

fashioning singular, integrated sound designs for
dance and theatre through creative collaboration

the loudspeaker as instru



the soundworks



ument

of Nancy Tobin

BY ANNA FRIZ, PHOTOS BY NANCY TOBIN





first encountered Nancy Tobin's work through her Web site, *RestArea*, featured in Studio XX's Les HTMLles / Maid in Cyberspace festival in Montreal in 2001, and accessible on the Web at www.mmebutterfly.com/restarea/.

The site is "an ambient Web site for relaxation," a soothing blue plane inhabited by coloured rectangles slowly drifting across the screen, intentionally reminiscent of a television test pattern or a Piet Mondrian painting. The accompanying soundtrack is of the microsound ilk—a clicking rhythm layered with other minimal tones. The overall aesthetic is like Nancy herself—unassuming and deceptively spare, with layers of complexity at work behind an uncluttered presentation.

RestArea won the First Prix du Public at Les HTMLles 2001 and was shown at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York; but Nancy Tobin is best known as a sound designer for stage. Her work has been part of the Festival de Théâtre des Amériques, the Festival International de la Nouvelle Danse, the World Stage Festival, the Festival d'Avignon, the Edinburgh International Festival and the Berliner Festwochen. In

2002, she was nominated for the "Masque de la contribution spéciale" by the Académie Québécoise du théâtre for her sound design of *Intérieur*, directed by Governor General's Award winner Denis Marleau. She works primarily with experimental theatre and dance directors such as Danièle Desnoyers, François Girard, and Denis Marleau, people who are, she affirms, "good ear people." Tobin specializes in subtle sys-



tems of amplification, resulting in intimate atmospheres; innovative use of loudspeakers; and electroacoustic work inspired by microsound and glitch music forms. She works with the acoustics of the presentation space, with the tonal qualities of amplified voices and the "voice" of pre-recorded sound sources amplified through various speakers.

formation

Tobin entered the field of sound production very casually, almost accidentally. Like many children, she listened to pop music and had a little musical training, but her first real exposure to sound equipment and experimental soundmaking was at the radio station at Collège Limoilou in Quebec City.

There she hosted a weekly program, and had the opportunity to fool around with Revox reel-to-reel recorders, splicing, and mixing. She later moved over to CKRL (campus and community radio) in Quebec, and continued her radiophonic explorations there. Tobin remembers “spending nights in the station, having a show the whole night, having four turntables and three Revoxes and an open mike and open telephone—that kind of fun.” Her show was open format and often hours long (filling in the wee hours on campus and community radio is a special kind of madness); and here she truly played with the available equipment, “slicing tape, throwing it all on the floor and picking it up again, putting it back together to see what it does.” Though the station provided basic training, what was most valuable for Tobin was having licence to play, to try different techniques in a casual and non-serious way, but within the discipline of a weekly commitment to do a program. Tobin’s inspirations at this time included Laurie Anderson, Brian Eno, Klaus Schultz, and Meredith Monk.

Tobin began studying dramatic arts at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) in 1986, where she began her technical training in earnest. Initially she was interested in theatre direction, but felt insecure about her ability to make a living in theatre, so opted instead to become a technician, which she viewed as a “more concrete” profession. Because of her volunteer radio experiences, Tobin gravitated toward sound, and so studied sound engineering. Digital editing was still very new and expensive, while MIDI was state of the art. She gathered a solid basis in studio operation, theories of sound, and technical concerns specifically for stage. Tobin notes that she has consistently improved her technical knowl-

edge, partly to maintain professional excellence and partly out of a desire for job security. “For the last ten years what was important to me was to get some serious training in theatre ... to have a really solid thing that I could rely on to make a living.” Tobin has worked professionally in theatre and dance since graduation.

the intimate voice onstage

Upon graduation in 1989, Tobin worked for several years for smaller theatre and dance companies in Montreal. “But what I do now, I certainly didn’t learn in school,” Tobin attests. “I feel sometimes that in Quebec I’m a pioneer in the development of a unique approach that is specific to Québécois theatre.” The successful adaptation of multimedia for stage is a hallmark of Québécois theatre. Tobin’s work with Denis Marleau and Danièle Desnoyers is particularly rich, in part because the directors themselves assign a significant role to the sound design of the production. They integrate amplified and composed sound, not as embellishments, musical interludes, or background, but as central elements of the presented works. Sound is the medium in which the performers exist and move, their voices seamlessly amplified, their bodies causing audible change, the soundscape challenging and leading the choreography as much as integrating with it. Tobin is called on early to participate in a production, so that sonic elements are created simultaneously with choreography and character development, in many cases enabling actors and dancers to become amplified sound sources themselves, through the use of wireless microphones and controlled feedback systems. Tobin is particularly known for her trademark natural-sounding vocal amplification and

manipulation of sound with various types of loudspeakers. These skills were developed through experience in the field, especially working with directors who provided time and equipment to experiment during the production phase of a show.

