

2 Vaguely Specific: Resonant Historicity with Chesóls

Abstract

This chapter explores the conceptual ramifications of meaningfulness as an analytical concept for musical performance. Expounding the concept's scope, the chapter introduces the neo-phenomenology of atmospheres (Schmitz, Böhme) more systematically and proposes ways of thinking through music with atmospheres. Based on an in-depth analysis of chesóls, a Palauan solo chant, I flesh out the layered complexity of musical meaningfulness: it often presents itself as an atmosphere that will be experienced with the felt body, leveraging both affective and interpretative frames but exceeding both by way of its primarily corporeal experiential quality. This finding opens vistas to overcoming several of the binaries lingering in more dominant scholarly traditions of thinking through affective publics.

Keywords: chesóls, resonance, historicity, Hermann Schmitz, meaningfulness

The girl getting on the stage is about 12 years old. Anxiously, she reaches for the microphone. We are in the early 2000s, and this is Palau's annual Women's Conference. The daughter of a hereditary leader and, as such, a prospective hereditary leader herself, she is about to perform in front of a good hundred women in the audience. Not quite comfortable, she starts her chant. Her voice is a little shaky, and her vocal rendition is closer to a melodic tune than a traditional chesóls recitation, which would be narrated rather than sung. As she concludes the first verse of her chant, silence ensues. A little coughing here and there, someone spitting out their betel nut quid. The chanter gazes at the audience; the audience seems confused. Finally, one of the women responds: "hm... uei!"; others join in. The chanter proceeds to



Sound example 2 Chesóls, chanted on the occasion of a Women's Conference in Koror/Palau, early 2000s.

the second stanza, the words of which are familiar to everyone in the room. As the verse is nearing its end, she is getting increasingly uncomfortable, anticipating another awkward moment of silence. But a few of the older women seated in the first rows have started looking at her reassuringly, smiling. As she finishes her verse and raises her eyes to the audience, they respond loudly and clearly: “hm... uei!”.

In this chapter, I am interested in the mechanics that bring about shared sensations through music. That morning at the Women's Conference, that sensation was one of confusion – and then a discrete yet powerful we-spirit emerged. Both took a powerful hold of the audience in the course of the chesóls performance, even though, at first, the audience seemed to have difficulty identifying the chant as chesóls. To unpack the efficacy of the performance, initially unlikely at first but received overwhelmingly positively in the end, in the following, I will, firstly, introduce chesóls as a genre. It will become clear in the course of the chapter that musical meaningfulness is never straightforward but always a matter of layered complexity. It often presents itself as an atmosphere experienced with the felt body, leveraging both affective and interpretative frames but exceeding both by far owing to their primarily corporeal quality. An audience may not yet quite understand what exactly is going on in a musical situation such as the end of the first stanza of the girl's chesóls. But their felt bodies are already in the process of attuning to the situation, exploring it with their own means. My analysis of chesóls will show how both atmospheres and meaningfulness as analytical concepts implicitly address a much broader discourse straddling psychology and philosophy. The two concepts have the capacity to open new ideas about how music can mean things to certain people because it has “no object other than the situation's own intensity” (McGraw 2016, 142). This chapter, thus, demonstrates how very disparate and often existential layers of meaning and meaningfulness coalesce in the experience of sound in situations characterised by musical atmospheres. Musical meaningfulness is transformative but it is also simultaneously always transforming itself. Musical atmospheres, as they

probe Indigenous and contemporary frameworks of temporo-spatial felt-bodily alignment, lay bare a process which opens analytical doors to much wider experiential dimensions. Given the competing nature of Indigenous and contemporary temporo-spatialities in the post-colonial Pacific Island world, an analysis of musical meaningfulness in chesóls also leads right into issues located at the heart of layered post-colonial epistemological configurations.

