

*Species of Spaces: word city and music city – a score for Sarajevo **allegro non troppo***

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Abstract: Against the background of an introductory note on Boris Pahor’s writings, I focus on one of his urban miniatures that blurs the boundaries between literary, musical and architectural writing forms. Continuing with Šejla Kamerić’s and Anri Sala’s *1395 Days without Red* (2011)¹ I explore here the urban space as an open-ended score. Combining poetry, music, film and architecture paves the way for a new kind of investigation of the urban space. Away from centralized, object-centred urbanism, the action and context-related city is experienced differently, as a space of possibility, as a creative process amounting to a performance.

‘There is the *utterance of the city*: what happens and takes place in the street, in the squares, in the voids, what is said there. There is the *language of the city*: particularities specific to each city which are expressed in discourses, gestures, clothing, in the words and use of words by the inhabitants. There is *urban language*, which one can consider as language of connotations, a secondary system and derived within the denotative system [...]. Finally, there is the *writing of the city*: what is inscribed and prescribed on its walls, in the layout of places and their linkages, in brief, the use of time in the city by its inhabitants.’ Henri Lefebvre, *The Right to the City*.

‘Without music, life would be a mistake.’ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*.

Figure 1



Tlatelolco Clash, 2011. HD video projection, colour, Dolby Digital 5.1 11:49 min. © Anri Sala.
Courtesy: Kurimanzutto, Marian Goodman Gallery, Hauser & Wirth, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Kaikai Kiki.

¹ *1395 Days without Red* is a film project by Šejla Kamerić and Anri Sala in collaboration with Ari Benjamin Meyers, starring Maribel Verdú. Conceived, developed and filmed in Sarajevo as a collaborative project, it actually resulted in two independent films. As for the title: the siege lasted 1395 days, during which the city’s residents were advised not to wear bright colours that might draw attention from snipers in the hills above.

I. Boris Pahor's urban miniature: conducting the city as open-ended score

I.1. The Karst, the sea, the city

Not far from Duino, Canovella offers breathtaking views of the Gulf of Trieste and the Karst, Trieste in the background (Figure 2). This view shows the literary space occupied by Boris Pahor, who never ceased his commute from one to the other. 'When I'm in the mountains, I want to go back to the seaside. And as soon as I'm in front of the sea, I want to put on my mountain shoes' (Pahor in de Fontaine 2019, 80). Pahor's biography and writing are intimately connected to space: the Karst, the sea and the city.²

Figure 1:



The Gulf of Trieste, and Trieste in the background, viewed from Canovella, 2012
© Anja Čop. Courtesy: the photographer.

First, the omnipresent Karst that overlooks and surrounds Trieste. The rural-urban rift corresponds to the Slovenian and Italian political divide, the city being for the Slovenians a space to assert themselves. In Pahor's words:

From the Karst towards the city always flows a new sap, which keeps the city alive, always new and young blood, a blood ready to mix, to deny itself, but something attracts you there, as if you wanted to put your strengths to the test and succeed where others have failed. (Pahor 1964, 154)

Next, the sea. Back in 1919, the city of winds became part of the Kingdom of Italy and, to the oppressed Slovenians, the sea was the only space for freedom. For them, Trieste was a 'cage that opens on one side to the sea' (Pahor 1964, 108). Thus, the sea amounted to a highly

² For a comprehensive view, see Pahor and Rojc (2013), and Chiereghin and Senardi (2021).

connoted space: it represented a refuge for the resistance fighters and it was almost the only place where Slovenians could express themselves freely, using their – elsewhere forbidden – mother tongue. Certainly this was a main motif for Boris Pahor's poetry as well as a source of the writer's longstanding and unfailing commitment that had materialized already in late 1920 in his involvement in the framework of the first anti-fascist resistance movement in Europe, the TIGR (see Pahor 2009).³

Finally, the city. Claudio Magris recalls that 'Trieste was also – was, thank God – an example of how the border can become, be a barrier, a wall of hatred, ignorance, rejection of the other: reciprocal hatred and mistrust between Italians and Slovenes, provoking violence, grudges, revenge' (Magris 2007, 11). We may remember young Pahor witnessing the arson attack by Italian Fascists on July 13, 1920 on the Slovene Cultural Centre (the *Narodni dom*):

Due to the trauma of experience of the Slovene Community Hall being burned down, which I experienced at age seven, on the spot, and following the shock that I could not go to Slovene schools anymore, I felt robbed in a way of the spiritual and psychological meaning of life (Pahor 2013).

This childhood trauma became a topos, marking all of Pahor's work like a branding iron (see Pahor 1962). A stone's throw from *Narodni dom*, Oberdan Square was the place where, in February 1944, Pahor had to respond to the muscular interrogations of the Nazi secret police before commencing his odyssey: Dachau, Natzweiler-Struthof, Dachau again, Dora, Harzungen and Bergen-Belsen.

More than just simple coincidence, on the same day he regained his freedom in Lille on May 1, 1945, Trieste was liberated by the Yugoslav army. From 1945 to 1954, it became formally the "Free Territory of Trieste" placed under international administration. The city, which then had its own flag, currency and stamps, was supposed to become a unitary, democratic and independent state – notably implying parity between the Slovenian and Italian languages (Security Council resolution of January 10, 1947). A controversial issue: despite the bilateral Treaty of Osino (1975) which attributed Trieste in part (i.e. sector A) to Italy, the United Nations Security Council is virtually, still today, *de jure* guarantor of the integrity of the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT) (see Ara and Magris 1991; Jennings 2017; Giraldi 2016).

