

4 “Rak, Where Is He Now?” Presence | Present

Abstract

This chapter explores how meaningfulness and meaning relate in music, and how, structurally and texturally, music may ‘have meaning’ and yet mean far more beyond this meaning. Presenting an exploration of omengeredákl, a type of women’s group chant, and exploring Palauan notions of temporality, I single out “effects of meaning” and “effects of presence” (Gumbrecht 2003), showing how the dynamics arising between them lead to the emergence of a distinctly sonic atmosphere. There is no such thing as binary oppositions in atmospheres.

Keywords: omengeredákl, temporality, presence, meaningfulness

“A rak, Ngarkere chechang?” “Ngara beluu ra Ollei.”

“Rak, where is he now?” “He’s in Ollei village.”

(Cf. Klee 1976, 221; italics in original)

Traditional Palauan time reckoning was based on a correlation of the relative motion of the planetary bodies with the periodic cycles of nature, including fish spawning cycles (Klee 1976) and +mythological stories (Parmentier 1987, 135). The traditional Palauan lunar year illustrates the link between these three dimensions. It consists of twelve lunar months, each of which, in turn, consists of thirty darknesses. The first half of each lunar month belongs to Rekil Ongos, the time of easterly winds, and the second, to Rekil Ngebard, the time of westerly winds. Iechadrenge had made *búil*, the moon, but Rak, a major Palauan God, took her away from him and left for Ngetmel village in Ngarchelong, Northern Babeldaob. When *búil* is in Ngetmel for thirty darknesses, placing her in a house called Iromel, the Palauan year begins (Klee 1976, 220). An alternative version of this

myth says he was entrusted with búil by the high god Uchelianged, and left for his journey from his home village of Ngetmel (see Parmentier 1987, 135), which, in this way, becomes the first stop on his journey. On his way onwards, he passed through five more villages, where he places búil in a specific house. Then the wind shifts direction from Rekil Ongos to Rekil Ngebard, and the second half of the lunar year begins: Rak and búil travel to six more villages, and Rak again places búil in six specific houses. Once the twelfth set of thirty darknesses has been completed, the wind direction changes back to Rekil Ongos and, with the cycle complete, Rak and búil return to Ngetmel (Klee 1976, 220). This itinerary of Rak with búil, which led them southerly along the Eastern coast of Babeldaob, is the foundation of the Palauan lunar year (also see Parmentier 1987, 135). It makes sense that the Palauan noun for “year” is also rak (Josephs 1990, 285). To ask, “A rak, Ngar ker re chechang?”/ “Rak, where is he now?”, therefore, is to ask what month of the year it is; to answer, “Ngara beluu ra Ollei” / “He’s in Ollei village”, is to say that the moon is in its second set of thirty darknesses, i.e., lunar month, of Rekil Ongos, the time of easterly winds (Klee 1976, 221). As Parmentier points out (1987, 135), Rak’s journey does not coincide with the motion of any celestial body. Instead, the narrative connects *Rak*’s journey with temporal units and specific places in Palau and with social hierarchy marked by the house placements of búil. It is a technique aiming to correlate temporal and spatial categories, and an illustration of the traditional Palauan conceptualisation of temporo-spatiality. The underlying ‘model of the path’ (ráel) is a central trope in Palauan mythology, evoking people and objects moving in a linear fashion, thus, inscribing their mark into the landscape and engraving the natural world in cyclical time. In contemporary Palauan, ráel simply means “path”, but also “way out”, “way to someone’s heart” and “connection” in the sense of family ties (Josephs 1990, 285). The idea of a mythological journey only becomes the model of the path through narrative culture, which is an integral part of ráel. As storytelling and chanting tell of Rak’s, or any other mythological figure’s, journey, their olángch character “anchor[s] these mythological narratives in perceived experience” (Parmentier 1987, 135). The current time, Rak’s location, only becomes meaningful for the present moment when the suggestions of motions emanating from a sacred object or the sound of a chant being recited fills the space, envelops people and seizes them felt-bodily. It is no coincidence that at the mythological beginning, “the voice of the high god Uchelianged rings out across the empty sea to command that a piece of land be brought out of the depths” (Parmentier

1986, 172). The combination of the model of the path with the sensations evoked through olángch cultural practices

is 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. A journey along a path is thus the paradigmatic cultural act, since it is the simplest form of presupposition; spatiotemporal linkages once established can become the template [...] for future actions and relationships. [...] And more importantly, the fact of static, structural homology among linked points in the system [...] can be read as evidence for temporal sequence by simply postulating the prior existence of a journey. (Parmentier 1987, 136)

