



Sound, Site and the City in Nadia Vadori-Gauthier's Resistant Dancing Project *Une minute de danse par jour*

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Abstract

This article examines the recorded city soundscape and its relation to dance in Nadia Vadori-Gauthier's resistant dancing project *Une minute de danse par jour* started in 2015. Referring to the concepts of site and non-site, site-specific performance, sonic landscape and Cage's experiment with city soundscapes, I look into three types of sites used by the dancer: the street, means or sites of transport and isolated places (cemeteries). I am particularly interested in the ways in which the found sound determines the dancer's movements and how it is framed both by the dancer and the camera.

Keywords: sound; site; dance; Paris; resistance; Vadori-Gauthier

1. Introduction

Une minute de danse par jour is an artistic project launched by Nadia Vadori-Gauthier, a Parisian performer and dancer, as a response to the events of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting. Since then she has continued her interventions into social, urban, private and natural sites on daily basis, uploading their camera recordings in a website archive. The artist describes her initiative as a reaction to the "hardening" and "violence" of the world through "sensitivity", which is supposed to soften it gradually by repeated action. With its manifesto of "poetic resistance" and "local micro-political"¹ action, Nadia Vadori-Gauthier's project intervenes into specific situations, sites and events, most of which (yet not all) take place in Paris. Risky and unpredictable because of its real time development, the project tests the limits of openness of

¹ The terms used by Vadori-Gauthier in her project description, <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/en/the-project/>.

city space to vulnerable action and its oppositional potential. The oppositional nature of Vadori-Gauthier's dance mostly relies on what Judith Butler (2016) described as peaceful resistance and the "marshalling" of vulnerability as a way of protest (p. 22). The very act of resistance is based on exposing oneself to risk and demonstrating one's vulnerability in situations in which it can be potentially used against us. Vadori-Gauthier's dances realised in the city space often involve such vulnerable exposures caused by the unpredictability of human reactions and the city itself. Sometimes the dances only break the routine of everyday life, while on other occasions they redefine perspective and estrange commonplace experiences. They might also obstruct and disturb work or traffic, or become part of street demonstrations and protests. Very often they engage in double resistance – with the demonstrators but also against them, creating the alternative non-violent micro-space which partly mocks the violence of the protest. These direct interventions into sites and situations are simultaneously indirect, mediated events because of the presence of the recording camera. The camera imposes a perspective, defines and restricts space, affects other people's behaviour, increases the safety of the performer on some occasions but also exposes her to aggression on others. To most of audiences the project is only available in its website version as a recording of an intervention into (mostly) urban spaces. It is this mediated aspect of the project that is of particular interest to the study of urban soundscape. The acoustic layer of the dances in most cases consists of the recorded background sounds of the city against or next to which the sounds produced by the dancer's movements are registered. Being most often only by-products of the performer's actions, the sounds are sometimes made intentionally and actively listened to. The short video clips are thus in their acoustic layer the recordings of the urban micro-soundscapes.

The aim of this paper is to investigate urban micro-soundscapes recorded in Nadia Vadori-Gauthier's project and their connection to the city and the dance itself. I will look into the relation between the dancer and the soundscape, (random) choreography of sound, reaction to its unpredictability and sensitivity, and vulnerability to sound, by examining several examples of dances realised in the city space in three types of locations: streets (including street demonstrations), transport (e.g. underground train stations and subways) and isolated sites (cemeteries). These types of location will demonstrate different responses in dance to various intensities and qualities of urban soundscape.

As Nadia Vadori-Gauthier's project is not mainly or solely interested in sound, the term city soundscape operates here retroactively (as being framed by the camera recording). If, as R. Murray Schafer suggests, "[a] soundscape consists of events heard not seen" (Schafer, 2012, p. 99), the sound in *Une minute de danse par jour* in a sense might be more similar to what Richard Leppert (1995) defines as "sonoric landscape" (p. 18) and Alain Corbin (2004) refers to as "auditory space" (p. 184). The landscape, according to Leppert, "is a perception, a specific and ultimately confined view of a portion of the land that seems 'worth' viewing because it is somehow noteworthy. Thus landscape is the different within the same; it is what draws attention to itself" (p. 17). The landscape is defined by what goes beyond the ordinary experience of the land: "when a portion of land is raised in our consciousness to the status of *landscape*, the physical entity is reconstituted in our minds as something in excess of the factual" (Leppert, 1995, p. 17). Analogically, the soundscape would be defined through this excess or otherness in perception of sound; it is "an auditory or aural landscape": "[I]like a landscape,

a soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world” (Thompson, 2004, p.1, discussing Alain Corbin).

In *Une minute de danse par jour*, however, sound is rarely the element that “elevates” the site beyond the commonplace. It can be described rather as the sonority of the landscape – the sound layer of what comes to be identified as landscape/cityscape. In Vadori-Gauthier’s project what renders the site “noteworthy” is the camera recording that frames it both in time (set beginning and end) and space (range of vision, camera angle and distance). The camera foregrounds the site for the viewer, by choosing a fragment of the city to focus on, and a part of this fragment consists of sound. For the dancer, the foregrounding – or landscaping of the site – takes varied forms, from random selection to social (e.g. street protest), personal (e.g. visit to a cemetery) and aesthetic (art or architecture) motivation. Although sound itself, as already mentioned, is rarely a target in Vadori-Gauthier’s project, the way of listening that it encourages through dance makes it “remarkable”. Dance filters the found sound, imposing on urban soundscape meanings or rhythms that make them audible (noticeable) and also visible (translated into movement). However, before this form of foregrounding happens, the site chosen for each dance functions as a found space.

