ARTICLES

THERAPEUTICS OF INSISTENCE: THE EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC SCENE AND THE USE OF TRANCE MEDIATED BY MUSIC AS THERAPY AGAINST MALADY CAUSED BY THE SÃO PAULO *ETHOS*

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses how participants of the experimental music scene in São Paulo perform therapeutic practices through the performances that occur there. The therapy consists in using music as a form of mediation in search of trance, to treat states such as anxiety or urban blasé demeanor, which can become a problem. These "maladies" are caused by the city *ethos*, a vector that imposes the need to adapt to a way of life they disagree with. Finally, the degree of proximity between the performer and the public affects the degree of efficacy of the intended therapy, inferring that treatments like these can be recurrent among marginalized groups, allowing them to insist on a way of life parallel to the predominant *ethos*.

THE PUNKS WHO MEDITATE

"Shhhh": a spectator asks for silence. In the bar – on the opposite side of the small stage, separated by less than 10 meters – two people were talking aloud. The loudness was necessary for the dialogue to happen, since a musician was performing on stage, in a relatively high volume. They drank beer, they laughed, they had fun. We were not at Sala São Paulo or the Municipal Theatre1. We were not in an environment where silence is, more than a rule of etiquette, an obligatory behavior for spectators when watching a musical performance. We were at an event made by and for people involved with the developments and variations of punk (counter-)culture.

This request for silence instantly astonished some of the audience. I think about the ways in which punks usually express themselves in shows of bands connected to that scene; about the energetic way I have seen some punks from São Paulo and its metropolitan area behave in the concerts of their favorite bands: they mosh, they stage dive,[2] they sing their hearts out, in anger and in chorus, they scream slogans, they bump into each other, they sweat, they laugh, they have fun. Because of the energy and violence contained in their movements, they hurt themselves sometimes. Since the punk movement took shape,[3] this kind of behavior – energetic and noisy – is common practice for people involved in this scene. Even if some do not act like that, they would at least agree with those who do so during musical performances. It is a consolidated behavior, commonplace in the many existing variations and ramifications of the punk movement, be it the Japanese crust-core scene of the late 1980s, the power-violence scene of Vila Velha in the 2000s, or the English anarcho-punk scene of the early 1980s. A request for silence is not something most people would expect to hear in a punk event.

The event I am describing is called Vela Preta, a festival organized by Meia-Vida – a record label from the city of Curitiba, specialized in *punk*, *industrial* and *noise* music –, in which six performances by solo artists or bands took place. It happened at Espaço Zé Presidente, in Cardeal Arcoverde Street, Vila Madalena, São Paulo. I went with some friends, and when the request for silence happened we were standing between the bar and the stage. The request caught everyone's attention except Yantra's, the performer, who simply continued to play, staring at his instruments in a kind of meditative state. At first, we did not really understand what happened.

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1. Famous venues to listen to classical music in São Paulo.
2. Mosh and stage dive are steps in the collective punk dance. Mosh is to move the body in a frantic way, leaning and pushing on those who dance together. Stage dive is a jump made from the stage with the intention of being carried by the crowd, above their heads.
3. The punk narrative places its genesis in 1977, release year of the albuns *Rocket to Russia* by the Ramones and *Never Mind the Bollocks*, Here's the by the Sex Pistols, bands considered demiurges in the punk cosmogony.

We briefly commented on this strange event and had similar opinions: the boys at the bar knew they were disturbing the performance but did not expect to be recriminated, since noise is not something considered offensive in the punk movement. Despite the tension, the conflict was resolved very quickly. Even though the request was unusual, the boys who spoke and laughed loudly, sensing they were bothering the audience, soon left the venue. I think they saw the public's attitude as strange: their facial expressions showed their confusion.

In a way, the music Yantra performed provided the climate that nourished the aforementioned scene. He used two instruments: an electric guitar and a *monotribe* – a synthesizer and sequencer –, with which he used for looping sounds between the mantra "Om" and the didgeridoo. It was a repetitive mantra-like sound that resonated a pleasant and magnetic frequency to hold our attention – its repetitive and mantra-like character did not bother us –, and acted as a sound layer to sustain the other part of the music, which consisted of electric guitar improvisations metamorphosed into a sitar via the timbre chosen and the scales used. The Indian influence was also in his body: Yantra played sitting on the floor with his legs crossed, as if in the yoga position *sukhasana*.

We also smelled masala, which came from the incense he had lit. The atmosphere of that performance wanted to convey a message that, I think, was decoded by the public: in the one hand, their desire to be silent so the music playing was the only sound heard, and on the other, most of the crowd sat on the floor in *sukhasana*, as in a meditation session.