To incorporate olángch suggestions of motion via felt-bodily attunement seizes the felt body and infuses it with an encompassing sensation of temporo-spatial sequence resonating with Palauan cultural history and social fabric. A Palauan chanter, like the Palauan elders Victoria and Oribech chanting omengeredákl I described in the ethnographic vignette at the very beginning of this book, is a part of the latter: in flesh, genealogy and feeling. As the sound of Victoria and Oribech's omengeredákl singing pervaded their material bodies in the form of sound waves and affected their vital drive through suggestions of motion, their own song made it all come together for them. This is why they found chanting omengeredákl to be so vastly meaningful and also self-explanatory: they did not have the words to capture the experiential intensity of that fleeting omengeredákl moment in which, for them, all times and places and stories Palauan entered into resonance – olángch while it lasted.

Present, Presence, Meaningfulness

To understand this phenomenon better, in the preceding chapters I have explored meaningfulness with Schmitz, exploring the historicity and temporo-spatialities of Palauan musical atmospheres and identifying atmospheric suggestions of motion and heightened motional energy. Broadening the discussion, this chapter introduces an alternative concept, namely, the asignifying intensity literary scholar Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2003) has called "presence effects". Introducing the term into the discussion will help to open new vistas on Schmitz's notion of the "primitive present".

This, in turn, will allow me to think about musical meaningfulness more systematically against the backdrop of Hermann Schmitz's philosophy of time. In a sense, I am using Gumbrecht's presence effects as a searchlight to further sound out the temporality of musical meaningfulness in Palau and highlight its entanglement with both Palauan spatio-temporalities and Oceanic 'deep time' (see Chapter 2).

'Presence effects' is a container term that includes, among other things, moods and atmospheres. Gumbrecht's work, widely read and much quoted, shines through in a significant amount of recent work on atmospheres, most notably perhaps the work of philosopher Tonino Griffero. Griffero, in suggesting the idea of "pathicity" as a "pathic-aesthetic notion of felt-bodily presence" (Griffero 2019b; also see Griffero 2020), draws extensively on the work of both Gumbrecht and Schmitz. Griffero's pathicity is

the affective and life-worldly involvement that the perceiver feels often unable to critically react to or mitigate the intrusiveness of [... This] complicity with the atmospheric world is for me the core of the aesthetic sphere (in the etymological sense of *aisthesis*), much more so than art and beauty. But it is also a real phenomenon [...] philosophically rehabilitating pathicity means valorizing the ability to let oneself go. (Griffero 2019b, 415; italics in original)

In Gumbrecht's work, and specifically in his notion of presence effects (2003, 2014), Griffero finds a rehabilitation of the presence which, to him, resonates well with an ongoing theme throughout Schmitz's oeuvre: for the latter, to "be" is "to be-present" (Griffero 2019b, 417). However, Gumbrecht is interested in presence; Schmitz's inquiries, by contrast, are directed toward the "present". The common ground Griffero detects between the two is one of affective enactivism (Griffero 2019b, 418). This, to him, means that

whether one surrenders to situations full of atmospheric energy, or fulfills (more or less voluntarily) the "affective action" through which they consolidate our incipient and vague emotions, without the external conditions and constraints provided by atmospheres one wouldn't experience certain feelings, or, at least, one would not feel them as something precise and authoritative. (Griffero 2019b, 418)

In this chapter, I will explore *omengeredákl* with both presence effects and sense effects. The discussion will lead more deeply into the layered

complexity of the resonances that musical atmospheres evoke in the in-between of the divergent registers from which lived experience emerges. I have argued in the preceding chapters that these include temporo-spatiality, affect, emotion, discourse and memory. I have also established how the felt body, which is where suggestions of motion manifest atmospherically, continually forms in and remains laden with movement. Movement is also the force that enables a feelingful felt-bodily ability to respond to suggestions of motion. This response ability (Brown and Dilley 2012; Haraway 2016) is a prerequisite for the possibility of resonance. Exploring how music may "have meaning", yet mean far beyond such meaning, this chapter now turns to the mechanics of how these resonances come about, and why their imbrication with one another in music is intrinsically atmospheric. In the following, I will briefly introduce the genre of *omengeredákl* before I proceed to discuss Gumbrecht's sense and presence effects in relation to *omengeredákl*'s meaningfulness. Situating the discussion with the long and elaborate debate on musical meaning across the various branches of music studies will allow me to conclude the chapter by sketching the analytical potential meaningfulness holds for a music scholarship sensitised for phenomenological aspects of music-making.

