

Tarantella

(again)

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The Tarantella is a dance that first appeared in the early Middle Ages embedded in a southern Italian pagan rite. Known as the first, last, and perhaps only trance occurrence in Western culture, it was meant to heal (mostly female) cases of restlessness, indolence and other disorders that were believed to be caused by the bite of the *Lycosa Tarantula* spider. In the course of the ritual, the ‘tarantulees’ (*tarantolati*) were exposed to the throbbing music of the Tarantella, a fast, upbeat melody played by accordions, violins, tambourines and voices. They would then enter frenzied dances that lasted for hours, sometimes days, until their possessed bodies were restored back to vitality. The Tarantella therefore served both as a cure and a way of living out of the delirium. Today, the bite of the *Lycosa Tarantula* is known to be harmless for humans. Arising in times of hardship and superstition, the origins of the dancing mania remain obscure. Some describe such moments of expenditure as the resurgence of Bacchanalian rites that were suppressed in 186 BC by the Roman Senate. Others interpret it as a pretext for suggestive choreographies at a time where dance was proscribed by Canon law, or attribute it to the psychoactive effects of the ergot of rye.

Augustin Maurs’s Tarantella occurs from a capitalist-schizophrenic present. He arranges his composition in scores, which are displayed on A5 posters throughout the Sophie-Gips courtyard surrounding Aperto Raum, Berlin. They are diptychs associating words and notations: nervous declinations of the superlative formula “as ... as possible” on the one hand, strange doodle-ish notations on the other. Repeated as incantations, the instructions become invitations to altered, climactic or paralytic states.

Echoing John Cage’s piece *ASLSP* (for As Slow As Possible) – a score deliberately omitting further durational instructions, the formula “as ... as ...” recalls the musical convention typically informing the fundamental mood of a piece or the intensity of a given sequence such as *allegro* (quick, lively) or *fortississimo* (as loud as possible). Here, Augustin Maurs extends the basic indication of tempo to other possibilities of excess, which manifold versatile moods or gestures forming an elusive, deregulated and instable ensemble. “Fast”, “fuzzy”, “holy”, “fake”, “loud”, “owned”, “banned” are *found states* reflecting the current shape of the world.

Appended to those febrile instructions, musical notations lead into unidentified free-

hand inscriptions. Within their deconstruction of musical codes, these movements follow the same pattern of alienation – a mutation towards muteness. Call them signs, prosody, pathos, winks or blinks, even memes: these inscriptions have shed off their original meaning to become appearances of uncertain significance. This ascetic shift towards uncertainty evokes a double action of reduction and of extension of what *makes music* and what *music makes*. Maurs’ scores cannot be read or performed in a conventional way and, through this, they question conventions surrounding reading and performing. They are music in absentia, signs and sensations, emanations and escapes. In this arrangement of the (in)visible, (in)audible and (un)speakable, they are a relational tool, a potential that cannot stand for itself, that is meant for someone else or something else or somewhere else.

In line with his interest in the notion of practice, Augustin Maurs sets up an exercise of release. His troublemaker scores heighten subjective sensations. They invoke a bodily response to contemporary anxieties in an attempt to seize upon the unidentified ailments in the atmosphere. They recall the bodies that have been displaced in immaterial technologies and territories, in permanent states of expulsion.