in its own right: a thought of the sonic. The practice of music thus appears as a way to propose sensible (and potentially significant) elements from the sounds that populate the world, to carry the unheard to the experiential knowledge. This phonosophic conception not only mobilises the processes of music creation in new directions, but also has important epistemological, ethical and political implications.

2. A SONIC EPISTEMOLOGY

As Jacques Attali (1977: 12–14) states in his influential book *Noise*, music as a tool of knowledge is haloed by a theoretic indiscipline that troubles the modes of thinking mainly expressed through language. Part of this unruliness comes from the fact that the thoughtful dimension of music emanates from the capacity of sounds to carry sense. Accordingly, conceiving music as a mode of thought involves the formation of a sonic epistemology.

Through sound, a whole social life expresses itself in its multiplicity, so that the noises produced by/ emerging from a given society constitute a type of soundtrack of the vibrations that animate it (Attali 1977: 12). But beyond the social and even the human, sound opens onto the intertwining of movements, ambiances, gestures and actions marking the lived experience. A sonic epistemology considers not only that the acoustic ecologies are enunciative of social relations and power dynamics, but also that they tell about the way reality is lived, experienced and organised: they are *expressive*, in themselves. They express in the actuality of their effective manifestations as in the potentialities of the multiple meanings, narratives, rhythms and relations that emanate from them.

This implies, on a political level, that paying attention to ambient noises could allow us to grasp otherwise unperceived dimensions of politics. The buzzing of the ventilation systems of downtown buildings having taken the place of the clamour of the working-class districts, the statements transmitted by the loudspeakers in different public spaces, the construction noises imposing the concrete deployment of urban planning on every surrounding activity, etc. If, as the Invisible Committee (Comité invisible 2014: 83) underlines, the structure of contemporary power takes the form of the material, technological and physical organisation of the world, in short if power is the very *order of things*, this environmental order could sometimes be more perceptible in ambient noises rather

than in the analysis of the explicit statements of the administration. Yet the movements of struggle are no exception to this: the uproar of a demonstrating crowd, the judicious use of loudspeakers to manifest the presence of a particular political perspective (or, in the case of counter-demonstrations, to supplant a hostile gathering), the rhythm of a marching swarm, or even intoxicated revellers who break up the nightly tranquillity of early risers in a gentrified neighbourhood. The attention to the sensible common that goes beyond formal discourses provides access to the informal field of desire that is the real motor of all movements of struggle: the various recording devices come to capture and then amplify this desire to make heard its smallest folds, the ecology of the presences that are expressed there. As the Ojibwe artist and activist Marcella Ernest (Rector and Ernest 2017) affirmed, ‘understanding the sonic elements of protest helps us to better understand how protest and politics is heard and felt’.

A sonic epistemology brings knowledge into a pragmatic and experimental mode, where intuitions, attention to the small details of everyday life, furtive sensations and plurivocal relationships to meaning are part of the research. In this sense, it could inspire practices of *study*, understood following Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2014: 110) as a speculative practice of thought driven by sensitivity to the world, emphasising the plurality and diversity of modes of reflection that populates the lived experience, and which are just as important – sometimes even more, depending on the subject of study, the context and the approach – as the recognised forms of intellectual production. This conception offers a particular understanding of the academic field labelled ‘sound studies’: at this point, two people sitting in a park and noticing that the birdsongs are more and more covered by the combined sounds of traffic and urban works act as true ‘sound students’. The elaboration of a phonosophic epistemology should never undermine this pluralistic approach which valorises the already-reflexive dimension of many daily practices, pointing to the thinking foam of what’s *organising*, what moves the collective even before the formal organisation begins.

3. WHAT THINKS IN THE SONIC EXPERIENCE

Sound gives access to the often-unperceived senses that circulate in a given ecology: it proposes matters of knowledge of the actual world. The philosophy of process of (and inspired by) the philosopher and mathematician Alfred N. Whitehead allows us to extend this at the deepest level of the lived experience.

For Whitehead (1978: 227), hearing a sound is first and foremost a physical feeling, that is, a physical prehension of an actual occasion of experience.³ But this hearing also always occurs as a tending towards the realisation of a conceptual feeling, which marks the qualitative difference of the event by shaping the texture of what is not actualised but is nevertheless felt. The conceptual feeling comes from the mental pole of experience, which can never be detached from the physical pole: the contrast between the two poles is where the relationship between the actual and potential nature of the vibrations that animate the deep movements of the world is played out (Manning 2020). Because as it has been shown by many phonosophers,⁴ quantum physics has demonstrated that the material world is movement, ‘movement of movements’, composed of extremely fast oscillations (Bergson 1966: 165). Reality presents itself in the form of a continuous fluctuation, driven by the periodic rhythmicity of (sub-)atomic activity: matter is in this sense intrinsically *vibratory*: ‘We find ourselves in a buzzing world’ (Whitehead 1978: 50, 79). The sound being, in its physical reality, a vibratory movement, matter is, as such, *sonic*.