Omengeredákl

Omengeredákl is a group chant. The word *omengeredákl* implies that something is sung in a loud voice, and it means 'to begin a song' in the context of music-making. One singer in the group inserts spoken interfaces between the formal units of an *omengeredákl*, usually by clapping their hands at a certain point, and underlines the lyrics through gestures and dance movements. Other singers may join in by clapping their hands. Historically, gestural dance seems to have played a considerable role in the performance of *omengeredákl*, but its importance varies in contemporary performances. My interlocutor, Riosang, who was in his sixties at the time of our conversation, described the genre as follows:

[*Omengeredákl*] are sung by a group: the leader explains the verses, and one person 'deviates' from the group, keeping the rhythm. The leader starts the chant, the 'paddlers' continue the chant – [the 'paddlers' are] the crowd, at least four people – and then there is the person who departs from the main melody. (Personal communication, 15 February 2005)

There are Palauan terms for the vocal parts Riosang describes. The *melemótem* prompts or ‘explains’ the song’s lyrics between the formal parts of the omengeredákl. The *meruchodl* is a solo singer who commences the sung section of an omengeredákl. The *esbe* is the ‘counterpart’ singer (the person who ‘deviates’ from the group’, as Riosang put it), ideally a male performer with an exceptionally high-pitched voice. The *melíkes* is the leader of the chorus, and the *rokúi* – Riosang calls them ‘the crowd’ here – is the chorus itself.³⁴ Melemótem, meruchodl, esbe, and melíkes are referred to as the *lebuchel*, or the ‘leaders’ (Palau Society of Historians 2002, 21). The primary function of the melemótem is to remind audiences of the lyrics, which may be lengthy. The lyrics in omengeredákl are recited in full by the melemótem between the formal units before they are sung by the chorus. Recited and sung lyrics may overlap slightly. They perform these lyrics in a number of ways, from ordinary speech to parlando singing. He or she is followed by the meruchodl, who starts the sung part of the omengeredákl. Melíkes means ‘to speak (i.e., words of song which others will sing in response)’ (Josephs 1997, 163). This word primarily means ‘to pole (a canoe)’. This metaphor illustrates the function of the melíkes neatly: to guide the ‘crew’ or chorus through the ‘water’ or music.

As mentioned above, *esbe*, which is related to the Palauan word *mengesb*, refers to a lunar constellation in which the moon is positioned in the centre of the sky.³⁵ The word *esbe* also means “to sing ‘with an especially high-pitched voice’ as the only person in the group” (Josephs 1997, 179). The *esbe* is an important part of the omengeredákl; it shapes the musical form significantly and functions as a marker of form in the musical texture, as will be seen. If the *esbe* does not function successfully, however, the piece is still distinguishable to the Palauan listener as omengeredákl. As a matter of fact, the *esbe* part is often omitted owing to a lack of suitable singers. *Rokúi* simply means “all of them” (Josephs 1997, 190, 293). In the context of omengeredákl, it refers to the chorus. The *rokúi* singers usually join in *un à un*; there is no clear ‘*rokúi* entry’ that demarcates the formal units. Given the tonal characteristics of the chorus part, this leads to a gradual building of a frequency band rather

34 Osamu Yamaguti recorded a slightly different Palauan terminology in 1965. According to him, the *mesuchokl* prompts or ‘explains’ the lyrics between the formal units of the omengeredákl; *mengider* is the ‘start-off’ that commences the bóid; the *meliikes* is the leader of the chorus; and the *mengesbch* is the ‘counterpart singer’ (see Yamaguti 1967). This terminology was not approved of by my interlocutors, and they proposed the one I give here instead.

35 The term also means “to sing out of tune” in English, which does not necessarily have a negative connotation in Palauan.



Sound example 4 Omengeredákl/keredekiil, performed by Lucy Orrukem (*1907 in Koror), Cheluiil (*1894 in Airai), Diratuchoi (*1904 in Koror), Risong (*1903 in Melekeok) and Dilliaur (* 1902 in Peleliu) on 20 September 1963 in Koror/Palau. Recorded by Barbara B. Smith.

than a rapid entry. Canoeing metaphors are a popular means across Micronesia to describe the social dynamics of group actions, and Riosang's comparison of the rokúi with paddlers is revealing in this regard: every paddler's position has an important role in safely navigating the canoe, yet, the overall safety of the journey depends entirely on how the group interacts.

The musical form of omengeredákl consists of a flexible sequence of four roughly standardised structural units and interpolated spoken or recited *melemótem* passages. These five elements can be interpreted as the building blocks of omengeredákl. The melodic progression of the four units (A, B, C and D) generally follows a scheme that is roughly uniform throughout the same piece but may differ to some degree among different performances. In any case, the contours of the phrases are recognisable across different performances.

