

Listen to the Music of the Other
Angelica Mesiti's *ASSEMBLY*

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¹ 'Music and dance in Aboriginal Australia are key means of communicating and experiencing spirituality. Their performance becomes a form of collective self-actualisation. It is in and through the singing of ancient, sacred songs and the performance of the dance that accompanies them that deference and respect to the land and country is demonstrated and lived out, and one's own place within them and as part of them is acknowledged and joyfully experienced'. Jo Dyer, 'Living Songs: Music, Law and Culture in Aboriginal Australia', in *Exploring the Musical Landscape*, Australian Music Centre and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 1998.

In his *Ten Books on Architecture*, a dedication and instruction to his patron, the emperor Augustus, Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, provides a clear thesis concerning the matter of architecture with regard to purpose.

Key to Vitruvius' thoughts on the planning and building of architecture for Imperial Rome are the concepts of harmony and balance. He adds to these the necessity of knowledge about philosophy, geometry, optics, light and symmetry which, to him, are requisite to creating proportions that are suitable.

Memory is also significant and aids an understanding of the legacies of ornamentation – inherited wisdoms, styles, iconographies and histories of the emerging Rome that draw from the Greeks. Memory, for Vitruvius, is imbedded in the very stone of buildings and carried forward.

As well as these attributes, Vitruvius repeatedly refers to the importance of music in his thesis on architectural forms. Attentiveness to the musicality of a space, he informs Augustus, instructs the use of harmonic and mathematical proportions and assists architecture to become a vessel for oratory and 'theatre'. Thus assembled, architecture provides a musical setting for civic work, the business of the polis, brought together in pleasing accord.

It is not only in the western canon that we find such references to music and its application as modality and metaphor for governance. The Chinese teacher, politician and philosopher, Kōng Fūzi, 'Confucius', regarded a knowledge and practice of music to be of the highest order, second only to an adherence and knowledge of 'ceremonies', which in ancient Chinese society relates to the rituals and laws of the court and temple.

Confucius valued the refinement of the *Shao* style of official music for its nuance and elegance. He believed this 'good' music could help to morally regulate the people and assist in organising and universalising the affairs of state in a harmonious fashion. Conversely, he was against the populist *Zheng* style of music, which he considered had a wanton, passionate attachment to lustful desire that he feared would lead to corruption and excess.

If we look back through history at many societies and their structures and rituals of government and law, we recognise the consistent reference to music, circular gathering, ceremonial dance and rules. The Indigenous communities of Australia, the Americas, Asian and Pacific Islander communities; Viking and Nordic groups; and Saxon, Celtic gatherings each mark out circular spaces for ritualised law making, frequently accompanied by music and dance as forms of oration and story telling. Often these are naturally formed circles or designated spaces marked in the landscape.¹

However it is the Vitruvian ideals proposing an architectural instrument, designed with harmonics in mind, to inspire unity, morality and regulation, which has been most fully adopted into modern civic architecture. Vitruvius' arrangement – symmetrical, acoustically enabling and balanced – becomes the model *topos* for the government of 'the people' to be enacted: a parliament. The Vitruvian formula creates an interior where the wise elders – the anointed men – assemble to represent the interests of the people; a temple for 'Democracy' – an amphitheater of argument and reason.

These handed-down prototypes and architectures, with their embedded histories, are rhetorical spaces designed to enable argument to flow and wash with the civility of balance – fulfilling the ambition to resolve acrimonious arguments into harmonious, consensual outcomes. Such architectural arrangements acknowledge the fledgling hopes of a government based on the values of equality, reason and agreement. They are the basis of Democracy, exemplifying the representation of, and rule by, the people.

Yet even at the time of its inception, in ancient Greece, Democracy, as a concept and an actuality had its detractors and skeptics. Famously, Socrates, through the interlocution of Plato, warned of the fallibility of Democracy and the likely trajectory from people's representation to populist leader to tyrannical despot.

² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, 'declaration', self published, un-paginated, dist. Argo Navis Author Services, eISBN: 9780786752911, 2012.

³ The filming takes place in the Italian Senate Chamber in the Palazzo Madama, Rome. The Italian Senate first convened in this chamber in 1871. The interior was designed by Luigi Cabet.

⁴ Alain Badiou, 'Infinity and Set Theory: How To Begin With The Void', 2011. Presented by the European Graduate School EGS Media and Communication Studies Saas-Fee, Switzerland.

⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *Event*, Penguin, 2014, pp. 49–50.

Indeed, how many times, of late, have the commentariat had justification to consider Socrates' warning and then announce that the end of Democracy is upon us; that Democracy has failed? Right now, and previously, in perpetual waves of agreement and dissent, history has played this scenario out. However, if the Vitruvian formula is right, then his architectural *topos* of balance and musicality should, in time, be able to reassert the desirable democratic dialogue.

Democracy, right now, is under pressure, fracturing and failing, but it is not dead. However, to be robust it needs participation and new thinking. It is wise to heed the counsel of political philosophers, Michael Handt and Antonio Negri, when they write, 'The surest and most powerful way to generate democratic political affects is by practicing democracy.'²

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Angelica Mesiti opens her *ASSEMBLY* (2019) in the mute spaces of an empty parliament building. Her camera lingers on corridors and meeting rooms of influence, the places of intrigue and plotting. Lined with marble busts of historical dignitaries – the men of history – the corridors confirm a long patriarchy. Chairs are arranged for waiting, distributed along a gallery. Ceiling frescos permit a view to the illusionary heavens. All spaces are still, awaiting some life and event of change.³

In a chandeliered room a neo-classical fresco is shown. Painted by Italian artist, Cesare Macarri, it depicts the Roman senator, Cicero, denouncing the insurgent, Lucius Sergius Catilina, who sought to overthrow the Roman Republic. The scene functions as a reminder to all who debate in the house that governing is a precarious, changeable business. Cicero's pictured pronouncement of a death sentence for Catilina and his followers, without trial and due process, provides a premonition of Cicero's own brutal dispatch at the hands of Mark Antony's men. The *aide-mémoire* of this oft told narrative acts as a warning for those who follow a live-by-the-sword agenda. The fresco depicting the toga-wearing, exclusively male ensemble creates an historical ornamentation and the requisite commemoration as Vitruvius would have thought appropriate.

The grand, impressive Senate chamber, echoing the arrangement of Macarri's painted interior, with its red upholstered seats, arranged in the aforementioned, prescribed semi-circle; its podia centrally located to enable oratory, heard by all at an equal distance from the fanned out seating, is forensically examined by Mesiti's directorial eye. She allows us to dwell momentarily in this architecture of power and absorb its voided silence.

Mesiti's motionless, cinematic eye encourages us to contemplate these spaces. And it is interesting to consider for a moment this empty – voided – architecture and question its symbolic purpose.

In his interrogations into set theory, the ontological French philosopher Alain Badiou refers to the void as the 'Omega'. That which stands outside but awaits the succession of a chain of incidents that respond to, or are caused by what he refers to as a 'cut'. In his philosophy, this beginning of a sequence can be understood as the 'Event'. The Omega is disrupted by an Event – a cut – that opens up a new world by unleashing a succession of incidents. It is, Badiou says, 'a recalculation of the world'. Inside this new world of successions is what he refers to as 'blind memory'. The beginning of a new world, for Badiou, will always contain memory.⁴

In a Hegelian twist, philosopher Slavoj Žižek thinks of the 'Event' in another way. For him the Event is something that influences our subjective perception of what he calls the 'Real', which is a phenomenological encounter rather than an empirical one. As he says, 'The ultimate Event ... is the loss of some primordial unity and harmony which never existed, which is just a retroactive illusion.'⁵

Perhaps, given our location in the architectural prop of the Senate, Democracy itself is this illusion. The Senate we encounter through Mesiti's lens proposes a democratic

⁶ In a letter dated December 16, 1877, Giuseppe Garibaldi declared he would like to see professor Michela's very useful invention fully implemented. In 1881, the Italian Senate adopted the newly-developed stenographic system which is still being used. The modern-day Michela is computerised and allows instant transcription of the Senate debates in alphabetic characters instead of shorthand. *Il Globo*, Mary Zuppardo, September 15, 2016.

void, full of blind memory that awaits an Event to recalibrate its purpose. In her cinematic scenario the stage is set for such a Badiouian cut; a Žižekian phenomenological rupture.