2. Found Spaces / Found Soundscapes

According to Brandon LaBelle, sound art has historically been connected with experiments in site-specific and installation arts, which started to focus on the environment with its variety of viewpoints and experiences, including sound: “for the very move away from objects toward environments, from a single object of attention and toward a multiplicity of viewpoints, from the body toward others, describes the very relational, spatial, and temporal nature of sound itself” (LaBelle, 2006, p. xii). Likewise, Vadori-Gauthier’s project – not being sound art itself – makes sound one of its crucial components. In site specific art sound is one of the specificities of the site to be explored: it is part of the found space.

Using found space in performance involves a special kind of relationship between site and performer and relies on the primacy of the former. The found space, as Richard Schechner argues in his *Environmental Theater*, has to be “acknowledged” and “coped with creatively”. Its elements, such as “architecture, textual qualities, acoustics, and so on – are to be explored and used, not disguised” (Schechner, 1994, p. xxxiv). They can also drastically affect the performance itself which needs to adjust to the changing circumstances. In Vadori-Gauthier’s project the site is used as found space; in some cases it might be additionally choreographed but in most it is left as it is found, with the dance being just a one-minute temporary “occupation” of that place.² The audience, the routes and practices of particular places can change the course of the – mostly improvised – dances.³ Dancing, as Johannes Birringer (1998) notes,

² For the ghostly conceptualisations of site and performance, see: Mike Pearson and Clifford McLucas in Kaye (1998, 214).

³ In general terms, Vadori-Gauthier’s dance project can be classified as a form of site-specific dance: e.g. it fits into the general definition of the genre, such as the one formulated by Victoria Hunter in her introduction to

illuminates a fundamental aspect of the body-in-space, namely, its inherent motivation to ascertain its existence, its being-in-the-world, by projecting itself and moving into space, by taking up space, by shaping space and touching the environment, mediating or minding the self in relation to others. (p. 29)

Dancing in found spaces demands constant negotiations of these spaces with oneself, other dancers and the witnesses.

One of the important aspects of such performances is the dynamic nature of its boundaries. As Nick Kaye argues in his *Site-specific Art*, the result of “site-specific work’s very attempt to establish its place will be subject to the process of slippage, deferral and indeterminacy” (Kaye, 2000, p. 183). Although written in response to different forms of site-specific art, the comments about the tendency of “the limits and boundaries of the artwork to be inescapably *restless*” and “the inside of the work [...] already penetrated by the outside” (Kaye, 2000, p. 192) accurately describe Vadori-Gauthier’s project’s relation to found space. As technically the area of the dance is delimited by the camera’s field of view, the real space itself is not really separated physically from the location. The performance site is thus by definition open to and vulnerable to *restlessness* and exchange between the inside and the outside.

The recorded sound is even more indeterminate for its boundaries. It often transgresses the barriers set by architecture and invades space, connecting it to the outside. LaBelle sees sound as transformative and transgressive in relation to social situations and spaces:

sound amplifies and silences, contorts, distorts, and pushes against architecture; it escapes rooms, vibrates walls, disrupts conversation; it expands and contracts space by accumulating reverberation, relocating place beyond itself, carrying it in its wave, and inhabiting always more than one place; it misplaces and displaces [...], sound overflows borders. It is boundless on the one hand, and site-specific on the other. (2006, p. xi)

The sound in Vadori-Gauthier’s project goes beyond the recorded space. When it is non-diegetic⁴, it might be experienced as an intrusion or alternatively create a sense of immersion into and connectedness with the city. As sound is always “intrinsically and unignorably relational” (LaBelle, 2006, p. ix), the off screen or remote background sound embed the site in the larger space – in the case of the dances to be studied in this paper – that of the city.

This aspect of connectedness and blurry boundaries can also be seen in terms of relational concepts of Site and Non-Site developed by Robert Smithson (discussed by Nick Kaye). They

Moving Sites: Investigating Site-Specific Dance Performance: “dance performance created and performed in response to a specific dance or location” (2015, p.1). However, it also seems to represent a trend of moving away from the category of strict or pure specificity (Hunter, 2015, p. 14), being improvised and not committed extensively to the studios explorations of site characteristic of, for example, earlier performances (see McLucas in Kaye, 1998, 213; Lorek-Jezińska, 2003, pp. 47-54).

⁴ I use the term non-diegetic sound in a technical sense, meaning the one whose source is not within the camera field of view. However, I assume that it is impossible to define this category in other senses, as the soundtrack always enters into some relation with the image and cannot be fully detached or fully synchronised and integrated. The sounds that are technically extra-diegetic are very often the ordinary and expected elements of urban environments. In some of Vadori-Gauthier’s dances sounds might be meta-diegetic, not necessarily imagined by the dancer but integrated into the “imaginary matrix” of the dance (e.g. a bird fluttering its wings) (cf. Gorman, 1987, pp. 22-26; Donnelly, 2014, pp. 1-3).

seemingly reverse the relation of the space defined as exhibition or playing area to what is beyond it, by attributing definition to the latter and indeterminacy to the former. The site, as Kaye suggests, “is not available as an ‘object’, for it is not static: the site is mobile, always in the process of appearance and disappearance [...]. The site, in fact, is an effect of mapping, yet always remains antithetical to the map” (2000, p. 96). It is the non-site that attempts to define the site, “prompt[ing] a dialectical move toward the site which cannot be resolved” (Kaye 2000, p. 96). In such conceptualisation, the city, which would be the Non-Site of the project, defines the limits or attempts to define the limits of the project’s site. As the camera field of vision remains more or less stable, the unstable relation between site and non-site can move into or outside the dancing area. The sound layers, however, always remain penetrable; the city sounds pervade the playing area and merge with whatever sounds are produced in dance.