The sound example suggests how a central feature of the tonal language of omengeredákl is the rendition of the chorus part. While the main melodic line serves as a point of reference for all singers, only one singer typically follows it. The remaining singers, except the *esbe*, perform slightly higher- or lower-pitched variations of that line, typically close to either the main melody's pitch or a fellow singer's intonation of the same line. The musical result is a thick texture that can be described as a frequency band. The *esbe*, entering either roughly on the beat with the chorus or with a slight time displacement, adds another vocal part to the thick musical texture, which usually commences on a pitch spectrum above that employed by the rokúi. In the following, the *esbe* melody slowly descends in pitch towards the phrasal ends, while the chorus remains around the established frequency band. The *esbe* and chorus parts slowly converge within a phrase. As the *esbe* part draws nearer to the rokúi throughout the course of the musical phrase, it evokes a frequency band with narrowing upper contours. Two descending melodic *esbe* phrases usually occur in each formal unit. In this regard, the *esbe* part may be viewed as a quasi-diminution of the chorus's part, which occurs solely on the level of musical form and does not affect the (inner) tempo. The end of the first *esbe* phrase is an interior phrase

conclusion. The final movement of the phrase differs from this conclusion as the rokúi narrows the frequency band. An interior phrase conclusion in omenegeredákl can, therefore, be identified by the convergence of the contours of the frequency band and concurrent maintenance of tonal friction generated by a frequency band with stable contours. In the concluding part of the phrase, the frequency band appears to be narrowed to a width that is perceived by the listener as a distinct (and consonant) pitch, not a dense frequency band. In this way, the development of tonal friction serves as a marker of musical form as it defines the shape of those musical phrases that involve the rokúi. Singers focus on specific structural parameters in the rokúi parts in order to make the omenegeredákl feel ‘how it’s supposed to feel’, as Oribech put it. Firstly, there is the considerable spectral friction within the frequency band that builds up to the final plateau at the phrasal end. In the case of sound example 4, this creates a single suggestion of motion that lasts for the whole phrase. This suggestion of motion can quite literally be described as roughly 11 seconds of contraction followed by about 2.5 seconds of expansion. A brief increase in spectral friction at 14” marks the end of the phrase and the suggestion of motion. This process of contraction and expansion is a tangible manifestation of the way in which individual voices behave both towards another and together. It brings into existence the rokúi, the key auditory body of the performance. The emergence of the rokúi requires all singers to contribute to a musical event that occurs only *between* the vocal parts. It cannot, therefore, be analysed in terms of individuals’ parts. This also explains why Victoria and Oribech did not deem it relevant to explain the rules for the melodic progression of the individual vocal parts to me (see Chapter 1). It did not make sense to them to elaborate on that because they found that clearly, the music could not properly be described in these terms.

A rokúi phrase suggests motion, musically conveying that thickly textured relationality is the primary structural element in the performance: it is relational not as a metaphor but as an atmosphere. According to Schmitz, suggestions of motion modulate the singers and audience’s vital drive with its continuous oscillation between contraction and expansion, which responds to a stimulus beyond affect and perception. Paraphrasing anthropologist Charles Hirschkind,³⁶ this suggestion of movement stirs up “latent tendencies of [...] response sedimented within the mnemonic regions of the flesh”

36 Charles Hirschkind refers here to the affective intensities of the body rather than the responsiveness of the felt body. In keeping with the discussions of affect presented by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Massumi (1995, 2002) and others, McGraw (2016) and Vadén and Torvinen

(2006, 82f.). The mnemonic regions of the singers' felt bodies resonate here and remember the Palauan concept of community, which was developed when the gods created the islands and their societal hierarchy. As *mechás* (a respectful Palauan term for elder, knowledgeable women), omengeredákl singers often consider it their responsibility to pass on the experiential knowledge about such traditional key concepts through song. As Oribech said to me in a conversation a few weeks after the one I described at the beginning of this book, "we can only sing [to the young people]". She meant that some traditional values cannot be fully translated into words. They require a different medium, in this particular case omengeredákl and the encompassing felt-bodily experience of Hirschkind's responsiveness they afford. The particular notion of community that, as the *mechás* suggested during our conversations, is embodied by the *rokúi* can be traced all the way to the gods and is present throughout Palauan oral history and mythology. By modulating the felt body's rhythm of contraction and expansion, the *rokúi*'s suggestion of motion causes the felt body's knowledge of this origin and cultural history of the notion of community to resonate in a diffuse way with the musical experience of singing omengeredákl. If the musical texture of the *rokúi* phrase exudes a sense of community, as my interlocutors kept emphasising, then the spectrograms above show how this happens: primarily through a modulation of the *rokúi*'s frequency band and its internal tonal tension. This modulation is a suggestion of movement that, in omengeredákl, resonates with Palauan notions of societal structure, community values, spiritual obligations, social responsibility and historicity. This resonance is possible because of the confluence of two historicities: the historicity of these notions themselves and that of a musical genre that is *olángch* and, as such, capable of resounding these notions: omengeredákl. The materiality of the latter suggests movement. In a traditional context, Palauan listeners' felt bodies experience these suggestions of movement powerfully as an atmosphere that is inseparable from the affective and emotional qualities of the former. This is also why omengeredákl items will be performed during official events of a political nature if at all possible, in order to evoke that shared feeling of belonging to one and the same community.