In the following, I will trace the atmosphere of belonging and solidarity that the chesóls performance at the Women's Conference produced back to the distinct sense of historicity exuded by the chant itself. This chapter, thus, also begins to explore the conceptual implications of Schmitz's stance that "[sound's] history often lives on"³⁰ in sound (Schmitz 2014, 88), which will come back time and again throughout the following chapters. It also analyses the meaningfulness of musical atmospheres as latently historical, an idea which will be discussed in a later chapter. The chapter will conclude that music, in itself a time-based performance practice, enables the sensation of meaningfulness as borne mostly from the intensity, not the extensivity, of temporal experience as intrinsically historical. As meaningfulness oscillates between the various registers of the experience it leverages, among them the affective and interpretative, it becomes much more than the sum of the parts of its experiential complexity, and the musically meaningful experience of temporality becomes 'deep', in the sense of Pacific Indigenous conceptualisations of time-space. As a result, the felt-bodily experience of the musical situation intensifies significantly. This oscillation is, in many ways, metaphorical. Importantly, however, it is also sonic vibration and, as such, of a very material nature. It is a type of kinetic energy enveloping, penetrating and infusing the human body it encounters both physically and felt-bodily. The oscillatory nature of this movement is the reason for the internal diffuseness of meaningfulness. At the same time, the double nature of this oscillation as both a material and an immaterial energetic force accounts for the overwhelming intensity musical situations produce. The processual character of this experience of intensity, finally, makes musical situations resonate with their own dynamics and becomings.

30 Original text: "Weil (die früheren Abschnitte des Erschallens) in der intensiven Dauer aber zu einem absolut unspaltbaren Verhältnis zusammengebunden werden können, lebt im augenblicklichen Schall oft noch seine Geschichte." (Schmitz 2016, 88).

Chesóls Meaningfulness

To this day, chesóls form one of the most formal musical genres in Palau. As a genre, chesóls are a “core concept” that will feature “in any Palauan discussion about the essential Palauan way” (Nero 1992, 243)³¹. When the English word ‘chant’ is used in a Palauan conversation, the intended meaning will often be ‘chesóls’, even though there are a number of other musical genres that are also considered chants. Chesóls are a metonym for traditional Palauan culture and an authoritative resource for culturally legitimised knowledge to the extent that they have been used in court as evidence in defence of Indigenous land rights. Structurally, they are recitations divided into verses. An chesóls’s formal parts subdivide into a recitative line and a final line and not all the formal parts of a given chesóls have to be presented together: the performance of only one formal part at a time is just as possible. Formal parts are not necessarily identical in melodic or rhythmic details. Technically, the performance of chesóls has to be preceded by the okisel a chesóls (“rising of chesóls”) and the otengelel a chesóls (“bringing down of chesóls”); see the beginning of Chapter 1.

An chesóls’ recitative line consists of a loose sequence of variations on the tonal material of chesóls, the basic shape of which is standardised. This melodic cell is characterised by the repetition of one central tone in simple punctuated rhythm. To conclude such a melodic unit, the recitative line invariably bends down, roughly a whole-tone, to reach its final note. Repetition of the nuclear cells results in phrases, and the latter generally display a descending melodic line. The tendency to shift downward in pitch, already evident in the nuclear cell, is mirrored in the overall descending spatial movement of the verses. Verses generally proceed from the upper framing tonal spectrum of the tonal inventory at the beginning to lower pitch spectra, thereby producing a slightly downward-arching melodic shape. The ambitus of this movement and, thus, of an chesóls, does not normally exceed some 500 cent. Overall, the chesóls’ musical style is highly recognisable to the Palauan ear: the audience will usually recognise the chant as an chesóls only a few seconds into a performance.

That day at the Women’s Conference in 2005, however, the audience took a little longer to realise the performer was presenting them with an chesóls, because traditional performers usually avail themselves of a vocal style heavily shaped by the sonic peculiarities of the speaking voice. The

31 For a more detailed description of chesóls practice, see Abels (2008, 74ff).



Sound example 3 Chesóls, chanted by Rengulbai Ruloked (* around 1900 in Melekeok) on 28 September 1963. Recorded by Barbara B. Smith.

chanter here, by contrast, clearly focused on melodic movements and vocal timbre, as a singer would. Additionally, in her rendition, the chant's tonal ambitus consisted of intervals. Melodic development, for her, consisted of intervallic relationships, not of a tonal framework for vocal recitation. As a result, her vocal rendition was much closer to a melody than a recitation in its sonic effect. Furthermore, five of the six phrases that made up the first part of her chesóls finished on a strong beat, but the phrases of chesóls traditionally end on weak beats. These five phrases contained five beats each, and she accentuated each of them like a 4/4 metre. Both strong endings and regular metre are means to establish a melodic flow; however, the structural design of the traditional chesóls form and performance practice prevents exactly that. Finally, the melodic motive the singer used to begin her chesóls was characterised by an interval of a little less than three half-tones (290 cent). This is an interval that does not normally feature in chants outside of their final phrase. The inner-phasal melodic stream commonly employs pitch distances that do not normally exceed the interval of a major second. In fact, an interval of roughly 290 cent would signal the final development of a verse in the traditional chesóls musical form. The singer was, thus, using a familiar marker of structural form in an unfamiliar structural place.

