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## PARtake: The Journal of Performance as Research

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# A Unity of Experience: The Shared Rhythms of Only Wolves and Lions

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**‘Only wolves and lions eat alone, you should not eat, not even a snack, on your own’  
– Epicurus**

These words from Epicurus began *Only Wolves and Lions* (July 9, 2013), a participatory performance by U.K.-based performance company, Unfinished Business, in which the audience shares a meal, a conversation, a provocation. In the act of joining others in a shared event, tensions inherent in the social structures supported by Western capitalism were explored—as natural rhythms of individual body clocks were combined in a collective rhythm. In doing this, Unfinished Business hoped to develop a sense of collective experience and community, something often absent from contemporary living; the participatory nature of *Only Wolves and Lions* produced the conditions for individual circadian rhythms to gradually become a collective, shared rhythm, thus forging a unity of experience. Writing from an autoethnographic perspective,<sup>1</sup> I draw on Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s *rhythmanalysis* and continental philosopher Henri Bergson’s notion of pure duration—that “which excludes all juxtaposition, reciprocal externality and extension”<sup>2</sup>—to assert that participation in *Only Wolves and Lions* resulted in a sense of duration distinct from the homogenous, clock-measured time that regulates economic production as an authoritarian force in our late capitalist society.

**Towards a Shared Community**

In Unfinished Business’s *Only Wolves and Lions*, a group of individuals were brought together to prepare and share a meal, participate in a conversation, and to explore the notion of community. For Leo Kay, company leader, *Only Wolves and Lions*, was about providing:

A secure structure within which we explore ideas surrounding community, loneliness, isolation, collective experience and its relationship to happiness, free market capitalism and the meaning of the word crisis [...] To what extent does the current economic crisis and the social structures promoted by Western capitalism play with our sense of isolation and dislocation? A political system has a great deal of power to manipulate our perception of happiness and where it can be located. I wanted the structure of the show to trigger points for the participatory conversational discourse which opened the event, and tackle such politically rich questions.<sup>3</sup>

Although *Only Wolves and Lions* might be considered as a community event rather than a performance, the company drew on the ritualistic and thus performative elements of making and sharing a meal as a means of constructing the kind of through line commonly found in theatrical presentations, without restricting the audience's influence. Despite the definite performative nature of *Only Wolves and Lions*, there was a fluidity to the performance that was essential in allowing the participants to use their agency as a means of influencing the course of the performance. The structure of the performance was evident, however, in the performers' "management" of the conversations that emerged from the audience, very clearly highlighting its theatricality.<sup>4</sup> The company, led by Leo Kay, creates "theatre and live-art [...] with an emphasis on participation and intimacy, social and political engagement and unexpected interaction between artist and audience."<sup>5</sup> Thus, in their work, the company creates communities. For existentialist philosopher Martin Buber, "community is where community happens,"<sup>6</sup> a notion developed by Victor Turner in his writing on spontaneous *communitas*.<sup>7</sup> Turner distinguished between three different types of *communitas*:

(1) *existential* or *spontaneous communitas* – approximately what the hippies today would call "a happening" [...] (2) *normative communitas*, where, under the influence of time [...] *existential communitas* is organized into a perduring social system; and (3) *ideological communitas*, which is a label one can apply to a variety of utopian models of societies based on *existential communitas*.<sup>8</sup>

In *Only Wolves and Lions*, a community emerged from spontaneous *communitas*, as participants shared an experience of performance that affected rhythms and, ultimately, altered my own sense of duration. Apart from the spontaneity of community suggested by Buber and Turner, the term could also be applied to groups of individuals with common interests brought together physically or virtually; an establishment of conditions within which a nascent community may emerge. Political theorist Iris Marion Young notes that the ideal community "seeks to resist the individualism and alienation that is pervasive in late capitalist societies by bringing people together."<sup>9</sup> It is in this sense that the participatory nature of *Only Wolves and Lions* was successful. Over the duration of an evening that lasted around three and half hours, I felt a degree of kinship with the other assembled participants, as my individual circadian<sup>10</sup> rhythm became part of a collective rhythm in this shared durational experience.