With the help of a professional development grant, Tobin went to Broadway and to London’s East End in 1997 to observe sound designers at work on huge musicals like *Oliver*. In particular, Tobin was interested in the technique used for amplifying voices so they could be heard in the back rows of large concert venues while remaining synchronized with the acoustic voice onstage. These halls are so large that it takes a noticeable period of time for the sound from the stage to reach the back rows. This results in a lack of clarity in the sound. Very little was written about ways of dealing with the situation, so Tobin engineered a kind of apprenticeship for herself, where she learned “through observation, and by listening to experienced people discuss their techniques.” Tobin spent a month in New York observing a production during its creation by sound designer Tony Miola, and Miola put her in touch with Andrew Bruce in London, where she spent another month’s internship. Upon her return to Montreal, Tobin worked with the techniques that she had learned, adapting them to smaller venues and budgets, and began to establish her distinctive style.

In order to create the illusion that actors are not amplified, invisible mikes are used, and loudspeakers must be synchronised to the acoustic voice on stage. This involves delaying the amplified voice in the speakers to match the time it takes the acoustic sound to travel from the stage to the spectators’ ears. Tobin says that while she interned in London, calibrating the speaker delays was a fun group



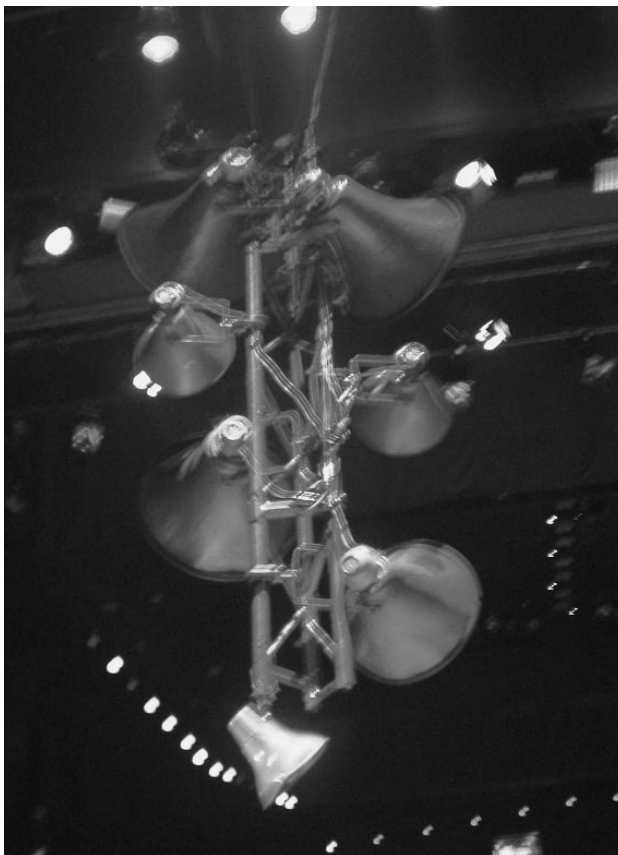
activity. The technicians would people the balconies farthest from the stage, while a single speaker onstage emitted a regular pulse, and the speaker delays were set by consensus among the group. Nancy still invites friends to come in when she sets delays in Montreal, so I joined her one afternoon on the set of Théâtre UBU's *Quelqu'un va venir* at Usine C to see how the process works.

