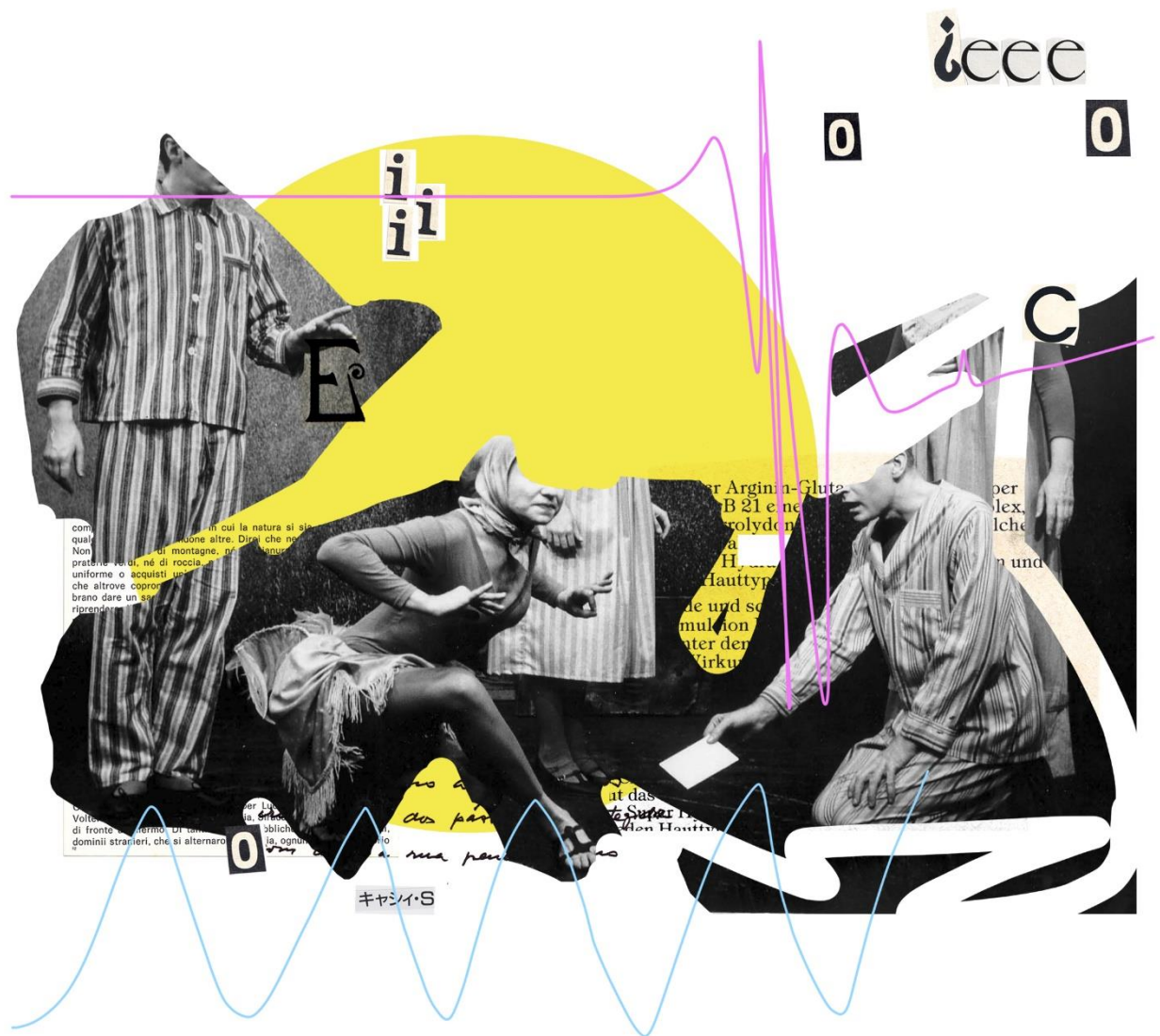


soundscapes of migrant dramaturgy in relation to spectatorship



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"A migração é um labirinto. Um labirinto de concreto cujo céu não se vê. Seguir em frente é o único sentido até mesmo voltar significa seguir em frente. Decidir tirar os pés do chão, cujo solo é conhecido, cujo terreno está medido, onde se planta, onde não se planta, onde é possível colher ou não, é um ato de coragem"¹.

- Manuella Bezerra de Melo.

¹ Manuella Bezerra de Melo, *Volta para tua terra: uma antologia antirracista/antifacista de poetas estrangeirxs em Portugal* (Espanha: Urutau, 2021): 9.

ABSTRACT

Migration is a worldwide phenomenon that has significantly impacted societies across the globe, creating culturally diverse communities. This work focuses on the representation of migrants' point of view in contemporary performance and aims to explore how sound is used by migrant artists to communicate their experiences with migration in their performances. At a more specific level, this research investigates the importance of sound in migrant dramaturgy and how it invites the spectator to have a bodily experience through listening referring to being a foreigner. As a methodology, this thesis consists of a theoretical framework mentioning key authors on this subject such as Yana Meerzon, Katharina Pewny, Mieke Bal, Natasha Davis, Lynne Kendrick, George Home-Cook and a dramaturgical analysis following the relational approach proposed by Groot Nibbelink and Merx. The main focus of the analysis is on performances created by migrant artists. To achieve that, I chose two case studies: *Internal Terrains* by Natasha Davis, a Croatian-born performer and visual artist based in London, and *Cosmic A** by Charlie Prince, a Lebanese performer and choreographer based in-between Amsterdam and Beirut. In this sense, by analysing dramaturgical structures and strategies regarding the performances' composition, spectatorship, and social context references, with this work I intend to contribute to the performance studies field, bringing the spotlight to the artwork produced by migrant artists and discussions about migration from their point of view. I hope that my research contributes to the contemporary art field promoting recognition of what migrant artists have to say. Their voices play a more important role in promoting different ways to share their stories using sound, as well as inviting spectators to reflect on migration in a more empathetic way by making them experience a fragment of migrant life through experience.

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I also would like to thank my dear friends, family, and partner, who have been by my side during this entire process (even with a considerable geographical distance) encouraging me to pursue my dreams, far away from my roots, during pandemic times. Especially the incredible migrant friends and artists I met in the Netherlands; our paths crossed to transform our experience into a less lonely one. Last, but not least I thank Natasha Davis and Charlie Prince, two incredible artists who have been developing such important artwork, you two inspired me a lot during this journey.

This thesis was valuable not only, academically speaking, to expand my knowledge and be able to reflect on the experience and the theory I read, but especially beyond that, on my personal life as well. During this research, I made *Pertencer* which also helped me to elaborate my emotions and experiences about my own migration process. This was important to me, and I am glad I had this opportunity to be able to move again, to create this video essay and to write this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

“[e]very story is a travel story – a spatial practice.”
Michel de Certeau, 1984

Many people migrate voluntarily or involuntarily around the world. This resettlement movement has been a part of humankind for centuries and it happens for various reasons. Presently, we live in a globalized world where we are required to face different challenges daily. Some of these challenges are attributable to contemporary societies' intercultural facet, but on a more critical level, to how countries have been dealing with migratory policies. Migration has impacted societies creating intercultural communities, affecting how people feel about their sense of belonging and how they deal with cultural differences. In any of these circumstances, there are issues to be debated to find better solutions. In this sense, I believe that art is a useful tool to tackle such matters since it can invite audiences to reflect on these themes and create representative spaces for immigrants to be seen and heard in society.

In *Theatre and Migration: Documentation, Influences and Perspectives in European Theatre* (2017), Azadeh Sharifi places theatre and migration in perspective while it historically presents how this reality is constituted in the European landscape and what are some of the crucial issues that are raised on this subject. By critically analysing this scenario, the author explains that due to “the break-up of the colonial empires and the economic rise of Europe, migration to Europe has reached an unprecedented level, particularly regarding the migration of people from former European colonies.”² Sharifi also adds that Europe has been dealing with refugees from different parts of the world, especially from places called ‘crises areas’, trying to settle and find a better life.³

Emma Cox in her works *Theatre and Migration* (2014) explores the theme in a more practical way saying that theatre has something to add concerning these matters, she also defends that “migration is, at its heart, about encounters with foreignness – with foreign people, and with foreign places. These are, it may be supposed, ingredients of good storytelling.”⁴ According to her, theatre is an expression of human experience, for this reason, it is often connected with what happens in the world. Another important element presented by Cox is who the artists involved in the performances (immigrants, locals, or a combination of them) are, this will affect how migration is addressed in the theatre.⁵ “None is owed a moral monopoly on the use of migration as a dramatic trope, but there can be different interests at work when ‘outsiders’ are written and performed into being by ‘insiders’, as contrasted with outsiders enacting some kind of self-representation.”⁶ The famous Romanian-French playwright Matei Vişniec does something similar when he brings up the current discussion concerning fiction. In his comedy *Migraaaaants*

² Azadeh Sharifi. “Theatre and Migration: Documentation, Influences and Perspectives in European Theatre” In *Independent Theatre in Contemporary Europe Book Subtitle: Structures – Aesthetics – Cultural Policy* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag), 321.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Emma Cox. *Theatre and Migration*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.

⁵ Ibid, 10.

⁶ Ibid.

(2016), Vişniec confronts a plurality of perspectives on the theme of migration, bringing a storm into the stage based on true news about the bitterness experienced by migrants.⁷

Considering the importance of these matters to theatre and society, I firmly believe this is a relevant topic to discuss within the academic environment. In addition, the subject is strongly connected to countries reality around the globe. However, since I am an overseas student on the subject of performing arts based in a European university, I mainly work with Europe and the current migration crisis.

It is important to mention that exploring this topic brings out questions about the role of globalization, the privileges in western society, inclusion/exclusion processes, environmental crises, racism, and ethnocentrism. Also, as Sharifi affirms in her text, “the migratory movements have triggered a cultural transformation whose traces are also perceptible in the European theatre landscape, although the political conditions of artistic work of these theatre-makers are crucial and have an impact on their presence in the respective theatre scenes”⁸.

In her viewpoint, migrants usually do not have an active voice in the representation of immigration in art.⁹ In this sense, Sharifi’s considerations confirm a well-known postcolonial theory coined by Antonio Gramsci and popularised by Gayatri Spivak¹⁰: the subaltern's theory. The subaltern theory reflects on the individuals whose history or perspectives are silenced across history due to many visible or invisible factors. The phenomenon occurs on the account of political, historical, social, or geographical issues that affect individuals and populations across the globe. Since colonialism is knowingly one of the greatest causes for historically creating such power dynamics, Spivak has popularised the subaltern theory while associating its discussions with Postcolonial Studies. Both Spivak and Gramsci’s works critically look at contemporary power relations and the importance of giving voice to those who have been purposefully left out due to a cultural hegemony which tends to favour a restricted few.¹¹ In this direction, I will base my analysis on the work of the migrant artists, showing how important it is for society to hear what they have to say about their art and experiences.

