

PAPERS 9 Performance as sound event

Chair – John Levack Drever
THUR 12.00-13.30 | RR5

All around the place: sound immersion and frontality

Jeanne Bovet

Being a listening place as well as a seeing place, the theatre is a place where sound and images coexist and interact. Although in Western theatre both sound and image are mostly frontal phenomena due to the use of the frontal stage, other combinations have occurred throughout history, and have been made seemingly boundless with the technological and digital development of stage and sound design.

Focusing on the concept of immersion, a brief recall of historical means of both visual and aural immersion will be followed by an analysis of internationally-renowned Québécois stage director Denis Marleau's use of sound immersion processes in his staged plays as well as in his three technological fantasmagories (Maurice Maeterlinck's *Les Aveugles*, Beckett's *Comédie*, Jon Fosse's *Dors mon petit enfant*), in order to underline the sensorial and perceptual shifts induced by these processes in the theatrical relation between the visual and the aural.

Staging sound: a matter of dissociation

Daniel Deshays

Every listening act imposes its own duration. The work unfolds in front of us. It offers itself in the elusiveness of the listening moment, by appearing and disappearing, and ending in oblivion.

There are always choices to be made regarding what is being offered to us. However the proliferation of choices is not in itself a guarantee to a better and more enjoyable experience.

In terms of sound, everything appears to come into play in the way we create a dissociation from the real world. In fact, what seems crucial in the simulation of reality is not so much the ability to faithfully reproduce sounds but to keep the freedom to choose what we want to listen to from all that is being offered to us; and to be able to allocate our attention span according to what we wish to hear.

Distant noises. The sound of hearing

Marie-Madeleine Mervant-Roux

If in the theatre the spectator remains invisible, unseen apart from exceptions or transgressions, s/he is permanently audible, producing coughs, laughs, murmurs, movement, breath, and silence. These phenomena are often evoked as anecdotal, pleasant or even solemnly magical.

The study that Mervant-Roux conducted on multiple performance runs of the same scenic productions – placing her multidirectional microphone in the heart of the audience – illustrated the structural character of what constitutes a literal acoustical modulation of the scenic action, a modulation of acoustics. In theatre eyes are heard, and this phenomenon works directly a tempo on the production. This aspect is fundamental for the differentiation between the media of theatre and cinema (a theatre piece is retransmitted on television with ambient audience noise included. This never occurs for the retransmission of a film on television, even if it does make a difference for the film spectator whether the movie theatre is packed or empty).