Therefore, the first line of this chesóls was bound to puzzle the listeners. And yet, once they had realised what the performance was supposed to be – the context of the formal event helped infer this situation required the performance of an chesóls – they were willing to follow customary protocol and partake in the chesóls. This affirmed the chesóls and supported the chanter by delivering the responsive shout required even though the performance departed substantially from conventional genre expectations. As selected women began to respond, “hm... uei!”, and an increasing number of members of the audience joined in, a sense of community began to fill the room. It seized seat row after seat row felt-bodily, allowing the community, which from this moment on explicitly included the chanter, to reaffirm itself. This was a process of solidary incorporation of suggestions of motion.

Suggestions of Motion

Suggestions of motion, according to Schmitz, occur in pre-dimensional, surfaceless space. Owing to their diffuse nature, verbal description cannot describe them exhaustively. However, it is possible to describe their mode of operation. In contrast to suggestions of motion, both the sound and the body occupy dimensional space. To Schmitz, the felt body (*Leib*), however, belongs in surfaceless space, i.e., in the space of suggestions of motion. Accordingly, the felt body and suggestions of movement are potentially “becoming with” one another, in Donna Haraway’s sense: they are mutually constitutive processes, a sym-poietic assemblage (Haraway 2008). The material body, dwelling in dimensional space, perceives sound as actualised movement. Specific musical parameters, such as timbre, pitch, intervallic relationships and loudness, are not themselves suggestions of motion; they are sonic enactments of suggestions of motion. Suggestions of motion, that is to say, are prior to any material manifestation in dimensional space. Only when suggestions of movement actualise into sound events, does sound become prehensible. Any sonic event is composed of a series of sound waves actualising. As sound waves actualise, crossing over from surfaceless to dimensional space, they blur the threshold between the felt body’s pre-dimensional space and the material body’s dimensional space. Musical suggestions of motion, as enacted suggestions of motion structured along cultural conventions, have the capacity to seize people felt-bodily. For this to happen, however, they first need to “pass through [felt-] bodily attunement and interact with [...] values and ideologies that mediate the power of sound” (Eisenlohr 2018b, 4). Felt-bodily attunement, thus, is the key for atmospheres to invite incorporation processes, affect people and create those shared feelings we perceive as atmospheres. If sonically enacted suggestions of motion are able, via felt-bodily attunement, to affect the felt body, then this is owing to the oscillatory dynamism that is characteristic of sound: this dynamism is closely interrelated with the Schmitzian vital drive (Schmitz, Slaby, and Müllan 2011, 45), that sequence of contraction and expansion that forms the phenomenological lifeline of human experientiality.

Where musical atmospheres seize people felt-bodily, suggestions of motion, enacted in sound, interact with their vital drive. Motion, in this context, is not a metaphorical phenomenon. It is materially palpable motion, manifesting as both sound’s incipency and that incipency’s enactment as a sonic event. To inquire into the becoming of musical atmospheres, it makes sense to identify instances of heightened structural motion in the course of a musical event, for instance, an *chesóls*. By that, I mean significant changes

of intensity in any acoustic parameter and, certainly, also instances where several parameters display a significant decrease or increase of energy simultaneously, thus, bundling motional energy. With a view to Mauritian *na't* recordings, Eisenlohr (2018b, 96) argues that such a multi-parameter manipulation of energetic intensity is how sound engineers manipulate sonic atmospheres creatively. It is important to note here that the resultant musical 'event-as-enacted-suggestions-of-motion' will release suggestions of motion itself. Sonic events are always a succession of physical motions; musical events are conventionally structured sonic events. This is how an atmosphere can change profoundly in the course of a performance: it is a participatory process potentially involving a multiplicity of (felt) bodies. They, in turn, depending on their individual attunement and directionality, will feed the atmospheric space with additional suggestions of motion. A motion-laden atmospheric energy loop fills the space, infuses the situation with musical meaningfulness and rearranges the temporo-spatial positionality of those it envelops and pervades.