## Rhythms of Duration

In *Rhythmanalysis*, Lefebvre examines the rhythmic patterns of cities as well as aspects of everyday life, such as dressage, music, and the media. His work as a rhythm analyst, however, began earlier in his book *The Production of Space*, where he notes the fact that little detailed analysis of rhythms has been carried out, and that if such an analysis of them were to take place it might “eventually even displace psychoanalysis [...] closer to a pedagogy of appropriation (the appropriation of the body, as of spatial practice).”<sup>11</sup> This appropriation of the body is intended to show a contrast between natural rhythms and those of machines, the body as cyclical and social practice as linear. For the body, rhythmic patterns repeat, whereas social practices of the kind necessary in capitalism move forwards inexorably. Like pure duration, the rhythms of the body are more akin to our natural, circadian patterns, whereas the linearity of social practice suggests moving forwards inevitably in a process of production and destruction. The rhythms of machines attempt to emulate the body’s natural rhythms and impose social practices. The social practices of machines, however, move forwards in a drive for productivity whereas the body’s rhythms respond naturally in ways that distort clock-time.

Bergson’s notion of pure duration—that “which excludes all juxtaposition, reciprocal externality and extension,”<sup>12</sup> as distinct from time that is counted in space—is also applicable to rhythm. Rhythm can be defined in several ways: as musical patterns, biological processes, a natural feeling, and flow of words or phrases although, for the purposes of this article, I use the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of *rhythm* as “a regularly recurring pattern of events or actions.”<sup>13</sup> Rhythm can only be quantifiably measured in the same way that duration, in the form of time, can be perceived as minutes, hours, and seconds. Writing in an age gripped by modernity and its associated technologies, Bergson stated that:

[T]here is no one rhythm of duration; it is possible to imagine many different rhythms which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness, and thereby fix their respective places in the scale of being.<sup>14</sup>

For Bergson, the difference in rhythms between individuals is the same as the different tensions inherent in consciousness; he believed the rhythm of the world is *the* single

objective duration. In this article, my argument that Lefebvre's analysis of rhythms can be understood in relation to Bergson's pure duration is exemplified by *Only Wolves and Lions* as a participatory, collective experience. It is this participatory and collective nature that ultimately led to a sense of solidarity in the form of a unity of experience. The analysis of my participation in *Only Wolves and Lions* offers a paradigm of duration (as an alternative to time), rhythm and solidarity that challenges accepted values and beliefs relating to both time and shared experience. Thus, in challenging the accepted rhythms of late capitalism, a new perspective may be reached.

### **The Rhythm of Solidarity and Bergsonian Duration**

The aim of Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* was to expose the contrast between natural bodily rhythms and those of machines. He noted the "rhythm that is proper to capital is the rhythm of producing [...] and destroying"<sup>15</sup> and that the alternative of bodily rhythms has been negatively impacted by this process of production and destruction.

Drawing on earlier work on the production of space, Lefebvre's analysis of rhythms seeks to explore whether there is a general concept of rhythm as a way of assessing the effects of spaces and those who occupy those spaces. In particular, Lefebvre analyses the rhythms of Mediterranean cities and concludes that "there is a struggle between measured, imposed, external time and a more endogenous time."<sup>16</sup> For Lefebvre, this struggle is representative of the ways in which capitalism imposes its rhythm on the innate rhythms of the human body. He proposes that the notions of cyclical and linear repetition (two different types of rhythms) can be separated out under analysis, but "in *reality* interfere with one another constantly."<sup>17</sup> Lefebvre sees how cyclical rhythms are more natural than the linear rhythms imposed by capitalism:

The cyclical originates in the cosmic, in nature: days, nights, seasons, the waves and tides of the sea, monthly cycles, etc. The linear would come rather from social practice, therefore from human activity: the monotony of actions and of movements, imposed structures. Great cyclical rhythms last for a period and restart: dawn, always new, often superb, inaugurates the return of the everyday. The antagonistic unity of relations between the cyclical and the linear sometimes give rise to compromises, sometimes to disturbances.<sup>18</sup>

He proposes that the notions of polyrhythmia, arrhythmia, and eurhythmia are central to producing an effective analysis of rhythms. The first of these terms—polyrhythmia—refers

to the idea that many different rhythms coexist, something that—in a capitalist, machine driven world—creates an uneasy tension. The second term—arrhythmia—suggests an uneven rhythm or pattern of repetition, perhaps because of the tensions produced by the clash of multiple rhythms in a world predicated on standardisation. The final term—eurhythmia—means a collective rhythm, although not in the machinic immersion present in the rhythms of capitalism. In Lefebvre’s terms, eurhythmia refers to rhythms “unit[ing] with one another in the state of health,”<sup>19</sup> an argument I present in relation to my experience of *Only Wolves and Lions*. This sense of eurhythmia—as a unity of rhythms—produced a sense of solidarity among the audience members; as the performance progressed, this burgeoning solidarity and experience of eurhythmia became a way of understanding a new sense of time, separate from the linear time of the clock.