For Pahor, that was a sign of hope in the conditional:

With the establishment of the Free Territory of Trieste, for the first time in history the coexistence of the two national communities would bring a future. Little by little, the frictions would diminish, and instead of a hegemonic tendency fought by a struggle against assimilation, the consciousness of a shared past would be born. The time would come for the complementarity between the two cultures and civilizations, accompanying an economic development facilitated by the wide openness to the hinterland and itself a prelude to a general development of the territory, destined to become in the short term a kind of Switzerland on the shore of the Adriatic (Pahor 1984, 34).

This excerpt illustrates the typical reflexivity of Pahor's texts which, in passing, does not refrain from stating the truth which structures the whole history of Trieste: namely that this city had been created for its hinterland and that it would have been exhausted without it, the hinterland being both the essentially Slovenian Karst and Vienna. Remember that Pahor was born in 1913 in Trieste, then in Austro-Hungarian territory (see Borsetti 2016).

³ Active between 1927 and 1941, TIGR is an abbreviation for Trst, Istra, Gorica and Reka. The full name reads Revolutionary Organization of the Julian March TIGR (Slovene: *Revolucionarna organizacija Julijske krajine* TIGR).

It would be wrong to attribute this point of view to a Slovenian bias, far from it. Suffice it to mention here the brilliant analysis of the Trieste journalist Angelo Vivante (1869-1915). In his major work he criticized Italian irredentism, denounced both ‘national awakening’ and centralism, and clearly indicated that the key to Trieste was not to be found in Rome but in its hinterland (Vivante 1917, 212). The destiny of Trieste, a border town *par excellence*, has always been to be autonomous, a free city and a free port integrated into a Europe of regions (see Selva and Umek 2013).

Trieste – an Ithaca for the Ulysses from Trieste. Pahor studied theology first at the seminary of Capodistria, then at that of Gorizia. He abandoned this path in 1938 and returned to Trieste. Enlisted in the Italian army in 1940, he did his service in Libya where he took his *matura* exams, discovered the Arab-Muslim world and read the Koran before returning to Trieste in February 1941. The Italian army then transferred him to the shores of Lake Garda. After the armistice, September 8, 1943, he returned to Trieste... occupied by the German army. After his visit to hell and then his release, followed by a stay in a sanatorium near Paris, he returned to Trieste in 1946 with ‘the feeling of rediscovering Ithaca after countless adventures’ (Pahor 1984, 39).

A personal destiny but also one that is typical of Trieste literature, about which we are thinking here in particular of Fulvio Tomizza (1969 and 1974, see Locatelli 2021). Beyond the return to place, Pahor tells the story of another journey: a journey of self-knowledge to discover his consciousness, a search for the miraculous but also wounded child which opened the writer to the essence of things and to the awareness of the necessity to engage in active resistance. Pahor’s novels – always tinged with autobiography – often show Slovenes ready to take up with the Maquis to defend their language and their homeland.

I.2. The noiseless alphabet of the night

Figure 3:



Port of Shadows – cover of the 2012 restored version.

Among Pahor's short stories, *L'alphabet muet de la nuit* [The noiseless alphabet of the night] (Pahor 2023) offers a highly creative and thought-provoking urban miniature (see Huyssen 2015). The story refers to the famous French film *Port of Shadows* (Camé 1938). The plot: on a foggy night in the 'Panama' bar of a port city, Jean (Jean Gabin), an army deserter, meets the young Nelly (Michèle Morgan). To save her, he kills Nelly's godfather, Zabel. As he flees to join the boat that is to take him to Venezuela, he is murdered by Lucien, a young local mobster from whom he has drawn hatred. Definitively a *film noir* belonging to the realistic, poetic and modern cinema.

Fresh out of the cinema where *Port of Shadows* has just been screened,⁴ the narrator of *L'alphabet muet de la nuit* literally performs the movie as well as engaging in the 'phrasing' of the city. Rewinding and rolling out the movie, decoding and re-encoding the city, the narrator captures the multi-layered urban experience and delivers a production of the city both as private and as social space.

Strolling through Trieste at night, still caught in the web of *Port of Shadows*, the narrator – a young composer – saves Michèle Morgan, offering her 'this solitary pier under the silver stars and the amphitheatre of the sleeping sea', and composes a symphony of the sea, a *symphonie marine*,* a *symphonie triestine*.⁵ Again alone, after having met an anonymous woman on the quayside – we may recall here the movie's original title, *Le Quai des brumes* [The dock of mists] – the narrator continues the musical score of the city, his footsteps beating out the time.

The act of walking, the interplay between steps and music, as well as the intertwining of the film's fiction and the story's narrative, opens up a different perception of the city that produces the urban space (see de Certeau 1988, 91-110). First the harbour station and the fish market (today the *Salone degli incanti*), then the pier stretching far into the sea and finally the port, the fishermen unloading boxes of fish and, in the background, the hinterland: the light of the hills, the Karst still asleep. The clarinets, violins, cymbals and the drums of the narrator's symphony mix to the sounds of the city: the Karst wind, the fishermen's nets being thrown into the bay (*ts, ts, ts*), the lullaby whispered by the sea, the music of a party at the military naval base and the noise of the steam locomotive (*teuf, teuf*)... All 'ready-made' sounds.

