

Twin Cities by Mitchell De Jarnett

In the first year of our schooling, we got each other sorted out quickly. Our priorities were openly advertised in how we dressed, and in the musical choices that we inflicted upon ourselves and our neighbors. Despite the advertising, people at first grouped in studio based on incomplete information, and it wasn't long before some neighbors relocated to form more congenial and homogeneous neighborhoods of taste, within the otherwise undivided studio space of our forced creativity.

These alliances naturally lead to local field trips to listen to artists that the various nations (of our now musically balkanized architecture studio) could agree upon. My nation went to hear Tom Waits at the Wiltern for what was later to become known as the "Big Time" tour. Well, it was quite a show, and one of a handful of musical presentations I've witnessed that broke through the "membrane" of show business, chopped the "membrane" into bit sized pieces, and fed them back to the audience who, like baby birds, chewed, swallowed, and gratefully digested the entire unctuous mass. One day the Wiltern for show changed. That show affirmed that ART was possible, while also making it abundantly clear that we all had a long way to go before we could start making any claims ourselves.

Years later, I had to go to Minneapolis for two weeks to oversee the installation of a museum show at the Walker Art Center upon which I had worked for my employer. It was November and winter was bearing down. I was living in a generic Hilton and, though I immediately fell in love with the twin cities, outside of my work, I was bored and isolated. Towards the end of my visit, my employer's husband came to check up on me, and the progress of the install. We had not really been well acquainted before this, and I was unsure of what to expect.

I have never been so grateful for the company of another human. To my ever-lasting wonder, the man revealed himself to be one of the few true Bodhisattvas I have ever been blessed to meet on this sad and beautiful little globe of ours. It was just a couple days of meals and movies in a strange city, but I made a friend for life, one whose sainted behavior and luminous presence I continue to esteem and aspire to emulate. Towards the end of the trip, I invited my new friend to go see the film of the "Big Time" tour which was playing over at a third-run movie theater in what seemed to be the slums of Minneapolis/Saint Paul. It was an interesting neighborhood with syringes on the sidewalk and lots of blood banks. It was the coldest day of the trip so far, snow was falling and melting as it hit the street. Our California clothes were useless on such a night, and we were wet and freezing. All the lights and electric signs in this part of the city seemed abnormally bright against the dark sky and even blacker puddles that were forming on the wet pavement.

When we came out after the movie it was even colder, darker, and wetter. I was telling my companion with pride about how half of the movie had been filmed at the show that I had attended at Wiltern years before. He was quiet and polite;

my impression was that he did not share my musical tastes but was happy to bear witness to my youthful enthusiasm for these youthful things.

I was walking him up to the corner to catch a cab (unlike me, he was staying with friends out in the suburbs) when I looked up and saw that we were at the corner of 9th and Hennepin.

I stopped, grabbing him by the arms, and said, "my god, do you realize this is THE INTERSECTION... THE INTERSECTION in the song... THE SONG in the movie THAT WE JUST SAW?"

"WE ARE HERE.1"

He smiled and hugged me. He looked me in the eye and said, "of course we are..."

"9th & Hennepin" by Thomas Alan Waits

Well it's 9th and Hennepin
All the donuts have names that sound like prostitutes
And the moon's teeth marks are on the sky like a tarp thrown over all this

And the broken umbrellas like dead birds
And the steam comes out of the grill like the whole goddamned town is ready to blow

And the bricks are all scarred with jailhouse tattoos
And everyone is behaving like dogs

And the horses are coming down Violin Road
And Dutch is dead on his feet
And the rooms all smell like diesel

And you take on the dreams of the ones who have slept here
And I'm lost in the window
I hide in the stairway
I hang in the curtain
I sleep in your hat

And no one brings anything small into a bar around here, they all started out with bad directions
And the girl behind the counter has a tattooed tear, one for every year he's away she said