Usine C is a renovated factory used for theatre, dance, and multimedia presentations, and as such does not possess the flawless acoustics of a concert hall. However, by the time Tobin has finished setting up the sound system, the most intimate sounds of an actor's voice and breathing can be projected to the audience without any separation between the acoustic and amplified voice. For this production, there are five speakers hanging from the ceiling, and four on the floor in front of the stage. Tobin works with another technician to first angle the speakers to cover all the seats in the

house—a finicky and tedious task. The uneven contours of the room alternately reflect and diffuse the sound, depending on where one sits in the audience, causing hot spots and dead spots. Checking the angles involves slowly creeping up and down each row, hunched over to the same height as a seated person's head, while the same song plays over and over again though the sound system. Speakers are minutely angled, adjusted, and readjusted. Once Tobin and her assistant are satisfied with speaker placement, we convene near the front row to calibrate the delays, beginning with the two middle speakers on the floor. An additional speaker is set on stage to emit a high frequency click track. First we just listen to the clicking speaker, concentrating on the attack of each click; then the two front speakers are faded in to the maximum possible volume until we are aware of a separation. Tobin methodically calls out each delay value in seconds, and we listen

and hear the acoustic and amplified sounds draw closer together. By the end, the difference between an audible and an inaudible delay is a matter of milliseconds. Consensus with this group is astonishingly easy—we all hear it the moment the speaker synchronizes with the acoustic sound. We move further back in the seating, and the same procedure follows for the suspended speakers.

Tobin first adapted this method of imperceptible vocal amplification to more intimate venues under the direction of Denis Marleau of Théâtre UBU, in 1997, for a production entitled *Les Trois derniers jours de Fernando Pessoa*. Tobin also notes that this was the first time that she was really asked to do sound design as opposed to sound production. "My challenge was to create an audio space where the acoustic voice of the actor and the amplified voice of the playback would both seem to be in the same space—as if they were talking to each other in a realistic manner. There



was a clear function that the sound should achieve, specified by the director. Usually in a stage production, if there is voice amplification, the idea is just to make the actor's voice louder, and there is no specific role for the sound." Thus Toxin's job was to craft the mediated voices of the characters through amplification techniques and speaker choice. Only a single physical actor was on stage, and he played all the characters in the piece, video images of the other characters projected onto his face as he played each of them. For the recorded voices to seem as real as the actor's voice, the live actor was also amplified by a small invisible microphone and played back through a speaker with the right tonal quality, thereby allowing him to share the same acoustic space as the recorded voices. Through Toxin's design, the live quality of theatre encounters the intimacy of cinema, as the actor can whisper or make small expressive sounds instead of using the exaggerated effects of stage projec-

tion; thus her techniques transform the methods of both actor and director and enable poetic, abstract, and minimalist theatre experiments.

Les Aveugles

Denis Marleau's staged video-art installation *Les Aveugles, fantasmagorie technologique* (2002), is an adaptation of Maurice Maeterlinck's static drama from 1890. The staging is extremely minimalist, consisting of a dark room containing twelve masks on which are projected the faces of two actors, each playing six characters. Each projected character also has his or her own speaker. The premise is simple: twelve blind people go out with a guide for a walk in the forest; at a certain point, the guide announces that he will leave for a moment, but in fact dies suddenly and silently among them. The play takes place with the blind characters stranded in the forest awaiting their guide's return, with the projected actors made truly blind

to the audience by being physically absent. The aural aspects of the piece are central to the success of the production—from the amplification of the actors' recorded voices through natural-sounding speakers, to the soundscape of the forest.

Maeterlinck's text describes the sounds the blind hear—breathing, wind, oceans, birds, leaves, steps on leaves, and the sound of stars—and Tobin wanted to integrate these sounds without relying simply on foley effects. After listening intently to recordings of oceans, winds, leaves, etc., Tobin noticed that all these sounds met in the very high and very low registers. "I realized that all the sounds Maeterlinck wanted included in his play could somehow come from a single instrument. All these sounds are quite similar at the extremes of the human audio spectrum." She began by emphasizing each sound's texture in its extremely low or extremely high frequencies. For instance, the sound of waves



against a gravelly beach becomes a fragile rustle when the high frequencies are foregrounded, or can sound like the land itself breathing when mostly lower frequencies are heard. The final soundscape conjures an abstract yet recognizable environment, as ghostlike and subtly evocative as the actors' faces suspended against black, drawing the audience into the dark wood that can only be apprehended by listening.