Reflecting on that, to discuss migrant artworks in the contemporary scene, Durrant and Lord argue that migratory aesthetics promotes awareness for the need for comprehension ways through which “aesthetic practice might be constituted by and through acts of migration.”¹² In this sense, the authors say that to understand the concept of aesthetics as proposed in their work, as an experience that is connected to how people face everyday life, it is vital not to romanticize or take it lightly.¹³ When it comes to this topic, performers approach memory, identity, language, among other aspects (related to migrants' daily lives), using their own embodied knowledge to

⁷ Matei Vişniec. *Migraaants: On est trop nombreux sur ce putain de bateau ou le Salon de la cloture*. Editions l'Oeil du Prince, 2016.

⁸ Sharifi, Azadeh. “Theatre and Migration”, 322.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. “Can the Subaltern Speak?": Revised Edition, from the “History” Chapter of *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. In *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, edited by Rosalind Morris. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

¹¹ Ibid, 271.

¹² Sam Durrant and Catherine M. Lord. “Introduction: Essays in Migratory Aesthetics: Cultural Practices Between Migration and Art-making”. In *Essays in Migratory Aesthetics*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi), 12.

¹³ Durrant and Lord “Introduction: Essays in Migratory Aesthetics”, 15.

communicate to an audience. In this case, the use of sound promotes interesting experiences for the spectator because of its immersive characteristic. For this reason, it is often adopted as a dramaturgic strategy due to the potential that it entails.

From my standpoint and considering testimonials of other migrant peers I have collected over the last one year of living and studying abroad, speaking a different language is an intense daily effort of trying to understand your surroundings. In this sense, the relationship with sound changes, and this experience can be translated through sound in performances, inviting the spectator to modes of engagement.

Considering this discussion and focusing on the representation of migrants' points of view in contemporary performance, I aim to explore how sound is used by migrant artists to communicate their experiences with migration in their performances as my thesis territory. To elaborate more about that, I chose to analyse two pieces in this thesis: *Internal Terrains* by Natasha Davis and *Cosmic A** by Charlie Prince. They invite the spectator to engage differently with their work and reflect on migration, creating distinct bodily responses in the audience by listening and questioning the spectator's position during the piece. In this regard, I propose a dialogue between migrant dramaturgy and the importance of sound. The chosen approach is relevant to the subject because sound promotes different ways to share migrants' stories, as well as inviting spectators to reflect on migration by making them feel a fragment of migrant life through experience. As of previous research, I have concluded that this field has not yet been explored to exhaustion, therefore, I believe this to be an important contribution to the theme.

It is also pivotal to mention that the concept of dramaturgy adopted here is as understood by Georgelou et al who recognize that dramaturgy “has to do with diverse, multiple, and shifting areas of practice that are extremely difficult to pin down.”¹⁴ which could be broad, so the authors work with *dramaturgy* “by using the term in the singular, and without an accompanying adjective, we seek to delve deeper into an understanding of dramaturgy as a particular process of work that is common to all artistic production (whether ‘experimental’, ‘traditional’, ‘new’, or ‘old’), and that sheds light upon the ways that encounters, work, and creation inside (and possibly also outside) the artistic frame happen.”¹⁵ Therefore, even if the diversity and plurality of migrant artistic production are noticeable, I will use the term dramaturgy in the singular as proposed by Georgelou et al.

Therefore, my main research question is:

How is sound used in the dramaturgy of migrant theatre to convey aspects of migrant experience to the spectators?

To begin answering the research question, I divided my research into the following sub-questions that will also serve as guides to describe the methodological approach used in this study:

¹⁴ Georgelou, Konstantina; Efrosini Protopapa and Danae Theodoridou. “Introduction: why dramaturgy today?” In: *The practice of dramaturgy: working on actions in performance*. (Valiz: Netherlands, 2016), 1.

¹⁵ Georgelou et al “Introduction: why dramaturgy today?”, 2.

- How sound is used as a dramaturgical strategy in Natasha Davis's piece *Internal Terrains* and Charlie Prince's *Cosmic A**?
- In what way sound features are used to invite the spectator to have a bodily experience in *Cosmic A** and *Internal Terrains*?
- How does the soundscape invite the spectator to be the outsider/foreigner in both pieces?

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This thesis consists of a critical theoretical framework and an analysis of the two case studies previously mentioned. The first chapter elaborates on theories concerning migratory dramaturgy, spectatorship, and the importance of sound. It explores how these elements create different experiences in the audience through listening - inviting them to be the outsider - referring to the key authors on this subject such as Yana Meerzon, Katharina Pewny, Mieke Bal, Natasha Davis, Lynne Kendrick, and George Home-Cook. Chapter two contains a detailed description of the two case studies and a comparison between both cases as means to underline connections between the performance analyses and the theory discussed in the first chapter. It should be noted that, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, I could only have access to Natasha Davis' *Internal Terrains* through a video recording provided by the artist herself. As for Charlie Prince's *Cosmic* A*, I had the opportunity to watch it live at the Spring Festival in Utrecht in May 2021.

Dramaturgical Analysis

In *Dramaturgical analysis: a relational approach*, Groot Nibbelink and Merx¹⁶ propose a way to analyse performances dramaturgically using what they called *planes of dramaturgy* which is composed of three elements: “principles of composition, modes of addressing the spectator, and ways in which a performance may relate to a wider social and artistic context.”¹⁷ I chose to work with this method because it is a tool to engage with artistic practices considering not only the contemporary performances but beyond that. The authors understand dramaturgy as useful “for analysing not only artistic processes but also societal or even behavioural processes; we can also analyse, for instance, the dramaturgy of urban spaces, classrooms, climate conferences, or presidential elections.”¹⁸ In addition, in the relational approach, the way spectatorial relations are addressed play an important role which I intend to explore in this thesis. According to Groot Nibbelink and Merx's perspective, “our triadic approach helps to discuss, respectively, elements of spectatorship, the possible statements conveyed, and matters of situatedness.”¹⁹ The focus of this approach is also to emphasize the relationality between the planes. In this direction, I aim to

¹⁶ Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx “Dramaturgical Analysis: a relational approach” FORUM+, vol. 28 no. 3, pp. 4-16, 2021.

¹⁷ Groot Nibbelink and Merx, “Dramaturgical Analysis,” 6.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, 9.

analyse two case studies: Natasha Davis' performance, *Internal Terrains*, and Charlie Prince's piece *Cosmic A**, using Groot Nibbelink and Merx's approach but focusing especially on sound.

CHAPTER 1

Theatre and Migration:

Migrant Dramaturgy, Spectator, and the importance of Sound

In *Essays in Migratory Aesthetics: Cultural Practices Between Migration and Art-making* (2017), Durrant and Lord explore the complex and many-sided connection between aesthetics, politics and human survival. The authors explain that “*migratory aesthetics* suggests the various processes of becoming that are triggered by the movement of people and peoples: experiences of transition as well as the transition of experience itself into new modalities, new artwork, new ways of being.”²⁰ In essence, the authors defended that migratory aesthetics is related to both the critique of a migratory universe and its products, as well as the causes that originate migration modes, whether they are involuntary or not.²¹

According to Durrant and Lord, when it comes to analysing artwork, it is necessary to consider if this could be a concrete account of migration’s impact on different aspects of the human habitat. In this sense, the concept presented by these authors reflects upon cultures in transition and different power relations, as the citation below demonstrates.²² The authors say that to understand the concept of aesthetics as proposed in their work as an experience that is connected to how people face everyday life, it is vital not to romanticize or take it lightly.²³ When it comes to people dealing with the reality of migration, their daily practice is directly affected by the prevailing social and cultural aspects in multiple ways. Durrant and Lord argue that migratory aesthetics is not only a tool to gather migrant histories but a mode to celebrate memory while attributing agency to the subjects even at the moment of an apparent denial.²⁴ In this sense, this perspective brings relevant aspects when it comes to artworks related to this topic or even pieces created by migrants showing their agency and the importance of those within the Art field.

In a similar take, Mieke Bal (2007; 2002²⁵) who is a cultural theorist, a video artist, and a professor who devotes her work to *migratory aesthetics* explains that it is a ‘travelling concept’ which “on the one hand it falls back on the notion of aesthetics, and on the other it coins a modifier for that notion, truly modifying it.”²⁶ In other words, the modifier specifies that migratory²⁷ aesthetic is an aesthetics *per se* since it works as a way to perceive beauty and artistic

²⁰ Durrant and Lord “Introduction: Essays in Migratory Aesthetics”, 12.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 15.

²⁴ Ibid, 18.

²⁵ Mieke Bal. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002)

²⁶ Mieke Bal. “Lost in Space, Lost in the Library”. In *Essays in Migratory Aesthetics*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 23.

²⁷ As Bal (2007) explains “the modifier ‘migratory’ does not refer to migrants or actual migration of people, nor would I, as user of the concept, presume to be qualified to do so. What the modifier means instead, how it relates to the three concepts above, and how it can help us understand possibilities for art to be politically effective, is the subject of this paper.” (23)

expression through an active interaction “between viewer and artwork.”²⁸ That is an aesthetic committed to the characteristic movement of migration, so to say.

For instance, Bal works with the idea that *migratory* as a modifier would be a characteristic of the contemporary world, where mobility has increasingly become part of the norm. According to the author, this term opens a floor to experiment interactions with the migratory instead of arbitrarily assigning such relations. Bal explains that “If aesthetics is primarily an encounter in which the subject, body included, is engaged, that aesthetic encounter is migratory if it takes place in the space of, on the basis of, and on the interface with, the mobility of people as a given, as central, and as at the heart of what matters in the contemporary, that is, ‘globalized’ world.”²⁹

Sound and language are important aspects in Bal’s work on migratory aesthetics, Bal discusses her video *Lost in Space* (2005), a collaboration with Shahram Entekhabi which explores the manifold perceptions of language as a cultural device. Both Bal and Entekhabi seem to be focused on closely approaching the notion of home, security, and borders by interviewing actual migrants. According to Bal, during the creative process, they kept the aesthetic open to what would take place. In other words, the process was entirely organic. The author explains that it takes more than a topic to create an aesthetic but rather a meaningful encounter between subjects.³⁰ In this case, the aesthetic of the video emerged from an experience she had with an interviewee concerning his difficulties to communicate in English, “both his desire to speak and the difficulty he experienced when speaking both became relevant factors.”³¹ In this example, sound appears as an important element. So, Bal explains

This double discrepancy – between speech and understanding, and between meaningful sound and senseless sound – then, became the basis of the film. The migratory aesthetics took the form of a work *on* and *with* discrepancy. In practice, the result was the following. We decided to sever sound from vision, as in Daryush’s interview, and to place sound *in competition* with noise.³²

Furthermore, she recognizes that “it was experimentation with sound at its heart. . . The way the sonoric quality of the voices was both made and performed through the work of sound, came as a result of their struggle with globalised languages”³³ Bal also reflects on the dominance the English language takes in contemporary society and how using English as a common medium to conduct the interviews felt like a violent imposition. She adds that this creates a clear advantage for the ones who speak the language over others who do not. As consequence, Bal’s project also concentrates on the aesthetics of the accent, analysing the changing characteristics of spoken English, and exploring the lack of clarity.³⁴ That can also be understood as an aspect related to sound, which I intend to explore further in this thesis.