Such a crumbling beauty, but there's nothing wrong with her that \$100 won't fix
She has that razor sadness that only goes worse
With the clang and the thunder of the Southern Pacific going by
As the clock ticks out like a dripping faucet till you're full of rag water and bitters and blue ruin

And you spill out over the side to anyone who'll listen
And I've seen it all through the yellow windows of the evening train

And I've seen it all through the yellow windows of the evening train

And I've seen it all through the yellow windows of the evening train

Op-Ed by Morgan Woolsey

I recently finished teaching a general education college course on listening: a mode of attention associated with the sense of hearing. Though primarily understood as the perception of sound, the term "listening" is also used to describe many forms of non-sonic attention directed at phenomena that share some of sound's not-necessarily-sonic qualities (invisibility, ephemerality, motion, tactility, complexity, etc.). This kind of "listening" is also used to describe listening to feelings, ideas, our bodies, and a wide range of other nonverbal communication and abstract concepts.

I like teaching through this capacious definition of listening (a perceptual modality for engaging self, others, and the world) as well as a specialized skill for producing, consuming, and analyzing music and other sound-based phenomena). Invoking hearing in the classroom valorizes vulnerability; listening, intersubjectivity and interdependence. As a set of practices, listening requires an active receptivity to the unseen and an active awareness of the unheard. And when approaching listening in itself (as an object/event for analysis), we must slow down ephemeral moments of perception and the seemingly-reflexive responses produced therein. This slowing-down is challenging because "normal" hearing is a complex and blisteringly fast sensory process, and it is often conflated with the equally fast and complex processes of attention and interpretation we call "listening." Though the two function simultaneously, teasing them apart is a useful exercise.

Hearing is physical (the vibration of mechanical sound waves) and neurological (the transfer of electric signals in the brain). At a temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit, in a relatively dry atmosphere (the conditions in my apartment in mid-city Los Angeles as I write), sound travels at roughly 768 mph. It moves instantaneously from its source (say, my purring cat) to my ear, and then travels to my brain in one twentieth of a second. I'm not a scientist, so this process (and the speed at which it occurs) seems like magic to me. But it's a magic that can be slowed down and translated, making it more intelligible to a layperson such as myself. I'll demystify it for you now: ~120 words to describe in the most skeletal of terms a process that takes a fraction of a second.

Sound energy enters the outer ear as waves (where it vibrates the eardrum) and travels to the middle ear (where it vibrates the auditory bones). Next, these vibrations move through the fluid of the inner ear, or cochlea (where they move bundles of tiny hair-like structures (stereocilia) protruding from the thousands of hair cells [cilia] that line the cochlea). This motion causes pores in the stereocilia to slide open, allowing ions to rush in and stimulate the release of neurotransmitters (glutamate) within the cell. The neurotransmitters bind to the cell's auditory nerves, producing an electrical signal. The signal is then carried via the auditory nerve to the brain (the temporal lobe). From there we interpret and understand the signal as sound.

When teaching, I like to demonstrate how active and complex a process hearing is, to understand it on its own terms. This is because hearing is frequently represented through comparisons with seeing and in many of these comparisons the receptivity hearing engenders is cast as undesirable: passive, vulnerable, feminine, primal, irrational, involuntary. Even though seeing-like hearing-involves the body's penetration by waves of energy, it is very rarely discussed in such anxious and tactile terms as hearing. Instead, seeing is characterized as active, agentic, masculine, invulnerable, controlled, directional.

Sound theorist Jonathan Sterne calls this compulsive opposition of seeing and hearing the "audiovisual litany," a recitation of the supposed differences between seeing and hearing. In his view, this repetition "elevates a set of cultural prejudices about the senses (prejudices, really) to the level of theory." The audiovisual litany delinks and hierarchizes the senses. To see is associated with power and its exercise; to hear with powerlessness and the absence of meaningful action. If hearing is characterized as passive and powerless, so too, by extension, is listening, which is figured as lack (the inverse of gazing, a receptacle for speech). But it isn't. Listening simply presents a paradox of dichotomous thinking: present absence, active receptivity, intersubjectivity.

