Headphone Theatre (performances & experiences): a practitioner's manipulation of proximity, aural attention and the resulting effect of paranoia.

Finn Edward Adam Todd

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Dissertation in Theatre Studies

Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies

University of Essex

February 2019

Contents

Acknowledgments **4**

Abstract **5**

Introduction **6**

Chapter One: **18**

Proximity and the 'headphone experience'- An Exploration of *Séance.* **18**

Séance and Space *24*

Séance, Sound and Proximity to Others. *28*

Physical Proximity and the Resulting Effect of Paranoia in Séance. *32*

Conclusion *35*

Chapter Two: **37**

An Introduction into Audio Guidance, its Relationship with Paranoia and the Participant and Attention. **37**

The Missing Voice (Case Study B), the Proximity between Guide and Participant and Paranoia *43*

Fiction, Paranoia and the Guide in Proximity with the Participant *47*

Conclusion *59*

Chapter Three: **61**

Intimate Narrative: An Analysis into my Practical Research. **61**

Surprise Party *64*

Beached *66*

Aural Attention and Proximity in Beached and Surprise Party *69*

Conclusion *80*

Conclusion **82**

Bibliography **87**

Appendices **92**

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr Liam Jarvis for his support and knowledge regarding his supervision of this dissertation.

I would like to thank my partner Eleanor Kingsford for her support and willingness to drive me to completion.

Abstract

Headphone theatre is a continuously growing branch of digital theatre and one which demands new thinking to decipher the medium's potential as an artistic form. This dissertation explores the methods in which headphone theatre practitioners curate and control their work, harnessing the tools at their disposal, specifically proximity and aural attention, to create an effective immersion and subsequent narrative in their production. This study hypothesises around the role that paranoia plays within 'headphone theatre' and exploring how it operates in response to the manipulation of a participants' aural attention and proximity. I will be exploring and providing analysis of my own practical work; investigating a variety of case studies and conducting interviews with professionals such as Practitioners and Sound Designers to help inform the discussion.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters with each exploring a participant's tool and its relationship with the effect of paranoia. Each chapter engages with key theorists such as Lynne Kendrick, George Home-Cook and Tim Crook across a variety of related subjects such as aural attention, theatre aurality and theory behind radio drama. I discuss how the manipulation of proximity and paranoia within Darkfield's *Séance* in Chapter One, exploring how the pair operates within sound design and space to intensify and heighten drama. I explore how 'guided' works in Chapter Two are manipulated by the practitioner, exploring the variety of positions the participant is placed in within the productions, whether as a protagonist relying on instruction or as an eavesdropper observing from afar. Most importantly I analyse how paranoia has a key role in both roles. Finally, in Chapter Three, I discuss my two practical pieces *Beached* and *Surprise Party* in length and do so within the context of

how Aural Attention is implemented. This chapter is led by my research questions surrounding how practitioners can deploy tools of manipulation and why they are effective in order to contribute new critical thinking to the growing discourse surrounding headphone theatre.

Introduction

Introduction

I began the first year of my undergraduate degree of BA Drama in October 2014, and within that first month, I decided to attend an interesting piece of theatre without any knowledge of the play or the producing company, Fuel. This show was a very early version of David Rosenberg and Glen Neath's second production of their collaboration – *Fiction*[1]. I arrived at the Lakeside Theatre at the University of Essex unaware of the production I was about to witness. Upon entering the stage space, I was assigned a number, and instructed to find the corresponding number on a seat. To my side was a pair of headphones. The production began the under the pretence of a 'lecture', as the lights began to fade I felt myself being transported into this sonic reality, I did not have a chance to grasp an understanding of what I was experiencing. The deliberate distance between the seats in the auditorium was amplified by the complete darkness and isolation provided by the headphones, the narrative thrust a role upon the listener, as a main character under the guidance of, and at the hands of my 'chaperone', and as such I immediately felt that I had no control over my experience and I was engulfed by an intense feeling of uneasiness. The narrative presented by the creators of *Fiction* transported the audience between different locations, time periods and we were thrown into conversations with a variety of characters. The performance was untethered from a conventional structure and it was the combination of a wariness of the unknown and the innovative use of sound design that propelled the experience forward. I will expand

[1] "FICTION." Lakeside Theatre. <https://lakesidetheatre.org.uk/events/fiction/>. (Accessed October 29, 2018.)

further on *Fiction* in Chapter Two – *An Introduction to Audio Guidance, its Relationship with Paranoia and the Participant and Attention,* as I explore the production as a primary case study. As I travelled up the stairs, away from the stage, I was silent. I had stumbled across an exciting form of digital theatre and all my questions were directed towards how it all worked. One question protruded from the rest, why did I feel uneasy, out of control and shepherded into this feeling by the piece of 'headphone theatre'? I was seemingly accompanied through the hour narrative by the intense feeling of uneasiness. Fuel's original description of the show on the Lakeside Theatre's website was as follows - "It is an anxious journey through the sprawling architecture of our dreams and an exercise in empathy."[2] The etymology of "anxiety" originates from the Latin "*anxius*" meaning "uneasy, troubled in mind." This "uneasiness" was unique, I had not felt this ingrained sense of anxiety in any other 'orthodox' theatre production prior to *Fiction*. I did not know why it worked so well within a primarily and solely sonic narrative. If I was to understand what I had experienced, I had to first understand headphone theatre and its branches and the potential it held as a form of digital theatre.

I first encountered the term 'Headphone Theatre' after being directed towards a symposium at the University of Kent in June 2017 – "Headphone Theatre, Podcasts and Radio"[3]. Keynote speakers Rosemary Klich and Lynne Kendrick both used the term in the titles of their papers: *Headphone Theatre Aurality*[4] (Kendrick) and *Headphone Theatre, Haptics and Multimodal Perception* (Klich). Klich in her keynote piece

---

[2] "FICTION." Lakeside Theatre. Accessed October 29, 2018. https://lakesidetheatre.org.uk/events/fiction/.
[3] "Headphone Theatre, Radio and Podcasts." Lecture, Headphone Theatre, Radio and Podcasts., University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2017.
[4] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury , 2017.)

Amplifying Sensory Spaces: The In- and Out-Puts of Headphone Theatre[5], identifies 'headphone theatre' as a sub-genre of the "wider-sphere of immersive theatre, though connected to a history of ambulatory art practices"[6], such as 'Audio Walks' which I discuss in Chapter 3. "'Headphone theatre' is rooted within the digital performance paradigm that uses locative, wearable, audio and mobile devices to facilitate immersive and intersensorial audience experiences."[7] However, the term 'headphone theatre' is a broad one, and the productions referenced at the symposium at the University of Kent by both the academics and practitioners in attendance confirmed this. Daniel Barnard of FanSHEN[8] discussed his new pieces *Disaster Party*[9] and *Out of Sight*[10]. Both pieces contrast to one another, *Disaster Party* is a guided and more instructive experience, with each individual participant being assigned a character and a series of lines to say which are delivered via the playback of headphones. This is compared to *Out of Sight* which takes the form of a binaural headphone (surround sound) piece in the dark, exploring "what it means to care for someone and be cared for."[11] Both are very different theatrical experiences, yet they fall under the same bracket of 'headphone theatre'. For clarity, I have developed my own definitions and series of 'sub-genres' within the umbrella term of 'headphone theatre'. I would like to split headphone theatre into two definitive areas – ''headphone experience'' and ''headphone performance',' both of which operate on opposite ends of the same spectrum. I must disclaim that I

---

[5] Rosemary Klich (2017) Amplifying Sensory Spaces: The In- and Out-Puts of Headphone Theatre, Contemporary Theatre Review, 27:3, 366-378, DOI: 10.1080/10486801.2017.1343247
[6] Rosemary Klich (2017) Amplifying Sensory Spaces: The In- and Out-Puts of Headphone Theatre, Contemporary Theatre Review, 27:3, 366-378, DOI: 10.1080/10486801.2017.1343247
[7] Rosemary Klich (2017) Amplifying Sensory Spaces: The In- and Out-Puts of Headphone Theatre, Contemporary Theatre Review, 27:3, 366-378, DOI: 10.1080/10486801.2017.1343247
[8] FanSHEN. <https://www.fanshen.org.uk> (Accessed October 29, 2018.)
[9] "Disaster Party." FanSHEN. https://www.fanshen.org.uk/disaster-party. (Accessed October 29, 2018)
[10] "Out of Sight." FanSHEN. <https://www.fanshen.org.uk/Out-of-Sigh>. (Accessed October 29, 2018)
[11] "Out of Sight." FanSHEN. <https://www.fanshen.org.uk/Out-of-Sight>. (Accessed October 29, 2018)

am not declaring that productions are bound to either end of this spectrum and that I recognise that there is a definite bleed of qualities between my chosen sub-genres. It would be naïve to suggest that performances are bound to qualities that determine their description. However, for the purpose of clarity in understanding, I am exploring the use of these characterisations as they help emphasise key creative aspects and qualities of productions thus enabling clear and interesting analysis.

A ‘‘headphone performance’’ leans heavily towards an emphasis on a sonic narrative driven production in which there is a story for the audience member or participant to follow and/or be a part of. From my experience ‘‘headphone performances’’ are usually longer in length and clear parallels can be drawn with radio drama which I discuss in Chapter 4. A ‘‘headphone performance’’ often uses special effects or adept sound design, however the immersion is centred primarily around the ‘sonic diegesis’[12] (sonically delivered narrative.

A ‘‘headphone experience’’ is an example of when the participant’s sensory immersion can become a priority over a narrative or story, in which the sound design and aesthetic contributes more so to an experience that the participant can feel/undergo. These experiences are normally shorter than ‘‘headphone performances’’, emphasising intensity rather than narrative. Many different productions fall under these sub-genres and the productions I cite within this dissertation will be placed under a sub-genre for clarity within the discussion.

The key quality of a piece of “headphone theatre” is the inclusion of headphones which Klich writes “both isolate and connect.”[13] *Isolating* a participant from their existing reality and *connecting* them with a curated sonic reality is a trait which is

---

[12] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017). Pg 114

[13] Rosemary Klich (2017) Amplifying Sensory Spaces: The In- and Out-Puts of Headphone Theatre, Contemporary Theatre Review, 27:3, 366-378, DOI: 10.1080/10486801.2017.1343247

common throughout every headphone piece investigated in this dissertation. Putting on a pair of headphones initiates the immersion, it is the moment in which the boundaries of existing reality and one that has been sonically generated are crossed.

Theatre Sound academic George Home-Cook states that "we are in sound… sound is indeed inescapable"[14]. This inescapabilty of sound supports the notion that headphone theatre is 'immersive', wherein the headphones are used as tools to "submerge" the individual "in sound." However, if we are to apply Home-Cooks statement that sound is inescapable, the act of putting headphones on initiates transitionary moment of one world of sound to another, or the moment in which the practitioner has gained control over the participant's immersion and the world of sound, which I will refer to as the 'sonic world'. 'Immersion' is a key term within this dissertation and one that has been used by academics in different ways depending on the context of their work. Referring to the word's etymological roots "immersion" means to "plunge in" or *"be* in"[15]. Within the context of this dissertation, I will be using immersion to describe a deep submerging within the overall experience of the piece of headphone theatre. When referred to 'immersion' in the context of a practitioner's artistic intentions or 'desired immersion', I am indicating that the participant has been successfully placed *in* the experience on multiple fronts accredited to the practitioner's tools in curating their experience such as the sound design, writing, set and (when applicable) visuals.

Home-Cook draws attention to difference of "*being*-in and the *attending*-to"[16] this world of sound or headphone reality. Aural attention is another key term within this

---

[14] James Frieze. *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance.* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.) Page 130.
[15] James Frieze. *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance.* London: (Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.) Page 130.
[16] James Frieze. *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance.* London: (Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.) Page 130.

study, and I will be referring to it throughout this dissertation. Aural attention is to attend the sonic world through the "act of *listening*[17]", to be present within the event of sound. The importance of aural attention within ''headphone performance'' is a subject that is explored in depth throughout this dissertation, for its importance to a practitioner/ sound designer is that of the highest importance when curating the act of immersion. If a practitioner has control over a participant's attention, the correlating power of the participant's immersion will be heightened. I will further expand on the importance of attention when I underline my hypothesis regarding attention manipulation and the tools with which a practitioner achieves this in 'headphone theatre" later in this chapter. Home-Cook writes "being ephemeral and thus more prone to perceptual ambiguity, radio drama must work hard to capture, direct and maintain the listener's attention."[18] In my desire to understand 'headphone theatre' as an immersive form of sound orientated theatre, one must refer to the sub-genre's origins in radio drama. This approach to radio drama can also work within the context of 'headphone theatre' which I will expand on within this dissertation. With 'headphone theatre' constantly evolving through its variety of sub-genres, in what ways does a practitioner manipulate the immersive experience and performance for the participant?

Another key term within this dissertation is 'paranoia' a term became increasingly important to my study as it progressed. My understanding of the word shifted as my idea of its placement within headphone theatre evolved. Paranoia is "an unjustified suspicion and mistrust of other people"[19], and I have observed that it has

---

[17] Home-Cook, George. *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves*. Houndmills, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan,) 2015.
[18] Home-Cook, George. *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves*. Houndmills, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan,) 2015.
[19] Paranoia | Definition of Paranoia in English by Oxford Dictionaries." Oxford Dictionaries | English. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/paranoia. (accessed January 7, 2019)

become a common trope within theatre in the dark especially as darkness can act as a catalyst for enhancing paranoia. Within this dissertation, paranoia is not only a mistrust or suspicion of other people but a participant's anxiety of the situation they find themselves and the mistrust of the practitioner themselves. Within Chapter two, I expand on this view of paranoia especially when discussing the role of the paranoid participant and guide and how this enhances the drama and tension of a production. However, within this dissertation, I discuss another angle in which the effect paranoia can be felt within the subject of aural attention manipulation. The word paranoia's etymological origins come from two words *para* [irregular] and *noos* [mind], resulting in *paranoos* [distracted][20]. Therefore, the feeling of paranoia can be injected into a production by a practitioner in order to cause a distraction which can disrupt the flow of a piece of headphone theatre, leading to questions about whether aural attention is maintained or disrupted by the practitioner. These questions are explored further in Chapter Three. The definition of paranoia is at its core, the Oxford definition within this dissertation. However, I believe if spoken about within the right circumstances (such as aural attention manipulation), I argue that it transcends the role of a 'feeling' and takes on a different role as a desired effect of a tool of manipulation.

My discussion explores the many ways in which a practitioner within the field of 'headphone theatre' aims to curate the desired immersion to fit their artistic vision. I will attempt to engage with a variety of case studies that exemplify methodology in which a practitioner manipulates an audience member's experience and immersion. I will apply the theories of academics who are directly engaged in new thinking surrounding 'headphone theatre' such as Lynne Kendrick's *Theatre Aurality* and

[20] Paranoia | Definition of Paranoia in English by Oxford Dictionaries." Oxford Dictionaries | English. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/paranoia. (accessed January 7, 2019)

George Home-Cook's theories of *Aural Attention* as well as those of surrounding fields such as Tim Crook's work on 'radio drama' and Michel Chion's sound theories. This dissertation predominantly calls upon these theories to support and examine the case studies under investigation to extract the methods and tools that practitioners deploy. The extant scholarly work is also applied to the original practical pieces I have produced, in a reflection of the hypothesis surrounding aural attention and the following 'tools': proximity, aural guidance and paranoia; all of which I will define within the chapters. I will provide a detailed exploration of my own practical work and the process alongside it to develop an overlap between the discussions of my case studies and theorists with my own creative practice. I will offer any further definitions that I have not covered in this introduction as I progress through the dissertation.

I will now lay out my methodology for the development of this dissertation and will develop the finer points of discussion as I progress through the chapters and bring in the relevant steps, I had taken to develop said chapter. I began this process by developing a literature review, building a catalogue of relevant academic literature to help enhance my own knowledge of my subject area. Through further discussion with my supervisor, I concluded that the academic writing available that was specific to headphone theatre was in the minority. This was an important turning point for me as I acknowledged that I would have to draw greater importance to my own findings within case studies and my own practical output. I would have to draw academic theory and comment from critical writing that surrounded the area of headphone theatre and that headphone theatre itself draws from such as critical thinking on radio drama, a broader scope on immersive theatre and theories on attention.

Chapter One - *Proximity – And Exploration of Séance*, engages with my experience of Darkfield's *Séance* and I use this chapter to contextualise the difference between a ''headphone performance'' and a ''headphone experience'', discussing the methods in which Darkfield began to "brutalise" their sound design to enhance the intensity and "fairground" like experience of *Séance*. This chapter introduces ways in which Darkfield manipulate proximity both in a physical sense and within an aurally generated reality, firstly discussing the importance of the physically imposing shipping container and the significance of establishing a relationship in regard to the proximity of the participant and the space around them to help shape their experience, and in the case of *Séance*, their paranoia. This chapter discusses the relationship of proximity and paranoia, which is further enhanced by analysis of my praxis which draws on knowledge I have gained from my experience of *Séance.* The chapter discusses the proximity of sound and how sound operated within the space of *Séance.* The importance of this chapter is establishing an understanding of the complexities of proximity as a tool of manipulation.

