

on a day's highlight / what is listening

with Robin Gruber, Laura-Maria Vahimets, Theresia Pürmayr, Nicolás Rueda Blanco, Ezra Erak,
Anuk Wurm, Sanaz Raffi, Fritzi Hannah Harreck, Robert Finster, Alexander Meile
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an ongoing collective exploration / learning from experiences of togetherness and uncertainty / reflecting on listening – with Robin Gruber, Laura-Maria Vahimets, Theresia Pürmayr, Nicolás Rueda Blanco, Ezra Erak, Anuk Wurm, Sanaz Raffi, Fritzi Hannah Harreck, Robert Finster, Alexander Meile, Matteo Zoccolo – 12 may 2021
matteozoccolo.net/on_listening/conversations.html

RG: Guys, just a quick thing. If I may have your attention! Yeah, so, Matteo is doing a project on listening for his thesis. Whatever. And I have a question for everybody. Maybe somebody wants to start, I'm too shy. What was a highlight of you guys, this day? What was really amazing? What you're grateful for or... Yeah.

MZ: Yeah, we can pass the microphone. Um, today was a boring day for me.

RG: Yeah.

MZ: Before people started to come here! Because then when people come and we are together, I think it gets interesting. And I'm very happy that I met Ezra and new people. I mean, I'm also happy for the old people that I already knew. But, yeah, for me, the highlight of the day is this evening. We played amazing music and I think there was a very good vibe. I'm grateful for you to join tonight. That's my highlight.

LMV: Do I have to talk close to it? It's really funny. Yeah. Today I had a friend, Sonja from Estonia. We went swimming to Puchenau, and it was quite nice. And then a biker passed by, and he also came swimming with us. We were talking and... Yeah, and then we were playing for a very long time with stones, we were collecting stones and throwing them into the water. And it was quite like therapeutic. Is that a word? Therapeutic. I don't know, it was really chill. Sun, water, stones and...

TP: Today was a very good day. Today there were many, many cool things, I don't know what the highlight is. But I think the talk with Hanako Geierhos, a professor of Nicolás and me, she teaches performance, and she told us about her works in different countries in the world. And it was very interesting and motivating to continue with that. And yeah, that was my highlight.

NRB: We shared that the highlight. I enjoyed coming here, it's like this, thinking that your day doesn't start with the sun coming up, but it starts when it starts for you. My day was pretty much monotonous, there wasn't much happening until we started talking with Hanako in the afternoon, and I just canalized, gathered some energy worth for my decision and my determination of staying here in Linz maybe longer than I firstly intended to. So, it was very exciting that way. And after that, just getting lost in a flat I don't know with a bunch of people I don't know, it's kind of a nice highlight for a day. I would say that too.

EE: So, I don't really have a place here in Linz. I live in Vienna, I'm staying with my grandma. Today she woke me up and the breakfast was ready. I went to the kitchen table and had like this big meal in front of me and then coffee. It was smelling nice, it's like a good start to the day. I had oranges, croissants and a cool conversation with

my grandma. She was telling me about her childhood. My great-grandfather was a pastor in Mariendom, and they lived close to the Dome. She said that the surface in front of it didn't used to be like some cement and stones. There was a park full of trees, and she was like angry at all the stupid architects in Linz, who decided to remove trees and put stones everywhere. Yeah.

AW: For me, a highlight was first when the painkiller hit, then when my history teacher looked really judgmental on my bare feet. In my imagination, it was judgmental, but eventually she took her shoes off. This was also a highlight. And when Sanaz said, "You don't have to discuss with a pretender."

SR: It's not me, it's Hafiz! He lived 800 years ago... My day started with a talk with my mother. Yeah, we talked for one or two hours, and I told her to come to Linz. I'm so homesick. I miss my mama, I didn't think I would, but I do. And then I had some shit going on in the middle with the bank and stuff. Then I joined you, beautiful people, I'm so happy. We played very nice music and improvised together. So, who's next?

FHH: For me was a very nice moment when the curtain of my window was closed, but the window was open, and the wind was blowing the curtain outside the window. And I could hear the sounds, but I was somehow in my room and the light was very nice. That was a very nice moment.

RF: I enjoyed riding a motorcycle and paying attention to the acoustics, a beautiful sound. What's the difference between when you started first and when you left it? It brings you closer to life. And after you ride it for, let's say, a few hundred kilometers, you get a different tone from the engine. It's always really nice to hear this difference. And the focus is nice, right now.

AM: I don't know any of you, but there's a really nice, chilly mood here. So, it's really kind of like... It feels like a very good outcome of the day. Is really good. And also, when Matteo said, "I can make pasta or something." It was a kind of highlight!

MZ: I can still make it!

AM: I know, I know!

RG: Yeah. What was the highlight of my day? There were many highlights. One was this thing about listening, which I find quite funny. And the first question you asked me before was, "What does it mean to be together?" Which I found really hard to answer. Right now, a big thing for me is listening to myself. And today I spent most of the day alone, just out in nature, and I was listening to myself all day long. That felt really nice. I found calm and serenity, chilling in the sun. That was amazing.

FHH: What is serenity?

RG: Being calm, yeah, in peace.

MZ: Do you want to make another round, or is it enough?

RG: Yeah, anybody has a question?