²⁸ Bal, “Lost in Space, Lost in the Library”, 23.

²⁹ Ibid, 23.

³⁰ Ibid, 26.

³¹ Ibid, 27.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, 26.

³⁴ Ibid, 29.

The way sound is manipulated in the video is also relevant to its comprehension and artistic process. In this case, the sound is not only a tool but rather something displaced from the images. Thus, this creative tool stands for an alternative way to tell the story in opposition to a traditional form, which invites the viewer to engage differently with the artwork.³⁵ As Bal explains concerning the process of detaching sound from image in filmmaking.

Losing clarity, then, leads to a gain in insight. One of the many insights that the difficulty of clear communication provided, was, for example, the insight that we all need technological supplementation to sharpen our senses. We may not realize it but wearing glasses or contact lenses is just one instance of such supplementation. Needing a foreign language to speak, on an everyday basis, is another. This example leads us to the most foregrounded element of the film's aesthetic: the separation of language as it is visible – in mouths, in gestures, in bodies – from language that is audible. Language, in the film, then, is at first made to disintegrate. First you see it, then you hear it. And while you hear it, you are almost being distracted from it by the written word. This written word you need, and the realization of that need is a confrontation with your own inadequacy.³⁶

The lack of clarity explored in Bal's film uses sound as a medium in an interesting way. It is an important tool to demonstrate migrants' daily experiences and, at the same time, it invites the viewer to experience it distinctly. The author states that sound promotes insight because you use other elements to comprehend what is happening before your eyes. The sound plays the most important role in this film, being essential to display migratory aesthetic as Bal says: "sound, in this project, is a tool, perhaps a weapon, against some of the dominant tendencies in viewing"³⁷ Bal argues that in this case sound does not follow image, but has a role of its own, it is dominant over vision; the sound is not just support, as people would traditionally expect it to be, because it is not what we are used to seeing on cinema and how storytelling is presented by the media.³⁸

Considering theatre landscape, language is also central when it comes to migrant dramaturgy and a way to communicate through sound. In *Dramaturgy of Migration: Staging Multilingual Encounters in Contemporary Theatre* (2019), Meerzon and Pewny argue that "multilingual theatre's ability to stage personal journeys of migrant theatre-makers and engage new performative mechanisms of constructing and reflecting their new audiences that are often themselves multilingual and multicultural."³⁹ The book addresses important aspects of migrant theatre and brings new 'dramaturgies of self'⁴⁰ as the authors explain; such a concept portrays the alienation present in the migrant artists' daily lives. Such dramaturgies are the result of

³⁵ Ibid, 29.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, 31.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Yana Meerzon and Katharina Pewny (Eds.) "Introduction: Dramaturgies of self: language, authorship, migration" In: *Dramaturgy of Migration: Staging Multilingual Encounters in Contemporary Theatre*. (Routledge, 2019), 20.

⁴⁰ Meerzon and Pewny "Introduction: Dramaturgies of self", 19.

“forced displacement, political banishment, war threats, asylum-seeking, economic migration, and personal tourism.”⁴¹

In the same direction, Emma Cox argues that language and accent occupy an important role in migrant theatre. The author defends that both imprints’ marks on the performing body “just as powerfully as skin: both may be political, as well as personal.”⁴² Concerning this idea, the writer and multi artist Dragan Todorovic shares his own experience connecting exile, language and identity in his first piece entitled *In my Language I am Smart*⁴³. In this *audio play* — or *sound art* as he called it — Todorovic represents himself sailing the ocean of language exploring the negotiations that happen between two languages. Sound here is also central; in his piece, the sound effects create an ambience and its complexity. The use of spoken language (native and English), its accents, tones, inflexions, and rhythms.⁴⁴ The artist worked with words he acquired and with the ones he abandoned in his subjective process as a migrant by adding different layers to approach the complexity of this setting. As he affirms “the number of layers I used whilst mixing the final version is telling: 69 stereo channels of conflicting sounds were needed to express the complexity of this settlement. The Beatles used eight.”⁴⁵

Todorovic also states that as a person in exile you must deal with a lot of new information, different rules, places, languages, which creates confusion and fragments of knowledge. “The noise permeates everyday life, thus making communication minimal or negligible. The information becomes coded and difficult to comprehend and use.”⁴⁶ In my perspective, embodied knowledge acquired through migrant artists life experiences open new possibilities to create from this type of knowledge and to build bridges with the audience through sound, which is something so ordinary to the migrant's life. As Todorovic says: it is irreversible.

Spoken language also appears as the main element in Ana Candida Carneiro’s performance *All is Filthy in Wonderland*. In her essay, Carneiro talks about her dramaturgical choices and how she decided to address the audience in a condition of foreignness by creating an environment where the spectators could not fully understand what was being presented.⁴⁷ In this case, the sound is used as a medium to invite the audience to feel said lack of clarity, which will be discussed in depth further ahead.

Another important characteristic element in Migrant Theatre is the multiplicity of aspects that constitute an identity, as Paire aptly points out. To express that, sound can be used to translate their reality and experience. According to the author,

By stating that the construction of identity is, at all times, geographically influenced, migrant theatre suggests that identity is never an arrested fact. On the contrary, it is a concept marked by a strong volatility. It also has to stem from an exchange between the

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴² Cox, “Theatre and Migration”, 12.

⁴³ broadcast in May 2005 on CBC Radio One.

⁴⁴ Dragan Todorovic. “We are who we are not: language, exile, and nostalgia for the self”. In *Dramaturgy of Migration: Staging Multilingual Encounters in Contemporary Theatre* (Routledge, 2019), 35-42.

⁴⁵ Todorovic. “We are who we are not”, 40.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ana Candida Carneiro. “Playing and writing across languages and cultures”. In *Dramaturgy of Migration: Staging Multilingual Encounters in Contemporary Theatre* (Routledge, 2019), 47.

migrant and the other and this exchange should not depend solely on migrants. Migrant theatre opens up the possibility of a multiplicity of identities' but also warns us that this possibility can only appear as the result of a shared effort. The instability of the migrant partly depends on the amount of space we, as Westerners, are willing to give her/him in our contemporary societies.⁴⁸

In this case, to create spaces to reflect on the multiplicity of identities on stage leads us to different ways to build connections regarding this topic in contemporary society; as the author says, it is not possible to be settled alone, it is a shared responsibility. This can be done through sound art, as the main topic discussed here. One good example of that is *Things I'm not*, a LegalAliens Theatre Company audio performance, written and performed by female artists who have migrated to the UK from different countries. As their description⁴⁹ says, this piece is about recognising the stereotypes often projected onto migrant women and giving them room to respond. Each episode approaches a situation that migrant women face daily. Another interesting project is *Soundwalks*⁵⁰, part of *Home-Makers: Urban Expertise in the Philippine Diaspora*' led by Dr Ella Parry-Davies at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London. In this collaborative project, listeners are invited to go for a walk with sounds made by migrant domestic and care workers from the Philippines in the UK. The listener can visit the place the person chose to go and hear the monologue about their lives. The project explores how they create a sense of home while living and working abroad. Both projects approach the multiplicity of migrant identities and contribute to expanding our ideas when it comes to the diversity inherent to our identities. Besides, it uses sound as an important medium in communicating to the audience, questioning their ways of looking at the foreigner.

In *Performing Migratory Identity: Practice-as-Research on Displacement and (Be)Longing* (2016), Natasha Davis is dedicated to exploring performing migratory identities, discussing the notions of displacement and '(be)longing'. In her perspective, to be able to create and consciously revisit trauma sources for artistic purposes, migrant artists must find themselves in a situation in which living conditions (both material and emotional) are sufficient.⁵¹ Davis believes that personal body memory has a fundamental role in analysing issues related to identity and migration, a crucial component of their performances that is strongly related to migrant aesthetics. The artist also says "the memories and interpretations of past events and traumas, as the material that shapes my vision of the present, are *located* in my body. They *locate* me in my current identity and inform my agency."⁵² In this regard, their experiences as migrants create interesting ways to explore other senses in the audience, experiencing a bit of what happens in migrants' daily lives. I am interested in understanding how sound is dramaturgically used to invite listening provoking experiences related to that.

To discuss sound as central in contemporary theatre and performance, on the subject of post-dramatic theatre Lehmann says that soundscapes and sound effects have great importance.

⁴⁸ Roxane Paire. Migrant theatre and the aesthetics of identity. *Aigne Online Journal* (2011), 39.

⁴⁹ Project website: <https://thingsiamnot.com/>

⁵⁰ Project website: <https://homemakersounds.org/>

⁵¹ Davis, Natasha. "Performing Migratory Identity: Practice-as-Research on Displacement and (Be)Longing." PhD thesis diss., (University of Warwick, 2016)

⁵² *Ibid*, 29.