In what could be described as part of her artistic manifesto⁵, Vadori-Gauthier emphasises the spontaneity of choices and unpreparedness of her actions, saying that she is committed to reality as it is, without embellishment, preparation or idealisation (Mallié, 2018). However, this process of creating one-minute dance often takes more than four hours (sometimes as much as twelve hours) a day and might involve repeating dances and adjusting perspective when the artist is not satisfied with the effect (Mallié, 2018). It is not surprising then that the dance movements and clothes the dancer is wearing often seem carefully choreographed. They create analogies and contrasts that could hardly be just accidental. Thus in dance the found space undergoes the process of aestheticisation in which the nature of the site is investigated and tested. The choreography of the dance itself, including the costumes, often matches and thus exposes the visual features of the setting or merges with the background so that the dancer and the site become inseparable. Sometimes the visual choreography enters into contradictions and conflicts with the site, by which it estranges what is usually familiar to one’s sight. On other occasions, elements that seem not to match the city at the start of the dance or even contradict each other in the dancer’s costume form instant allegiances with the transforming site⁶. Those instant and disappearing analogies mark moments of connectedness – of sudden adaptations to the city networks and mobile “scapes”. In this way what is demonstrated is being “in” – but also being “of” the city – its part and element.

The found soundscape is governed by similar principles. Despite its dominant visual appeal, Vadori-Gauthier’s project is also an experiment into the city soundscape, using in most of the city dances the found sound of the particular location recorded live. The dance transforms the way the sound is perceived or apercived by contradictions and analogies/allegiances with the setting similar to the visual effects discussed above. The dance itself produces sounds that melt into the urban soundscape or become exposed against the background near-silence. “Silence” in urban space usually means temporary suspension of traffic sound (e.g. by traffic lights) or the background sound muffled or shut off by architectural barriers, such as a cemetery wall or

⁵ <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/en/the-project/>.

⁶ For example, the artist might be wearing a necklace or shoes that turn out to match exactly the colour of several cars passing when the traffic lights change.

the strip of trees enclosing a site. It is often barely audible in the background and is exposed only when other foreground sounds subside or the dancer exposes the background through movement.

3. Caging the City

In aesthetic terms the use of city sound in the project by Nadia Vadori-Gauthier bears a lot of resemblance to John Cage's experiments with sound and silence. The performance of John Cage's "4'33" in various urban locations partly revealed the density and intensity of the urban soundscape. Its original version designed for the concert hall venues challenged the audience's expectations but also expanded their range of sensory experience. Framing the various sounds that compose silence in performance, Cage's "4'33" exposed itself to randomness and chance, unpredictability and reality, performing what could be seen or heard as improvisation. Transferring Cage's composition into a different context – that of open space urban sites – is in a sense simultaneously more and less challenging. Despite its low definition soundscape, the city still offers something to listen to, something that can be hardly thought of in terms of silence. Another aspect would be the absence of an expectant audience, the one to whom the sound needs to be structured and, in a sense, remarkable. Yet it is more challenging because of abandoning the frame that would grant it a sense of definition and importance present in the original concert hall version. Brandon LaBelle considers the concert hall version of "4'33" to be site-specific, that is dependent on the site for its meaning, which can be described as questioning of the "determinants" of that space. As LaBelle (2006) rightly argues, when transposed into the street, "such a project would become diluted" and would risk "sabotaging itself" by expecting silence in confrontation with conceptual art (p. 293). Yet by subverting the original paradigms the project might be also seen as "anarchic" – as liberating and letting in the chaos of the everyday practices of the city, as LaBelle suggests (2006, p. 293).

Two versions of the project shown in *A Tribute to John Cage* (1973) by Nam June Paik – the one with the piano (Boston) and the other one without (Manhattan) – though very similar in content, show an important change of focus. In the former, there is still an expectation similar to the one in the concert hall and the "knowledgeable" audience knowing when to applaud. In the second – the one open to chance – there is no instrument, only the recording. The division into movements is similar and the measurement of time too. But what is being recorded and listened to are the sounds of the city randomly selected by throwing the I Ching "to determine performance sites" on the city map (the exhibition plates⁷). The project is thus subject to "chance, randomness, the democratisation of sounds" (the exhibition plate) and Cage encourages the audience to "listen to the sound of this environment" and "open [one's] ears and listen" (Cage's voiceover in the film⁸). At these places it is only the city soundscape that is being recorded for a specific span of time. With the first movement performed in the middle of the day and in the middle of the busy street, the second movement in a green urban wasteland away from traffic, and the final one in the nighttime busy square (the locations selected

⁷ The exhibition "Nam June Paik", Tate Modern, London (17 October 2019 – 9 February 2020).

⁸ *A Tribute to John Cage* by Nam June Paik. The film available during the exhibition "Nam June Paik".

by chance), the “silent piece” transforms the found sound of the city into a chance composition, exposing its features and notations through incidental contrast and analogy, change of rhythmic pattern and dynamics. While in the piano version in the street the silent piece is about waiting for the sound that is not there, and hearing – perhaps at some point listening to – what silence means in this place, the Manhattan version is from the beginning focused on listening to the city through the frame, marking its beginning, middle and end. It is the city – instead of silence – that is being listened to.

Framing the city – “C/caging” it – by extracting a fragment of its auditory fabric, using the found sound as an improvised composition is a way of listening that may be said to be a “*positive study program*” (Schafer, 2012, p. 95). Schafer’s positive approach to urban noise involves a redefinition of the perception of the sounds produced by the city transforming it into the soundscape to be listened to rather than abated (2012, p. 95). With the general impression of the urban street sound to be annoying and oppressive and to contribute to noise pollution to be fought against, making the street sound the basis on which the dance is built might be said to open the body to unpredictable rhythms and influences that might be seen as contrary to dance with its regular rhythm and pattern.