I have non-exhaustively identified several musical parameters above which the singer of this particular chesóls performance at the Women's Conference treated somewhat unconventionally in her performance: (1) the melodic (as opposed to recitative) arrangement of the tune; (2) timbre; (3) tonal ambitus and intervallic relationships; (4) beat accentuation; and (5) phrasal design. It was the momentary discrepancy between the suggestions of motion the genre chesóls exuded and the chanter's enactment of them that caused the audience's initial confusion about their own participatory role in the chant, the genre conventions of which required their interpolating the customary shout, "hm... uei!". This was a dense moment of atmospheric disruption. It decelerated the situation's motional energy; however, this did not lead to a decrease in atmospheric density. Once the audience members had begun to attune to the new situation felt-bodily, however, the atmosphere settled. A process of solidary encorporation of the chant's suggestions of motion ensued. I argue that the olángch character of the chesóls played an important role in this process. It provided the atmospheric stability that allowed the audience to accommodate the atmospheric instabilities of this particular performance.

While structural and musical markers matter, a chant's meaningfulness arises from more than its structural recognisability. In fact, as this performance demonstrates, meaningfulness can arise even if musical characteristics are altered beyond recognition. Music, therefore, is not meaningful per se. Meaningfulness arises in the processual interlacing of suggestions of motion, their sonic enactment and manipulation, and the

resonances they yield within surrounding ontological and epistemological frameworks. This imbrication of cultural practices with their life-worlds gives rise to situations in which musical experience manifests as a corporeal experience of meaningfulness.

The chesóls performance at the Women's Conference underlines two main characteristics of musical meaningfulness: Firstly, meaningfulness is a matter of musical becoming, not of genre, repertoire, form or structure. This means that it has an in-built capacity to change and adjust quickly to any situational dynamics that might arise, such as the bewilderment and then delayed affirmation the audience granted the chanter. Secondly, as meaningfulness comes about, the felt body does not act primarily as a site of experience but as a nexus of relational complexity, which, in turn, allows meaningfulness to manifest. The realisation that we were witnessing an chesóls being performed enabled an experiential sensation of all the connections the sonic event made tangible in sound: socially, a community; historically, a shared vision of the past; culturally, a joint set of familiar practices and conventions. In a way, the audience's late and gradual comprehension added to the situation's overwhelming intensity precisely *because* of the delay in realising this was an chesóls. Like a slow-motion replay of the same video footage they had previously viewed at standard speed, the significantly reduced speed of the situation's unfolding allowed the viewer to discover details and connections they had not previously noted owing to the fact that there is such an overwhelming wealth of information in every audio-visual moment. What initially seemed to be interpretive confusion was, at the same time, a gradual and, hence, intensified becoming aware of sound's capacity to act as a liaison between the various frames of human sociality. That capacity was not readily identifiable; it unfolded gradually as the listeners attuned to the situation. This performance not only echoed the phenomenological insight that musical meaningfulness is intensity-becoming, it also demonstrated rather tangibly how such intensity-becoming manifests situationally.

This intensity-becoming is inherently linked with chesóls' historicity: they are olángch, signs of history (Parmentier 1987, see Chapter 1). Chesóls as olángch allow for material intensifications to emerge not just as representational expressions (Parmentier 1987, 11) but as dynamic manifestations of, in the case of this particular chesóls' performance, belonging. Such manifestations work atmospherically – auratically, as Parmentier called it in 1987 for the want of a more specific term: through material suggestions of motion, such atmospheric manifestations link felt bodies

both with one another and with their deep (his)stories, agonies, pleasures and attunements in sound. That link is not metaphorical in nature. It is experiential, mediated via sound. The result is a “we” (Wir-Leib): a shared feeling of age-old interconnectedness that spans past(s) and present(s), gesturing toward the future. We feel in chesóls how we have always been becoming-together. This process is circular, in that for that feeling to manifest, the chesóls’ sensation of belonging together and chesóls as a musical phenomenon reverberate with one another. This reverberation, in turn, accounts for the emergent intensity and, as such, for the musical meaningfulness of chesóls.