The theatre that Lehmann's identifies as postdramatic often focuses on exploring the usually unacknowledged anxieties and paradoxes that surround the performance. According to the author "postdramatic theatre is a theatre of states and of scenically dynamic formations."⁵³ In other words, is fragmented, no linear structure. He presents the idea of *textscape* – or *theatre of voices* –, which is composed of text, voice and noise creating a soundscape, playing with different textures of sound.⁵⁴

By contrast to the latter, the postdramatic 'audio landscape' Wilson talks about does not mimetically represent reality but creates a space of association in the mind of the spectator. The 'auditive stage' around the theatre image opens up 'intertextual' reference to all sides or complements the scenic material through musical motifs of sound or 'concrete' noise.⁵⁵

Lehmann also explains that collages and the use of different languages "proves to be omnipresent in postdramatic theatre. Multilingual theatre texts dismantle the unity of national languages"⁵⁶, which was also addressed before when it comes to the importance of language in migrant dramaturgy. Another concept related to sound proposed by Lehmann is the idea of *musicalization*⁵⁷. As the author defends, "an independent auditory semiotics emerges; directors also apply their sense of music and rhythm".⁵⁸ Lehmann states that technology amplifies the possibilities to manipulate sound and voices in theatre. The use of different tools, such as synthesizers and other types of audio mixing contribute to innovative ways to approach human-made sounds on stage.⁵⁹

In *Theatre Aurality* (2017), Kendrick argues there are theatre makers who focus on sound because "it allows them to create experiences that cannot be made visually, or if they were—they would be something different."⁶⁰ His definition of Aurality is related to the different states of what we can define as listening as the author perceives it. It entails various stages of capturing and interacting with sound: "[...] many states of hearing and listening, resounding and voicing, sonance and resonance, moving and feeling but these do not necessarily preclude the other senses."⁶¹

Kendrick argues that in the history of sound in theatre there has been a significant change due to technological advances. At first, the sound was mechanical and offstage work, it was mostly about illustrating weather and atmospheres. When the electronic encountered theatre practices, sound gained a different meaning in performance.⁶² The author explains that before the prevalence of visual effects, the voice was responsible for conveying the emotions presented, in

⁵³ Hans-Thies Lehmann. *Postdramatic Theater*. Translated by Karen Jurs-Munby. (Routledge, 2016), 68.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 148.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 147.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 91.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 92.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Lynne Kendrick. *Theatre Aurality*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 2.

⁶¹ Ibid, 1.

⁶² Ibid, 29.

this sense, the author considers voice to be “the essence of drama.”⁶³ Also, he argues that sound “is explored as an effective means of establishing spaces and environments through sensation.”⁶⁴ The idea of using sound to create a bodily experience in the spectator is particularly interesting to my research, especially when related to migration. When using sound in this way in theatre artists translate some aspects of migrant life to the audience by not only sharing their journeys but inviting them to experience a fragment of this otherness. Providing an opportunity to experience such perspective is equivalent to leading the audience out of their comfort zone, promoting awareness and critical thought about the subject.

According to Kendrick there is an important discussion in philosophy about the dominance of sight over the other senses. In short, the author explains that human beings associate the act of seeing as an equivalent to truth but also to “the metaphysical obsession with meaning as being the ultimate culmination of any act of sensual engagement.”⁶⁵ Meaning, in this sense, requires what can be perceived as palpable and not derived from bodily experiences. Although I will not enter the philosophical debate around this topic, this does not imply that these matters are less important, but mainly out of the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, to dedicate ourselves to sound does not mean that we should therefore disattend the phenomenon of looking or even diminish the importance of other senses as authors such as Kendrick and Home-Cook already point out.

The Aurality is not changing *an ear for an eye* as Kendrick says, it is a rejection of the traditional way to conceive the idea of sight as a dominant sense when it comes to spectatorship and aesthetic experiences; “therefore, to engage in a critique of seeing, of visuality and spectatorship, is to critique the systems that maintain jurisdiction over the terms of perceptual engagement.”⁶⁶ In addition to that, George Home-Cook defends that “what is needed is an account of aurality in theatre that acknowledges, accommodates and, above all, begins to explore the role of vision in our experience and perception of theatrical sound.”⁶⁷ In this sense, both aurality and migrant dramaturgy question hegemonic narratives; the first in regards to sight in relation to other senses and the second, about colonial perspectives when it comes to migrants and migration. Kendrick’s point of view demonstrates that his work surpasses the established limits when asking: “instead of defining sound as a medium, what happens if it is considered as a theatrical phenomenon, what of sound as performance?”.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the author explains that *aurality* helps us to understand the world we live in because it refers to auricular qualities, such as feeling and immersion which is fundamental to the experience.

the ear brings us into contact with the world which, in turn, means we can be affected by it, as well as having an effect upon it. Therefore, it is not so much the sense, but the sensing possibilities of the ear that are thwarted by ocular dominance, particularly when honed by listening, which renders the self open and available to modes of engagement that invite exchange and dialogue.⁶⁹

⁶³ Ibid, 33.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 40.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁷ George Home-Cook. *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 9.

⁶⁸ Kendrick, “Theatre Aurality”, 39.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 8.

Another important element discussed by Kendrick is the role of voice in the theatre, which is generally dislocated from its relationship to sound. The author argues that the voice speaks its ‘truth’ that is expressive of theatrical practice. It has become associated with written material and its purpose is more about the textuality than the aural sphere.⁷⁰ In this sense, the importance of speech in theatre demonstrates how important sound is, even when this relation is not so clearly established. The use of artists’ native languages in migrant dramaturgy is also a choice related to hearing a spoken language the spectator does not know, provoking the feeling of missing meaning, and inducing the viewer to feel in his own body a physical manifestation of the lack of understanding.

Thinking about spectatorship in migrant dramaturgies and the way sound is used as a way to invite the audience to engage differently, performers address the spectators in several ways. Sometimes even inviting the spectator to be someone else, as a foreigner, for example. About that, Groot Nibbelink argues that “they are perhaps confronted, seduced or invited to accept a particular way of reasoning; they can be treated as guests or as outsiders, as sensitive bodies, as citizens and so on”.⁷¹

The discussion about migrant dramaturgies previously argued re-emerges here to invite modes of listening related to migration reality. For example, in *All is Filthy in Wonderland*, Carneiro chooses to address the audience in a condition of foreignness by using language as a means. The piece was originally performed in Italian, but part of the dialogues was performed in Portuguese without subtitles.⁷² On this topic, Carneiro explains: “I wanted to demand from those watching my play the same effort that migrants have to make to overcome linguistic barriers. In a foreign land where you don’t speak the language well, your body and soul are consumed in an immense, constant effort of de-codification.”⁷³ According to Carneiro, the idea was to lead the audience into engaging in the situation and generating a level of empathy, which is mainly different from being sympathetic towards the circumstances⁷⁴. For this reason, the author was compelled to find a balance between the amount of use of the two languages as a way to guarantee enough comprehension so the audience can engage in the story.⁷⁵

In my viewpoint, performances that build or provoke the audience to reflect on migration through listening can affect the way migrants are seen and heard in society. There are two possible stages when it comes to migrant artists creating performances to share their stories (autobiographical or not): firstly, artists can find space to be heard while establishing a critical dialogue about the topic and elaborate their own experience through creating art; secondly, the spectator who sees performances can be affected by them, creating empathic responses or the migrant spectator who sees and hears something he/she/they experience, creating spaces of

⁷⁰ Ibid, 36.

⁷¹ Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink. "Bordering and shattering the stage: mobile audiences as compositional forces." In *Staging Spectators in Immersive Performances: Commit Yourself!*, 59-71. Edited by Doris Kolesch, Theresa Schütz, and Sophie Nikoleit. (London: Routledge, 2019), 64.

⁷² Carneiro, “Playing and writing across languages and cultures”, 47.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

representativity for them. So, there is social importance in promoting situations like these, which is what makes artworks in this line so impactful and rich.

To understand the sound regarding spectatorship, Kendrick defends that sound is an immersive phenomenon in which the spectator's senses are explored. According to the author, sound invites aural engagement and the establishment of a “*non-visual spatiality*”⁷⁶ which is needful of the bodies, animate or inanimate that are part of the environment. In this case, the use of sound is going to invite the spectator to feel through their ears. As Kendrick argues, aurality

is about the presence of the body amidst perception, and the sonority and resonance, permeability and motility of the subject amidst all this. The ways in which sound works with bodies place an onus on *us* in establishing its meaning. We are not mere receptors of or conduits for sound, we are its source at the same time as its receiver, we can be both speaker and amplifier. Our bodies are also the point at which sound manifests its meaning, and in this way aurality requires performance—sound works on us (and vice versa) through its form.⁷⁷

In this case, sound works through our bodies, which decode and establish meaning from the input. The author also defends that aurality, in terms of the audience, will relate to corporeality because “any reception of sound is some kind of embodiment of it.”⁷⁸ According to Kendrick in theatre aurality sound performs “whether this is the creation of the spaces, fictions atmospheres and dramas made through sound or the disassembly of all these through noise”⁷⁹ Beyond that, the act of listening occupies a prominent place when it comes to the spectator.

In *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves* (2015), George Home-Cook explores how going to the theatre demands our attention, an act which could be illustrated through listening. Home-Cook also defends that attention is more than an activity of the mind, on his point of view, he suggests we understand attention as “reconsider attention as a dynamic, intersensorial, bodily engagement with the ‘affordances’ of a given environment.”⁸⁰ In other words, attention is inherent to the theatre. As the author defends “‘to listen’ is to pay attention to sound(s), and ‘to attend’ is to stretch.”⁸¹ According to him,

By investigating the phenomenology of theatrical listening we can begin to elucidate what it means to *attend* theatre. Conversely, the theatre provides a very relevant context for a consideration of listening as a theatrical mode of attention. It is thus the phenomenon of aural attention, and the particular ways in which the ‘act’ of listening presents itself as *theatrical*, that is at stake.⁸²

⁷⁶ Kendrick, “Theatre Aurality”, 44.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Home-Cook, “Theatre and Aural Attention”, 2.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

This idea brings up how the act of listening and stretching can be related to how spectators experience the sound in performance. Home-Cook argues that “when we stretch we *move*, both in the sense of bodily movement through objective space, and in the sense of ‘making space’ through and in this act of embodiment.”⁸³ This view follows what this thesis aims at discussing in regards to understanding sound as a medium to invite the audience to modes of engagement through experiences that take place in the spectator's body. When it comes to migrant dramaturgy, the use of sound could invite the spectator to experience fragments of being the foreigner. Home-Cook also says, “by accounting for the embodied particularity of the listener-spectator not only can we gain a clearer understanding of the enworlded and embodied dynamics of theatre perception, but of the synergic nature of perception in general: theatre stages perception.”⁸⁴

About that, Home-Cook defends this hypothesis that listening is an act because it is intrinsically theatrical. It entails a *double act* that usually includes listening and looking. Also, the sense of dynamism, movement, and spatiality, which are all characteristics of listening. As the author explains “as a specialised mode of *attention*, listening both manipulates and is manipulated by the phenomenon of sound, in a dynamic dance from and through which experience is born.”⁸⁵ To the author, it is undeniable that audiences are a mass of individual listeners who are there to comply with what is presented.⁸⁶

Regarding the performances analysed in this thesis, I defend that both artists invite the spectator to engage differently through listening and reflect on the subject of migration. Said practices promote an active bodily experience through sound. In this case, they utilize sound as a connective medium that can flow *across* and *through* people, as well as spaces to prompt us to rethink how we might relate differently to others in a space of listening. *Internal Terrains* and *Cosmic*A* are good examples of what Cox defends as “permanent forms of migration it is arguably even more vital that artists and audiences think through dwelling. And part of this is the extent, which dwelling is helped or hindered by hosts, who are already home.”⁸⁷ Even though these performances were not necessarily based on aurality, the sound as a medium assumes an interesting role, on which I will focus my analysis. In this sense, in the next chapter, I will discuss how both artists invite modes of listening through the means of sound. I will analyse these performances following Groot Nibbelink and Merx⁸⁸ *planes of dramaturgy* which is composed of: principles of composition, modes of addressing the spectator, and ways in which a performance may relate to a wider context.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 8.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 10.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Cox, “Theatre & Migration”, 78.