In Vadori-Gauthier’s project the recordings frame the city soundscape in similar ways to the open space version of Cage’s silence, exposing its random arrangement of sounds for artistic and meaningful social experience, delimiting it temporally in similar – although not so strictly musical – terms. The artist’s movements legitimise this found sound through reaction and attentiveness that also affect the viewer. In the recordings this reaction seems often delayed and the sound initially aperceived or ignored to be foregrounded retroactively. Asynchronicity, particularly *ostensible* in the dances featuring traffic “noise”, sometimes turns the dance into a frantic reaction to chance stimuli that evade and invade human physical and cognitive responses. The impression is that the music, rhythm and choreographic arrangement do not match, that the internal rhythm of the dance fails to correspond to the acoustic irregularity of the city. When it does, the dancer seems to have finally discovered the rhythmic pattern of the city, tuning into its soundscape, but never relaxing the tension that is a prerequisite of attention and awareness. The tensions visible in the dancer’s movements record the reaction to the outside space without valorising its effect in positive or negative categories⁹. The similar reactions happen in confrontation with some natural sounds, but their intensity and speed are much lower. Yet the very fact of the body being exposed, vulnerable to outside sound remains the same.

⁹ The city streets have often been associated with unpredictable and oppressive noise, causing distress and fatigue by its irregularity. Karin Bijsterveld presents an interesting contrast between street and industrial noise in the early 20th century: “At the end of the 1920s, the Noise Commission of London for instance claimed that street noise was a much more serious problem than industrial noise, because street noise, unlike industrial noise, had no rhythm. This made the clatter of traffic harder to adjust to than the cadence of industrial machines. Such difficulty of habituating to the chaos of street noise created angry emotions and added to fatigue. Lack of rhythm thus made street noise more distressing than industrial noise” (Bijsterveld, 2012, p. 154).

4. *Une minute de danse par jour*: Dances and Sounds

Although in modern and contemporary art, dance is often seen as separate from music and external sound¹⁰, it is certainly based on the internal rhythm developed by a dancer. Silent dancing, which is what Nadia Vadori-Gauthier usually performs, either implies dancing to the internal rhythm of the dancer or the external sounds produced by the environment. Silent dancing in urban locations is exposed to found soundscapes. No matter whether focused on the performer herself or the environmental sound for support, the dance involves attention to and tension with the city soundscape. Its lack of regularity and unpredictability can be both liberating and oppressive, it can be either integrated into the dance or remain external.

The playing area of each of Vadori-Gauthier's dances is delimited by two factors – firstly, the spatial quality of a site and, secondly, the camera's placement and field of view. The dancer tries not to move beyond the viewing field¹¹ and often negotiates this space with other people who happen to be within it. Thus what comes to be defined as site in the project is technologically determined by the camera first and then by the negotiations of this site with the found environment. The soundscape or the sonic landscape always extends beyond the camera field of vision to include non-diegetic sounds. The artist's perspective – both visual and auditory – differs from the one experienced by the viewer, who can see the space behind the dancer and hear the sounds near the microphone better. The different intensity of auditory experience might affect the ways in which the connection between sound and dance is interpreted.

In the following part of this paper I will analyse three categories of dances grouped according to their location in the city space. Starting with the category of "street and traffic", I look into dances performed in the streets of Paris with varying intensity of traffic "noise"¹², in which the sonorities of the sites are exposed and explored. The second category consists of dances commenting on mobility and transport. Despite quite oppressive sounds that they record, the dances seem to approach the noise produced when moving in the city as positive experiences to be explored. The last category features three dances performed in cemeteries, to be dis-

¹⁰ According to Merce Cunningham, people find it difficult "to accept that dancing has nothing in common with music other than the elements of time and division of time" (1996, p. 153). The concept of "dancing itself" (Cunningham qtd. in Huxley & Witts, 1996, p. 155) or dancing for its own sake separates the dance from its connection to or support in conventional music and locates it in the dancers (Cage, 1996, p. 135).

¹¹ This aspect of the connection between the dancer and the camera resembles Cunningham's video dance.

¹² Although I look at the traffic noise in a "positive" perspective, I am well aware of a very ambiguous status of the concept of "noise" in sound, cultural and environmental studies. What could be described as traffic noise has contradictory implications, of something to explore and listen to, on the one hand, and something to escape or suffer from, on the other. It is both conservative and hegemonically oppressive as well as confrontational and oppositional (cf. Attali, 2003, pp. 12-14), and it can be used in all these implications simultaneously in Vadori-Gauthier's project. For the discussion about the impossibility of defining noise and on its multiplicity of meanings and uses see: Hainge (2013, pp. 1-11) and Schwartz (2011). Hillel Schwartz in his study approaches noise as "an active historical agent, be it provocateur, saboteur, ally, or poltergeist", outside the binary moral judgements and beyond reducing it to being "mere epiphenomenon" (by-product) (2011, pp. 25-26).

cussed for their negotiations of the city's micro- and macro-spaces. The analysis will be conducted on the basis of the films recorded by the artist from the perspective of the observer, which – as mentioned in several cases – might differ from the perspective of the dancer and other live participants of the project.

5. Streets and Traffic

Out of numerous dances performed in the streets I have selected three to illustrate various relations between the dancer and the part of urban soundscapes that is often considered to be the cause of noise pollution. Starting with the dance exploring the secrecy of earphone listening in the street, I move on to the dance developed in reaction to intensive traffic sound and then to the one created in response to a street demonstration.

Dance 658¹³ (1 November 2016) thematises the activity of listening. Exploring the relation between public and private listening spaces, the dance stages an encounter between the dancer and an accidentally met Parisian man listening to music in his earphones. Exposing the secrecy of listening to inaudible sound by both, the dance also incorporates the city sounds as the acoustic layer to which the audience needs to pay attention as the only audible soundtrack available to them. The project explores the concepts of connection and isolation through listening and encourages listening to the city in a manner similar to John Cage's city version of the silent piece.