Having been delayed by the rhythms of the traffic and streets, I arrived at the performance venue, a converted chapel in South Manchester, for the start time of 6.30pm. The timed signals of traffic lights, the ebb and flow of vehicles travelling at various speeds, and my personal rhythm all seemed at odds with each other. Early on this Tuesday evening there were many competing rhythms, prompting me to imagine the unerring rhythms of the traffic lights operating even when the streets are virtually deserted—in the dead of night, or when the roads are closed for a marathon, the “signal [of the traffic lights that] continue to function in the void, [are] a despairing social mechanism, searching inexorably through the desert.”<sup>20</sup> It is these rhythms of social practice that repeat until interrupted by mechanical breakdown or accident. Since the industrial revolution, there has been an inexorable drive to “master”<sup>21</sup> time as a way of controlling labour and production. In his discussion of the working day, Karl Marx describes how “a multiplication of small thefts in the course of the day [...] from the labourer’s meal and recreation time”<sup>22</sup> increases profits without additional expenditure of wages. This manipulation and intended “mastery” of clock-time, typical of many unscrupulous early industrialists, has continued unerringly into the digital age. However, whilst nineteenth-century factory workers might have been subject to the clock being used to “chain” them to a machine, in the “dynamics of a networked society,”<sup>23</sup> and “some of us carry our chains around with us, in the form of laptops and phones,”<sup>24</sup> thus stealing time from ourselves and displacing our natural rhythms with the rhythms of “machinic immersion.”<sup>25</sup> These are the rhythms that support the clock-

dominated world<sup>26</sup> and what Marx described as the “moments [that are] the elements of profit.”<sup>27</sup> This “practico-social dominance of linear over cyclical repetition” is exemplified in the clock-dominated rhythms designed to maintain a cultural and social order.<sup>28</sup>

The audience in *Only Wolves and Lions* had an initial shared rhythm of solidarity, as there was a common interest in choosing to attend and participate in the same performance. Initially, there appeared to be a unity or agreement of feeling; something I felt because of the common decision to attend this out-of-town venue and engage in what was advertised as a participatory performance. Whilst all performances are to some degree participatory, as “[w]ithout participation performance would be nothing but action happening in the presence of other people,”<sup>29</sup> the extent to which *Only Wolves and Lions* required participation meant that I felt a definite sense of solidarity among the audience members. By the end of the evening, this unity appeared to become one of experience through sharing a common encounter that lasted over a duration that surpassed comfortable consumption. This notion, that performances lasting beyond an average of two hours challenges smooth consumption and offers a culturally healthy pause, is suggested by Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen in his discussion of British-Danish performance artist, Stuart Lynch.<sup>30</sup> Skjoldager-Nielsen writes that Lynch’s *24-Hour Performance* (2000) poses questions about the schism between such a performance that offers the experience of Bergsonian duration and the compartmentalized time of an audience who can come and go at will, something that, in Lynch’s performance, produced “a deliberate clash of time and duration.”<sup>31</sup> The experience of *Only Wolves and Lions* was a shared solidarity from the event, developed through the changing rhythms of the group which, in turn, offered a sense of what Bergson might have understood to be duration as distinct from clock-time.

### **Polyrhythmic Beginnings**

It was as host rather than as performer that Leo beckoned us inside the chapel and, in the first act of moving towards eurhythmia (collective rhythm), we respectfully queued and entered. The request to bring one raw ingredient to the meal had been dutifully observed by all and, as I handed over a butternut squash to Unai, who was the other host to identify himself, I took a seat near the head of the table and observed the other participants. My thoughts turned to rhythm—my own and that of others—and the way in

which we were being enculturated into a focus on the collective experience. We were equals in the process, seated equidistantly around the table, on identical chairs and in identical ignorance as to how the events of the evening would play out. So far, the sense of solidarity—insofar as having a common interest was evident—we were there to discover and create, finding a commonality through shared actions and conversations.