⁸⁸ Groot Nibbelink and Merx “Dramaturgical Analysis: a relational approach” pp. 4-16.

CHAPTER 2

Experiencing through sound

3.1 Internal Terrains *By Natasha Davis, 2016.*



Figure 1. *Internal Terrains*, image by Bob Karper

Natasha Davis is a Croatian-born performer and visual artist based in London. Her work creates poetic performances exploring interdisciplinary aspects concerning the body, memory, identity, and migration. Her work is intrinsically non-linear and enrooted in elements of her autobiography. One of her most prominent pieces, *Internal Terrains*, was created in 2016 through practice-as-research – one of the four of her performances⁸⁹ developed in her PhD. – dealing with memory/trauma and the pain/pleasure in connection to the experience of exile. The piece was performed at various international stages and festivals, and it was developed in collaboration with Bob Karper (sound), Branislava Kuburović (written documentation), Elisa Gallo Rosso (objects) Lucy Cash (movement), and Marty Langthorne (lights).

In her study, she discusses how practice in performance art deals with trauma and how it plays a significant role in memory and body. Davis describes her research as "mainly to the autobiographical narrative memory that I return in my journeys back in time and place, in my search for the personal material of symbolic and metaphorical value, in order to share the trauma of displacement and migration with the audience."⁹⁰ This piece makes it possible to recognise essential elements discussed before in terms of migrant dramaturgies discussed by Meerzon and Pewny: the use of native language with a strong accent without providing subtitles in the performance, the cultural symbols, memory, and the way to invite the spectator to engage with her piece. Also, as these authors say, the multilingual theatre's ability to stage personal

⁸⁹ *Rupture, Asphyxia, Suspended and Internal Terrains.*

⁹⁰ Davis, "Performing Migratory Identity", 15.

journeys⁹¹ relates to this work, because she has created through her personal experience and trauma.

My first contact with Davis' performance was through a video recording provided by the artist herself. Her creation process begins with the performer uncovering her identity and personal memories by exploring soundscapes that produce interesting contrasts — such as alternating moments of intimacy and moments of discomfort — that she wants to provoke in the audience. Her piece is deeply poetic, sensitive, and powerful. She conducts the audience's gaze through her journey exploring time and space by performing her displacement and sharing fragments of her story across different decades. In my analysis, I aim to focus on Davis' artistic process and her use of sound as an aesthetic element. As Davis explains, working with the idea of living in-between spaces, borders, and countries, comprehends the architecture of space “in terms of home, traveling, mapping, situating, locating and dislocating – emerged as a significant aspect and a necessary way of thinking in the construction and design of this piece of work, starting with objects.”⁹² I want to explore how all this is present in the way sound is used in the piece.



Figure 2. Internal Terrains stage, image by Josh Waddington.

The first element the audience sees in *Internal Terrains* stage is a tangle of electric cables in the centre. Each of these has a lit light bulb at the end and they are scattered around the stage. The light bulbs are positioned on the stage periphery forming a wide circle and are connected to a central dimmer. This central device allows the performer to control the lights and, therefore, the stage ambience. Besides, in between the light cables, there is a series of varied objects, some are on the floor (a violin, a lobotomy machine⁹³, an electric toy car, a metronome, a microphone, and a record player). Some chains hang from the ceiling holding other objects which dangle in

⁹¹ Meerzon and Pewny “Dramaturgies of self”, 19.

⁹² Davis, “Performing Migratory Identity”, 125.

⁹³ a lobotomy device.

the air (a birdcage, an iron mask, a red bag with sand). These objects combined with the sound in the piece, build an atmosphere strongly connected to the soundscape, for the sound reverberates throughout the various items displayed. Therefore, what you see on stage is a composition of the performer and things that are symbols of her journey as an artist and an individual, which she brings close to the spectator. Although her composition is multifaceted, this analysis focuses mainly on sound and how Davis invites the audience to listen. At some moments, she incites the spectator to be a part of her most intimate self, at others, the spectator is driven away to feel like an outsider. In *Internal Terrains*, the sound is an important aspect of the piece, since it is a notable element used to create the atmosphere Davis builds with the audience, this invites the spectator to an aural experience, to feel fragments of exile as I will demonstrate in this analysis.

Regarding what you hear, the soundscape is remarkable and it has a vital role in the piece. The artist explores interesting ways to work with sound during the performance: there are moments where there is melancholic piano music being played, and others where this mellow ambience is interrupted by uncomfortable noises. Bob Karper, the sound designer, created a soundscape using unidentified disturbing noises such as high-pitched mechanical and electrical sounds as well as music played on a piano. As a spectator, I felt these moments of high-pitched sounds uncomfortable to hear, sometimes causing agony and discomfort, while sounds coming from the piano brings a sense of melancholy, a sense of mystery. Davis also, in the end, sings a capella and plays the violin on stage, contributing to constructing a paradoxical environment of chaos and organisation. In this moment, it brings a sense of intimacy and a more emotional moment between the performer and the audience.

The soundscape is complex and multi-layered as the migration process, full of contradiction and different sensory stimuli. The piece invites the audience to engage differently, experiencing through sound this intricated process of exile life. *Internal Terrains* was created by Davis based on her singular experience with migration, which is, as Bhugra and Becker explain, “a complex process, involving a heterogeneity of causes, experiences, cultural adjustment and stages, that influence the mental health of migrants.”⁹⁴ About migration, these authors point out that this process is about the unknown, is about feeling lost in a sea of voices and attitudes that seem unrecognizable because they are so foreign from what you are used to. This feeling of displacement is caused by many factors and the effect that they have on migrants may be either positive or negative and it’s a consequence of migration.⁹⁵ In this sense, Davis’ work is aligned with two important aspects of the *migratory aesthetics* defended by Durrant and Lord, which are: the celebration of memory and the attribution of agency to migrants.⁹⁶

In terms of sound, an important element is that the piece works with the performer’s voice (spoken language), sometimes even overlapped with the piano music, creating different layers of sound building the soundscape, the sound of objects on stage (such as metal from the sabre in contact with the iron mask, sand following on the tray, metronome, etc) and

⁹⁴ Dinesh Bhugra and Matthew A Becker. “Migration, cultural bereavement and cultural identity.” *World psychiatry : official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)* vol. 4,1 (2005), 23.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Durrant and Lord “Introduction: Essays in Migratory Aesthetics”, 15.

electric sounds. In other words, as Davis explains the soundscape is presented in full collaboration with space and the objects displayed on stage. The performer herself acts as a mediator among all those visual and sound layers, guiding the spectators through her memories. Her strategy to speak her native language requires the audience to make an effort to understand what is being said, and also to hear a different language that the audience probably doesn't know. Furthermore, it is related to the daily effort immigrants feel to be able to communicate not using their native language. Davis invites through listening an experience similar to what migrants face every day: listening to different languages and sounds related to this new space and culture which are, sometimes, so different from their own. It also illustrates the communication noises that happen in contexts of migration and the lack of understanding that happens in situations like this as pointed out by Bal called the *double discrepancy* that occurs in migratory aesthetics (speech vs understanding and meaningful sound vs senseless sound ⁹⁷).

Another element is that lightning supports the soundscape in the piece. She operates the lights arranged in the centre of the stage and uses video projections that show pictures of her family and herself in different houses, unique moments captured in different occasions, as well as videos of the buildings she lived in before and during the exile. Concerning light design on stage, Davis explains: "I capitalise on these contrasting and ambiguous ways electricity can be perceived and use it to light the stage literally, as well as to throw light on the shadows of the spaces in the past metaphorically."⁹⁸ According to her, the light design oscillates during the performance from being soft, to seductive, to sometimes frightening.⁹⁹ These different ambiances are also present in terms of the soundscape. In this piece, the light design amplifies the sound aspect, building the atmosphere, fluctuating between more or less lit playing with sonic contrasts in the sound. This oscillation can be read as an experience regarding how the environment can oscillate, creating fear or connection. In this sense, this aspect creates an experience about how the atmosphere can change significantly when it comes to migrants living in another country and how it affects the spectator. Also, the artist chooses to address different ways to use electricity on stage: projector, computer, lights, electric toy car, lobotomy machine, and sound. Thinking about the wider context, Davis also addresses some historical and cultural elements of Serbia. For instance, she directly refers to Nicola Tesla (1856-1943), a Serbian scientist and electrical engineer known worldwide. Innovatively, the performer presents Tesla not only as a scientist, but also as a migrant individual who lived abroad most of his life.

The sound of the ticking metronome is another important aspect of this piece. The storytelling is not linear. Time is set primarily by the metronome, which sets the *tempo* while she projects a video where pictures of herself in different places are displayed on a large screen. This element is explored in terms of sound, at times you hear music, at others the sound of the metronome is the only sound you hear. These images were captured in other sites and reflect the artist's self across different decades, and of her former addresses during this period. In this scene, Davis code-switches between English and her native language. As for her bodily behaviour, while the images are being shown on the screen, the artist remains in

⁹⁷ Bal, "Lost in Space, Lost in the Library", 27.

⁹⁸ Davis, "Performing Migratory Identity", 114.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

the dark in front of this projection while moving from side to side, like a pendulum, in the rhythm dictated by the sound of the metronome.

Time also is present in the scene where she is dropping salt passing through the spectator is led by the performer to reflect on the passage of time and the lack of linearity that occurs in migrants' lives. The audience follows the addresses she lived during exile and listens to her native language which generates a more intimate moment in the performance. Time is central, as the artist says referred “in the context of repeating, unbalancing, fragmenting and the architecture of the performance space. Illustrate how civil war affects the life of a family in a personal way.”¹⁰⁰ In this sense, the migratory experiences are also approached here because it reflects how migrants have to negotiate with their past, present, and their trauma. Davis was dedicated to reflecting about time and “the importance of locating events in time concerning places in the past – my own, other peoples’ and the historical past.”¹⁰¹ As she explains, she wanted to provide evidence to the audience of how an ordinary family can fall apart under the pressure of a civil war.