In fact, the mental operations related to the conceptual pole of experience allow the subject of the feeling to make some elements of its/her/his objective physical datum⁵ consist by the (conceptual) prehension of

eternal objects,⁶ that is to say of pure potential. These conceptual prehensions are therefore essential in the sensory perception of sound, since it is the ingression (the relation/the coming-into the concrete world) of eternal objects that brings definition and nuance to what is perceived as sense-data in the experience. Indeed, although the mentality of the occasion always emerges from the material-sensitive experience, the physical data – here the measurable characteristics of a sound (frequency, intensity, etc.) – never completely determine what feels/is felt in the sonic experience (Whitehead 1978: 85, 248). In other words, when a sound is perceived (and sometimes identified) as such, it is because a conceptual prehension (of an eternal object) has come to qualify and through this specify the physical sound stimulus captured by the perceptual apparatus. This means, for an epistemology of phonosophy, that every perception of a sound implies a conceptual movement, which carries a mental dimension that could become the material for another thinking practice, for a *sophia*.

The speculative and pragmatist philosophy of Whitehead thus allows us to perceive sound in its ecological dimension, or rather in the deep inter-relationality of the different ecologies that make it (*ré*)sonner as such. Yet, at some point, an entity in subjective position still has to be able to perceive these differences through experience. Because if we thus come to realise that the mental (psycho-metaphysical) and physical-organic (sensory) mechanisms of perception are inextricably linked, a conception, however abstract it may be, always starts from a (sensory) perception, as Bergson (1966: 145) recalled. The importance of the mental pole in the experience of sound should therefore not obscure the fact that the actual feeling of a sonic element comes from a physical sensation, able to generate an emergent ecology.

4. MUSIC AS A THINKING PRACTICE

Through conceptual prehensions, the pure potential of felt relation (eternal objects) provides a definition, but moreover adds a quality to the physical feeling of a sound (Whitehead 1978: 227). This is how music is perceived from more or less clear sounds, through conceptual valuations. Perhaps this is what John Cage (1961: 94), who contributed eminently to the reception of the sounds of the world in Western music, foresaw when he maintained that the field of music is the mind of the listener. In Whiteheadian terms, this means that

⁶A fundamental type of entity in Whitehead’s process philosophy (with actual occasions), the eternal objects embody permanence in the flow of events, and that is what makes them so precious for conceptual feelings (Deleuze 1988: 107). ‘[Eternal objects] are what give the occasion its nuance. They are the thisness of the event’s qualitative difference – just this quality of sound, just this colour tone, just this affective tonality’ (Manning 2020).

³These two concepts, fundamental in Whitehead’s (1967: 176; 1978: 19, 23) thought, need to be unfolded a little more here. A prehension is a ‘concrete fact of relatedness’ attached to an occasion of experience of which it constitutes a mode of activity, a detail resulting from a division and referring to an outside world. A prehension is thus a vector movement of capture of a particular element of reality, movement that brings to the actual existence. The actual occasion is in a way the atomic unit of Whitehead’s meta-physics. If, for the author, the actual world is a process, the actual occasion can in a way be understood as the ‘landing’ of this process, the elementary component of the fluctuation of the world.

⁴For more developments on this idea, see Evens (2002), Cox (2009) and Goodman (2010), among others.

⁵For Whitehead (1967: 176; 1978: 16, 233–4), the subject (of a feeling) emerges as such only in *that* occasion of experience, that is, as an ‘occasion of sensitive reaction to an actual world’. In that sense, it is often the process itself, or at least what stands out from/through the process, the contrasting element – for instance a perceived noise – that is the real subject of the experience. The concept of datum names the part of the actual world, the surrounding environment that is prehended by a given physical feeling (then becoming *the* datum of *this* feeling). Following the example of the noise heard, the datum not only constitutes the objectification of the resonating space of this noise, but also its specific physical qualities *and* the bodies perceiving it (Whitehead 1978: 22, 225, 234). This means, since ‘every prehension is a prehension of prehension’ (Deleuze 1988: 105; author’s translation), that subject and object appear to be relative terms, which could be distinguished only according to their activity (or, for William James (2012 I, III, VI), in function of their potential perspective in a given context of experience and not in function of a so-called ontological essence). In other words, in the philosophy of process, subjectivity and objectivity become co-implicating terms in an occasion.

what is identified as ‘music’ comes from a perceptual experience where the mental-conceptual pole determines the qualification of the sounds actually heard, and thus their ‘musical’ dimension.

