



Thomas F.
DeFrantz/SLIPPAGE's
*Soundz at the Back
of My Head*, Gibney
Dance, New York,
2020. Photo:
Scott Shaw

THOMAS F. DEFRA NTZ/SLIPPAGE

SOUNDZ AT THE BACK OF MY HEAD

Text and dance by Thomas F. DeFrantz, with sound design by Quran Karriem, lighting design by Asami Morita, and visual design by Rebecca Uliasz.

A performance cocommissioned by Theater and Gibney, New York, January 2020.

Soundz at the Back of My Head is the third and final installment of the talking|dance series begun with I Am Black (you have to be willing to not know) and continued with White Privilege. This dialogic manifesto, talking-dancing-technology work engages its audience with the contradictory impulses that run through the creative imagination of an artist working within experimental performance and the afterlives of slavery. Like the first two installments, this hour-long creation relies on a text and interfaces that translate the performer's gestures and words into media as sound, image, and light.

NOTES

ON PERFORMANCE

Realized as an improvisation, in performance each element—text, wearable technology, conjured and programmed sound, projected visual interfaces—is manipulated and explored by the four performers, including the lighting designer as live board operator. The event proceeds through divergent systems of timing for each performer, decided on before the audience enters. For example, sound might operate on

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thirteen-minute loops; visuals on nine-minute loops; text/dance on ten-minute loops; and lighting on a single forty-minute loop. The entire timing for the event container should be fifty-five minutes or so. After each performer completes a loop of activity, they take a forty-five-second break before beginning again from silence, darkness, or stillness.

Each artist begins the event seated at one of four separate command tables, distributed about the space and among the audience. The tables include the technologies needed for the event: light board, sound board and bespoke sonic modules, bespoke visual interface array, a laptop computer.

As the audience enters, the artists warm up. The audience sits in a U shape along three walls of the space, their seating aligned so they can see each other across or along the sides of the space. The speaker greets some people warmly and makes introductions to others, engaging in brief, private conversations. The speaker occasionally leaves sheets of paper on the ground at some places in the space. Elsewhere in the space are two microphones: one set at the speaker's text command table, and the other on a stand that is dragged throughout the space during the event.

The space is territorialized into five distinct speaking areas, distinguished by the positioning of lighting instruments. The lighting designer reveals these areas, whether the speaker occupies them or not, throughout the performance. The audience members are able to see each other dimly throughout the event. Video projections occupy the fourth wall of the space; their designs and light often bounce over the speaker's body.

—TD

Quran Karriem
in Thomas F.
DeFrantz/SLIPPAGE's
*Soundz at the Back of
My Head*. Courtesy
of Quran Karriem



ON SONIC DESIGN

by Quran Karriem, sound designer

In preparation for performance, I sometimes completely rearrange my instrument. The interconnectivity of electronic modules allows for the easy removal and reordering of elements. This modularity, this practice of aesthetic substitutability, creates a destabilizing performance condition where my only recourse is to improvisation. A key component of my live practice is to create a sort of infra(decon)structure—that is, technical systems that force me to reconsider and break performance habits rather than reinforce them.

*The composition itself, then, is saved as a materially specific configuration of the constellation of instruments and programs: a patch. For the performances of *Soundz*, the construction of a signal processing chain transformed the samples I used as raw material in specific ways. Their arrangement constitutes a composition in itself; the hardware/software patch is thus both instrument and instrumentality. Repatching changes the flows of electrons, digital signals, and feed-*

back loops I manage during a performance; changing the patch is changing the performance condition. It creates a separate instantiation of selfhood at the articulation of body and machine and is the ground on which improvisation can occur.

Playing live with a new patch or a new configuration of modules motivates a performative tension similar to performing in a new venue. The synthesizer interfaces directly with the DI inputs, mixer, PA system, spatial acoustics, and bodies to create resonances that can never be reproduced. I want to honor the unreproducibility of the event through my practice. I want to emphasize the materiality of air pressure: sound isn't only heard; it is already a multimodal sensory experience that we feel on our skin and throughout our bodies. I am interested in the signature or specificity of the event—speaker cones, eardrums, bodies, and architectural structures vibrating in specific, once-in-a-eternity kinds of ways. For me, this speaks to the radical potential of the present moment at the juncture of its coincidence with the pastness that a recorded sample symbolizes.