Leo and Unai called order by banging tiny cymbals and proposing the first toast of the evening. The marking of moments like this went some way towards disassembling a sense of homogenous clock-measured time, and towards the experience of pure duration—considered by Bergson as being like the notes of a tune, forming “both the past and the present states into an organic whole [...] melting [...] into one another.”<sup>32</sup> Using the example of a sugar cube melting in water, Bergson sees the experience of time passing while waiting for the sugar to dissolve as “no longer something thought [...] but [as] something lived. It is no longer a relation, it is an absolute.”<sup>33</sup> Bergson’s principle ideas on duration argue that intuition and immediate experience are more important than rationalism in understanding reality. Time, he asserts, is something that is expressed in numbers, whereas duration cannot be measured in the same way. In examining whether true duration relates to space, Bergson argues that *if* time allows our conscious states a way of being counted, *and* number is conceived as things that can be directly counted spreading out in space, *then* time being a way of making distinctions is nothing but space, *therefore* pure duration must be something different.

At this early point in the evening, my sense was that the rhythms of the group were polyrhythmic (many individual rhythms). This multiplicity of rhythms would later become eurhythmic in our subconsciously realization of a sense of pure duration and solidarity through a unity of experience. Polyrhythmia is akin to pure duration, in that the idiosyncrasies of our internal clocks suggest an absence of uniformity. It was, however, through the collective participation in *Only Wolves and Lions* and its subsequent forming of a group rhythm, that an experience of pure duration was realized and, consequently, an experience of solidarity.

### **A Nascent Unity of Rhythms**

For Lefebvre, the “notion of rhythm brings with it or requires some complementary

considerations: the implied but different notions of polyrhythmia, eurhythmia and arrhythmia.”<sup>34</sup> It is not only through the activities associated with the preparation and sharing of a meal in *Only Wolves and Lions*, but also through the time taken during the experience to allow the change from individual rhythms (polyrhythmia) to a collective sense of rhythm (eurhythmia), that appeared to forge a solidarity. Equally, the rhythm of a place can affect the rhythm of individuals occupying it. Lefebvre believed that in any “interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm;”<sup>35</sup> and that rhythms interfere with linear and cyclical processes. In *Only Wolves and Lions*, it was the rhythms of individuals, work patterns, and travel that were interrupted by the imposed structure of the performance, which was both linear and cyclical.

In an opening participatory act, we were encouraged to embody the physicality of apes. As we stood around the table, beating our chests and wildly waving our arms in the air, barriers were eroded through this most basic act of communication. As we settled into our places, discussion soon turned to the notion of community and shared experience. It was Leo’s declaration that this feeling of community was absent from our lives. He suggested that because many of us reside in densely populated cities, we have, paradoxically, becoming increasingly isolated. We have moved from the small towns and villages that represent the nostalgic Arcadian ideal into the metropolis, where it is easy to become lost or go unnoticed. Coupled with a belief that capitalism and mass consumerism are shielding—and thus preventing—a deeper personal fulfillment, Leo and Unai acknowledged their intention to address this imbalance through an experience of community and sharing. The unity of experience in *Only Wolves and Lions* nurtured a nascent solidarity, through working towards the common goal of preparing a meal and, in doing so, this act formed a temporary society. Like the spontaneous *communitas* that, asserts Turner, develops into the structure and law of societies, the actions of the participants in *Only Wolves and Lions* formed new ways of thinking and consolidated my understanding of Bergsonian duration, as the group moved from polyrhythmia to eurhythmia.

Leo brought Epicurus into the conversation: “Only wolves and lions eat alone, you should not eat, not even a snack, on your own.” I considered the notion of rhythm, of internal rhythms, and the rhythms of others, and wondered whether rhythm is absent when

one eats alone. Political theorist Stuart Eldon notes that Lefebvre sees “[o]ur biological rhythms of hunger, sleep and excretion [as being] conditioned through our family and social existence.”<sup>36</sup> The rhythm we adopt in eating is aligned with the degree of hunger, time constraints, the substance and texture of the food being consumed, temperature, tastes, sensations, and smells, among other factors. Thus, it is our social condition that influences, distorts and shapes our personal rhythms. The multiplicity of rhythms of duration imagined by Bergson are also conditioned by these biological factors and less so by the social conditions in which we may find ourselves; conditions that are largely structured around clock-measured time.