To give birth to music, sounds do not need to be organized according to an intention; it is enough to perceive them while 'every sound can be music' (John Cage). Only the wheels of the Plough, up there in the sky, are silent: 'There, in the sky, they are deaf, dejected and mute, hands drawing in the air. Inaudible circles of hands, silent rings of emptiness. The noiseless alphabet of the night.' The city is interpreted as a space organized by music, structured by indeterminacy (Cage 1961), and the text ends up composing a musical piece as an event.

The urban space refers no longer to the city as a static object (Figure 4), but to a performance including a personal appropriation of space.⁶ The cinematographic text makes the city dance. 'Here you have your symphony, and Michèle, and the stars, and the silence, and the song of the sea.' Pahor's urban miniature reminds us that 'space' is produced while experiencing the city. As Sophie Wolfrum pinpoints:

4 A film featuring Jean Gabin, Michel Simon and Michèle Morgan (Camé 1938). The screenplay was written by Jacques Prévert, based on a novel by Pierre Marc Orlan (1927).

5 The reader familiar with Trieste will recognize here the famous Molo Audace pier. * in French in the original.

6 Christopher Dell – artist, musician and urbanist all at once – introduced the concepts of performance and improvisation; see Dell (2019). The term 'performative urbanism' was introduced by Wolfrum (2015).

The unique performative character of architecture emphasizes the components of spatial experience, perception, and behaviour, which are an essential part of architectural reality. Thus architecture disposes of a repertoire of specific architectural means and structures, which only become a reality during a cultural event, in a use situation, through movement, and being part of it while it is being perceived (Wolfrum 2015, 15).

Figure 4:



Trieste's city grid: in yellow the city area and in grey the port area, as mentioned in Pahor's urban miniature
© Christophe Solioz.

Within the planned city, a city of another kind emerges, like the one Kandinsky dreamed of: 'a great city built according to all the rules of architecture and then suddenly shaken by a force that defies all calculation' (Kandinsky 1989, 73). To understand the city properly is to hear it. A hearing that allows us to see the city differently.

Pahor transposes into words the poetic/musical structure of the city. His short story relates to a new mode of representation of the city – viewed as a 'social laboratory' and as 'a "space of possibility" in a constant state of flux' (Dell 2019, 16) – that scores the urban space in an open-ended way. Pahor's urban miniature evidences also how the history of the city is also the history of its improvisation. As Christopher Dell highlights: 'Cities have always been involved with reassembling and resignifying arrangements that came about through improvisation' (Dell 2019, 8). Improvisation matters herein, as the relationship between architectural and musical thinking becomes relevant only in an improvisational perspective (see Dell 2019, 176-209). And this is precisely how Pahor's proceeds.

To avoid any misunderstanding, it matters that we specify that the notion of the 'score of the city' does not refer to a representation of the urban sound texture nor to an interpretation of the city in an aestheticizing or musical programming sense, as Pahor's urban miniature might tend to suggest. Instead, musical thought encapsulates an analysis of the urban space as an

improvisational process. As Dell underlines: ‘the transposition of a musical concept to an architectural question on a metalevel’ enables the interested observer ‘to elaborate on how urban processes can be rendered visible in a new form, by deploying a musical mode of spatial conception as a filter and perspective’ (Dell 2019, 184). Music is therefore not apprehended as a timbre but as a way of organizing events.

Of course, Pahor’s decomposition and recomposition – the literal rewriting – of his city differs in many ways from that one practised notably in *Made in Tokyo* (2001) and *S,M,L,XL* (1995). Nevertheless, there are some striking similarities worth highlighting here. First, as for diagrammatic visualizations of the city, Pahor’s urban miniature also depicts the hybridity of use through a hybrid mediality (film, imagined music, sounds of the city, specific spaces of the city, in-between film script and story plot).⁷ In this, it is the structure, not the form, that matters. Pahor’s narrative can be grasped alongside Jacques Derrida’s concept of the ‘writing of difference’:

Origin of the experience of space and time, this writing of difference, this fabric of the trace, permits the difference between space and time to be articulated, to appear as such, in the unity of an experience (Derrida 1997, 65-66).

Such writing paves the way to experience the ‘*espace vécu*’. Dell pinpoints it thus: only in such a writing process does ‘space reveals itself, or vice versa: every showing of space is writing’ (Dell 2016b, 191). This is precisely the way in which *Port of Shadows* works.

Second, Deleuze’s triple definition of writing applies perfectly to Pahor: ‘To write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map’ (Deleuze 1988, 44). Primarily, ‘the map has to do with performance’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 12). By ‘map’, Deleuze means an ‘abstract machine’ – thus diagram – that overcomes the paradox of blind seeing-making because, instead of being depicted, the urban space is being creatively produced: ‘It is a machine that is almost blind and mute, even though it makes others see and speak’ (Deleuze 1988, 34). Thus, not only as mentioned above, we hear and we also ‘view’ the city – the city as a performance.