THE TRANCE AND THE MUSIC: A FORM OF PARALLEL INSISTENCE TO THE *ETHOS*[4] OF SÃO PAULO

The musicians of this scene came from experiences in the punk movement, which sees life in a disenchanted way, in the Max Weber sense of the term. That is what makes me and others feel at odds with the Vela Preta Festival. What led these punks to seek some form of spirituality? Or rather, what do they want with this spirituality? Although getting drenched in spiritual practices, they still carry the antiestablishment punk ideology, but different from the commonplace punk. They use music for varied purposes; here music is a way to clash with the São Paulo *ethos*, understood, broadly, as living in a city that demands speed in all activities because of the extreme control of time imposed by capitalism, associated to the blasé attitude, typical of the big cities that emerged with modernity, as Simmel puts it[5].

More than a resistance, this struggle would be a form of insistence[6] on searching for a different life experience from that imposed by the city's *ethos*. This form of agency by insistence implies that, instead of being on the defensive against the affections directed at them by São Paulo, they act in a positive way by proposing a different lifestyle, not necessarily contrary to the São Paulo *ethos*, but in parallel; it would be impossible to alienate themselves from the *ethos* since they are part of it. Felinto, one of the musicians in that scene, commented:

> I don't know if I'm resisting the rhythm of São Paulo, because I'm in it too, right? But within this crazy rhythm of São Paulo I'm looking for other rhythms. I'm leaving this

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4. I use the concept of *ethos* as defined by Gregory Bateson: "*ethos*, [would be] the expression of *a culturally standardized system of organization of the instincts and emotions of individuals*. The *ethos* of a given culture is [...] an abstraction of the entire mass of its institutions and formulations, and so one can expect *ethos* to be infinitely varied from culture to culture – as varied as the institutions themselves. In reality, however, it is possible that in this infinite variety is the *content* of affective life that changes from culture to culture, while the underlying systems or *ethos* are continuously repeating themselves" (Bateson, 2006, 169; our translation).

5. "The psychological foundation on which the type of individuality of the big city rises is the *intensification of the nervous life*", result of the enormous amount of human affections possible there if compared to rural life (Simmel, 1903/2005, 577; our translation). This stimulates an "external reserve" of city dwellers, the blasé, which stimulates them to "a slight aversion, a mutual strangeness and repulsion which, at the moment of a close contact, caused by some reason, could immediately burst into hatred and struggle" (Idem, 583; our translation). Finally, Simmel states that this "reserve, with its harmony of hidden aversion, however, appears again as the form or clothing of a much more general spiritual being of the great city" (Idem; our translation).

6. I thank Clarissa Reche for indicating this possibility of agency form.

thing that we're understanding as the thing to resist... I'm leaving it to whoever wants to stay in this whole paranoia.[7]

We might think that insisting on it, then, would be an act of autonomy regarding an environment that at any given moment tries to impose its massive influence on those who participate in it. Insistence would not be a maintenance in existence, as recommended by resistance, but something closer to creating a space or invasion that would make a different life possible, simultaneously to the oppressive environment. Among its many uses, music functions here as a tool to develop a *trance*, as I will call it, to treat some maladies these musicians say are created by the *ethos* of São Paulo. As such, this practice is a therapeutic one. Felinto is one of the proponents of music-therapy – as we will see in one of his speeches.

Before developing the idea of therapy it contains, we must address what they understand by trance. Although this term is used by the scene's participants, I will make a synthesis that will guide the general definition of trance used in this article. To address this particularity, I have built a model that allows for looking at this moment of consciousness in more detail. To think of trance as *movement* would facilitate its understanding, since it would not be a *state*, but a *search for a state*. Its full realization would always be groped, never completed. Namely: trance would be a moment in which the individual would isolate himself from himself.

Losing the notion of existence is an interesting image to illustrate what that moment would be like. The many trance techniques I observed tended to put the individual in introspection from the control of the perception of external and internal stimuli. We could then understand trance as the search some individuals carry out to block their perception of external affection and their internal drives. Trance, then, would be a search for the suspension of the perception of existence:

> How does this relate to anthropology and performance? If the brain is endowed with plasticity, if it is shaped by the environment and can be trained, we can then glimpse new ways of understanding how culture actually "inhabits" the brain. Many traditional rituals – especially those that use trance – operate performatively through repetition and rhythm (percussion, singing, dancing). The psychotropic effects of the trance are well known. The paradox of the trance is that, for those who know or have already learned to enter a trance, it is desired and controlled, but when a person is "in"

trance, the expected or normative behavior of the trance is in the foreground. The entrance doors to the trance – turning, singing, meditating: there are numerous ways to induce the trance – are consciously controlled, but once in trance, a mental-cerebral state similar to that of a oneiric state is in the foreground. Trance can be thought of as a kind of "daydream", a dream in which the dreamer, to some extent, controls its trajectory (Schechner, 2013, 55; our translation).