Chapter Two – *An Introduction to Audio Guidance and Aural Attention Manipulation*, introduces 'audio guidance' as a method that the practitioner uses to establishes control over the progression of the 'sonic diegesis' or narrative, which is further discussed in Chapter One. I begin by discussing the 'headphone theatre' sub-genre of audio walks, analysing the importance of the 'guide' and their relationship with the participant' as a method of feeding the participant information and maintaining attention. I engage with three important case studies, Janet Cardiff's *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*, Fuel's *Fiction* and Cardiff's *Cabin Fever.* I discuss the role of a guide who possesses the knowledge to navigate the participant around the aurally generated world, taking on the position of the practitioner, and a spectator within this aural reality.

On the other hand, I explore the effects of the removal of the guide and the implications, introducing theories on eavesdropping and the effectiveness of paranoia.

In Chapter Three - *Intimate Narrative: An Analysis into my Practical Research.* I engage directly with my own practical work and the methods I, as a practitioner, engage with to curate my participants' immersion. I discuss the process of my two pieces *Surprise Party* and *Beached* and how the former helped inform the latter. I then explore the role of aural attention, proximity and paranoia in both of my productions. I will expand on my hypothesis that for headphone theatre to maintain aural attention, it must inject a distraction that partially redirects a participant's attention and then simultaneously maintains it, continuing a pattern of engagement within the piece of 'headphone theatre'. Furthermore, I explore Complicite's *The Encounter,* discussing relevant information which has helped inform my practical work such as my observations on how 'distractions' are deployed to enhance aural manipulation. Finally, I discuss the dramaturgical decisions themselves, drawing on Tim Crook's *Theories of Radio Drama*[21] within the context of 'headphone theatre', exploring which dramaturgical techniques within my practice serve to enhance my immersion.

The conclusion extracts the key points from this dissertation and uses them to attempt to address my research question, simultaneously drawing on the key theories, and my analysis of vital case studies that I have engaged with to help inform my discussion. I will aim to validate my hypotheses, expanding on my idea that in order for a practitioner to maintain, and work hard to maintain a participant's aural attention as to shape their immersion, they must introduce ways to disrupt a consistent focus and simultaneously regain a participant's focus. What are the benefits in doing so and what are the tools that the practitioner has at their disposal in order to achieve this? What are

[21] Crook, Tim. *Radio Drama Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2005.)

the distinctive methods a practitioner use to maintain a manipulation and curate their participant’s immersion?

Chapter One:

Proximity and the 'headphone experience'- An Exploration of *Séance.*

Immediacy Proximity and the 'headphone experience'- An Exploration of *Séance.*

In Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1936)*[22], the philosopher comments on "the desire of contemporary masses to bring things "closer" spatially and humanly."[23] I have introduced this chapter with this quote because it encompasses the inherent benefits of proximity, it is through immersive and digital technologies that headphone theatre has emerged and with that a new discourse surrounding proximity. To firstly clarify my definition of 'immersive' within this chapter, etymologically, 'immersion' means to "plunge in" or *"be* in" and in the context of headphone theatre, 'immersion' means to "*be* in" an aurally generated projection of reality delivered through headphones; contrasting to the real world beyond headphones. I will be focusing on proximity and how it operates through the exploration of Darkfield's (Glen Neath, David Rosenberg) first instalment of their trio of performances in a shipping container - *Séance (2017).* I will be referencing my experience of the short ''headphone experience'' throughout the chapter, which I was a participant of in October 2017 in Brighton.

It was important early on when approaching this dissertation, that I wanted to build a catalogue of possible shows to have as case studies. *Séance* was the first show I attended, and I identified it as an opportunity to allowed close critical analysis and to help gauge my understanding of the limits of my knowledge early in the process. The immediate effects of proximity quickly became apparent to me and I saw this chapter as an opportunity to explore a critique of proximity within Séance. It must be said that

---

[22] Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* [1936], trans. J.A Underwood. (London: Penguin)
[23] Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. (London: Routledge) 2008. Pg 35.

when I revisited this chapter later in the process, I was able to use what I had gained from this exploration of Séance and discuss my own practical output which is discussed in the last section of this chapter.

I will be using my experience of the production to provide first hand analysis and observations of how proximity is harnessed by David Rosenberg and Glen Neath as I progress through the chapter. Within this chapter I will be investigating how proximity can be harnessed and thereby manipulated by practitioners to allow their work to pursue to their own artistic intentions. I will be discussing the role of paranoia[24] within *Séance* and how it is implemented through physical/spatial proximity and expand on this through an analysis of my own short 'headphone experience' – *Surprise Party*. I will be exploring the proximity between the participants and the space, the proximity between the audio and participants and the proximity between the audio and the space. This chapter will help inform the reader as to how proximity is, at its core, a tool which can alter the direction of a headphone theatre piece towards their intended direction.

Glen Neath and David Rosenberg's previous and first outings as a creative partnership, *Ring (2013)*[25] and *Fiction (2015)*[26] differ greatly from *Séance* but share similarities, the main correlation being the creative duo's intention to immerse the participant in an aurally created experience using headphones whilst being performed in the dark. *Ring* and *Fiction* are both full-length, 'headphone performances' using binaural sound which is designed to relocate the listener's mind and simultaneously their body as darkness allows for the participants to have a physical disconnect from themselves, which is then relocated as to explore an aurally generated world and a

[24] A definition of 'Paranoia' can be found in the introduction on page 11.
[25] Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Ring,* prod Fuel Theatre, London and UK Tour. 2012.
[26] Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Fiction,* prod. Fuel Theatre, London and UK Tour. 2015.

partnering 'sonic diegesis'[27] a term employed in *Theatre Aurality* (2017) and by headphone theatre academic Lynne Kendrick's to describe a sound led narrative. In an interview in 2013, Rosenberg talked about how *Ring* was a "very solitary experience, yet you are in a room with loads of other people."[28] This is a common component within both *Fiction* and *Ring;* the idea that a participant enters the space with other people, does not physically leave the space but is transported beyond the space alone to explore another "dreamlike"[29] world, abandoning the space with the people they entered it with. Lynne Kendrick writes how "without visual reference, sound can take us where it bloody well likes" [30]. I agree with this statement as sound can cross distances and transport listeners to and from different locations without the need for visuals. This is harnessed by Neath and Rosenberg in *Fiction* in particular. The performance explores a fictional, dreamlike tale with the listener/participant becoming the protagonist who is guided through multiple locations such as a hotel or journeying in a car. Kendrick comments on how Neath and Rosenberg use the various sounds within the play. "In *Fiction*, sound propels us between locations and drops us into situations by sounds both familiar and unknown."[31] Therefore the subject of *Fiction* becomes the relationship between what is outside the space that the participants are sitting in and the completely different space and story that they are transported into via sound and darkness. *Ring* follows this same pattern, harnessing both darkness and sound to transport the

---

[27] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017). Pg 114
[28] Baclondon. "Shunt's David Rosenberg and writer Glen Neath on 'Ring' at Battersea Arts Centre." YouTube. March 06, 2013. Accessed January 04, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZc2bF50QJg.
[29] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017). Pg 115
[30] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), Pg 114
[31] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), Pg 116

participants/listeners on an "emotional journey that [they], as an audience member, are taken on.[32]" *Ring* is set up as a "conference or meeting"[33] with chairs facing one another but quickly evolves into a performance that gives the participants room to journey within themselves, tapping into fears, emotions and personal questions. Like *Fiction, Ring* disconnects the audience from the space they are in and transports them elsewhere. *Ring* is a journey away from the situational setting and into the listener/participant's own mind, whereas *Fiction* requires the listener/participant to journey through a dreamlike work in a fictionalised story. Sound allows for the spatial proximity between the listeners and the story to be blurred through *Fiction's* constant changing of locations such as moments in which we are in the hotel room and we are suddenly transported to the outside space of a forest. This blurring reinforces the idea that the participants are distant and yet close regarding their spatial proximity. This blurring exists due to the practitioners favouring a narrative and 'scenes' within differing locations.

Séance breaks away from the type intentional blurring of this proximity as referenced above, favouring a different approach in recycling the proximity in our immediate environment and using it within the experience itself. The short form of ''headphone experience'' sacrifices plot and story for intensity and the focus shifts from an imagined venture outside of the room the participants are situated in, to an examination of what can happen within the space they are shut inside. *Séance* delivers an experience which can be likened to that of a fairground or thrill-seeking experience due to its length and location. In his own words in the article *Forget immersive theatre, this play takes place in total darkness*, on Wired.co.uk, creator David Rosenberg says. "It's a bit like a sideshow fairground ride, bypassers get in a queue, there's a low-ticket

[32] Cole, Emma. Ring Reviews. March 14, 2014. Accessed January 04, 2018. http://www.glenneath.co.uk/home/Ring_Reviews.html.
[33] Cole, Emma. Ring Reviews. March 14, 2014. Accessed January 04, 2018. http://www.glenneath.co.uk/home/Ring_Reviews.html.

price and it's a short and intense experience." [34]. This commercial desire to be thrilled has seen immersive theatre popularity rise through production companies such as Punch Drunk delivering on consumer demands. The practitioners have cleverly written a piece of headphone theatre that can adhere to the same demands in *Séance.* I have contextualised *Séance* within Rosenberg and Neath's catalogue of previous productions to understand how *Séance* differs from their previous workings. I will now expand on *Séance* and elaborate on my own experience of the production.

Séance is a twenty-minute-long performance in which several participants are shepherded into a container and are asked to sit down either side of a table. They are then told to place headphones that are situated behind them on their heads and to hide/turn off any devices that give out light. Once the participants are all settled the container doors are shut and the participants are plunged into darkness and the experience begins. Through a binaural recording, the voice of the 'Medium' enters the container and the carefully constructed world of the séance starts to take shape. The Medium first asks the participants to place their hands flat on the table and then proceeds to wander up and down the vibrating table asking recorded participants if they believe in spirits. Once that has taken place, the séance begins and various 'spirits' enter the space. The participants then undergo an intense, almost brutalised aural experience that, coupled with an increase in volume, harnesses traditional horror techniques such as jump scares and atmosphere to create a complete horror experience. As soon as the performance is over, the container doors are opened, and the participants exit the container in a collective feeling of dismay at the experience they had just undergone. This research is an in-depth consideration into the different ways in which proxemics

[34] Roland Manthorpe, "Forget Immersive Theatre, This Play Takes Place in Total Darkness" Wired < https://www.wired.co.uk/article/glen-neath-david-rosenberg-darkfield-seance-edinburgh-festival> (accessed December 2018).

are explored within *Séance.* An analysis into this production is particularly productive in relation to my wider research angle of the tools practitioners use to manipulate the direction of their work and how these tools such as proximity reveal how paranoia is a key factor in achieving this manipulation. I will further expand on how proximity can operate and the benefits to the immersion that they provide. Paranoia also impacts a participant's attention, however within this chapter, I will be analysing proximity solely as I elaborate on this effect in further detail in Chapters Two and Three.

Within this chapter, I will approach *Séance* through my own experience of the show in October 2017, drawing on my own observations and those of who experienced the show with me. I will explore *Séance's* use of proximity between the participants and the space they are contained within and is around them, placing the analysis within a wider context though observing the use of space within other 'headphone performances' such as Lundahl and Seitl's *Symphony of a Missing Room* and my own practical projects. I will explore sound within *Séance*, analysing the sound design and its effectiveness within the proximity of the participants and the narrative. I will engage with experimental composer Michael Chion's *Modes of Listening*, when discussing the act of listening and the process of hearing within *Séance*. I will be using this theory to observe the participant's fluctuation of listening when using modes within *Séance* to enhance my analysis of the relationship between the sound design and the participant. I will explore how Darkfield uses participant interaction to create space for the sound design to close the proximity between art and participant.

Séance and Space

Séance opens with the medium asking the participants to place their hands on the table in front of them, this instruction anchors them in the space. In an interview with theatre academic Josephine Machon, Christer Lundahl of Lundahl and Seitl responded to a

question about the importance of the participant being incredibly aware and present in the work of the duo - *Symphony of a Missing Room*. Lundahl says 'The voice says, "I'm standing behind you, with my hand on your back", and then you feel that hand barely there, you're feeling the head or energy of the hand; because of the instruction to put your attention there you *really feel* the hand there. That gives a sense that the voice is connecting to the action in real time.'[35] I have opened this discussion with this segment as it highlights a shared aim of both Lundahl and Seitl and Darkfield, that there is an intention to establish a connection between the environment and the participant that transcends the 'headphone performance'. Returning to *Séance,* the one action of the participants placing their hands on the table, connects the participants with the container, simultaneously connecting them with the "action in real time."[36] Before the experience has even begun, the audience are aware that the focus of the experience will exist within the walls of the container itself. This is an attempt by the practitioner to manipulate the direction of *Séance,* steering it towards a complete immersion that requires the entire space and environment to work. Although the container is a venue of practicality due to its portability, it holds colder, darker connotations such as its connection with the refugee crisis and globalisation, and the simulacra that followed. Within Michael Shane Boyle's scholarly article *Container Aesthetics: The Infrastructural Politics of Shunt*, Boyle writes "Containers invite easy visual consumption, thus tempting viewers to believe that what they see is what they get—although, of course, everyone knows that there is more to a container than meets the eye."[37] This outlook can be applied to *Séance,* as the uncertainty surrounding the

---

[35] Machon, Josephine. *Immersive theatres: intimacy and immediacy in contemporary performance*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.) Pg 173.
[36] Machon, Josephine. *Immersive theatres: intimacy and immediacy in contemporary performance*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.) Pg 173.
[37] Michael, Shane Boyle, "Container Aesthetics: The Infrastructural Politics of Shunt's *The Boy Who Climbed Out of His Face", Theatre Journal* v. 68, no. 5 (March 2016)

contents of the space before the production begins is able to support the idea that *Séance* is designed to 'thrill'. As well as this, audiences are aware that it will be a cramped environment and this in turn unsettles the participants. Although the container is not at the centre of the aural drama, its importance as a key aspect of the experience cannot be understated. The container shells the 'sonic diegesis' of the audio within a defined, enclosed or fixed set of spatial parameters. *Fiction* and *Ring* are productions designed to take, or rather transport, the audience outside of the room they are physically sitting in – a theatre or performance space - to new locations of the narrative – a hotel, forest, a car – the 'sonic diegesis' can move the audience from one location to another. *Séance,* however, does not attempt to remove the participants from the space of the shipping container, but to bring the action into the location itself. This diversion from Glen Neath and David Rosenberg's earlier productions may be in part due to the short 'headphone experience' chosen for this performance. 'Headphone experiences' tend to sacrifice plot and narrative for affect[38]. *Séance* is a brief experience, that maximises the intensity of the narrative that plays upon widely accepted horror techniques. Darkfield brings each participant into close physical proximity, with one another, often sitting shoulder to shoulder with strangers. The journey of the participant is of a collective rather than an individual, a collective of hands on the table, a collective of participants around the table and yet headphone theatre is a very solitary art form; headphones are designed to fit around one head and bring sound to an individual's ears. Darkfield use our other senses such as touch and sight before the darkness and sequentially, the 'Medium' enters the container to begin the immersion. These senses work alongside hearing

---

< https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/18348/Boyle%20Container%20Aesthetics%3A%20The%20Infrastructural%20Politics%20of%20Shunt's%20The%20Boy%20Who%20Climbed%20Out%20of%20His%20Face%202016%20Published.pdf?sequence=1>

[38] A definition and distinction between the two terms 'headphone experience' and 'headphone performance' can be found on page 10 in the introduction.

before the aural experience begins, our sight situates us, preparing us with an image of the location we are sat in and touch (the table or the shoulders of the participants next to us) roots us in the setting. Kendrick writes "we can close our eyes but we cannot close our ears and therefore what we see is always apart from us, whereas hearing is constant – a part of us."[39] The immersion begins when what is visual, what is "apart from us", is taken away from the participants, they are then relying on their hearing and Darkfield harnesses this in their staging of sound[40]. The space at the beginning of the experience feels cramped and the other participants are in touching distance of one another. Simulated within the audio, the medium is intentionally connecting with each participant, repeatedly asking the same questions about whether they believe in spirits but by the end of the drama, the participants feel increasingly alone, albeit in a cold, dark and contained space. The sound of the local environment is replaced with artificially constructed soundscape which mirrors the same environment. As the 'sonic diegesis' increases in intensity and reaches its peak, the participant is singled out by the medium, saying "You took your hand off the table." This formula mirrors horrors within popular culture such as the films *Unfriended (2014)* or the *Saw* franchise (2004-17). A collective begins the story and only the individual remains by the end of the narrative. The physical space in proximity with the participants is manipulated by the sound design but remains as a blueprint for the sound to be overlaid in darkness, as to intensify and enhance the horror-like experience. Practitioners use space within *Séance* as a foundation for the immersion and sound design itself, Darkfield project their sonic recreation of the space over the top of the participant's existing reality. The effect being

[39] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury , 2017.) Pg 119
[40] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury , 2017.) Pg 121

that the line between what is perceived as real, and what *is* real is increasingly blurred thus intensifying the participant's experience.

