

ScoreScapes: Thinking scores as a pedagogical tool

Lilia Mestre

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Note of intention

ScoreScapes is a research on scores as a pedagogical tool that I started in the context of a.pass (advanced performance and scenography studies) - an educational platform for artistic research practices based in Brussels.

The fact that a.pass is based on principles of self-education and collaboration motivated me to build scores to address questions such as: What do these terms - collaboration and self-education - mean in the context of education and what do they engage with politically? How to create an inclusive *dispositif* that enables learning through each other's research proposals? How to deal with an un-disciplinary context that aims for transversal relations?

In the frame of Social Acoustics, the artistic research project led by Prof. Jill Halstead and Prof. Brandon LaBelle, I propose a Fragile Community Score which is an iteration of Scorescapes. Fragile Community Score is conceived to be practiced in a shorter period of time with a steady group of people.

In this specific context, the ideas of resonance, listening and community make alliance with the concept of Scorescapes. The score sets the possibility for a network of relations that question the individual and the collective and very importantly the space in between both, where situated singularities happen. I see this space in between as being the place of potential expansion of the sensible and so as a political environment. Can sensibility, attention, collision and disagreement be part of the same game? This question opens for me a utopian ground to practice iterations for a possible inclusive collectivity. An environment which is rather generative than productive that can put into liaison different voices, intentions, concerns, intensities... a practice for temporary co-habitation in difference.

By "score" I mean a set of instructions that can be repeated for a predetermined period of time. These instructions create a system through which participants interact. Since 2014, I have developed four iterations of the practice: Writing Score, Perform Back Score, Bubble Score and Medium Score. More information about ScoreScapes and the different iterations can be found at www.apass.be. A publication was released to mark the experience of each iteration. Publishing is an alibi to process and reflect the ways the score traced.

It is important for me that the scores are an open source tool, they can be modified and used by anyone.

Scorescapes mode d'emploi

To use in case of interest in:

Artistic research

Co-learning processes

Criticality

Agonistic Collectivity

Practice-based study

Experimental knowledge exchange

What is needed:

A group

A place to meet

Time

Aesthetic, philosophical, speculative or other content

Will to question

Will to respond

General instructions:

- Set a time frame. For example, meet every week on the same day and at the same time for a predetermined amount of time (e.g. four hours). Meet for a predetermined period (e.g. four months).

- Work only with the people present. It is not possible to participate remotely by email or other means. There is no public. The participants of the score are their own audience.

- Skip a session. If there is no work to present, or the impossibility to join - The score allows participants to skip or to start at any point.

- Bring food and drinks to share.

Action instructions:

The contribution - Upon first meeting, each of us presents a sample of our work. The sample is communicated as performance, text, object and/or dissertation. It manifests the content of the research and the form through which the research is articulated. When starting at a later point in the process, follow the same procedure: bring a contribution.

The questions - After we attend to each other's presentations, we assign by chance who asks a question to whom. (For example, write the participants' names on small pieces of paper, fold them and put them in a container. Each participant picks a name.)

The responses - After receiving your question, you will develop a response for the next session. (The length of the responses is to be decided before starting the score.)

Contribution > Question > Response > Question > Response >

The questions are a tool to engage in the discursiveness of artistic practice and research. They aim to make the stakes appear, to show the implications and further relations of the proposition. They are indicators of the dialogical potential of each art research project. They are the motor of a process of sharing, contaminating, contradicting, thinking and making together.

In relation to the gift presented previously, the questions are an intrinsic and important component of the score. Think them, contextualise them, offer them.

Scorescapes: Thoughts

If artistic research actively searches for ways to maintain the viability of our relationship with the world, how can scores mediate this search? If artistic research engages in processes of awakening unseen phenomenological relations with our surroundings, how do we then compose materials and thought? What is the performativity at stake in the sharing of materials/thoughts? What is the relationship between individuality and collectivity? How does this impact our individual practices and relationships to the collective? If artistic research is about knowledge-production and not about researching to make an artwork, how can we talk

through the questions and responses that are inherent to our practices? How do we articulate the urgency for life, its resilience, its resistance to the world we live in today?

