

Hertz - Sidney Leoni

a text by Franziska Aigner

Hertz, the new performance installation by Sidney Leoni, fictionalizes the possible interactions between sound, light and humans as distinct but equal performative agents. During the performance, the darkened theatre space becomes an amplifier of emerging theatrical micro-ecologies, proposing an aesthetics of the barely visible, yet haptically and sonically perceptible. Made in collaboration with the artists Kjetil Brandsdal, Martin Lervik, Stina Nyberg, Morten J. Olsen, Jonathan Uliel Barbosa Saldanha, Sandy Williams, Jan Fedinger and Frédéric Alstadt, **Hertz** is a hybrid choreography of sound and light phenomena that gives rise to a sensitive fabric of theatrical forces and energies, thematizing different perceptions of nature and ecology through the help of fiction and narration.

Following *Undertone* (2010) and *War of Fictions* (2011), **Hertz** is Sidney Leoni's third performance work. While the former, made in collaboration with an array of guest artists, takes place in total darkness and prioritizes mechanisms of perception other than vision by proposing an immersive experience of different kinds of stimuli, the latter, made in collaboration with Luís Miguel Félix, is a full embrace of fiction in all its expressions. A series of physical and emotional states are embodied, launching a set of experiential and kinesthetic environments. Continuing along the lines set out by both *Undertone* and *War of Fictions* in its attempt to reconfigure perception and fiction in performance, **Hertz** is the place of encounter and intensification of the respective thematics, producing a rich and atmospheric grid of connections.

Rather than referencing and calling upon a natural reality outside itself, the theatre space in **Hertz** takes on the function of amplifying both natural and artificial, organic and inorganic processes located within itself. The presence of an environment emerges, consisting of living and dynamic forces, embedded in a dynamic series of evolving stages of development. Forms, figures or any physical manifestations become temporary, as the environment's forces and energies, unpredictable and forceful, turbulent and imbalanced, flow and spread out. Reminiscent of the 'Zone' in Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, the environment in **Hertz** is a complex net of alliances and feedback loops.

The Zone is a very complicated system of traps, and they're all deadly. I don't know what's going on here in the absence of people, but the moment someone shows up, everything comes into motion. Old traps disappear and new ones emerge. Safe spots become impassable. Now your path is easy, now it's hopelessly involved. That's the Zone. It may even seem capricious. But it is what we've made it with our condition. (Stalker, 1979)

Living in the 21st century, the idea of environment put forward by **Hertz** resonates with the challenges that environmental ecology is currently facing, as maintaining or directing natural equilibriums will increasingly be more and more the work of technological intervention.

Subsequently, the manifold, heterogeneous elements of **Hertz**, both organic and inorganic, natural and artificial in kind are part of the same turbulent continuum, whose guiding principle is one of radical interconnectedness and mutual production.

Faced with the challenge of how to relate to the many elements and events within ecologies that remain hidden, in combination with the question of how to fold the natural and physical into the artificial and cultural without representing it as a series of predictable objects of knowledge, **Hertz** abolishes nearly all visual representation. In near darkness, undermining one of the central means by which theatre is often defined, **Hertz** presents itself as a performance that is played out sensorially, while radically altering the sense-ratio in theatre. The theatre space, offering itself as one of the spaces for the creation of such unsuspected sensorial and perceptual realms, is transformed into a specific acoustic communication device by **Hertz**. Oscillating back and forth between complex soundscapes, giving rise to multidimensional perceptions of spaces and inventive, practical strategies for sonic orientation and navigation through these very spaces, a complex artificial ecology of sonic and physical processes emerges, proposing itself as an aesthetics of and for the invisible.

Evocative of microclimates in complex weather systems, **Hertz** is a series of swarming and flocking sonic and tactile phenomena, which cannot be organized in terms of euclidean understanding of space or the linear passing of time. **Hertz** is not a choreography in the sense of ordering in as much as its time does not follow the logic of the clock, in which past events predetermine the future. Faced with partly unpredictable and uncontrollable networks of both human and non-human intensities, a quasi-system bordering on the edge of chaos arises. Interested in locating itself within an aspect of this formlessness, **Hertz** does not distance itself from this chaos, rather, it anchors its own practice of choreography on this very terrain.

With the help of fiction and narration, as the calling into existence of alternative modes of being, **Hertz** appears as the theatrical environment of a parallel universe, inviting its visitors to enter and become immersed in it.