

TOUCH THE SOUND - Transcription

Evelyn Hearing is a sensation for which you need your whole body...and my whole life is about sound; you know, it's what makes me tick as a human being.

 There's sound absolutely everywhere. You have to listen. That's it really.

Evelyn I want to be open to absolutely everything that comes my way. I mean, this is the most interesting thing with a musician, this sound journey.

Fred & Evelyn chatting as they walk in:

Fred ...be a lot more fun...

Evelyn ...You might have to strike it out first!

Fred aaoooo!

Evelyn ...we don't need any instruments...shall we just use the voice?!

Fred aaaaooo! What's That? Five seconds? Oooooo!

Evelyn ...So we could work up and down, and across, couldn't we? Well.
 But you know, the tiniest sounds could be made...

Fred Absolutely.

Fred & Evelyn laugh

Evelyn ...some very good sounds!

Fred Why, thank-you!

Evelyn I must say, that is kind of one of the better sounds!

Fred Yeah, they've often said that about my back...

Evelyn There's lots of, um, surfaces...

Evelyn You always imagine a percussion player to strike things, but when you try to transfer some of the ideas of other instrumentalists, for example, a singer, where the sound comes from the diaphragm, it comes from this part of the body, it doesn't just come out of the mouth and that's it, the whole breathing aspect is hugely important. You know, it's trying to just find the sound way, way, way down in the surface, that is, you have your surface there

but in fact the sound isn't here, it's actually under here, so we want to get under the surface in order to find the sound, rather than just simply striking that surface.

Evelyn Hearing is a form of touch, something that's so hard to describe because in a way...you know, something that comes, sound that comes to you, you know, you, you can feel as though you can literally, sort of, almost reach out to that sound and feel that sound.

Evelyn You feel it through your body, and, sometimes, it almost hits your face.

Evelyn I was born in the North-East of Scotland, on the farm that my father had. When I was at primary school, there was the realisation that I was just becoming a little bit slow in reacting to conversations, and also missing things out in homework, and things like that, but of course, when you're eight years old, you don't think you're becoming deaf or anything like that, you just think, oh, something's not quite right, and you adapt accordingly.

Evelyn Meanwhile, I had been playing the piano; I started piano from the age of eight, and absolutely loved that, but as the years rolled by, by the time I reached the age of eleven, you know, I was dependent on hearing aids, and ... when I was about to go to secondary school, the audiologist said: "Right, you know, she is deaf, she's, you know, she needs these hearing aids and she's not going to be able to play music, she's not going to be able to do this, or to do that, and she's going to have to go to a school for the deaf." So, it was just so strange that, you know, thirty minutes before walking through the door, I could do whatever I wanted to do, but then thirty minutes later, apparently, the medical profession tells you that you can't do something...and of course, my parents were extremely concerned..., and my father just said, "Look, you

know, there is absolutely no difference, in, in, how, you know, in what she does, what she wants to do...hearing or not, she will do what she wants to do.”

I did...carry on at a mainstream school

Teacher So, introduction, remember...is the title...
(in background)

Evelyn I mean, I had great friends, and, and very good teachers, too, you know, they wore a little microphone and then I would receive their sound through my hearing aids

Teacher ...then at the end of the play, cos remember you're going to have to show how the ...relationships change

Evelyn They had a very strong music department, and I was quite eager to find something else to go alongside my piano playing. I thought, well, percussion, kind of looks interesting, maybe I'll try that.

Ok, you go on this side, you go on this side, cos you're right-handed. So, just very gently, nothing has to be loud, at all, but just the process of coming against the drum... and moving away; so it's just like hauling the sound out of the drum. Just, just try it! Yeah ... just give it a go, there we go... and just feel the body come against the drum and move out. It's like ... some body movement and sound at the same time.

Great, yeah, no, it's good, because interestingly, you know, even if we strike the drum so soft, from the side, we actually see the skin move. You try.

This time, if we put our hand on the actual shell, and take note of what you're feeling through the hand, through the arm, and we strike the drum. You try.

And there it ends. So what was happening?

School-girl ...I could feel it

Evelyn Where did you feel it, can you be more exact?