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The silence of the Senate chamber is disturbed by a clunking sound. Deliberate, lung like and punctuated by pauses. Then, like a punctum in the empty scene, the camera reveals a lone figure seated amidst the amphitheatre. A grey suited senate stenographer at a desk works a keyboard that resembles a small piano. An apparatus known as the Michela machine. The clunking sound is now married to the black and white keys as they are depressed.

A screen monitor in front of the key operator types the words ... *To be written in another tongue / as for example, the language in which my grandfather / dreams now he is dead, or living, / muttered in his sleep. Clouds ...* . Another machine, like an old-fashioned calculator printer, spools a paper scroll with encoded letters grouped in syllabic clusters.

The words and clusters are stenographic transcriptions from the poem 'To Be Written in Another Tongue' by Australian writer David Malouf. In his poem Malouf writes, in the code of the metaphoric, of language and its loss; memory, family ancestry, other lands; ancient times and the ever-widening lapses of knowing that spread between the living and the not living.

Written during the time Malouf was also preparing his novel, *An Imaginary Life*, a fictional account of the poet Ovid in exile – a book, in part, about remembering old and inventing new language – the poem has particular meaning for Mesiti, an Australian with Italian heritage who lives between languages in the old world of Europe, in Paris, and the new yet ancient world of Australia, in Sydney.

It is a poem that in many ways represents the feeling of estrangement that dwells in the heart of the exile, immigrant or refugee who has been set adrift from their place of origin yet carry a homesickness or yearning for belonging, often distributed through generations.

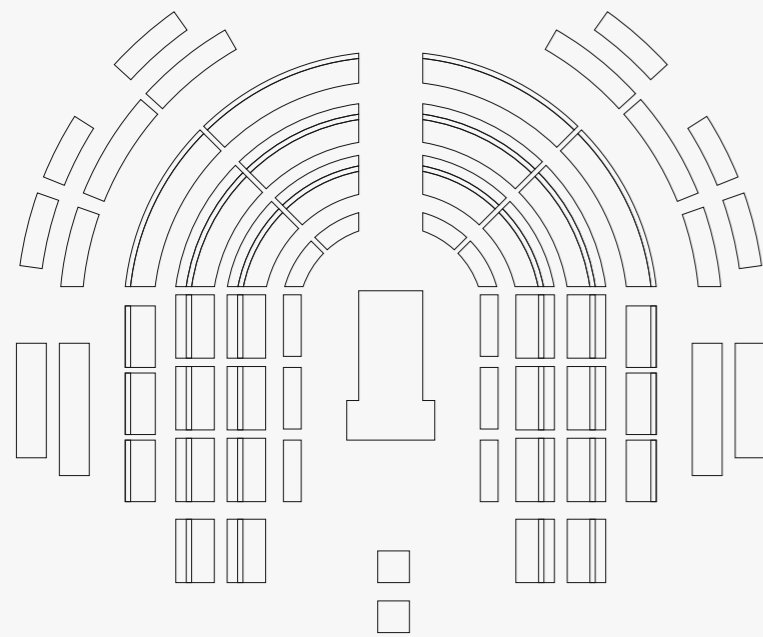
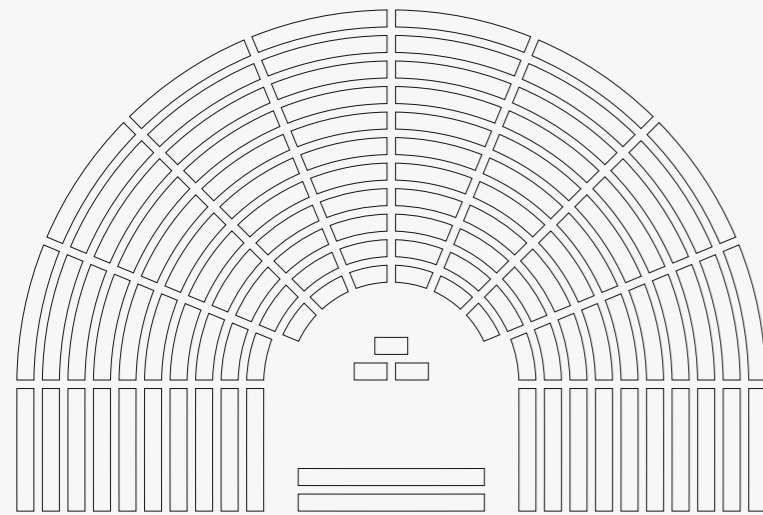
The translation of Malouf's poem has been converted into a stenographic language to be used by the Michela machine, which was invented by Antonio Michela Zucco and first presented at the Congress of Education in Milan in 1863. Zucco conceived of his machine, with its small 'piano' keyboard, as a phonetic, linguistic device. He based his research on musical notation structures and organic, body created sounds to create his shorthand. Zucco had hoped the Michela machine and its phonetic translations would facilitate the creation of a universally understood communication – a new language.⁶