I have explored Darkfield's use of proximity between the participants and the space they are contained within and the devices Neath and Rosenberg used to anchor the participants within the local environment and the sonically generated one. I will now progress to examine the artistic duo's use of sound and the proximity, and then move onto how the sound design works alongside the relationship between the participants.

Séance, Sound and Proximity to Others.

Séance's use of sound is the product of experimentation, comparing *Séance* to both *Fiction* and *Ring*, Neath and Rosenberg's use of sound has progressed with their increasing knowledge of the medium and how it works within a theatrical sense. This is evident in how the duo challenges the proxemics between the participants of their work and sound itself. Lynne Kendrick notes how "*Fiction* is a robust, sometimes brutal event in its handling of sound in darkness"[41], comparing it to *Ring* "which was written in a way that the audience became acclimatized to the function of sound in creating the production around them." Darkfield's use of sound within *Séance* can be described as an aural bombardment, any acclimatization or caution about the power of the 'Medium' is waved away and is replaced by a sudden plunge into darkness coupled with the character of the 'Medium' pacing up and down the table. The effectiveness of binaural sound is instant alongside the vibrating table that all the participants have been asked to place our hands on, a sense of space is automatically established within the darkness.

[41] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017.) Pg 116

Jennifer M. Barker writes, "Binaural sound is considerably powerful, as it tends to actualize a continuum, an overlap, a blurring, and sometimes an amalgamation (but not a complete fusion) between the inside and outside as well as between the fictional and the real."[42] A binaural recording is deliberately designed to blur the line between the sonic reality and the existing one. When the participant is plunged into darkness alongside the beginning of a binaural recording, this line becomes even more indistinguishable. Neath and Rosenberg understand the effectiveness of suddenly immersing the participants, it does not allow time for them to process the plunge into both alternate reality and into darkness and in doing so they are consequently involved in a séance rather than feeling outside the experience. Neath and Rosenberg do not need the participants to understand what they are listening to; the experience works due to the high intensity that 'headphone experience' form provides. The ethics surrounding this "brutalised" form does not go beyond what consumers expect from horror rides at theme parks and adheres to the practitioner's intentions of creating an experience that is comparable to the fairground experience. To return once more to this notion, specific emphasis can be drawn on the idea of the "bypasser"[43]. The experience does not only cater to theatregoers, it is a high intensity experience that can be appreciated and enjoyed by those who are not theatre fans. It has a cross genre aesthetic and the appeal is inherently tied to the core artistic elements of the production, those of which I have underlined above.

Composer Michel Chion's *Modes of Listening* proposes three modes that can be applied to how we listen, these modes can change and fluctuate, replacing one another.

---

[42] Jennifer M. Barker. "Movement That Matters Historically: Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's 2012 Alter Bahnhof Video Walk." *Discourse* 35, no. 2 (2013): 212-27. doi:10.13110/discourse.35.2.0212.

[43] Roland Manthorpe, "Forget Immersive Theatre, This Play Takes Place in Total Darkness" Wired < https://www.wired.co.uk/article/glen-neath-david-rosenberg-darkfield-seance-edinburgh-festival> (accessed December 2018).

It can be noted how at the beginning of *Séance* when the medium has entered the container and is asking the participants what they believe in, the participants are in the mode of *Casual* listening, "seeking to link the sound heard to its casual source"[44] as the 'Medium' walks up and down the table, we follow the sound of his voice. This serves to help preserve the walls of the container and contain the aural action, however as soon as the spirits enter the space, the participant's mode of listening fluctuates between all three modes *Casual*, *Sematic* - listening finds meaning in a particular sound on the basis of its position within a system of sounds, and *Reduced* - focuses on the sound itself rather than its source or presumed meaning, listening. The participant moves through these three modes attempting to regain attention and an anchor of focus in order to understand the situation they find themselves in. This intensity in the sound design increases the tension through a sonic bombardment which is created to leave an almost suffocated feeling. As the experience reached its climax, the previously immediate real world that existed before the participants were plunged into darkness is replaced by an aural reality. This shift is a sudden change in tone and one that was aided by the vibrations of the table and the darkness itself. Sound coupled with darkness manipulated my interpretation of the special dimensions of the space and it felt like the metal walls of the shipping container were closing in on me. Building towards this climax, Darkfield's *Séance* began as an experience as soon as the participants enter the container, placing the participants in an awkward position before the piece even began meant that we were already feeling a type of tension. We looked to each other awkwardly as we were told to put our headphones on, being pushed against other participants who you had not met before, but simultaneously you are also looking to be

[44] Kirk, Peader, Teoma J. Naccarato, and John Maccallum. "Intimate Listening." *Performance Research* 22, no. 3 (2017): 57-60.

comforted by these same people. As a result, the 'sonic diegesis' only seems to build on this tension to take the participant to a place of fear within the immersion.

Lynne Kendrick has commented on how the sound design works within another of Glen Neath and David Rosenberg's works *Fiction*. *Fiction*, unlike *Séance*, is intentionally designed to feel like the participant is being transported through a dream, a dream with constantly shifting locations and contents. Kendrick writes "Once the sound of the engine ceases, the car is no longer present and as the characters stop speaking they disappear too. In this way sound forms the scene, the scenario, the dialogue and the interstices of these."[45] In reflection of this statement, and in reference to Neath and Rosenberg's recent piece, the dialogue before the 'séance' itself takes place between the participants and the 'Medium' has been pre-recorded. However, we have seen that there are other participants sitting next to us and in front of us. We know they exist because we have interacted with them prior to the piece beginning and this plunges us into an immersion of the experience of *Séance e*arly on. Unlike *Fiction*, as soon as the participants stop "talking" they don't cease to exist, but instead we are constantly reminded of their existence throughout the séance itself, that is until just before the doors are reopened. As said previously, the participants enter the 'séance' as a collective and leave as an individual. It is a creative choice, as soon as the room is filled with spirits and the sound intensifies, we are still aware that the other participants exist but instead we are forced to prioritise what we are hearing and therefore focus on ourselves within the experience. This allows the immersion to become more effective as the participants are forced to put emphasis on their own state of mind and emotions and become more attentive to how they are reacting both physically and emotionally to

[45] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017.) Pg 117

the situation around them. Together with the multimodal interaction between the self and the art, Darkfield harnessed short term memories of interacting with other participants and knowing they exist to enhance our co- immersion *with* others, the relationship between the self and the other individuals becomes just as valuable as sound and space. I analysed *Séance* in this chapter as I wanted to apply close analysis to a professional production so I could implement the same angle of critical thinking towards my own practical productions. My analysis of *Séance* was at the beginning of my project and I wanted to explore my own critical analysis so I could begin to develop possible angles of research within my own practical output. The next section is evidence to how I have made connections between my thoughts on proximity and how I expanded on them within my first developed headphone piece *Surprise Party.*

Physical Proximity and the Resulting Effect of Paranoia in *Séance.*

I would refer the reader to Appendix A and C before continuing reading this sub-chapter.

Séance displays the variants of proximity, and I have discussed how they operate within the production. I will now explore proximity and paranoia[46] within *Séance,* illuminated by my understanding of my practical output. *Séance* is seen by both critics and the practitioners as a production which is designed to 'thrill' the participants[47]. A powerful element of ensuring this aim, is the emotive state that the

[46] A definition of 'Paranoia' can be found in the introduction on page 11.
[47] Roland Manthorpe, "Forget Immersive Theatre, This Play Takes Place in Total Darkness" Wired < https://www.wired.co.uk/article/glen-neath-david-rosenberg-darkfield-seance-edinburgh-festival> (accessed December 2018).

participant finds themselves in throughout the production and how this is managed by the practitioners. I entered the shipping container, alongside other participants who were strangers to me. In doing so, we were herded into our seats, sitting shoulder to shoulder with the one another. I am now physically in close proximity to participants that I had met for the first time inside the shipping container. My personal space is intentionally invaded, and nerves begin to settle amongst everyone within the space. Darkfield deploy paranoia at the very beginning of the 'headphone experience', through managing each participant's uncertainty about the experience we are about to undertake as we are shepherded into a dark space with the only instruction being "Put your headphones on.". This is ultimately heightened by the lack of space to within the environment and the manipulation of our spatial proximity. As I entered the shipping container I became aware of the many faces that were around me but as soon as the mental doors were slammed shut and we were plunged into darkness, this awareness was intensified through feelings of paranoia. This feeling of paranoia was drawn from the fact that what I thought I understood about my surroundings came into question as my vision become impaired. My idea of my spatial proximity to my environment was formed in my mind before the removal of my eyesight, but as soon as it became dark, paranoia had begun to take control on my ability to think rationally which enabled the 'headphone experience' to begin to scare me. My fear was triggered using close physical proximity to help build uncertainty and paranoia. I wanted to explore this within my practical piece *Surprise Party* and was something that *Séance* demonstrated to great effect.

In order to explore how the use of physical interaction and proximity between the participant and the environment outside that of the soundscape, my praxis built upon my experience of *Séance. Surprise Party,* like *Séance* was written as a 'headphone

experience', and the production required physical interaction between the participant and the performer (in this case it was me). *Séance* harnessed physical contact, not between the performer and the participant but between the participant and the space. In instances such as asking the participants to place their hands on the table in front of them to anchor them within the immersion, something I wanted to explore within *Surprise Party*. I began using light play with torches and physical interaction with objects such as presenting the participant with a lightbulb and pulling it out of their hand which was timed with the smashing of the light bulb within the audio. My overarching objective was to create a multimodal (multi-sense led) immersion for the participant, harnessing the use of other senses to help build the aurally generated world of the drama. However, this use of physical interaction and proximity allowed paranoia to become an influence on the drama itself. An example that I can draw on is the use of light play to emulate the action of a car arriving into the soundscape. I ran a torch over the participant's blindfold, therefore allowing the participant to realise that the immersion extends beyond that of the headphones they are wearing, a realisation that could possibly be considered unnerving. I performed this show several times to different participants and after each show I had a ten-minute post-show discussion about their experience of the production. Within the feedback I received from the participants, multiple mentioned that at the point of physical interaction, the immersion transcended initial scepticism and instead required and demanded an attempt to understand what is occurring around them. Therefore, from my observations, it could be argued that this paranoid reaction of the participant was a result of experiencing the blurring between the physical world outside the participant's headphones and the aurally generated world inside them, heightened the tension within the drama. I then revisited my own observations of *Séance* and noticed some comparisons within the two

pieces. Within *Séance* I had a similar reaction, the moment in which I placed my hands on the table was the moment that unnerved me the most due to this becoming the moment that confirmed my involvement in what was about to occur. This moment unsettled me up to the climactic and brutal crescendo of *Séance* when the spirits entered the shipping container and my paranoia had become fear. *Séance* highlighted to me the involvement that paranoia can play through a practitioner's use of physical and spatial proximity and I began expanding on my initial observations of *Séance* before beginning my praxis (theory imbricated within practice)[48] as I developed *Surprise Party* later in my project after I had the technology available to me. When I later revisited my findings within this chapter within insight I had gathered through my practical findings, I explored how physical proximity can be deployed by a practitioner to manipulate the intensity of the 'headphone experience' and generate paranoia. The next instalment of my practical output *Beached* (which I will expand on later in the dissertation), explores this further, however this exploration never reached its full potential and would be something I would expand on if I had more time to develop this project.

Conclusion

To conclude, *Séance* harnesses the short 'headphone experience' to close the proximity between the sonic diegesis and the participants, in the sense we feel we are in the circumstance while knowing it to only be 'dramatic'. Darkfield recognise that sound is a powerful tool in creating an intense and short immersive experience without the need for an in-depth narrative. Darkfield use a sonic recreation of the space that the participants are sitting, to not only anchor the participants within the space but to further

[48] Klich, Rosemary. (2017) 'Intro to PaR' [Powerpoint Presentation].

enhance the immersion as an experience. The action enters the fixed space as soon as the experience begins and fills the fixed space of the shipping container, this eventually becomes suffocating and even claustrophobic for the participants. The forced collective adds fuel to the tension that Darkfield need to build the horror-like immersion and the introduction of immersive techniques such as touch and sound brings the participants closer to the action physically and emotionally. I have explored the use of physical proximity within *Séance* and subsequently expanded on my observations within my 'headphone experience' *Surprise Party.* I have acknowledged the methodology deployed by Darkfield within *Séance* and experimented with its influence within my own practical work, making connections particularly between how physical proximity is deployed to manipulate a participant's paranoia. This however is an unfinished angle of study and one that requires more development. My methodology was perhaps less structured towards the end my journey rather than when I began this project. I did not have the technology available to me until the latter part of my project and therefore early questions surrounding the tool of proximity that emerged during my exploration of *Séance* were not focused on as heavily as other tools such as aural attention (which I explore later in the dissertation). *Séance's* immersion is as brutal and swift as the sound design, enveloping the participants in such a way that does not need depth but an audience itself. 'headphone experience's may sacrifice plot for intensity, but the flexibility of proximity and the effect of paranoia demonstrate that the practitioner's use of such tools into creating an entertaining artistic output is plentiful.

Chapter Two:

An Introduction into Audio Guidance, its Relationship with Paranoia and the Participant's Attention.

An Introduction into Audio Guidance, its Relationship with Paranoia and the Participant and Attention

The guide within 'headphone performance' is manifested in different ways within various 'headphone performances' and their sub-genres. An 'Audio Walk' coined by Canadian sound artist Janet Cardiff, is a guided experience often tied to a specific location, in which the guide is a voice which acts to relocate the participant physically between different locations to tell a story. The guide often describes exactly what is happening around the participant, going into precise detail to allow for the participant to become engrossed within the narrative of the 'Audio Walk'. The guide is also an important part of a variety of 'theatre in the dark' pieces. This emerging form of theatre has recently received scholarly attention in Adam Alston and Martin Welton's new collection of essays *Theatre in the Dark*[49], which features essays from key academics in this emerging field such as theatre aurality academic Lynne Kendrick, whose theories on *Fiction,* attention and aurality I have cited throughout this dissertation. Within 'Theatre in the Dark' audio work, the guide takes on the responsibility of transporting the participant mentally between sonically designed locations and soundscapes to further the 'sonic diegesis' (audio driven narrative). The relationship with the participant in a 'theatre in the dark' audio piece, differs from that of the guide in an audio walk. It could be argued that the level of trust needed to physically relocate the individual between locations is perhaps not as important to the guide of a 'headphone performance' in the dark, however this can vary depending of what an audience member is asked to do. This will be explored further through my case studies and will

[49] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017.)

be illuminated through elements regarding the role that paranoia plays alongside the guide in achieving a practitioner's intentions for their piece of headphone theatre. An example I can draw on in which the practitioner deploys tools to manipulate the direction of their 'headphone performance' is David Rosenberg and Glen Neath's *Fiction (2015).*[50] This 'headphone performance' uses the evocation of images and thoughts as primary catalyst to the narrative or 'sonic diegesis'. Therefore, this creates an element of risk within the piece, creating paranoia which in turn enables questioning on the level of trustworthiness of the guide. The guide and their proximity between the participant are tools of manipulation and alongside paranoia, the direction of the headphone piece is fixed along a course which exists because of the practitioner's intensions for their work, in this case Neath and Rosenberg wished to create a piece which transported the participant through a dreamlike state[51]. I will elaborate on this further within this chapter through engaging with my own experience of Janet Cardiff's *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*[52] and Neath and Rosenberg's *Fiction*[53]. I have chosen to analyse *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* due to the explicit role that paranoia plays within the piece and the production being a pioneering piece of art regarding how guides operate within headphone work. This therefore enables me to turn my focus towards how *Fiction,* a more recent production, expands on how a guide is deployed within 'headphone performances'. I have chosen to explore *Fiction* as a point of analysis with specific attention on the variants of relationships and proximity between the guide and the participant, and how a practitioner's intentions are at the core of this relationship. As well as this, I will be exploring the impact of other work that I

[50] Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Fiction,* prod. Fuel Theatre, London and UK Tour. 2015.
[51] Post show discussion notes
[52] Cardiff J, *The Missing Voice (Case Study B),* prod. Artangel, London 1999.
[53] Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Fiction,* prod. Fuel Theatre, London and UK Tour. 2015.

have not experienced such as Janet Cardiff's *Cabin Fever*[54] and radio producers The Kitchen Sisters' *The Ground Zero Memorial Walk* [55] using scholarly articles and reviews, applying my own critical thinking as I progress through the chapter. I will also explore relevant theories such as theatre academic Lynne Kendrick's theories on Theatre Aurality, which Kendrick explains "relates to many states of hearing and listening, resounding and voicing, sonance and resonance, moving and feeling but these do not necessarily preclude the other senses"[56], and Paige McGinley's theories surrounding eavesdropping and spectatorship in the context of the role of the participant within headphone theatre. I will use these theories and apply them to the case studies listed as well as my own practical work. The theories listed will help illuminate my understanding of the role that the participant has through their relationship with the practitioner through my analysis of these case studies and how they have illuminated my own praxis. This chapter explores how guidance and paranoia are constantly being manipulated by practitioners.

