



LEONA JONES **babblesnatch**

VOICES *approach* / LISTENinnn / near~er ssssPRING into SPEECH transmit *pass*
on>>> Each Successive Perhaps *pass on>>>* messages{constructions} s s s seep
through drrdrrdrrdrip~in WORDS drrdrrdrrdrop~in **WORDS**

The 8-channel audio installation version of *babblesnatch* is the original form of the piece which was designed to play in lowlight. Listeners can wander or be still between loudspeakers as the space comes alive with Sounds. A 2-channel version was submitted to the international Karl Sczuka Prize in 2023, winning the Grant Prize in the competition. The work:

- is an abstract montage entirely created from Leona's audio recordings of two Voices performing an original script (a text for our fast-changing times). The recordings were then used both as unmanipulated and digitally manipulated Sound to create sonic colour, texture, vertical time, sense and nonsense
- cracks open conventional language to create a 'snowglobe' of cascading, undulating, rebounding Sound as Voices dart and fly, recognisable words erupting from aggregated clamour to take on significances Listeners have to decide for themselves
- invites Listeners to use their imagination and consider what it might be like to experience the usually non-audible digital voices and moods enveloping us.

During the Covid pandemic lockdown Leona and her mentor Dr Caroline Wilkins had long-distance discussions about the rush on-line and the torrent of digital information forced to

substitute for so much previously gained from live events and gatherings. Everyone virtually listened to and watched each other even more than previously, creating an overwhelming digital infostorm. Caroline and Leona's conversations followed many paths, for instance:

- does digital technology enable an ever-expanding world of increased freedom and power?
- is increased democracy merely an illusion as sophisticated chains of mis/information have been created?
- can individuals protect themselves from being rendered inert by overload?

Big questions. Questions that generated *babblesnatch*.

Of course, the work cannot provide definitive answers to such dilemmas. However, along with its offer of an immersive listening experience it endeavours to raise explorations of everyday social media life, sparking debate around tensions such as surveillance and mental health, corporate and personal, community and callousness, mis/information. Listening itself is now being understood as a holistic act, a back and forth between Listeners, rebounding in the wider socio-political context. '*...to be listening is to be at the same time inside and outside*' (Jean-Luc Nancy 2009 *Listening*). The lazy binary of active speaking and passive listening is being questioned and analysed. There's a concern not just for Sound and Listening but what it might mean for someone or something to be listened *to*. Importantly, as part of this movement, *babblesnatch* embraces Sound and Listening as artforms, placing them centre-stage. It celebrates our capacity to go beyond what is visible - so critical in a digital world where fact increasingly downplays the importance of communal experiential life - and seeks to rebalance the dominant bias of eye over ear.

The basis of *babblesnatch* was a performance script published as part of an essay *The Panacousticon* in *Journal of Performance Philosophy* (2016) by Dr Caroline Wilkins which was later adapted by Leona to create the recording script for *babblesnatch*

VOICES: Caroline Wilkins & Leona Jones

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