
Part III: **Time and Space in Poetic Sound Art**

Holger Schulze

How to Remember, Sonically? Affective Situated Listening in Audioliterary Docupoetry: *Memory Loops* (2010) and *Audio.Space.Machine* (2019)

What do you and I remember? I don't mean your or my personal history as we commute to work, socialize with friends and acquaintances, or meet a romantic partner; but how do we remember in a larger social and historiographical framework? In other words, what do you or I remember about the past of the societies in which we live? We learn about it from school textbooks, from media productions of various formats and qualities, but also from other people who tell us about it, and from public sites and events of remembrance: our cultural memory in this sense, following Jan Assmann, clearly transcends our everyday experience (cf. 1988)

These acts of remembrance seem to require stability, permanence, and grandeur. Monuments are built of stone, erected and unveiled, decorated and greeted with ceremonial rituals at regular intervals. They imply eternity as their minimum lifespan. Or so we think. Some readers of this chapter might be inclined to add: isn't sound – and, for that matter, poetry – necessarily ephemeral, transitory, purely subjective, and rather unpredictable? Can't it only be understood in a personal context and may not even be suitable for more general and long-term acts of memory? However, these assumptions about monuments and sound are indeed mainly a kind of cliché. On the one hand, we can clearly recognize here the old *audiovisual litany* (cf. Sterne 2003, 15–16; 2012, 9–10) of what sound should really be and how it should be distributed across gender roles, forms of interaction, ascribed meanings and material qualities, and, on the other hand, what I would like to call the *monumentalist litany* of how a society should reasonably remember historical events. I wonder: perhaps it is actually the other way around?

Sound has been recorded and preserved for about 160 years, as have the sounds of spoken words, political speeches, and poetry readings. In recent decades, since the 1980s, a growing movement of anti-monumentalism has proposed and installed a series of alternative monuments and alternative monumental practices, accompanied by a series of investigations and reflections to understand how the traditions of building monuments can, perhaps even must, be transformed into a radically different and more adequate practice of remembrance. These new anti-monuments reject the self-congratulatory and rather obsessive at-

tempt to erect yet another massive edifice in praise or mourning of historical events; they operate in some cases not vertically but horizontally, sometimes even digging into the ground and exhibiting relics underground; and in many cases these anti-monuments leave the act of remembering solely to those who visit the anti-monument and can even contribute to it. It is crucial to note that these new practices have usually grown out of a desire to mark a break, a rupture with imperialist, nationalist, colonialist, racist, sexist and homophobic traditions of the past: Be it Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Monument Against Fascism* (1986), be it Do-Ho Suh's *Public Figures* (1998) or Nicholas Galanin's *Shadow on the Land* (2020) or the *I Am Queen Mary* statue in Copenhagen, designed and installed by La Vaughn Belle and Jeannette Ehlers (2018): all these anti-monuments were born out of a desire to propose significantly different commemorative practices as a material documentation of this break with past traditions. Their alternative practices of commemoration intend to contribute to a different way of living together in a society – also by remembering differently (cf. Stevens et al. 2018).

However, even if one accepts that sonic forms of remembrance can be understood as a kind of alternative or anti-monument, a very pragmatic and almost craft-oriented question remains: is it at all possible to create and offer to the public a sound artwork that can really serve as a kind of memorial, anchor or vehicle for national memory? And if so, how do sound works that aspire to this goal succeed? What are the production techniques and rhetorical means that make this possible? And if language in the poetic sense is employed in such a sound artwork, what are the poetic strategies and means of poetry that can be meaningfully employed?

Two Works of Audioliterary Docupoetry

In this chapter, I will focus on a particular use of poetic strategies that is situated within a form of artistic practice that uses the rewriting of existing documents, testimonies, and documented recordings. This poetics of collecting, arranging, re-arranging, and re-presenting existing historical material clearly continues a larger tradition of documentary poetry (cf. Metres 2007; Harrington 2011; Wazzan 2023) and documentary theater (cf. Lehmann 2006; Logge 2012) – or, in our case, experimental sound pieces. This thread of tension between preserving or reworking of historical material will guide us through the following sections of this chapter.