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Writing about translation, hermeneutical philosopher Paul Ricoeur counselled, 'give up the idea of a perfect translation'. Instead of perfection, he suggested, we should accept translation as a kind of 'linguistic hospitality' and permit the remembering and the mourning. 'Linguistic hospitality', he wrote, '... is the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one's own home, one's own dwelling'.

The illusion of a total translation or universalisation of meaning, which would be an exact replica of the original, seems, to Ricoeur, to resist the opportunity to host the foreigner within one's own linguistic home. He speaks about this as a 'mourning' for the absolute translation, which, when accepted, reverts to a 'happiness' associated with the new meanings created, resulting in the recognition of the Other in oneself.

Rejecting the notion of a universal language Ricoeur believed, '... universality would try to abolish memory of the foreign and maybe the love of one's own language, hating the mother tongue's provincialism. Erasing its own history, the



Top: A diagram of the Italian Senate arranged in a Vitruvian derived semi-circle.

Above: A diagram of the Australian Senate combining the balanced arrangement of the Vitruvian derived semi-circle and the oppositional Westminster parliamentary form.

⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan, Routledge, London and New York, 2006, pp. 3–10.

⁸ David Malouf, 'Dream Stuff', on ABC RN, *Books and Writing*, presented by Ramona Koval, Friday 5th January 2001, 11am.

⁹ The filming takes place in the Museum of Democracy, Canberra, which was previously the Provisional Parliament House, Canberra. Built between 1924 and 1927 it was designed by John Smith Murdoch, the Commonwealth's Chief Architect. It features wood sourced from all over Australia. The Senate chamber uses black bean wood and Tasmanian blackwood. Murdoch's design was deliberately austere and functional, reflecting the expected provisional nature of the building.

same universality would turn all who were foreign to it into languages' stateless persons, exiles who would have given up the search for the asylum afforded by a language of reception.¹⁷

Translation has been a particular enquiry and methodology for Mesiti for a number of years and it occurs in a variety of contexts in her works. Perhaps most notably expressed as a movement from verbal and written language to non-verbal, gestural and musical translations. These non-verbal translations become what Ricoeur would call a 'third text' or 'third party', where, for him, the actual meaning lives.

Mesiti is in search of this new, third language, which pulls the memory and the mourning from Malouf's words into her newly recalculated world. The imbedded musicality of Malouf's rhythms and words, as well as its metaphoric meaning for those who live in a context between cultures, has drawn Mesiti to this particular work and has inspired her to send it on a discovery of translation.

About his own and others' works Malouf has observed that for readers, '...it's the particular music of that writer that they're responding to, the particular tone of that writing, the particular density with which detail occurs in that writing, the span of sensory stuff in that writing.'¹⁸ And it is this specific musicality to the words that Malouf has written in 'To Be Written in Another Tongue', which Mesiti uses as a prompt for a change of atmosphere in the quietness of the chamber.

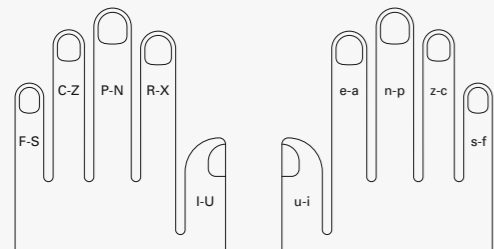
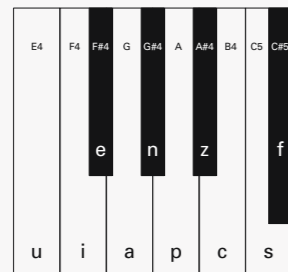
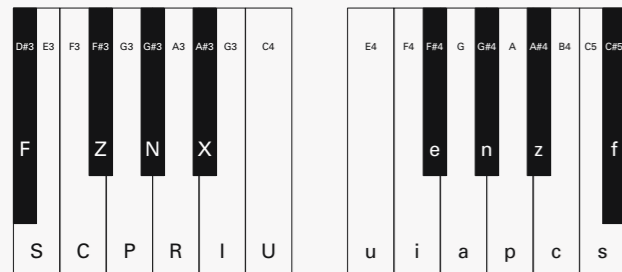
Malouf's, '... owls ... dust ... humming birds ... homesickness ... yearning ...' are transposed, first into a code created for the Michela stenographic machine, which in turn is re-encoded into a universal stenographic language that enables a musical transposition to be possible: word to code to note, emerging as the 'third text'. A transformation takes place from perfunctory mechanical sounds of the clunking keys of the Michela machine to piano music. A new succession has been commenced.