In these musicians' search for trance, music would have agency on the external and internal stimuli, which puts it in a privileged place: music would provide the effect of isolating the individual from the environment and guide him not to get lost in his mind's emanations. Environment and mind, then, are the places the trance proponent must pay attention to; because they would act as impediments to reach the search for trance. This movement is strongly attached to the individual's notion of existence – perception. We could understand the constitution of this notion of existence, broadly, as the synthesis produced by the dialectic movement between environment and mind.[8] The search for the trance would be a search for the balance between the mutual nourishment made by the affections of the environment and the emanations of the mind; a search for the place where this nourishment does not happen. I believe that finding this place is impossible, but not finding a place where this signal is weaker; thus, I understand trance as a search. However, music can be understood as a link between the individual and their feeling of existence, a link with the environment and the mind: music is always heard by the musicians who are seeking the trance. This characteristic of always being heard, encloses music in a contradiction within this search for the trance: although it acts to isolate the environment and direct the mind, it simultaneously stimulates the auditory perception and abstract emanations in the individual. Trance, then, would be better thought of as a becoming, it would be a becoming-trance.

THE *THERAPEUTICS OF INSISTENCE* AS AN INTENTION OF AFFECTION

Although producer of physical affections – it awakens our hearing or makes us feel our body in a certain way, for example –, music apparently closes its paradox of guiding the listener to the trance by making it impossible for them to reach it, because of its unique characteristic of *closed language in itself*, as suggested by Lévi-Strauss. Music would be a language that does not speak of anything other than itself, making its action carry the contradiction of being simultaneously intelligible – because we understand it – and untranslatable – for it is impossible to transpose it to another language (Lévi-Strauss, 2004, 37-8). In other words, we may understand music, but only in its musical value.

8. Although I use environment and mind as distinct entities, I do not treat them as isolated monads that, when in contact would create a third entity, the individual. Two things must be emphasized: the environment is nourished by the emanations of the mind, since the individual interacts with the world around him, transforming it; the mind is nourished by the affections of the environment, since the world interacts with the individuals, transforming them.

It is not because music expresses itself that it is devoid of message. Lévi-Strauss suggests that this type of message is linked to two factors, the same ones individuals must observe when searching for the trance: their emotions (internal drives, of the biological order) and their education (internalized external drives, of the symbolic and imaginary order). During a musical performance, listeners would be subject to the performer's intentions of affection:

> Musical emotion comes precisely from the fact that at each instant the composer withdraws or adds more or less than the listener predicts, convinced of being able to guess the project, although he is in fact incapable of revealing it due to his subjection to a double periodicity: that of his ribcage, which is linked to his individual nature, and that of scale, linked to his education (Idem, 36; our translation).

Thus, Felinto's commentary on how he could manipulate his music to direct it towards producing certain affections is very interesting. He talked about how some people said to had been affected by his music: through one of his performances, some said they had come into contact with a deceased relative and resolved past issues, others said to have come into contact with their African roots, or that they had felt their vulva pulsing... He explains that these feelings and all the others awakened by his music occur because mankind shares amongst itself life experiences common to all humans, or at least to humans who belong to a given society. After he told me those stories, he elaborated on why he could affect the listeners:

> I think those facets I find in myself reverberate in other people. And besides reverberating, I have experiences, no matter how unspoken, that other people also have. We deal with death, we deal with love, we deal with scarcity, sometimes... With the need for abundance, with the need for affection.

If this type of reflection relates to the "education factor", as Lévi-Strauss puts it, when Felinto talks specifically about physical affections, he completes the "double periodicity of music" suggested by the anthropologist, by considering, among other things, that music has the potential to be something like an affection machine, and that the different forms of affection possible are associated with the aesthetic forms of sound frequencies manipulated in a performance. He states that:

> Today I have executed, created, thought with a more defined aesthetic purpose. I worry about what I can create aesthetically, "synesthetically"... What a sensory experience I'm gonna bring, huh?

I can start with a high frequency that goes to the roof of your head or a low one that will mess with your stomach.

