

DANCE RESEARCH NRW # 15 in Düsseldorf

**Interview at the end of the residency:
“Unheard Of: The Performative Possibilities of Foley Artist Labour”**

Performer and choreographer: Kareth Schaffer & Boglarka Börcsök

Kareth, where did your interest for foley art come from and how did it come to this project and to the cooperation between you and Boglarka?

Kareth Schaffer: The decision to work on foley came as a kind of ‘Eureka!’ moment one day when we were discussing dance’s (im)possibilities of pointing to something beyond the body and the stage – contemporary dance can be very self-referential, and we wanted to get out of that. Foley is a type of movement pretty much completely determined by something outside itself – the film material – and we realized that the performance of foley could occupy an interesting position between functional and dramatic performativity.

You have undertaken an internship with a famous foley artist during the first days of your residency in Düsseldorf. Tell me how it was. And why that was necessary.

The internship with George Hapig was a wonderful contribution to our research on many levels. As a choreographer I was thinking a lot about how doing foley *looks*, but of course George (and every other foley artist) is concerned in how the foley *sounds*. These are two different priorities, but in learning about the technical necessities for creating foley, e. g. what the recordist does, or how amplifying sounds also change them, we gained a lot of depth in how we could manipulate sound in a staged situation (please see also the FOLEY DIARIES).

How did you both then start working at the WELTKUNSTZIMMER? How did you proceed and what did you explore?

We started work in the studio by finding materials we thought were interesting to foley. After a lot of discussion, we settled on film material that somehow features or implies some sort of physical transgression – like people getting stabbed.

Things that are difficult to realistically portray on the stage. Then we had to identify all the sounds, find objects that could produce these sounds, and look at the best way of using these objects.

What interests you in the performative aspects of foley for your work as a dance artist? What aspects are of interest to you particularly with regard to the issue of Dance Research # 15 “dance and music”?

Doing foley is quite a specific physical task, with sometimes very unnatural rhythms – you’re trying to follow edited film, after all. I like that it produces a very specific physicality – a very concentrated gaze, with precise time and precise movements – and yet, at the same time, all of this movement is *only* there to produce sound. The movement is like a ‘side-effect’ of the sound. These moments when you are doing it and you become consumed by the task of producing sound sometimes makes the body do something surprising. These are the moments I like to watch for in any type of dance piece – when the performer goes beyond what she thought she was going to do.

What did you show in the final presentation? What could the audience experience?

For the final presentation we decided to show a series of ‘performative experiments’: small scenes, usually drawing on

some kind of pre-existing film material, that we had foleyed in different ways. The spectators could either watch the film and listen to us, or just watch us and try to imagine what type of sounds we were creating. People were very interested and seemed to like switching back and forth between the screen on the one side of the room and what we were doing on the other side. We presented the experiments in several different rooms of the WELTKUNSTZIMMER so that we could work with the different audiovisual effects of each space: large and small rooms, amplified or unamplified, etc. The whole thing had a 'parcours' feeling to it.

How would you describe what interests you most regarding your relationship with the audience in general and specifically in this work?

I'm very interested in inviting the audience to reflect on *how* they are watching a performance: with what expectations, with what senses. For example, I don't think George Hapig [*ed. the foley artist Kareth interned with*] really watched anything that happened on the stage during our final presentation: he was always watching the film material and *listening* to the sounds we were making, because that's what he cares about most. But other people switched, and so for them sometimes the presentation was like being in a movie, sometimes like watching a dance piece, sometimes like listening to a concert. Giving the audience the option of choosing how to watch something – and thereby reflecting on what it means to be a spectator—is something I'm very concerned with, especially in this work.

What do you take with you after this research in Düsseldorf? How do you want to develop this material? Are there any ideas for concrete production?

Right now we are concentrating on making an evening-length performance piece with foley, dubbing, and doubling as its main focal points. We were able to generate a lot of movement material as part our research in Düsseldorf, as well as compiling long long lists of films we would be interested in working with, props that make great sounds, and compositional and audio-technical techniques that are relevant to foley and doubling. In order to to make the various fragments connect as a piece, of course, we need to find a way building coherency. For instance, in the final presentation there was always a break between every 'scene' because we had to re-construct the space: now we're interested in integrating this re-construction into the foley-making so we can maintain tension and concentration in the piece – we are dealing with a lot of horror films, after all! We will be showing various parts of our progress in Berlin and Düsseldorf in the second half of 2015 and probably be doing a couple of workshops on foley as a performative practice – it's a very accessible way of making contemporary dance practices transparent, and that's a wonderful thing.