Third, as in the case of ‘visualization’ operating diagrammatically, Pahor’s text additionally calls on viewers/readers to (re)construct meaning through their subjective and reflective contextualization of the constellation of the fragmentally distributed aspects (traces, structures) which are just waiting to be freely rearranged, reconfigured and recombined in a new context. Accordingly, the urban miniature becomes for the reader a work in progress, including a burgeoning questioning – notably at a political level. The deterritorialization enacted by Pahor, from Le Havre (*Port of Shadows*) to Trieste, invites the reader to proceed with his/her own deterritorialization, thus to actualize and improvise his/her own musical score.

Combining now the above-mentioned arguments: the diagram, as an intersocial form that is always in the process of becoming, opens up the option of pursuing the city as an open process. As formulated by Deleuze:

Lastly, every diagram is intersocial and constantly evolving. It never functions in order to represent a persisting world but produces a new kind of reality, a new Model of truth. It is neither the subject of history, nor does it survey history. It makes history by unmaking preceding realities and meanings, constituting hundreds of points of emergence or creativity, unexpected conjunctions or improbable continuums. It doubles history with a sense of continual evolution (Deleuze 1988, 35).

7 Bachelard’s concept of ‘poetic diagram’ (1964, 110) fits with Dell’s understanding of diagrammatic ordering.

To sum up, Pahor's urban miniature blurs the boundaries between literary, musical and architectural writing forms and suggests that the urban space may be conceived of as a performance, as an open score – including an indeterminacy. Herein the notion of 'score' does not refer in an obligatory fashion to a musical composition so much as to an open structure and its conditions of assemblage. The recomposition at work in Pahor's text corresponds to his hope that, one day, his city would evolve and change, recognize – alongside German Nazism and Slovenian/Yugoslav communism – Italian Fascism, and give the Slovenian minority the place they deserve.

Italy finally returned *Narodni dom* to the Slovenian community on July 13, 2020 in the presence of Italian president Sergio Mattarella and Slovenian president Borut Pahor. Boris Pahor attended the event and was, on the occasion, decorated with Slovenia's and Italy's highest state orders. It took two more years for restitution to come into effect, in March 2022. Just a few months later, on May 30, 2022, Boris Pahor passed away.

II. Sarajevo *allegro non troppo*

II.1. "Life death" in the time of clairvoyant societies

Figure 5:



Photograph taken during the shooting of *1395 Days without Red* in Sarajevo, 2010
© Milomir Kovačević – Strašni. Courtesy: the photographer.

The film project *1395 Days without Red* by Šejla Kamerić and Anri Sala (2011)⁸ brings into the present a past which is composed simultaneously of the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony (1893), the Siege of Sarajevo (1992-1996) and, in my view, the multiple crises of the emerging twenty-first century, our age of immunology (see Napier 2003). The Siege of Sarajevo as well as the immediate post-war years act as an advance warning of the now-ubiquitous paradigm demonstrated by immunization: that societies are becoming increasingly compartmentalized communities that tolerate the 'other', the foreign body, only in small doses.

Post the 'disciplinary societies' of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries (Foucault), post 'controlled societies' putting themselves beyond confinement, the control of the people being carried out by continuous supervision and instantaneous communication (Deleuze), here comes the time of 'clairvoyant societies' (Neyrat) characterized by preventive immunization: '*To be and to remain intact*, sheltered from all harm, from all damage; to defend itself against the fragility of the living; to act as if death, mourning, loss, and nothingness did not exist' (Neyrat 2019, 24). Following the same path, biotechnological manipulations of the human body and the logic of vaccination ought to prevail; in this way, biopolitics is becoming a shared frame of reference for an order which is as much political as medical (see Napier 2003). This new era, which strangely recalls the previous century's 'age of crowds', is a time when:

Everybody knows about the superior force of enveloping danger. Still, to overcome it: nobody knows where to locate it, nobody knows from which direction it comes, nobody is really able to look it in the face, nobody is able to really oppose the danger (Broch 1979).⁹

Herman Broch here seizes hold of the spirit that is used as much by the totalitarian regimes of yesteryear as the Sarajevo snipers of the 1990s and, today, by computer viruses and the pandemic that have besieged us and put us into lockdown. Each time, the stake is the same: the body, the memory, and also the memory of the body, and, above all, 'life death' – signifying the paradox that the policy of life as its object becomes a policy of death as its outcome (see Derrida 2020, Esposito 2008). *1395 Days without Red* remembers when, during the Siege of Sarajevo, crossing roads, walking through Sniper Alley, was a shaking of hands with 'life death' (figures 6 and 7).

Figures 6 and 7:



Photograph taken during the shooting of *1395 Days without Red* in Sarajevo, 2010
© Milomir Kovačević – Strašni. Courtesy: the photographer.

⁸ See footnote 1.