Anthropological considerations on the relationship between music, trance and therapy are not new. A classic on this approach are Roger Bastide's studies on how in some religions of African matrix the state of trance is guided by music and the controlled trance – opposite to possession, which would be an involuntary trance – would be eminently used as therapy. Thus, the trance would be considered as a "social adjustment function for a disinherited population, poorly integrated into the global society, and that, consequently, they constituted a factor of psychic balance, therefore mental health" (Bastide, 2016, 107; our translation). If we agree with Bastide, trance can be understood as a therapeutic practice that strengthens the insistence on a lifestyle other than the hegemonic one imposed on certain groups. It is interesting that his approach arises from the inversion of a psychiatric vogue. Before, the trance of Afro-religions was seen as stimulating a cult of the pathological,[9] due to its association with typical Western psychological diseases – e.g., hysteria, schizophrenia etc. – and how they manifest. In a second moment, psychiatry began thinking of trance as a search for the cure[10] of problems caused by the position practitioners of Afro-religions find themselves in their societies (Idem, 109). Music, in this context, would be the trigger for the trance, which would take place respecting its proper liturgical moment: "the trance starts only when one hears the

9. We use pathological, in a generic way, to what denotes disease.
10. We define cure, in this article, as the re-establishment of a person's normalized state of body and/or mind sanity. Note that this state is socially constructed.

music of their god. The moment and form of the trance are liturgically determined" (Idem, 144; our translation). Musicians of the experimental scene in São Paulo would then function like shamans, doctors, healers and liturgy masters: guides on a journey towards the unknown emptiness of the mind, so that individuals can find in themselves the cure for psychic maladies through music. These performer's form of action is seen by their mastery of the intentions of affection their music may effect. Lévi-Strauss's comment on this possibility of control, which reinforces Felinto's speech, is quite illustrative:

> If the composer withdraws more, we experience a delicious sensation of falling; we feel torn from a stable point in the solfège and thrown into the void, but only because the point of support offered to us is not in the place provided. When the composer takes less, the opposite happens: he forces us to exercise more skillfully than we do. Now we are moved, now we are forced to move, and always beyond what we alone would feel capable of accomplishing. The aesthetic pleasure is made of this infinity of ennui and truce, useless waits and waits rewarded beyond what is expected, the result of the challenges brought by the work; and the contradictory sensation it provokes, that the trials to which it submits us are insurmountable, when it prepares to provide us with wonderfully unforeseen means that will allow us to overcome them (Lévi-Strauss, 2004, 36; our translation).

The intention of affection meant by Felinto is indicative of the importance in observing the ethological context in constructing a path in the search for the trance. He intends to use his music as a therapeutic tool to treat what he calls anxiety, one of the main mental illnesses caused by the *ethos* of a city like São Paulo, where *urgency* is the categorical imperative that mediates living in the megalopolis. Reciprocity in urgency, present in those who share this *ethos*, would feed a desire to deny the wait, considering it undesirable and, to a certain extent, unthinkable, triggering a chronic feeling of anxiety, the intermittent desire to always be doing something. This need for urgency would institute waiting as a waste to be avoided, an empty space that always must be filled. More broadly, it is a consequence of the capitalist *modus operandi*, which presupposes the control of time to a faster and maximized production. To Felinto, this would propel people to try and make up for the wait in some way, such as the need to smoke a cigarette while waiting for the bus or eat something, even without hunger, while waiting for someone in a bar.

Felinto directs his intention of affection to sensitize those who participate in his performances that waiting happens and is inescapable and should not be blamed, as the city's *ethos* suggests. Commenting on this particularity, he states:

> Here in São Paulo everyone has issues with time. I think our people die early and our year goes by faster. Everybody's in

a hurry here. I don't know, I think this is the only place in the country that's kind of an emergency bid... That's insane!

With that in mind, he comments on his therapeutic proposal:

> I am looking for spaces with therapeutic proposals, in which people are willing to slow down, to pause a little, to experience silence, to reduce anxiety or to talk to anxiety and understand that it is there.
> We are trying to create a circuit of people who enjoy experimental music and somehow find a way to enter introspection, into something transcendental, from this exercise of listening.

Felinto's musical aesthetic choice is also important. He prefers to compose songs that can be defined as *ambient*, since the aesthetics of this type of music reflects what Felinto wants to awaken in his listeners. Ambient music would be characterized by a slow and fluid sound with plenty of space between the musical actions, besides being performed in the repetitive idea of a mantra. The time it awakens, then, would oppose the productivity eagerness, typical of the São Paulo *ethos*.

But there are other problems these experimental musicians want to deal with. Another way to perform therapy with trance mediated by music is using the musical frenzy – different diseases require different treatments. The musicians of DeafKids, for example, try to unload the blasé attitude typical of big cities. For them, this type of attitude, typical of metropolitan populations, builds intense levels of individualism, which facilitates the many forms of control by different oppressive social forces, be they the State, the market etc. Isolated individuals have weaker possibilities for political action, since they would not be or willing to be in contact with others. DeafKids's intention of affection would, then, break the controlling blasé attitude has on the individuals' bodies through the trance mediated by the frenzy of the dances proposed by their music.