Sound’s History Lives on

Samoan historian Damon Salesa has advocated the notion of Oceanic ‘deep time’. Originally a term from geology (see Mawyer et al. 2020, 25), ‘deep time’ refers to the ancient history of Oceania. Salesa, evoking traditions and genealogies spanning millennia, emphasises how colonial rule and its predecessors, including Euro-American maritime exploration, imposed a sense of time on the region that before their arrival was utterly alien to Oceanic peoples: a time measurable in linear concepts such as seconds, minutes, hours and chronologies. Indigenous Oceanic concepts of time, by contrast, revolve around “genealogies which connected gods and ancestors to the living and invoked ages and periods (but which also insisted on their copresence in the present” (Jolly 2018, 34). Genealogy, Salesa argues, “orients time towards ancestors and descendants, not to an external systematic or a disembodied calibration of time” (Salesa 2014, 41). Space-time, a word well-known to many Oceanic languages (Salesa 2014, 41), implies that the past is not just a time but always also a place. “The *vā* [i.e., space-time in Samoan and Tongan, see Staley 2017] is necessarily relational, implying not a static point of observation but a movement, or possible movement between” (Salesa 2014, 43; italics in original). More specifically, *vā* perceives space as points and their interrelationships rather than a bounded area (see Staley 2017, 52; van der Ryn 2007, 3). Tevita O. Ka’ili sees the Tongan practice of tauhi *vā*, “the nurturing of socio-spatial relationships”, as a cultural practice of establishing and strengthening beautiful sociospatial relationships (Ka’ili 2008, 33). He emphasises how it is impossible to think of *vā*, space, without *tā*, time, both in Tonga and Hawai’i, calling “attention to notable Hawaiian scholars and activists Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa and Haunani-Kay Trask in their descriptions of time-space conceptualisation

in Hawaiian culture where the past is the time in front and the future is the time that comes behind" (Ka'ili 2008, 26, quoted in Staley 2017, 53; also see Ka'ili 2017a, 23 and Kame'eleihiwa 1992, 22-23; Kame'eleihiwa 2009). Ka'ili's thinking is closely related to Tongan historical anthropologist, Ōkusitino Māhina's tā-vā theory of art (see Lear 2018; Māhina 2010). Māhina sees tā and vā as the common medium of all things natural, mental and social that exist. Accordingly, all things unfold in time and space, with nothing whatsoever existing above or beyond this realm. All things in nature, mind and society have four dimensions: three spatial dimensions (height/depth, width/breadth, length) and one temporal dimension, which is form (also see Ka'ili 2008, 36-7; Staley 2017, 54). Ka'ili explains how tā-vā is "collective and communal but [...] also arranged in a circular fashion" (2008, 41): "The purpose of ontologically organizing these concepts in a cyclical fashion is to bring multiple entities into harmonious relations with one another (Ka'ili 2008, 41). This is made visible in the practice of *tauhi vā*, especially among closely related people in a 'aiga or kin group." (Staley 2017, 55). At the same time, *tauhi vā* underlines the social importance of tā and vā, which literally mean "beating space": As a cultural practice, *tauhi vā* regulates and maintains social relations between groups by performing reciprocity. The symmetry or asymmetry of such exchange-based relationships leads to either a harmonious relationship or conflict (see Ka'ili 2008, 42). This illustrates the deep entanglement of notions of time-space and sociality in Tonga.

Similar ideas are reflected in Tongan anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa's well-known and highly influential re-imagination of space and sociality in Oceania as a "sea of islands" that enables connection rather than separation. "The sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else, the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us" (Hau'ofa 2008, 58). Hau'ofa, more interested in temporality than in the competing and latently colonial concept of linear time, emphasises how time is space and community in "Pasts to Remember":

To remove a people from their ancestral, natural surroundings or vice versa [...] is to sever them not only from their traditional sources of livelihood but also, and much more importantly, from their ancestry, their history, their identity, and their ultimate claim for the legitimacy of their existence. It is the destruction of age-old rhythms of cyclical dramas that lock together familiar time, motion, and space. (Hau'ofa 2008, 75)

Oceanic temporalities tend to emphasise the interlacing of the cultural, the ecological and the spatial with the temporal. Owing to this inseparability of

time, space and relation in Oceanic thinking, Tongan tauhi vā, the nurturing of socio-spatial relationships, is “relational as well as aesthetical in its practice as a performing art” (Staley 2017, 53). It is no different in Palau: traditional Palauan

culture unites [the two categories of space and time] through the notion of a journey (*omerael*, from the verb *merael*, “to walk, to travel,” itself derived from the noun *rael*, “path, road, way” [PAN **dalan*]). The journey of a god, person, group, or mythological creature provides a basic space-time continuum for conceptualization and discourse. (Parmentier 1987, 134; italics in original)