ScoreScapes wants to bear witness to affective relationships for understanding the self and the collective through acts of gathering and attending. The material of the score is the participant's concerns and this can be expressed in any form such as writing, performance, scientific formulas, situations, objects ... It is a system for interaction, where varied aesthetic experiences can coexist, complement, challenge, contradict and inspire each other. It is seen as a *dispositif* of collaboration, weaving a plurality of concerns that expand from the participants' researches.

The eclectic materials that expose the content of the researches become a language through which one can discuss. We start speaking tongues, not a unifying language but a plurality of languages that create thirdnesses – that provoke interstices, raise questions, trigger curiosity, antagonisms, launch desire, the will to live.

I've been considering the proposition that the score plays out acts of engagement, attention, generosity and care. It engages in the politics of difference by not emphasising the common (regardless, the common is the structure that binds us and such structures are always already artificial and always already a power-structure in which to dwell). It's a rehearsal to co-habitat in complex societal systems.

Artificial friendship.

We came as one. We came to be undone. We trust.

If one is made through being undone, I could say that the score is schizophrenic by the fact it asks as much for control as for spontaneous input. It is a destabiliser, it asks one to consider the agency of the other and therefore things which might be in total opposition to what one has in mind – all in rather a short period of time. It asks to trust what is there, to expand critically with what is at stake. ScoreScapes wishes to underline the importance of the experiential in learning processes to open up to unforeseen ethical relations.

In this sense, the use of chance procedures provokes interactions between elements and people that might not have happened otherwise. Chance calls for trouble, for forceful interaction that might crack open certain tendencies. The score is a crisis-under-control tool that also opens to its own critique. Is it possible to create structures that don't support hegemony but rather sustain difference, paradoxes, antagonisms?

Through the questions and responses, which dismantle and rebuild the contributions, a spectrum of relationality comes to the fore and creates links of different consistencies with other fields. Arms reaching out to concerns that would have likely remained unseen. This process also helps delineate what systems of governance are at stake in each of the participants' research, by looking at them as operational structures. It is a way to make visible the system of relations each proposition (contribution) offers, as well as the use of medium or trans-medium and its relation to content. *The problem (problematics) of the score* manifests itself in these relations and the politics they propose.

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Tectonic Friendship #2

The following text is the second iteration of *Tectonic Friendship*, a text made using some of what I wrote and quotes I collected through Medium Score, the fourth iteration of Scorescapes (a.pass post-master Block 2017/II). It is a compilation and an edit of the responses I gave to questions I received during the score. In this iteration, we concentrated on medium and what it means in the arts today. The medium I used was writing and I wanted to reflect on the Scorescapes through practicing writing about it. How do I write when I write about my practice? How can I challenge my writing in the context of artistic research? Why would I write? Fictionalisation of the practice of the score became the way through which I could imagine and practice forms of collectivity.

They arrived here, coming from different places and times. They came with ideas, stories, feelings, relations and holes. They didn't know where they were going. Each of them knew what kind of language they would use to communicate with each other but they didn't know how they would be understood. They decided to spend some time together. They agreed that poetics were a form of knowledge and they needed to put these poetics in contact with each other. They took themselves as vehicles and containers. They used art processes to expose *sensibles* as guidelines for the future. They experimented. They wanted to create potential for the unforeseen. To play. To redistribute values and create utopias. To put into motion the models they had and challenge them. They were fervent. Serious. Caring. Critical.

Emancipated. Beautiful. Difficult. They were young and old. Human and animal. Thing and thought. Movement and stillness. Together and apart. From here and there.

They gathered often. They made things happen from which they learned about themselves and the world around them. They collected information to create temporary constellations: newspaper clippings, smells, theories, hard science equations, dances, fictions, historical facts, rests, fractions, economic evidences, political betrayals, despair, ... They prioritised modes of relation as a political force. They met to understand how to relate, think, and move anew. They were obsessed with detail. They were rigorous. They were careless. Something about them was ungraspable. They listened. They looked. They felt. They wrote.

I wrote it. I deleted it. I wrote it. I deleted it. I wrote it. I deleted it. I wrote it. I deleted it. I wrote it. The practice of the score used Google Drive to store the questions and responses of the participants so that all of us could have access to the materials anytime. I was interested in seeing how I could bring other realms of my life to the experience of the score. Maybe as a diary. A dear friend's confession. I was very busy with the idea that the process was in the process itself and that I couldn't step ahead at any moment. I didn't want to know yet. I was answering the questions with a lot of voices around my head, trying to understand what was their intention of and how I could take the best out of it all.