Of course, the situation becomes more complex when the perceived sound is a chord, a note in a melodic sequence, or a textural composite of noises emitted simultaneously: the same complex process of physical and mental interrelations applies nevertheless, in a game of prehensions where relations of whole/parts, of harmony/dissonance determines the sensitive experience of sound, consequently forming a more or less contrasted pattern, with varying degrees of intensity. Perhaps this is what it means to *entendre* the music: to perceive the rhythmic contrasts, to pay attention to the differences of tonalities, to appreciate the (dis)harmonic movement of inter-related singularities, in any situation, at various levels. Whitehead’s speculative materialism details the game of innumerable prehensions through which musical processes emerge, emphasising the deep inter-relation of mentality and physicality in every aspect of the perceived reality. This complex game is marked by a series of harmonies, bifurcations, divergences: multiple captures. Music thus consists, following Deleuze (2002: 57; 1988: 111), in an operation of capture of the forces that mobilise, cut and crystallise the world. In this sense, it appears to be a concentration, an intensification of the acoustic experience by capturing the surrounding forces to *sonorise* them. Taking on what lingers around, what is woven below formal organisations, conventional attentions and representations: a series of micro-political captures turned towards the tiny rhythms through which the elementary movement of things is felt.⁷

The processes of musical creation not only involve the capture of elements from their surroundings, but also organise them into new blocks of sensations. Such blocks of sensations are composed from the materials at hand, from the perceptions and affections felt in each situation, which are aggregated into percepts and affects; in short, in compositions of relations of forces that alter the way we (can) feel and perceive. But for Deleuze and Guattari (1980: 363–05) it is only when these actual compositions leave their territory of emergence, when they deterritorialise from the lived actuality to trace a diagonal which crosses heterogeneous components to make them hold together, that these unheard sound blocks become new musical creations. Indeed, this take-off from the sensitive to the expressive is what allows the properly creative operation of music, and which makes the

⁷This process of capture implies among others a decoding of the immanent but unheard forces that move the social, a process without which the creation would not pass the threshold of the sensible (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 271, 630).

created work an event as such, having its proper life, independently from all human subjects participating in the different stages of its process (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 271, 630; 2005: 167). This is what the author and composer Hildegard Westerkamp (2002: 52, 56) underlies when she insists on the need for a soundscape composition to be able to become a ‘new place’ from the environmental sounds from which it is (partially) derived.⁸ And for this to happen, something has to *think itself* in its own process of emergence.

5. TECHNICITY OF THE VIBRANT ECOLOGIES

The contribution of process philosophy to the thought of the musical experience leads us to consider the musical event as an ecology: each musical event is the result of a multiplicity of human and non-human agents forming an immanent *agencement* of productive forces, that is, an experience of trans-individual intensity associating all kinds of material, ambient, social, technical, spiritual components, and more (the instruments, their level of maintenance and reaction to the microclimate of the place, the musicians, their mood, the relationships between them, the ambiance of the room, the lighting, the size and attitude of the audience, etc.). This contingent association of disparate elements must be seen as that which creates, produces the music, and that which expresses through it (Nesbitt 2015: 187–9).

The quality of the expression that will emerge then depends not so much on the degree of inspiration of the soloist, the genius of the composer or the arranger, or even on the harmony of the group, but rather, it depends on the configuration of the *agencement* that is present, presence in which all these variables participate, with a multiplicity of others. And the importance of ‘minor’ variables in the bifurcation of the *agencements* should not be underestimated, since a musical *agencement* is subject to the tiniest changes, according to the movement of circumstances. From then on, a whole attention to the conditions of musical creation opens itself.

As ecology, the musical event arises from the contingent, ephemeral and often ambiguous encounter between multiple elements, which contribute in

⁸But Westerkamp has an ambivalent relation to the deterritorialisation inherent to the musical operation, insisting on the necessity for a music piece to preserve some link with the place of *origin* of the recorded sounds: ‘What does it take then to create such a composition from the found sound materials, in other words a piece with its own integrity, a new moment in time in a new place with its very own life and characteristics, yet still sonically connected to the place and time of the original recordings and the composer’s own experiences?’ (Westerkamp 2002: 53). This issue will be addressed in the following sections.

varying degrees to the expressive quality of the music produced. The quality of a musical performance is thus an issue of encounter between/with the different bodies (human, sonic, technological, etc.) participating in the event: attempting to provoke encounters that will compose an ensemble capable of capturing and making heard unheard forces, a more powerful *agencement*, able to make tremble together ‘beings’ and ‘things’. There is no relativism here: the process of musical creation requires an increase in the expressive capacities/potentialities of the ensemble, and this power of a musical *agencement* to affect (or be affected) comes from a fine match of a series of countless conditional factors (and, at some point, a certain margin of luck).

This requires specific techniques. Always singular, a technique is a commitment with the expressive modalities that a practice invents for itself, a (counter-) method⁹ of rigorous experimentation marking a specific turning point in the combination of the creative conditions which determine the quality of the experience (Manning and Massumi 2014: 89–91; Manning 2013: 34). Such a combinatorial art is a question of deploying the uses¹⁰ that will allow the collective to reach the greatest margin of its expressive potential, and especially to learn about/through these uses. A technique often implies a certain level of repetition: each successive operation incorporates a part of the implicit which underlies the ecology of experimentation opening up, and this requires a patient exploration of how a practice comes better to itself (Manning 2013: 33–5).