I would like to introduce this chapter with a focus on non-theatre related audio walks to introduce the basic qualities of the form, discussing the socio-historical aspects of audio walks and how they can help our understanding of the relationship between the participant and an audio walks' guide - which in the case of a more fact-based audio walk is typically more reliable. Audio walks are a cross-discipline experience which have been harnessed by museums, galleries and historical locations. These guided tours of an establishment often deploy a number-based system with the information given to the recipient about the object of focus by a voice tasked by only delivering that information. However, an example of a shift in the way audio walks are being

---

[54] Cardiff J. and Miller, G. *Cabin Fever*. New York. 2004.
[55] Nelson, Davia and Silva, Nikki. *Ground Zero Memorial Walk.* New York. 2002.
[56] Kendrick, Lynne, *Theatre Aurality* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017) Page 1.

developed, and the role of a guide has been developed by other practitioners (not of a theatre background), is by American radio producers The Kitchen Sisters', *The Ground Zero Sonic Memorial Soundwalk* (2005). This is an hour-long audio walk which is guided by the voice of novelist Paul Auster and is regarded as "first major audio walk production to incorporate a significant element of located oral history and first-hand eyewitness testimony."[57] The audio walk guides its participants around the location of the former twin towers, listening to testimony of witnesses to 9/11 and evoking moments of remembrance. Audio walks work well within a historical context due to sound possessing the ability to transport the participants through time and experience the soundscape of a location in the past. With this audio walk taking the form of a historical project, and the inclusion of testimony, it highlights the importance of voice and the reliability of voice, with its purpose being to bring the participants in the walk, closer to those directly involved in what they are remembering. In *The Ground Zero Sonic Memorial Soundwalk*, the guide is arguably undoubtedly reliable as are the testimonies, recounting the spectacle of 9/11 which reshaped the world. Haidy Geismer who is Assistant Professor of Museum Studies at NYU Writes "Listening to the tour whilst walking around the site creates a visceral memorial out of one's own body-channelling memory (sic) through hearing, sight, and movement. The sound walk creates continuity between past and present, layering different moments of history into a single hour..."[58] The walk itself allows for a coupling of the participant and the landscape around them and the introduction of a soundscape layered on top of this location. This audio walk is more likely to evoke emotion and memories for a wider demographic due to the global coverage of 9/11.

---

[57] Bradley, Simon. "*History to Go: Oral History, Audiowalks and Mobile Media." Oral History* 40, no. 1 (2012): 99-110. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41806585.
[58] Bradley, Simon. *"History to Go: Oral History, Audiowalks and Mobile Media." Oral History* 40, no. 1 (2012): 99-110. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41806585.

The historical audio walk's guide as has an obligation to remain close and yet distant to the participant introducing an interesting tension which could be harnessed by practitioners within a theatrical context and shall be expanded on later in the chapter. A guide's role within this context has the responsibility of recounting fact and testimony and at the same time, delivering clear instructions and guidance for the participant. Therefore, the relationship is a one of trust. Alison Oddey writes in her chapter "Tuning-in to Sound and Space: Hearing, Voicing and Walking"[59] about the art form of "the walk", writing "Walks involve the spectator making some kind of connection to the landscape, be it the urban city environment or the gallery space of an installation."[60] Although Oddey is not talking about "the walk" in the context of a headphone delivered audio walk, but more specifically the act of walking itself and how we attend the environment around us. If applied within the context of an audio walk, it is through the introduction of a guide, the connection to our landscape and environment is strengthened, and serves to amplify emotions and memories due to the guide directing our attention towards the object of the environment around us. The "connection" is relevant to all forms of guided work set in a location, regarding *The Ground Zero Sonic Memorial Soundwalk*, this "connection" that Oddey refers to is there to evoke emotions, and help rekindle memories of the focused event, the guide in this context acts like a catalyst to help inspire these thoughts. This allows for active spectatorship[61], as the audience is far removed from the role of a protagonist and instead serves to place the emphasis on the stories of those lost to the event. This allows for the participant to form their own opinions and emotions around the event of 9/11. The guide's role is to

[59] Oddey, Alison and White, Christine, *Modes of Spectatorship*, (Bristol: Interlect, 2009.)
[60] Oddey, Alison and White, Christine, *Modes of Spectatorship*, (Bristol: Interlect, 2009.) Page 134.

introduce the information to the participant and not coerce the participant into a preferred way of thinking. I have aimed to introduce a basic understanding into the role of a reliable guide and the relationship with participants and will now explore how practitioners expand and experiment with this role artistically within headphone theatre.

The Missing Voice (Case Study B), the Proximity between Guide and Participant and Paranoia

Through exploring this historical audio work, I have introduced the artistic potentials of the sub-genre of 'headphone performance', such as the possibility of the further artistic potential in reference to the relationship between participant and guide. I will now explore a variety of case studies, examining them through the critical lens of the aforementioned theories on theatre aurality and eavesdropping and contextualise them through my own praxis. A key method in which a practitioner has altered the role of the guide within headphone theatre is through the introduction of paranoia[62].

I will briefly discuss this effect to help enlighten the reader into its importance within this study. I wanted to experiment with how paranoia operates within both 'headphone experiences' and 'headphone performances'. I developed *Surprise Party*, which is a 'headphone experience'. This term means that I focused on developing a production which adhered to the idea of a 'fairground ride' and can be likened to that of Darkfield's *Séance*, I expand on this production in greater detail in my dedicated chapter to my praxis – Chapter Three. Paranoia is deployed here as a momentum shifting tool, directing the participant to the feeling of 'thrill' through creating nervousness. I did this through meddling with the participant's perception of space and

[62] A definition of 'paranoia' can be found in the Introduction on page 11.

the sound design itself. This was a far more superficial effect, and the desired outcome was entertainment rather than provoking thoughts. However, this highlighted to me the potential of paranoia and perhaps how it can operate within more narrative driven 'headphone performances' and raised questions about how can it be implemented within the production. Paranoia quickly established itself as an important point of study due its easily implementable qualities and how the effect it creates differs from production to production. Through my own experiences of headphone theatre and experiencing shows live such as *Fiction*, *Séance*[63] and Complicite's *The Encounter*[64], which I discuss in further detail in Chapter Three, I observed a common trope that was consistent in each production and was influencing how I was becoming immersed. Paranoia manifested itself as a deep feeling of uncertainty and questioning that differed from the panicked nature of fear. *Séance* deployed paranoia within its sound design and harnessed the intensity of the small performance, pushing the participants up against one another. As well as this, *Séance* used sound effects such as crashing and banging to allude to an ominous climax as the experience of séance reached its peak. Whereas within *Fiction* the participant's feeling of paranoia derived from transitioning through locations and the conversations with figures that are totally unknown. The most effective method however, was the deployment of the guide. Paranoia is deployed by the practitioner to curate the overall experience for the participant but also is also purposefully created. One of the key reasons that paranoia is deployed by practitioners is its unique contribution to a participant's aural attention. I will further elaborate my analysis of paranoia's influence on aural attention within Chapter Three, however I will briefly discuss it now for the sake of context. Aural attention is the process in which a

[63] Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Séance*, prod Darkfield, Brighton Dome. 2017.
[64] McBurney, Simon. *The Encounter*, prod Complicite, The Barbican. 2018.

participant attends and focuses on the headphone piece through listening, the challenge that practitioners must combat is how they maintain such attention. I argue that the effect of paranoia is such a way that practitioners do this in Chapter Three.

Practitioners over time have evolved the guide within an artistic context, none more so that Janet Cardiff. Cardiff is a Canadian sound artist and is the pioneer who coined the term 'audio walk.' Cardiff's UK debut *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* "is part urban guide, part detective story, part film noir"[65] about a woman who goes missing. Through Cardiff's use of binaural microphones (a way of recording audio that creates a surrounding effect which imitate live hearing), the artist captures the bustling, almost suffocating sound of London. Cardiff's response to the piece is as follows:

> For me *The Missing Voice* was partly a response to living in a large city like London for a while, reading about its history in quiet libraries, seeing newspaper headlines as I walked by the news stands, overhearing gossip, and being a lone person getting lost amongst the masses […] the London experience enhanced the paranoia that I think is quite common to a lot of people, especially women, as they adjust to a strange city.[66]

This 'paranoia' is clearly portrayed through the character of the guide, voiced by Cardiff herself. Cardiff portrays this through hushed tones pitted against a bustling landscape, and simultaneously deliver instructions to the participant that remain clear. Drawing from my own experience of the piece, the guide takes the form paranoid woman, which led me to question the reliability of the instructions, furthermore this increased my own paranoia within the location. This paranoia seeps out of Cardiff's soundscape runs parallel with our own reality as we navigate the notably loud streets of east London alongside Cardiff. The soundscape is believable because we are confirming the idea of Cardiff's world with the visuals of our own, we can hear the

---

[65] *"The Missing Voice (Case Study B)."* Project. <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-missing-voice-case-study-b/> (Accessed April 10, 2018)
[66] Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, *The Missing Voice: Case Study B*, 1999. http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/missing_voice.html. (Accessed April 10, 2018)

traffic pass us and the voices of the public alongside the road side at the same time as we hear these same objects through Cardiff's audio.

The coupling of the pace of the walk and the travelling binaural soundscape begin the sinking feeling of paranoia but it is the voice of Cardiff that authenticates it. Steven Feld argues that "the soundingness of hearing and voicing constitute an embodied sense of presence…Voice then authorises identities as identities authorise voice."[67] Cardiff talking and instructing the participant not as a figure passing off knowledge, but as a "companion" or an equal, returning to my overarching point about the value of the participant/guide relationship. Cardiff is exercising her artistic licence to play with this relationship to help form her narrative. As a participant, I questioned the guide, the paranoid companion, however as they are guiding my movements through the busy streets of East London I trusted them because you are not offered any other option other than to opt out of the experience entirely. It is the participant's curiosity and film noir style story that hooks the participant; the mystery about who has gone missing (which I would argue is wholly ambiguous), whilst walking the streets of London's historical East End and at the same time following a guide that has a say in the narrative. This mystery and ambiguity in the story but clarity of the instructions, allows the audio walk form to work effectively within the headphone theatre genre due to the participant constantly seeking for something to listen to and attend, therefore changes the way we experience the environment.

To reflect on this chapter, I have introduced a basic role of a guide within audio work in order to highlight the potential for artists to play with the relationship between guide and participant. I have introduced the notion of paranoia and how malleable it

---

[67] Oddey, Alison and White, Christine, *Modes of Spectatorship*, (Bristol: Interlect, 2009.) Page 135

can be for a practitioner to harness it, but more importantly I have discussed Janet Cardiff's guide within *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* and the introduction of the paranoid guide which is able to impact on the story itself. I will now elaborate on this point further in the next part of my chapter, discussing how the relationship between participant and guide evolves from Cardiff's guide within David Rosenberg and Glenn Neath's 'headphone performance' – *Fiction*. Discussing the 'chaperone' and their relationship with the participant.

Fiction, Paranoia and the Guide in Proximity with the Participant

There are a lot of similarities between the guide of an audio walk's and that of a guide which the practitioners deploy within a theatre in the dark piece. The following of a voice that becomes familiar, directing the participant to locations, creating mystery and wonder to allow the participant's imagination to fill in the gaps where the guide and soundscape does not. The role of the guide shifts to the identity of the "chaperone" in Glen Neath and David Rosenberg's *Fiction*, a production I briefly examined in *Chapter One: Proximity in Short Audio Performance*. I recently revisited *Fiction* at the Battersea Arts Centre in February 2018 in celebration of the previously mentioned release of the book *Theatre in the Dark*[68] by Adam Alston and Martin Welton. After first experiencing the headphone piece in 2014, my initial thoughts four years ago were inquisitive in retrospect as my understanding of the genre of headphone theatre was at the beginning of its journey. As I discuss in the Introduction, my experience of *Fiction* was my first experience of headphone theatre as I have come to refer to it. However,

[68] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017.)

with my mind turned towards this chapter when attending the performance for a second time I decided to focus on the character of the 'chaperone' called Julie, who takes the role of the guide within the hour-long theatre in the dark piece. My fascination with the 'chaperone' began with my desire to understand why Neath and Rosenberg gave the chaperone complete control over my actions within the world of *Fiction*. In this part of the chapter, I will be analysing the character of the 'chaperone' and their relationship with the participant. I will be focusing on this relationship to help broaden my understanding of how the proximity between the guide and the participant within the theatre in the dark form, perhaps differs or remains like that of the audio walk or other guided headphone pieces. I will be exploring how paranoia manifests itself through the chaperone's influence on *Fiction* as a response to the practitioner's intentions, reflecting on my own praxis on paranoia within my theatre in the dark piece *Surprise Party*.

Firstly, to understand the "chaperone" or Julie, and their role within the piece, I will firstly discuss *Fiction* and David Rosenberg and Glen Neath's aims after attending the post-show discussion "A Dialogue in the Dark."[69] The play was conceived and developed in 2014, and is a 'headphone performance' running at an hour-long in total darkness. I entered the performance space at the Battersea Arts Centre recalling my first experience of this show in its inaugural run in 2014. The piece had undergone various changes such as the introduction of a preparation period in which the participants have an opportunity to experience total darkness before the play begins. I entered the chamber and was handed a pair of headphones with a number on them and was instructed to sit in the seat which had an identical number on it. Once I did so, I placed

[69] Rosenberg, David and Neath, Glen. "A Dialogue in the Dark". Post-Show Discussion, London. 2018.

them on my head and the projections began telling us that there was to be a guest speaker. We were shown various images of empty hotel rooms and forests. Suddenly the room was plunged into darkness and the soundscape of a forest filled our ears. For this brief moment, I was immersed in the traditional sense of the word, simultaneously grabbing the edges of my seat. The sound of gasping for air then brought me back into the light chamber. This was the key difference I noticed from the first run, although this section of the performance was designed to prepare the participants for the rest of the piece, it allowed for a realisation about how far removed I was to be from the well-lit chamber at the Battersea Arts Centre. Then, we were to be plunged back into the "empty halls of same dream state."[70] I then was met with the voice of a French woman who is labelled as the "chaperone" and quickly built a relationship with this character. Physically, the character is in close proximity with the participant throughout most of the piece, appearing as the voice who has the sole aim of guiding us around the soundscape. I will focus on how this relationship is applied to the narrative of *Fiction.* The play itself is labelled as a 'dream' by director and co-creator David Rosenberg, written in an information sheet given to me before the show, Rosenberg is quoted saying:

> Fiction is an attempt to move an audience into different environments that they can imagine or (preferably) that they can't help imagining…It is also an attempt to delate the haphazard tyranny of our dreams and their swaggering mania of just appearing when we are asleep.[71]

The chaperone "just appears" within the narrative, I felt tied to her throughout the performance. I felt unnerved by the lack of understanding of this unknown location, partially formed within my own mind by the imagery presented at the beginning of the

[70] Rosenberg, David. Fiction (Programme Notes), London, February, 2018.
[71] Rosenberg, David. Fiction (Programme Notes), London, February, 2018

piece. The gaps were then filled with the images of similar locations that I had encountered outside of the performance space within my everyday life. The chaperone acted as a safety net, guiding me through this sonically generated unknown location as to allow me to become more comfortable within in it. At the beginning of the piece, the chaperone appears as an omniscient being, however a level of paranoia began to seep into the tone of the piece. Unlike the paranoia of the guide in *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* where the paranoia was triggered due to the participant and protagonist's companionship, this paranoia was actively being transferred by the chaperone onto the participant. The chaperone began talking about a man staring from a window opposite, deflecting any other characters that wished to enter the soundscape and actively telling me to be suspicious of other individuals. The guide's role had changed from a safety net to the focal point of suspicion. This demonstrated to me that practitioners wanted to manipulate the tone of the 'headphone performance' and did using the guide as a mouth piece, the paranoia enabled relationships to be questioned and isolated the participant within the narrative, thus intensifying the immersion befitting Neath and Rosenberg's intentions.

Within the post-show discussion, "A Dialogue in the Dark" I queried Rosenberg and Neath on the role of the guide being a character within the narrative and I received an interesting answer regarding the chaperone. Paraphrased, Rosenberg stated that "the guide doesn't feel coercive but must be"[72] in order for the narrative to work. The chaperone is coercive when it comes to instructions given to the participant, the action then occurs because the chaperone has stated that is should. For example, the chaperone states that we should go down to the lobby to collect a new statue after the first one is broken, then I heard the sound of a lift opening, signifying that this action is taking

[72] Rosenberg, David. "A Dialogue in the Dark". Post-Show Discussion, London. 2018.

place. The coercive instructions from the chaperone correlate with the direction of the dream itself, the participant never feels like they have control, thus leading to even further paranoia and tension within the drama. I will build on the "coercive" guide later on in this chapter.

