

ECHOES

LARA DÂMASO

10.6. – 16.7.2022

EN

With Nikima Jagudajev, Tarren Johnson and Mario Petrucci Espinoza

The Chicken or the Egg or the Chicken or ...

Writing in *The Conjectural Body* (2010), the American philosopher and music theorist Robin James extends Rousseau's assertion that the nature of music is "unique [in its] ability to express and elicit human passions"¹ to include all sound. He also speculates that, "untouched by language ... a sound has no absolute character by which it might be recognised."² Immediately, questions of the nature as sound as an absolute concept arise, unable to be effectively answered. What is this sonic ur-material – sound – which becomes that which we understand as language and song? If, as James argues, we recognise sound as music and language because of certain social – now inherent – signifiers, what then, is movement to dance? If, as evolutionary linguistics postulates, humans adapted over time to harness their ability to create sound and thus communicate, is dance then a product of the mutative desire to converse via the body?

"I think they come from the same place. They're different forms of something similar. They both actually come from listening," artist and performer Lara Dâmaso explains to me, "they" being music and dance. Her thesis is that movement is always a reaction or response to something, that there is no movement that comes from nowhere, that it must always be motivated by something, and that it's the same with sound. "It's linked with the passage of air and is shaped by the present moment, but also by history, and identity," she continues. For the artist, the nature of sound is contingent on the environment in which it's produced. "What room is it produced in? How does it resonate?" she asks, the notion of resonance leading her to conclude that "there is audible movement and visible movement."

This dilemma of causality begs more questions with each one it answers ("why do we need music to dance, when music doesn't need dance to be music?"). ECHOES stems from the artist's desire to open new pathways for sound via collective movement. The resulting inquiry yields a performative exploration of the self-as-medium in which sonic and physical gestures are conflated – we return to a pre-hierarchical appreciation of expression.

Slippage of the Many Selves

ECHOES is the latest of Dâmaso's durational performance works, the first in which she invites three other performers – Nikima Jagudajev, Tarren Johnson and Mario Petrucci Espinoza – to take the stage with her, thus sharing her creative onus. While the architecture and structure of this exhibition may suggest a cumulative sum of parts – (The presentation is inaugurated by a vocal and movement performance by Dâmaso which is then broadcast over speakers. Later, over the course of the exhibition, Jagudajev, Johnson, and Espinoza will also perform and make recordings, engaging with the modular, specially-created curtains which demarcate the space.) – this work is, in fact, a place for investigating the potential of polyvocality, that is, the use of multiple, overlapping voices to generate a sonic happening unfathomable as a single performer.

It is vast understatement – false, even – to describe this event as a "collaboration" between artists. In Johnson's words, "It's a desire to share consciousness, let go of your individual mind, and lucid dream together. To experience and appear in each other's works and fantasies." There is a highly transgressive quality to these ideas, of "exiting the imprisonment of the singular body, or singular identity" as Johnson continued. Such collective exploration is the only means by which Dâmaso can get closer to an understanding of the full potential of human vocal expression, a device she laments as radically underexplored.

In bringing together performers with widely varying backgrounds – Johnson recently finished participating in a heavily rehearsed opera, is a classically trained dancer, and otherwise works with folk singing and poetry; Espinoza's experience is as a street performance; and Jagudajev's background is as a choreographer – Dâmaso creates an opportunity for the fluid movement of expression across bodies and between modes. The resulting tension is caused as the boundaries between the individual and the collective performer are dissolved and made permeable: The invitation to explore the self yields the discovery of a new, greater, ephemeral whole.

Paradox Loss

Newton's third law states that for every actionable force in nature, there is an equal and opposite reaction. In order to reach new frontiers, there must be something left behind. In essence, where something is lost, there is also something gained.

The contradictory nature of this principle is demonstrated clearly in ECHOES, where the loss of the performers' sovereignty gives way to the solace of the greater whole. "Lara has this idea of amplification," Espinoza tells me, "Usually, its thought of as an act of unison, where many people are communicating 'one' message, but what is amplified here is the dissolution of the performer. I find it very exciting, because I get to take off the responsibility of identity."