DeafKids's music, something between *d-beat*, *noise*, *drone* and *industrial*, would be a commentary on the dystopia that surrounds our bodies today. This aesthetic choice would be a diagnosis of the vectors creating this blasé malady. Besides showing how the contemporary lament is configured by these oppressive forces, their music also stimulates the listeners to seek freedom for their bodies. Many are the restraints that oppress individuals, but they specifically deal with the problem caused by the blasé attitude. The therapy is given through the repetitive – and mantric – character of their music; a stimulus for bodies to break the bonds of blasé control. It is by dance, frenetic dance, free dance, that this control is undone. The search for the trance, the intention of fundamental affection for the treatment they propose, is also on the performers. Mariano, drummer of DeafKids, comments that the way he plays his instrument, repetitively and using polyrhythmic techniques, which come

from certain African musical styles, becomes, at a certain moment of his performance, a search for the trance; he forgets about himself and the body acts automatically. This highlights the necessary practice to intend the trance affection. Finally, for the trance affection directed at the listeners be possible, these musicians must master the trance, something that permeates their control of the musical language that makes it possible. Schechner synthesizes this relationship between the control of trance and the practice of some specific performance technique:

> The trance, of course, is performance; it is a physical action, a powerful way to introduce cultural practices deeply into the structure of the brain, effectively changing it. Obviously – even though sometimes the most powerful truths are right in front of our nose – the performance of the trance is both a cause and a consequence of *retrained brains*. Trance masters – shamans, Candomblé practitioners and other traditional performers, as well as some artists – have trained their *bodybrain* using traditional methods. They are an embodied knowledge (Schechner, 2013, 56; our translation).

The body, thought in conjunction with the mind, is the vehicle for achieving the trance. It is the body that mediates the healing affections intended for healing other bodies that want healing.

FIGURE 3
Mariano, DeafKids's drummer. Source: Victor Balde.

FIGURE 4
DeafKids Live. Source: Nubia Abe.

The body that needs healing, the one built from the maladies generated by the city's *ethos*, would need, then, to be recomposed, remade. The body's reconstruction intended by these musicians, mediated by the trance, is a means of deactivating the vectors that previously configured its pathological state. This spirit that permeates every moment of people's lives in São Paulo and acts in a hegemonic way, creates impediments for undoing the problems they cause in the bodies of city dwellers.

DeafKids is an interesting archetype of these punks' current choice for a spiritual approach to the world, seen in the aesthetic changes they present throughout their career. Many are its factors, but some are crucial when talking about this mélange of music, trance and the treatment intended. DeafKids's first album, released in 2011, was still pretty much stuck in the rock music convention, with songs following compositional choices limited to the solutions found in the *d-beat* format, a punk sub-genre. But more and more they started adding exogenous elements to their compositions. Its apex, from the transformation of a strictly punk band into a band that does something so *sui generis* that escapes definition,[11] is the album *Configuração do Lamento*. There is a progressive variation in the band's aesthetic choice between the first and last albums, which may be parallel to their spiritualization. Mariano, for example, changed from a strong atheist to someone who prefers to, as he likes to say, "accept the mystery", since some things in existence go beyond the possibility of understanding. They started going to Umbanda – Angu, their bassist, was going for longer; they also started listening to different African and Indian music. These are factors that influenced the compositions seen in *Configuração do Lamento*. This album uses a lot of percussion – something not very common for punk bands apart from the drum kit – such as the djembe, bongos and *water noise* (water falling into a container covered in metal objects). These "unusual" elements – for punks, of course – were used in this recording referencing their knowledge of African and Indian music. It is interesting that this movement of aesthetical change happens simultaneously with a the recent increase in the circulation of African music in Brazil, with the New African Diaspora. They also used a type of percussion inspired by composition techniques typical of *industrial music*, built on a "microfonized" malleable metal plate – the elasticity of a saw would be an example of this type of metal.

The *therapeutics of insistence* is not an exclusive phenomenon of this scene. It could be something broader, like a technology of affection and body care that acts to restore the subjects' sanity. It is built and practiced by people who, in some way, are not aligned with the *ethos* of the

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11. Examples are found in these articles: "DeafKids defy the rational on 'Configuração do Lamento'" (Cory, 2017), "Resenha do disco 'Configuração do Lamento'" (Justini 2016), "Why DeafKids are one of Brazil's most important bands!" (Reveron 2017).

social environment in which they live, such as the practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions, as discussed by Bastide. Further research on this type of healing process should be conducted in other marginalized social groups, since it seems to be a common trait among these populations.

So far, at least superficially, the *therapeutics of insistence* practice has been outlined. But let us ask ourselves: what would enable this technology to be effective? Before trying to answer this question, we need to take a step back and understand the meanders of the *therapeutics of insistence* as a cultural manifestation. We must think about the social parameters of its reproduction, by specific social relations. Thus, we will be able to think how the existence of the *therapeutics of insistence* acts in the individuals' bodies, from an intersubjective perspective and in a recurring way. Therefore, the following topic will discuss some characteristics of the *therapeutics of insistence* in its relationship with *socius*.