But one should not think that a technique is the initiative of (a) creative subject(s). As Whitehead’s process philosophy have shown, subjectivity is constituted in the very moment of subjective experience: if there is a subject of the musical creation, it is the creative process as such and only it that can really claim this title: an ecological subjectivity. This has important implications on the process of music creation, but also on the conception of politics. In both cases, the emergence of novelty does not come so much from the

intervention of one of the actors involved, but rather from the abstract machine¹¹ which catalyses the *agencement* in its process of expression, like a kind of thinking-motor taking on specific potentialities to make them stand out in the event. For Deleuze and Guattari (1980: 126–7), collective *agencement* and abstract machine are not separate: in music (and in politics) there always coexists a singular abstract and a collective concrete. We can feel it particularly in moments of great musical intensity: the experiential effect then comes from the expression of a ‘coming-together of the parts [involved, and] not [from] the parts themselves or their structure’ (Massumi 2011: 149). At this moment, a machinic *agencement* is expressing itself, making feel the energetic ‘taking’ of a musical ecology. ‘No-one knows who’s playing it: maybe we all are. Perhaps it’s just playing itself. Perhaps it is playing us’ (Gilbert 2004: 118): *what plays* then comes under a technical-machinic operation – the machinic involves a series of technical operations; it is by their technical element (their technicity¹²) that the *agencements* become machines – which capture heterogeneous expression materials in order to associate them in a consistent manner.

One of the key modalities within the techniques of relation that comes to catalyse and modulate the interaction of the components of the musical *agencement* is the enabling constraint, understood, following Erin Manning (2013: 111), as the setting of the establishment of a series of conditions favouring a limitation of the field of experience while allowing the emerging event to remain open to invention. The concept of enabling constraint encourages the precision of techniques in an open field of experimentation, which can imply the invention of new techniques of collective alignment that go beyond the pure habit of movement (Manning and Massumi 2014: 91–2). Transposed in the field of improvised music, the concept of enabling constraints resonates with the one of improvisation.

⁹Because very often, a method implies the application of categories fixed beforehand to an object defined as such, then excluding or ignoring the processes that do not fit into its thought schemes. Almost never able to get rid of its Cartesian foundations, the method is thus based on a narrow conception of knowledge, where consciousness, language and rationality take precedence, and which often ends up extracting the immanent dimension of thought from experience: ‘Despite its best intentions, method works as the safeguard against the ineffable’ (Manning 2016: 32).

¹⁰The concept of use is understood here in the Agambian (Agamben 2015: 136) sense, that is, as a field of tension between loss and capture. In what matters here, ‘using’ then underlies to respect the radical autonomy of what is captured in the moment of creation. In that sense, ‘mastering’ a technique implies a perpetual opening to an exteriority that exceeds all notion of property. This idea, which concerns art, politics, life, will be developed in the following sections.

¹¹The abstract machine designates the singular operation that opens (or sometimes closes, depending on) the *agencement* to its potential by deterritorialising it through the continuous variation of one or more of its components and/or by the association with other components (logistic-material, conceptual, biological, etc.). ‘The abstract machines ... constitute a kind of *matter of change* ... composed of crystals of potentiality catalysing the connexions, the destratifications and the reterritorialisations from both the living world and the inanimate world’ (Guattari 1979: 13; author’s translation).

¹²Technicity can be closely associated to the abstract machines: the concept refers to all the ‘enabling conditions’ capturing the affective tone of a process to project it towards a new expression, it is the operational field of the expressiveness of the techniques, opening them to their compositional potential. Technique and technicity are inseparable: the technicity is in a way the excess of potential of the technique. The different techniques create potential opportunities for a singularity of form to give rise to a generative process, they actualise the potential which lies in the field of technicity (Manning 2013: 33).

6. RÉSONANCES MANIFESTES: A PROPOSITION OF PHONOSOPHIC PRACTICE

These aesthetical and epistemological considerations offer much to experiment with: and this is what *Résonances manifestes* (Devenir-ensemble 2020), a improvised music piece based on a sound score composed of field recordings from various autonomous demonstrations that shook the streets of Montreal in the recent years, attempted to do. *Résonances manifestes* is the musical expression of a process of research-creation – at the confluence of music, philosophy and political thought – aiming to understand how sound and music contribute to the (trans)formation of affective communities, these communities in movement which do not stand on pre-established identities or shared interests, but are moved by the intensity and the density of the affects that circulate among them.¹³ Work on the piece has been mobilised by the thoughtful dimension of sound and music elaborated in the previous parts of this article (as it has troubled and contributed to its conceptualisation), at the artistic, philosophical and political level, and appears to be in this sense an original case of phonosophic practice (Sound example 1).