TRACK LISTING / RAW MATERIAL FOR TRANSFORMATION

1. "Move On Up," Curtis Mayfield
2. "The Perfect Fool," op. 39, Gustav Holst
3. "Elevators (Me & You)," OutKast

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4. "Napoleon Solo," *At the Drive-In*
 5. *Die Kunst der Fugue: Contrapunctus IX*, BWV 1080, J. S. Bach
 6. "C.R.E.A.M.," *Wu-Tang Clan*
 7. "Someday My Prince Will Come," *Miles Davis*
 8. *String Quartet No. 13 in B flat, op. 130: 2. Presto*, *Ludwig von Beethoven*
 9. "Oblivion," *Astor Piazzolla*
 10. *Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber: IV. Marsch*, *Paul Hindemith*
 11. "Flim," *Aphex Twin*
- QK

ON THE TEXT

The textual materials can be rearranged in performance, except for the PREAMBLE, which should open the event. After that, anything goes. The speaker's materials include:

PREAMBLE

SOUNDZ

FAMILY MATTERING

RAGE

LOOPTIME

BACKGROUNDING

At intervals between sections of text/speaking, the speaker can engage in Embodied Activation, dancing in the space improvisationally. The performer wears a sync patch developed in the SLIPPAGE laboratory, which renders data generated from the speaker's movement into electronic sound. The wearable device includes accelerometers and positioning hardware that allow gestures to produce unexpected soundings that become emphatically present during these portions of the event. Typically, there might be five sequences of Embodied Activation in a single performance of the work.

The FAMILY MATTERING text should be entirely improvised in each performance. In rehearsals, we worked with stories of my father's passing away; my cousin's illness; my grandmother's marriages.

The RAGE text should also be improvised. This text reflects themes engaged across performances in January 2020.

—TD

PREAMBLE

can you hear that? the buzz? signal. did you hear that? a sound beyond sound, an impulse, electric, and by now, unavoidable. oversampling multisensory noises thrill. why is Black music best played loud? cut 'n' mix recalibrations confirm the entirely unstable notions of sound creativity: it is unfixed, fugitive, right here and now, and already gone. what are those voices in my head? alternating current always present; o-r and back again, never quite one or the other; both/and. Black life as a template for the death of the author: where there are no citizens there can be no ownership. and yet we know Black noise so very well. to work in soundz is to enable the non-temporality of signal, always always there and there. come, listen!

See also Roland Barthes, Tina Campt, DJ Magic Mike, Jungle Brothers, KRS-One, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, Claude Shannon, State of Florida and Jordan Davis v. Michael Dunn.

SOUNDZ: NOIZE IN MY HEAD

electromagnetic noise. the hum of transformers, corona discharge. sounds always on. sometimes voices. voices in my head. rumor, innuendo, i heard it through the grapevine.

in her recent book *Why We Dance*, philosopher Kimerer LaMothe reminds us that the internal monologue is part and parcel of human neurology. the constant stream of contradictory, evaluative reasoning never stops, forcing us toward an indeterminacy of gesture always shaping and revising itself in real time.¹ this is why we dance, she asserts, in response to the insistent barrage of questioning and wondering that animates our entire corpus, from the soles of the feet to the synapses of the brain.

we dance because we are always on, and in dancing we might relieve the need to be able to account for all of the physical activities simultaneously. i wonder. in dancing we do relinquish some responsibility of accounting for everything that happens in relationship to body; the intention to express and to move beyond the structuring logics of social restraint drive us to try to shake a leg, to twist and bounce, to get low.

professional dancers practice the marshaling of energy that produces an expressivity faster than thought. their dancing resists the intrusive inner monologue by attuning the body to respond no matter the circumstance. physical gesture moves amid its own devices, those honed by repetitions designed to create unassailable pathways of gesture. the dancing isn't to become somehow automatic, but to be in relationship to choice making, conditioned by practice. moving beyond the static, the drone, the hum. attuned to the slight variations rather than the constant array.

but that hum is always there. it's a sound and a sensibility, a feeling and something impending, a commotion and an inevitability. once we said, there's no outside of history, now we know, there's no outside of signal. signal that won't stop, so it has to be accommodated, ready player one; it has to be made space for, augmented or virtual reality; it has to be borne and allowed for. we learn to resist its pull, to pretend we can't hear it or feel it, but we can; we always do.