The *esbe* part is illustrated as a clearly discernible, two-part melodic line that is 'poured' on top of the *rokúi*'s frequency band. In sound example 2, one can hear those two parts from 2-8" and 8-12", including the melodic arch of the second *esbe* part, which commences around 8" and reaches

(2014) assume that affect is sensed before interpretive frames are leveraged. I, however, contend that both processes may happen simultaneously and interrelate (also see Eisenlohr 2018a).

its highest pitch at around 10". The women's use of the *esbe* to refer to 'the moon up there', together with Victoria's hand gesture (see Chapter 1), seems to become self-explanatory: the uplifting melodic movement that reaches beyond the upper contours of the frequency band suggests a spatial expansion that links the *rokúi* to a wider sonic space. But that is not all there is. Beyond the isomorphic metaphor, the *esbe* further reinforces the felt-bodily experience of the grander frame of reference, that is, the Palauan concept of historicity that is closely linked to spirituality. This is why the structure of *omengeredákl* simply 'makes sense', in the words of my interlocutors. Palauan spirituality is deeply intertwined with cosmology and its coming into existence. The moon is a central luminary both mythologically and spiritually throughout Palauan mythology and oral history. Accordingly, the lunar cycles are the primary markers of time, and these cycles simultaneously explain the structure of Palau's divinely created societal hierarchy (cf. Parmentier 1987, 134-136). The reference to the moon in the word *esbe*, thus, is a reference to one of the guiding principles in the Palauan traditional worldview.

Loudness, related to the modulation of spectral friction, can also be observed in the figures. Harmonics – appearing in the spectrograms as horizontal lines – generally tend to have comparatively constant frequencies but, as can be gleaned from the spectrograms, their loudness increases proportionally more than that of the lower frequencies. Hence, there is a greater concentration of acoustic energy in the higher band of the spectral envelope. Due to the frequency band's continuous movement of internal pitches – voices shift constantly within a very close intervallic range – the acoustic result of the phrase is complex, constant modulation between brighter and darker timbres. These oscillations form another suggestion of motion that is much quicker and more varied than the suggestions brought about by play with spectral friction and the distribution of the *esbe*'s phrases across the *rokúi* part. They also cause the part preceding the final plateau to become louder, while the final plateau itself, featuring many fewer oscillations of this kind, is quieter. This emphasises the largest suggestion of motion in the *rokúi* phrase: the one marked by spectral friction, which creates the impression of a frequency band shaped like a melodic arch. In this way, a hierarchy is established between the various suggestions of motion that unfold simultaneously: the suggestion of motion brought about by tonal friction marks the formal parts of the performance, whereas the other suggestions of motion shape the phrase's inner Gestalt. These musical suggestions of motion (and others) comprise a musical event, the diffuse meaningfulness of which is made up of layered felt-bodily sensations

(such as expansion in space) and remembrances (such as experiencing the specifically Palauan notion of community through the felt body).

Victoria and Oribech deeply appreciate omengeredákl as a musical genre for its cultural value and its olángch nature. But it is only through the incorporation of suggestions of motion in the musical experience of singing omengeredákl that its full meaningfulness became tangible to Victoria, Oribech and their fellow singers: It does not get more intensely olángch in the now than when your body is one, connected via suggestions of motion, with chelitákl rechuódel as much as Ollei village is one, via the story of Rak, with the second lunar month of Rekil Ongos.