In the recent history of sound and media art, there are two striking examples of the use of these poetic strategies within sound and radio productions with the

purpose of contributing to memory culture: *Memory Loops* (2010) by the artist and performer Michaela Melián and *Audio.Space.Machine – Ein Bauhaus-Konzeptalbum* (2019) by author and actor Christian Wittmann and composer and performer Georg Zeitblom. Both works take historical texts and stage them with different goals in mind, be it an affective depth in Melián's *Memory Loops* or ironic affects in Zeitblom and Wittmann's *Audio.Space.Machine*. The production strategies used to create these affects will be at the centre of my analysis of both pieces.

Memory Loops won the art competition "Victims of National Socialism – New Forms of Remembrance and Commemoration" by the city of Munich. It was produced over a period of 18 months in close collaboration with the public radio station Bayerischer Rundfunk and the City of Munich. It consists of 24 hours of spoken word recordings with musical accompaniment based on archival testimonies of the Holocaust victims: 16 hours in German and 8 hours in English, covering 300 locations in Munich. They were all accessible by dialing a number on a mobile phone at a time when internet access in public spaces was usually impossible or cumbersome for most mobile devices – before the age of the ubiquitous smartphone. On September 23, 2010, this work was publicly presented to the city at the Munich City Hall. The second piece I want to address in this chapter, *Audio.Space.Machine*, was commissioned by the Deutschlandfunk Köln in 2018, in collaboration with two other German public radio stations, NDR and SWR. It was developed over a period of about a year. In the so-called *Bauhausjahr* 2019, it was the contribution of the national radio to the centennial of the founding of the Bauhaus School of Art and Design in Weimar in 1919. On January 12, 2019, it was first broadcast in a 60-minute version, and a little later it was presented in a 12-track binaural version at the "100 Jahre Bauhaus" in the Akademie der Künste Berlin.

In late 2023 and early 2024, I conducted studio visits and interviews with the producers, artists and authors of these works (cf. Melián 2023, 2024; Zeitblom 2024). Both works of sonic docupoetry were produced for radio and commissioned by a radio station – and both of them were at the same time accessible for a public audience. In the following, I wish to show how these works contribute to memory culture through their audioliterary practices in a sense that they are *digital poetic sound artworks*. They are clearly *sound artworks* by virtue of the production medium, the artistic techniques, and the presentation format chosen by their authors, composers, and performers. They are *poetic* in the sense of docupoetry (cf. Wazzan 2023), because the textual basis of these pieces was not an existing score, but the authors created the acoustically presented texts in a writing process based on existing documents (cf. Benthien et al. 2018). Last but not least, they are also *digital*, because on the one hand they both explicitly and extensively use digital post-production techniques, and on the other hand they are both pre-

sented in a distinctive way that allows the listener to access them in the public sphere: in the streets and public squares of the city of Munich, as in the case of *Memory Loops*, or in various exhibition spaces of a cultural institution, as in the case of *Audio.Space.Machine*.

Memory Loops: Affective Depth through Archival Transcription and Musical Layering

The production of *Memory Loops* underwent various stages; it was, needless to say, not produced solely by the one person that is listed as its author and creator. In my first conversation with Michaela Melián she stressed how this piece was grounded in the work of mainly two groups of people: the first working group being a sort of core team: Michaela Melián as the driving force, conceptual director and main performer worked together with her production assistant Kirsten Böttcher. Mario Thaler, a long-term collaborator with her band F.S.K., did the studio production with her; the website was designed and programmed by Stefan Ammon, also a familiar colleague and working partner of hers; and the mobile app was again produced by another team member. Casting of the 19 voices, among them also those of children, was done externally and so was the voice recording and the translation of all texts into English. The second group of people consisted of experts and colleagues who contributed their perspectives and knowledge in regard of the specific topic of this piece: the deportations and the everyday violence against citizens in Munich during the Third Reich.