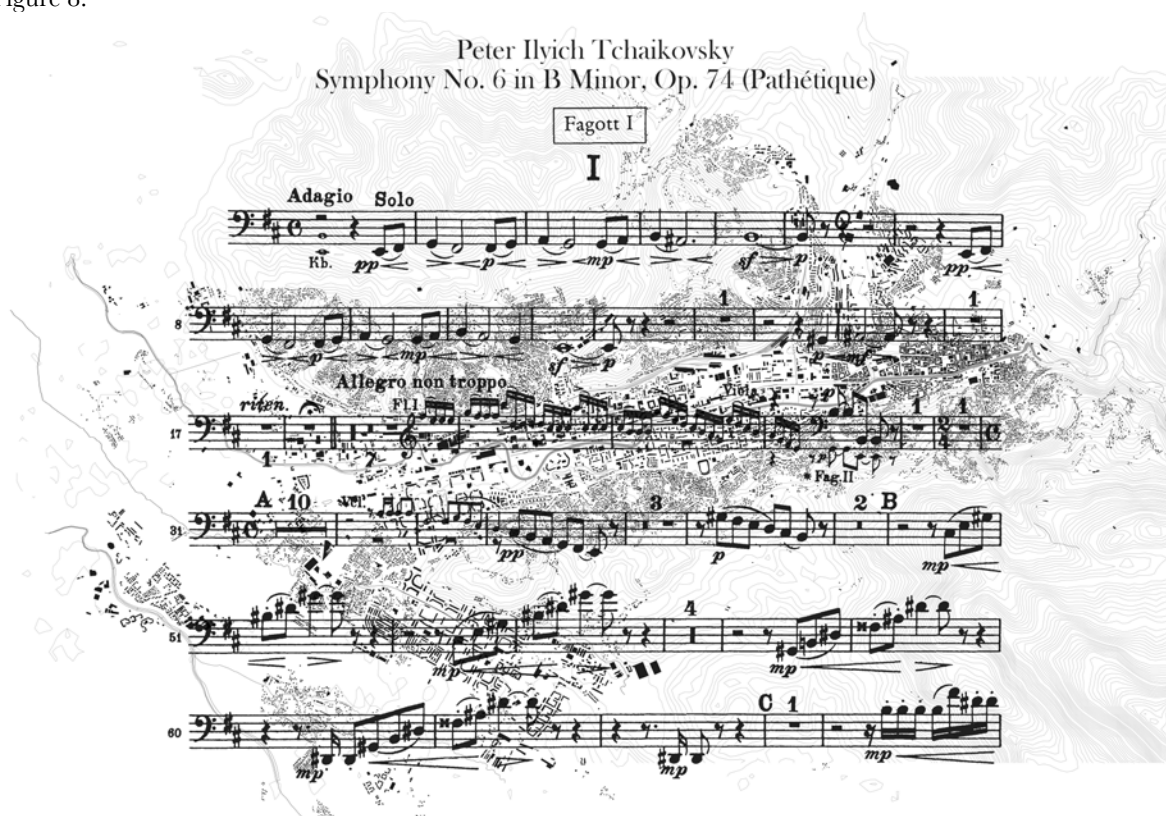
⁹ Herman Broch, 'Proposal for the Foundation of a Research Institute for Political Psychology and Study of the Manifestation of Mass Hysteria' (1939); published as the first chapter of Broch (1979).

II.2. Performed urban space – being is being *there*

That the specific context of the Siege is only suggested in *1395 Days without Red*, together with the absence of any dialogue, and with the filming mostly favoring absolute frontal close-ups, heightens the image of the musician – a bassoonist – played by Maribel Verdú. My commentary focuses essentially on this central figure as well as on the relationship between the body, breath, music and space. It must be noticed that her odyssey through besieged Sarajevo is accompanied by the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra which, repeating different movements of the symphony, stops and starts again, echoing the movements of the city's inhabitants.

Maribel Verdú is seen crossing Sarajevo first spatially, from the downtown-situated *Veliki park* to the music rehearsal space at the other end of the city; and second temporally, from the past of the Siege to the post-war years.¹⁰ The actress is crossing the city to join her orchestra for a rehearsal of the Tchaikovsky symphony.¹¹ At each crossroads, her progress is interrupted: a moment of silent waiting. In order to escape the sniper fire, one must wait for the right moment to cross, holding one's breath, then grabbing the chance with both hands and setting off (figures 6 and 7). Arriving on the other side, breathe out and continue on. And then again: walking, stopping, hesitating, calculating, running, bending down and catching one's breath. Every crossing a new challenge.

Figure 8:



Montage of Sarajevo's city grid and Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*
© Christophe Solioz and Almir Abaz. Courtesy of the author.

¹⁰ We recognize notably at the end of the film the surrounding wall of the then US Embassy compound as well as the twisted façade of the Avaz Tower (constructed 2004-2008), symbolizing the post-war evolving urban landscape.

¹¹ The logical progression of the film gives us to understand that the actress is a bassoonist in the orchestra she is about to join although Michael Fried (2023) contests this interpretation.