How does a practice orient itself among the countless components of the event? What techniques are required by the creative process to maximise the expressive potentialities of the musical *agencement*? How does a community emerge in a given acoustic ecology? Such musical and political issues stemming from the creation of the piece *Résonances manifestes* have found a relevant avenue of exploration in the concept of improvisation.¹⁴ Improvisation is here approached, following author and composer Sandeep Bhagwati (2010: 10), as a set of compositional techniques for practices of collective improvisation that rely on singular indications able to orient the musicians without repressing their ‘spontaneous’ expression. The indications

could be understood as virtual rules¹⁵ that inflect contingency through the relative stabilisation of certain elements of the context to act as a support for the musical coming-into-relation of the different components forming the *agencement* that creates the performance (Nesbitt 2015: 189–92). But the relationships between the various components of the musical *agencement* are not, as such, the only desires mobilising the production of a piece and/or a performance: what is at stake is also the search for the aesthetic quality, that is, the maximisation of the expressive capacities of the musical *agencement*.

Always singular and immanent, each musical *agencement* begins from a problem to be unfolded through the (improvised) performance: and it is this problem that will determine the type of virtual rule/enabling constraint chosen. These virtual rules coming to support the current expression of the bodies composing the musical *agencement* often takes the form of a score. The good score is thus the one that makes it possible to address the affective issues related to the singular problem that mobilises the formation of the *agencement*. Good, in a Spinozist-Deleuzian ethical sense, that is to say as a structure (shaped from the singularity of the (musical) event) of composition of the lived relationships increasing the expressive power of the *agencement*.

Among the multiple actualisations of the affective community, autonomous political demonstrations appeared as privileged moments through which communities get consistency from the collective perception of sonic elements. It is very often when such gatherings take to the streets that we can see how the affective power of sound acts like a magnetic force, and comes to make us feel the collective in a kind of sensitive immediacy. Such emotional power is evidently at work in certain musical practices. What happens in these moments that take bodies in spite of themselves, before any reflection? The use of recorded ambient sounds appeared particularly relevant to address such a problem focused on the porosity of the common to the environment. So relevant that it appealed to the composition of a sound score.

The score of the piece *Résonances manifestes* is composed of sounds of demonstrations that have been captured through a sound study realised in the streets of Montreal between 2015 and 2018. This sonic inquiry on the affective communities occurring during the demonstrations has involved hours of recording, listening and note taking, in a continual cycle of composition¹⁶ that have set the rhythm of the study.

¹³It is also important to specify briefly that the work on the piece has been the occasion to develop the ecological dimension of the concept of affective community. The affective community takes in a common becoming all bodies – living or not, human or not – that are linked by/in its field of resonance (Collectif pour l'intervention 2012: 47–8). It is the tonality of this relationship between bodies, worlds, which qualifies the affective community. Indeed, in a music performance or in a demonstration, it is through the ecological *attunement* to the multiplicities that animate the event that a new collective individuation can emerge (Manning 2013: 219).

¹⁴The concept of improvisation comes from the contributions and limits of the poles of musical practice that improvisation and composition are to deepen the concomitant zone between the two and create affirmative machinic propositions from it – think and experiment from the in-between.

¹⁵The notion of rule must be understood here as the construction of a continuum of variation, a series of optional norms that emerge from the variability of the components (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 130).

¹⁶Recording – listening/discussion/collective reflection – composition(s)/intervention(s) – new recording: this is the perpetual cycle that marks the militant sound investigation of the collective Ultra-red (2008), whose approach greatly influenced the sound study realised for this project of research-creation.

A sound study that was not only an opportunity to capture the main materials for the sound score of the piece, but that was also crucial in the development of its internal organisation. Indeed, the reflections that emerged from this process of inquiry oriented the structuring of the piece in nine movements, each expressing an affective tonality¹⁷ experienced in autonomous demonstrations. These affective tones are sometimes linked to specific moments (e.g., the sudden riot police attack linked to fear-anger affects), but are never totally dependent on them (Sound example 2).

The elaboration of the sound score required a patient sound editing studio work in order to highlight the contrasts and reduce the impact of some disturbances while preserving the roughness that characterises the (sonic) experience of the demonstrations. This editing work was a *technical* issue in itself: it was a matter of accentuating the qualities already present to support the indicative function of the sounds, rather than authorising all possible alterations, which would have risked breaking the link to the recording context, and therefore one of the specificities of the piece.¹⁸ In other words, too much sound editing work could have dissipated part of the affective force of these sounds by blurring their physical-actual dimensions, which would have made certain conceptual operations of perception (through which these sounds can be associated with the demonstrations) difficult, thereby lowering their charge of potential. On the other hand, the creation of the piece was mobilised by a non-representational relationship to politics: it was therefore not a question of generating a documentary, or even touristic ('as if you were on the demo') relationship

to the demonstrations, but rather to share the affective tonalities which marks these singular moments of the common,¹⁹ to start from these materials to compose new blocks of sensations with their own life. This was achieved through different editing interventions, like the parsimonious use of some sound effects on specific passages of the score to amplify a singular sonic quality, which was a way to alter the sonic recognition and the identification of the lived events to put the attention on what was *implied* by the sounds, their potential affective charge (Sound example 3).²⁰