Melián's basic idea was to create a piece starting from original footage. However, as the original archival sources of around 8 prisoners at the concentration camp in Dachau proved not to be of sufficient quality for a radio production, these statements, reports, confessions had to be transcribed, reorganized, adapted and partly rewritten to form a consistent series of monologues: texts that one would be able to listen to after a more serendipitous selection. On top of this, 8 additional persons were then recorded for this piece. This decision regarding the lack of audio quality of the original recordings was clearly an effect of Melián's reflection upon the specific listening situation in the public sphere: people would be calling a phone number (and later accessing a mobile website), in order to listen to this digital sound artwork. This situation of a public sphere requires a much better audio production, especially a more distinct and clear separation of the different tracks and voices within one audio file. Moreover, with the audio quality of phone calls still following earlier standards, only the frequency range

of 300–3,400 Hertz was transmitted – a small subset of the bandwidth in which human speech is mainly situated (100 to 17,000 Hertz).

After this sound work was presented publicly for the first time on September 23, 2010, I listened to it as a radio piece and in its online version. Listening to this work about a decade later only documents and confirms the aesthetic rigor of the production as well as the attention to detail and staging when working with all of the voice actors and musicians. I will now take a closer look at the production of this work in order to explain these qualities.

Some of the tracks in this work were staged in a loose sequence: they can be listened to as singular narrations and sound pieces; but listened to in a sequence, they work as a larger piece, telling a more comprehensive story from the perspective of their speaker. This modular composition makes open connections between all the tracks and stories easy, while allowing larger stories to be told. An example of is found on tracks 84–93, in which Beate Siegel a.k.a. B. Green talks about instances of antisemitic aggression and microaggression in Munich between 1933 and 1945. In school and on the street, in shops and everyday life in general:

The first time I came across antisemitism was at school. I needed a new exercise book or pencil or something that one got from the teacher. So, I asked Fräulein Fellner and she said, can't you Jew kids get your own? I told her that I thought we could. When I recounted this to my mother, she became very indignant. It was then that I realized that my teacher shouldn't have said that to me. I was seven years old. (quoted in Melián 2010, track 85)

At this point I must add a personal note about the affective burden and impact that this work still has. As a professional listener and sound scholar, who listens, enjoys, questions, and discusses all sorts of sound pieces, radio productions and media sound artworks on every single day of my work life, I have to confess an experience that occurred to me while listening again to all of the 293 files. This experience is not a common one in my professional listening: I could not bear to listen to more than just a handful at a time. Each of the recordings left me with nausea, vertigo, and the painful sense of a lethal danger, the threat of a death sentence. I had to stop and had to pause. Sometimes I could continue listening several minutes later; sometimes it took me several hours or even the next day before I could continue. For me, my reaction to listening is indeed proof of the lasting impact of Melián's work. As an example of sonic docupoetry, it succeeds in every respect.

Now, since 2010, when this work was first released, the production techniques and styles have clearly developed on many levels. But those texts and their inherent voices, confessing the horrors, the crimes and the threats, the constant fear and violence they narrate, still instill in me a sense of unsettling and disturbing presence. All of the spoken texts signal their historical context of the 1930s

and 1940s; but they are performed so painstakingly present and intimate, as if a close friend or some acquaintance speaks to me (cf. Simecek 2019; Schulze 2020a, 2021). It is too close and too painful to listen to. This is the effect of the attunement that Robert Jan van Pelt writes about in *PRISM – a Journal for Holocaust Educators*, when he writes about this piece: “the music [. . .] ‘attunes’ the listener to the story” (2012, 132). What might sound pretty general and not very remarkable at first, has its roots in distinct material and explicit artistic decisions that Michaela Melián and her team made. Let us look a bit closer how their editing, their voice recording, and their music production was affected by these decisions.

The editing of the archival texts was, as Melián describes it in our conversations, a heavy job (cf. 2023, 2024). It took around six months to complete a series of rather complex and conflicting tasks. First, they selected the recordings of people who experienced the Nazi terror in Munich at that time. Then they transcribed them to text and cleaned all of the selected texts very carefully to remove any stuttering or breathing that would hinder them from being understood by listeners to the radio piece – or those who would listen to it on their phone, on a public square. Also, some heavy local dialects had to be evened out and redacted to be understood. This was all done with support from and intensive discussions with 12 students studying Jewish History and Culture at Munich’s Ludwig-Maximilians Universität. They indeed questioned the editing practices, the selection of texts, and the status of the resulting texts: can they still be regarded as original statements when they had been so heavily edited? At the end there were ten thick folders that were the result of a sort of literary practice of transforming documented statements into poetic texts that could be staged and presented within a professional production. The refinement of the selection then continued, however, as out of these ten folders a smaller group of texts had to be chosen to be those that would be actually recorded and produced. This group of texts was limited to two large folders.