THE SOCIAL RELATIONS THAT REPRODUCE THE *THERAPEUTICS OF INSISTENCE*
How, then, should we analyze the implications of social relations in the *therapeutics of insistence*? I will now talk about some concepts that might help us build a framework.

Musicking is concept put forward to solve a musicology vogue – and, thus, a certain part of ethnomusicology –, which, broadly, focused on discussing music-social problems from an European, logocentric and individualizing musical reference. Generally, this musicology approach used compositional or biographical analysis to build its explanations and had in the music-textual registers its source of data. This precludes solving issues that involve the Other's meanings of his own musical making or other social aspects enhanced by music. In a rather ludicrous way, we see this vogue in the classic example of an Eurocentric musicological approach: the notes between the semi-tones, typical of certain Arabic music, for example, would be considered as played by out-of-tune instruments and not as a choice of a smaller frequency range for defining the notes within this music system. Finally, the vogue that the concept of music evokes makes it possible to include, if in a limited way, other conceptions of music, besides socio-musical phenomena that were previously excluded.

Coined by Small, *Musicking* is, in general lines, an epistemological approach used by ethnomusicology to account for the practices that enable the reproduction – in the sense of perpetuating its existence– of music. This concept then categorizes *music* as an action that intends to enable music to be performed. The phenomena this approach encompasses are not only of the mechanical execution or of the compositional forms, but a network of other vectors that sustain musical making. Musical

relations would be, then, the relationship between any *musicking one* who acts for the event of the music: the person who works at the box office of a musical presentation, the person who manages the Facebook page of a band, the person who shares pirated music, the person who works in the administrative sector of São Paulo's Symphony Orchestra (Osesp), the musical performer etc. (Small, 1998, 9).

Musicking, then, enlarges, apparently indefinitely, the scope that surrounds music. But if the musical scope does not end, everything becomes music. If everything is music, then nothing is music; since it is the differentiation between an entity/phenomenon and the rest of the cosmos – the singularity of an object – that enables something to exist, music, for being an undifferentiated phenomenon from the rest of the cosmos, would not exist or would be its totality. How to overcome this difficulty? What would music be? We must take a step back.

Music, as treated by Blacking, would be a set of humanly organized sounds (2007, 213). So, whenever we notice some culturally constructed order for a contingency of different sounds, we have a musical manifestation. However, for these organized sounds to happen in the world, they must manifest themselves: the music would be performed during a musical action, a performance. This movement suggests that the musical phenomenon structure is composed of a synchronic entity (ordering of sounds) and a diachronic entity (performance of this ordering). Music, in its diachronic sense, would be the moment of convergence of all vectors moved by musicians so that music can happen. In other words, music would be an *act*, not an object. A similar definition is proposed by Seeger, who puts the need for ethnomusicological analysis to reflect on the performative elements of music, because it is the moment where audience and performer affect each other through music (2008, 244). Furthermore, we must understand this idea of music, which happens in action, as a performance, as defined by Schechner. For the author, performance are "marked behaviors, framed or accentuated, separated from simple living" (2003, 34; our translation). Having outlined this epistemological basis, how could this tool be used to discuss the experiences in the experimental music scene that I followed?

Many approaches could be used to interpret this ethnographic experience, even from the *musical* perspective. For example, we could construe this scene from the relationship the performers have with the space Yoga For All –a yoga school that houses some performances of this musical scene. Maintained by Vanessa Joda, the space works in the lines of *Yoga Punx*.[12] As such, we may examine how these performances

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12. A yogic philosophy that associates, as the name implies, ideas from yoga and ideas from the punk movement. On its official website, it is said that "Yoga Punx combines

and Yoga for All built a relationship, from the social relationship between Vanessa Joda and the artists. We can further complicate this relationship and see how this first relationship would influence the yoga students, who would be looking, at first, strictly for a yoga practice and who, being affected by the association between yoga and music intended by the school, begin to like experimental music.

Besides the music aspects, other phenomena act in establishing connections between the individuals of this scene. We could even suggest that these are the phenomena that enable the reproduction of the *therapeutics of insistence* (would be the structure of this movement?). We shall use Small's idea as the trigger for that discussion:

> The fundamental nature and meaning of music lie not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action, in what people do. It is only by understanding what people do, as they take part in a musical act, that we can hope to understand its nature and the function it fulfills in human life. (1998, 8)

Here we see the importance of thinking that music is carried out by people's actions: these acts give agency, signify and attribute new meanings to musical making. What, then, would make such acts possible? Or more: what would make it possible for these acts to reproduce?