we hear it differently, though. in the context of Black lives, we hear the noise as a call to action, a call to dance, and a call for containment. ever vigilant to its threat, the noise comes as a possible disavowal. more on that later. we manipulate its intrusion, organizing rhythm that will not be denied; low tones that go lower, below sound into body; sound is vibration and the dance is movement. low-end theory. to acknowledge the noise that is always on, in the twenty-first century, to deflect its insistence, is to organize toward a possibility. a dancing that has long been going on. before signal, and now through it.

hearing the signal. noticing it, responding to it. a new-ish cultural imperative. manipulating it to shape it and design it. a newish creative imperative. dancing it. the possibility of being in physicalized time. to dance it Black might be to harness the obvious threat and impending dismembering and allow for creative response. resistant response. signal as common resource. noises in my head as the materials of embodied dissension.

See also Atmosphere, Simone Browne, Ernest Cline, Grisha Coleman, Michel Foucault, Marvin Gaye, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Ralph Lemon, Susan Manning, A Tribe Called Quest, Ying Yang Twins.

BACKGROUNDING: IMPROVISING THE BLACK MODERN

this is an improvisation. that doesn't mean we don't rehearse, or that things happen randomly according to some sort of free-floating happenstance. no, this is an improvisation in the manner of Black aesthetics: honed by experience, contained by the afterlives of slavery, wondering at its resistances even as it moves toward grace. and laboring toward an elegance of citation.

Black performance wonders itself along, building in the improbable and the inexplicable alongside the obvious and the necessary. it's quite a trick, this dancing in spirit or signifying on unbearable politics as part of a rumpshaker beat. maybe this is part of the modern, then: an assembly that resists the thing we call modern; that thing that is so concerned with building up white supremacy and white privilege. Black aesthetics encompass the resistance that disassembles, breaks it apart, makes the thing vital again. Black aesthetics build by shaking the foundations, revising the beat, making the mess manifest.

improvisation done well reveals itself as a process of recovery and risk. not just figuring out an answer to the situation; that's what anyone does in any space of concern. Black improvisation, the heart of Black aesthetics, bring energy to bear on the urgency of *now* and making it *not now*, but then and then and then, not this nor that, but what if this and *of course that* but together producing the thing we were afraid of, at least a little bit, the elephant in the room that none of us knew we could do until we tried. until we tried. not a solving of the moment, but a processing of the moment, a turn, a flit, a cut, a deepening. these aesthetics produce an expanding remains, a slaying that lays bear the boundaries of before. i mean, just listen to Art Tatum or experience the deliverance of Church of God in Christ service. it all gets left on the floor. but there's always more. there's always one more, yes, there's always more. more to be had, more to be discovered uncovered destroyed. what if *this*? . . . and of course *that*.

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See also Katherine Dunham, Ashon T. Crawley, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Saidiya Hartman, Ligia Lewis, Wreckx-N-Effect.



RAGE: SURVEILLANCE

fires burn in Australia.

tracking by Google, Amazon, and Netflix raises anxieties.

algorithms mine our activity to keep us engaged in commerce.

Ancestry.com offers carefully placed enticements to continually search for an impossible-to-account-for past.

mixed-race heritage as an inevitable outcome of chattel slavery; race, invented in the moment of slavery's deployment, predicts its dissemblance even as it constrains its victims.

See also Huey Copeland, Adrienne Kennedy, Tavia Nyong'o, Robert Reid-Pharr, Hershini Bhana Young, Shoshana Zuboff.