The presence, action, and relationality of listening aren't always acknowledged or understood as such, and to do so requires the kind of breaking down I performed earlier in relation to hearing. However, where it was easy enough for me to describe hearing dispassionately in a single paragraph, it would be much more challenging to similarly describe listening. This is because listening encompasses the physical and neurological processes of hearing within its own labyrinthine-overlapping, co-constructing, and often recursive-processes, unfolding in a series of context-specific modes that each deserve their own paragraph. And the structures of meaning that govern the listening modes (their speed, trajectories, and patterns) are too numerous to count. Film sound theorist Michel Chion usefully defines three such listening modes, which may or may not occur simultaneously and in varying proportion: Causal (listening to gather information about a sound's source), semantic (listening for meaning), and reduced (listening to the traits of the sound itself, "independent of its cause and of its meaning").¹ But there are many, many more; intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, psychological, social, political, ideological, and historical patterns conditioning each and every instance of listening.

¹ Thanks to Dr. Olivia Boehrer for the succinct formulation: Sterne, Jonathan, "Sonic Imaginations," *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 9); Chion, Michel, "The Three Listening Modes," *Audio-Vison: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press), 26-34; Ahmed, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7.

Speaking of emotion (a non-sonic, figurative object of listening), the ever-lucid Sara Ahmed reminds us that the immediacy of a reaction should not be taken as an indicator of that emotion's being unmediated. I was stunned by the simplicity and depth of this statement the first time I read it, and it continues to stun me every time I consider it, every time I reproduce it in my own thought and writing. So in lieu of the efficient and dispassionate paragraph on listening I could not produce, I'll conclude by asking you to apply Ahmed's observation to your own varied practices, and produce paragraphs of your own based on the questions that arise.



Review: Practicing Spaces

By: Liz Ohanesian

With her indie imprint Bill Columns (pronounced Five Columns), Melissa J. Frost, an educator based between Philadelphia and New York, takes the conversation about architecture outside of the professional realm with zines, cassettes and other projects. "It is, in many ways, about the architecture practice as a creative practice that encompasses other mediums besides buildings," she says by phone.

Last fall, Frost explored the music made by architects with Practicing Spaces, a limited edition, compilation cassette that was released for Printed Matter's New York Art Book Fair in September. As much as I started this with the idea that I would release a compilation at the base of that was a desire to create an archive," says Frost. "I was thinking about how this portion of architects' creative work is generally not captured within architectural archives."

Frost looked to her own circle of contacts, as well as their contacts, and asked architects to submit any and all music they had. From there, she narrowed it down to one selection per artist, compiling a track listing that includes work from Michael Meredith, Benjamin Britton, Mariana Ibañez & Simon Kim and others. Inspired by the idea of creating a piece of an archive, Frost packaged the cassettes. Owing cases that are hand-folded and included archival paper inserts.

In some instances, music is a well-documented part of the artist's creative practice. That's the case with Alfredo Trueman, who has played with the Chilean psychedelic rock group Folkakoid, and more recently, released the collaboration Land in the Sky with Tres Warren. For others, their musicianship is a perhaps a lesser-known talent.

Practicing Spaces presents a selection that is eclectic in terms of genre - you'll find everything from ambient electronic music to post-rock to hip-hop on here - but cohesive in its sense of organization and flow. Frost selects cuts that largely eschew traditional songwriting. Instead, these are often pieces that look at music-making as an exercise in sound design and construction, and an exploration of how space and sound feed off each other.

As a whole, Practicing Spaces builds from the sublime and intimate "Dadwhoreyouzonegative" by Michael Meredith to its raucous conclusion with Daniel Barber's "Needlefoam." That this recording of "Needlefoam" ends with applause is fitting, signifying the growth of creativity from private ideas to public presentations. In all, Practicing Spaces fulfills its intent of archiving the music of architects, but it's also a thoughtfully compiled documentation of the creative process.

from private ideas
to public presentations

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Morgan Woolsey teaches, researches, writes about, and performs music in the Los Angeles area. She is a lecturer in LGSTO Studies and Musicology at UCLA, and teaches online coursework in music for Chaffey College, with a focus on race, gender, and sexuality in music, music and its relationship to other media, and critical listening strategies. Her research and writing explore the interaction of music and other media in the representation of marginalized identities, and argues for the importance of the soundtrack as an affective archive in the study of processes of cultural liberation.