Interestingly, we as the "speaker" never speak, "Julie (the chaperone) speaks for us"[73] and because of this, the situation that we find ourselves in is never in our control, and is perhaps reflective of a non-lucid dream. Our own minds plunge us in to worlds that "just appear" and we are left to our own devices. However, I would argue that because we are protected, sheltered and shepherded by another character within the drama, we only reach an ultimate "dream state" at the end of the drama in which our chaperone, Julie, abandons us which is perhaps the practitioner's intention throughout the drama with Neath and Rosenberg commenting on how they desired for this production to be so reminiscent of a dream. Our relationship with the guide very quickly becomes non-existent and we suddenly find ourselves with the other characters that Julie had told us to ignore. Our relationship with the chaperone builds to the point that we do not trust the voice that speaks for us. This is manifested as another form of guidance, the chaperone at the beginning appears to guide us between locations, to prepare us to perform a speech, however it is through the guide that we are not prepared, we are in fact more distant from the speech and the other characters than we were when the piece began. Paranoia and the eventual outcome of Julie abandoning us leaves us at our most vulnerable point, therefore it could be argued that as a participant we are perhaps more alert and attentive when we are at our most lonesome within headphone theatre, leading to a more intense immersion. I suspect that paranoia is deployed here

[73] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre.* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017.) Page 128.

to impact the 'thrill' of *Fiction* but also directly impact the direction of the narrative, for the production to reach a point of climax, the guide must abandon the participant.

Returning to Rosenberg's aim of *Fiction*, stating that the play is "an attempt to deflate the haphazard tyranny of our dreams."[74] I would argue that this attempt fails. From my own experience of the play, the abandoning of the guide and the resulting transportation between the locations that follow, with the characters that we have been told to ignore, in fact strengthens the argument that dreams are a "haphazard tyranny." The chaperone that informs us and shepherds us through this "dream" disappears, leaving us to feel suspended within this state, with no direction. The occurrences that follow, we are not informed about, or guided towards but are instead left to endure. After experiencing *Fiction* for the second time in March 2018, I wanted to explore the guide within my own practical output. This was a common theme within my methodology. I would often take questions that had been raised within productions I had attended and attempt to examine them within my praxis, and questions of a guide's influence within headphone theatre had to be explored. [Refer to Appendix B] Therefore it is through developing my play *Beached* which was designed without a guide, I have learnt that leaving a participant to navigate a soundscape without a guide can enhance a feeling of paranoia. Although *Beached* does not contain subject matter relating to that of dreams, it attempts to delve into trauma and recollection which can be of a similar blurred nature like dreams. The participant is not abandoned by a guide but is instead left to guide themselves and filter through the relevant information to progress through the sonic diegesis. What I have observed from a practitioner's viewpoint, is that perhaps it is far easier to create "haphazard tyranny" then it is to avoid it entirely. An immersion is to '*be* in' and within darkness, senses become heightened

[74] Rosenberg, David. Fiction (Programme Notes), London, February 2018

and we grasp for awareness of our immediate surroundings. Therefore, before the audio has even begun, as participants, we find ourselves beginning to become cautious so progression from this serves only to enhance “tyranny” regardless if the subject matter is that of dreams.

The relationship between the chaperone and the participant within *Fiction*, highlights how the role differentiates from that of an audio walk and provides an insight into how the guide may be used in other headphone pieces. The chaperone guides us towards an anxious mental state that reflects the uncertainty of a non-lucid dream through the character’s delivery and paranoia. *Fiction* inverts the traditional guide in audio work and we are instead left knowing less about the landscape we find ourselves in than we did at the beginning of the play. The proximity between the participant and the soundscape evolves and separates the more information is provided by the guide and practitioner as our paranoia teaches us to not trust what we think we should take as facts and assurances. At the beginning, we are told to wait for a speaker, a clear action that serves to drive our own character’s objectives, but at the end we are confused, anxious and do not know what to anticipate next. *Fiction* presents a strong case for the future of vocally guided headphone theatre. *Fiction* demonstrates how the relationship between the guide and participant is there to be artistically played with to create drama. I began *Fiction* in close physical and emotional proximity with Julie, as she is only pillar in a world unknown world. Rosenberg and Neath deployed the use binaural recording to allow Julie to whisper instruction and suspicions in my ear, this therefore meant I ended the play far removed from any voice and instead in the hands of my own paranoia. Neath and Rosenberg demonstrate that as practitioners, they can manipulate the experience of the participants using the guide. Within the context of the world of *Fiction*, a world of dreams, participants attempt to find voice in the hopes of

understanding their environment and when that disappears, paranoia takes control and intensifies the overall 'headphone performance'.

The Coercive Instruction Paradox, and the Shifting Role of the Soundscape in Proximity with the Participant. (Attention)

Returning to the idea that a guide's instructions must remain coercive for the narrative and drama to move forward, the removal of the guide towards the end of *Fiction* introduces an idea that we do not need to be guided by the voice of a person for a headphone piece to direct our attention. This issue of clear coercive instruction is perhaps an ethical hurdle for theatre makers and introduces a paradox within headphone theatre and the use of the guide. Does the requirement of coercive and clear instruction from the guide to the participant to move the narrative of a piece forward, hinder the opportunity for more experimental art? A question that I raised when I wanted to create my own praxis for this dissertation. In some circumstances, artists, like myself, wish to create art that is ambiguous and thought provoking. However, with instructional, audience participatory work, it could be argued that more vague instructions could lead to the message of a piece of work to be lost if a participant does not understand what demand the work is placing on them, in terms of the specific kind of participation it invites. The relationship between the guide and the participant could break down, leading to a distancing from the participant and the artist's desired immersion. These questions about the coercive nature of the guide and their instruction, leads me to wonder about the removal of the chaperone in *Fiction.* This act introduces an interesting

dynamic which is echoed in another of Janet Cardiff's work *Cabin Fever,*[75] which was an artistic installation at Luhring Augustine Gallery in New York in 2004. This dynamic in question is the total removal of any voice or guide and focus on the soundscape itself.

In this part of the chapter, I will be investigating the proximity between the participant and the soundscape and how the soundscape can take on a guide-like role within a 'headphone performance'. I will play close attention to the idea of a participant taking on the position as an eavesdropper within *Fiction* and *Cabin Fever*. I will define an 'eavesdropper' within headphone theatre as when the participant is simply an observer within a headphone piece and does not act within the sonic diegesis. With this focus on *Cabin Fever,* I will be exploring Professor of Performing Arts at Washington University in St Louis, Paige McGinley's important paper "Eavesdropping, Surveillance and Sound"[76] and applying it to my own thinking about the subject.

Although I have not experienced the work first hand, McGinley provides a detailed recount of her experience of the piece -

> I pick up a pair of headphones and put them on. I put my head inside the enormous box. Inside there is a diorama. The diorama is a depiction of a familiar rural scene: a trailer home, leaves on the ground, a gravel driveway. It is night. Someone is home. The sounds of a quiet summer night: crickets, leaves rustling, the murmur of activity in this house. The sound of car wheels on gravel. A car door slams, followed by footsteps, followed by a screen door opening and closing. I hear murmurs, conversation. A man and a woman. The volume rises. They are shouting now, but I can't make out what they are saying. And then, horrible sounds: things being thrown, objects hitting walls…the violence is viscerally unbearable. A gunshot makes me jump. The screen door opens, slams, feet running on the gravel, throwing it in the air, speeding away.[77]

---

[75] Cardiff, J and Miller, G. *Cabin Fever*. New York, 2004.
[76] Paige McGinley, Janet Cardiff, and George Bures Miller. "Eavesdropping, Surveillance, and Sound. Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller "Cabin Fever"." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 1 (2006): 52-57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139997.
[77] Paige McGinley, Janet Cardiff, and George Bures Miller. "Eavesdropping, Surveillance, and Sound. Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller "Cabin Fever"." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 1 (2006): 52-57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139997.

The audio then loops itself, replaying the same sonic narrative. McGinley notes that the piece itself does not fall into a genre, however I would argue that the piece falls into the sub-genre of 'headphone experience' due to its short form and its neglect for narrative over the effect led experience. The piece is minimalistic in form, with McGinley calling it "unapologetically theatrical."[78] However, the theatricality differs from Cardiff's audio walks, the participant is never directly addressed, and the narrative does not require such participation to progress. The participant becomes active in the role of an eavesdropper. Author of *Theatre Aurality* (2017) Lynne Kendrick discusses aural attention and listening regarding headphone theatre:

> A more clandestine form of listening is indicated, which suggests a stealthy audience, an eavesdropping or even, as Steven Connor suggests, an unbounded opportunity for undetectable aural 'stalking'. Indeed, the idea of stalking seems to capture the difficulties of attention, as the listener is always in a process of moving towards focus, but never quite attains it.[79]

Cabin Fever adheres to this theory of eavesdropping, participants listen to this piece searching for something to listen to and because of this they become the "intentional focus of the production – but also *not* the object, because we are also the audience of the production."[80] The looping narrative of *Cabin Fever* is not the focus of the piece, it is the audience and their position in observing it, and because of such the soundscape itself takes on the role of guide. Attention is manipulated by Cardiff, through the act of eavesdropping as we never "attain focus," but are instead limited in our ability to act towards what we are listening to. Within longer 'headphone performances', the relationship between the practitioner and the participant is reflective of a dialogue

---

[78] Paige McGinley, Janet Cardiff, and George Bures Miller. "Eavesdropping, Surveillance, and Sound. Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller "Cabin Fever"." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 1 (2006): 52-57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139997.
[79] Kendrick, Lynne. *Theatre Aurality. (*London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.) Page 65.
[80] Paige McGinley, Janet Cardiff, and George Bures Miller. "Eavesdropping, Surveillance, and Sound. Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller "Cabin Fever"." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 1 (2006): 52-57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139997.

which is constantly progressing and demanding the participant to act towards it. This is not the case when the participant takes the role of the eavesdropper, there is an innate frustration regarding attaining a satisfying level of attention from an aural position which listens from the outside in.

The participant uses the impact of visuals manifested as aural architecture to follow the looping narrative of *Cabin Fever*, the sounds of the crickets, the doors, the gunshot help the audience member in the act of wanting to attain and understand the story. The participant eavesdrops on the situation and the sounds of the situation allows for room for the participant to "stalk". The sounds of the aural architecture guide the audience towards the conclusion that they should not be there to witness the narrative but because of the nature of the piece, they still carry on listening. McGindley recalls that the effect of *Cabin Fever,* produced the reaction akin to the 'fight or flight' response, calling the sounds "unbearable" and having the desire to "take the headphones off"[81] and yet she still listens, "stealthily". The term "eavesdropper" denotes an intention to listen in but to do so paranoid, with the fear of being caught. The soundscape feeds this desire as it provides an opportunity to attempt to attain attention, but this is never able to completely actualise. The practitioner provides the participant with all the information to form an understanding of the scene yet, they struggle to accept it, expressing a desire to remove themselves from the scene. The guide-like nature of the soundscape may act a catalyst for the participant to attain attention within the scene, but because the participant takes the role of the eavesdropper, their paranoia acts to prevent consistent attention.

---

[81] Paige McGinley, Janet Cardiff, and George Bures Miller. "Eavesdropping, Surveillance, and Sound. Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller "Cabin Fever"." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 1 (2006): 52-57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139997

If applied to *Fiction* and the introduction of a guide provided me with a pillar of focus and because of such the removal of the guide left me in a state of confusion demanding something to listen to remain in control. The "listener is always in a process of moving towards focus, but never quite attains it,"[82] therefore once the chaperone disappears I began looking for another focus that could provide me with guidance within the soundscape to maintain my attention. The sounds themselves provided me with partial situational awareness, I could acknowledge that I was in a car but I was not able to determine why. I took on the role of an eavesdropper, although the whole narrative of the drama was about me as a speaker, after Julie left the soundscape, I felt like an imposter within my own dream. To conclude this point, through the removal of any vocal guidance, the participant seeks to listen to something to remain attached to the soundscape, because of this, the soundscape itself takes on the role of the guide. However, because at this point in the narrative I become an imposter, paranoia seemingly displaces any attempt to grasp a focus and understanding.

The participant then becomes an eavesdropper, the removal of a vocal guide allows for the participant to focus on the soundscape more so than they would with a guide but in doing so they are attempting to anchor onto a world they are inherently uncertain about. The relationship between the participant and the soundscape becomes one of attempted reliance. The imposter relies on the sounds of the aural environment to help sculpt the aural imagery of a scenario, however their attention on this shifting soundscape can never be completely attained. Practitioners adjust the position in which the participant receives their immersion, whether this be guided or positioning them as an eavesdropper. This is due to the practitioner demanding the participant to be active towards their work, being both reactive and proactive towards their navigation through

[82] Kendrick, Lynne. *Theatre Aurality*. (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2017). Page 65.

the soundscape. Eavesdropping is deployed to adjust the way in which the participant is participating, harnessing paranoia as a tool in which the practitioner can manipulate the direction of their work towards their creative intentions. In the case of *Fiction,* I would argue that the artistic intention is to demonstrate the lack of coherency within dreams, and in the case of *Cabin Fever* it is simply the experience of feeling paranoid and remaining outside the action they are spectating.

Conclusion

The purpose of the guide shifts between each manifestation of the role within each sub-genre of headphone theatre and aural work in general. The guide is there to steer a participant, in a certain direction, sonically through imagined spaces or physically through actual spaces (in the case of audio walks) to help them come to their own judgement of a scenario, whether that be positive or negative in its final result. The relationship between the participant and the guide is gradually shifting and is being seen by theatre makers as tool for potential to enhance the narrative, character and structure of their audio work and manipulate the experience in accordance to their aims. Theatre makers no longer see the guide as a tool to simply to help the participants understand what is going on within their art. At the beginning of this chapter, I have analysed the basic form of a guide within audio work and identified the key tropes that a guide provides such as the ability to deliver information, direct a participant's attention and craft the surrounding location. However, emphasised through my praxis, I have identified how the guide's relationship with paranoia influences headphone theatre, citing my own productions *Beached* and *Surprise Party* as examples and discussing *The Missing Voice* and *Fiction.* I discuss how the relationship between the two guides in *Missing Voice* and *Fiction* represent an evolution of the artistic potential of the guide with *Missing Voice* introducing the paranoid guide who becomes the participant's

companion and the guide within *Fiction* that creates paranoia through whispering uncertainties into your ear and help you attempt to create a world which you do not trust. I explore how a soundscape takes on similar responsibilities when a vocal guide is not present and how eavesdropping is deployed by practitioners to ensure practitioners always remain outside of the action, and how paranoia deployed through eavesdropping never allows the practitioner to attain a consistent level of attention. Sound is becoming an ever more powerful tool in how it controls its participants and because of such, the guide is having to evolve alongside it. The relationship between the guide and participant is shifting, traditionally, the guide is the provider of information and instruction but theatre makers are now inverting this model. A guide can now be a courier for uncertainty and paranoia, evolving from the traditionally reliable therefore enhancing artistic possibilities.

Chapter Three:

Intimate Narrative: An Analysis into my Practical Research.

Chapter 4: Intimate Narrative: An Analysis into my Practical Research.

Throughout the process of my Masters by Dissertation, I have been focusing on case studies to help my understanding of how proximity and aural attention are experimented with by several practitioners such as Darkfield and Janet Cardiff. However, it is only through my own praxis that I have been able to approach headphone theatre from a practitioner's view point. My creative process began quite late into the Masters year. I spent the first six to nine months collating a literature review and building a catalogue of shows that I could identify as case studies. My focus was not on my creative output as I wanted to hone my analytical and academic writing as I identified this as a weakness of mine. However, I quickly concluded that the questions and avenues of research I wanted to pursue required the outlook of a practitioner. My methodology shifted from the desire to use what I had gained from my case studies and reading to create inform my practice to a pursuit of answering unanswered questions which I could use my practice to answer. A key turning point was when I crowdfunded a binaural microphone. This acted as the catalyst for progress and opened further creative possibilities. I began planning to create a triptych of pieces, two headphone theatre in the dark pieces which became *Beached* and *Surprise Party* and one more piece which was conceptualised as a audio walk and unfortunately due a limited amount of time, this never materialised. However, being able to develop practical art to explore questions that I had amassed over time led to the through line of my dissertation to become far clearer. During the months in which I did not have my microphone I was focusing on proximity and the guide as separate subject focuses and did not have an element to link the two. It was only until I began working on my practical work and

approaching my research questions from a practitioner's view point that paranoia became a focus and subsequently, I was able to explore the tools of manipulation that became available to me. This chapter is a detailed dramaturgical analysis of the two pieces I created: *Beached* and *Surprise Party* and an exploration of the questions that they raised. I have provided both a transcript of each play with accompanying audio file on a USB memory stick alongside this dissertation, I would advise listening to both plays before reading this chapter. These are Appendices A, B, C and D. I would also like to make the reader aware that there are certain examples of physical interaction and props used that could not be recorded as both pieces have been produced with the intention of being performed in total darkness.