This practice alters the original texts to such an extent that it became clear to many of those involved in the project that the adaptation of spoken language to an artistic work is a process that requires more craft and intervention, more selection and adaptation than one might expect. This aspect became tangible in the discussions Melián had with historians from the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich. The historians clearly preferred documentary accuracy and source criticism, whereas the limitations of a radio production and the bandwidth of the mobile devices for which this work was created set firm limits on what kind of spoken language could be used or had to be re-recorded. Melián’s role as the author of this piece was then to find and negotiate a viable path between these two extremes of documentary accuracy and poetic alteration, also in terms of media-specific usage. In the end, these ongoing, and at times apparently heated, discus-

sions resulted in a process of poetic staging that lies at the heart of the concerns and challenges of creating works of documentary poetry and theatre in general.

After this initial process of editing and selecting meaningful texts, which had already taken six months, it took another six months to record all the voices and the music in a private studio and in a studio at Bayerischer Rundfunk. It did not end there, however. As this work should be accessible from mobile online platforms, there were another six months needed to adapt the whole project, and especially the audio quality of the individual files to the technological restraints of mobile phones at the time – before the advent of smartphones. All in all, these 18 months were a gigantic and unimaginable production time for a radio work – and would be almost impossible to do today as harsh and substantial budget cuts are taking place in all public radio stations, all over this planet; usually directed towards the custom quality control processes of producing programmes in the area of the experimental arts.

Returning to the process of voice recording more specifically, Melián addressed in our conversation one core principle: “Do not put too much emphasis and drama into the voice!” (2023b, n.p.). This guiding principle of a strong detachment, of less emphasis and less drama was even the reason why children and their rather untrained voices were asked to read the official documents by the city and by state institutions, official laws, school textbooks or newspaper clippings. As a consequence, the reading they performed was even more alienated and detached. A result that clearly was desired by Melián and her team. To withhold the affect when the texts were performed – and to open up other routes for all the affects later in the production process.

These affects clearly came into play, when Melián worked on the music for this sound artwork. As a first step, she pre-produced samples and beats with Carl Oesterhelt of her band F.S.K./Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle. Melián played all the instruments, including piano and cello, and Mario Thaler produced and mixed the music. Melián’s intention with these samples was to represent a broad, metropolitan and modern, seemingly safe lifestyle, sometimes with a touch of domestic privacy. More specifically, she chose motifs by Kurt Weill, the jazz and swing composer, Coco Schumann, Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and Karl Amadeus Hartmann: a composer whose works were not allowed to be performed during the Third Reich. All these piano motifs form the basis of a safe and modern environment – including all the wide variety of music that would be banned under Nazi rule, all the Jewish culture that would later be annihilated: metropolitan and bourgeois life, especially for assimilated German Jews – before the Nazi onslaught. From the foundation of these samples, Michaela Melián then improvised clustering cello passages as well as passages with xylophone, guitar, bass and glass harp. Piano and cello were the instruments of choice for the musical

education of the children of the upper bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century – and for many German and European listeners in the twenty-first century they still evoke a sense of security and homely warmth. Melián's improvisations quite clearly, and not only metaphorically, brought in the fragility, the instability, and aspects of anxiety and approaching threat into these musical pieces. Still today, this ambiguity of affects in the piece is the fundamental reason for the lasting effect it had on me as a dedicated listener.