FAMILY MATTERING: THE GAME

when the thing happened with my brother, he was in high school and i was still in middle school. my brother was a big guy, he was a big boy and he wanted to be a good Black boy. we lived in Indianapolis, Indiana, and he wanted to be a good young man and he played football. and he was a big guy. so he was playing high school football, and it was very unusual because we were together, both of my parents and me, we actually went together to this football game. which, when i think about it, it was so amazingly unusual; it's actually the only time i can think of when we were actually just the three of us, there with my brother who was a big boy playing football.

and it was like a fall day, and it was really cool, and it was i guess like November probably, it was after Halloween. this was Indianapolis, Indiana, so i guess it's chilly, maybe even cold, then. and i remember i had never even gone to a football game before, i didn't know anything about football, i was already a queer kid, i didn't know what that was, but i knew it mattered to my brother so i wanted to be there and then weirdly the three of us, both of my parents and me, we went to this football game. It was in a stadium—well, of course it wasn't a stadium, it was high school. so it was a . . . i don't know, like just a small . . . where they play high school football, just a small kind of field, not a big stadium. and there weren't even that many people there at this game when the thing happened.

so i remember that i got to have some hot chocolate because they have this kind of truck, this place where you could go and buy some coffee. it actually wasn't a food truck, it was really just for coffee and hot chocolate. those were the two things they had. and i remember how great it was to get some hot chocolate because it's not like we ever had hot chocolate at home, so i thought, oh, this is fun, and i remember sitting in the stands with my parents. we were kind of off by ourselves because . . . it was certainly as weird for them as it was for me because there we were at a football game and we had never done that before.

and my brother was really big, and he was fifteen and he was trying to be a really good boy and play football. he was big. he was a lot bigger than i was. and he'd be a really good football player.

did you hear that?

and the boys were doing the thing that they do when they play football. and i didn't understand the game a lot because i wasn't paying attention but i knew that the two great things that could happen would be that one person got the ball from everybody else and ran away, or, the other thing where there was a play and there was some sort of event, and everyone piled up. and my brother was really big and he was going to go to college early the next year when he turned sixteen.

To be continued.

LOOPTIME: INDIGENEITY

we can't forget the things we never bothered to remember.

slavery hurt us all, and trauma distends and recurs.

distress becomes recursive.

the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina voted, back in December 2019, to give \$2.5 million to the Sons of Confederate Veterans so that they could house the Silent Sam statue that had been toppled by twenty-first-century students who didn't want to pass by it most days.²

we do the land acknowledgment now, it's a bit like the preferred pronoun circle, a new opening of an imaginary commons, a circling of the wagons, if you will, that imagines a facing toward each other that begins in the preaccelerations of genocides ongoing. looptime. the chickens come home to roost.

i started writing this piece a dozen times, each time practicing how to begin and where. the question, of course, is actually when. the thirty-fifth time i tried, the hundredth, i remembered Kotallah, the woman who actually shows up on an Ancestry.com website that my husband built about me. she lived on a reservation in Indiana. the land acknowledgment comes home. looptime.

if we took the time, we might wonder:

is everything always available to everyone all the time?

is everyone always automatically expected to share the concerns of people of color? do we all really have to pay attention to race, religion, sexuality, ethnicity? what constitutes a "white privilege"?

looptime.

the chickens come home to roost, yes,

and we can't forget the things we never bothered to remember.

See also Frantz Fanon, PBS's Finding Your Roots, Karyn Recollet, Moses Sumney, OutKast, "White Privilege" (Theater 48, no. 3), Frank Wilderson.

BACKGROUNDING: POSTHUMAN

this is the space of the posthuman; the wondering about being surveilled and accelerated into a future we can't actually comprehend. being machine-learned. machine learning follows our

impulses through the data-tagged landscape of tomorrow and tomorrow; locating patterns more and more quickly and predicting choices that will result in the preferred outcome. the preference has to be mapped, of course; it depends on some sort of choice having been made at some point so that the next choice can be preaccelerated for you by the service.

for this to work, a couple things have to have happened: first, someone has to have been able to make a choice like this before. someone had to have gotten hungry and wondered if there was food nearby and have gotten a phone or access to the internet or understood that the internet could produce information about which restaurants or stores are nearby and open for business and available for delivery. somebody else was nearby and wondered about food and asked for a map of restaurants and menus; someone took the time to make the dishes available to be categorized and photos placed online; someone took the time to make the dishes; someone took the time.

all of this time-taking was tagged by someone else at some point to become a data point worthy of consideration, a vector available to an algorithmic computation. two years ago we learned what restaurants were around; last year we knew which ones were still open and delivered and what people thought of them; this year, the phone knows which one we will like best. which one is most likely to get our order.