There was a need for an investment of time in *Only Wolves and Lions*. Like the worker who has nothing to sell or trade but his or her labor, the participants offered their time to prepare a meal to be shared equally. There was a greater sense of *giving in* to duration rather than *giving up* time, as this was not a process of *exchanging* labor for food but *investing* in a process that offered a fulfilling experience, noticeably in the atmosphere and social interactions. There was a definite sense of camaraderie as the participants learnt about each other’s experience of food, cooking and the associations with social occasions such as meals with family and friends. Some of these experiences were revisited later in the evening, as the conversation became concerned with community. The process of polyrhythmic individuals uniting in eurhythmia formed an increasing sense of togetherness because of the experience. The mechanical reproduction of clock-measured time corresponded with the practico-social rhythms brought by everyone to the meal. In contrast, the cooking and conversation eroded these rhythms and produced an experience which I understood to be one of pure duration.

### **From Space to Place**

Perhaps this sense of solidarity was not only a consequence of an alternative duration and rhythms, but also due to the occupied space becoming place as meaning was injected into the experience. While often conflated, space and place are distinct from one another. Michel De Certeau’s assertion that space is a practiced place and that “place is the order [...] in accordance with which elements are distributed within relationships of co-existence”<sup>37</sup> suggests place undergoes a transformation from space through an actor’s

encounters with it. This view of space as existing regardless of any meaning associated with it and that, as it is practiced, it develops meaning and becomes place, concurs with Carter, Donald and Squires who write “[p]lace is space to which meaning has been ascribed.”<sup>38</sup> For De Certeau, place represents orderliness while space, in transforming to place “admits of unpredictability [and] might be subject not only to transformation, but ambiguity.”<sup>39</sup> The exchange that occurred between audience, performer and space in *Only Wolves and Lions* was both intangible, yet recognizable. It was a simple reciprocity; a mutually beneficial contract between spectator and performer, and an energy produced in the collision of bodies and their inherent rhythms in the place, all focused on a shared objective. This exchange was important in a space that became a *place*, somewhat cushioned from the externality of the ardent consumerism of late capitalism operating beyond the four walls of the converted chapel that hosted the performance. The piece itself, however, stood at odds with my perception, offering respite from consumerism and capitalist culture. The event was a product of capitalism, a way of exploiting the use value (a fulfilling experience) of an artistic product in exchange for the price of a ticket. As a valuable experience, or rather an experience with value, it was commoditised as a definite mass of “congealed labour time,”<sup>40</sup> a notion that Marx saw exemplified in the utility of labour, for if “the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it, the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value.”<sup>41</sup>

### **From Performance to Pre-formance**

The marking of units throughout this performance was evident in many ways; perhaps to challenge the polysemic<sup>42</sup> rhythms and exemplify the discursiveness of something that was not exactly performance but *pre*-formance of behavior. Whilst the piece was framed as a performance and thus pre-formed, its content often seemed to encourage new behavior, or challenged accepted notions of behavior. The actions of the piece and its associated behaviors suggested a rearrangement of known patterns (i.e. social interactions and etiquette), in the same way a strip of film might be treated by a film director. This restored behavior, as Richard Schechner notes, originates “as a process [and is] used to make a new process [... and is ...] the main characteristic of performance.”<sup>43</sup> In *Only Wolves and Lions*, the new processes formed by restored behaviors began to unearth secret

rhythms; natural rhythms usually obfuscated by the mechanical repetition of the clock and the silent drive of the network. In the preparation of the food, restored behaviors were part of the process of forming new processes, of forming new rhythms in a sense of unity with each other.

After negotiating the contents of the menu, the collective participants agreed upon an eclectic range of dishes. As the participants independently selected their offered ingredients, there was a good deal of imagination needed to create the menu. It was interesting to note that the entire range of dishes presented might be considered healthy choices (stews, curries, rice, pasta) and vegetarian; perhaps a discrete nod towards solidarity and respect for others' beliefs and practices, as well as a tacit concern for the wellbeing of others. Following this we volunteered ourselves for roles in the preparation of the food. As an unimaginative and uninspired cook, I offered my services in the preparation of the bruschetta. For the next forty-five minutes, my rhythm was dictated by dutifully chopping onions and garlic, toasting bread and laying out my offering to the group. As I worked, I looked around at the other participants, some of who were chatting, whilst others were solely focused on their culinary task. As time passed and tasks were completed, movement between groups revealed a desire to help others in this burgeoning community. The pre-formed behaviors emerged as new forms of behavior, as actions were performed for the first time in a new context.