While the original texts in their heavily edited form are read rather coldly, even technically at times, matter-of-factly and unaffectedly, their surrounding sonic environment in this sound artwork, the music and sounds, provide actual affective interpretation: We are close to the words of the speakers. We can understand what they tell us very clearly and we can imagine the situations they describe, the acts of terror and the moments when a threat becomes real and felt. The underlying sounds of the music, however, only provide the interpretation of what is going on here – affectively. This effect can be analyzed by employing Julian Henriques' concept of *sonic dominance* (cf. 2011, 17). Though the words and narrations dominate on first listening, the accompanying and underlying music and sounds clearly dominate the listening experience in a deeper sense. As listeners, we experience the narrative and the sonic traces of these past events as accordant. This occurs while we are (or as if we were) standing in the actual places where these events took place, on a square or street, in a house or some institution in Munich. The poetic content is affectively shaped by the music, and experientially and spatially situated by the location where we are listening. Therefore, the listening experience of this sound artwork, though a digital one, is clearly corporeal, situated and sonic, through and through.

In 2012 *Memory Loops* won the Grimme Online Award – one of the most prestigious awards for cultural projects on the web in Germany. The jury argued that in this piece:

Individual lives do not disappear into the statistics here. The everyday nature of violence and repression is given an unsettling closeness and authenticity by the newly spoken audio documents, their harmonious background music and their precise location on the city map. [. . .] Not in the artificial environment of a museum, but in the place of suffering and violence itself, the past becomes tangible. (Grimme Online Award 2012, n.p.; trans. HS)

Following my sonic interpretation, I propose here, I would add that this “unsettling closeness” is a clear effect of the manifold layered working stages on the text sources in combination with the compositional detachment of affect between a cold reading and an affectively loaded musical performance. This specific artistic practice by Michaela Melián and her surprisingly large team of collaborators and researchers allowed for the creation a consistent stream of poetic narration and

sonic affect through all the 293 files, the separate modules out of which this impressive digital sound artwork consists. They created a suggestive *sonic fiction* (Schulze 2020b) of Nazi terror in Munich, so to speak, relaying and evocating historical and personal events at that time. As a sonic fiction, Melián's docupoetry operates not only by presenting the "voices of individuals and actions that mass media has inclined to overlook or misrepresent" (Wazzan 2023, 1430) – but also through "sounding artefacts and imaginations the inherent potential to alter precisely these areas of the epistemological, the sensory, and the political" (Schulze 2020b, 143). By staging the rewritten testimonies within her sound artworks, their presentation becomes a vivid and suggestive sonic intervention in a historical and political discourse. The sound production is not just added value here – it alters the substance of the testimonies and lends them an impressive impact.

Audio.Space.Machine: Ironic Affects through Restaging Archival Sources and Highly Detailed Postproduction

The digital sound artwork *Audio.Space.Machine* written, produced and performed by Christian Wittmann and Georg Zeitblom together with a range of performers, has been presented in two forms: as a work for radio, 65 minutes long – and as an assortment of modules that could be accessed and listened to at an exhibition, 40 minutes in total. Some modules are included in both versions, others only in one. In 2019, when this production came out, I listened to it and I enjoyed it deeply, sonically, with its humor and its playful approach to restaging historical events, artistic manifestos and aesthetic approaches: the Bauhaus and its protagonists are meaningfully dislocated in the digital culture of the twenty-first century – and this allowed me to encounter this historical avant-garde movement anew. In 2024, I listened to this piece in its entirety again. The pervasive intensity of this work struck me again, its cockiness and radical sonic impact is stunning and breathtaking, five years after. I could listen to *Audio.Space.Machine* as an album – on par with the most brilliantly produced and ambitious contemporary recordings in popular music. This sound artwork actually achieves a goal that many productions today aim for but rarely succeed: historical documents of a long-gone period in the arts, the aesthetics of the historical avantgardes in the early twentieth century, become present again. Its audioliterary strategies make this example of docupoetry work. One can sense the avantgardes' transgressive humor and their excessive ambition, their infighting and their mocking of each

other, the ridiculousness of some of their pathetic actions – but also the legitimate and noble goals they bring together here. Zeitblom and Christian Wittmann manage to let me, as a listener, experience and enjoy, even agree with the pathetic and radically gargantuan, aesthetic and revolutionary goals of the Bauhaus activists and artists – and still I can also enjoy the deep irony and often the laughable character of all these endeavors. This ironic affect is a grounding tone in this work. It allows for ambiguity and complexity of affects in understanding these radical modernists of the early twentieth century – from a distance of one century later into the future. Ironic affects work here much better than a musealization and unambiguous praise that often frame celebrations of historical avant-garde movements.