concerto grosso pour corps et surface métallique

Nancy Tobin has worked with choreographer Danièle Desnoyers and her company Carré des Lombes through a series of productions, each one an exploration of the body as sound subject and as object moving through a sonorous environment. *Concerto grosso pour corps et surface métallique* (1999) featured six dancers moving, predictably, on a metal floor. Some

dancers wear tap shoes—not for a tippy-tapping percussive effect but for scraping the metal surface like skates applied to ice. The ice rink metaphor continues with fluorescent lighting overhead and a rack of battered eighteen-inch hockey-arena loudspeakers. Two dancers have wired into the bottom of their tap shoes small microphones, whose signal Tobin transforms in the latter part of the piece by considerably lowering the pitch, broadcasting the altered sound through subwoofers stationed at the edges of the metal floor. Additionally, when a dancer with miked shoes comes into proximity with the speakers, a controlled feedback rumble arises, creating deep eddies of bass harmonics offset by the earlier harsh scour of metal shoes on the metal surface. Only some of the dancers wear tap shoes, and only two at a time are amplified, rendering different members of the company audible while others become mute, and in some cases are characterized by their choreography as deaf. These elements in

turn are heard in relation to recordings of piano music by Morton Feldman and Alfred Schnittke, which are sometimes played through the tinny rink loudspeakers rather than the PA.

The overall effect is one of intense contrasts: Desnoyers has set the organic body in motion between these cold unforgiving elements of metal and fluorescent lighting, which Tobin supports with sounding tools for the dancers that create a sonic landscape, alternately murky and dark or sharp and thin. The piano score played through the rink loudspeakers takes on a nostalgic, distant tone, due to the compression of the sound and emphasis on high frequencies, evoking the feeling of a song half-remembered from a dark dream of a family skating outing.

bataille

Desnoyers and Tobin continue a study in contrasts in Desnoyers' *Bataille* (2002), which also shares similar staging elements with *Concerto grosso*—

the cold fluorescent lighting and the white square floor functioning more as a plane of inquiry than as a stage. For this production the dancers do not themselves create sound, but there are two dialogic sound sources: Violinist Malcolm Goldstein's live improvisations as he moves around the perimeter of the stage, and electroacoustic pieces by Tobin, created from baroque recordings on vinyl. Desnoyers arrived at Tobin's house with a bag of baroque records one day and asked Nancy to DJ at a rehearsal with these recordings with "the basic aim [being] for it to become something else." After listening to the records and trying some mixes at home, Tobin preferred to keep working at home, as she felt "quite negative" about the material and the possibility of transforming the baroque music into something else through turntablism: "I would pick any album from the pile and try mixing it to the record already playing. This method was very haphazard." She recorded those mixes to DAT, and began experimenting with the raw material on the computer, which began to yield interesting results. Her compositional method was "inspired by the microsound musical genre; every small crackle or noise that revealed the vinyl format was taken as an opportunity to create a rhythm or a melody. Small vocal excerpts were integrated in an attempt to emphasize the emotional quality already present in the baroque style."

The results are sometimes crackling loops and undertones of dub, layered with haunting choral samples, sometimes lurching and looping rhythms of records winding up and down—arpeggiated horn solos engaging with full orchestral samples, and ending with a tiny spectral echo like a transistor radio playing in the apartment next door. The emotions reflected from the baroque pieces into Tobin's

compositions are grand—voices swell in requiem, a single horn renders a noble but melancholy tribute—yet the crackles and the pitch-shift of a record suddenly slowing remind us that this is all artifice. Tobin's processing of the vinyl reflects Desnoyers' process for the choreography: "[Desnoyers] explained to me that her piece, *Bataille*, is not really about a battle, as in a fight, but more about oppositions being confronted ... What is left? What is created?" Two very different worlds collide in this composition by Tobin, the sound creating a counterpoint between the ornate grandeur of baroque music, and the "aesthetics of failure" inherent in glitch and microsound genres that enhance the smallest sounds and create rhythms from tiny fragments.

Though Tobin learned her DJ skills not with any intention of playing live, but to improve her sense of beat, DJ techniques in this case helped her shape the raw material into something she could work with. "From that experience," Tobin notes, "I realized that you can compose an emotional musical piece without knowing the traditional musical language of chords and melodies. I never read music. I speak in tone, I speak in hertz, I speak in noise I don't speak in notes. But somehow the result is the same. It's just a different path to go toward it." Considering that Tobin came to sound through cut-up tape and mixing experiments on campus and community radio, it is no surprise that her entry into musical composition evolved from the role of technician.