In Mesiti's cinematic world of the possible, the scene shifts from one chamber to another. Again empty corridors and outer spaces are travelled and visited. But here there is an altered light: a shift in atmosphere – a gathering progressive movement. We enter a twilight zone of nether glow. The shine of the dark wood polished floor creates a chimera effect, like a billabong catching the reflection in a moonlit sky. The squatness of the architectural pillars appear like truncated forms of their ancient Athenian prototypes. The wood panelling and furnishings are of another, non-European flora. On walls are hung dull, gilt framed, sombre paintings depicting scenes appearing out of the gloom. The slow pan along these corridors is lured by the piano music.¹⁹

Mesiti's directorial plot now takes us into an alternative place, similar, yet different to the grand Vitruvian Senate. Slumped, well-worn, ox-blood-red leather seats are surveyed, arranged in stalls. The camera pans over their lumpy vacancy. The entire chamber is revealed. It shows a hybrid interior *topos* combining the balanced arrangement of the Vitruvian semi-circle and the acrimony of the oppositional, Westminster parliamentary form, which assumes and encourages an adversarial encounter of two sides facing off in debating conflict.

In place of the Michela stenographer a musician sits at a piano in this eccentric twin space and plays; transposing the stenographic code, sent across space and time, into a musical composition.

The piano player brings a concentrated energy to the playing of the note clusters that have been assigned tones and tempo by Russian born, Australian composer, Max Lyandevat. Lyandevat's score is methodical and true to the Michela transposition. Transferred from the staccato of the stenographic code to the piano the music is tonal, chord based, non-lyrical and arrhythmic with a solemn, even lamentable character.



SPEAK LOUDER	AGREE	TOO LONG
BLOCK	POINT OF ORDER	TECHNICAL POINT
DISSAPROVAL	SILENCE	DIRECT RESPONSE
CLARIFY	OPPOSE	TRANSLATE

Top: A diagram showing the key strokes of the Michela stenographic machine.

Above: A set of hand signals used in the 'Nuit Debout' demonstrations in Place de la République in Paris, 2017.

¹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984, p. 21.

Malouf's poetic yearning has found another expression that commences the cut into Mesiti's recalibrating world. An unusual energy has entered the chamber.

The piano is joined by the sounds of a viola, with its rich sonorous timbre, which releases a different tone and a more elaborate variation on the Malouf/Lyandevat score. The bow finds additional nuance and accents in its four strings. The viola player stands in an unadorned, wood-panelled hallway – a perfunctory transition space. The piano music and viola strings are joined by the sounds of a clarinet with its reedy, interpretative notes that let air into the musical space. The clarinet player performs in a meeting room standing in the elliptical, empty centre of a circular meeting table. The ensemble sounds, built upon the same foundations, yet accented and individuated, perform their aggregated music to evoke a new conversation.

Each player builds upon the last, yet each musical sound has its own 'voice' and tone. The music becomes a polyphonic experience and elaborates the poem's translation, performing a composition in evolution: every participant being different, yet hospitable to the Other's notes.

Mesiti is exploring the idea of polyphony as suggested by Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin when he wrote: 'The essence of polyphony lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent and, as such, are combined in a unity of a higher order than in homophony. If one is to talk about individual will, then it is precisely in polyphony that a combination of several individual wills takes place, that the boundaries of individual will can be in principle exceeded. One could put it this way: the artistic will of polyphony is a will to combine many wills, a will to the event.'¹⁰

Mesiti returns us to the parliament's corridors and halls, which are now entered by a teenage girl who walks with purpose towards a room where other girls sit in quiet occupation constructing fluorescent items, soon recognisable as the 'launchers' that can be purchased from street hawkers and the itinerant sellers who populate the cities of tourism. A new sound enters the scene. The hammered strings of an instrument with a Byzantine vibration.