These technical considerations bring back on another angle the ambivalent dimension of the positions of subject and object stressed by process philosophy: an ecological perspective cannot limit itself to fixed positions such as the 'subjectivity' of the composer and the 'objectivity' of the sound environment. Sound materials preserve autonomy, they always resist, at some point, the operations of capture. Even more, they can act as the true subjects of a musical event. And that is what they do in the piece *Résonances manifestes*: the field recordings composing the sound score not only have their own musicality – with which the musicians of the ensemble have to play – but also this musical expression is effectively productive: it provokes, catalyses, extends, pushes the bodies touched by it to consider these sounds not only as objects, but also as true subjects taking part in the performance. 'As' the musicians, they can indeed change the mood, contribute to the melodic lines or counterpoints, impose or instil a specific rhythm, etc.: they participate in the phonosophic practice that is then occurring.

Such an agency does not necessarily dissolve all the interventions of the musicians in the field of pure contingency, but it undermines the intentionality and the personality that often reside at the core of the music production. Rather than being only the sum of the

¹⁷The affective tonality marks the quality of the consistency that takes on beings, things and ambiances – in sum all the molecular multiplicities animating any event – in a common becoming. The sensible quality of a vibrating ecology comes from the affective tonality that characterises its expressibility, the way this occasion of experience feels itself with others. The interplay between the affective tones, to which we can access through practices of affective attunement, reveals a whole politics of frequencies.

¹⁸In this sense, the relationship with these singular sounds in the creation of the score can be situated between two major contemporary tendencies in the sound editing of field recordings. The soundscape composition insists on the link between the ambient sounds and their context of 'origin', a link which must be maintained (at some point) in order to avoid the creation of (mainly) schizophrenic relationships to ambient sounds or even the control of nature through sound manipulation (Westerkamp 2002: 52–5; DeLuca 2017). At the opposite, the acousmatic approach allows all possible transformations, without any consideration for the 'original' context of a recorded sound in order to subsume all the components under the musical quality of the sounds. The approach mobilised in *Résonances manifestes* was determined by the considerations required by the process of creation of the piece, without any moral relation to these contemporary tendencies.

¹⁹Such an approach is inspired by the one developed by Bob Ostertag (2009: 116) for the piece *All the Rage*, created in collaboration with the Kronos Quartet from sounds captured during the queer riots in San Francisco (Ostertag and the Kronos Quartet 1991): 'The point was not to transform the riot into something else, but to use music to bring the listener into the riot. Not the gimmicky sense of creating an audio illusion of actually being in the riot, but to get inside the energy, the passion, and most of all the anger.'

²⁰This non-representational approach determined many more dimensions of the music piece; for instance, it also influenced the relatively non-chronological progression of the different movements composing the piece, which have rather been organised according to a potential succession of affective tonalities. A similar approach has been used in Christopher DeLaurenti's *activist sound* series (DeLaurenti 2016), where the cut-up montage amplifies the contrasts in/between the acoustic ecologies of/around demonstrations, far from any chronological structuration. But DeLaurenti's work on demonstrations differ in many ways, among others through the emphasis put on human voices (that lower the attention accorded to the non-human plurality in the acoustic ecologies) and the restraint in the musical expression living with the recorded sounds. In spite of these differences, which cannot really be unfolded here, the *activist sound* series and the *Protest Symphonies* can be considered as true phonosophic creations.

addition of individual inspirations, the musical performance then becomes the result of the encounter between human and non-human actors (with different perceptive capacities, different expressive potentialities). The sound score based on field recordings of ambient sounds²¹ thus poses listening as such as a central element of the process of *comprovisation*: collective perception plays a big role here in the becoming-together of the musical *agencement*. Because it is, once again, a matter of *agencement*: it is only according to the collective *agencements* that perception operates and participates in machines of expression and processes of subjectification (Guattari and Rolnik 2007: 45). Indeed, as Gilbert Simondon (2013: 353) has shown in his lectures on the perception of the different living beings, the perception of sounds, the way in which a collective entity is affected by sound, orients its very capacity to perceive, to be affected by sounds.