It would be interesting to examine the topological development of that scene. Its cartography could give us a panoramic view – broader but less detailed – of the processes taking place. Thus, we could glimpse the mechanisms that enable the *therapeutics of insistence*. Such topography would be a detailed description of a locality. Considering that our analysis deals with social relations, its topography, the physical-spatial issues involved in the practices of this experimental scene, is of little importance. More important is to examine the *geographical position of social relations in the action of individuals*. Appadurai defines well how the locality formed by the unfolding social structure conceptualizes itself:

> I view locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial. I see it as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts (1996, 178).

As such, we can consider that locality would be not the space itself, but the practices that endow the space with shared meanings among the agents. The same meaning can repeat the same location without having to repeat itself in the same physical space. A location does not necessarily repeat itself, but it may repeat itself. It is precisely from this

yoga and punk philosophy to offer alternative donation-based yoga classes for all student levels. Come and be as you are. We play kick-ass music!".

power of repetition that a scene could be constructed and endure. It is also this repetition that would strengthen the ties between the agents of this scene and magnify the efficacy of the *therapeutics of insistence* practiced by them – we will examine this later on.

The idea of *community of practice* helps us deal with this recurrence, since "[t]hese practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise" (Wenger, 1998, 45). Thus, the experimental scene would be a community of practices with shared common ends, the *therapeutics of insistence* being one of them. This scene is composed, then, by people who come together to carry out shared projects.

But one could ask: why differentiate between *locality* and *community of practice*, if this concept can include people who are carrying out joint ventures? To this I answer: the differentiation between *locality* and *community of practices* is necessary because not everyone in the *locality* where the music takes place participates in this *community of practices*. The events are public, so it may happen that people not necessarily connected to that scene are there during the performances. In other words, *locality* would be the global context of the events of this scene, while the *community of practices* would be a contingency, internal to the *locality*, formed by people who have common initiatives.

From this group external to the *community of practices*, but internal to that *locality*, we could reflect on the limits of the *therapeutics of insistence* agency. For this purpose, I conducted an ethnographic experiment to observe if, in fact, the closer the listeners and performers were in otherness, the easier it would be, for the listeners, to decode with more precision the message contained in the performers' music. To do so, I invited someone outside this scene to see how he would react to the message conveyed through the music and/or the degree of difficulty in understanding the performer's message. To make this experiment less biased, the subject had no previous knowledge of my research –so as not to influence him with the reflections I had already come to. I deliberately invited the subject to watch a DeafKids performance, because I intuited that the message they conveyed through their music was relatively easier to understand than the ones made by other performers. The subject was chosen for his experience with experimental music and no prior knowledge of DeafKids until the invitation was made. Despite this methodological choice, this draft experiment might serve to some future research project that needs a tool to measure the quality of intersemiotic translations taking place in musical performances. I will talk about the outcome of that experiment later. First, we must examine the introjection of the message in the songs performed by the participants of this scene.

THE TRANCE AS A MESSAGE THAT USES MUSIC AS A MEDIUM

What happens in the interactional process of the performances of this scene can be seen as communication: here, the musicians intend to affect the listeners with their message, which, among other things, could be the cure for some evil caused by the *ethos* of São Paulo. Even though small, not everyone who came to the performances was a scene goer: some were regulars, while others were sporadic listeners. These regulars were very close to the performers, not restricted to interacting with them only as spectators.

The regulars easily understand the performers' message. One person commented that in a Felinto performance, they felt a connection with his recently deceased grandfather, which helped her relieve herself from the trauma that was his death. Other talks about how the music he heard had connections with Africa, awakening and strengthening a certain sense of empowerment because of his African roots. Two examples that stray from Felinto's main proposal, which is to treat anxiety. About this divergence, he explains that, although he imbues his music with questions that speak to possible human affections, it is impossible for the connection made by his music and pathological processes be entirely complete, given the complexity of the subjectivities constitution. But in another Felinto performance two listeners told me they had accessed something like a moment of nonexistence – maybe a form of trance. In fact, they said that after the performance they felt an unusual peace. They were participating in the performance, meditating, for about 50 minutes. One of the participants said he felt as if only a few minutes had passed in this practice. In the performances of DeafKids, there is a regular who, every time I have seen him – there have been many –, he was dancing in an unusual frenzy. In performances by Afrohooligans – a band formed by Felinto and members of DeafKids – I always see the majority of listeners in *sukhasana*, as in Yantra's performances. A practice I have seen repeated in other performances by Yantra and also by Acavernus.

Although I only discuss here the issue of the trance mediated by music, other messages can also be conveyed by this means. Let us take as example another message transmitted by DeafKids.

On a Saturday night, me and a friend – let us call her K. – went to Hotel Bar, on a alley of Augusta Street, where the musicians of the experimental scene perform almost daily. We were there to see a DeafKids performance, a band that, as said before, K. did not know. This field work was to examine this communicational aspect, specifically this band's music. K. knew she was helping with my research, but I did not explain what this ethnography was about, so as not to influence her observations. For the same reason, I asked her not to research the band before the experiment occurred.