The source of this new music is found in a curtained room. Light pools through the fabric in rectangles of gentle luminosity. A musician, seated at a desk, plays the *sanjūr*, a Persian dulcimer instrument; a type that has been migrated and adapted from Iran, Turkey and Mesopotamia and around other Middle Eastern and Arabic countries since the 11th century. He plays his own interpretation of the Malouf/Lyandevat score; freely adapted, intuited rather than read, which permits a new filigree of notes to enter into our consciousness. This ornate, reverberant sound opens Mesiti's newly imagined world up, and away, from the West. The viola and the *sanjūr* play in unison, the notes never joining, the *sanjūr* weaving its way around the tonal strings of the viola score. Malouf's words, appearing on the screen, remind us of a 'different breath'.

The *sanjūr* and viola music give way to a clarinet joined by the under playing of the Zulu *umtshingo* harmonic flute. Together through strings and wind, exaggerated by reverb and distortions, they explore sounds that reach to an outer space, or another interior place to create an imaginary landscape, acknowledging the kind of music making that finds its reference and illusion in the primordial strangeness of the weird and melancholy atmosphere of an unknown territory. Together they produce a sonic environment of dusky sounds conjured from breath, rasping, micro-tonal warbling and harmonic trills through wood. Drumming rhythms join.

Mesiti takes us to another room. A barefooted performer sits on the floor and waits, listening to the sounds. The space she explores is a Sovereign room, holding the regalia of British Monarchy – crown, orb, ampulla – symbols of Australia's status as a colony. The glass case in which they are housed divides the performer's body. She touches the furnishings – leather topped table, mushroom-pink velvet couch – leans on an upright chair. Lightly occupying a space that never permits complete accommodation,

¹¹ Julia Kristeva, 'Giotto's Joy', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora and Alice A. Jardin, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982, p. 224.

¹² Alain Badiou, op cit.

she settles between things, moves and crouches. She gestures using the universal hand signals of the occupy protest movements, a language system designed to enable consensus through listening and non-verbal participation. She hears something inaudible to us. Her hand gestures demonstrate agreement, disagreement, they ask for clarification, want the speaker to get to the point, refute, and emphatically urge the players to bring up the volume.

The *umtshingo* flute is now joined by percussion sounds. The exuberant entry of a band of drummers activates the sombre parliamentary hallways. The reflective vestibule of the house becomes a mirror of dancing, blue fluorescent lights, which illuminate the transparent snare drums that a band of male performers use to play a spirited Zaffa beat. The drumming ensemble stomp, swirl, dance, encircle one another in a joyous reverie. Flute, drums, reverb, sonic distortions comingle into a cacophony – a boisterous blurring of musicality. Mesiti soaks her scene in the incandescence of ultra violet blue. Blue, the colour Julia Kristeva calls 'Giotto's joy' for its ability to 'express the carnivalesque excesses of the masses [that] anticipates their verbal and ideological translations that come to light later.'¹¹

The girls, now outside the confines of the parliamentary Board room and in the world, launch their projectile flight objects. These fluorescent missiles transform into Giotto's 'kamazaki angels' from Malouf's poem, fluttering in the night sky like dustmotes. They are electric blue humming-birds soaring and plummeting; ecstatic and jubilantly released.

A sound climax seizes the scene. Dissonance, cacophony, sonic waves – a chaos of music. This seemingly unresolvable disturbance – reverberating rupture – is gradually overtaken by humming. The launcher girls have re-assembled and, using the technique of deep listening and 'tuning', they commence a resolution, a harmonisation to enact a sonic force – a wall of musical resistance. The girls are gradually revealed as a mass grouping and following the methodology of American feminist and experimental composer, Pauline Oliveros, they form a community through sound.

Oliveros' *Tuning Meditation* (1971), provides the inspiration for this final act in Mesiti's possible, recalculated world. Oliveros' instructions to her participants – 'Inhale deeply; exhale on the note of your choice; listen to the sounds around you, and match your next note to one of them; on your next breath make a note no one else is making; repeat. Call it listening out loud.' – manifests as a shifting chord-mass incorporating the best efforts and aspirations of the deep listeners who intone.