The sound designed by Bob Karper comes and goes during the whole performance, eventually the sound repeats in variations, as Davis explains “the sound a specific object produces will be repeating what has already been heard in the soundscape, even if the audience only register it on a subconscious level.”¹⁰² In the piece, sometimes you listen to a melancholic and dense piano composition disrupted by noises, sometimes even overlapping the spoken text of the performance, which can provoke a loss of clarity in what you hear and what she said. This repetition of sounds may synchronise with her movements/gestures or do the opposite, as she defines as “challenge me further in my own rhythm of finding and losing my balance.”¹⁰³

Davis conducts the audience's gaze through her journey exploring time and space, performing her story's displacement, and sharing fragments of her life in different decades. In this piece, she operates the lights and objects' lightning design on stage during the performance, amplifying the sound aspect mentioned before. So, her role on stage is also of a narrator who has the power to tell her story. The audience can see her the same way she can see them. About that, Davis explains:

This allows me to read intimately the silent exchanges and communication that evolve between them and the objects, sounds, and my actions, and this can affect my own performance in turn. My reading of their reactions also influences the level of the lighting I control from the stage via the dimmer to respond to the atmosphere in the room and, as I have noticed, it can affect my delivery of the song towards the end of the performance.¹⁰⁴

As the artist explained, her perception of the audience will affect how she manipulates the lights, affecting the atmosphere created. In *Internal Terrains*, Natasha Davis invites listening.

¹⁰⁰ Davis, “Performing Migratory Identity”, 125.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 125.

¹⁰² Ibid, 130.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 131.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 109.

In this case, the spectator experiences proximity to the performer, and creates an intimate relation (she is herself, not a character), sharing her memories of exile and displacement. The audience is positioned close to the stage and the lights are dim, which allows the performer to look them in the eyes. The soundscape plays an important role because through sound the spectators can experience the feeling provoked by the atmosphere created in the performance on their bodies, as argued by Home-Cook when discussing the concept of *'being-in-sound'*. According to the author, “the phenomenon of immersion, in other words, like attentional life in general, consists of a dynamic tension. We are immersed in an ‘atmosphere’, yet, at the same time, ‘atmospheres’ are felt, noticed, and sensed.”¹⁰⁵ In the piece, the atmosphere created invites spectators to feel and to dive into her exile experience, also exploring how the exchange between the performer and the audience will affect the ambience created.

Focusing on spectatorship, Natasha Davis addresses the audience in a condition of foreignness using sound. The use of language on this piece (English and her native language) creates this sense of otherness, inviting the spectator to assume a different position. By using such techniques on stage, she invites the audience to experience what it feels like to be an outsider. The experience of listening to an unknown language is maximized by the sonic impact this has on us. Another example is when she is speaking and the soundscape commences, demanding an effort of the spectators to understand what is being said and also to experience on their bodies the lack of clarity when you don't have access to all the information necessary to understand it.

As Home-Cook argues, sound invites aural engagement, which explores senses and feelings, creating bodily responses. “To be ‘immersed’ (in the ‘atmosphere’) is not only to be ‘plunged’ *into* the world, but to make sense of it. Likewise, our experience of being in-sound is not one of straightforward immersion, but consists of an ongoing and dynamic process of embodied attending.”¹⁰⁶ When it comes to immersive theatre, the author says that on the contrary of passivity that exists when the spectator is only an observer, there is no separation between audience/stage. It aims “to invite the audience to actively participate in the theatrical event. Immersive theatre thus not only promises, but trades on its ability to provide a particular (though paradoxically undefined) all-encompassing, multi-sensory, participatory experience”.¹⁰⁷ In this sense, the use of sound in this piece, brings another layer to be absorbed by the spectator, because it promotes an aural experience that affects his/her/their position. In this case, the invitation to be the other.

Natasha Davis plays with visual and aural contrasts building tension through the fragmentation of the soundscape and the lighting design. At moments the spectator empathises with what is presented, at others, it is uncomfortable or even confusing. This dramaturgical choice is also used in Ana Candida Carneiro's *All is Filthy in Wonderland*, as mentioned before, because the artist also approaches the spectator as an outsider using native language without subtitles during the performance.

¹⁰⁵ Home-Cook, “Theatre and Aural Attention”, 131.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 133.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

This artwork is related to the global context in which migration is a characteristic of contemporary societies, where mobility has increasingly become part of the norm. In the artistic field, the theme of migration has gained notoriety and has been increasingly fronted in the contemporary art scene for its relevancy and importance nowadays.

3.2 Cosmic A* By Charlie Prince, 2021.



Figure 3. Cosmic A*, image by Paul Sixta

Charlie Prince is a performer and choreographer born and raised in Lebanon and immigrated to Canada before settling in between Amsterdam and Beirut. The artist is interested in the place of the body as an archaeological site, and as part of postcolonial imaginaries. According to Charlie Prince,¹⁰⁸ this piece is “a solo work that observes the body as an archaeological space and engages this body in rituals of excavation - revealing new and unbound mythologies - allowing for a limitless agency of self-representation and rootedness.”¹⁰⁹ The artist understands art and the body as political, which cannot be separated. *Cosmic A** relates to the migrant experience – his body still responds to his land – displacement, Arabic identity and belonging.

The performer also shared that, during his research to create this piece, he has been interested in Arab-Futurism¹¹⁰, which is a relatively new and artistic movement for countering xenophobia and racism around the world. His choreographic work has been presented in several important festivals and theatres, such as SPRING Festival (NL), Dansmakers (NL), Rencontres Chorégraphiques Internationales Seine St.Denis (FR), Oktoberdans (NO) and the Beirut International Platform of Dance (LB).

In *Cosmic A**, Charlie Prince moves his body in different ways adding many layers to the performance’s atmosphere. He also shares the stage with Joss Turnbull, responsible for creating a soundtrack by mixing traditional percussion with electronic soundscapes. Turnbull’s work is vital to the piece. The dramaturge is Erin Hill and Manon Bongeot the light designer. In this

¹⁰⁸ Unpublished material provided by the artist.

¹⁰⁹ Prince, Unpublished material, 1.

¹¹⁰ In *Space is the place: reflections on Arabfuturism*, Soboczyk (2020) describe it as “a movement of Arab artists who started to redefine an orientalist toolset of narrativization projected upon the Middle East. From astronauts, spaceships and intergalactic travels, Arabfuturism hijacks the colonial theme of the Space Race and uses its spatial and temporal dislocation to challenge and rethink the history and memory of occupation in a more preposterous way, as a ‘backward glance that enacts a future vision.’” (pp.12) To know more about it, check it the manifesto written by Sulaiman Majali: <http://noveltymag.com/towards-arabfuturisms/>

piece, Charlie explores the way his body still feels the vibrations of his homeland. I had the opportunity to watch *Cosmic A** performed live during the Spring Performing Arts Festival¹¹¹ on May 29th, 2021.

When the audience enters the theatre, each person receives a hearing protection device. When you are seated, on the left and front of the stage, the only part illuminated is a small section where you can see percussion instruments and a sound table. The rest of the scene is entirely in the dark. When the piece is about to start, the musician Joss Turnbull gets in his position where you can see percussion instruments and a sound table, and the lights go out. On stage, the musician and the performer work together, also there are some lights on the stage background. The lights are dim most of the time during the performance, therefore, it takes a considerable amount of time for the spectator to have a clear view of the performer, revealing only some parts of the performer's body. The soundscape in this piece is central, strong, and portentous.

In terms of sound, the soundscape in this piece works in different scales of volume and intensity, which reflects on his body movements and the spectacle lighting as well. For example, in the beginning, the audience is in complete darkness, listening to some sound with a very low volume. You try to recognize the soundscape, and after some minutes you suddenly hear a thunderous sound: a combination of electronic noises, Persian percussion, and indistinguishable noises which reminded me of aeroplanes and bombs exploding, buildings falling, destruction - it was so loud and that even creates a sense of fear. The sound is deafening so everyone can feel vibrations in their body, and the sound effects create this bodily experience. After that, the lights are turned on to a penumbral state; the room is lit to the extent where the body of a man lying face down on the floor is visible.

The soundscape is crucial to the atmosphere created, and it plays a vital role in the piece. There are moments where you can hear sounds that resemble the sounds of the streets and nature being played; at other moments the musician is playing several traditional Persian percussion instruments like Goblet drum, most commonly known as *derbak*¹¹² live. All of this mixes traditional percussion with electronic sounds. Charlie invites the audience to hear sounds of his Land. He invites the spectator to feel, to connect with him through sound.

In addition, in the piece's climax, you can also hear the performer making some sounds with his mouth during the movements. The sound design of the piece alternates between moments when the sound volume is low and moments when it becomes incredibly intense, creating a responsive reaction in the audience's bodies. Regarding how the spectator is addressed, this piece invites listening - the way the performer uses the sound to establish an immersive experience in the spectator. When the sound is loud, it creates a vibration response in the spectator's body, it makes you feel it in your skin the tension and the intensity he builds on stage through sound and his movements. In my experience, I felt nervous and scared when the sound was too loud, I felt my body vibrating, in other moments I felt tense and uncomfortable. I was deeply immersed in his performance, paying attention in every sound and movement, almost in an alert mode. In this sense, such use of sound invites the audience to engage differently, through aural experience, which often creates tension and bodily reaction in the audience. This provokes a body

¹¹¹ International festival which happens every year in Utrecht - Netherlands.

¹¹² It is an Arabic percussion instrument is a goblet shaped hand drum, also known as chalice drum, darbuka or doumbek.

engagement with the performer and oscillates during the piece. Also, the performer provokes a vibration on the spectator's body by using sound intensity as a medium to promote an experience related to the migrant's reality.