Desnoyers' initial goal with *Bataille* had been to create a piece with the sensibility of a museum installation, and that formal aesthetic led Tobin to an interesting aural augmentation: six piezo speakers were placed in a row along the back of the performance area. "The frequency range of the piezo speaker is very high and the

result is a very thin piercing sound. Sometimes the soundscapes would be amplified by these special-effects speakers, as well as by the main sound system, as if suddenly another instrument was playing the same parts but in a much higher range." Tobin often employs specialized speakers for their diverse tonal qualities, much like minimal dub producers enhancing high or low frequencies: "I consider the loudspeaker as my instrument. I play and interpret sounds through it, as a musician plays an instrument."

Playing the same track through different kinds of speakers greatly affects not only the equalization of the piece but the texture of the sound as well. Tobin often augments the main PA with other speakers to exaggerate high or low frequencies, thus enhancing or quickly shifting the intensity of the soundscape at a critical moment in a choreography. Choosing specific speakers has also led Tobin to experiments with controlled feedback, as with *Concerto grosso. Duo pour corps et instruments* (2003), Tobin's most recent collaboration with Desnoyers, is a further exploration of controlled feedback, this time placing speakers prominently onstage and teaching the dancers to improvise with sound creation.

duo pour corps et instruments

Inspired by Patti Smith, Desnoyers wanted to work with rock music for *Duo pour corps et instruments*, particularly sampling and building soundscapes from guitar solos. Tobin employed some of the same techniques of sampling and mixing from vinyl as she used for *Bataille* to create raw, loud, highly charged pieces out of fragments of guitar—god onanism. The dancers, three women, all dress in late '70s, early '80s high heels and black and taupe dresses; their movements

enacting a kind of desperate distracted beauty, suggesting an era both decadent and hollow. The piece, however, centres around units of one dancer and two speakers (the body and instruments of the title—because the speaker truly is Tobin’s instrument). Each dancer works with a wedge speaker (commonly used by bands in the ’70s and ’80s as a personal stage monitor) and a small wearable speaker that functions as a high impedance microphone. Depending on where the dancers position their small speaker-mike in relation to the wedge speaker, varying tones of feedback result, and in some instances, two dancers form another kind of duo when creating feedback tones at the same time. Thanks to an octave pedal and other effects pedals rigged up between speaker-mike and wedge, the sound is piercing but syrupy, sometimes a morse code of dashes when just at the edge of effect. The dancers learned the sensitivity, range, and tonal quality of the equipment in rehearsal, and developed a vocabulary of movements with which they improvise to make sound for the performances.

Meanwhile, the speakers themselves are far from static: the dancers sit like nervous party girls on their wedges, fall off them, haul them across the stage and back again, unplug and replug them. “The wedge speaker,” says Tobin, “was integrated in our sound system as part of the set, but also as a way to give to the audience another aural perspective that is more direct, as opposed to the main sound system, which is more surround.” In this way, the three speakers do not merely amplify, but take on a role parallel to the three women; though they are controlled by the dancers, the speakers move, they sound, and they have distinctive voices. There is a compelling subtext at work in the tension between dancer and speakers:

proximity creates sound and can be very beautiful, but bringing the wearable speaker microphone and the wedge too close together results in shrieks of angry feedback. Playing the speaker is an exercise in managing intimacy.

collaboration

Tobin emphasizes the importance of becoming involved in a production early in the creative process, establishing communication with the director or choreographer, allowing time for development, experimentation, and for coming up with new methods—“kind of like inventing a tradition . . . I don’t work alone, trying to invent a precise and developed idea and then delivering it, saying ‘here is the finished product.’” For *Bataille*, it was a

“teeny” loop that led to a whole structure of loops. Desnoyers would ask for fifteen minutes of one loop, and then work on it with the dancers. “Somehow the root of the work was the same for me and for her,” says Tobin.