Listening to music, wearing earphones, similarly to using a Walkman decades ago, makes a listener a holder of the secret and a passer-by – its beholder (cf. Hosokawa, 2012, p. 114). Vadori-Gauthier – as a beholder of the secret – tries to break the monadic barriers set by the listener sitting on the wall next to the street, which she does by asking him to let her listen to the music in one earphone. She then comes to share the secret and externalise it through dance. The dance, which seems to be motivated by the “secret” music, soon expands and incorporates the nearby traffic. Throughout the dance Vadori-Gauthier is focused on the listener, smiling at him and trying to establish the connection through smooth and gentle gestures (waving, spinning), inviting him to participate. Despite the surprise and disorientation visible in the listener's face, he tries to respond through gestures to the dancer's openness. Vadori-Gauthier performs what could be compared to a simple form of interpretive dance, focusing on pleasure and tranquility of listening and reacting to music. By suggesting that there is sound in the site worth dancing to, the dance functions in a similar way to the structure of musical composition in Cage's “silent piece” – it exposes the city sound as a “positive” listening experience. Dance 658 explores the secrecies of individual and privately shared listening and then its expansion into the open city space. The extra-diegetic traffic sound (the street is behind the camera lens) becomes detached from its source, thus forming the soundtrack of the dance. The sonic landscape of the city is acoustically incorporated into the site, but without setting boundaries other than the recording range of the microphone. The conceptual effect of this dancing piece consists in the exploration of the contrast and adjacency of private and public listening, the intimacy and expansiveness of listening experiences, isolation and sharing. The project also

¹³ The dance video is available at: <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/en/danse/dance-658/>.

investigates borders and transgressions between private and shared spaces within the larger public environment. In doing so, to follow the analogy of headphone listening to a Walkman, one could extent Shuhei Hosokawa's argument to suggest that it "is able to construct and/or deconstruct the network of urban meaning" (2012, p. 115). It also "transform[s] the spatial constellation of the urban, communicate[s] autonomously, surreptitiously, tacitly, and present[s] the user as a possible stranger who speaks an incomprehensible pedestrian language" (Hosokawa, 2012, p. 115). Vadori-Gauthier's "Dance 658" is about crossing the boundaries and invisible /inaudible barriers set by the stranger, as a result revalorising the city sound as a surrogate for the silent/secret music.

Dance 468¹⁴ (25 April 2016, Le Pont de Bercy, Paris) is a city traffic dance par excellence. The urban traffic becomes the element of the dance: it structures its choreography, sets the rhythm and pulse, decides about its tempo and volume of the dance itself. As an example of found environment, the site of the dance is only delimited by the range of the camera view and safety of the dancer, who probes into its borders by dancing very close to the curb on the pavement. Although the performer dances to and reacts to the traffic navigated by traffic lights, within this pattern it is rather unpredictable and irregular. The sound layer consists of the noise produced by passing cars, a motorcycle and trains close to the dancer and the quieter traffic noise from the other lane behind the bridge. The sounds closest to the microphone are produced deliberately by the dancer in reaction to the intensity of the traffic noise; they consist mostly of the sound produced by the hard soled shoes shuffling on the pavement, clicking of the beads, thrown onto the ground at the end of the video, and audible breathing (caused by rather unnatural frantic movements performed by the dancer). All sounds are diegetic, with the sources visible within the camera range (the passing cars are heard before they are seen).

When compared with some other dances, Dance 468 seems very dynamic, disruptive and irregular¹⁵. The dancer's body adjusts to the tempo of the city, yet always with some delay, mentally recording the change and then reacting to it, as if the dance was to represent the immediate traces left by the city, an echo, the detritus of sound waves. Largely disregarding the traffic visually, except for taking notice of the passing train and waving, the artist is listening to the sound and participating in its production. The sounds produced by the dancer are also sudden and irregular, at times very intense, and then slowed down to speed up again. While the passing cars cause sudden reactions, the loud motorcycle evokes the most ostensible response, catching the performer's spinning body in an invisible whirlwind. With the artist's heavy breathing and what looks like physical exhaustion, the dance seems to approach the city sound as a negative project, commenting on noise pollution and the effect it has on the human body. It seems to illustrate how "the difficulty of habituating to the chaos of street noise" causes fatigue, distress and "angry emotions" (cf. Bijsterveld, 2012, p. 154). Yet when considered in the context of the whole project, the questions it seems to ask are: which sounds to record and acknowledge, which to react to, preserve in movement, open oneself to, explore its

¹⁴ The video is available at: <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/en/danse/dance-468/>.

¹⁵ The energy and violence of the street noise and the dance in Dance 468 are matched by the intensity of dances featuring water, such as Dance 487 (14 May 2016; <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/en/danse/dance-487/>), in which Vadori-Gauthier enters a fountain and dances frantically to the irregular noise of water.

regularity or invasiveness to understand one's reaction to it. Dance 468 delves into the acoustically invasive site and sound, exploring their effect on the dancer.

Dance 1418¹⁶ (1 December 2018) takes place in a street in Paris during one of yellow vest protests. When talking about another dance realised a week later in a similar situation, Vadori-Gauthier admits in an interview that she would not be able to take the risk if it were not for the one-minute duration: "the constraint of one minute dissolves fear and forces one to go and meet the world" (Mallié, 2018; my translation). Positioned in the middle of the street, the camera records the dancer and other people (mostly yellow vest protesters) passing by and sometimes stopping for a moment to dance in front of the camera. The street is clouded in dark smoke that obliterates the view most of the time, making the yellow vests, traffic lights and bonfires the only well visible landmarks. Wearing dark clothes with stripes of bright yellow cloth and a vast red shawl to protect her face, Vadori-Gauthier merges with the cityscape recorded by the camera. The soundscape consists of non-diegetic remote but loud sounds of the demonstration passing along the main street, audible from a distance, ambulance and police car sirens, horns and shots (tear gas being fired by the police). In the foreground people's voices are recorded, their laughter and whistles. The dancer's or other people's steps are hardly audible as the noise of the demonstration carries from the main street and drowns the nearby sounds.