The key category linking space and time into one continuum in Palauan traditional thinking is movement. This is not surprising for a culture whose ancient history is rooted in voyaging and migration. The ‘place’ Palau only came into existence through the maritime voyage there, which, in turn, as a traditional seafaring practice, was a movement through space that was deeply relational: determined by the correlation of movement on the surface of the water in relation to the journey’s duration in relation to the spatial alignment of both with the visible stars. The motion-oriented conceptualisation of space-time in Palau is reflected, for instance, in the deictic and verbal forms that distinguish between “in front of, before” and “in back of, after” based on “the model of motion of elements along a linear path. Anything ahead (*uchei*) on the path will arrive at a given location before (*uchei*) anything traveling behind (*uriul*)” (Parmentier 1987, 134; italics in original). Similarly, traditional time reckoning depends on the correlation of the relative motion “of stars, sun, and moon with periodic regularities of fish spawning, growing seasons, tidal fluctuation, and climatic variation” (Parmentier 1987, 134). Parmentier also gives the example of the correlation between lunar cycles and the *rak*, the six-month periods marked by shifts in wind direction (Parmentier 1987, 134). It is in this context that the olángch quality (see Chapter 1) of *chelitákl rechuédel* becomes central to the emergence of musical meaningfulness. As olángch cultural practices, Palauan chants are

capable of transforming temporal sequence into spatial organization, because once established, the points of connection continue to exist as a stable, structural linkage which transcends the particular founding act [...] spatiotemporal linkages once established can become the template [...] for future actions and relationships. (Parmentier 1987, 136).

The story of Latmikaik, which is a part of Palau's origin myth, is instructive here. Latmikaik was a sea goddess who lived at the bottom of the ocean and the first to come into being. She incarnates as a giant clam, which even nowadays is the Palauan symbol of fertility and abundance. Latmikaik gave birth to lots of fish, but also to the first Palauans. Her human children are the first humans and the ancestors of today's Palauans; her fish children built houses of stone for themselves by piling up rocks until an island emerged above the water surface, today's Angaur (and, later on, the other Palauan islands, including Babeldaob) (see Krämer 1929a, 1f.). Latmikaik's human children moved to Babeldaob, "but they are not exactly foreigners, since they originated within the archipelago. Similarly, they came from the sea, but crossed a bridge which initially stretched to the heavens" (Parmentier 1987, 137). Movement along a path in time remains the founding process throughout Palauan traditional historiography. Palau's social hierarchy ensued from the journey of Latmikaik's children along the path. Traditional chants are "points of connection" between spatio-temporal order and the relationship network engrained in that order and sonically olángch. The neo-phenomenological notion that history lingers on in sound and spatio-temporal relationality renders it experiential is immediately intuitive within both Oceanic and, specifically, Palauan epistemological and ontological frameworks. It was the lingering olángch quality of the chanter's performance at the Women's Conference which, as movement referring to prior movement that co-constituted Palauan spatio-temporality and relationality, made the performance meaningful beyond any doubt. To perform an chesóls as olángch is a temporalizing act of the Palauan felt body engaged with its temporo-spatial environment.

Intensity: A Closer Look

With reverberation at the heart of chesóls' meaningfulness, the analytical focus now moves on to the dynamics arising between the layered felt-bodily sensations, remembrances and ideas that enter into the energetic conversation manifesting as musical meaningfulness. In the chesóls situation at the Women's Conference, meaningfulness arose when the audience crossed the threshold and joined that conversation felt-bodily, incorporating the chesóls' suggestions of motion as well as partaking in the complex situational reverberations those suggestions of motion enabled. Suggestions of motion and sonic events both occupy surfaceless spaces

in Schmitzian neo-phenomenology. To attune to a sonic event felt-bodily, an chesóls performance in this case, is to temporarily prioritise one's experience of felt-bodily surfaceless space over that of dimensional space and to explore one's relationality from the threshold in their in-between. Surfaceless space and dimensional space are concurrent and in no way consecutive to one another. An infinite number of suggestions of motion is unfolding in surfaceless space at any given time. Some affect felt bodies and are experienced as atmospheres, some do not; some affect some felt bodies and not others. For Schmitz, feelings are 'out there'. As atmospheres, they have a capacity to draw in people who happen to be located in the space inhabited by these feelings. To attune to an atmosphere, therefore, is to dwell on the thresholds between diverging types of spaces. Atmospheres point to how experiential spaces, that are typically thought of as disparate, interrelate in an intimate manner. That is where they become potentially productive for the analysis of sound-based cultural practices: As they transform those they affect, they too transform, always becoming something new.