In this case, the soundscape builds an atmosphere and promotes an immersive experience for the audience; as Home-Cook explains the “immersion is ‘dynamic embodied attending in the world’: to be immersed, whether in sound or in the world at large, is to live through the flows, tensions, and perceptual peculiarities that are continually played out within our attentional ‘sphere’.”¹¹³ For example, this explosion sound creates a sensation in the audience's bodies, which represents a traumatic experience lived and felt under the skin by migrants who had lived situations like this. This sound can also provoke sensations of fear and discomfort in the spectator. In *Speaking the Unspeakable: Sounds of the Middle East Conflict*, Adham Hamed is searching “for words where there is seemingly nothing that can express the truths of an experienced conflict. It is about sounds that cause resonances among, and inside of different actors in the Middle East Conflict.”¹¹⁴ The author explores “the potential of sound to help in speaking unspeakable truths”¹¹⁵, which resonates with experiences lived in zones of conflict. Hamed focus is to explore the similarities between a diversity of possibilities of hearing sounds and its effect on people, and Wolfgang Dietrich's transrational approach to Peace Studies.¹¹⁶ The author is “driven by the assumption that it might be possible to understand the Middle East as an open space full of resonating sound boxes, which stand as a metaphor for the many persons that are engaged in the conflict on a daily basis.”¹¹⁷

As a social context, the piece refers to Arab communities in the Middle East that have been bombed in the conflicts that keep happening in that region and how Western societies perceive them. In this sense, Sharifi points out that after the attack on the World Trade Center in 9/11, people from the Near East and from Islamic countries were targeted as the enemies.¹¹⁸ According to Sharifi, after this event “In Europe, the ‘irreconcilability with Western values’ became the focus of the political discussion. Thus, Muslims and persons from Islamic countries are often stereotyped by the media as a homogeneous, deeply religious group which adheres to a fundamentalist Islam.”¹¹⁹

The vision, however, is blurred, for the lights are low. The audience cannot see clearly what is being presented on stage, which evokes aural attention – a central aspect of this performance. Charlie starts moving slowly, and the lights accompany his pace, for they also change slowly. The audience hears a soundscape coming from the streets: music playing on a radio far away, a man singing far away, birds, there are nature noises in a very low volume, after a huge and booming sound. In terms of the spectator point of view, this atmosphere created makes you feel tense and frightening sometimes. The body in front of you continues moving slowly, only low on the ground. The body looks like someone coming out of the wreckage, you cannot

¹¹³ Home-Cook, “Theatre and Aural Attention”, 132.

¹¹⁴ Adham Hamed. *Speaking the Unspeakable: Sounds of the Middle East Conflict*. (Springer, 2016), 1.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 3.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁸ Sharifi, Azadeh. “Theatre and Migration”, 330.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 330.

see his face for some time. When he is on the ground his body moves in a scary way, as he was hurt, as a survivor rising from the destruction, sometimes animalistic. It appears that his foot is broken because he drags his leg around. Later on, when he stands, he let his body respond to the sounds of percussion of his homeland becoming intense. The lights are warm, having orange and yellowish tones, and smoke is used. The tension accompanies the viewer throughout the performance, especially because of the lack of vision and the low-pitched sounds (electronic and percussion).

The performance's bodily movements are presented as such: the artist starts on the floor, first lying on the ground and moving slowly in fragmented movements which entail the idea of deformity. Throughout the piece, he assumes a human form and stands up when the lights become brighter, giving the spectator a clearer view of the stage. Movements also range from slow and small to faster and more expansive and precise movements. Equally important, the spectator watches his body in moments of fragility and other moments of joy and empowerment during the piece. conducted by the sound. He also works with repetition rising intensity, and rhythm which is explored on his body as well on the soundscape. When discussing his own work, Prince defends that the body is political as “it is the container of manifestos, of historical traumas, of unanswered questions and fragile answers.”¹²⁰ About this, Paire argues

Contrary to the experience of exile that can only be lived in the flesh, the sense of exile can apply to both immigrants and non-immigrants. In both cases, the feeling of displacement arises from the relationship an individual has with space. The body is the physical frame of identity and it is through the body and its physical connections to the outside world that an individual will begin to define his or her identity. In the case of immigrants, these daily habits are subject to considerable alterations. Everything will begin to change: the smells, the sounds and one’s relationship with one’s body.¹²¹

I defend that these movements presented by the artist also represent how resilient we, as migrants, need to be in our daily lives to survive abroad. We need to negotiate with ourselves and our bodies to adapt to the new social and cultural scenario in which we are. This is connected to the internal process migrants face when they migrate and how they build their community space as said by Paire ‘everything changes’¹²²: the way you see yourself, your body, the sounds and smells around you change and how migrants experience these changes can be explored in their performances.

In my view, this piece also invites listening, the way the performer uses the sound to question the spectators’ position through aural attention. When the sound is loud, it creates a vibrating response in the spectator’s body, it makes you feel it in your skin the tension and the intensity he builds on stage through sound and his movements. Such use of sound invites the audience to engage differently, through aural experience, which often creates tension or an

¹²⁰ Prince, Unpublished material, 3.

¹²¹ Paire. “Migrant theatre and the aesthetics of identity”, 33.

¹²² Ibid.

emphatic reaction in the audience. This provokes an embodied engagement with the performer and oscillates during the piece. Also, the performance provokes a vibration on the spectator's body by using sound intensity as a medium to promote an experience related to the migrant's reality, that relates to what Adham Hamed defends. The author comprehends the Middle East as an open space full of resonating sound bodies and the potential sound assumes in helping to understand something that cannot be put in words, which is experienced in zones of conflicts.¹²³



Figure 4. Cosmic A* at Spring Festival 2021, image by Anna van Kooij

Charlie Prince conducts the audience through different mental states and moments in time through his body. The spectator is an observer during most of the performance, but this shifts when the performer faces the audience. He confronts the spectator by looking into their eyes, and for quite some time you can feel the tension. At this moment, he invites the audience to be the other, to be aware of the way you look at him, how you see him. Here, unlike Natasha Davis' piece, he does not use words or his mother tongue, but he uses body language and gestures instead. However, the understanding which is loud and clear. At some point, the artist ceases dancing, he looks as if he is going to say something, but he says nothing – he repeats this moment for some time. After that, he looks attentively into the eyes of each spectator, one by one. He then sits on the floor, an action that could create confusion in the audience. His direct gaze feels as if we were individualized in the middle of the audience and as a statement that he is aware of your gaze. This is when the spectator is confronted and assumes the position of an outsider or an invader. The tension described is presented through multiple layers of sound, light, and movement. This experience is embodied by the spectator, and it has the power to make you feel uncomfortable. Also, it is important to mention that since the performance is held at an art venue

¹²³ Hamed. "Speaking the Unspeakable: Sounds of the Middle East Conflict", 3.

located in Utrecht, it is presumable that most of the audience is European but also has a few people of other nationalities like myself. So, since the piece openly discusses the subject of migrant lives, there is a cultural clash openly established between the perspective of the west and the east in in face of the public imaginary concerning Arab identity. He faces the spectator, staring straight in the eye, an action which commonly generates discomfort for anyone. Thus, what Prince does is to mimic an uncomfortable situation that is often part of the life of migrants; the stare makes difference evident, it acknowledges the oddity among the dominant norm. This hostility Arabic people have been receiving in western societies questioning the spectator's position as his own.

*Cosmic A** is genuinely connected with the artist's embodiment and how he uses soundscapes to create an intense connection to the spectator, mainly because the audience can feel the vibration in their body. On a deeper level, the piece is also related to memories. The artist approaches Arabic identity remains in construction and is interested in looking forward: beyond ongoing, Eurocentric, and hegemonic narratives. This is a common aspect explored in genre narratives; memory and heritage walk hand in hand. As for the artistic context, migration and decolonization have been currently addressed in many contemporary performances and theoretically, as I have presented in this thesis. As mentioned before, this piece is about now and the future, it is related to Arab Futurism, something that the performer is interested in exploring in his research.

3.3 Comparison

In my point of view, both performers approach memory and identity concerning the body in a thought-provoking way. Their work relates to migrants' daily lives, and artists use their own embodied knowledge to communicate to an audience. The soundscape in both performances is crucial and decisive, creating different ways to invite the spectator to engage with the performer and even reflect on the topic. I also believe that Davis and Prince explore their embodied knowledge (identities, bodies, memories, languages, among other aspects) to make these performances add another layer to the broader context. They invite the spectator to engage with an aural experience in the piece and reflect on the migration, creating embodied responses in the audience, questioning the spectator's involvement during the piece. Both pieces are representative examples of what Emma Cox defends: "theatre and performance that concerns itself with more permanent forms of migration it is arguably even more vital that artists and audiences think through dwelling. And part of this is the extent, which dwelling is helped or hindered by hosts, who are already home."¹²⁴

Both pieces are representative of the migratory aesthetics proposed by Durrant and Lord but also by Bal, because they are not mere illustrations or archives of migrant histories; they go beyond that. They invite the audience to experience a fragment of their journeys through sound and they provoke the spectator to feel and engage in moments of discomfort or intimacy, related to migrant experiences. It seems they let the aesthetic "happen" during the creative process. As

¹²⁴ Cox, "Theatre and Migration", 78.

Davis' and Prince's work use sound as a powerful element in their dramaturgy, their technique resembles Mieke Bal's approach in her video *Lost in Space* (2005). However distinctly sound is explored in these three artworks, they have something in common: all of them tell stories related to migration and use sound was to invite the audience to engage dissimilarly through aural experience. There is a clear discrepancy between what you see and what you hear in both performances. In this sense, I defend Charlie Prince and Natasha Davis present artworks committed to the movement of migration, so both pieces are related to migratory aesthetics.

In *Cosmic A** and *Internal Terrains*, you can see they are as personal as they are political. In this regard, Davis says that trauma and other experiences are located in the body, and they are part of her current identity.¹²⁵ Embodied experiences imprint marks in the performing body, which are observable within the dramaturgical choices made by the artists. Both decided to show their bodies, personal stories and how they address the audience while on stage – the way they create this embodied response in the spectator using sound, for example. It is political, it is provocative.

It is important to attend to how theatres of migration differ depending on whether they are made by migrants, or by locals, or by some combination of these subject-positions. None is owed a moral monopoly on the use of migration as a dramatic trope, but there can be different interests at work when 'outsiders' are written and performed into being by 'insiders', as contrasted with 'outsiders' enacting some kind of self-representation.¹²⁶

As an overseas artist and student, I chose to work with migrant artists performing in their new homeland, sharing their way to see and embody the experience of migration. Both of these aspects are relevant and political choices as well. Prince's performance is aligned with Arab Futurism, a significant artistic movement of Arab artists who started to redefine an orientalist toolset of narrativization projected upon the Middle East. It is about identity, memory, culture, past, future and hope. In his piece, he explores his self-representation of the Arabic male body and invites the spectator to feel through sound something that Adham Hamed called *unspeakable truth*, when it comes to daily basis experience of those who lives in zones of conflict. Prince's piece goes in the same direction Abdelhady explains about Lebanese migrant art makers.

In *Cultural production in the Lebanese diaspora: memory, nostalgia and displacement*, Abdelhady approaches how these artists contribute to the construction of collective memory of their homelands among the diaspora community¹²⁷. She also affirms that “Lebanese diasporic artists challenge traditional understandings of belonging by focusing on global issues in order to participate in global social change.”¹²⁸ Abdelhady reveals how these artists “challenge dominant narratives of collective memory in their homeland in an attempt to disrupt traditional

¹²⁵ Davis, “Performing Migratory Identity”, 29.

¹²⁶ Cox, “Theatre and Migration”, 22.