Both films metamorphose the urban space into a soundscape, a place of the bodily appropriation of the city whose script is here the *Pathétique*. Experiencing the city as a movement, notably over road crossings, is structured on several levels by repetition. The fabric of the city joins the phrasing of the music score – see our montage combining Sarajevo’s city grid and Tchaikovsky’s *Pathétique* (figure 8). The striking formula of the philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, ‘architecture = music’, receives here its full meaning (see Schelling 1985, 401).¹²

The body, especially the body’s memory, is playing a central role here. While the actress’s body remembers – albeit at irregular intervals – the music score, the body of almost all the other actors – Bosnians who had undergone the Siege – remembers the Siege. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology synthesizes what the film operates with subtlety: the linking of the body, consciousness and existence. In one sentence: ‘to be a body, is to be tied to a certain world [...]; our body is not primarily in space: it is of it’ (Merleau-Ponty 1958, 171). Referring to the legendary figures of the ‘flaneur’ (Walter Benjamin), the ‘passerby’ (Isaac Joseph) or even that of the ‘onlooker’ (Jean-Samuel Bordreuil), the philosopher Hicham-Stéphane Afeissa underlines the importance of the body for any effective perception of the urban space:

The total being of a city is formed within changing circumstances where walking plays a key role. The identity of a city is the writing of a moving body. A city is of course nothing more than a built space, but it is a space that takes time – the time it takes to survey it and walk through it (Afeissa 2012, 74).

Strolling down the city, waiting at the crossroads, running, breathing, the bassoonist (Maribel Verdú) operates the synthesis of her own body, finding a way to herself and to the city: ‘it is a grouping of lived-through meanings which moves towards its equilibrium’ (Merleau-Ponty 1958, 177). The body reconstructs the music score as well as the city grid but, by the same token, it becomes the thought or intention that it is significant for us: ‘It is the body which points out, and which speaks’ (Merleau-Ponty 1958, 230).

The urban space, as embodied activity, arises performatively in *1395 Days without Red* (see Dell 2016, 303). Trembling from danger, emotion and running, the musician’s breathing literally produces the sound of her instrument and gradually recovers the memory of the score: what is at first only hummed takes shape and asserts itself, continuing to gain strength and conviction (Figure 11). We then recognize the *Pathétique* which begins, we should remember, with a bassoon solo drawn from the lower register – a sombre and plaintive *adagio*, a muffled murmur (see at 23:50 and 49:10 in the film produced by Kamberić).

The inevitably jolted rhythm, dictated by the fabric of the city and the ‘war logic’ of the Siege, tears apart the phrases rendered by the bassoonist the melody of which is, nevertheless, being simultaneously preserved by the Sarajevo Philharmonic. The film thus juxtaposes, on the one hand, the sound of the city with two slightly altered soundtracks of the same score, one hummed by the bassoonist and the other played by the Orchestra;¹³ and, on the other, two image tracks: one of her walking across the city with, the other, the orchestra rehearsing the *Pathétique* at the other end of Sarajevo. This creates a ‘space in-between’, a ‘singular plural space’ of sounds and images,¹⁴ occupied by the bassoonist towing the concertgoer along in her wake.

¹² Schelling highlights that architecture and music have maintained close relations, both metaphorically and theoretically, since antiquity. Further, he considers architecture as concrete music (Schelling 1985, 106-117).

¹³ The *Pathétique*’s score has been altered: some passages were compressed while others were dilated in order to match the actress’s hectic breaths and momentary moments of relief.

¹⁴ I borrow and adapt the notion of ‘singular plural’ from Nancy (2000).

The reappropriation of the body by itself, the ‘recollection’ of this interior music, suggests a consciousness of self which also reconnects to the consciousness of the city:

Thus the city is in itself without ever returning to itself, and in each self-consciousness there is also consciousness of the city which is without consciousness. Structured rather like an unconscious: barely a miniscule *ego* floating on the surface of a populated thickness, of a woven, streaked and pulsating *it*, stretched and expanding in all directions, piling up the generations and their cemeteries, the foundations and demolitions, the generalised illimitation of boundaries. The city hardly authorises the statement ‘I am’, but rather ‘I am there’. Folded and unfolded space precedes being there. (Nancy 2011, 45)

Both the bassoonist and the city catch their breath, their arteries once again pulsating with the rhythm of the music. The city which, in defiance of those that would destroy it, comes back to itself and to life: an illustration of what Bogdan Bogdanović – the architect, former mayor of Belgrade, and dissident – pointed out admirably about the city; that it: ‘remains indeed something powerful, almost indestructible, able to resist the attacks of the most ferocious barbarians. This is what we can precisely call “the sacred essence of the city”’ (Bogdanović 1995, 135).

Facing uricide – an extreme situation anticipating the crisis of the urban space of the closing years of the last century, not to mention here the fate of Ukrainian cities since 2022 – the musician stages the waking dream of the invisible city. Against the background of the collapse of the city, we may ask what remains for those who find it increasingly difficult to live in the city if not both despair and hope of redemption? In this trying wait, the city becomes a place of words, desires and memories.¹⁵

Figure 9:



Le Clash, 2010. HD video projection, colour, Dobby Digital 5.1 8:31 min.

© Anri Sala. Courtesy: Hauser & Wirth, Marian Goodman Gallery, Galerie Johnen, Galerie Chantal Crousel.

¹⁵ I paraphrase here Italo Calvino's lecture delivered at the *Graduate Writing Division* of the Columbia University on March 29 (Calvino 1996, VI).