posthuman life is transactional: what's most likely to produce an effect of continued use, or a patterned return, or a calculable tomorrow? posthuman life knows itself as part of a formula, as a statistical probability that's high, thank goodness, and seemingly glad somehow to register repetitions and variance. that's the learning part; to get it better and better and closer to preordained or known, knowable futures set in motion by patterns begun before, activities data-tagged to become recognizably part of the transaction.

we see the irony immediately. for those choices to be made someone had to have access before; someone who was probably very much like me; who likes what i like and knows what i know, lives as i live. was your great-great-grandmother enslaved? do you have a second cousin in jail? are you the one in three who has endured a sexual assault?³ wait, that number's pretty high—are you one of the 13 percent of African Americans (13 percent of a whole)⁴ who have produced more than 50 percent of American popular culture⁵ and its rhythms and are five times more likely to be incarcerated than whites,⁶ to make up 40 percent⁷ of the prison population? there's an algorithmic likelihood that you will order from Jimmy John's.

See also Stephen Best, Simone Browne, Hasan Elahi, N. Katherine Hayles, Cypress Hill, Wangechi Mutu, Shakespeare, John Szwed, Robert Farris Thompson, Alan Turing, Sylvia Wynter, www.census.gov.

FAMILY MATTERING: THE HIT

so the boys lined up in the way that they do and uhm . . . and it was this great thing, because in the choreography of the football game the boys line up and there's a referee, or actually one of the people calls out some numbers or signals and then the boys get together and then they HIT. and then they go and they HIT each other. and its, uhm . . . one of the things that happens, one of the important parts of the game is when the boys hit each other and there's a commotion and there's a pileup. so that was the thing that happened, there was a pileup on the field. and the

boys are on top of each other, and my brother was there and he's fifteen, and he's playing high school football because he was big, he was a big Black boy in Indianapolis, Indiana, and uhm . . .

To be continued.

RAGE: COMMERCE

improvisation is hard to monetize. or to record. so is this what happens to Black creativity? bottled up into the thing that can be repeated, so then reduced into a crass tininess that can be predicted, captured, reproduced? improvisation is not an open field, but it probably arrives more expansive than any of our marketplace designations for creative craft. even experimental Black performance becomes too narrow to capture the stylings of Solange or Simone Leigh. Black doesn't fit, because it is concerned with presenting alternative points of view, other takes, inclusions and citations from outside the space at hand. bring it in here, now, listen, there, hear what's happening. move.

See also Nora Chipaumire, Brenda Dixon Gottschild, Nia Love, Sondra Perry, Okwui Okpokwasili.

LOOPTIME: RECYCLING ACTIVITIES

i've been wondering about how to place Black musicality in relationship to capital, urban politics, and the narrow spaces available to Black lives.

Black creativity traffics in the recycling of materials and their redeployment. the materials are treated, of course, but fashioned and designed to be recognizable in a new context. this is like repetition with a difference. the ever-changing same. but always different.

we tend to be ambivalent about our shared focus on the repetition or the difference. the difference might be the thing that makes for shine; the difference is the fun of hearing Chaka Khan or Luther Vandross sped up to Chipmunk sonorities, or hearing a Marvin Gaye recording as the basis for Mary J. Blige singing about pms. but it might be the repetition that could offer us ways to think about dissolving cultures. Black musical creativity is always in relation to works of the past, the ancestors, sure, but also the musicians and dancers who sweated before and transitioned into other modes of being. the repetition here, then, is a revising as a repetition; difference revealed through repetition and the craft of revision.

repetition with a difference might sound boring, like doing the same old thing to get toward something only nominally new-ish or different; the past seems to bear the burden of having to arrive in relationship to gender, race, identity politics, impossible circumstances, class as destiny. for Black people, pasts are inevitably tied to the three aspects of BLACK REASON that Mbembe cites: colonialization, apartheid, slavery.⁸ this tripartite assemblage of traumas creates context for Black creativity: repetition, with a difference, in this context, means the repeated negotiation of disavowal as the watery surface from which we find our moves and grooves. with these parts of our inevitable past, Black encounters itself within its histories of disavowal, repeating creative process toward an end of invention. the stuff that we draw on inevitably had a harder row to hoe. things may not be better now, but they were surely worse then.

for dancers, repetition with a difference is cycling through dances that have been around