### **(Re)Making Rhythms and (Re)Marking Time**

In his analysis of rhythms, Lefebvre questions whether there might be “hidden, secret, rhythms, hence inaccessible movements and temporalities?”<sup>44</sup> Perhaps these secret rhythms, like secret temporalities, are obscured by more tangible ways of perception. Lefebvre suggests that rhythms are silent rather than secret and, similarly, our understanding of time through clock-measured, quantifiable means obscures the silent pure duration, hidden under layers of subjective experience. The repetition of acts or gestures throughout the meal prompted me to consider the passing of clock-measured time. The raising of the glasses as a toast and the storytelling that punctuated sections of the meal both implied a linear structure, stretching out in space across the evening as in unidirectional clock-time. Each act, such as a toast or a moment of rehearsed performance,

seemed to follow each other in a logical progression; as one might consider the logic of time moving in a single, forwards direction. During the performance, I considered time as situated in space and pure duration as something else—each section of the performance became more clearly marked, although not in the same way that clocks *mark* and *make* time. As the linearity of clock-time was gently erased and replaced with Bergsonian duration, secret rhythms and temporalities became more apparent.

This meal was intended as a shared experience in a time of crisis and described as being “an active experiment in community [...] in a world of intimate virtual connections [...] of simple pleasures that remembers the things we forgot to make time for.”<sup>45</sup> This temporary community, existing for a few short hours was a respite from the intensity of my internal rhythms conflicting uncomfortably against the pounding beat of an external economic machine.

In *Only Wolves and Lions*, the socialist undercurrent of the discussions around production and productivity facilitated a sense of egalitarianism, and instigated a questioning of the injustices and impatience of the external economic world, thus developing an apparent feeling of solidarity and community among the participants. The theme of crisis in society and the suggested lack of community heavily dominated the discourse led by Leo and Unai. Following a free and easy conversation, in which the general agreement was that a feeling of community was absent in many strands of contemporary life, I noted that the group’s sense of community (perhaps spontaneous *communitas*) developed easily, evident in the positive atmosphere. This was exemplified further during the preparation of the food, as responsibility for making the meal happen appeared to be instilled in the participants while we occupied ourselves with the process of shaping ingredients into an appetising offering. Even those who had completed their assigned culinary role circulated between the groups, showing an eagerness to assist with other tasks rather than just passively observe.

The participatory act of investing and sharing time in *Only Wolves and Lions* was significant in developing a sense of solidarity through a unity of experience. It was important to be present and engaged for the entire duration rather than being able to blend into an anonymous crowd, as one might in more “traditional” performance. As a participant, I felt I had been “invited” to this meal, despite the monetary transaction for a

ticket. Having purchased a ticket several months in advance, I was telephoned a few days prior to the performance by the organizers to confirm the location and time. This action made the event feel less formal and as much about the audience as the performers and performance. Despite the invitation and role as a guest, investing my time in the rituals and routines of the evening was a fundamental part of the participatory process. The negotiation of the menu, preparation of the food, and open conversation amongst strangers were components of the evening that developed partly *because* of the duration of the event. The investment of time and immersion in what I felt might be pure duration made this an event that stood apart from the external world and its marked schedule. *Only Wolves and Lions* facilitated an experience in which not only did a collective rhythm emerge, but time was *remarked*, thus *remarking* clock-time, reconstituting it as pure duration. Whilst three and a half hours was still relatively short in the context of an evening where one meets and interacts with others in a social sense, it was testament to the experience that unity was developed over this time.<sup>46</sup>

### **From Polyrythmia to Eurhythmia**

Throughout the evening the mood shifted even further towards a sense of community, in both an outward physical sense and in innate rhythms, evident in the easy atmosphere and sense of camaraderie. The polyrhythmic beginnings of the evening were gradually replaced with eurhythmia as “rhythms unite[d] in a state of [...] everydayness.”<sup>47</sup> Lefebvre suggests that “[t]he everyday is not only a mode of production but also a modality of administering society. In both instances, it refers to the predominance of the repetitive, of repetition in time; it is a base of exploitation and domination.”<sup>48</sup> In *Only Wolves and Lions*, new repetitions emerged in the realization of concealed rhythms that might have countered the exploitation and dominance of time. As one of a group, I sensed a move towards a new sense of solidarity as we progressed from polyrythmia to eurhythmia.