II.3. Singular plural space and time

How should we express what is silently being played out in the simple fact of being there, of seeing, of touching, of moving? Walking in the footsteps of Merleau-Ponty, Sala is aware of the fundamental inadequacy of language to account for experience. To overcome the opacity of word language, Anri Sala's installations – combining sound, image and architecture – shift from the 'word city' to the 'music city' as a much more implicit form of communication.¹⁶ What Sala formulates in general terms – music 'has replaced the verb, because it is closer to the breath' (Lequeux 2022, 93; see Sala 2011) – is perfectly performed in *1395 Days without Red*. The same applies to how he views the function of music: a 'role of syntax, structure, more than content' (Lequeux 2022, 94) – and here he stands very close to Dell's above-presented approach.

Figure 10:



No Window to Cry (Oscar Niemeyer, Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion, Sao Paulo), 2010. Music box, glass, metal window frame
© Anri Sala. Courtesy: Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery.

First, music creates space. As in Sala's other installations, the same partition – Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* in *1395 Days without Red* – is being played in diverse tempos: Maribel Verdú and the orchestra drifting apart like waves before joining up.¹⁷ When the actress feels safe, both soundtracks merge into a single tune. In one of the key sequences, the bassoonist plays the first notes of the *Pathétique* in the rehearsal hall; then we switch to Maribel Verdú strolling in the city, again humming alone, before being united with the orchestra, both performances being played with greater strength. Arriving at the crossroads, she stops before setting off – as if the rediscovered music had given her the resolution to cross the street (see at 49:10 in the film produced by Kamberić). While that interplay may take different forms (echoes, anticipations and simultaneities), architecture still frames the sound: indeed, the respective spaces, the city and the rehearsal hall, shape the sound of the two concurrent performances. As in many of Sala's works, from *Long Sorrow* (2005) to *Le Clash* (2010) and *Tlatelolco Clash* (2011), as well as the series

¹⁶ Burton Pike (1981) introduced the distinction between 'word city', 'real city' and 'city of feeling'.

¹⁷ Anri Sala further developed this approach in collaboration with Ari Benjamin Meyers in *The Breathing Line* (2012).

of music boxes encased in windows entitled *No Window No Cry* (2010, ongoing), sound forms a pair with architecture – including the sound of the city – that creates, defines and articulates a ‘singular plural space’ (see respectively figures 1, 9 and 10).

These installations should be distinguished from more recent ones such as *Ravel Ravel* (2013) that – instead of an urban situation – take place in an environment constructed according to the principles of an anechoic chamber that might be considered as ‘non-place’. As in *1395 Days without Red*, two soundtracks are both playing the same score, albeit in diverse tempos – here Ravel’s *Concerto pour la main gauche* (1930). The two different interpretations are heard alongside one another and displayed on two distinct screens. The respective tempos of each performance have been recomposed so that both executions continuously shift in and out of unison – one evolving slightly more slowly than the other, first creating a slight echo, then a doubling with the notes heard twice, eventually catching up, only to shift away from one another again.

Sala’s intention is ‘to bring out the resonance of a space consecutive to the temporal lag between the two performances and, through the repetition of the same notes, to induce the impression of an echo in an entirely muted space where the absorption of the sound reflections annihilates all sense of space’ (communication by Anri Sala, 2017). The iteration of *Ravel Ravel* (2013) titled *Ravel Ravel Interval* (2017) – displayed in 2023 at Basel’s Schaulager – projects the two videos one behind the other on two semi-transparent screens in order that the two piano voices overlap audibly and visually (Figure 11). In the artist’s words: ‘a space *in-between* emerges through the distinction between the two performances and resides in the interval between their respective tempos’ (communication from Anri Sala, 2017). Clearly here, the music becomes space.

Figure 11:



Ravel Ravel Interval, 2017. Two channel HD video projection on two transparent screens and 16-channel sound installation, colour 20:45 min. © ProLitteris. Foto Gina Folly. Courtesy: Anri Sala.

Second, music also composes time. The intertwining of film time and music time produces an effect of presence. The four elements (two soundtracks and two image tracks)¹⁸ going in and out of sync with each other create an otherly perception of time intended to maximize access to a present of a certain quality. In my view an ‘absolute present’, a ‘pure time’, a present shaped by the coexistence of the past, the present and the future.¹⁹ Again, the body plays a pivotal role as it takes possession of time, bringing ‘into existence a past and a future for a present’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 279). As elegantly formulated by Sigmund Freud: ‘Past, present and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them’ (Freud 2001, 147).

This introduces us to the power of repetition that literally structures *1395 Days without Red*. Discussing Nietzsche’s ‘eternal return’ concept, Gilles Deleuze pinpoints:

We misinterpret the expression *eternal return* if we understand it as return of the same. It is not being that returns but rather the returning itself that constitutes being insofar as it asserts connection to becoming and to that which passes. It is not some one thing which returns but rather returning itself is the one thing which is affirmed of diversity or multiplicity (Deleuze 1983, 48).

The remembering, recollecting, repeating and returning in *1395 Days without Red* constitute the ‘being’ of the bassoonist. A being that is also a ‘being-with’ – with the music, with the city, with the passers-by and the musicians – and that intertwines different temporalities and experiences. And this in such a way that ‘the past is constituted of the interior itself of the present [*de l’intérieur même du présent*]; just as the present is constituted of the interior itself of the past’ (Didi-Hüberman 2017, 104).