To approach an analysis of my practical work, I have returned to the title of my dissertation to help provide me with a series of questions that were brought to light by my practice and eventually. How have I effectively experimented with proximity for it to affect the overall quality of the immersive headphone piece? How have I engaged with the tools available, such as creating a sense of paranoia and sound design, to experiment with a participant's aural attention? I will be using these questions critically interrogate the scripts of *Beached* and *Surprise Party*, analysing recorded feedback that I received immediately after my showcase and engaging with several theories surrounding the subjects of radio drama, sound design and audience reception from sound art and radio drama academics such as George Home-Cook's work on aural attention and Tim Crook's work on writing radio drama. I will be using terminology surrounding sound design which has been identified in Tim Crook's *Radio Drama* [83]. Firstly, I will briefly elaborate on the content of both *Beached* and *Surprise Party* for the purpose of understanding the content of this chapter. My first piece of practical

[83] Crook, Tim. *Radio Drama Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2005.)

work, *Surprise party*, provided essential feedback and experience. The qualities of this production, and the feedback given by audience members and my supervisor were fed into my next production *Beached*. The chronological development of these pieces will inform the structure of this chapter, beginning with a discussion of *Surprise Party*. I will also be referring to the pair of productions and their forms as 'headphone experiences' and 'headphone performances', as further explained in my introduction, but I will briefly discuss the two differences. I believe that 'headphone experiences' favour a more effective immersion using technology and varying effects both aural and environmental, whereas 'headphone performance' favour narrative and 'sonic diegesis' over varying effects in order to enhance an immersion.

Surprise Party

Surprise Party was conceptualised as a binaural 'headphone experience' with a running time of fifteen minutes. The experience is a one-to-one show in which I sit down directly opposite the participant and listen along with them. I was captivated by Darkfield's *Séance*[84], which is a short 'headphone experience', which has been compared to theme park rides by critics and creator David Rosenberg himself[85]. When creating the piece, I wanted to channel that sense of dread that was so potent throughout the experience but not quite on the same scale as Darkfield's production. I began writing the participant into the role of an eavesdropper, sitting in with a couple of burglars robbing a house. For the first five minutes of the piece, the participant is only an observer, there is little to no pressure on the participant within this situation as they are not directly involved. However, the owner of the house arrives home and this was the

[84] Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Séance*, prod Darkfield, Brighton Dome. 2017.
[85] Roland Manthorpe, "Forget Immersive Theatre, This Play Takes Place in Total Darkness" Wired < https://www.wired.co.uk/article/glen-neath-david-rosenberg-darkfield-seance-edinburgh-festival> (accessed December 2018).

cue for my first interaction with the participant as I am sitting adjacent to them. I turn on two torches and shine them across the participant's whited out mask as to simulate a car's lights shining through the window. The two burglars decide to remove the lightbulb in the room the participant and the two of them are situated in. After the lightbulb is removed, one of the burglars says, "Hold this". This is said into the left ear of the participant, shortly after, I carefully position a lightbulb into the hand of the participant. This is the second moment of physical interaction with the participant. The homeowners arrive home and try and turn the light switch on with no success. After a little while, I pull on a piece of string which is attached to the lightbulb and the lightbulb flies out of the participant's hand, timed with the sound of glass smashing below them. The burglars find themselves alone again as the homeowners leave the room looking for a candle to light up the room with. One of the burglars then whispers into the participant's ear again "You dropped the bulb" and at the same time, the other burglar is readying a weapon. As time goes on, the homeowner in the piece, returns with a box of matches. He lights one match and then is promptly killed by one of the burglars, the other homeowner comes into the room singing "Happy Birthday" and then sees the victim on the floor, the audio ends there.

As *Surprise Party* was my first piece of headphone theatre, I wanted to use this platform as way to experiment not only with the technology at my disposal but with proxemics and aural attention to create a sense of 'paranoia' within the participant's immersion. I began with the idea of darkness becoming a focus in the created reality of *Surprise Party*. As music academic Elissa Guralnick writes [86]"The blind must assemble their world, as an ever-emerging unproven hypothesis, from small information as comes to them piecemeal." I assembled the room and through the sound design I wanted

[86] Crook, Tim. *Radio Drama Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2005.) Page 50.

to provide the “small information” about the room’s dimensions and where they were situated. However, using an intervention in the form of physical objects and light play, I fed them information which enabled a confirmation of the participants’ hypothesis. The decision to harness the participant’s sense of touch and response to light heightened to the experience of being an eavesdropper directly in the situation through intensifying the feeling of paranoia. However, the drive to create this experience led to issues regarding the participant’s reception of the narrative, the focus on the experience became oversaturated as I was perhaps overloading the participant with information instead of allowing them to evaluate what was directly at the front of their minds. And after reflecting on my audio work and sound design with professional Sound Designer, Tom Wilson, I have concluded that my decision to use binaural field recordings was partly to blame for this oversaturated experience. Although my aim to create a sense of paranoia was achieved, due to the recordings of an already existing and familiar space, my intended projection of the space was not clear enough to the participants and listening to the feedback given, the participants found themselves struggling to comprehend the wealth of “information” I was giving them which consequently belittled the narrative. *Surprise Party* was the beginning of my journey as a practitioner and I used the experience to begin working on *Beached* with a focus on understanding why the issues that appeared in *Surprise Party* were prominent. I have provided an example of how I began to research the issues that emerged from *Surprise Party* and from this the influence of proxemics and aural attention became more prominent within the script and sound design of *Beached.*

Beached

Beached is a half an hour long, ‘headphone performance’ in complete darkness played out in a group setting. Ten participants enter the space and sit in an arrangement with

the chairs facing towards a table with a single painting in the centre. This painting depicts a beach scene with the centre whited out preventing the participants from seeing the full picture. The participants are then plunged into darkness and experience an immersive drama from the protagonist, Matthew's point of view. The drama follows Matthew's journey of coming to terms with trauma that he experienced as a child impacting his actions in an event involving a young boy at a beach. The participants follow Matthew's journey from his point of view, observing Matthew in his work environment and his relationship with his colleague Jake as well as his home environment with his partner Carrie. *Beached* involves a carefully curated series of flashbacks which trouble the protagonist Matthew as he tries to grasp a sense of understanding and deal with guilt. These flashbacks are not presented to the participant in a linear progression, they are intentionally presented as disjointed and muddled, interrupting his working life and his home life. I will further expand on the nature of these flashbacks when I expand on the sound design of *Beached.* The flashbacks reveal the outcome of the occurrences on the beach in which Matthew's own experience of trauma as a child, prevents him from saving a young boy from being taken out to sea. To combat the heavy sense of dread and guilt that Matthew experiences through his trauma, he paints the images he has seen. The final part of the 'headphone performance' involves Matthew painting the image of the event onto a canvas, and a final flashback replaying the event in real time with perfect clarity. When the audio ends, the house lights are turned on again and where the image of the incomplete beach scene, a completed image now reveals the young boy at the centre of it.

Beached is a 'headphone performance' using binaural sound, featuring both field recordings and assembled sound effects from a variety of archived sources. When planning and writing this piece, the biggest dilemma I faced was creating a sonic

narrative that could both maintain the participant's aural attention (when a participant maintains a focus on the subject through the act of listening), but also a consistent immersion (the experience in headphone theatre when the line in which what can be perceived as real or fiction is intentionally blurred) for a thirty-minute time period. My focus turned to the issue that was continually referred to in my post-show interviews with the participants of *Surprise Party*. As said previously, it quickly became apparent that due to the intensity of the experience itself, the participant was one step behind the flow of the narrative. *Séance* had introduced me to the idea that 'headphone performances' and 'headphone experiences' are on opposite sides of the same spectrum. A strong narrative becomes sacrificed in place of an intense immersion/experience. However, *Surprise Party* fell in between, I wanted to develop a strong narrative and an equally strong immersion/experience but due to the amount of information I was delivering to the participants through their headphones, the overall experience was not as effective because the participant's desire to constantly attempt to "assemble their world"[87]. The world they tried to assemble never actualised due to the "information" within the narrative becoming a secondary source of information to the intensity of the immersion. This provided me with a key question to address within a longer piece of headphone theatre: how can I balance the level narrative understanding with an intense aural immersion using a variety of sound design techniques? How can I use proxemics to help create immersion but also allow for a strong but comprehendible sonic narrative? After briefly discussing the synopses of both pieces, an insight into my process and my key questions, I will now explore my use of aural attention and proxemics in both pieces.

[87] Crook, Tim. *Radio Drama Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 2005. Page 50.

Aural Attention and Proximity in Beached and Surprise Party.

Attention is a key term within this bracket of immersive theatre and both 'headphone performances' and 'headphone experiences'. Theatre Sound academic George Home-Cook writes "Theatre sound design not only 'demands' but manifestly manipulates our attention, and, in so doing, plays an important role in shaping theatrical experience."[88] The demand placed on the participant to aurally attend the sonic experience is one that must be reciprocated for the headphone theatre piece's complexities and details to work effectively. However, within headphone theatre, how a practitioner maintains a participant's aural attention has become an interesting point of study. I have concluded that there are a variety of different tools which a practitioner can deploy to manipulate attention and consequently shape the headphone piece to their desired shape. Sound design is of course a primary tool, designers often deploy a variety of techniques such as "Internal and External logic"[89] to help manipulate and audience's attention. "Internal logic", defined by Tim Crook, "is a metaphysical or philosophical/ aesthetic paralleling of music and sound design to the narrative flow of drama and communication."[90] Practitioners can use Internal Logic to control the tone of the sonic narrative, allowing an audience's attention to travel alongside the narrative flow. An example of the application of Internal logic is within Darkfield's *Séance,* the introduction of sonically jarring and haunting sound design highlights a clear direction which is constantly moving towards a climax of intensity in the form of spirits and chaos. When applied to headphone theatre sound design, this technique and other sound design techniques

[88] Home-Cook, George. *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves*. Houndmills, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.) Page 60
[89] Crook, Tim. *Radio Drama Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2005.) Page 66.
[90] Crook, Tim. *Radio Drama Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2005.) Page 66.

provide the practitioner with a method of manipulation which is inherently entwined with the sonic narrative. I will talk in further detail about aural attention and sound design in my own praxis later in this chapter. Paranoia can be seen both as a tool for the manipulation of aural attention and as a result of manipulation through other methods such as the experimentation of proxemics and sound design. The word paranoia's etymological origins come from two words *para* [irregular] and *noos* [mind], resulting in *paranoos* [distracted][91]. When referring to the word's origins, 'distracted' alongside 'attention' is a natural contradiction. If an individual's attention is being manipulated by a practitioner to shape an experience, the conclusion that could be drawn would be that a carefully curated manipulation lends itself to consistency of narrative and Internal Logic, however I would argue that this is not always the case. For example, paranoia emerges from inconsistency within the narrative or experience that provides the audience with a question, a raising of suspicion or a distraction. The "information" that Guralnick discusses needs to be assessed, evaluated and eventually trusted before a hypothesis can be drawn and the illusion of a reality can be created. Paranoia injects this distraction into the mind's eye, allowing for attention to be heightened as the mind must work harder to fully form the immersion and *be* in amongst the blurring of reality and fiction. An example within my praxis can be found at the beginning of *Surprise Party*:

> "The play opens with scuttling, whispers and other suspicious sounds. – 2 mins.
> A: Someone's coming. I can see headlights. – Torch is shone through the blindfold.
> A: **Keep your head down.**
> B: Take out the bulb.
> A: But –
> B: Before they come in. We're not finished.
> The bulb is taken out. – 20 second sequence.

[91] Paranoia | Definition of Paranoia in English by Oxford Dictionaries." Oxford Dictionaries | English. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/paranoia. (accessed January 7, 2019)

A: Hold this.
Gives the bulb to the participant. – 5 seconds."

From the example, the time durations of each moment within the play are clearly marked. I deployed paranoia as a tool to demand the audience's attention as soon as the dialogue begins. Through the use of field recordings, I have introduced the space and left the participant in the space for two minutes before any dialogue has begun. The participant is required to piece the environment together with very limited "information", as the audio is a field recording and they are not intentionally placed binaural sound effects. This results in the "information" remaining consistent, and adhering to an internal logic. However, as the dialogue begins, and the bulb is given to the participant, paranoia is injected into the scenario and a distraction is introduced. The illusion of the play's reality and the participant's position as an eavesdropper which is formed within the first two minutes of the piece, is dramatically altered as soon as the dialogue begins, allowing for the participant's attention to be demanded and pulled in another direction. Home-Cook writes "the phenomenon of speech would appear, in every sense, to take centre stage."[92] A combination of dialogue, directed towards the participant and physical engagement introduces a distraction and consequently introduces paranoia. Something unusual to the flow of the narrative then demands the mind to focus on the immersion and assess the new information. Paranoia does not only manifest itself as a feeling for the participant but is also a tool of manipulation for the practitioner and is reintroduced as the play progresses. The audience's attention is maintained through spontaneity and unexpected distraction. It could be argued that the introduction of an attention shifting tool only enhances the general demand for attention in being present in the piece.

---

[92] Home-Cook, George. *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves*. Houndmills, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.) Page 166.

Surprise Party harnesses the power of dialogue within a barren soundscape, the introduction of speech within silence brings added weight to the distraction. However, this introduced a further challenge within my second piece *Beached* which was to be written in such a way in which the narrative was the focus of the 'headphone performance', contrasting to that of a more 'experience' driven *Surprise Party*. I reflected on my experience of longer ''headphone performances'' such as Complicite's *The Encounter* as my focused centred around maintaining 'aural attention' within not only narrative driven 'headphone theatre' but over a longer period. Complicite's *The Encounter* is a full-length, one man, 'headphone performance' that is partially live and partially recorded. The story follows that of a National Geographic photographer, Loren McIntyre, who "found himself lost among the people of the remote Javari Valley in Brazil."[93] The play was inspired by novelist Petru Popescu's *Amazon Beaming* and opened at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2015. Simon McBurney purchased the rights to the story years previous but could not work out how he would tell the story on stage. Gareth Fry who is a world-renowned sound designer, is quoted saying "the normal approaches to adapt a book to the stage just didn't feel right. It needed an approach that could convey both the initial isolation of Loren McIntyre and the eventual way with which he could communicate with the tribe leader."[94] Complicite turned to binaural sound and a performance delivered to the audience through headphones which were wired throughout the venue. *The Encounter* is a stage play at its core, and therefore watching the prodfiuction has prompted me to develop my own understanding of what headphone theatre is and how aural attention is manipulated to adapt in to the presentation of the audio to the participant(s). McBurney, as an actor, was a constant

[93] Simon McBurney and Complicite, *The Encounter*, (London: Nick Hern Books, 2016)
[94] Simon McBurney and Complicite, *The Encounter*, (London: Nick Hern Books, 2016)

presence within the show. Although he played the role of Loren McIntyre, he sought to remind the audience that he was only the mouth piece for Loren McIntyre's story. On reflection, this was a way of effectively presenting a stage play and an audio/sound led production within the space without one form of presentation neglecting or undermining the other. *The Encounter* became layered as it produced an immersion within the Amazon Rainforest and simultaneously presented McBurney as a story teller away from the immersion. The seemingly seamless interchangeability between the two layers provided me with a point of focus, I questioned how Complicite were able to maintain a deep and rich immersion within McIntyre's story but still present McBurney as a story teller that was not telling his own story. The interchangeability of the two layers interacts directly with the key theme of memory, storytelling keeps memories alive and stories are a core element of what it is to be human; socialising, conversing. Presenting Simon McBurney as a mouth piece reminds the audience that his is conversing with us, telling us this true and old story. This interchangeability between the two layers not only enhances the effectiveness and quality of the production, but, I would argue that this interchangeability is a tool of attention manipulation. The running time of *The Encounter* is two hours long, which led me to question how McBurney and his team would be able to maintain a substantial, audio led immersion over a lengthy period. An example of a way that Complicite combatted this question was through the inclusion a section of audio in which Simon McBurney's own daughter, Noma, entered the room.

> ACTOR. A little while later, the fires were restarted and beiju was cooked. And Loren noticed that Barnacle had not eaten. He was back making his whistling arrows. Why hadn't he eaten?
> LOREN. He's fasting. Why is he fasting?
> Actor. *Some of us are friends. (Looped.)*
> *SFX: Door creaking open. The following is a conversation between the ACTOR, live, and a child, Noma McBurney, recorded aged five.*
> NOMA: *Dada, I'm hungry,*

> ACTOR. Sweetie, please…You're supposed to be in bed.
> NOMA. *Dada, why have you got your shoes on in the house? You don't want to get the floor dirty.*
> ACTOR. Well, I know, but Mama's not here, so…
> NOMA. *I'm hungry! Can I have something to eat please?*
> ACTOR. There isn't anything. Well, okay, I've got this packet of crisps. There you go, there's a crisp. Now, I am working…
> NOMA. *Night-night, Dada give me a kiss.*
> ACTOR. Now go to bed. And don't slam the door please, I've got a headache. *SFX: door slamming.* [95]

McBurney uses Noma and the opening of the door as a tool of guidance, disrupting my attention and immersion of the amazon rainforest and taking me back to a familiar world of a Western home. Yet it is only a disruption, with the door opening, a new narrative begins to occur and with the door shutting, the disruption ends. I could resume our immersion and desire to listen attentively because of the disruption. I wanted to resume the story out of curiosity not just because McBurney and Fry demand it. Breaks in linear story telling within headphone theatre allow for a space in which the participant can gather what they have heard and decide that they want to carry on listening. The 'distraction' manifests itself as an interchangeable plot point which maintains both the immersion of the rainforest and the audience's attention. It perhaps could be said that if Complicite wish would maintain the audience's attention, they must detach the audience from a sonically unknown environment and transport them into a space which is more familiar but still distant allowing for a breathing space to interpret the new information at a slower pace. The repetition of this removal from the immersion of the amazon and placed in the front room of a Western home is this breathing space detaches the audience's attention from the immersion at the sound of the door opening and then subsequently reattaches it at the sound of the door closing. *The Encounter* highlights that it is possible to effectively deliver a rich narrative and a

[95] Simon McBurney and Complicite, *The Encounter*, (London: Nick Hern Books, 2016) Pages 29-31.

deep immersion without one being neglected for the other through masterfully manipulating our attention within a lengthy headphone production.

Using this knowledge and insight I had gained from *The Encounter,* my thinking turned to how I would be able implement this knowledge of how to manipulate aural attention within my own longer piece of 'headphone theatre' – *Beached*. From my experience of headphone pieces, a lot of the drama lay with how we as participants interact with our own mind. Lynne Kendrick writes about aural attention and the action the participant takes as an active listener within headphone theatre. "Theatre audience is not a mere fraught navigation of sonic phenomena but is a conscious and purposeful negotiation of listening that requires conscious reconfiguration and adaption. It suggests movement, not just of sounds, but on behalf of the listener."[96] This supports my hypothesis that if aural attention is to be maintained, there must be constant level of mental reconfiguration and reassessment of what exactly they are actively listening too. Listening is a muddied process, one that requires a simultaneous negotiation between the sound designer and the listener, "within sound there is often more demand for our attention, than we can pay attention too." The 'distractions' cannot be filtered out by the sound designer regardless of the practitioner's intention, the distractions can take the form of anything the participant listens to. However, it is through anticipating these distractions to create paranoia, that aural attention can be attempted to be maintained. Distractions are inevitable, the participant is relying on an 'idea' and hypothesis however effective the immersion is. However, it is not for the practitioner to simply provide a soundscape for the participant to navigate, the sound design challenges the participants to 'attend' the 'headphone drama' this challenge creates both

[96] Kendrick, Lynne. *Theatre Aurality*. (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2017.) Page 64.

the drama itself and the onus for the participant to remain active towards listening. The moment the participant does not remain active, the immersion breaks, and it is difficult to regain the participant's attention. When approaching *Beached,* I wanted to investigate this 'challenge' whilst simultaneously exploring how to maintain a participant's attention for a longer period within a specifically narrative driven 'headphone performance'.

When approaching the subject of aural attention manipulation, I began with questioning how I would harness the knowledge I had gained from my experience of both *The Encounter* and other ''headphone performances'' such as Glen Neath and David Rosenberg's *Fiction* as discussed in Chapter two. I had outlined what my intended outcome of my second 'headphone' piece would be, in that I wanted to create a ''headphone performance'' rather than a ''headphone experience'', relying more so on a narrative to drive the drama. *The Encounter* and *Fiction* had educated my direction towards a drama that harnessed the innate ability for sound to seamlessly relocate a participant within a variety of time periods and differing locations; with *The Encounter* harnessing a consistent interchangeability of locations to help maintain a level of attention as touched on in the paragraph above. Kendrick writes "sound can take us anywhere it bloody wants,"[97] therefore in the role of a sound designer, I questioned where I wanted to take my participants to explore aural attention and present it as a 'challenge' for them. I decided to explore the route of trauma or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to be specific. I chose this subject matter as it enabled my protagonist to be able to access differing time periods through flashbacks and feelings of dread or paranoia. Although I was initially sceptical about the message my drama would present,

[97] Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), Pg 114

I was aware that if I wanted to experiment with aural attention and the resulting paranoia, I would have to explore difficult subjects to do so. I began writing with the idea that I would place my protagonist in the present within his own domestic environment, at work and at home. This was influenced by the idea that a domestic environment presented itself as a point of familiarity for the participants, drawing on the idea that was presented in the *The Encounter;* that these spaces can become a breathing space to comprehend what occurs within the traumatic flashbacks. I presented two differing flashbacks, one recounting the events of a traumatic event in which the protagonist experienced being dragged under water as a child. And the second event, which is closer to the present day, in which the events of his childhood present him from saving another child suffering a similar experience as he did. My next decision was regarding how I would divide the information given to the participants within the flashbacks to enable them to actively listen and work towards combatting the challenge I would set them as a sound designer and ultimately acknowledge the drama within the piece. I decided to divide the two flashbacks into five audio cues, the first being vague and nonspecific, a combination of both of Matthew's experiences on the beach, as a child and an adult.

> BEACH SFX 1: *Sound of children playing behind Matthew, the beach in front. Suddenly cut to the sound of running.*[98]

This audio segment is the shortest of all the flashback segments and features nine lines in from the beginning of the play. I began the play within the domestic environment and then introduced a distraction and therefore paranoia, unsettling the participants and simultaneously reminding them that they are not observers or eavesdroppers but that they are inside of the protagonist's head. Tim Crook writes "The key to beginning well

in drama is to create a dramatic moment of arrival"[99] and within an orthodox radio play this is the case. However, it is through my workings, this was not effective regarding my 'headphone' pieces, the drama and tension was derived from subverting the participant's idea of what they expect of the drama after the play initially begins. I began *Beached* within the world of the mundane, with the sound of phones and general sounds you would associate with an office environment. The initial calmness of the waves begins to seep into the aural sphere, sounds that connote mindfulness, only to become panicked with the sound of footsteps running away before returning to the office. This is repeated within the play; each flashback provides more information until the final segment chronologically reveals what happened when Matthew leaves the boy on the beach. When reflecting on *Beached* with my participants, a lot of students identified that my intention was to drip feed information with each flashback, with some labelling the flashbacks as "messy" which began a debate within the group. To counter the idea that the flashbacks were "messy", a few of the participants argued that they were not messy and that as a sound designer, I had carefully but successfully delivered on providing the participants with the information for them to understand and be able to evaluate the narrative. What I deem a success (as a Practitioner), however is that the participants could see both sides of the debate and ultimately reach the same conclusion, that they actively listened and gathered the information they needed to observe that the narrative and story was coherent. The participants declaring the flashbacks as "messy" meant that the participants had to act towards the audio. As a sound designer, I harnessed the 'distraction', providing blockades for the participant to work around in order to reach a point of understanding when the play finishes, ultimately maintaining their attention throughout. The interchangeability of the flashbacks and the present day

[99] Crook, Tim. *Radio Drama Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2005.) Page 115.

allow for the participants to calculate, evaluate and filter through what they have listened to and arrive at the information that is at the core of the drama.

Conclusion

My experience as a practitioner has enabled me to attempt to answer questions that prior to my experimentation, I did not have the catalogue of first-hand knowledge that I have now. I aimed to use my praxis to help my understanding of why both proximity and attention manipulation could be used as tools to help create an effective immersion and further enhance the growing image of 'headphone theatre' as an important branch of digital theatre. *Surprise Party* provided me with the opportunity to develop an understanding into the relationship and proximity between the information within the 'headphone' piece and the method in which a participant receives it. This provided me with an avenue to explore regarding how attention is a consistent reconfiguration of the information provided and the information received between the practitioner and the participant. Moreover, I was then able to expand on this new avenue within my longer ''headphone performance'' *Beached* as to help broaden my understanding of how a practitioner can further stretch and maintain attention for a longer period through the introduction of 'distractions'. I posed two key questions at the beginning of this chapter which are as followed: How have I effectively experimented with proximity for it to affect the overall quality of the immersive headphone piece? How have I engaged with the tools available, such as creating a sense of paranoia and sound design, to experiment with a participant's aural attention? I would argue that I have successfully experimented with the varying forms of proximity, namely investigating the proximity between the practitioner and the participant and the participant and the sound design. I have done so through evolving my scripts and tackling two different forms of 'headphone theatre' in order to receive a variety of results. However, I would have perhaps liked to have gathered a greater understanding into the proxemics within the spaces I used. I was

perhaps limited within my study, for many different reasons, regarding the space in which I performed and the spaces within the sonic diegesis of both pieces of 'headphone theatre'. Therefore, this is perhaps an area I would expand on if I were to further my study. Secondly, I would argue that I have successfully managed to assess my engagement with the tools such as the ability to generate a sense of paranoia and sound design in order to investigate the role that aural attention plays within 'headphone theatre'. I have been adventurous and explored difficult subjects to help further my understanding and unearthed new ideas surrounding the larger output of other companies through my understanding of my own practical output which I demonstrated in my discussion of Complicite's *The Encounter*. My knowledge of this field has been greatly enhanced through attempting to answer the questions that I only knew had to be answered as I progressed with my experimentation. However, I also acknowledge that this new and exciting branch of immersive/digital theatre is still evolving and subsequently is my thinking and hypothesis.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Headphone theatre is a continuously growing branch of digital theatre and one which demands new thinking is an attempt to decipher the medium's potential as an artistic form. This dissertation has begun to explore the methods in which headphone theatre practitioners are able steer their work in a direction that is in accordance with their artistic aims. I have drawn particular attention to several 'tools' that can be deployed by practitioners: proximity, guidance, aural attention manipulation and the resulting effect of paranoia. Within this dissertation, I have approached the analysis of the deployment of these tools with the use of relevant theories to support my exploration such as Lynne Kendrick's workings on *Theatre Aurality*[100], George-Home Cook's theories on *Aural Attention*[101] and Tim Crook's theories on *Radio drama*[102]. These theories are applied to different tools within each chapter of this dissertation alongside my attempt to contextualise these 'tools' within relevant case studies such as Darkfield's *Séance*[103]*;* Neath and Rosenberg's *Fiction*[104]; Janet Cardiff's *The Missing Voice: Case Study B*[105]*, Cabin Fever*[106] and Complicte's *The Encounter*[107]. My analysis of the 'tools' of manipulation, spans across three chapters. My analysis of external case studies has largely been restricted to the first two chapters except for my focus on *The Encounter* in Chapter Three. I have reserved the third chapter to explore my own practical work in detail, highlighting my own practical process from my position as a

---

[100] Kendrick, Lynne. *Theatre Aurality*. (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2017.)
[101] Home-Cook, George. *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves*. Houndmills, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.)
[102] Crook, Tim. *Radio Drama Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2005.)
[103] Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Séance*, prod Darkfield, Brighton Dome. 2017
[104] Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Fiction*, prod. Fuel Theatre, London and UK Tour. 2015.
[105] Cardiff J, *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*, prod. Artangel, London 1999.
[106] Cardiff J. and Miller, G. *Cabin Fever*. New York. 2004.
[107] McBurney, Simon. *The Encounter*, prod Complicite, The Barbican. 2018.

practitioner and how this enables insight from this specific angle. I have not, however limited my practical findings to this last chapter alone and have interwoven my findings throughout the first two chapters, highlighting how these case studies have driven my research.

Chapter 1: *Proximity and the 'headphone experience' – An Exploration of Séance,* discusses Darkfield's artistic intentions for their 'headphone experience' *Séance* as a short 'fairground' like experience. The exploration of the use of proximity within *Séance,* highlights how Darkfield uses the proximity between the participant and the space that the performance takes place in, and draws the importance of the relationship between the two. *Séance* harnesses the short 'headphone experience' to close the proximity between the 'sonic diegesis' and the participants. During the course of this MA project I have explored the use of physical proximity within *Séance* and subsequently expanded on my observations within my 'headphone experience' *Surprise Party.* I have acknowledged the methodology deployed by Darkfield within *Séance* and experimented with its influence within my own practical work. From my analysis, I can draw the conclusion that 'headphone experience's may sacrifice plot for intensity, but the flexibility of proximity and the effect of paranoia demonstrate that the potential for practitioner's use of such tools into creating an entertaining artistic output is plentiful and provides an exciting framework for future Headphone Theatre.

Within the first chapter, I highlight the benefits of a practitioner's manipulation of proximity. Chapter Two: *An Introduction into Audio Guidance, its Relationship with Paranoia and the Participant and Attention,* discusses the influence of guidance within headphone theatre. I begin the chapter by discussing the origins of guided audio work, establishing the basic requirements of an orthodox guide. Progressing on from this, I highlight how modern practitioners see the guide as an artistic tool more so than one

for information and introduce the idea of the paranoid guide within my case studies: Janet Cardiff's *The Missing Voice: Case Study B* and Rosenberg and Neath's *Fiction.* Furthermore, I explore how paranoia manifests itself through the guide and how the practitioner positioning the participant as an eavesdropper within their audio work alters how they attempt to attain attention. I expand on how the relationship between the guide and participant is shifting away from the traditional guide as provider of information and instruction and elaborate on how headphone theatre practitioners are now inverting this model in accordance to their aims.

Expanding on the practitioner's ability to manipulate attention, I demonstrate how I have used my research on my case studies and the relevant theories to help influence my practical research. In Chapter Three: *Intimate Narrative: An Analysis into my Practical Research* I explore the development of my two practical pieces *Beached* and *Surprise Party*. I managed to assess my engagement with a practitioner's tools of manipulation such as the ability to generate a sense of paranoia and sound design in order to investigate the role that aural attention plays within 'headphone theatre'. I have explored difficult subjects to help further my understanding and unearthed new ideas surrounding the larger output of other companies through my understanding of my own practical output which I demonstrated in my discussion of Complicite's *The Encounter*. I aimed to investigate all forms of proximity, however I do not feel this was the case. I focused much of my analysis on physical proximity and perhaps could have experimented further with other forms such as the recycling of the environment around the participant within the aurally generated reality. Overall, I achieved the core aim at the centre of this study which was to explore how a practitioner's tools to curate the study towards an artistic vision. Throughout this study, I became increasingly aware of how I had only just scratched the surface; however, I believe this is a comprehensive

introduction and exploration into the ‘tools’ that lay in a practitioner’s arsenal and demonstrates the potential for further study of this field.

Bibliography

Alston, Adam. Welton, Martin. *Theatre in the dark: shadow, gloom and blackout in contemporary theatre*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017.)

Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. (London: Routledge, 2008.)

Baclondon. "Shunt's David Rosenberg and writer Glen Neath on 'Ring' at Battersea Arts Centre." YouTube. March 06, 2013. Accessed January 04, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZc2bF50QJg.

Barker, Jennifer M, "Movement That Matters Historically: Janet Cardiff and George Bures

Miller's 2012 Alter Bahnhof Video Walk." *Discourse* 35, no. 2 (2013): 212-27. doi:10.13110/discourse.35.2.0212.

Benjamin, Walter, and J.A Underwood. *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*. (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2008.)

Bradley, Simon. "*History to Go: Oral History, Audiowalks and Mobile Media." Oral History* 40, no. 1 (2012): 99-110. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41806585.

Bradley, Simon. "*History to Go: Oral History, Audiowalks and Mobile Media." Oral History* 40, no. 1 (2012): 99-110. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41806585.

Cardiff J, *The Missing Voice (Case Study B),* prod. Artangel, London 1999.

Cardiff J. and Miller, G. *Cabin Fever*. New York. 2004.

Cardiff, J. "The Missing Voice (Case Study B)." Project. https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-missing-voice-case-study-b/. (Accessed April 10, 2018.)

Cardiff, Janet & George Bures Miller, *The Missing Voice: Case Study B,* 1999. Accessed April 10, 2018. http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/missing_voice.html.

Cardiff, Janet., and George Bures Miller "Cabin Fever"." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 1 (2006): 52-57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139997.

Cole, Emma. Ring Reviews. March 14, 2014. <http://www.glenneath.co.uk/home/Ring_Reviews.html.> (Accessed January 04, 2018.)

Contemporary Theatre Review, (2017): 366-378, DOI: 10.1080/10486801.2017.1343247

Crook, T 1999, *Radio Drama*, (Routledge: London) <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.serlib0.essex.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=63868&site=eds-live>. (viewed 28 September 2018,)

Crook, Tim. *Radio Drama Theory and Practice*. (London: Routledge, 2005.)

FanSHEN "Disaster Party.". <https://www.fanshen.org.uk/disaster-party/> (Accessed October 29, 2018.)

FanSHEN. "Out of Sight." <https://www.fanshen.org.uk/Out-of-Sight/> (Accessed October 29, 2018)

FanSHEN. <https://www.fanshen.org.uk> (Accessed October 29, 2018)

Finer, Ella. "The Aura of the Aural" *Performance Research* 22, no.3 (2017): 15-29.

Frieze, J., *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance.* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.)

Fuel, "FICTION." Lakeside Theatre. https://lakesidetheatre.org.uk/events/fiction/ (Accessed October 29, 2018.)

Home-Cook, George. *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves*. Houndmills, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.)

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

Kirk, Peader, Teoma J. Naccarato, and John Maccallum. "Intimate Listening." *Performance Research* 22, no. 3 (2017): 57-60.

Klich, Rosemary., "Amplifying Sensory Spaces: The In- and Out-Puts of Headphone Theatre",

Klich, Rosemary. (2017) 'Intro to PaR' [Powerpoint Presentation].

Koester, Joachim. *The Department of Abandoned Futures*. Turner Contemporary, Margate. 2016.

Machon, Josephine. *Immersive theatres: intimacy and immediacy in contemporary performance*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.)

McBurney, Simon. *The Encounter*, prod Complicite, The Barbican. 2018.

McBurney, Simon., and Complicite, *The Encounter*, (London: Nick Hern Books, 2016)

Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Fiction,* prod. Fuel Theatre, London and UK Tour. 2015.

Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Ring,* prod Fuel Theatre, London and UK Tour. 2012.

Neath G. and Rosenberg, D. *Séance*, prod Darkfield, Brighton Dome. 2017.

Nelson, Davia and Silva, Nikki. *Ground Zero Memorial Walk.* New York. 2002.

Oddey, Alison and White, Christine, *Modes of Spectatorship,* (Bristol: Interlect, 2009.)

Paige McGinley, Janet Cardiff, and George Bures Miller. "Eavesdropping, Surveillance, and Sound. Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller "Cabin Fever"." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 1 (2006): 52-57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139997

Roland Manthorpe, "Forget Immersive Theatre, This Play Takes Place in Total Darkness" Wired <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/glen-neath-david-rosenberg-darkfield-seance-edinburgh-festival> (accessed December 2018).

Rosenberg, David and Neath, Glen. "A Dialogue in the Dark". Post-Show Discussion, London. 2018.

Rosenberg, David. Fiction (Programme Notes), London, February, 2018

Saw, dir. James Wan, feat Cary Elwes and Danny Glover (Lionsgate Films 2004)

Shaughnessy, Nicola. *Affective Performance and Cognitive Science*. London:

Symposium at University of Kent, Canterbury, "Headphone Theatre, Radio and Podcasts." Headphone Theatre, Radio and Podcasts., June 2017.

Unfriended, dir. Leo Gabriadze, feat Shelley Hennig, Moses Jacob Storm (Universal 2014)

Appendices

Appendix A: Script for *Surprise Party*. This is the full script that was worked from for my first performance.

Appendix B: Script for *Beached.* This is the full script that was used to create my second performance.

Appendix C: USB. Recording of *Surprise Party*, ideally listened to with over-ear headphones or earphones, in complete darkness if possible.

Appendix D: USB. Recording of *Beached,* ideally listened to with over-ear headphones or earphones, in complete darkness if possible.

Appendix A: *Surprise Party* – An unguided experience in the dark.

This piece will explore the following lines of thinking

- *The minimal role of the guide and focus on the soundscape and the proximity between the participant and the aurally generated world.*

The play opens with scuttling, whispers and other suspicious sounds. – 2 mins.

A: Someone's coming. I can see headlights. – *Torch is shone through the blindfold.*

A: **Keep your head down.**

B: Take out the bulb.

A: But –

B: Before they come in. We're not finished.

The bulb is taken out. – 20 second sequence.

A: Hold this.

Gives the bulb to the participant. – 5 seconds.

B: **Now keep your head down.**

1 min sequence, shuffling, whispering, knocking into things.

Distant chatter. 10 second faint light as the door opens.

D: I'm going to the toilet.

C: Alright.

Sounds of the toilet door opening and shutting. 2 Seconds.

C enters the room. Tries the light switch. – Sound of light switch 4 seconds.

C: Has the bulb blown?

D: Huh?

C: I said has the bulb blown?

D: Don’t think so.

C: Huh?

D: *I don’t think so!*

C: It was working earlier.

D*: It was definitely working earlier!*

C tries the switch again, knocks into a surface. The bulb is dropped and smashes at the participants’ feet. *- 5 secs*

D: What was that?

C: I’m not sure.

Sound of breathing and shuffling to the sides of the participants – 5 secs.

C: There’s something in here.

D: Turn the lights on.

C: Bulbs gone.

D: Try it again.

Sound of the light switch being flicked – 5 secs.

C: It’s not working.

D: Light a candle.

C: Where are they?

D: Try the bottom drawer in the bathroom cabinet upstairs.

C: Okay.

D: One of the boxes of matches should be next to them.

C exits, goes upstairs. Sound of walking stairs – above 7 secs.

Shuffling, breathing – 5 secs.

A: We need to get out.

B: We’re not finished here.

A: They know somethings wrong.

(Turns to participant) **You dropped the bulb.**

B: It could have been anything.

'A' checks the window. Sound of it trying to be opened left side – 5 seconds.

A: You said it would be unlocked?

B: It should be.

A: It's not.

B: Fuck. Have you got it?

A: It's right next to me.

D exits the bathroom, sound of the toilet flushing, walks away into the kitchen. Sound of the bathroom door closing and the kettle being boiled -10 Seconds.

C: Where?

D: Bottom drawer!

C: Why are they in the bathroom?

D: When I have baths! If you can't find them, there's another box in the kitchen somewhere.

Sound of footsteps above, walking around the bathroom – 10 seconds.

C: Found them!

Sound of footsteps coming down the stairs – 7 seconds.

C re-enters, tries to light the candle.

Sound of failed matches being lit – 10 seconds.

C: Where did you get these matches from?

D: Huh?

C: They're shit. Really shit matches.

D: Use these ones then.

C walks towards the kitchen.

D: Wait, wait a second.

C: What?

D: Just a second.

C: Okay.

5 seconds pass.

D: Here.

C: What are you doing in there?

D: You'll see.

C comes closer to the living room. – 5 seconds. C lights the match, the sound of a statue smashing C's head. The body hits the floor. – 10 seconds.

D re-enters singing happy birthday, with a cake and candles.

D: Oh shi –

Lights up.

Appendix B: *Beached* – A 'headphone performance'

The participants enter a room and sit around an easel with a painting on it.

The participant takes the role of the protagonist Matthew, an office worker from Gorleston. Matthew suffered a traumatic event as a child, falling off a pier. Matthew found art and used art to over overcome this trauma. However, Matthew witnesses an event at the beach which changes him.

Carrie – Matthew's Wife

Jake – Matthew's colleague.

Colleagues – Cathy, William and Mary.

Mother – Carrie's Mother.

We are in Matthew's place of work, an office environment. The audio will be centred from Matthew's viewpoint, his voice shall be experienced from the centre of the binaural microphone.

Jake (J): (Matthew) Did you want a coffee?

Matthew (M): No.

J: Cathy, would you like a coffee?

Cathy: I'm okay thank you Jake.

J: William, would you like a coffee buddy?

William: Erm, no I'm good. Thanks, though Jake.

J: That's all – Mary would you like a coffee?

Mary: Oh, go on then Jake.

Mary and Jake walk off chatting behind Matthew. The sound of the office, the phone rings again on the right side, laughter on the left-hand side.

Sound of a seagull interrupts the space. The office sounds fade. The seagull is joined by the sound of the beach.

BEACH SFX 1: Sound of children playing behind Matthew, the beach in front. Suddenly cut to the sound of running.

Back to the office.

J: Matt. Matt.

M: Jake.

J: Here's your coffee.

M: I didn't want one.

J: Yes but I thought you needed a bit of a pick up.

M: Pick me up.

J: You know, you just looked a bit shit that's all. Like you felt a bit shit.

M: I'm okay, just, working.

J: You're not working.

M: I am.

J: You're not Matt, you've been staring out of that window for the last ten minutes.

M: Ten minutes?

J: Ten minutes Matt.

M: Ten minutes, really?

J: Did you paint that?

M: Don't touch it.

J: It's very good. I like all the colours. Is it a table?

M: Please don't touch it. It's a pier.

J: Oh, which one?

The picture frame is dropped.

BEACH SFX 2: The SFX of crashing waves. The SFX of a fairground overhead, and a packed beach in front. SFX of Matthew's TE fades and the SFX of young children playing in the sea this time with the sound of pencils hitting the paper.

Crashing waves become the sound of a washing machine.

SCENE II

Carrie: I hope you put that on a quick wash?

M: Mmm?

Carrie: Matt we are going out in an hour.

M: To your mothers?

C: Matt please.

M: To your mothers then.

C: Take five minutes Matt, sit in your studio.

M: I'm okay, just -

C: Was it Jake again?

M: I'm not sure he does any work.

C: Paid to be a pain.

M: He just buzzes, buzzes in your ear.

Pause

Then knocks paintings off your desk.

C: Matt, no, was it?

M: Yeah, it's okay, just needs a new frame.

C: So it's not broken?

M: Well.

C: Please tell me it's not broken.

M: It's just stained and the frame has snapped a little. He made me a coffee.

C: Matthew, we can go back there. If it helps. We can go back and you can take a couple of sketches.

M: It's done now.

Silence, the sound of the washing machine.

C: Well get ready then.

M: Sure.

The sound of a bird hitting the window.

C: What was that?

M: I think –

C: What on earth/

M: What is it?

C: It was a seagull

Sound of the washing machine suddenly gets louder.

BEACH SFX 3: The flashback is sped up, we hear the kids behind, the waves in front. Pencils and heavy breathing are synced.

Matt wakes to the sound of rain hitting the window and accompanying thunder on the right side of the bed.

SCENE III

M: How long has it been raining?

C: Not long, a storm rolled in off the coast.

M: Has it kept you up?

C: Like storms always do. I'll put the kettle on.

Carrie exits.

M: I don't feel like I've slept.

C: Mmm?

M: I haven’t slept. All this rain. What happened with that bird?

20 seconds

Was it dead?

10 seconds

Did it get up, did it fly away?

20 seconds

It’s flooding.

5 seconds

The road is flooding.

3 seconds

Carrie the road is flooding, it’s half way up the curb.

Matt is clearly distressed. Carrie enters with a cup of tea.

C: Shh, what’s the matter?

M: Did that bird get up?

C: Yes, almost straight away.

M: Okay.

C: That’s good.

M: Yeah it is.

C: You need to sleep, you’re all over the place.

M: I’m not sure I will.

C: The storm will blow over soon.

M: The wind’s up as well.

C: Matthew.

M: It’s the water, it’s filling up so quickly.

C: It’s reminding you isn’t it.

M: I can’t stop thinking about it.

C: You’re here now, you’re okay. You’re safe, that was years ago.

M: Jake dropping the frame, that seagull.

C: I’ll get you a glass of water.

Pause.

M: and that boy.

Back in the office. The next morning. The sound of a phone rings. It intrudes. The sound of typing. Heavy breathing.

SCENE IV

J: Matthew.

M: Jake.

J: I bought you a new frame. I went home and I felt terrible about knocking it over.

M: That’s okay.

J: Did you see the rain last night?

M: Torrential.

J: It woke me up, I looked outside and saw this cat meowing, soaked.

The typing stops.

Matthew?

The typing starts again.

It’s all a bit strange, the seagull the other day squawking at that window and then the cat. It was staring right at me. I was going to bring it into the house but my wife is allergic. Anyway, It upset me a bit. I felt quite, well, you know. This very wet cat was being pummelled with water and all I was doing was staring at it. Oh well, I’m sure it was alright. Found a radiator or something. They always do that. You know, find a radiator.

The typing is continuing.

Would you like a coffee Matthew?

M: No.

J: Cathy, would you like a coffee?

C: I'm okay thank you Jake.

J: William, would you like a coffee buddy?

W: Erm, no I'm good. Thanks, though Jake.

J: That's al – Mary would you like a coffee?

M: Oh, go on then Jake.

The typing gets louder and then stops, the phone rings. There is a rustling of a newspaper on the left.

W: You seen this? They've found a body on the beach, a boy's body, on the beach. You don't reckon it's that Hedgley kid, do you?

C: Didn't he go missing at that caravan park?

W: They're close to each other; caravan parks usually are.

The sound of pecking at the window. Everything zones out. Apart from the pecking. Sound of squawking)

BEACH SFX4: We hear the sound of water completely around us. Pencil being scribbled down at a fast pace. Then the sound of a fairground ride. This is a blurring of Matthew's traumatic event as a child and the event at the beach.

Back to reality, heavy breathing. Sequence, all eyes on Matthew.

J: Matthew, are you alright?

M: I fell off the pier. I went under too.

The sounds of the office have stopped, there is no chatter. Matthew says nothing.

J: You weren't yourself for a moment there.

Matthew says nothing, heavy breathing.

J: Why don't you go home.

Heavy breathing, one final breath.

SCENE V

Art Studio – 5/7 minutes.

Radio on the left hand side playing *Radio 6.*

1: Sound of a paintbrush dipped in water, sound of seagulls flying overhead, fades out.

2: Sound of a paintbrush dipped in water, sound of waves crashing, fades out.

3: Sound of a paintbrush dipped in water, sound of children playing abruptly stops. The action is repeated. Matthew stops. He puts the paintbrush down.

The door suddenly opens on the left, It's Carrie.

C: Tea?

Matthew says nothing, Carrie moves closer

C: That's quite something.

M: What is?

C: It's moody, there's a steel to it.

M: I'm not sure.

C: No? What is in the middle?

M: It's not finished, it's nowhere near finished.

C: Are you not going to tell me?

M: Well.

C: Can I guess?

Matthew says nothing.

C: It's a boat, a silhouette of a boat. With its captain standing on the deck, looking back at you, Matthew. I'd say, I'd say posing. I'm not quite sure on the tone of this one though.

Pause

I think it's telling me that I should tread water for a bit.

M: What does that mean?

C: It means that you have stamina.

M: I feel like I'm treading water.

C: Okay.

M: Just staying upright.

Pause

C: Stay upright sweetheart.

M: This is from the other day.

C: The beach?

M: I did a few sketches.

C: This is lovely Matt.

M: Lovely.

C: This one will be special.

M: It feels unique.

C: Yes, special.

Pause

M: But they aren't the same thing.

C: What isn't?

M: Unique and special.

Pause

C: You don’t think it’s special?

M: I don’t think I want it to exist.

Pause

But it does

C: Yes.

M: and if I don’t get this image out of my head/

C: Onto canvas

M: Right. If I don’t get it out of my head then it’ll. I’m not sure.

C: You’re losing stamina.

M: I’m okay.

C: Stop pretending please, what’s happened?

M: It’s like the pier Carrie, it’s happening again.

C: What do you mean?

M: The boy in the water, I left the bloody boy in the water, just left him there to be dragged away.

Mother: Are you two in here?

The door opens. Mother enters

Mother: Oh, there you are, I knocked a couple of times on the front door you know.

C: Oh, I’m sorry. Erm, let’s let’s go to the kitchen.

Mother: Did you hear about the Hedgley boy at the caravan park? With his sister?

Carrie and Mother begin to walk off, the chatter becomes a mumble.

There is a lengthy time where we can hear the mumbling

M: Stay upright.

The seagull enters, is closer.

BEACH SFX5: The beach is empty, calm waves, and SFX of a flask of tea being opened. The SFX of tea being sipped. The SFX of a seagull on the left hand side. The SFX of pencil beginning to be scribbled down. The SFX of a young girl and young boy enter from behind. The SFX of the young boy and young girl in front playing. The SFX of sketching gets quicker. The SFX of wind brushes past on the right-hand side. The SFX of a girl beginning to yell for help, pleading with the waves. "David, David, help help, he's gone under, he's not come back up." SFX of Matthew's breathing intensifies. SFX of gathering things. SFX of the waves and yelling getting quieter, Matthew running away. SFX of a seagull squawking.

The seagull squawks one more time and flies off.

SFX *Breathing. Silence. The painting is finished. Dipped in black, the sound of the boy yelling for help is revealed, it is continuous until the paintbrush is put down.*

M: Carrie. Carrie, could you drive me to the police station? I need to give a statement.

Matthew walks off, ***the microphone is left in the studio****. The sound of the car driving off. The seagull enters, pecks at the ear, pecks at the radio, there is a radio fuzz.*

Radio: The body of a boy that was discovered on the Gorleston Beach four days ago has been identified as David Hedgley, aged 8 years old. A witness to the event has come forward to the police…*the audio trails off.*

LIGHTS UP

There is a finished painting in the centre of the room, there is an image of a young boy amongst the waves.