¹²⁷ Dalia Abdelhady. “Cultural production in the Lebanese diaspora: memory, nostalgia and displacement”, *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, vol. 35, no. 1, University Press of Florida, 2007, 39.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

understandings of coherent national culture and identity”¹²⁹. They play an important role in contesting and reinterpreting the hegemonic discourse present in their host societies with regard to their country of origin. In this sense, Prince also faces the audience - representative of this western gaze - questioning spectator’s position and also his own. According to Prince, “in a time where the Arab body is increasingly being manipulated and controverted by global political movements on both ends of the spectrum; commercialized - tokenized - essentialized: What can be our role as artists from the region in the production of knowledge relative to ourselves, in the plea for an agency that subverts the oriental?”¹³⁰.

On the other hand, Davis explores other means to confront the audience: she poetically shares her story by exploring different states through sound and light to create scary/hostile or seductive/safe environments. She conducts the gaze as she operates the lights responding to what she feels and sees. She is close to the audience and observes them during her piece. Cox defends that "artist and audience relationships instantiate the wider structural imbalances of power and status between migrants and those who enjoy the economic, historico-legal, social and linguistic benefits of being 'at home'. In such, theatre of migration is at its most basic level implicated with, troubled by, power relations within broader society."¹³¹ When it comes to theatre of migration “this may be summed up, crudely, as: ‘is it by/about them or is it about us?’ (though in practice, affiliations are rarely so straightforward). An audience may mostly comprise people for whom the representation of migration is a story of other or otherness, or it may mostly comprise people who perceive the work as about their own community.”¹³²

Throughout the analysis demonstrated in this thesis, the performances here analysed integrate the audience as part of their work: In *Cosmic A**, the soundscape oscillates through low and high volume, sometimes so loud that it promotes vibrations on the spectator body, making you feel in your skin the tension and the intensity he builds on stage through sound, lights, and his movements. Prince also confronts the audience at some point breaking the fourth wall, looking everyone in the eyes. He sits on the floor, just staring at the audience before continuing his performance. This moment is when the spectator is confronted and taken to an outsider or an invader position. The spectator embodies such experience, and it has the power to make you feel uncomfortable. On the other hand, in *Internal Terrains*, Davis keeps the lights on so she can see the audience and be close to them. The performer controls the lights, and she operates them as a response to what she feels coming from the audience during the piece. At a certain point during her piece, she speaks in her native language and no subtitles are provided. So, unless the spectator knows her language, they cannot understand a word of it. This is the moment when she invites the spectator to be a foreigner.

Both performances dialogue with elements of the post-dramatic theatre proposed by Lehmann. In my view, the way sound is used in both pieces brings an aural experience where “the whole-body acts as 'becoming voice'.”¹³³ In both pieces’ artists created the *theatre of voices* through their soundscapes mentioned by Lehmann - Davis has moments when she overlaps

¹²⁹ Ibid, 41.

¹³⁰ Prince, Unpublished material, 1.

¹³¹ Cox, “Theatre and Migration”, 27.

¹³² Ibid, 27.

¹³³ Lehmann. “Postdramatic Theater”, 148.

text/voice by sound/noise creating this effect and Prince communicate thought sound/noise and body. The way Davis and Prince address the audience is approached by Meerzon and Pewny and Carneiro as well and it invites the spectator to engage differently and generate a level of empathy, as mentioned in chapter one. According to Carneiro when you are "in a foreign land where you don't speak the language well, your body and soul are consumed in an immense, constant effort of de-codification."¹³⁴ About that, the author explains that you need to find the right balance between both languages, otherwise the spectator won't comprehend the story. Carneiro's approach demands the same effort immigrants have to make to understand their surroundings, "I wanted to induce the audience to reach a new level of perspective as if looking through a window into a world that."¹³⁵ This is present in migrant dramaturgy and in Natasha Davis piece she speaks her native language in a brief part of the performance. She uses this mechanism briefly, but it is present and invites the spectator to feel a fragment of what she has faced in her exile. On the other hand, Prince does not use words but his body and silence. He breaks the fourth wall looking at the audience in their eyes, confronting them. In this case, the audience is also invited to be the Other.

According to the theatre aurality as Kendrick perceives it, sound is an efficient medium to create atmospheres through sensation.¹³⁶ In my view, both artists build atmospheres in their artwork where sound is central. The sound invites the spectator to engage with their bodies by experiencing a fragment of what migrants face every day, provoking a bodily experience. In these two cases, positioning the spectator in this spot demands this aural attention, creating an immersive experience, as Home-Cook explains

Whilst sound, like the air we breathe, would seem to surround us, it also invades us, appearing to make contact with our very being. Similarly, whilst the listener resides *in* the medium of sound, this medium must be attended, explored and travelled through. Being-in-sound, like being-in-the-world, does not consist of a static, passive and spherical existence, but is characterised by a dynamic, three-dimensional, ongoing engagement with any given sonic environment: *sound is sounded*.¹³⁷

The use of sound can evoke embodied responses in the spectators' bodies which can provoke the audience to reflect on migration through physical experience. Being-in-sound and feeling on your skin can affect the way migrants are seen and heard in society. As Home Cook argue "to be more precise: immersive theatre is about manifesting an experience of being immersed, and one of the most readily apparent and effective means by which this new brand of theatre attempts to realise this state is through the use of sound."¹³⁸ Both artists establish a critical dialogue about the topic, and elaborate their own experience through creating art; which can affect both the common spectator, by creating empathetic responses, and the migrant spectator,

¹³⁴ Carneiro "Playing and writing across languages and cultures", 47.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 46.

¹³⁶ Kendrick "Theatre Aurality", 40.

¹³⁷ Home-Cook, "Theatre and Aural Attention", 131.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 134.

who sees and hears something he/she/they experience, creating spaces of representativity for them. So, there is social relevance in promoting situations like these, which adds another layer relevance to artworks in this field, making them even more important. As mentioned before, Davis and Prince are good examples of migrants' artists who have been creating through their migratory experience and their use of sound in both pieces invites the spectator in a condition of foreignness. In this case, promoting an immersive experience through listening related to the life of those who have immigrated.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I examined how sound is used in the dramaturgy of migrant theatre to convey migrants' daily life to the spectator. To achieve that, in chapter one, I explored the theories concerning migratory dramaturgy and the importance of sound referring to key authors on this subject. Also, I focused on the spectator and how sound can be used in migrant dramaturgy as a medium to invite the spectator to feel the foreignness of being an outsider through listening. Chapter two is dedicated to a dramaturgical analysis of the case studies by using Groot Nibbelink and Merx's approach. In this chapter, I also make a comparison between Prince's and Davis' work by underlining connections between the performances' analyses and the theoretical framework. Even though this thesis focuses on two specific pieces, this research provides enough support to analyse how sound is a vital element in migrant dramaturgy in more general terms.

Therefore, this study contributes to the existing discourse regarding migrant dramaturgy, aurality and spectatorship in contemporary performances focusing on the relation between these topics. Looking back at my observations and my research journey so far, I conclude that sound plays a crucial role in performance art, mostly in migrant dramaturgy because aural attention can create sensations, which can invite the spectators to experience something they have never lived. This can be used as a strategy to question the spectator position in the world and how migrants are treated in society, as well as sharing and giving agency to their stories. As Home-Cook defended, "to be in sound is not to be straightforwardly, spherically and passively 'immersed', but rather consists of an ongoing, dynamic and intersensorial bodily engagement with the affordances of a given environment."¹³⁹

The soundscapes in migrant dramaturgy are diverse, multi-layered and establish a dialogue with migrants' daily lives, being able to promote an encounter between migrants' stories and an audience, where they can feel a bit of what migrant's face in their context. Both, migrant dramaturgy, and theatre aurality are questioning, each one in their own way, hegemonic speeches, promoting new ways to make art. In my point view, *migratory aesthetic* proposed by Bal¹⁴⁰ fits well in the methods artists have been developing nowadays and provides a truly inspiring way to understand these movements of people through migration. Helping us to comprehend this phenomenon within its complexity inherent to our current reality (globally speaking) and making art of it.

In this sense, Natasha Davis and Charlie Prince's performances are representative of what has been said so far. The way both artists address the spectator through sound is clever. In *Cosmic A**, Prince plays with low and high volume on his soundscape, sometimes so loud that it creates this vibration to the spectator body, making you feel in your skin the tension and the intensity he builds on stage through sound, lights, and his movements. He also confronts the audience at some point breaking the fourth wall, looking everyone in the eyes. He sits on the floor, just staring at the audience before continuing his performance. This moment is when the spectator is confronted and put in an outsider or an invader position. The spectator embodies this experience, and it has the power to make you feel uncomfortable, questioning your position. On the other hand, in

¹³⁹ Home-Cook, "Theatre and Aural Attention", 3.

¹⁴⁰ Mieke Bal. "Lost in Space, Lost in the Library", 23.

Internal Terrains Davis kept the lights so she could see the audience and be close to them. The performer controls the lights, and she operates them as a response to what she feels from the audience during the piece. At this moment, she invites the spectator to be the foreigner speaking her native language. Both artworks address the spectator in through listening (aural attention), where sound occupy central aspect. However, in both cases the spectator is invited to be the outsider in different approaches, so to say.

This thesis is not only relevant for its insertion in the academic field of contemporary performance, but also because it brings the spotlight to the artwork produced by migrant artists and discussions about migration from their point of view. As research limitations, this thesis has the cut to analyse only one performance of each one of these two immigrant artists, located in different countries. It would be interesting to be able to expand this research to reach more artists that have to contribute to this theme. Also, it is important to mention that *Internal Terrains* was analysed through a video recording which does not offer a full picture of what happened in the piece, it was just a recording for archival purposes, not a video performance made for this medium. To further expand my research, a next step would be interviewing migrant artists to understand how they translate their embodied knowledge and experiences using sound in a performance exploring their creative process or ever analysing pieces from more migrant artists.

On a more personal level, this research also affected my personal life, helping me to elaborate emotions and experiences I faced during my own migration process. I hope that my research contributes to a research field in which increase the voice of migrant artists will play a more important role exploring different ways to share their stories and invite spectators to reflect about migration in a more empathic way.



Figure 5. 'Escuta, Som e Cena (eu e você)' 2021, Collage by Juliana Coelho

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List of illustrations

Cover collage ‘Escuta, Som e Cena (nós e eles) by Juliana Coelho, 2021.

Figure 1. Source: <http://www.tracesproject.org/natasha-davis/>

Figure 2. Source: <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/80978/>

Figure 3. Source: <https://www.citerne.live/people/charlie-prince>

Figure 4. Source: <http://charlie-prince.info/works/cosmica>

Figure 5. ‘Escuta, Som e Cena (eu e você)’, 2021, Collage by Juliana Coelho