Pierre Férida helps us move one step further with his distinction between ‘recollection’ [*ressouvenir*], allowing the living perception of time, and ‘melancholic memory’ which turns the souvenir over ‘to the impotence of a deliverance and thus to exhaustion’ (Férida 1988, 101). Nietzsche’s warning may be remembered here:

When the historical sense no longer conserves life but mummifies it, then the tree gradually dies [...]. Antiquarian history itself degenerates from the moment it is no longer animated and inspired by the fresh life of the present (Nietzsche 1997, 75).

Nietzsche insists that history – being in the form of monumental, of antiquarian and of critical history – must ‘always and only’ perform for life. Thus ‘knowledge of the past has at all times been desired only in the service of the future and the present and not for the weakening of the present or for depriving a vigorous future of its roots’ (Nietzsche 1997, 77). Last but not least, such an approach requires ‘above all great artistic facility, creative vision, loving absorption in the empirical data’ (Nietzsche 1997, 93), as enacted in Kamerić and Sala’s films.

The recollection at stake is combined with the present, imitation is its operating mode and reaching the ‘originary phenomenon’ or the ‘thing in itself’ its stake. Here the child is king: one who knows that the gestures of body and lips are the earliest manifestations of mimesis, as Walter Benjamin reminds us (see Weigel 1996). The key element of the film (Figure 12), the humming produced only for one’s self, like ‘hearing oneself speak’, stems from independent and basic self-experience (auto-affection). Below reflection is self-awareness: an experience of ‘my own’, of self; an absolute experience of oneself that is immediate and contrary to other experiences (for example the experience of ‘otherness’) that are mediated. In Husserl’s view, both breath and

¹⁸ As for Sala’s film, produced by Liria Bégéja, the music Maribel Verdú hears in her head is played by the orchestra of the Paris Conservatory – something that was realized subsequent to the filming in Sarajevo.

¹⁹ See my discussion of Semezdin Mehmedinović’s concept of time (Solioz 2022, 21-45).

voice offer a model of ‘an absolutely pure auto-affection’. Furthermore, this experience is related to the experience of the ‘living present’. But this ‘now point’ is ‘thick’ as it includes the immediate memory of the now that has just elapsed and the anticipation of the now that is about to appear (thus creating layers of time).²⁰

Figure 12:



1395 Days without Red, 2011. HD video projection, colour 43:46 min. for the film directed by Anri Sala / 63:00 min. for the film directed by Šejla Kamerić
© Anri Sala, Šejla Kamerić, Artangel, SCCA/pro.ba 2011. Courtesy: Anri Sala.

As the Philharmonic is playing in this same dimension, the bassoonist meets the orchestra long before she joins it. Thus, the film composes this ‘singular plural space’ that allows an encounter between pure auto-affections without the assistance of any external force: an experience that everyone can reproduce by listening to an interpretation of *Pathétique* while, at the same time, humming along to it. The above-mentioned purity of the auto-affection of the voice facilitates self-awareness and tends towards a theme of universality: a process that Hermann Broch sums up as follows: ‘What distinguishes this supra-rational universalised knowledge contains *a priori* lived experience, an immediacy and breadth of life which remain, so to speak, inaccessible to rational knowledge’ (Broch 2005, 10).

In one sense, this is about composing along with the city, or recomposing its score, but it is more than just that. To familiarize oneself with the unspeakable, to find again that breath of ‘pure differential vibration’ evoked by Jacques Derrida:

You dream, it’s unavoidable, about the invention of a language or of a song that would be yours, not the attributes of a ‘self’, rather the accentuated paraph, that is, the musical signature of your most unreadable history. I’m not talking about a style but an intersection of singularities, habitat, voices, graphism, what moves with you and what your body never leaves (Derrida 1995, 119).

²⁰ I refer here to the Husserl phenomenology as presented by Jacques Derrida (2010).

‘Try see’ with it

Knowing the city is ‘neither the absurd position of modern architecture’s “knowing everything” nor the ironic posture of postmodern negation of truth, but the constructive insight into how the path toward a truth of the city is already truth itself’ (Dell 2019, 183). Neither fiction nor documentary, *1395 Days without Red* belongs to the art of the fragment, ‘the in-finite explosion of the finite’ (Nancy 1997, 132), and masterfully stages the ‘city effect’: ‘that which the city does and that which makes it – but also that which undoes it’, in the process putting it back together (see Bailly 2013, 8).

This film project also succeeds in the feat of encompassing multiple levels as the utterance of the city, the language of the city, the urban language as well as the writing of the city (see Lefebvre 1996, 115), but adding an ultimate dimension: where the unspeakable is the unique expression, music substitutes language. I do not gaze at *1395 Days without Red* as one gazes at a thing, I do not fix it in its place. My gaze, a gaze from the inside, wanders within it as in the halos of Being. In Merleau-Ponty’s words: ‘Rather than seeing it, I see according to, or with it’ (Merleau-Ponty 2007, 355).

Notice

While the first section is new, the second relies on previous versions published as ‘Retrouver son souffle’, *LIGEIA – dossiers sur l’Art*, 34 (2021) 189-192, pp. 15-17 and ‘Catch Your Breath’, *SEER – Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, 24 (2021) 1, pp. 103-106. A first enhanced version was published as ‘Faire corps avec la ville’, in Solioz (2022). This text constitutes a significantly reviewed and enhanced version.

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