Jagudajev, too, offered an idea of this contradiction in terms: "I anticipate that I'll be leaving something behind, but I don't anticipate that I'll be leaving with less." These mutual forces tug at the performer, generating catharsis as they gain existence. The fleeting communion of bodies and voices is as much a force of production as it is of dissipation.

Olamiju Fajemisin

PART 1

FR, 10.6.2022

18:00 Vernissage

19:00 Performance Lara Dâmaso

DJ sets HAYA33, soungou

PART 2

FR, 24.6.2022

19.00 Performance Mario Espinoza

SA, 25.6.2022

19:00 Performance Nikima Jagudajev

20:00 Performance Tarren Johnson

DJ set Tina Omayemi Reden

Lara Dâmaso (1996, Biel/Bienne) is an artist and performer based in Zurich. Body and voice are central mediums in her work, in which she explores their expressive, therapeutic and political potentials. After several years of intensive training in ballet and contemporary dance, Lara Dâmaso studied at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig in the field of art and media and at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHDK), where she obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Her work has been presented in various institutions, incl. MASI Lugano, zürich moves!, Kunsthaus Langenthal, Istituto Svizzero, Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Kunsthalle Zürich, Theater Neumarkt, Cabaret Voltaire, Plymouth Rock, Kunsthalle Bern, Centre Pasquart. Lara is an associate artist at the Gessnerallee in Zurich.

Tarren Johnson (1990) is an American artist, choreographer and performer from Southern California and a graduate of California Institute of the Arts in Dance and Choreography. Her work utilises systems and poetry to transpose contexts, allowing performance to exist in the indeterminate, and is concerned with mutations in cultural reproduction and fragmentations of individual and collective identity. Tarren Johnson has shown work across Europe including at the Volksbühne, HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Manifesta 11, Les Urbaines, Sophiensæle, Festspielhaus Hellerau and the Paris Internationale's public programme. She was a Principal Resident of La Becque's Spring 2021 programme.

Nikima Jagudajev (1990) is a choreographer based in New York and Brussels. Their first solo exhibition "Basically" took place in 2021 at Bergen Kunsthall (Norway). This process based live practice that expands formal dance into the construction of open-ended socialities has taken form in venues including Shedhalle (Zürich), Kurimanzutto (Mexico City), Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, The Whitney Museum of American Art, MoMA PS1 and the Rockbund Art Museum (Shanghai) as well as in the context of Material Art Fair's Immaterial (Mexico City), 89+ at LUMA/Westbau (Zürich), kunstenfestivaldesarts (Brussels) and as part of the Marrakech Biennale (Morocco). Their published work includes 'The Backstreet Boys' as part of Bergen Kunsthall's Speculative Histories text commission platform (2021) and co-published by Karmaklubb*, 'Relations of Unpredictable Encounters' in the Movement Research Performance Journal (2017) and 'the landscape thinks itself in me' in Asad Raza's Root Sequence. Mother Tongue (Walther König, 2018).

Mario Espinoza is a Venezuelan multidisciplinary artist, working mostly within the realm of vocal performance and naturalistic visual arts. Educated in painting at the Academy of Arts in Florence, he has begun to delve into time-based arts, pursuing themes of forgotten memory in folk tradition, and bringing his own intimacy and personal processes into the public sphere, often intervening in public spaces. He has performed in various Swiss institutions such as the Centre d'Art Contemporain de Genève, FriArt, and Helmhaus.

¹ See Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) in James, Robin, "Conjectural Histories, Conjectural Harmonies: On Political and Musical 'Nature' in Rousseau's Early Writings," *The Conjectural Body: Gender, Race and the Philosophy of Music* (Lexington Books, 2010) p.37