The process of creation of the piece took on the challenge of collective listening in the heat of the moment: the musicians of the ensemble had to learn to elaborate common ears, in a way. In fact, if the collective orientation of the ensemble was mainly based on its listening skills, it is because listening came to be a real *material* for the piece. This is why the composition of *Résonances manifestes* involved, in the months before the first performance, a series of listening and reflection workshops with the musicians of the ensemble. This collective training was made necessary in regard to the plurality of sound interventions in the piece. Such a posture has proven to be demanding, requiring not only versatile concentration and opening to unpredictability, instability and loss of bearings, but also excitement and collective intensity which very often mark the autonomous demonstrations.²² But such a creative posture of alert and feverish openness

²¹Westerkamp stresses the specific capacity of such sounds to *make hear* what is often unheard in the everyday experience: the field recordings interrupt the familiarity to a given context, putting the ears in a state of auditory alertness (Westerkamp 2001: 148). Listening to recorded ambient sounds can potentially refine the attention to the nuances and contrasts present (but often not perceived) in a sound ecology, giving access to the non-perceived dimensions of the environment and opening up listening to different modes of perception.

²²Indeed, the composite acoustic ecology of *Résonances manifestes* – formed of a complex association of field recordings, ambient sounds specific to the place of the performance and sounds produced by the instruments of musicians – directly echoes to issues related to the attention to the ambiances and affective tones in the consistency of communities, to the musicality of the actual sounds of politics and to the collective perception of sounds. But this collectivisation of listening corresponds only partly to the ‘sonic commons’ mentioned by Eric Drott (2018: 637) in his article on the drum circle of Occupy Wall Street: these commons refer to the sharing of a soundscape, while the work of common listening effectuated in the creation of the piece *Résonances manifestes* implies a collective refinement of the perception of sound. In other words, it was not only to learn to interact in a shared soundscape, but also to sharpen a capacity to *phonosophy* together in live performance.

has also proven to be uncomfortable for musicians, since it breaks with the metaphysics of individual subjectivity that underlies a large number of musical approaches (Nesbitt 2015: 187–8). There is something risky in these decisive turning points which escape personal will, a risk which can also be the occasion for a magnificent concordance in the adventurous moment, where this fragility of the individual artist turns into a common force that exceeds the sum of its components. A vibrant ecology emerging from a loss of reference points to find others through joint research work and mutual trust in intuitions, which allows for affective densification.

7. THOUGHT-MUSIC AND ECOSOPHY

As intensification and refinement of listening, music as such is a practice of sustained attention to tones that can actively contribute to the collective flexibilisation of sound perception. By its capacity to generate percepts, that is to say ways of perceiving, music is able to open listening to what remains in the imperceptible, to make appreciable what was previously considered to be a disturbance, to distinguish nuances, textures, the play of vibrations, contrasts, continuities and discontinuities. Isn't music aimed at exploding the lived perceptions in sound events that transport, invigorate listening itself?²³

But that does not only concern musical aesthetics: the broadening and the flexibility of perception is a political issue in itself; in fact, refining common perceptions may never have been more crucial, as this epoch can be described as collective torpor, a numbness and/or stiffness in the capacity to share perceptions of the situation. To think between music, philosophy and politics incites to seek the rhythms underlying formal meanings, to explore the multiplicities populating life, to pay attention to potentials of resonance, to start from the productive instability of relationships, to emphasise the openness of processes. This is what the composer and author Pascale Criton (2015: 11) calls a ‘music-thought’: ‘an ethical posture whose impact is political, an ecology of signs turned

²³This question underlies a nuance too crucial for the little place it has taken in this article: the bodies are affected by (dimensions of) sounds and music that they are not able to perceive. As Brian Massumi (2011: 145) stresses, music mobilises incorporeal signs. Hearing – like other senses – is too slow to perceive the atomic actuality of a sound in the tiny instant when it reaches the body: at a certain level, what is perceived is rather a question of non-sensuous perceptions, that is to say, the micro-intervals qualitatively and abstractly charged with affects which come from the virtual (abstract) composition of the senses (Massumi 2011: 18, 65). It means that vibrational force (potentially able to contract in sounds) has effects, even when it is unperceived or even imperceptible. Nevertheless, this effectiveness of the imperceptible must be thought, for most living beings, in relation to the physical-sensory dimension of perception – as the virtual can never be separated from its actualisations in experience.

towards the play of differences, more than ever very topical'. The elaboration of this 'music-thought' will probably need to depart from the *logos* and its logic of seizure and representation – that remains in the concept of *ecology* – to embrace the strange and distant relation to knowledge that lives in the *sophia*. And for this, phonosophy will be a path to explore further, from different trajectories towards multiple experimentations. This one was only a beginning.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355771820000230>