Sense Effects | Presence Effects

The preceding analysis invites a fuller exploration of the role of presence, in Gumbrecht's sense, within the framework of an Oceanic 'deep time'. Gumbrecht's sense effects appeal exclusively to the senses; his presence effects, by contrast, provoke asignifying intensity.³⁷ Sense effects, for Gumbrecht, arise from the interpretative acts attributing meaning to a given phenomenon (2012b, 15); presence effects, on the contrary, "inscribe themselves into their articulative forms as aesthetic experience" (2012b, 15). This is possible, argues Gumbrecht, because everything has always already had a relationship to our bodies, simultaneously with the involuntary habit of ascribing meaning. In proposing his terminology, Gumbrecht makes a

pledge against the tendency in contemporary culture to abandon and even forget the possibility of a presence-based relationship to the world. More specifically: to make a pledge against the systematic bracketing of presence, and against the uncontested centrality of interpretation, in the academic disciplines that we call 'the humanities and arts.' (Gumbrecht 2003, vx)

Gumbrecht ultimately argues for "a relation to the things of the world that could oscillate between presence effects and meaning effects" (2003, vx). While meaning is intrinsically relational for Gumbrecht, it is also clearly a sense effect: "If we attribute a meaning to a thing that is present, that is, if we form an idea of what this thing may be in relation to us, we seem to

37 Gumbrecht 2011, 2012b.

attenuate, inevitably, the impact that this thing can have on our bodies and our senses" (Gumbrecht 2003, xiv).

While Gumbrecht's project to direct scholarly attention away from meaning and on to presence has obvious connections with the neo-phenomenological attentiveness to lived experience, his latently introjectionist categorical distinction between presence and sense effects makes it difficult to do analytical justice to the complexity of the latter. With a nod to Heidegger, Gumbrecht's set of binary opposites seeks to emphasise the bodily, pre-hermeneutical and non-interpretative as constitutive to human world-making. A few years later, this project led Gumbrecht to try and "read Stimmung" in contemporary literature, as the title of his book reads in the original German (2011; *Stimmungen lesen. Über eine verdeckte Wirklichkeit von Literatur*); the English translation complicates the concept of Stimmung into *Atmosphere, mood, Stimmung. On a hidden potential of literature* (2012a). Stimmung, in both cases, is what in a given literary text connects us with the text's time, renders it alive for the reader and allows it to speak to us with affective immediacy (Huntemann 2011). To read Stimmung, to Gumbrecht, means to get involved affectively and bodily with that time and to single it out (Huntemann 2011). Gumbrecht's notion of both Stimmung and affectivity are, thus, far removed from Schmitz's atmospheric theory and highly specific to literature and literary analysis.

And yet, the idea of presence effects can point toward a more nuanced understanding of atmospheres, and musical ones in particular. To suggest that cultural practices afford a condensation of linear time and temporality into presence effects is to move the focus to how temporal latency actualises as condensed Gestalt and experiential intensity. Such latency is not temporal in Palau but deeply temporo-spatial and infused with mythology, as I have established in the preceding chapters. Chelitákl rechuódel are olángch. What distinguishes them is that they can render the sensation of olángch experiential in a distinctly sonic way, pervading felt bodies and linking people and things with stories. However, with these stories comes a very particular, 'deep' temporo-spatiality, one that is both surfaceless and dimensional. Palauan spatio-temporality, I argue, straddles the thresholds of neo-phenomenological pre-dimensional space and Cartesian dimensional space. So does sound, emerging from pre-dimensional suggestions of motion as a dimensional sonic event which, in turn, harbours new pre-dimensional suggestions of motion. This is why chelitákl rechuódel render the depth of Palauan time-space experiential *as the present moment*.

This is also how chelitákl rechuódel effortlessly bracket discursive layers, memories, emotions, narratives and ideas and transduce them into

sheer intensity. The intensity becomes meaningful the very moment it is being bracketed atmospherically because this is when resonance emerges. Paradoxically, as musical presence effects temporarily intensify the temporospatial experience, they expose the illusory quality of linear time but conceal it simultaneously: As a given musical experience merges pasts, presents and futures, the experiential intensity that emerges belongs to none of these three categories. Instead, it constitutes a fleeting manifestation of presence in Merleau-Ponty's sense: presence, for him, is a "zone in which being and consciousness coincide" (1962, 424).

The dissolution of temporal linearity into experiential intensity, therefore, is an effect that is pivotal to the efficacy of musical atmospheres. The mercurial quality of the distinctly musical temporal experience that sound-based cultural practices afford also points to the mechanics of Schmitz's bridging qualities. Awash with multilayered suggestions of motion, the felt body's temporary familiarisation with time-space as well as with its own temporospatiality through music is a twirling process in which meaningfulness and resonance co-produce one another through structured sound.