² Ibid, p.36

1.
Exercise in random laments, 2021
510 x 340 cm
Silk, synthetic fabric

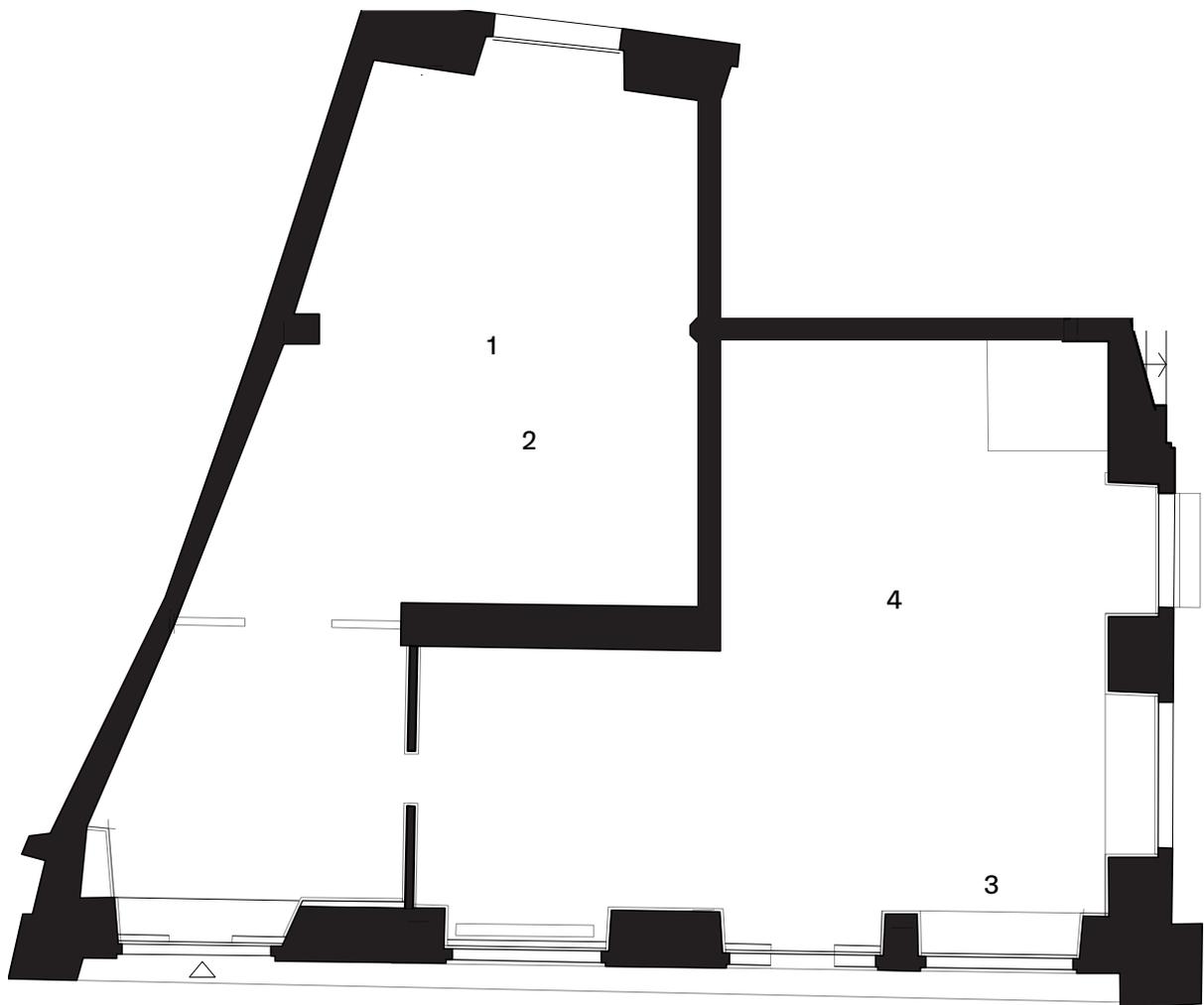
2.
To the unborn: catharsis, 2022
3 video installation
11'56, 16'36, 21'54

3.
A score for various paths to a polyphony, 2022
Vinyl foil

4.
Echo chambers, 2022
Multimedia installation
Curtains, 3-channel sound installation, performances

Curtains
1050cm x 330cm, 750cm x 330cm
Silk, lace, satin ribbons
In collaboration with Blanca Bianchi

3-channel sound installation
Various durations, loop
PART 1: Lara Dâmaso
PART 2: Nikima Jagudajev, Tarren Johnson
Mario Espinoza



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Opening hours
THU/FR, 17:00-20:00
SA/SUN, 12:00-18:00