MZ: I do have one for you. It's a question I asked myself long ago, and I'm still trying to find an answer, even though maybe it's very complicated. What is listening? I mean, it can get very cheesy, I know. But yeah, somehow for me, it's a hard question. So, what is listening?

LMV: Yeah, If I want to try to describe listening, then it's maybe using the sense of hearing to get information. Because you needed to survive. Animals and creatures have different senses, some are stronger, and some are weaker because they don't need everything. And for us, it's important to know if there is danger and listening is taking the sound information.

TP: Hello! I thought that there is maybe a difference between hearing and listening. That hearing is something we can do when we have functioning ears. But also a creature without ears could be described as a hearing creature, if it just reacts to the sound waves, but then maybe it's not called hearing, it's maybe just sensing. But listening, for me, it's more something that we decide to do, and to actively do. I mean, we can always hear, and listening is more focused.

LMV: Because we had this class with Peter Androsch, where he said that you cannot stop hearing. The difference between listening and hearing is that you can stop listening to something. It's like putting a focus on. So, hearing is everything that comes and is information, and listening is when you really focus on something, and you can stop it.

NRB: Is the recorder listening to us?

TP: Is recording hearing?

NRB: Listening is not just avoiding talking, in the sense of putting words out there. When you let the other put words in your head, you are listening. Otherwise, you're just hearing, yeah, and you don't really care or give it the meaning that it should or could have, what others have to say. You said just not talking, you are listening to me!

EE: I think maybe the most interesting interpretation of listening would be humans listening to each other. And I think maybe there's a certain way to do listening that it's most helpful for each other. I had this encounter with a lady a while back, I started talking and she had this certain way of remaining quiet, asking questions at the perfect time. This made me open up in a way in which I hadn't in a

long time. It's like you said, maybe knowing when to stop talking is a part of listening.

AW: I think listening needs much patience, and also love. It's important, when listening, to not have prejudice, or like to be judgmental. But yeah, the most important thing is patience and the love, in listening.

FHH: Listening is... It can be very introverted but also very extroverted. Maybe one way is being silent, then it's more introverted and more listening to your inner self. And when you are extroverted, it's maybe observing your surroundings with your ears.

SR: At this moment I have nothing to say. I'm listening so much!

RF: It seems to me as if it is even the possibility, the ability to deal with silence. No?

AM: Yes, I think silence is what we experience now in a way. We are listening to each other passing the microphone in the round. We really listen, and the rest is silence. I think, when you listen, you get away from yourself. And this is a very good ability, to draw the attention away from yourself to the other person. Also on stage, it's a very big ability. Since we are actors, for example, you have the text, but when you really listen to the other person, then you get away from yourself and you get maybe to a higher level. Also in art, when you really listen... I think it's really important to be able to listen to another person. It's a very good question.

RG: ...

MZ: Well, you made it difficult for me now, Robin! I don't have an answer. That's why I asked, because I don't have an answer.

AW: I think you need to trust yourself, to listen.

MZ: And I think it also needs care. It needs care because when you listen, you care about someone else, somehow,

LMV: Yeah, if you don't care, it's really hard to listen.

MZ: And maybe it also needs...

SR: Matteo, I was thinking about the pasta! Just out of the blue. Do you still have the energy to make pasta?

MZ: But I wanted to say something before, then it's pasta time, I'll feed you afterwards!

SR: Listening time now.

MZ: Maybe it's more important than the pasta.

FHH: C'mon!

MZ: I was just thinking that maybe there is also an element of vulnerability, when you listen. It's not an active offense. You take a step back, and you are suddenly vulnerable to what the other people think. If you are in a group, what many other people think about what you say. I mean, not what you say, but the fact that you are listening. Because if someone is speaking, they want to be heard and want to be listened at. And when you are listening, you are in a vulnerable position in which you feel the need to take care of this person.

SR: Once it happened to me that I was in the south of Austria in Villach. At the time I didn't know shit about skiing. I went there with some friends, and they said, "Let's go skiing" Anyway, I was demolished in the ski fields. And then one guy came, I didn't even know him, you know, it never matters who comes to tell you what. Sometimes you hear something even from a bird or from a person... I was sitting on the ground trying to put this fucking ski shit in my feet. I didn't know the guy, he just told me not to put my ass on the ground, just to stand up, wipe off the snow and then clean my shoes when I put them on. Yeah, and at that moment, I was thinking a lot about what he said to me. It never matters who tells you what, it just matters what comes to your ear. You know, something comes, and it feels to you, to your soul, the true thing to do. And then you just go for it. But everybody in the world thinks so much of who speaks. "Someone famous said that, so it must be true." No, you can hear something from a bird, or from a guy on a ski slope, or from somebody who is sweeping the street. Something that feels true to you, here. It's just it.

MZ: This is also about vulnerability. You were in a position in which you needed help. You had a problem to solve, and you were vulnerable. You were without your ski.

SR: I was demolished!

LMV: Today my friend Sonja told me that, when she used to work in a bar, she felt that she's very important to the people. She said she would never go to work there again, the people were always drunk, and they had problems. Sonja felt they didn't really have any friends to talk to, and she was always listening to their troubles. Even if she had a really bad day herself, she still felt that she had to listen, so that they would feel... I guess it's connected to vulnerability.

MZ: Definitely! If someone else has a question, we can make it longer. I'll go to... Cook pasta. You can listen to each other, I will listen to the recording tomorrow. Who's hungry?