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for ages, but finding a new accent, approach, shift of the weight, tilt. the Charleston and the Kid 'n Play; the running man and the reject. popping and the itch. taxonomies. footwork and the James Brown. the sounds that encourage these dances come variously, but they do shift enough to be recognizable. we don't do the dances the same way to different music; the sound and motion collude to produce a synergetic possibility. Black culture notices shifts in sound with great attenuation; we recognize trap music as a 2010s extension of booty bounce music from a generation earlier, but it surely arrives as its own thing. distributed through the digital hi-hat, played like a timbale or the edge of the conga with fingertips. the sound comes back, altered, inspiring the dance—or vice versa—here again with a difference. repeated in the newer contexts for Black life and Black ambitions.

See also Big Freedia, Gilles Deleuze, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Denise Ferreira da Silva, Immanuel Kant, Suzan Lori-Parks, Christina Sharpe, James Snead, Hortense Spillers, Kanye West.

FAMILY MATTERING: THE BODY

The boys were piled up and . . . they started moving away and . . . there was a body left.

To be continued.

BACKGROUNDING: POLITICAL SONORITIES

but what are Black soundz as ultimate outcomes? the sounds of fugitivity. the sounds of things already in motion, in hiding a bit, in transport. things in disavowal; people. bodies. people. we appear in fragments at best, in portions but not in coherence. in motion.

if you've ever wondered why Black music is so loud, it's partly to drown out the incessant sounds of white supremacy lurking just behind, the ever-present threat of a hauling-off and the unpredictable loss of personal control.

Black creativity materializes in fugitivity. physical emotional structural economic fugitivity; playing the changes and working to be hard to catch; a little bit out of reach, on the run, going going gone. trying to be away from prying eyes, away from the eyes of the carceral state, from the police eyes, from popo, bearing down, chasing, dominating. suppressing. subjugation.

money, intimacy, distributed audiences, actualized potentiality. a future current created from a dancing past. what happened before remains on the body, of the body, and the dances are evidence of how people survive, enliven, proceed, relate. imagine outward. through gesture.

this is not a laundry list; this is a registering of the vibration, the buzz in the back; this is recognizing the real. that phrase from the 1990s comes back now with a difference in the context of fake news. the real is white supremacy and racism; white domination as the only possible forward and we all participate in it willy nilly. a latinx playwright composes a riff on whiteness and it winds up on Broadway; the inheritance for us all is white power. how does that sound? it sounds like creativity turned into commerce; like the parceling of craft into forty acres and a mule; Spike Lee got that right, to make film is to join into a binding with structures of domination that will exclude. and he knows the sound well, the white sound that recurs in the background, never ending; white noise that keeps us agitated and nervous, anxious about the impossibilities we pass through life toward the mocking white captors, the mocking white fathers who engendered slavery, capitalism, apartheid; who engendered, period, creating gender as a cut to dissemble, and now repeat the cut to protect life, to cut the body to save the baby, cut the possibility of the mother as a woman to protect the child, a Kentucky law that demands a sonogram⁹—as if to characterize a life that will be disavowed immediately by a state that has no plan for care or no care for caring.

See also Forty Acres and a Mule Filmworks, Paul Gilroy, "I Am Black (you have to be willing to not know)" (Theater 47, no. 2), Matthew Lopez, Fred Moten, Alexander G. Weheliye.

RAGE: UNKNOWN FUTURES

what we gon' do?

- what is the gravity that shapes cultural space?
- how will intimacy be possible in a world overly reified by class?
- who learns to experiment in public spaces of performance?
- who trains to go to the museums as a practice of imagination?
- who can afford to be curious?
- what we gon' do?

See also Alexis Pauline Gumbs, William Pope.L, Audre Lorde, Dana Michel, Valerie Cassel Oliver, Keeanga-Yamahitta Taylor.