Morgan is also a singer, and is currently serving as facilitator and board chair for CILA, The Contemporary Choral Collective of Los Angeles, a group of choral singers, conductors, and composers committed to fostering collaboration, experimentation, and innovation in choral music.

Jesse Abbott is an East Los Angeles based designer, builder, artist, professor, and activist. He is a licensed general construction contractor and operates COAB Development, providing design, remodeling and construction services. He is an adjunct professor at East Los Angeles College Department of Architecture, and teaches college courses at Woodrow Wilson High School. His background in urban planning and Chicago at UCLA paved the way for his interest in community development and architecture. Jesse recently established ESMAAS, The East Side Music, Arts, and Architecture Studio, working with local musicians, artists, designers, and builders in cultivating a strong community sense for a changing East Side.

Jen Hofer is a Los Angeles-based poet, translator, social justice interpreter, teacher, writer, book-maker, public letter-writer, urban cyclist, Caribombado, bike, and co-founder of the language justice and language experimentation collaborative Antena Aire and the local language justice advocacy collective Antena Los Angeles. She publishes poetry, essays and translations with numerous small independent presses, most recently Kenning Editions, Les Figues Press, and Ugly Duckling Press, and in various DVD/DIT incarnations. Antena Aire collaborative writing is forthcoming from The Operating System and Tripwire. Jen teaches writing and translation at Otis College of Art + Design and Occidental College, and works supporting community groups in creating effective cross-language communication.

Elena Mann creates artwork that brings a greater consciousness to the listening and speaking we practice in everyday life, with the goal of building equity in ourselves and increasing equity in our world. She is a recipient of the 2019 Stone & Lucid Contemporary Art Award and a 2019 Artist-in-Residence at the Los Angeles Clean Tech incubator. Mann has presented her work in museums, galleries, and city parks in the U.S. and abroad. In addition, Mann curates, collaborates, organizes, and writes. She co-edited, with John Burtie, the anthology "Propositional Attitudes: What do we do now?" (Golden Spike Press, 2018).

Mitchell De Jarnett graduated from the UCLA Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning. He has practiced in the USA, France, Germany, India and Egypt where he managed the design of the interiors for the Library of Alexandria for Sirohetta Architects. His current practice spans public art, exhibit curatorial, and landscape/architectural design. His past projects include a large public plaza / environmental artwork with partner Lila Albuquerque at the California State Capitol in Sacramento. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Grand Central Art Forum and has taught at SCI-Arc, Otis, UCLA, and the Cal Poly Pomona.

Aaron Cayer is an ethnographer, historian, and educator of architecture. He received his Ph.D. in Architecture from UCLA and is currently an Assistant Professor of Architecture History at the University of New Mexico. Prior to New Mexico, he taught architecture history and theory at Cal Poly Pomona, and he was a Senior Research Associate at CHLA, an urban research center at UCLA, from 2012-2017. Also in Los Angeles, he co-founded the Los Angeles chapter of The Architecture Lobby in 2016. His current research focuses on histories of postwar corporate architecture practices as they intersect with those of labor, capitalism, and urban political economies.

Liz Ohanesian is an L.A.-based writer who specializes in entertainment and pop culture with an emphasis on fan communities and behind-the-scenes stories. Liz's work has appeared in numerous publications including LA Weekly, NCT Artbound, Bony Bunch, Topless Robot, Hi Fructose, Paper and Paste. When she's not on deadline, you can find Liz DJ'ing across Los Angeles.

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This publication is made possible in part by a grant from the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs

