

Solo for reading bodies.

On Audience

and Antonia Baehr's and Henry Wilt's *Un après-midi*

featured by Petra Sabisch



Jean Philippe / photo: Make-Up Productions

0'00

Prélude 1:

Please choose
the adequate
distance between
your eyes
and the text
so
that
you
are
able
to
do
your
reading
solo.

0'00

Prélude 2:

Take a clock and make sure that you start exactly at 0'00 of the score, so that you are synchronized with every other solo interpreter. Whatever happens in your solo, it is important that you respect the time-score.

0'00

Lude:

Decide when it's time for you to start the solo and go ahead.

0'01....

Read and interpret the following instructions.

Dear Interpreter,

Here are some general instructions for you:

- *Relax and let yourself be guided. It's a challenge.*
- ***Do what your MD text tells you to do***
- *The MDs words are edited. So there are cuts and silences. Don't worry the voices text are is always back after a silence. You won't be left alone. I edited the voices words, so sometimes you'll hear a male voice, and sometimes a female voice you are free to ascribe all kinds of gender to the writing persons. Sometimes they change abruptly.*
- *You can readjust your volume glasses, put your earphones ear-plugs back in, blink to water your contactlenses, etc. during the reading show if you need to.*
- *Don't try to be in sync. with anybody. Just follow your personal MD instructions. It doesn't matter what the other interpreters or the audience does.*
- *Don't try to be funny or exaggerated*
- *Don't try to entertain the audience*
- *Just stay with the instructions. The more you concentrate on them, the most thrilling it is to watch the piece. It's not about creating with interpretations of the instructions. It's about following them the best you can.*
- ***Don't try to hide your mistakes and your corrections!!!***
- *If you don't understand something: don't skip the instruction but interpret it. That is: don't wait until you understand something again but make up a meaning and stay active.*
- *The same is true for when it gets too fast: don't wait until it gets slower again, but just try to do the most of it you can.*
- *Pardon the speakers writers if when they make a slip of the tongue on the recording language lapsus.*
- *Right after the show, there'll be 15 min. to make some foto of you*
- *"Stop button" Stop reading for if you have a major problem: If you think you can solve the problem yourself, just go backstage (leave the text), fix it, figure it out and come back to continue. It doesn't matter if you lost synchronicity.*
- *If you think you can't solve the problem alone, look at Antonia Werner Hirsch (see fig. 2) and raise your finger. She will walk backstage with you. But hopefully, you won't have any problem.*
- *I can't promise to make you happy*
- ***It's an exercise in concentration***
Don't try to move in slow motion

Thank you very much,

Henry Wilt.

Petra Sabisch

2'38

The score presented above, is the note for the interpreters of Baehr's and Wilt's *Un après-midi*, which I have re-adapted for the present solo. You can reconstruct the original-score, if you read the text with all terms strikethrough and if you leave out the terms in grey colour. Try to reconstruct it within one minute.

6'09

Ingredients, history and making off *Un après-midi*

The first version of the piece *Un après-midi* was performed in April 2003 in *Ausland* Berlin, before being premiered one month later in the festival "Reich und berühmt" at Podewil, Berlin. The ingredients of this show consist of 4 minidisc players, 4 recorded minidisks, 1 recorded CD, 4 interpreters and 1 light/ sound technician. Furthermore, there is a space without any props, except one suspended big black curtain that separates the left from the right side of the stage, several marks of different colours on the ground and four ghettoblasters around the stage. Another sound equipment, steered by the technician is used to make the CD audible to the audience. In the versions I saw (Berlin #6 and Frankfurt #7), there was no special stage floor and the windows were opened. As usual, the stage is in front of several rows of chairs for the audience.

7'10

The interpreters of *Un après-midi* are chosen in the city where the show is performed. They change from one show to the other. The crucial point is that none of the interpreters knows the instructions before performing them. Second, it has to be highlighted that the four interpreters are asked to dress and behave in such a way, that they pass as another gender. In the Frankfurt version (*Un après-midi* #7, 25 August 2004), Antonia Baehr and Henry Wilt decided to choose interpreters, which have lived at least for a while as a woman or declare being a woman. So the four interpreters were asked to pass as men, which does explicitly not mean to reproduce all circulating stereotypes of masculine behaviour, but to take over a convincing temporary identity as a man.

7'55

Once the audience has taken their seats, the performance starts by verifying the synchronicity of the four MDs and the technician's CD. From this moment on, the whole performance is steered by the recorded instructions. As a part of the audience, you will perceive four corporeal interpretations of something that you don't know. As a part of the performers, you will perceive one soundscore of something you don't know beforehand.

From the beginning to the end of the performance, a nearly unperceptible “soundscape” is emitted by the four ghettoblasters surrounding the stage. This “soundscape”, inspired by Jamie Lidell’s “taught to box”, is the splitting of a sound recording into four frequency bands, which are then played back on the four boom boxes. Whereas Jamie Lidell took a recording of *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* by Claude Debussy, splitted it into several frequencies and replayed them on boom boxes fixed one by one to moving bikes, the recordings of Baehr and Paulun are said to have taken place in Baehr’s room at five o’clock in the morning on a sunny sunday. The performance-sound is thus shapened by merely perceptible birds, unidentifiable murmurs and vibrations, or as Baehr describes: “What the audience hears in the actual performance space on the four boomboxes surrounding them, *is one person’s virtual movements* between these four sound sources. her movements follow a reading of the score.”

A reading of the score of the performance of a score as a reading of a score...

9’23

Interlude

Please study attentively the following score.

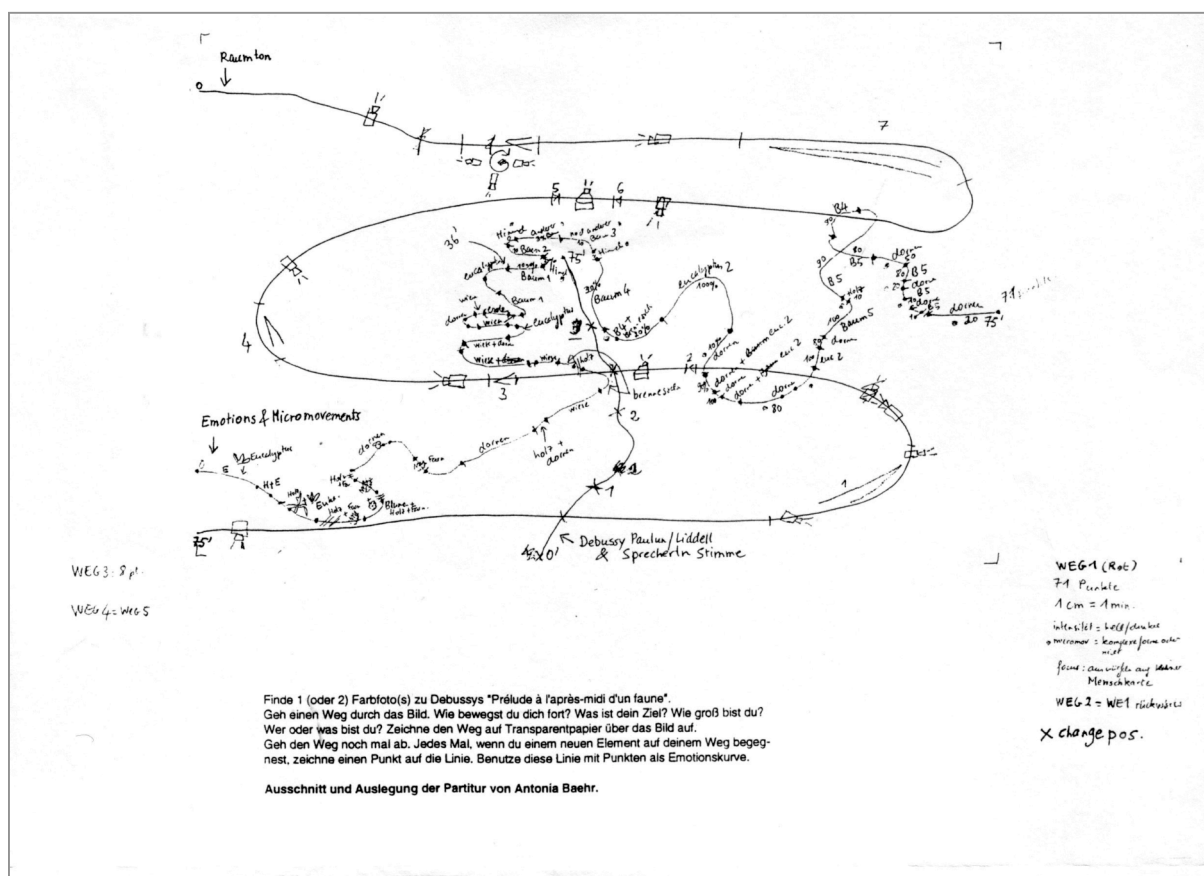


fig. 1: Extract and interpretation of Antonia Baehr's score / photo: Make-Up Productions.

Un après-midi deals precisely with this virtuality of movements. No longer opposed to the Real, as Deleuze points it out, the virtuality means the reality of continuous variations of variables in opposition to the actual determination of constant relationships.¹ Those critics, who spend their time to finally convict Deleuze of adherence to an ontological or vitalist thought, miss completely the point: Deleuze's virtual is virtual precisely because it's emergence is being processed in an always specific way by his writing.² Therefore it is not enough to consider only what he writes, for Deleuze's writings constantly process the productive differential between what he says and how he says it. His texts are about anything else than the processing of this shifting gap between the specificity of each single matter and the method it unfolds. The virtual as an emergence of possibilities is already part of the procedure longing for it, although this emergence as an emergence can neither be controlled nor produced. There is no guarantee for the virtual. Only by the very process of a specific writing against the real real, the deleuzian virtual has a chance to emerge as the potential to write otherwise. The virtual thus produces its latent presence only by a permanent processing of and within the actual determinations. That's why the virtual vanishes, when you insist in affirming its presence. Without process, there's no virtual.

The virtuality I see at work in *Un après-midi* derives from the fact, that the audience can not hear the instructions. Even if there is another soundlayer besides the discrete "soundscape" described above, there is no means to "know" the concrete instructions: The soundlayer audible to everybody in the audience includes Debussy's *Prélude à un après-midi d'un faune*, some rather technical and specific instructions for body movements, and a dialogue taken from the film *Kings & Disasters* made by Werner Hirsch. It thus offers a lot of different layers to "read" the ongoing little and precise movements, but the audience can never be certain, that their interpretation-layer is identical to the one that steers the movements.

To be clear: Important is not the fact that you do not know the instructions. There are so many performances and nobody cares about the cue-text for the performers. It is something else which is at stake at this point: Precisely because you know, that the whole performance is steered by instructions, you know that you do not know them. And in staging this impossibility of knowledge, controll or a total understanding by the audience, the actual movements and their principles, motivations and schemes let emerge the potential for their

¹ Gilles Deleuze/ Félix Guattari : Tausend Plateaus: Kapitalismus und Schizophrenie, Berlin 1987.

² Cf. as well to Cary Wolfe : Critical Environments. Postmodern Theory and the pragmatics of the "outside", University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/ London, 1998.

alterity, that is a virtuality. Therefore *Un après-midi* is no longer a performance *about* knowing and understanding, neither about identifying nor emotions. It is a landscape, a mapping of a thought, a body, many bodies, sensations. It just processes, what the audience does anyway: producing a show by its gaze and interpretations. Permanently balanced within this gap between the latency of present scores, cybernetic programs etc. and the concrete gestures, postures and attitudes, asking to be reshaped in any single moment, in any transformation of their actual configurations, the audience finally becomes what it is: a multiplicity of reading bodies, extremely productive.



fig 2: Werner Hirsch, Francfort 2004 / photo: Make-Up Productions

14'51

Audience

But if the audience becomes that multiplicity, that every single person already stands for, just by producing readings, what is then the difference to the interpreters on stage?

Of course, the interpreters have a special light from above, they have more space around them, they are more vertical than the audience, and last but not least they got a minidisc with a score. Ok. They have different props. But it is interesting that they cannot “dispose of” them as one disposes of a knowledge or of goods etc. As they subscribed to follow the unknown score the best as possible, they are on the same level of knowledge as the audience. They just listen and thus form in the literal sense of the word nothing else than an audience. Being observed by another audience, they do exactly the same thing as this audience: they interpret. The only difference then lies in the fact, that the performers’ interpretation of the

fig. 3: The main score of *Un après-midi* / photo: Make-Up Productions.

17'07

Gendering

Instead there are two main layers of scores. First, the score recorded on a minidisc and second, the one to pass as a man. Whereas the former proceeds the permanent figuration and disfiguration of perceived scores, the second one processes gendering. Gendering means here the double process of “passing as” and the perception of gender as always already linked to its interpretation. If I follow the assumption, that there is no body without gender and no perception of gender without construction of gender, how can the bodies of Wilt and Baehr be described? What are they alike?

The most striking effect of these strange and familiar bodies seems to me that they become, while morphing into maleness, extremely singular, particular and specific. Paradoxically, their longings for a certain generic produce simultaneously the withdrawal of the generic. Somehow, these bodies do no longer refer to the generics of masculinity, femininity or queerness. They are incomplete, unfinished, completely faked and absolutely true. They cause the drag effect as their truth, and stage this effective truth as a cause to cause on, which is affirmed and contradicted in every single breath.

What you see, is thus not the perfection of drag technics (even if these techniques are skillfully applied and efficiently used), but the processuality of passing. And this passing is, as a processual one, always specific, concrete and - singular. This singularity has not to be mixed up with a hidden but somehow authentic personality, revealing “itself” in the very moment of drag. It is just the effect of processing a generic male within a specific body, its circumstances and interpretations. And as a such, as the (dis)continuous variation of the variables of gendering, the gendering in *Un après-midi* coincides with the virtual.

19'07

Choreography

There are choreographed bodies, bodies which are being written and writing at the same time, bodies obeying to scores, interpreting scores, sedimentations of scores. Bodies which constantly disfigure and thus change the *choré*, that is the “ground” from which they differ. *Un après-midi* is not a choreography *about* something. It is rather processing multiple some things within their concrete framings and interpretations. Landscapes and mappings of the virtual. Or as Mårten Spångberg formulates in his lecture *I don't want to know anything about it*: “... it is choreography in the sense that it unfolds performance itself as discourse, or even not only performance, but also the ensemble of conventions surrounding it, which is to say a performance that unfolds not only what am I perceiving in what I am perceiving, but performs

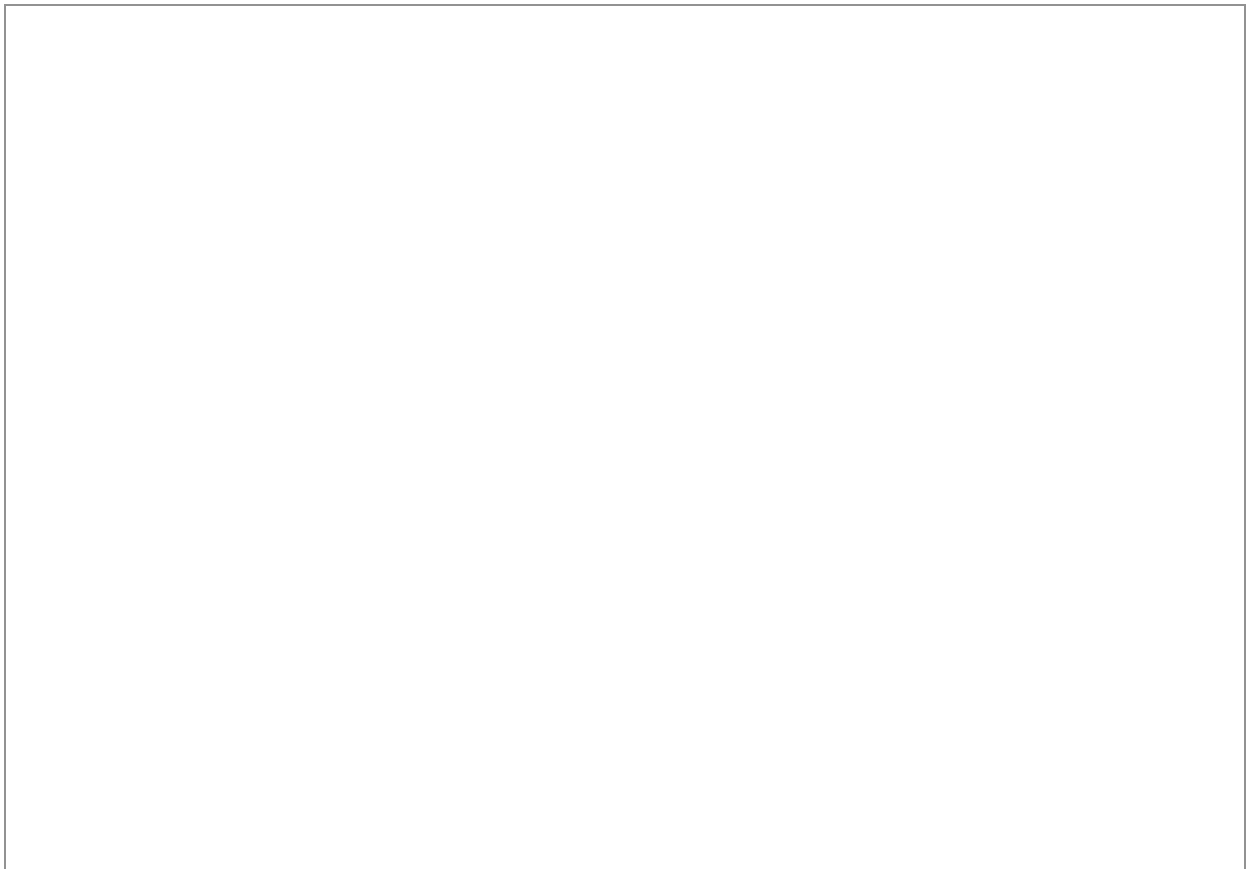
a shift from a position of the interpretation of an utterance towards the interpretation of what representational orders is governing the experience. In other words a performance that travels beyond representing 'a' discourse; instead the focus of the investment is on the ideology with which he, the performer, as much as the spectator engages in the process of unfolding. "³

The specificity of *Un après-midi* resides precisely in the choreography as a means to process these gaze regimes and interpretational registers, not in order to control them or by imposing a particular one, but in order to reflect them as multiple unfoldings, that is as a possibility for change.

21'03

Interlude 2:

Please take 90 seconds to remember or imagine the map, that John Cage proposed as the score for his *Solo for Voice 3*; a map which has been one of the starting points for *Un après-midi*.



³ This lecture has been held in the frame of the festival *Lignes de corps* at *Espace Pier Pasolini* in Valenciennes on 30 November 2002.

22'33''

Audience

While thinking of the audience as multiplicity of different reading bodies, I found the following definition in my old school Dictionary of English.

au-di-ence *n.*

1 [GC] the people listening to or watching a performance, speech, television show, etc.: *The audience was/ were very excited by the show.* | *an audience of 20,000* **2** [C] a formal meeting between somebody powerful and somebody less important: *The queen allowed him an audience of 20 minutes* **3** [U] law freedom to be heard, as in court.

Dictionary of Contemporary English. Ein umfassendes einsprachiges Wörterbuch für Schule und Hochschule. Langenscheidt-Longman, Gütersloh 1985.

First of all I thought about the striking difference between this definition and the audience in *Un après-midi*: The audience, - I had counted around 80 persons in the Francfort version -, was no longer qualifiable by mass characteristics, neither by a homogeneous reaction. But when I came to the last point, which inverses in a way the audience's agency as that, what is heard in a certain conventional setting, I thought, that this was exactly the point in *Un après-midi*: An audience listened by another audience, the same audience, other, audience of the audience. And while contemplating even longer these words, it suddenly came to my mind, that as part of the audience on stage, I have been very excited by the show. And finally, has the temporal interstice of *Un après-midi*, - lasting rather 35 than 20 minutes -, not been accorded by the generosity of King Antonia and Queen Henry? How could one describe then the relationship between faunes and audiences?

There are ways to perceive and ways to perform. There are ways to perform perceiving and ways to perceive performing. Perception of the performance of perception as a performance. Persons who perceive the performance of perception as a performance are called audience. Persons who perform the performance of perception as a perception are called performers, at least if they do it in the very presence of persons who perceive their performance performing the perception. A performer is thus already part of the audience, as the audience is a constitutive part of the performance. Performing audiences performing performances. Or reading bodies reading bodies reading bodies.

24'57

Postlude

Please take now a photo of you and send it to sabisch.petra@freenet.de in order to take part in our documentation of the solo for reading bodies. Please add a note, whether you want your photo or not to be shown in our exhibition *On Audience*, that we prepare for the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (December 2005). Thank you very much of having run the solo.

Petra Sabisch

39'57

End