The allocated cooking time passed by quickly as Unai began a final countdown. During the final few minutes we served and surveyed the disparate range of food. An array of dishes fashioned from the raw ingredients offered at the beginning of the evening were given imaginative names such as “mish-mash,” whilst others simply stated the key ingredients such as “butternut squash curry.” The slightly improbable meals suggested in

the earlier menu negotiations had come together as a successful whole. As with the individual rhythms of the assembled group, a collective sense of rhythm had emerged, becoming evident as we sat down to share the results of collective labor. Unlike the labor power that belonged to the capitalist figure described by Marx, the results of our work were not the “vampire-like [...] dead labour”<sup>49</sup> of capital, but an emblem of our unity in working towards a common goal.

As dishes were passed up and down the table, the conversations further explored the shared rhythm and cultivated a sense of a unity through recognition that a collective effort offered tangible rewards. In less than two hours, assembled individuals had become an assembled collective; individual rhythms had become a collective rhythm, and space with no personal significance became *place*. For a while, we sat around the table and shared the meal. Unai recounted a story from his childhood in the Basque region of Spain, fuelling the discussion around community. Many of the participants agreed that community was absent from aspects of their lives as they reminisced warmly about family events and a feeling of belonging. It was notable that this sharing of experience produced a unity of agreement, developed through making and consuming a meal; a routine that several people vowed to reintroduce into their daily lives. As “prosumer[s]—the consumer who also designs and produces what she consumes,”<sup>50</sup> we had created our own production line, but away from the consumers and producers of a capitalist system; our product was a sense of pure duration and a fulfilling shared experience.

As the evening ended, Leo requested that we participate in singing a traditional song from a culture unfamiliar to me. The song was meaningful to a culture not represented around this table, yet we had been enculturated into a shared rhythm through a shared experience and shared duration. At the end of the song, we each released a handful of rice into the air and metaphorically scattered the carefully orchestrated and diligently developed eurhythmia. We were, once again, a collection of polyrhythmic entities, about to head out into the city where each heartbeat jostles for attention against the grind of urban and economic rhythms. We had become arrhythmic, a lost connection with the circadian rhythms of the body as a cycle of life.

Throughout the evening I sensed the development of a definite group rhythm, in which we were more attuned to each other. The formality of the table layout imposed a set

of conventions upon us, rendering us equals in the experience; an unbroken cycle. Part of this group rhythm related to a sense of responsibility; I felt there was an expectation that I should participate as fully as possible, perhaps swayed by the group rhythm that emerged among us. At the end of the evening, the hosts offered the option of staying behind to help clear away the dishes and leftover food. As most participants remained at this stage, it was clear that the presence of solidarity in this experience did a great deal to facilitate this act of utilitarianism. In this moment, any obligation I felt to carry out tasks earlier in the performance was eroded, as I later participated fully with a clear sense of being a valued part of something important.

The durational experience of *Only Wolves and Lions* revealed a unity of rhythms as the evening unfolded, creating an experience of pure duration that allowed me to recognise unity of experience, transferable to everyday life. Returning to the urban spaces of the Manchester streets, I sensed that this feeling of solidarity was something worthwhile and stood apart from the rhythm of the “everyday [that] provokes a malaise, a profound dissatisfaction, an aspiration for something else.”<sup>51</sup> The experience of participation in *Only Wolves and Lions* enabled a conjoining of rhythms, isolated in a time distinct from the ticking of the clock and the machinations of the network—community and sharing were privileged over mass consumerism and productivity. We did not consume with money or credit but with contribution and exchange of ideas and values; through the food eaten and the conversation shared, we had “consumed” solidarity.

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<sup>1</sup> My assertions concerning the effect of *Only Wolves and Lions* on the collective participants are drawn from my own experience and observations during the performance. Thus, while there was a definite move from polyrhythmia to eurhythmia and an experience akin to Bergsonian duration, I emphasize that this is, first and foremost, an auto-ethnography.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 26.