But how was this intensity achieved? In the production of this sound artwork, the authors, composers, performers and producers worked with original voice recordings and original writings, for instance, by László Moholy-Nagy, Walter Gropius, or John Cage, mostly retrieved from the archives of the Bauhaus. As Melián with *Memory Loops*, also Wittmann and Zeitblom, the producers' duo, did not leave any recording, any source, any audio sample untouched. They have reorganized, rewritten, recontextualized, and restaged them in the various sections and versions of this sound artwork, as is customary in docupoetry – and they have even heavily post-produced every single minute of this piece in a mode and with a level of detail that is more common in contemporary studio work with popular music. In this section I will explain in greater detail how this production style differs significantly from the production of *Memory Loops*.

Detailed and time-critical postproduction might seem trivial. It is a common practice in contemporary popular music, especially if the focus is on a versatile and dynamic mixing of the various instrument groups and tracks. However, in the studio work for contemporary radio content, this is actually highly unusual. As a general practice, outside of experimental radio art, the music or the soundtrack are pre-produced and then put underneath or to the side of the vocal recordings. In the particular case of *Audio.Space.Machine*, the various tracks and voices were accurately staged through spatial distribution, with particular filters, distortions and all sorts of additional effects on literally all the voices and all the sounds in, as a matter of fact, real time. It is a practice of audioliterary writing (cf. Jäger 2020; Wehmeier and Wolf 2024; Matter 2025) that is here employed to produce sonic docupoetry with an intense staging through particular sound effects and the placement of voices and sounds within the sound space of the production. Zeitblom and Wittmann clearly benefited from their years of collaboration with professional studio engineer Boris Wilsdorf and his Andere Baustelle studio, and the professional studio albums they produced together. Wilsdorf had previously produced the studio albums of the German band Einstürzende Neu-

bauten, and members of the *Audio.Space.Machine* production team had also been involved in these earlier productions.

All in all, the producer duo did work for ten months on this sound artwork. In the first five months both authors and producers selected the texts of Bauhaus thinkers, designers and artists; they took selected passages from manifestos and speeches of Bauhaus artists, and they developed them into new scenarios and sonic environments, where these text passages could be staged for a contemporary audience. The original texts were not dealt with in the sense of philology or historiography: they were mere starting points for new imaginations that were made to suit contemporary technologies, cultural forms, and obsessions and fears of the twenty-first century. The following passage makes clear how the authors took the original Bauhaus-material and transformed it into a contemporary poetic text, which was then sonically staged in the production. It is a performative irony in action here:

ZITATOR MOHOLY-N. *mit Radioeffekt 1920*

Wir müssen alle räumlichen Mittel mobilisieren, um den Zuschauer aus seiner intellektuellen Apathie zu reißen, ihn angreifen, überwältigen und ihn zur Teilnahme am Spielgeschehen zwingen.

Walter Gropius zitiert aus: *Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, ein Totalexperiment*, (Seite 56), Verlag Florian Kupferberg Mainz 1972

WITTMANN *rhythmisch auf die Musik, Sprechmaschine*

This is not about a few of your favorite things

This is not about comedy

This is not about drama

This is not about a moral institution

This is not about being someone

This is not about being another one

WITTMANN *rhythmisch auf die Musik, Sprechmaschine*

This is not about all is none

This is not about ghosts

This is not about cubism

DWYER

“Totales Theater / Total Experiment”

(Wittmann and Zeitblom 2018, 13–14)¹

¹ The excerpt is quoted from the unpublished script for *Audio.Space.Machine* that Wittmann and Zeitblom have kindly shared with the author.

