

TORREÃO NASCENTE DA CORDOARIA NACIONAL

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Expanding Concert
(Isboa 2019 – 2023)

Mattin

with

Margarida Garcia

DJ Marfox

Vuduvum Vadavã

João Artur

text by Nuno da Luz



About the fourth *Expanding Concert* (Lisbon 2019-2023) with Mattin, Margarida Garcia, DJ Marfox and Vuduvum Vadavã at the Municipal Galleries, Lisbon, 2nd July 2022, by Dasha Birukova.

being-becoming-expanding: notes on the “Expanding Concert” 2022

A couple of days before the *Expanding Concert* took place at Galerias Municipais – Galeria Quadrum in 2022, Mattin presented me his new book *Social Dissonance* with the dedication “The strangest, the greatest. In alienation we meet”.¹

That was such a coincidence because I am thinking a lot about weirdness, that our current times are under the impression of the weird. Lovecraftian[1] weird would be about the gap between objects and the power of language to describe them. Indescribability as a reason why life is weird. Or weird as a rupture of coherency and a space of in-between states. A kind of weird that examines a destabilization or fascination for the outside. Even Harman wrote that philosophy must be weird because reality is weird. I find it symptomatic that Mattin’s artistic material is primarily noise because it is like “weirdness” “disturbing the order of things, making us aware that those things that we took as stable, those things that we took for granted, contain elements which, in fact, we cannot decipher.”²

But on the other hand, if we would think about the avant-garde in arts, it’s always about being different, being against conventions, being weird. For example, Futurism and Dada were not celebrating industrialism or criticizing war so much as they were replacing familiar principles with unfamiliar ones on the grounds that the familiar had failed.

Unfamiliarity or estrangement technic in art is a representation of reality in an alienated way. But we know that reality is composed of an alienated society while architecture is made of dissonances.

Is there any way to be not alienated?

Mattin would say “not really”. Metzinger would say “become no-one and no-where”.

Why are we always entangled in the dualities: one – no-one, where – no-where, familiar – strange, norm – deviation, authenticity – otherness, empire – colony?

I see *Expanding Concert* and Mattin’s artistic practice in general as a stage for revealing these strange matters of our life.

If Shklovsky taught us that defamiliarization of art transfigures the spectator’s economy of mental effort, then Mattin proposes to transfigure our perception to get closer to understanding reality, to use alienating potential of noise “to produce strange experiences that make us question ourselves as subjects.”³

Sounds like Farockian⁴ empathy which produces transgressive alienation. Probably it’s because there is more joy in dissonance than in consonance.

If we would think about contemporary art, it’s always about revealing the dissonances, mimesis of the broken “promise of happiness”, and not of art but of capitalism and societal relationships within it.

Every year since 2019 Mattin creates a situation or experience of “socializing social dissonances” in the form of a concert where the audience is an equally important part of the process as the musicians. That’s probably the reason why *Expanding Concert* produces these weird moments of in-betweenness – we are not spectators anymore, nor are we the merely musicians. It’s like a ritual but without coherent dramaturgy.

Every time the *Expanding Concert* is different, every time the social and political situation influences the artistic form. The first concert had no musicians, the audience was the creator of music, or better to say of the organization of sounds, there was the organization of oral histories of communities framed by gentrification. Barbara Silva in her textual response to the first edition concluded that we need a new harmony. We still need it.

The second concert was just after the first lockdown and it was saturated with awkward feelings of being together in a distance that echoed in the strange patterns of Mattin’s noise and Margarida Garcia’s deep drone sounds of her contrabass which were filling gaps between us. The third concert was after the second lockdown, it was even more awkward than the second one, probably because the crisis of the pandemic didn’t really change the social and political structures of our lives, we still experience racism, different phobias, plus Covid. This sensation resulted in the unwillingness of the audience to participate in any sonic organization but we were compensated by DJ Marfox’s functionalist rhythmic textures. It was such a relief, the safeness of techno music, anesthesia for dissonances.

For the fourth concert, Mattin decided to use a different approach to the audience. Perhaps he was disappointed in the collective way of creating the experience, so he had one-to-one discussions with the participants, or maybe he was following the idea of “radical attention” which Pierre Bal-Blanc shared in his textual response for the third concert.