REFERENCES

- Agamben, G. 2015. *L'Usage des corps. Homo Sacer, IV, 2*, trans. J. Gayraud. Paris: Seuil.
- Attali, J. 1977. *Bruits. Essai sur l'économie politique de la musique*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Bergson, H. 1966. *La Pensée et le mouvant*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Bhagwati, S. 2010. Composing through the Realm of Shadows. Conceptual Layers in 'Inside a Native Land' and 'Vineland Stelae'. In B. Paquet (ed.) *Faire œuvre. Transparence et opacité*. Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 3–11.
- Cage, J. 1961. *Silence: Lecture and Writings*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Collectif pour l'intervention. 2012. *Communisme: un manifeste*. Caen: Nous.
- Comité invisible. 2014. *À nos amis*. Montreal: pirate edition.
- Cox, C. 2009. Sound Art and the Sonic Unconscious. *Organised Sound* 14(1): 19–26.
- Criton, P. 2015. Avant-propos. In P. Criton and J.-M. Chouvel (eds.) *Gilles Deleuze. La pensée-musique*. Paris: Centre de documentation de la musique contemporaine, 9–12.
- DeLaurenti, C. 2016. Activist Sound. *Soundcloud*. <https://soundcloud.com/delaurenti/sets/activist-sound> (accessed 24 March 2020).
- Deleuze, G. 1988. *Le Pli – Leibniz et le baroque*. Paris: Minuit.
- Deleuze, G. 2002. *Francis Bacon. Logique de la sensation*. Paris: Seuil.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1980. *Mille plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2*. Paris: Minuit.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 2005. *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*. Paris: Minuit.
- DeLuca, Erik. 2017. Wolf Listeners: Acoustemological Politics and Poetics of Isle Royale National Park. Presentation at the *Still Listening: Pauline Oliveros Commemoration*. Montréal: Institute for the Public Life of Ideas.
- Drott, Eric. 2018. Music Contention and Contentious Music; or, the Drums of Occupy Wall Street. *Contemporary Music Review* 37(5–6): 626–645.
- Evens, A. 2002. Sound ideas. In B. Massumi (ed.) *A Shock to Thought. Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*. London: Routledge, 171–87.
- Gilbert, J. 2004. Becoming-Music: The Rhizomatic Moment of Improvisation. In I. Buchanan and P. Swiboda (eds.) *Deleuze and Music*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 118–39.
- Goodman, S. 2010. *Sonic Warfare. Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Guattari, F. 1979. *L'Inconscient machinique*. Paris: Recherches.
- Guattari, F. 2011. Produire une culture du dissensus. Hétérogenèse et paradigme esthétique. Université ouverte. http://cip-idf.org/article.php3?id_article=5613 (accessed 7 August 2018).
- Guattari, F. and Johnston, J. 2000. Vertige de l'immanence. Félix Guattari, entretien. *Chimères*. 38: 1-18
- Guattari, F. and Rolnik, S. 2007. *Micropolitiques*. Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond/Seuil.
- Harney, S. and Moten., F. 2014. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. New York: Autonomedia.
- James, W. 2012. *Essays on Radical Empiricism*. Adelaide: University of Adelaide Library.
- Manning, E. 2013. *Always More than One. Individuation's Dance*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Manning, E. 2016. *The Minor Gesture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Manning, E. 2020 [forthcoming]. *For a Pragmatics of the Useless*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Manning, E. and Massumi, B. 2014. *Thought in the Act. Passages in the Ecology of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massumi, B. 2011. *Semblance and Event. Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Nesbitt, N. 2015. Critique and Clinique. From Sounding Bodies to the Musical Event. In P. Criton and J.-M. Chouvel (eds.) *Gilles Deleuze. La pensée-musique*. Paris: Centre de documentation de la musique contemporaine, 187–98.
- Ostertag, B. 2009. *Creative Life. Music, Politics, People and Machines*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Rector, T. and Ernest, M. 2017. Standing Rock, Protest, Sound and Power (part 2). *Sounding Out!* 64. <http://soundstudiesblog.com/2017/11/30/sounding-out-podcast-64-standing-rock-protest-sound-and-power-part-2> (accessed 25 June 2019).
- Simondon, G. 2013. *Cours sur la perception. 1964–1965*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Ultra-red. 2008. Some Thesis on Militant Sound Investigation, or, Listening for a Change. In *the Middle of a Whirlwind*. <http://inthemiddleofthewhirlwind.wordpress.com/some-theses-on-militant-sound-investigation-or-listening-for-a-change/>

- Westerkamp, H. 2001. Speaking From Inside the Soundscape. In D. Rothenberg and M. Ulvaeus (eds.) *The Book of Music and Nature*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 143–53.
- Westerkamp, H. 2002. Linking Soundscape Composition and Acoustic Ecology. *Organised Sound* 7(1): 51–6.
- Whitehead, A. N. 1967. *Adventure of Ideas*. New York: Free Press.
- Whitehead, A. N. 1978. *Process and Reality*. New York: Free Press.

DISCOGRAPHY

- Devenir-ensemble. 2020 [forthcoming]. *Résonances manifestes*. Montreal: Cuchabata records.
- Ostertag, B. and the Kronos Quartet. 1991. *All the Rage*. New York: Nonesuch records.