Such atmospheric transformation is taking place on the level of surfaceless space. As it manifests in terms of continuous intensity fluctuations, it provokes new encounters and modulations within the *we-Leib*. The oscillatory nature of this fluctuating movement is the reason for the internal diffuseness of meaningfulness and, simultaneously, for its overwhelming intensity rather than extensivity. As music is itself a time-based performance practice, specific musical events enable the sensation of meaningfulness born mostly from the intensity, not the extensivity, of temporal experience. Meaningfulness oscillates between the various affective and interpretative frames of experience it leverages and to experience this meaningfulness sonically is to exceeds them all by way of the primarily corporeal experiential quality of the sonic as a medium. This is why sonic atmospheres and musical meaningfulness have the capacity to open new ideas about how music can mean things to certain people because it has "no object other than the situation's own intensity" (McGraw 2016, 142).

Musical Meaningfulness as Latently Historical

The audience at the Women's Conference embraced the unconventional chesóls performance because it enabled them to find one another felt-bodily in a sonic event that self-referentially suggested a sense of shared history

to them: this is where we are coming from as a community. If history often lives on in sound, then this is not owing to a structural-material quality of sound; instead, it is an example of what Tim Ingold (2011a, 2012, 2015) has described as material activities which are co-composing the world. Thinking about sound's latent historicity as a material activity in Ingold's sense underlines how musical atmospheres do not work according to a cause and effect logic. They move, instead, within those unstable "and active assemblages" of structured sound "with their own potentials of activity" (Löffler and Sprenger 2016). In other words, there is no cause and no effect in musical meaningfulness, only the mercurial movement of material activity. Again, Ingersoll's exploration of Kanaka he'e nalu as an epistemological practice resonates loudly (also see Diettrich 2018b, 44): as the surfing body

merges with the seascape into an ocean-body assemblage, ways of knowing and being are opened up to innumerable ways of moving, pausing, constructing, and deconstructing tempos as Hawaiian rhythms of cultural sovereignty are both disrupted and enabled. (Ingersoll 2016, 109f.)

While the material structures of both he'e nalu and music-making are based on the notion of linear time and, hence, the experience of surfaced space, their material activity is not. As they are atmospheric in nature, they move between surfaceless and surfaced space, sometimes lingering on their thresholds. This process renders our own temporal positionality experiential across both types of spaces. This is what accounts for the often overwhelming experiential intensity of music's inherent historicity. In the words of Hermann Schmitz,

Of all other *Gestalten* which atmospheres convey, the acoustic ones and the musical ones in particular are characterised by the fact that they are not simply there. They also grow, i.e., they bring their own history with them. This enables the expansive scope of musical composition, which finds no equal in the materiality of colours. Music forms *Gestalten*. Musical *Gestalten* are meshworks of suggestions of motion in the medium of sound, i.e., anticipatory impressions [Vorzeichnungen] of motion without motion that are created by music itself (through movement of the sound source).³² (Schmitz 2014, 89; italics in original)

32 Original text: "Vor allen anderen Gestalten, die Atmosphären vermitteln, haben die akustischen, besonders die musikalischen, den Vorzug, dass sie nicht nur da sind, sondern

Therefore, the intensity inherent to music is double for Schmitz: the intensive expanse of the surfaceless acoustic space filled with atmospheres, on the one hand, and the intensive duration of sound as laden and lading with history, on the other (Schmitz 2014, 89). Schmitz further distinguishes between two types of intensities inherent to intensive duration: intensive density and intensive length.

Regarding the emergence of the opposition of duration and ephemerality in music, the scope for the rivalry of intensive length and intensive density becomes incalculably larger through the transfer of executed motion onto merely anticipatory movement. Rhythm is such a suggestion of motion [...] and music adds to it by means of tonal suggestions of motion. In any rhythm of a process, length and duration work together antagonistically in pursuit of balance and saturation, which turns process into *Gestalt*.³³ (Schmitz 2014, 89; my italics)