<sup>3</sup> Leo Kay, “Performance and Collectivity,” *Exeunt Magazine*, June 8, 2012, accessed January 29, 2017, <http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/performance-and-collectivity/online> 2012.

<sup>4</sup> A similar work using audience as participants in a meal – such as Reckless Sleepers’ *The Last Supper* – is clearly framed as a performance as the audience are far more passive.

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<sup>5</sup> “What is UB?”, Unfinished Business, accessed January 29, 2017, <http://www.thisisunfinished.com>

<sup>6</sup> Martin Buber, cited in Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1969), 127.

<sup>8</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 132.

<sup>9</sup> Iris Marion Young, cited in Helen Nicholson, “Ideals of Community,” *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 13, no. 3 (2008): 271.

<sup>10</sup> My use of ‘circadian’ refers to the 24-hour natural rhythms of the human body, recurring regardless of light influence.

<sup>11</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 205.

<sup>12</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Della Thompson, *Oxford Compact English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 872.

<sup>14</sup> Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. Margaret Paul & W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen & Co., 1910), 274.

<sup>15</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Eldon and Gerald Moore (London: Continuum, 2004), 55.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>21</sup> Georges Gurvitch, *The Spectrum of Social Time*, trans. M. Korenbaum (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company), 15.

Georges Gurvitch draws on Paul Fraise’s 1957 discussion of the mastery of time: “Fraise places the ‘estimation, conceptualization and quantification of time’ under the rubric of the *mastery of time*. We have some reservations about this, since we believe that time can be estimated, conceptualized, and known without always being *mastered*.” Whilst Gurvitch (1964) does not define the mastery of time, he suggests, “generally speaking, [...] since the movements which produce time also take place in time, by this fact they are partially produced by time.” The notion of “mastering” time makes little sense when removed from an economic or social context, but Gurvitch’s belief in the “multiple manifestations of time” suggests time has no singular universal meaning, as might be argued from a late capitalist perspective.

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- <sup>22</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A New Abridgement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 153.
- <sup>23</sup> Robert Hassan, *The Age of Distraction: Reading, Writing, and Politics in a High-Speed Networked Economy* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers), 65.
- <sup>24</sup> Benjamin Noys, *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism and Capitalism* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2014), 11.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.
- <sup>27</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 153.
- <sup>28</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 91.
- <sup>29</sup> Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3.
- <sup>30</sup> Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen, “You Can Leave Whenever You Like ... and Come Back: Stuart Lynch’s *24 Hour Performance* in the Schism between Cultural Misfit and Appeasement” (paper presented at Performance Studies International conference, University of Zagreb, June 24-28, 2009).
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. FL Pogson (London: George Allen & Co., 1913), 100.
- <sup>33</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2008), 10-11.
- <sup>34</sup> Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 16.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>36</sup> Stuart Eldon, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre* (London: Continuum, 2004), 197.
- <sup>37</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 117.
- <sup>38</sup> Carter, Donald & Squires, cited in Doreen Massey. “The Strangers Beyond the Gates.” *Performance Research* 9, no. 4 (2004): 116-122.
- <sup>39</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.
- <sup>40</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 16.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.
- <sup>42</sup> I use the term “polysemic” here to refer to the many possible rhythms present, drawing on the meaning of polysemic as relating to many possible meanings.
- <sup>43</sup> Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 35.
- <sup>44</sup> Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 17.

- <sup>45</sup> Leo Kay, January 25 2013, comment on “Only Wolves and Lions,” January 2, 2014, <http://thisisunfinished.wordpress.com>
- <sup>46</sup> The intensity of the experience had some influence on the outcome although it was also partly connected with a group of individuals from similar backgrounds being brought together. Whilst the performance was accessible to everyone, its appeal was still narrow and therefore attracted a similarly narrow demographic, in part also due to its location near an affluent area of Manchester as well as the ticket price.
- <sup>47</sup> Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 16.
- <sup>48</sup> Henri Lefebvre, “Toward a Leftist Cultural Politics: Remarks Occasioned by the Centenary of Marx’s Death,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Laurence Grossberg & Cary Nelson (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 80.
- <sup>49</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 149.
- <sup>50</sup> Jen Harvie, *Fair play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 29.
- <sup>51</sup> Lefebvre, “Toward a Leftist Cultural Politics,” 80.