In "Dance 1418" – perhaps even more than traffic dances – the boundaries and limits of the site cannot be established. The dance site is relational and restless, to use Kaye's terms (see above), open to intrusion, negotiable and vulnerable. The acoustics of the demonstration extend its territory to the nearby streets, which affects people's openness and willingness to participate in Vadori-Gauthier's dance. The dance territory overlaps with the dynamic space of the public demonstration and thus is open to appropriations by passers-by who join in or take over the site. The recording camera is perceived as a tool of communication – of making oneself digitally visible against the background of the street demonstration. At times the dancer imitates the hand and dancing movements performed by the passers-by in front of the camera, such as jumping or hip-hop gestures. However, most of the time her dance remains incongruous with the situation, more poetic and ornamental, yet matching the energy of the surrounding with the large scarf fluttering with each movement and bright yellow elements of her outfit exposed in some choreographic arrangements. The dance is thus a form of intrusion into the space of demonstration, affecting people's behaviour, imposing another rule – the one of dance not violence – on the street. In this case, by following her routine of dancing despite the circumstances, the artist engages in what Judith Butler calls "sustained commitment" to "re-routing of aggression", which she sees as central to nonviolent action (Butler, 2020, p. 27).

6. Transport and Mobility

The two dances selected in this category comment on the speed and noise of the city transport and mobility. Although they both feature urban noise – either generated by people or machines operated by them – the dances seem to approach it rather as a "*positive* study program"

¹⁶ The video is available at: <http://www.uneminutedansepjour.com/en/danse/dance-1418/>.

(Schafer 95). Both use the city sites related to transport and mobility to explore their creative potential, with strongly immersive effects. The empty underground platform and the crowded subway contrast with each other in terms of availability of space and boundaries between site and non-site, yet both foreground the found sound as an element that the dances respond to.

Dance 692¹⁷ (5 December 2016), recorded in the subway leading to the underground station in Paris, is quite a risky intervention into the city space. It negotiates the narrow territory of the subway passage with the passers-by walking fast towards the station. The dancer uses a narrow strap of the corridor along the middle part trying to keep contact with the camera, only occasionally moving towards the people walking by. Moving back and forward, towards and away from the camera, the dancer spins, folds and stretches her arms, stepping sideways from time to time in the gaps between the passing people or sometimes to confront them with a smile. She manages to manoeuvre in between them, but some get distracted by her dance and avoid bumping into the camera in the last moment. Being in motion all the time, the dancer adjusts to the site and its dynamics, yet simultaneously seems to pose a threat to its fragile order. The soundscape consists mostly of reverberating sounds of human voices, fast rhythmical footfalls and the murmur of the passing train in the far end of the tunnel. The dancing steps are hardly audible against this loud combination of sounds, so the dancer seems to be moving to the rhythm and dynamics of the sound produced by others. The dancing style is swift and light, fast and effortless, in tune with the speed and flow of the crowd. It is not oppressive and irritating but smooth and efficient, optimistic and expectant, regular and almost predictable. In that it seems to reflect the productive busyness of the city, its movement and shared experience of moving forward. People's positive reactions (smiling either at the dancer or the camera) confirm this *positive* approach to the urban speed, commotion and excitement that goes with them.

The subway tunnel condenses and amplifies human voices and footfalls, which resonate and multiply. They fill the enclosed space with sound completely, leaving no escape from it. Sharing of space is limited as people have to avoid the dancer and navigate so as not to stand in somebody else's way. They are concerned with surfaces and boundaries of their bodies and struggle to keep them intact, however smooth and natural this action seems to an observer. Sharing of sound, however, is complete. It immerses the passers-by in this collective experience of passing, moving, being in a hurry.

Dance 1539¹⁸ (1 April 2019) was performed at the Quatre-Septembre underground station in Paris renamed on that day into "Premier Avril". Four other artists joined Nadia Vadori-Gauthier in her dance performed on one of the platforms. The camera was placed on the opposite platform so the dancers were visible at some distance, with the foreground occupied by arriving trains. Beginning with the empty platform, which makes the dancers both visible and audible to the camera, the scene shows the artists miming movements and behaviours that seem to imitate travelling by train and waiting or sitting in a carriage. Their gestures and postures look rather unnatural and grotesque, suggesting both playfulness of travel but also its

¹⁷ The video is available at: <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/en/danse/dance-692/>.

¹⁸ The video is available at: <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/en/danse/dance-1539/>.

incompatibility with the human body. Following the loudspeaker announcement of the approaching train, the dancers seem to prepare for the arrival by speeding up their movements as if trying to match the noise and speed of the train. At that stage their accelerating movements and steps are audible, with Vadori-Gauthier jumping and the male dancers stepping faster in more mechanical robot-like movements. The view of the dancers is then obscured by two trains arriving from opposite directions. The dancers can be seen for a moment in a narrow gap between the carriages. Being in the foreground, the sounds produced by the trains dominate: the decelerating and then accelerating clatter of the wheels, hissing sounds produced by the brakes and the opening and closing door. When obscured, the dancers still seem to be moving dynamically (parts of their moving bodies can be glimpsed in the train windows) only to fall down on the bench. When the second train leaves the station it reveals the dancers forming a tableau arranged by the artists resting exhausted in different positions on the bench.