Such an understanding of presence effects is, of course, in stark contrast to Gumbrecht's usage of the term. This is also reflected in the fact that atmospheric presence effects, as I have described them above, are in no way an opposite to sense effects in music. Quite the contrary: meaningfulness and meaning go hand in hand in music. In the following, I will briefly explore how this discussion relates to the scholarly debate on musical meaning as it has developed in twentieth- and twenty-first century music studies. While the earlier stages of this discussion are certainly relevant to the emergence of atmospheric theory to begin with (see Riedel 2019), I am focusing here on the developments of roughly the past three-quarters of a century. With this, my aim is to maintain, for the moment, a clear focus on the conceptual implications the resonances between the notion of music as atmosphere and the scholarly pursuit of musical meaning might yield.

Music, Meaning, and Meaningfulness

Coming from a scholarly tradition used to charting meaning as mostly hermeneutic and semiotic in nature, the discussion of musical meaning in twentieth- and twenty-first century North Atlantic music studies continued to centre around the notion of music as a representational practice for a long time. These discussions, exploring music as quasi-linguistically referential and/or emotionally expressive, have situated musical meaning as primarily

referential to something ‘outside’ the music(al event) itself. Around the turn of the millennium and well into it, many scholars continued to frame musical meaning as attributed value: “musicians and listeners ascribe significance and value to music, to the events in which [it is] performed, and to contexts, ideas and objects associated with it” (Clayton, Dueck, and Leante 2013, 1). While this dominant conception prevailed, work of the time emphasised the reverse process, in which “music also gives meaning to events, imbues contexts and objects with values and reinforces social bonds and distinctions” (Clayton, Dueck, and Leante 2013, 1). They also increasingly broadened the discussion to include issues of embodiment in the sense of musical meaning tied to physical experiences of musical performance and largely independent from linguistic mediation (Clayton, Dueck, and Leante 2013, 1). This is an intellectual trail that had also inspired key figures of the New Musicology movement. The overall tendency to shift analytic attention to process and away from being, for instance, is also reflected in the extensive work of cultural musicologist Lawrence Kramer. He argued prominently that meaning is not primarily a product of signification, or a signified, for that matter. To him, meaning is a

product of action rather than structure. It is more like a gesture than like a body. [...] Meaning is not produced via a linear derivation from a core of certainty, whether semiotic or hermeneutic. Nor is it produced via a one-to-one matching of less certain interpretive claims with more certain evidential ones. Meaning comes from negotiation over certain nodal points that mobilise the energies of both text (image, dramatic action, musical unfolding) and context. I once called these points hermeneutic windows – partly to counter the idea of music as purely self-sufficient and self-reflective, a windowless monad – and the term seems to have had some currency. (Kramer 2011: 68)

If movement is like a gesture, then it is motion. Accordingly, some ten years later, he argues: “The movement of meaning, that movement that *is* meaning, [...] also depends implicitly on a refusal of a Cartesian mind-body distinction in any of the myriad and annoyingly persistent forms this distinction takes” (Kramer 2016, xv, italics in original; also see Kramer 2002). With this, Kramer takes a clear stance against the omnipresence of affect theory in discussions of musical meaning in the second decade of the twenty-first century. His thinking resonates with and partly inspired approaches that chose to centre around framing in the sense of Mieke Bal (2002) and Goffmann (1974): framing as a dynamization of ascription processes that happen through,

not so much around, music (e.g., Richardson 2016a, 2016b). Nina Eidsheim in her *Sensing Sound* (2015) also departs strategically from the idea of meaning as an external reference and something with which people endow sound. Challenging conventional meaning-making paradigms, she emphasises the material dimension of sound-based meaning. Musing about the words 'mama' and 'papa' being said out loud, Eidsheim diverges radically from a semiotic definition of meaning in music: "[T]he physical unfolding of those words – or even a timbral modulation in their pronunciation, or even a timbral modulation that is not attached to a recognizable word – causes physical changes in the speaker or vocaliser, and it is from the sensation of that changed corporeal environment that we build meaning. [...] Speech is [...] not arbitrary in relation to meaning making and reality, but neither does it unfold through a casual and nonmaterial chain of relationships between concepts" (Eidsheim 2015, 124). As she brings the material body into the discussion, Eidsheim identifies the central challenge and certainly also opportunity for music studies when she suggests "that if we reframe musicking's core, understanding it as a constellation of corporeal activities and sensualities, we accomplish nothing less than a reconfiguration of the body's position in relation to sense and meaning making" (Eidsheim 2015, 127).