Work in a theatre is undoubtedly teamwork, an aspect of her profession that Tobin relishes. “I like it when you create work that becomes something outside of you, that exists without you, something that has nothing to do with you anymore, but that you’re part of, that you’ve helped to happen.” Tobin also stresses that it is important to relinquish proprietary feelings when working collaboratively: “You have to be sort of free, you have to be generous, but not like you’re giving something of yourself, it’s just this thing that exists, that hap-



Dedans et Dehors le Studio (In and Out of the Studio)

My interview with Nancy Tobin was part of a four-year, multi-university Canadian research project initiated by Dr. Andra McCartney of Concordia University. The purpose of the project is to study the experiences and working practices of women sound producers in Canada, and to produce a multimedia computer installation and set of writings about their ideas, approaches, and philosophies. We are studying gender issues that affect the work of women in fields as diverse as film sound recording and post-production, sound engineering, radio art, sound design for museums and theatre, experimental music, audio documentary production, video-game sound, and Web sound. Considering that there are relatively few women working in these professional areas, we are curious to know how the women who are in the field became interested in sound, how they proceeded, what challenges they have faced so far, and particularly how different women access and appropriate sound technologies. Other researchers on the project include Drs. Beverly Diamond (Memorial University), Karen Pegley (Queens University), and Ellen Waterman (University of Guelph). This article is the first in a series of three profiles scheduled to appear in *Musicworks*. For more information on the project, or to contact Andra McCartney, go to <www.andrasound.org>.

pened to occur in an afternoon in front of the computer.”Tobin considers herself lucky never to have had to produce theatre clichés, like creating a storm, or cueing a train whistle while the curtain drops. “Somehow I’ve always been in contact with people that wanted more.”

prendre sa place

One of my aims in interviewing Nancy Tobin was to determine what she had experienced in her field with regard to gender (see sidebar). When I asked her about gender distribution and her experience as a woman

in her field, she confidently asserted that she has not experienced gender discrimination while working within the Montreal experimental theatre and dance scene. And during her technical training at UQAM, while she may have been among a minority of women, she “certainly didn’t feel like I was invaded or was invading an environment.” She did add, however, that if she were to move into bigger mainstream productions, she would need to expend some energy maintaining the level of respect that she currently enjoys. When observing Broadway and the East End, Tobin found the situation very unbalanced in terms of gender, and bigger productions also have intensive organizational hierarchies that often reflect mainstream social stereotypes—for instance, the captain-like sound engineer at the mixing console is most often male. Tobin comments that if she were to move to bigger productions, she would need to elbow her way in.

On the other hand, there are so few people employed to do experimental sound design for theatre that gender is not an issue for Tobin in her professional life at the moment. She notes that there are only three or four people in Montreal who work in this way, and two of them are women. “It’s as if I’m setting a standard,” she says; and so this new tradition includes women from the beginning. For Tobin, the more immediate challenge is for sound designers as a body to garner respect in theatre and dance. Though lighting design is receiving more recognition, the sound designer is still brought in last for most productions, and is allotted the smallest budget, the least amount of time to work, and the lowest fees. Tobin and her peers are developing new ways of working and new expectations of a theatre experience, but are also showing the way for future sound design-

ers in terms of fees and work conditions. Importantly, Tobin is also learning to value her own work as being professional. For instance, she demands to be billed on the show poster and in the press when significant original creative and technical work is done.

in a simple, slow way

Meanwhile, I am starting to believe that Nancy Tobin needs a break at her own *RestArea* for a while. She works at a relentless pace, going from production to production, causing me to wonder what energy she has left for her solo artistic practice. She describes each production as its own all-consuming world, dictated by deadlines—“so you have to find solutions, the ones you think are most authentic, and you have to find them fast.” The time pressure is not always a problem, however. *Duo pour corps et instruments* and *Les Aveugles* were both developed during residencies at the Musée des Arts Contemporain in Montreal. “Working at the MAC is always a great situation,” notes Tobin. “I think in any creative project the most important thing is to have as much time as possible in the actual context where the final result will occur.”

Though Tobin could surf on her contacts and technical abilities for years, she would like to set aside time to contemplate and to play solo: “I feel I have this vocabulary now in sound that I can make little planets or places to experiment on one sound idea.” *RestArea* is a perfect example of such a place. It is a little pause created in response to an increasingly mediated world where, particularly on the World Wide Web, flashing text and images compete for our attention at high speed. *RestArea* unfolds slowly and simply, beginning with two small

bars of blue and white moving across the screen, and eventually evolving into a more densely choreographed landscape of striped and coloured bars floating across a blue background. The viewer has not stepped off the so-called information superhighway, and is still staring at the computer screen, a screen also reminiscent of television and animated advertising hoardings. Yet there is no text, nothing to be bought or sold, and no story told. There is, rather, a moment unfolding, over five minutes, again and again, as long as our attention holds. We are made aware of our expectations and impatience with regard to media, and of ourselves staring at the screen, at the same time enjoying the minimalist sound and abstract shapes. We find ourselves caught in a little paradox—that the screen is providing a rest from the screen.