School-girl ...going up my arm

Evelyn Eventually I discovered that by taking the hearing aids off, that in fact I'd actually hear less through the ear, but hear more through the body. And so therefore my teacher, my percussion teacher, whom I met when I was twelve years old, he...began to basically suggest, I mean, he was learning as much as I was, suggest that, you know, I place my hand on the wall, of the room which he taught in, and he would play, for example, two very old, hand-tuned timpani, or kettle drums, and ... he would tune them to big intervals apart, and I'd place my hand on the wall, and he would do the same, and he would strike one drum, and he would ask, where are you feeling that particular drum? I can feel that from here, and it's going all the way down my hand. And then, he would play the other drum, so...where are you feeling that? I'd say, maybe here...and down this part...and then gradually, he would lessen the intervals, so that the minute-est difference was possible to detect; but it was the beginning of really using the body, as some kind of resonating chamber.

Evelyn Was there the same feeling....when you...?

School-girl Not really...

Evelyn Not really...now, why is this, do you think?

School-girl ...when I hit that... my hand on there, I could feel it covering my whole hand...but this one, I could only feel it a little a bit...

Evelyn ...a wee bit, yeah...

Evelyn We can feel this; for an audience member, for a listener, I strike it - they may hear it; and then they may no longer hear it. For us, however, we've got our hand on the drum, we strike it, we can see, we can feel, we've had the process of striking it. Meanwhile, we're hearing this sound, because we're feeling this sound far longer than an audience member. Do you see what I mean? So, in fact, we're hearing more!.....I will sit there, cos I will play...Sometimes I put my tummy against the edge ...of the drum, just to feel a little more connected with the sound. So, as I say, you can, you can just do whatever you want to do. So if you take your hearing aids off, and then, and then also, if you... if you want to then put them back in, and just to...

School-girl No, I'll feel it!

Evelyn You'll feel it? No problem! Ok...

Evelyn I must show you this...usual percussion instrument.....oh!.....it's got quality!

Questioner Is Evelyn on the phone now?

Interpreter Well, whenever you're ready with a question, I'll have a go at repeating it.

Questioner Ok. Hi Evelyn, can you tell our readers, what is your favourite instrument?

Evelyn The snare drum is my favourite, you know, we're dealing with so many percusion instruments, but that one is a challenge, both physically and musically, and of course there are so many different styles of playing the snare drum, such as the Swiss style, and the Irish-American...of course, the Scottish style.

- Questioner Great. So now, why do you play in your bare feet?
- Evelyn ...you do feel a wee bit more connected to the sound, there's no question about that...
- Questioner You can lip-read; and you have some of your hearing left, but still, how can a profoundly deaf person become a musician?
- Evelyn If someone asks me: "Oh well, how do you hear that?" Then I simply say: "I really don't know, but I just basically hear that through my body, through opening myself up. How do you hear that?" "Oh well, I hear it through the ears..." ...you know..." Well, what do you mean, 'through the ears', what are you actually hearing?" So, when you try to bounce the question back to a so-called hearing person, then, they simply do not know how to answer these questions....so therefore, why should I be put in that position? That is just...slightly...upsetting.
- Fred When you were studying, did you have to do breathing exercises?
- Evelyn No...
- Fred I think that the way that you breathe is just a really fundamental part of who we are; and ... that's a... an essential sound element...also. I remember, when I had pneumonia, they wanted to go inside my lungs with a video camera. So they took me into a room, and I was supposed to breathe in, the anaesthetic, so that my ... all the windpipe and the lungs would be anaesthetised. And I was in the middle of

writing a string quartet at the time and I was having trouble with it... and I was breathing in through this mask ... and I was totally excited, because I understood exactly how to begin the quartet, so instead of being ready for this bronchoscopy, I said: "Bring me some paper and a pencil!" And I started writing the string quartet, with one hand...and while breathing in with the other hand, and then all these men in green coats came and shoved something down my throat and into my lungs, and started looking at the video screen, and I was thinking, I wish they'd go away so I could get on with this! But it was all about rhythm, it was all about that kind of breathing... that deep breathing thing that...is just a really fundamental part of who we are.

Japanese Man (unintelligible)

Evelyn It's just a very thin sound
 So quiet...again, so quiet!

Japanese Man Leather...