Indeed, what is more important: a collective or an individual, or how to keep harmony in a society made of very different selves?

Metzinger would “tell us that selves do not exist and that ‘the phenomenal

selfhood originates in a lack of attentional and sub symbolic self-knowledge, in a special kind of darkness.”⁵ Individual darkness of collective transparency where transparency means that we are not able to see something, because it is transparent.

It’s like a sensory fabric that ties us in this concert: we can’t see it but have a very personal perception, alienated empathy of procedures.

The question that Mattin welcomed me with to the concert was “Will there be a Third World War?”

Godard would answer that the crisis of war is a problem of representation.

Interestingly, three days after the concert I received a newsletter from a Russian independent political journal. They were writing – though it is legislatively prohibited in Russia to call the war in Ukraine “the war” – that the official state TV “Russia 1” announced that we are experiencing the third World War in which Russia is engaged in the “demilitarization of the entire North Atlantic Alliance.” That’s indeed a useful representation of the government that prepares a total militarization of the country. I heard that after the military call-up, the most popular service in Russia became the freezing of human reproductive materials. This new World War would have definitely inspired Lubitsch to make “Ninotchka II”. The war as an act of social de-sexualization.

In the previous textual response to *Expanding Concert* by Regina de Morais, she quoted the anonymous Palestinian national that “Having an identity is an act of resistance”.

I think that having an identity is a desire to belong.

Is it possible to belong to nothing?

I just recently spoke with my old Moscow friend, she relocated to Belgium 13 years ago, and I live in Lisbon for 4 years now. We were sharing the same feeling that we were never thinking about our Russianness while we were living in Moscow but as soon as we moved abroad, we experienced this national cargo pressing on our shoulders. Honestly, I can hardly understand what it means to be Russian or what kind of image Russia could create in the foreign mind?

I think it just reveals a different level of Dostoevsky in our blood.

But this war made me think a lot about my nationality, it made my body a battlefield where a quarter of Ukrainian blood fights with the three-quarter of Russian blood and the whole body resists having any national identity.

Sound waves do not have origins, could we be like waves without origins, could we be socially accepted without having origins?

I would prefer my body to be a point that separates the past and the future rather than to be politically bordered with others.

“Others – it’s elsewhere of ours here”⁶ – remembering Godard again.

Or “otherness” is just another form of “authenticity”, another form of

identity within the social structure in which conventions are rooted in domination and oppression.

Is it possible to reconcile selves and others, here and elsewhere in a non-political way?

I’m afraid of becoming mad.

Let’s all become nemocentric.⁷

There was an article published on e-flux some time ago by Irina Zhrebkina in response to the eradication of Russian culture and especially Russian literature in Ukraine (because it “deserves total cancellation, as it carries only negative, ‘concentration camp’ experience.”⁸). The author proposes that in order to defeat Russian oppression Ukraine should rely on the Russian minor literature. The idea of a great culture is an imperial project that leads to the desire for fascism and for war. She continues that the truly decolonial strategy is to use the principle of radical equality which holds together the values of “select heroic lives (around which major culture and literature is oriented)” and the values “of non-heroic lives – subjects of minor culture and literature.”⁹ Zhrebkina’s idea is that it is easier to mobilize the readers of “great” authors like Pushkin or Tolstoy than those of “minor” Russian literature such as Platonov or Kharmis.

Terre Thaemlitz would argue that “becoming minor” can be an equally dangerous position than “being majoritarian”. That the idea of “becoming” dwells on the notion of arrival, on becoming somebody else, where “somebody else” constitutes just a different construction and similarly “linked to processes of homogenization, grouping, identification and classification, which are therefore automatically interlinked with enclosure, limitation, territorialization, and “becoming-fascist”.¹⁰

Terre Thaemlitz would suggest that instead of using Guattarian-Deleuzian deterritorialization and “becoming minor” we should call our relations into question, do not try to arrive at a concrete model be it gender, race or nationality or any acts of naturalization. Thaemlitz would say that we need “overterritorialization” which means “simultaneously engaging in contradictory social identities; forsaking pride for an open investigation of shame and hypocrisy; inviting confusion in our own life and the lives of those around us; and not only thinking of social alliances in terms of cooperation, but to actively engage in non-cooperation as a means of socialization.”¹¹

Does “non-cooperation” sound like a way of socializing our social dissonances?