This is Mesiti's final act of translating. One built upon the premise of fallibilities in a continual evolution towards moments of unison and clarity, yet never settled. A translation permitting and being hospitable to the experience of the Other. Unified yet individuated, her chorus, folding in and out of their tonal destination, demonstrate the emotional power of the assembly. Their efforts help us understand Badiou's proposition that all identities are in relationship to something different and that to exist is to develop the experience of difference; identity is always in the experience of the other and any notion of pure identity does not exist. That, in fact, the pursuit of absolute identity is the destruction of the Other.¹²

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Mesiti's translations, each gathering and evolving from text to code; from music to movement; from actions to occupations represent our need to assemble and occupy a position of mutuality to cut into the void and define the next form of Democracy. All are built upon a desire for finding a position of understanding for the self within the ensemble in an effort to make that group stronger. Mesiti shows the necessity of making a hospitable place for the Other in the democratic process. And she illustrates the gradual gathering of actions and ideas that make up a Democracy that moves away from a tyrannical hierarchy, to become more horizontal, and Virtuvian in shape, once more.

¹³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, op cit.

¹⁴ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books, Random House, New York, 1994, p. 332.

¹⁵ Hardt and Negri, op cit.

She has physicalised this desire in the architectural installation that houses her three-screen projections in Venice. The audience is brought into the symbolic shape of the circle and requested to place themselves inside a small amphitheatre. Thus assembled they will encounter a multiple view – each screen attracting their attention for the differing viewpoints Mesiti has orchestrated. In this way Mesiti also activates the audience and asks them to be participants, alert to small manoeuvres, and the shifting of sensibilities.

Through the metaphor and activation of translation she brings attention to a new listening that is required and a new succession of actions that must be enacted for Democracy to better represent the people and create a future. Through poetic means she offers a visualisation of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's observations that, 'Horizontal democratic assemblies do not expect or seek unanimity but instead are constituted by a plural process that is open to conflicts and contradictions. The decisions of the majority move forward through a process of differential inclusion or, rather, through the agglutination of differences. The work of the assembly, in other words, is to find ways to link different views and different desires such that they can fit together in contingent ways. The majority, then, becomes not a homogeneous unit or even a body of agreement but a concatenation of differences.'¹³

By developing the musical styles of harmony, polyphony, dissonance and cacophony, and then coming to rest in a moment of tentative unison, Mesiti has created an imaginable world in which the 'contingent' is permitted space to remain open to resolution and disintegration by perpetually reforming itself.

Her work uses and embodies the exilic energies of those who seek hospitality in the governmental processes – the young, the female, the Indigenous, the arrived, the exiled, the hopeful, the refugee and the artist. Her work powerfully agrees with the words of Edward Said when he wrote, 'Liberation as an intellectual mission, born in the resistance and opposition to the confinements and ravages of imperialism, has now shifted from the settled, established and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhoused, decentered and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation today is the migrant, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages ... articulating the predicaments that disfigure modernity – mass deportation, imprisonment, population transfer, collective dispossession and immigration.'¹⁴

Mesiti's players and performers represent those who will assemble and fill the Democratic void, cutting a rupture into the empty space and igniting a new succession. She is in search of a new truth for this next generation who already speak differently, hear attentively, and act together to form the next translation of the democratic process.

She demonstrates, as Hardt and Negri write, that, 'New truths are produced through the interaction of singularities being together ... in struggle, different social groups interact as singularities and are enlightened, inspired, and transformed by their exchange with each other.' And like Mesiti's choir, 'They speak to each other on the lower frequencies, which people outside of the struggle often cannot hear or understand.'¹⁵

Mesiti's ensemble of players and collaborators, with their lives in Australia and their ancestries of Italian, Ukrainian, Lebanese, Jewish, Greek, English, Irish, Filipino, Korean, Russian, Scottish, Scandinavian, Sri Lankan, Anglo New Zealand, Iranian, Pakistani, Vietnamese and Australian Indigenous, embody contemporary Australia. Their playing and performing add layers to the landscape of Lyandevat and Malouf's word music. Through their interpretations, instrumentations, improvisations, gestures and listening they introduce a new energy – a polyphony of sounds that represent an emerging and strengthening cosmopolitan culture that can grow upon itself and create an assembly of participation that strengthens the democratic ideal.

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