The camera and microphone's position foregrounds the image and noise of the trains. In this close distance, the view and soundscape are fragmentary and incomplete, yet intensive and immersive. Too close and intimate to the viewer, the trains seem oppressive and distracting, as they obscure vision and drown other sounds. But they are also centralised as the main focus of attention, placing the dancers in a distance. In *Dance 1539* the experience of the dancers differs very much from that of the viewers, being on the opposite platform separated by the tracks. This creates a number of different effects. *Dance 1539* might be seen as a commentary on the paradox of communication that connects as it distances and divides. It might comment on the mechanisms and technologies of movement and communication, in which human beings lose their subjectivity and singularity. The sound and vision are dominated by the "traffic" noise which is exhaustive and unnatural and the final tableau seems to emphasise this aspect. Alternatively, the camera placement is simply motivated by the intention to immerse the viewers in the auditory experience while being able at the same time to see its source so that both the dance and the trains are partly visible and audible. In *Dance 1539* the sonic landscape again differs from the visual site of the dance. Because of the closeness of its source and its volume, the sound produced by the trains seems to create the claustrophobic effect, making other sounds that could create the sense of space inaudible. The sound fills the whole space between the source and the microphone flattening it out, which contrasts with the visual effect of distancing or diminishing the image of the dancers, visible in the narrow gap between the carriages and thus deepening the perspective. The contrast between the closeness of the sound and the distance of the dance in a way illustrates the different ways of creating and understanding space in sonic and visual experience.

7. Isolated Sites: Cemeteries

Out of numerous isolated urban sites used by Vadori-Gauthier, such as the roof of Notre-Dame, parks, fountains, dilapidated houses, private gardens, I have selected three dances performed in cemeterial spaces. Each dance approaches the site differently; each site differs from the rest in the way it refers to the urban macrospace, but each is in a sense isolated, set apart from the everyday urban experience.

Dance 659¹⁹ (2 November 2016), performed in Noisy sur École and described as “the Day of the Dead. Dancing on my father’s grave”, shows an interesting disparity between the acoustic and visual layers of the site. Isolated from the street by a stone wall and a strip of trees, the cemetery seems to visually form an intimate and enclosed space governed by its own principles of silence and quietude. With the camera focus on the foreground dance performed literally on the father’s grave, the site in fact is delimited by the grave stone, being the stage for a rather stationary horizontal dance performed by Vadori-Gauthier. The microphone gathers the sounds from the surrounding area and the ones made by the dancer, forming several planes. In the foreground what is most audible is shuffling against the surface of the stone, strings of beads clicking and creaking of suede shoes against the polished surface of the tomb. These sounds are highlighted and irregular, emphasising the tactile contact of the dancer with the stone. Challenging the taboo prohibition and distancing, the intimacy of the unpleasant sounds the dancer produces, evocative of bones clacking, potentially activates contradictory effects: the one of materiality of the memory of the dead and creating temporary closeness to them, on the one hand, and referring to the tradition of dance macabre or the Mexican Day of the Dead, on the other. In the near background the camera microphone records the birds singing and the sound of birds’ wings fluttering (collared doves), emphasising the silence of the site and its difference from the adjacent area. In the further background the monotonous murmur of street traffic can be heard, quietly spilling over into the site and opening up this closed space to the city. Simultaneously, another process is taking place: internalising the external by making the traffic part of the dance. The murmur of the street traffic – with its ebbs of growing and decreasing intensity filtered by the sound barriers – forms a kind of lullaby to which the dancer lulls herself to sleep, lying down for a moment in an embryonic position next to the head stone with the father’s photograph. As the sound of the bird’s wings fluttering coincides with the dancer getting up from the grave, the uncanny effect of the accompanying spirit rising into the air seems to be created. These effects mostly arise as a result of the non-diegetic nature of the sonic background. This very intimate and emotionally dense dance is embedded in the ordinary by being part of the city soundscape, yet simultaneously the city comes to function as the part of the symbolic site of this strange encounter, as a lullaby soundtrack.

While landscaping in Dance 659 is mostly performed through the visual elements of the cemetery space (the grave and the wall) visible in the camera field of view and is based on isolation, enclosure and intimacy, the sonic attributes of the site expand the area beyond what is visible. In fact the image itself can hardly suggest the type of sound that is produced by the background. So as a result, the two layers seem to be in conflict, each leading in a different direction – inside and outside – the centripetal and centrifugal movements of concentration and de-concentration.

The sonority of the dance itself consists of action and reaction. The dancer produces the sounds that create the uncanny effect, capitalising on and emphasising the accidental sounds audible in the near background (the fluttering of the birds’ wings) and car traffic. The background sound belongs to the found environment, recorded by the camera, diegetically pointing to the

¹⁹ The video is available at: <http://www.uneminutedanseparjour.com/en/danse/dance-659/>.

presence of birds and cars in the closest vicinity. Because of the symbolic nature of the location, the found sound becomes incorporated into the signifying process. Dance 659 seems to illustrate the tendency of the sound to “overflow [...] borders” (LaBelle, 2006, p. xi) and also what Jonathan Sterne commented upon as the ideological “audiovisual litany” – to immerse the hearing subject in the world (Sterne, 2003, p. 15). This immersion also means connectedness to the invisible world that can be conjured up by sounds.