That has the risk of real estrangement.

Or maybe we should all “become Indigenous”.

I just discovered the existence of Indigenous Artificial Intelligence. If Western AI is based on the idea that the humans and non-humans are

exploitable resources and we are in the master-slave relation to technology, then Indigenous AI is based on the North American and Oceanic Indigenous epistemologies which are foregrounding relationality.

In the Indigenous world, everything is animate and has spirit, all personal relations refer to relationships with everything in creation. Knowledge is the relationship one has with “all our relations”. These relationships are built around a core of mutual respect which, on the one hand, accepts human’s self-discipline, and on the other, acts responsibly toward other forms of life.

If the Western “epistemology of control” is inerasably tied to colonization, capitalism, and slavery then maybe we should think about Indigenous perspectivism and respectful relationality.

I see *Expanding Concert* as a very perspectival or spectral experience.

There is a relationality not just in the core of five concerts’ organization which borrows the structure of call and response in improvisation (concert is a call and a text is a response and so on, and so on). But the sound score composed of four universes of four musicians (Vuduvum Vadavã joined Mattin, Margarida Garcia and DJ Marfox in this 2022 edition) reveals the possibility of sonic coexistence, which is discrete and connected at the same time. Moreover, the formal organization of the experience is shaped by the intertwining of video recordings from previous concerts into the actual space, these imagistic spectres of the past rupture the time order of our present, the concert becomes a ritual of transmitting the present into the past or it becomes an act of erasing time by transforming it into our memory.

I read somewhere about the Shavirian expression of having a musical experience that “the music has become an extension of your flesh; or better, your flesh is now an extension of the music.”¹²

If we would think that the *Expanding Concert* is a body and all participants are organs and our social dissonances make us resist the organizations, then *Expanding Concert* would be a “body without organs”.¹³ The concert that resists being a concert, becomes the participants’ flesh and expands to the timeless text. What will we remember from the last concert to the moment when will be the next one? Will there still be the war or how many wars will be on the planet? And what will be after the last concert? Is it expanding to the end?

Let’s become surrealists and believe in the incredible peaceful after!

– Dasha Birukova

1 Editor’s note: Reference to the novelist H. P. Lovecraft (1890–1937).

2 Mattin. (2022). *Social Dissonance*. Urbanomic: UK, p. 153.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

4 Editor’s note: Reference to the filmmaker Harun Farocki (1944–2014)

5 Metzinger, Thomas. (2003). *Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity*, MIT Press, p. 632; quoted in Hickman, S. C. (2010). “Thomas Ligotti: The Nemo-centric Vision – the self as no-one and no-where”. <https://earth-wizard.livejournal.com/47133.html> (accessed 02-12-2022)

6 Jean-Luc Godard. *Ici et ailleurs* [Here and Elsewhere]. 1976, documentary.

7 Editor’s note: *nemocentric* (from Latin *nemo*, meaning “no one” or “nobody”) is a term associated with the work of the neurophilosopher Thomas Metzinger (1958) and to the discussion of hypothesis such conscious states without the recognition of a *self*.

8 Zherebkina, Irina. (2022). “Does Ukraine Need Russian Culture to Win the War Against Russia?”. <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/477795/does-ukraine-need-russian-culture-to-win-the-war-against-russia> (accessed 08.11.2022)

9 *Ibid.* [trad.]

10 Thaemlitz, Terre. (2009). “Becoming Minority”. *Guest Lecture #6*. <https://www.comatonse.com/writings/becoming-minor.html> (accessed 08.11.2022)

11 *Ibid* [trad.]

12 Shaviro, Steven. (1997). “Blinda Butcher”. in Kelly, C. (ed.). (2011). *Sound* (Documents of Contemporary Art). Whitechapel Gallery: London, p. 122.

13 Editor’s note: Expression used by poet and playwright Antonin Artaud (1896–1948) in *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu* [To Have Done with the Judgment of God] (1947) and later extensively operated in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Félix Guattari (1930–1992).

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