This reworking of the original material had the clear and explicit goal to produce not a historically accurate and philologically grounded praise of the Bauhaus. A hagiography was to be avoided at all costs. This task was radically different than the task of editing the texts for *Memory Loops*. In this case working with existing texts had the main goal to provide an interpretation that would recontextualize it and look at it from a different angle. Wittmann and Zeitblom chose an angle of a radical contemporaneity of the late 2010s. As if the Bauhaus were not some institution of the past, but as if it had generated Pokémon, if it were a driving force of the Metaverse and contributing to all sorts of social media platforms, AI apps, and even to mobile casual gaming. All of these technological frameworks are not only alluded to in their text – but they are explicitly mentioned and introduced. Walter Gropius is a Pokémon that a boy plays with on his smartphone. Buckminster Fuller is a protagonist of the Metaverse and is actually an AI. During this first stage of the docupoetic reworking of the text, Zeitblom also developed first audioliterary and sonic production ideas around the selected passages. At this early stage, a bass line for example was developed, also a sort of spatial arrangement for the voices, sound environments, for the music and other sound effects. Further, a sequence was outlined for the dialogues and how they might follow each other.

These ideas and sketches could then, in the next step of six more weeks, be tested out in a professional recording studio by Boris Wilsdorf. Zeitblom composed a range of modules to work with when finally putting the whole sound work together. During these sessions, all the pre-produced music material was mixed with the voice recordings and additional instrumental passages were added directly in the studio, for example a harmonium, drums, bass clarinet. As part of this production process, the artists also employed detailed work on various intended glitches of voice actors and a consistent sonic deformation of selected voices and tracks, similar to the audioliterary writing techniques of contemporary sound poetry (cf. Matter 2025). Some passages were strongly distorted, others were simply spatialized in the digital listening space, others were technologically shifted in tone or accelerated. While Melián's main artistic work was in the long pre-production of the spoken and reworked texts and the composition and recording of the musical contributions, Wittmann and Zeitblom's work was in the studio, when mixing and mastering the whole production.

In the final working phase of four additional weeks, after the radio piece was already completed, this production then had to be prepared anew for its exhibition in a large German cultural institution, the national Akademie der Künste in Berlin. The radio version had to be suitable for a range of listening situations, loudspeakers or headphones, and could not be mastered only for a particular set of listening devices. No one could know, and no one will ever know, how a ran-

dom radio listener might listen to a given radio piece. The version for the exhibition, however, had the advantage of a precisely defined listening device of advanced headphones (Bose QuietComfort 35 with noise cancellation). This allowed the production duo to rework and remix their sound piece specifically for this listening hardware and this public presentation environment. The producers were faced with new aesthetic challenges, as the spatial staging of produced music in the sound artwork required a very different approach to that required for dialogue and action. Vocal snippets and actions can be placed quite precisely within a binaural space, whereas finding the right place for produced music is a trickier task: it could have been placed anywhere, depending on aesthetic preferences as well as the requirements of the particular section of the piece.

All of this production, pre-production as well as post-production took place during the entire year of 2018. Therefore, Zeitblom and Wittmann chose to pre-produce and produce this sound artwork at home and in production studios other than those offered by the public radio station. This was also, in part, a choice Melián had made. The biggest contrast to Melián's piece, however, is that the affect addressed and evoked is not a historically triggered sonic trace of past events and their effects. This could have been a choice if they had been working towards philological and historical accuracy with archive material from the Bauhaus. Wittmann and Zeitblom, however, chose to work with ironic affects that are generated by an opposite artistic strategy: an imaginary Gropémon-App ("Gotta catch 'em all!") allowing kids to get access to the work and heritage of Walter Gropius, a Tamagotchi allowing us to care for the afterlife of all the Bauhaus-artists, and many of whom are, obviously, present in the Metaverse, some even co-created this online platform. With these staging frameworks in their radio piece, the authors distance themselves and their material from their original historical context by working with the source material in the style of a radical and provocative playfulness that might even be off-putting to any hagiographic approach to the Bauhaus. This playfulness extends to all aspects of the source material: particular quotes and manifestos, artistic endeavors and projects, personal relations of the Bauhaus-artists and their biography and artistic activities on all levels.