Tobin wants to highlight listening in a socially relevant context, unlike much new media work that she sees as superficially beautiful but often unemotional and empty. Her work with Desnoyers and Marleau has set a high standard of challenging audio that seems to lead naturally to her current aspirations. “What I really want to work on is something that’s a merging of visual art, new media and theatre, in a simple, slow way: something relatively simple that really talks.” Nancy Tobin’s latest solo undertaking is aptly titled *Risk*, which features a rare instance in which she herself will be onstage at the Société des Arts Technologiques (SAT) in Montreal, manipulating sound through some of the feedback tools created for *Duo pour corps et instruments*.

Whether designing the overall sound environment or specific tools for sound play, Tobin’s work brings listening to the forefront of experimental theatre and dance.

Anna Friz is a sound and radio artist living in Montreal. She has produced numerous original works for campus and community radio, CBC’s *Brave New Waves*, and national radio in Austria, Denmark, and Germany. She has presented installation and performance work in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal, as well as Chicago, Vienna, and Berlin. She is currently creating a mechanized puppet theatre in functioning tube-radios from the 1940s. Her article on Montreal’s *Silophone Project* appeared in *Musicworks* 83.

selected list of productions

sound design for dance and theatre:

Duos pour corps et instruments by Danièle Desnoyers, Carré des Lombes. Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, September, 2003.

Bataille by Danièle Desnoyers, Carré des Lombes. Usine “C,” Montreal, September, 2002.

Cruel mystère solo chorégraphie by Martin

Bernier. *Tangente Danse Actuelle*, 2001.

Novecento by Alessandro Baricco, directed by François Girard, Théâtre de Quat’sous. National Arts Centre and Edinburgh International Festival of 2001.

Intérieur by Maurice Maeterlinck, directed by Denis Marleau, Théâtre UBU. Théâtre du Rideau Vert, 2001.

Concerto grosso pour corps et surface métallique by Danièle Desnoyers, Carré des Lombes. Théâtre du Bic, Agora de la Danse, Maison de la Culture de Bobigny (France), 1999–2000.

sound designs for multimedia installations:

Les aveugles by Denis Marleau, texte de Maurice Maeterlinck. Musée d’Art Contemporain de Montréal, 2002.

La paresse by François Girard. Musée d’Art Contemporain de Montréal, 1999.

new media creations:

Coldspot by Nancy Tobin and Stéphane Claude. Multimedia installation for mmebutterfly.com, Société des Arts Technologiques, Festival International Nouveau Cinéma Nouveaux Médias, Espace SAT, 2000.

RestArea by Nancy Tobin. Web creation for www.mmebutterfly.com/restarea/.

résumé français

Le travail de la conceptrice sonore montréalaise Nancy Tobin pour le théâtre et la danse est caractérisé par l’utilisation de systèmes subtils d’amplification permettant la création d’ambiances intimistes, l’emploi innovateur des haut-parleurs et la création d’œuvres électroacoustiques inspirées par les courant « microsound » et « glitch ». Elle explore les caractéristiques acousmatiques des lieux de diffusion, les qualités sonores des voix amplifiées et la « voix » ou les qualités particulières de sources sonores pré-enregistrées, amplifiées à l’aide de haut-parleurs variés. Tobin est réputée pour les qualités naturelles de ses travaux d’amplification de la voix et l’étendue de ses manipulations avec des haut-parleurs de différents types. Les systèmes qu’elle a mis au point créent les conditions favorables à la rencontre de la qualité vivante et directe du théâtre avec l’intimité du cinéma. L’acteur peut s’affranchir du recours aux effets exagérés de projection sur scène et se permettre de chuchoter ou de produire des sons expressifs ténus. Cette approche transforme le travail à la fois de l’acteur et du metteur en scène, ouvrant ainsi la voie à des expériences théâtrales poétiques, abstraites et minimalistes telles que la pièce *Les Aveugles* de Denis Marleau.