FAMILY MATTERING: THE BOY ON THE GROUND

so. the body, of course was the boy on the ground who couldn't move, who wouldn't move, that was my brother, the boy on the ground. and i'm in the bleachers with my parents and my mother starts making these noises and she gets up and she tries to go toward the field, but my father, who was very mild-mannered in his way, is holding her back and calling her name, saying, "wait, wait," and there's a body on the field, there's a Black boy, and there's a body on the field, and he's face down and he's not moving, and uhm . . . the other boys move away and there's that weird thing that happens when you know something bad happened, but you're not sure how bad or what it is or what to do. and my mother is making these sounds and my father is holding her back and uhm the referees move in toward the body on the field, there's a boy's body on the ground. and uhm . . . they move kind of close. and it was a small enough place where this game was that you could see the blood.

and you could see it from the stands that there was blood and then the coaches come from the sides and come onto the field and they gather around this body, this Black boy's body on the ground and it's my brother who's playing and he's a good boy and he was fifteen years old playing high school football and they crowd around and . . . uhm. then they start to. they start to try to turn him over.

To be continued.

SOUNDZ: LISTENING

there's a difference between listening and hearing. listening we all aspire to—to demonstrate empathy, to comfort, to move closer toward, to care. to listen. to move toward understanding, getting it, becoming aware, doing something about it. i hear things: i hear people say they're not racist, or that they don't see color, but they are and they do, of course; why not see race for what it is and work through it toward the unknown place beyond disavowal?

hearing is a reflex; listening an activity. a preacceleration of an action.

Jean-Luc Nancy wrote a small book, *Listening*. it begins with a wondering: is listening something of which philosophy is capable?¹⁰ can philosophy only hear what's already happening and not listen to culture?

let's wonder at it together for a moment, though: the body resonates sound and sound bounces through us, our watery form, and we turn inward toward it to make it resonant somehow, within.

we can close our eyes and still hear; we might close our eyes to listen. to strain toward a possibility. to be always on the edge of meaning.

as in a lot of white philosophy, the possibility becomes abstract, concerned mostly with itself. Nancy reminds us, through Aristotle, that sensing is feeling oneself feel.¹¹ that a subject feels . . . that is his characteristic and his definition. of course, this is where Black possibilities become manifest as an impossible subject; one that whites listen for, that becomes a thing to be listened toward, to be strained toward at the edge of meaning. and that place of edge becomes valued and valuable.

but why reach beyond the strain if the strain matters? why would anyone?
 listening as an activity for liberal whites brings them into this room, into the presence of
 Black performance as a process that might be always out of reach, always beyond comprehen-
 sion. always to be strained toward.

if you could really understand Noname Gypsy . . .

see that's the separation point. Nancy follows Aristotle down the rabbit hole of white
 subjectivity; hearing himself, touching himself, he thinks himself and thus always feels himself
 as he resounds in a world and in the other. to be listening will always, then, be to be straining
 toward or in an approach to the self.

i really don't have that. i'm not always thinking of self as the place of creation or even
 transmission, as in "me me me me," and me as the beginning and ending of me; i don't need
 self to understand us. there is work that must be done together. there's the tiniest bit of contribu-
 tion to make; something to add to the pot. a stirring. it doesn't matter whether i do it or not; it
 needs to be done. to do because we must.

Nancy needs the other to restore his sense of a self; difference makes presence possible.
 difference is a condition. maybe so. experimental performance certainly believes this. we engage
 it to explore these differences.

listen, did you hear that?

Nancy claims that sound has no hidden face; that rhythm is nothing other than the time
 of time. yes, and when we can split the time of time wouldn't we then participate in a crucial
 worldmaking? to move toward looptime, and the infinite Möbius strip; to resist the you not me,
 but imagine an abundance of we?

it's all inevitable; the earth will not outlive us at the rate we're going.

to listen. to imagine an abundance of we.

See also Mladen Dolar, Jacques Lacan, Adrian Piper, Plato, Bryan Stevenson, Carrie Mae Weems.

FAMILY MATTERING: THE MOVING

he moved a little bit. and uhm. just enough so we could see. and it was like he was trying to wave
 at . . . and uhm, well, he's fifteen, and in my mind, he was trying to wave to us and let us know
 and uhm. the blood was . . . uhm. and then that's when they, they tried to take the helmet off.
 but in that HIT the boys had hit each other in the play and in that hit the helmet had cracked
 open and it had cracked into his head.

To be continued.

