

on listening with all the senses / awareness / improvisation on stage

with **Luke Baio**
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*an ongoing collective exploration / learning from experiences of togetherness and uncertainty / reflecting on listening – with Luke Baio, Matteo Zoccolo – 09 June 2021
matteozoccolo.net/on_listening/conversations.html*

LB: For me, listening can be completely different according to the situation you're in. You can listen to a person, listen to what they need, or they're asking you, or they're trying to tell you, which is a very obvious thing, a sort of one-sided thing. Some people may be better at listening than others. Some people struggle to listen and take on board what someone's saying, and to be able to sort of evaluate this in their brain. Listening, to me, is a broader thing, it's more connected to perception. I listen with my eyes a lot, for example. I see a situation around me or other people and try to engage or work out how I should respond.

MZ: This listening with the eyes is also what I was noticing before, during your rehearsals. You were interacting, all the performers had to listen to what the others were doing. Changing the clothes and matching the colors, for example.

LB: Yeah, it's a big thing in general on stage, in performance. In my experience, in all types of dance, you have to listen to the movement, how someone is feeling, how someone's moving. How people respond affects everything in a performance or in society in general. The timing, the functionality of any situation where there's just more than yourself, when there's lots of people. Yeah, and on a primal level as well, listening can be adapted to all situations. If you're in nature, you have a very different awareness, also through smell and touch.

MZ: So, you relate listening not only with hearing, but you see it as something deeper than something that is only connected to one sense.

LB: I do, Yeah, also on a very private level. I was raised by my mother, who is blind, with no sight at all. People think she has better hearing, which is a complete myth. Hearing actually isn't any better than anybody else's. She just has to use it more as a tool to gauge situations or whatever. But there's something more. There is also smell and other senses that you don't really understand. In general, listening is just this awareness of your environment.

MZ: I guess I pretty much agree with what you say. Generally, I believe listening is something relational. So, listening happens only when people are involved, in a way. And, as I said before, I was really thinking about that when I was watching you all Liquid Loft dancers on stage. Actually, I was expecting something different, since I already saw the streaming of 'Stranger than Paradise'. And it didn't look improvised at all. And now you were basically improvising everything. I don't know if that was just the rehearsal. I believe improvisation in a group is something very interesting. It's like reacting to what other people do, right?

LB: Completely right. I mean, there's normally a structure, so that you have some kind of clear rules. Within that

structure, there's a lot of things that you're supposed to listen to or watch out for. I wouldn't say it's a problem, it's not always a problem. Problems can make things actually quite nice, otherwise, everything would be quite boring. But yeah, everyone has a different idea of perception and time. You have to think when it's right to do something. You can also get very much focused on your own thing, and then you close off to other things, you don't see, hear or notice someone wanting to communicate with you. And it's easy to say that's a bad thing, but actually, in what we do, that can often be a good thing. It creates unexpected things. Someone is ready and something should be happening now, but then someone is on a different path and you get a crash.

That's what makes something exciting, that's what challenges you as a viewer because you don't expect it.