It is here that a conceptual distinction between sonic atmospheres vs. musical atmospheres becomes productive. Musical conventions are cultural strategies to modulate the two types of intensity the sonic affords, i.e., density and length. They offer a framework from within which to work with sonic atmospheres in order to instigate the transductive processes at the heart of musical meaningfulness. Such work results in musical atmospheres, which are self-referential vis-à-vis their historicity. Sonic atmospheres, by contrast, “comprise the mechanism through which transduction creates new phenomena in a Simondonean sense” (Eisenlohr 2018b, 9), but they are not capable of self-referentially bundling diverging spatial and temporal modalities of experience as musical atmospheres are. This distinction will prove helpful in further disentangling the workings of music-making as an atmospheric practice as it allows us to distinguish

auch wachsen, d.h. ihre Geschichte mit sich bringen. Dadurch werden ausgreifende Bögen musikalischer Komposition möglich, denen im Material der Farben nichts Entsprechendes an die Seite gestellt werden könnte. Die Musik bildet Gestalten aus. Musikalische Gestalten sind Geflechte von Bewegungssuggestionen im Medium der Töne, d.h. Vorzeichnungen von Bewegung ohne von der Musik selbst (durch Wandern der Schallquelle) ausgeführte Bewegung.”
 33 Original text: “Der Spielraum für die Konkurrenz von intensiver Länge und intensiver Dichte, für die Ausformung des Gegensatzes von Dauer und Vergänglichkeit in der Musik, wird durch die Übertragung von der ausgeführten Bewegung auf die bloß vorgezeichnete Bewegung der Bewegungssuggestionen unabsehbar vergrößert. Der Rhythmus ist eine solche Bewegungssuggestion [...] (der) in der Musik durch tonale Bewegungssuggestionen ergänzt wird. In jedem Rhythmus eines Ablaufs wirken Länge und Dichte antagonistisch zusammen und streben einem Ausgleich, einer Sättigung zu, die den Ablauf zur Gestalt abrundet.”

between the affordances of the medium sound and the specificities of a given musical atmosphere.

Conclusion

Musical meaningfulness, therefore, is a matter of intensity and oscillatory movement between the various registers of the complex experience the musical event offers. Both the phenomenon's intensity and oscillatory movement are experienced through the felt body by linking space and time with relational networks and genealogies. The oscillatory movement that bundles the divergent frames of the human experience into experiential intensity is in continuous motion for the duration of the musical situation. Or perhaps, as Oceanic ontologies suggest, these frames were never separate to begin with but always already connected with one another in aesthetic practice. Pacific Indigenous historiographers tell us how Oceanic peoples did not have a word for the bounded territory of the Pacific Ocean until foreigners introduced it. This is when "the abstract, wordless encounters of experience" turned "into [a] named, known, and narrativized" artefact of a place (Salesa 2014, 44). However, that which is taken to be "the Pacific Ocean" houses a diversity of other maritime places: "native seas", as Salesa suggests we call them. Native seas include huge maritime trading networks that could span millions of square kilometres and "places known and named, practiced and narrated" (Salesa 2014, 44). Such spaces are the "simultaneity of stories-so-far" and places are "collections of those stories" (Massey 2005, 131; also quoted in Salesa 2014, 44). They need to be acknowledged and explored. Native seas have been practised through a variety of cultural practices: traditional seafaring, techniques of orientation at sea, fishing lore or Indigenous marine biology, to name but a few, but also the traditional performing arts, which narrate voyages and routes, tell of relationships and recount shared histories through sound. Like Oceania's 'native seas', which sometimes nest in each other and overlap but are almost always connected to one another in some way, musical meaningfulness might also always already be both/and/but also (Soja 1996): both a feeling and a thought but also a story; both a physical sensation and a memory but also a historical fact; both unbounded and a definite genealogy but also attuned to the cyclical rhythm of the waves. If that is the case, then meaningfulness, or atmospheres more generally, for that matter, cannot be equivalent to affectivity or necessarily occur prior to any and all interpretative frames, as McGraw (2016) suggests. To

assume so is to conflate the notion of atmosphere with affect and, thus, to give away the analytical and truly fresh potential of atmospheres as an analytical framework for cultural practices. Neither are atmospheres an opposite to affect. Instead, they do not draw their might from whichever categories one is accustomed to thinking with but from the inevitable interconnectedness of these categories. Musical suggestions of motion during a chant performance make these connections resonate both with all they connect to and their own latent self-referential historicity, and the intensity of the situation emerges as a musical Gestalt.

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Figure 7 Bai ornament in Ngardmau as documented by Augustin Krämer during the Hamburg South Seas Expedition. (Krämer 1929b, double plate 23) Krämer's description: "[R]uk dancers with galéped clubs in the hands; far left the *galid* [chelid] Golongil [...] in whose honor the dance occurred." (KETC 2017c, 62; italics in original)