Imagine the now as the condition of the present in presence and where things happen. There is no time after all. At this moment we are all here. Imagine that, now, as you read, all there is, are bodies of affect. We react, interact every second of our existence with the existence of everything we encounter. Imagine we are just aware of an infinitesimal part of that

interaction. That there is a universe of exploration possible in there. Imagine we engage with it and are not afraid. Imagine this excites potential. Imagine play.

One of the participants once stated that the score contains common context while the computer contains personal context. What is the relation between time-framed performance in semi-public space and Google Drive-framed performance in individuality? Is it possible to question/challenge Google Drive (the score's source of sustainability) through what you design as your medium (performative text, correspondence)?

I responded in an ambivalent way: What happens when one knows that everyone reads the questions? That these seemingly intimate relations are actually public? That the relation between you and another are not just for you and the other but also for others? What about if we practice extimacy? Like a gift without return. Maybe this score is a public love affair.

Imagine life transpires through undercurrents. One moves through space alone-together, like in an apartment building, like in the forest. Imagine the becoming of the subject takes place in experiences of interiorisation and exteriorisation of the world. A virtual space. Imagine the subject as an agent of change through which its own transformation in the collective terrain participates actively in the collective. Imagine the arts as a manifestation of that transformation and that transformation as a form of political engagement.

They came along again and again. It was hot. Very hot. It was like in a dream. People were hanging around alone or in groups. Standing. Kneeling. Sleeping. Talking. Standing still. There were plants, paper pillows, plexiglas coloured plates, pens, bicycles, food leftovers, wooden structures, a scaffold, a disco ball, a long red tube, glue, lamps, strings, electric cables, trolleys, coffee cups, a hammer, shoes, a microwave, a red cloth, yellow plastic, a mirror, styrofoam, a yellow beanbag, a cube made of wooden sticks, a stringy shiny curtain, mice defecations, wooden plates, words, coloured string, an electric saw, books, meditation pillows and hidden yoga mats, a printer, pots and pans, garbage bags. All was suspended in the heat. Here and there, floating.

They could have decided to stay mute, to make a humming choir or to have live interviews with one another to unleash the questions. But they decided to write because that's what they were working on. After reading the questions out loud, there was nothing settled any longer. Except the invitation to linger around and eat together. They hung out for hours in diverse places. They were together. They were alone. They created and dismantled senses and feelings.

Imagine that another time they sat around a table. A large table. Imagine they were given a task and that they agree to pursue it. Imagine trust. Imagine two of them were on top and middle of a table. The curator and the artist. The artist was still and the curator was caressing her. Taking care of her. Imagine the audience was drawing the centre figures with their eyes

closed. Imagine they dropped their pencils on a piece of paper. Square pieces of paper. They drew lines, shapes. They followed their perception. Imagine they opened their eyes several times but just for one second and they continued to draw. The figures in the middle of the table moved constantly following their touch. Their shapes were undetermined.

The situation was unusual, addictive and harmless.

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Lilia Mestre is a performing artist and researcher based in Brussels working mainly in collaboration with other artists. She's interested in art practice as a medial tool between several domains of semiotical existence. Mestre works with assemblages, scores and inter-subjective set ups as an artist, curator, dramaturge and teacher. She was co-funder of Bains Connective Art Laboratory in Brussels (1997) acting as project dramaturge in 2006 and artistic coordinator between 2009 and 2016. Since 2008 she has been mentor, workshop facilitator and associated program curator at a.pass (advanced performance and scenography studies) in Brussels where she has been researching scores as a pedagogical tool titled Scorescapes. In 2019 - 2021 she's collaborating with Prof. Jill Halstead and Prof. Brandon LaBelle in Social Acoustics at the University of Bergen, Norway. And with Nikolaus Gansterer and Alex Arteaga in Contigent Agencies - a research project supported by PEEK -Vienna, AU. Since 2017 Mestre is artistic coordinator and co-curator of a.pass.