SOUNDZ: PREACCELERATION

this is a preaccelerated inevitability.

and that's the rub.

as we turn our shared attention toward historical mistruths, a colonial land and resource
 grab, we move ourselves into the spaces of disavowals and traumas.

but it's a movement before movement.

to train an AI model, to train a neural network, is to feed data into a receptive system. the network begins to predict outputs based on the data; obviously, the more robust the data, the more potentially accurate the model might become. advanced networks begin to assemble data sets on their own if they have enough inputs, in the way that Alexa or Siri come to understand voice. and predict desire.

the data that trains the model comes from the world. so the worlds that the models will create look, inevitably, like this world in all of its chaotic dispossession. true talk: if the only ways to understand Black possibilities have been curtailed and foreshortened, they will remain so in a future AI tense. preaccelerated toward disavowals; staying in our lanes.

See also Joy Adowaa Buolamwini, Annie Dorsen, Ed Finn, Arthur Jafa, Erin Manning, Hito Steyerl, Paul Virilio.

BACKGROUNDING: QUEER SOUNDZ

to raid the archive and redistribute its contents is a bit fussy; a bit baroque, you might say in terms of Western aesthetic; the embellishment is what there can be if we are always in the space of repetition. and like the baroque affectation, Black creativity trades in affect in its sound and gesture; its dances. and as in the curious flamboyance of the baroque, Black dance creativity arrives in spaces that are inherently queer.

queer affect, as we are now becoming trained to recognize, lines up neatly with pretty much the whole of Black gestural innovation; from the pimp walk to the catwalk/vogue death drop; from the bonebreak to the floorwork. queer affect might be the nonbinary provocations that suggest an *other* mode of corporeal temporality available to the performer, one typically denied or suppressed in everyday life, but revealed in dance performance. we dance our possibilities: in relationship, in couple dancing; as transfolk in strutting or posing; as warriors in j-setting or krumping. we tend to dance outside of our everyday identities. that's something that the dance allows—the other side of creative expression in the space of the *what if?* Black creativity revels in the *what if*—this is part of what allows it to be so powerful and compelling; *what if* i ruled the world; *what if* my histories were bound up with social success and fiscal dominations; *what if* i were allowed to express my sensuality through dance and posture? our dances tend to answer the moment with a new and urgent rendering of possibility rather than a confirmation of past lives.

so the dance arrives queer, and that queer stretches time and place. it stretches a history out of focus. a necessary act, one that allows for its soundz to be beyond before as an ultimate outcome.

The text turns into a chant that includes the audience.

beyond before as an ultimate outcome.

beyond before as an ultimate outcome.

See also Sara Ahmed, Malik Gaines, Jack Halberstam, Trajal Harrell, Jean-Baptiste Lully, madison moore, #Blacklifeinitfinitevariety.

NOTES

1. Kimerer L. LaMothe, *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
2. This text was written in January 2020. In February 2020, the county judge who first approved the deal reversed his decision, placing ownership of the statue back in the university's hands but not settling the question of where it would ultimately be housed. Michael Levenson, "Toppled but Not Gone: U.N.C. Grapples Anew with the Fate of Silent Sam," *New York Times*, February 14, 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/02/14/us/unc-silent-sam-statue-settlement.html.
3. Sharon G. Smith, Xinjian Zhang, Kathleen C. Basile, Melissa T. Merrick, Jing Wang, Marcie-jo Kresnow, and Jieru Chen, "National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2015 Data Brief," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, November 2018, www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf.
4. "us Census Quick Facts: Race and and Hispanic Origin: Black or African American, Alone, Percent," us Census Bureau, updated July 2019, www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI225218#qf-headnote-a.
5. See Robert Farris Thompson, "Hip Hop 101," *Rolling Stone*, March 27, 1986.
6. William J. Sabol, Thaddeus L. Johnson, and Alexander Caccavale, "Trends in Correctional Control by Race and Sex," Council on Criminal Justice, December 2019, cdn.ymaws.com/counciloncj.org/resource/collection/4683B90A-08CF-493F-89ED-A0D7C4BF7551/Trends_in_Correctional_Control_-_FINAL.pdf.
7. Ibid.
8. Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).
9. Adam Liptak, "Supreme Court Lets Kentucky Abortion Ultrasound Law Take Effect," *New York Times*, December 9, 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/12/09/us/supreme-court-kentucky-abortion-ultrasound.html.
10. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 1–2.
11. Ibid., 8.