Also featuring the cemetery location (Cimetière du Père-Lachaise in Paris), **Dance 388**²⁰ (5 February 2016) uses the non-diegetic found sound even more extensively by generating the atmosphere of uncanniness, mystery and primeval nature. Performed in cooperation with another artist, Hélène Barrier, and described by Vadori-Gauthier as “petite danse pagan”²¹, the dance is built around the motif of Cyclopes-Minotaurs, resembling a horned god. Adjusting the movements to the sounds of birds singing and crows cawing, the dancer approaches Barrier sitting on an old tomb and wearing a cyclope-minotaure mask covering her head and arms. Each movement sets tiny bells attached to the mask in motion, causing anxiety and sudden reactions in the dancer. Throughout the whole dance to what sounds like the soundtrack recorded in a primeval forest rather than in a cemetery, city traffic is audible – mostly as indefinite murmur with occasional car horns interrupting the sound. The traffic murmur does not seem to be integrated with the atmosphere of secrecy of what looks like a pagan rite performed on ancient graves (although it could be interpreted within the dance frame as a monotonous chant). The effect of this dancing piece thus relies on the discrepancy between the imaginary matrix²² imposed on the micro-site of the dilapidated part of the cemetery and the constant, non-matrixed remote traffic noise of the macro-site of the city. When approached in positive terms, urban traffic envelops the microspaces of the city, integrating its disparate parts into the contiguous space within which a variety of experiences – both real and imagined – can be conceived of, rather than being read only as noise and nuisance. The relation between site and non-site is here established rather by the attributes of the site that integrate the sounds appearing within it. The found sound is thus partly transformed for its meaning and location.

Dance 798²³ (21 March 2017), performed in Parisian Catacombes (which used to be stone quarries and at the end of the eighteenth century started to be used as a storage place for bones from Paris cemeteries), in contrast to other cemetery dances, is completely isolated acoustically from the traffic and other urban noise. It builds a kind of underground opposition to the lively city through its representation of death and solitude, concentration and enclosure. One of the categories this dance was put into by Vadori-Gauthier was called “Cellular or molecular resonances”. Resonance is directed inside not outside, and spreads within not outside the space. A drop of water or the sound of one’s step on a gravel create dramatic effects through

²⁰The video is available at: <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/en/danse/dance-388/>.

²¹ <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/danse/danse-388/>.

²² I use here Michael Kirby’s term denoting the elements of performance that do not belong to its informational structure (Kirby, 1987, p. 4).

²³ The video is available at: <http://www.uneminutededanseparjour.com/en/danse/dance-798/>.

resonance and the intensity of the dancer's reactions to these microsounds reflects this quality. The outside city is closed off; no link is established unless through contrast: to recognise the meaning of silence one needs to compare it against sound or noise. The awareness of the city life going on above the ground makes this dance a temporary interlude from the city environment, a moment to reflect on the quotation chosen by Vadori-Gauthier from among many inscriptions found on the walls: "Thus ends everything on earth: Mind, Beauty, Grace, Talent, Short-lived like a fleeting flower, Blown down by the slightest breeze". Dance 798 enacts this fragility of life in near-silence.

8. Conclusion

Nadia Vadori-Gauthier's *Une minute de danse par jour* explores the relation between found environments and the dance. Most of her dances performed in urban spaces use found sound as an element of the soundtrack to which the artist moves. Although often imposing meanings or interpretations going beyond found elements of the sites, the dances require a particular attentiveness to the soundscape. This careful listening to or corporeal reactions to the sound expose the urban soundscape in ways similar to John Cage's silent pieces, inviting openness and readiness to listen to the city. Perhaps with the exception of the Catacomb dance, all the other dances rely on the expansive quality of city sounds, on crossing architectural barriers, filling in space, carrying beyond the immediate surrounding. In all the projects examined in this article the sound is inescapable; even if it cannot be integrated meaningfully within the dance, it is there as a foil or counterpoint to other sounds or the dance itself. Part of this attentiveness comes from the expectations connected with the traditional understanding of dance as performed with the accompaniment of music. Watching the dance we might automatically listen to the music the dancer moves to, which, in the instances examined in this paper, consists of found sounds of the city sites. The dance then – from the acoustic perspective – operates also as a frame exposing the sounds recorded by the microphone as important and meaningful.

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, one of the aims of Vadori-Gauthier's project is to counteract violence and encourage connectedness through dance. Expressing oneself through dance relies both on movement and the shared acoustic experience. The passers-by who enter the site of the dance or decide to actively participate in it (with the exception of police interventions or disruptions from protesters) usually adjust their behaviour to the channel through which the dancer communicates or to the materials she operates on to create her performance, using dance and gesture or simply being within the borders of the site and witnessing it, without speaking. To the viewers of the video clips posted by the artist, the sonic aspect of the dance and found environment seems even more important as the microphone records and amplifies some of the sounds that could be "scattered" or "diluted" in the original environment. What is interesting, this recorded sonic landscape might differ from the one experienced by Vadori-Gauthier or other live participants of the dance. This aspect contributes to the immersive effect that substitutes the experience of live participation but simultaneously creates a meta-critical auditory distance generated by the viewers' earlier awareness of sounds in comparison with the dancer. This distance makes it possible to simultaneously watch the dance and study critically its relation to sound. As the sonic site available to the dancer cannot be recorded exactly in the form experienced by her, the soundtrack of the videos

forms a partly independent register of the city sonic microspaces. *Une minute de danse par jour* in its auditory aspect can be seen as an experiment in both recording and listening to urban soundscapes.

When considered in the micro-political and social context of resistant dancing, Nadia Vadori-Gauthier's project employs found sound as an element of the found site to offer alternative reactions to them. Working in her own rhythm and dynamics, she reframes the fragments of the city by vulnerable action, to change or confront the real or potential violence of urban spaces. Sound is an important element of connection through which dance and real environments are integrated and become contiguous. An encounter with the dancer performing in the city space breaks the routine of everyday city life, encourages a different way of thinking of both the city and strangers, helps to open up to the Other. Conceptually, the project creates alternative micro-spaces of resistance and alterity, which are woven into the city fabric to broaden the scope of acceptance and readiness for the Other, however incomprehensible or strange it might seem. By doing so, dance, as Vadori-Gauthier says in an interview, "can be a form of resistance to barbarism", which derives from "the negation of difference and the dogmatic thought that oppresses what is foreign to it" (Mallié, 2018; my translation).

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