Evelyn Yeah, exactly, just like a shoe, you know...seems like...excuse me..

 So you are like, you're the ...kind of, heavy...

JapaneseMan Uh, OK. You play?

Evelyn Well, I don't know, we'll see...

English subtitles under Japanese percussionist:

“In Japanese ‘ikiru’ means to live and ‘ikiru’ comes from ‘iki o suru’ – breathing. We must strive to perfect our breathing. Japanes culture grew through the hard work of (on?) the paddy fields. Our society developed in the rhythm of the life of the farmer. We don't live that rhythm anymore; instead we run. We train our breathing – we train, that ist, to live.

In Japanese legend, the sun goddess Amaterasu once hid in a deep cave and there was no more light. To bring her out to give light again men and women danced naked and beat drums. That was the beginning.

Train announcement in Japanese

Japanese voices

Evelyn I feel absolutely secure when I'm performing; but in everyday life, sometimes just a little imbalance happens...I think it's what's coming through the ear that actually affects me...this kind of cacophony that sometimes comes all of a sudden, or...sometimes is just sort of buzzing around there...

Japanese lift attendant

Evelyn It sounds really.... Maybe it's a silly idea..

Japanese man Chopsticks?...

Evelyn ...chopsticks...

Japanese Man OK

Evelyn How many pairs?

JapaneseMan Two,two

Evelyn More?

JapaneseMan You take one

Evelyn Do you also have, like a cup or a glass or a can; something that I can...
yeah...ok, these are empty... thank you! Do you have a cup...ok, thank you.
Thanks.

Evelyn I have spent three years at the Royal Academy of Music...

Evelyn Silence is probably one of the loudest sounds... and heaviest sounds that
you're every likely to experience.
At the end of the day, we still know that within everything that we see,
there's sound, I mean, we know that. We just don't have that sensitivity, to
hear what is going on around us.

Evelyn The opposite of sound ... definitely isn't silence ... in my mind anyway... I
think the ... I don't even know if there is such a thing ... well, there must be
an opposite, actually ... but... What that is, I don't know ...
I wonder whether it is something that is more static, something that you can
take away with ... with you ... It's the closest thing that I can imagine ... to
... to death.

Fred We are here today in northern Germany, cleaning up pigeon shit ... from our
amplifier, using Hautpfegetücher. Notice the smooth flowing movement
away from the body....!

Fred I believe that Richard Long said, "Artists are people who ... are in touch with
the energy that they had when they were children." It's never left them and
... and so that sense of ... seeing something or hearing something for the
first time and being excited by it ... I think, you know, you should try to hang
on to that ... it's great. In the end, it's about listening, period. I mean, it starts
from listening ... and it ends with listening.

- Fred Your early life is full of sound, and that sound is always ... redolent of a certain ... part of your self that you don't lose if you hang onto the sound ... In a way, improvisation, the narrative involved in improvisation is your whole life up to that point.
- Evelyn Oh... it's to hide your grey hairs! Hullo!. Oh ... oh, a new dog?
- Roger mmm... that shows you the last time since you was here!
- Evelyn Exactly! It's years! Does it hae a name, or number?
- Roger Eh ... aye, yeah...
- Evelyn Hullo! Come here ... I love the new hooses fae' ... comin' up fae' Ellon. It's such an awfu' lot.
- Evelyn To return to ... where I was brought up ... after quite a long time, just conjures up these very ... innocent ... I have to say lovely memories.
- Evelyn Gee Whizz!
- Roger You look so innocent- looking there...
- Evelyn Oh, I do don't I? And I'm mindin' that blouse and pullover and ...
- Roger Sunday night...
- Evelyn Gee (unintelligible)
- Roger The first time we recognised a tune that you ever made on the piano.

- Evelyn Dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee ...! Younger's Special beer ... or something...
- Roger Of course...Mum feeding the calves
- Evelyn I can remember Mum, even the overalls she was wearing .. it's like, God, I remember that, I mean, you can just feel it...
- Roger It's a typical scene that...
- Evelyn this is Dad ...
- Roger What kind of music did they play?
- Evelyn Well it was Scottish, like Scottish traditional music ...
- Evelyn Well this is a wedding or something ... maybe. See Mum never really...though she liked to play...
- Roger Oh, she had to read everything ...
- Evelyn Well, she could read, but she didn't have , like, this ... sort of natural, natural delivery, whereas Dad, I think ... could...
- Roger Oh he just could play ...
- Evelyn But ... and I think probably it's the sort of naturalness, I mean, I used to play by ear when I was little, and he used to encourage that ... and Mum, she was aye forcing us to read...
- Roger I think it was very difficult for Mum and Dad when you left home, it's ..
- Evelyn Yeah.