After the performance, K. described her experience in a few topics. First, she liked the music. She felt that DeafKids's music aesthetics conveyed a message of nihilistic destruction, defining their sound like a "noise that did not want to get anywhere." The message of destruction she understood would be a delight, a pleasurable destruction. For her, what she witnessed was very reminiscent of the film *The Seventh Continent* (*Der siebente kontinent*), which tells the story of a family that moves to an isolated place and starts destroying objects valued by our society – they throw money into a toilet, break a clock with axes, smash a television. She also said that the music was very inviting to dance, but she did not because almost nobody danced, making her feel out of place – I suggest it was because she did not participate in this *community of practices*.

We see two particularities in K.'s experience that relate to the message that DeafKids transmitted. One of them, which shows the performance of blasé attitudes, is that she felt compelled not to dance by being in a context that surrounded her with blasé, even though the music was very inviting to dance. Another is the image of destruction narrated by K. We notice that the narrative intended by DeafKids, among other things, is loaded with this content. Although DeafKids's songs have lyrics, all of them are unintelligible during their performances due to being covered by layers of audio processing with the use of reverb, delay and distortion in the audio signal of the vocalist's microphone. The interesting thing is that, even without understanding what was said verbally, K. managed to grasp what was said musically. She was able to perform, even if rudimentarily, an intersemiotic translation of a message contained in DeafKids's performance. Evidently, we must consider that the message is not understood in its totality, either in its verbal or musical aspect, by the structural particularities of each of these forms of human interaction – what Lévi-Strauss calls "a closed language in itself". One of the main messages proposed by DeafKids, verbally and musically, is that we live in a "permanent dystopia." K., at least in part, was able to understand that.

These were some examples of how music can transmit messages, a necessary mechanism for the *therapeutics of insistence* to happen. Now, we shall return to our first question: what would make this treatment effective?

THE *SYMBOLIC EFFICACY*, THE PROXIMITY BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS OF A *COMMUNITY OF PRACTICES* AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH COMPREHENSION IN THE MUSIC-COMMUNICATIONAL PROCESS

In this scene the trance can be a form of healing, having music as a privileged means of execution. In this *location*, this system would form a version of the *therapeutics of insistence*, a treatment that may show us another possibility for restoring sanity. But for the performers' intentions of affection to be effective, the entities involved in this contingency

must share similar intersubjective values, as the examples above suggest. How the relationship between these people is built, then, would be what enables the insistence agency – in this scene, the parallel experience of the city's *ethos*. For this, they must have a shared knowledge of a language so that a dialogue through music can happen.

It is precisely this common language that guarantees the reproduction of the *therapeutics of insistence*. The idea of *symbolic efficacy* is quite elucidative in this regard. Lévi-Strauss proposes this concept to account for possible efficacy in therapeutic processes that use *meanings*, since they could "make a situation initially given in affective terms thinkable, and acceptable to the spirit the pains that the body refuses to tolerate" (1985, 228). To discuss this idea, he compares a shamanistic cure narrated between the Cuna with forms of psychoanalytic treatment. Lévi-Strauss shows that, in a way, the patient needs to subjectivize the functioning idea of certain maladies to dominate them or at least live together minimizing their effects, if it is something inescapable. The process that takes place in the experimental scene is similar, with the exception of the type of language being used to intentionally cure: in our case, experimental music; in Lévi-Strauss' is a mythical narrative, sung by a shaman, or the creation of an individual metaphor to explain existence, done by the psychoanalyst. If we consider that "it is the symbolic efficacy that guarantees the harmony of parallelism between myth and operations; myth and operations form a pair, where the duality of the patient and the doctor is always found" (Lévi-Strauss, 1985, 232), the therapy that takes place on the experimental scene concerns the possibility of the performers and the listener that is being treated share world meanings. Just as myth and operations form a pair in the cure described by Lévi-Strauss, music and meditation are in a similar parallelistic relationship.

I believe that the *therapeutics of insistence* could be enhanced by closer ties between participants of a given group; the closer the subjects, the easier and more accurate becomes the symbolic understanding between them. The constitution of these groups as a *community of practices* must be observed if this type of healing process is to be improved.

It is the place that an individual occupies in a *location* that enables him to use the *therapeutics of insistence* for practices that restore the healthy state of the body with greater or lesser healing power. Such medical care may, in fact, be actions used to treat some form of illness. In other words, a musical process can be used to treat our bodies from problems caused by the most diverse agents, such as the *ethos* of São Paulo. Not only scientific medicine can cure us. Other forms of healing are possible.

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