While phenomenological ideas began to inform (ethno-)musicological work in the nascent stages of the field, it was only in the late 1970s that they began to have a substantive impact on the field at large. Berger attests in the conclusion of his review piece on phenomenological approaches in ethnomusicology that phenomenological ideas across the breadth of their spectrum have the capacity to open vistas on music as "elements of experience that contribute important threads to the texture of everyday life and as phenomena that stir our deepest passions" (2015). He adds that music "serves as an entry point to the rest of the social universe, a starting place for inquiry that draws the researcher beyond the music event to areas as diverse and significant as the affective life of capitalism, the neurobiology of trance, the nature of time, or the paradoxes of embodiment" (Berger 2015). Importantly, however, music retains an object quality in most of this work, an idea that reflects in the notion of the entry point to the social world awaiting us behind the door of music. If we push open the door of music, we may find a whole new world of social experientiality.

But perhaps the metaphor of the entry point is ultimately not as far from Schmitzian thinking as it may seem at first glance, at least if one thinks of the entry point as a quality rather than a place or an object. Berger's entry point is, after all, reminiscent of Kramer's nodal points, those "hermeneutic

windows” that stir the energies of what Kramer, in keeping with the discursive framework of New Musicology, refers to as text and context. This is where energies begin to twirl and churn. From a Schmitzian perspective, the crucial aspect of this incipency of motion is what Eisenlohr (2018b), with Simondon, has called transduction: the sonic event builds up meaningful intensity because its suggestions of motion are modulated by the bridging qualities of the sonic. It is only through its bridging qualities that music-making can seize people felt-bodily, entering their phenomenological body and modulating their felt-bodily experience of a given situation. Similarly, through its bridging qualities, one of music-making’s most pivotal characteristics could be said to be its capacity to playfully jump back and forth, subvert or completely transform that which could at one point be identified as either sense or presence effect in Gumbrecht’s sense. It is this unruly habit of music-making to disturb any sense of stability in meaning that marks its intensity and felt-bodily impact: as the sonic event keeps oscillating in the form of sound waves, so does its meaningful intensity. The colourful kaleidoscope of meaningfulness keeps spinning because it is resonant motion, layered, condensed, terribly unsettling and ever-transforming.

To think with atmospheres is far from an attempt to find a “solution” to dualist thinking, as Riedel (2020a, 263) suggests. In Lawrence Kramer’s succinct words, “no one has a solution” to binarist ideologies such as the mind-body dichotomy, “and by now the possibility is real that no one ever will” (Kramer 2016, xv). Instead, it is based on the conviction that a focus on process has to be radical in nature if it is to yield fresh analytical insights. Atmospheres are no longer about who or what relates. They are about relationship as motion and process in the abstract and in the concrete.

Meaningfully Present

Music-making’s meaningfulness is more than a conduit for something else, such as the ultimately ever-evasive musical meaning; it is an intrinsically felt-bodily effect. And yet, its kaleidoscopic becomings are deeply entrenched with that meaning and, similarly, meaning is imbricated within meaningfulness in music in the way in which the spatial parameters that shape an echo are inscribed in that echo. As they both create and, simultaneously, originate from auditory and kinetic atmospheres, the effects of musical meaningfulness transcend the idea of the material/immaterial dichotomy. Through its very materiality, the musicking body is capable of resounding with an experiential knowledge brought about by the body’s response ability

(Ingold 2016b) to situations: When the music resonates with your flesh and your bones, "you'll know what to do", in Oribech's sense, if you take a dive into the music. The felt body knows how to respond to the suggestions of motion it encounters, and that felt-bodily knowledge of how to respond is at the heart of the sensation of meaningfulness. When we experience musical meaningfulness, we experience our felt body making sense of something that we cannot make sense of other than felt-bodily. As the *esbe*'s voice climbs up and gives the *rokúi* its distinct melodic contours, we relish in the meaningful Gestalt that emerges: we anticipate it, we get surprised by it, we recognise it, we feel it in us as our bodies recompose along the suggestions of motion they encounter. This is how musical meaningfulness weaves it all together: the structures, the resonances, the material, the felt, the knowable, that which will not stop twirling, the fixed bits and those that do not seem to make sense. The focus, thus, shifts on to auditory ambiance and away from the *ideas* transmitted through music. But it does not disregard the latter. Music-making is primarily about making music present in the world and only to a lesser extent about communication, the manipulation of discursive configurations or directed interventions aimed at altering the social frameworks that characterise our life-worlds.

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Figure 11 Bai ornament in Keklau as documented by Augustin Krämer during the Hamburg South Seas Expedition. (Krämer 1929b, double plate 11) Krämer's description: "[T]he spirit in Ilëtemú; left Ngardmau with flying fox, house with spikes, to the right cave of the mother and she herself, center: a man with Gólei and fishing nets, finding the bowl with the stomach, right Gólei, high spirited people." (KETC 2017c, 60)