Through this manifold, imaginary presence of the Bauhaus in the accelerated digital culture of the early twenty-first century, we as listeners can encounter anew this historical period of revolutionary approaches to the arts and design. It is a means of comedic distancing, no doubt about that. It rejects any strong and tragic and deep identification with the Bauhaus protagonists. However, it is precisely this non-identification that might lead listeners into an even more intense closeness to past historical events. When listening to this piece, our affects to the Bauhaus are distinctly different than if we encountered them, as usual, through

large black-and-white photographs in expensive coffee table books or academic reflections about their heritage. But in a paradoxical, dialectical move, as a listener to this sound artwork I can, through this comedic distancing, relate much more to the Bauhaus actions and artists. The sonic affects of production and distortion occupy my sensibilities so much, I indulge in them, I enjoy them so deeply that another sonic dominance, as mentioned earlier, can take root through this detachment. I find myself smiling and laughing, inspired and invigorated by this piece's dynamics and sound production that I even forget that its protagonists are not of present times. They become contemporaries of mine, living and designing, demanding and imagining in the early twenty-first century. The Bauhaus is now: "Und wo ist die Gegenwart? Hier ist die Gegenwart!" (Wittmann and Zeitblom 2019).

In 2020 *Audio.Space.Machine* was awarded the *Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden* [Radio Play Award of the War-Blinded]: an award that marked the most advanced aesthetic innovations in German radio art since 1952. Its jury writes:

Acoustically, the concept album is held together, driven and carried by rhythm and composition, which act as equitable agents of analysis throughout. With humor and without petrifying in an authoritative didactic perspective, the artists consistently make it possible to experience how much of the elevated Bauhaus concept can be found today. (quoted in Wagner 2020, n.p.; trans. HS)

With these words, the jury actually acknowledges the sophisticated production techniques and the heavy and highly detailed post-production. Following my analysis of the work process and the sonic affects involved, I claim that Zeitblom and Wittmann succeed in creating a continuous stream of sonic and poetic traces through all the tracks and modules, leading the listener through the Bauhaus thought and its history – especially and primarily by ironically distancing themselves and their production from this history, in a dialectical manner. Their sonic fiction re-imagines the historical events in Dessau, at the Bauhaus, as contemporary events in the early twenty-first century: also their "sounding artefacts and imaginations [unleash; HS] the inherent potential to alter precisely these areas of the epistemological, the sensory, and the political." (Schulze 2020b, 143) This transposition and transformation of affects created a much more meaningful relationship with these artists and their activities.

How to Remember, Sonically?

Both sound works remind their listeners of historical events. Michaela Melian's work reminds us, as shown in this chapter, through the *affective depth* of every-

day terror, atrocities and crimes in Munich during the Third Reich. Georg Zeitblom and Christian Wittmann's calls to attention, as also shown in this chapter, all of the thinking, aesthetic goals, practices and craft of the Bauhaus-movement in Germany and beyond – through its *ironic affects*. The affective realm is clearly radically different in both cases. One cannot compare the two pieces in respect of the more particular affects they activate: one leads its listeners to question their own knowledge about the rule of the national socialists and the events of the Holocaust, while the other may lead to an altered and refreshed perspective of the Bauhaus. The dark and existential issues in Melian's piece require a thoroughly different approach than the ironic and playful staging in Zeitblom and Wittmann's piece. We are entering two completely incomparable worlds.

However, aside from these distinct profiles these two pieces present, they operate with affects in a surprisingly parallel manner. Both pieces work with *sonic traces* (cf. Schulze 2018, 111–113) of a particular location that are engraved into a listener's memory and impression of this piece and its protagonists, its actions, its rationale or narration. They also both convey their affective depth or ironic affects through a form of *sonic dominance* (cf. Henriques 2011) in their production rather than through their textual editing, which is either neutral or playful. Both of these means are employed, maybe needless to say, in a consistent manner through all the tracks and modules, in composition and sound design: this consistency keeps listeners close to its figures and its actions. This consistency is then achieved through the imagination and the creation of a sonic fiction. As audioliterary works of docupoetry, both sound pieces operate through the sonic staging of their material, which allows their authors and producers to convey worlds of affective experience that they recognise in these texts and that they intend us to experience – whether as affective depth or ironic affect. The sonic traces of these works imply fictions that, while grounded in historical events, take us elsewhere, into their sonic affects in general. Affective and situated listening in these works is achieved precisely through their sound production. They affect me and you because they place us in a fictional and sonic environment; we feel the traces of and we experience this dominant and consistent sound production. Perhaps this is how these historical events can be remembered, sonically: through affective, situated listening.

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