- Roger Both Evelyn and dad must have felt the same way in music because they could pick it up in the same way. I think there must have been a bond there between them, in ... how they could relate to music ... it was just nature to them.
- Roger I could manage it!
- Evelyn Come on then! Well I'll tell you, what a mess you have here ... but interesting bits you've got though...
- Roger It's sharp ...
- Evelyn Aye, it's affie sharp
- Evelyn My Dad stopped playing once I and my brothers were born. Why this was the case I've absolutely no idea ... the only time he did, in fact, was ... during Christmas Eve and ...my mother used to play the organ ... you know, for the Christmas Eve services and so, sometimes my two brothers would go with her ... so I would just be left in the house with my dad, and that was the time when he would bring the accordion out ... and I'd always ask him to play this thing, to play it, play it, play it ... and then I would want to have a go, and of course there was this great big machine buried me practically!
- Evelyn Certainly I was Daddy's girl and I was very fond of my father ... it's difficult to describe something like that but it's just one of those things that ... the sort of silent energy or chemistry or whatever ... comes to the fore and ... it's on of those things that you want in a way to keep quite, quite secret ...and certainly that hasn't disappeared to this day, you know, even although, you know... it's been several years since Dad died ... that feeling is definitely still there and he's definitely a source of inspiration ... for me... Once he died ... it was a terrible loss but at the same time I felt as though I was given something really quite extraordinary just to drive me forward, just some kind

of force or other that made me think, right, now I've got to gather myself together, and I have to try to make the most I possibly can out of ... my life, it was as though I was carrying dad's life as well, you know ... I felt I was doing, for a while I felt as though I was doing everything for him...

Evelyn To leave home, I felt I needed certain things, you know, home-made jam or something like that! ... and even now that's definitely the case but ... it's more the feeling of having Dad inside that's important.

Evelyn Part of the curiosity is, well, what is it, that, you know, makes you really be you, you know, what is it, that you just love. And my role in this play is to bring the power of the sound.

Evelyn Everything will be let go .. in the same way that all your music will ... disappear ... but yet, no sound is lost ... they live on, but what happens to them, I actually don't know; it's the equivalent of a life.

Being a musician, being a dancer, being an artist, you know, is all about the sense of touch, really ... the form of communication is about touch, and I don't literally mean ... that kind of thing, I , I mean, touch is just something that ... a little bit like hearing, it's just so vast, you know, we need all our senses for the others to function, we just do, and, you know, to take away the eye, it's, it's not a big deal; to take away the ear, it's not a big deal; all the other senses will become that particular sense that you've lost, you know, this is what the mysterious sixth sense is about, you know, it creates a, a type of sense that, you know, we, we never knew existed until one or the other disappears ... you know, in the same way that if suddenly I couldn't function as ... an actual percussion player, I'd never ever stop being a musician because I couldn't communicate through the percussion instruments, you know, I'd always be a musician because that's something that is so internal and no-one can take that away, you know, no-one.

We need to eat and we need to sleep, and we need music, I mean, it's always happening within yourselves...

Fred that was nice...

Evelyn I believe that we all have our own individual sound, we're configured ... uniquely, we have different weight, we have a different stance, physical stance, we have a different means of attack, we approach the instruments differently, but more importantly, we ... hear the sound within ourselves differently.

You know, if you think of a piece of music, we have all the different notes there, different rhythms, dynamics and so on, all, you know, within that one piece of music and it's, it's like, you know, the, the world, I mean, here we are, we've got all these human beings, you know, of different sorts, all different dynamics, different ages, different accents, one thing or another, you know it's just, imagine them on a ...page, you know, of music, imagine them, human beings being the dots on a page ... and it can be quite amazing to be part of that ... and then you understand, wow, we are the sound!