

## The Realism of *Close* (2022) and ‘the Unconscious Added Value’ of Sound in Movies: An Interview with Yanna Soentjens

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**ABSTRACT** Interview with Yanna Soentjens, sound engineer, about the sound environment she created for *Close* (2022), a drama film directed by Lukas Dhont. Soentjens reflects on various elements present in the film, as well as how they were thought of, captured, and mixed. By deepening the knowledge of her professional trajectory, the interview allows for a better understanding of her creative process and the importance of sound in cinema, not only as an inseparable element of the image but also as an instrument of connection between the film and the viewer.

**KEYWORDS** Cinema; sound engineer; production sound mixer; direct sound; sound design; realism.

In a cold morning, on December 8th, in the city of Covilhã, during an hour-long online interview, I was able to talk with Yanna Soentjens, a young Belgian sound engineer, or production sound mixer, known for her work in some highly awarded and recognized cinema productions, such as *Girl* (Lukas Dhont, 2018), *Sound of Metal* (Darius Marder, 2019) and her most recent project, *Close* (Lukas Dhont, 2022). With more than 14 years of experience in sound, Soentjens took her first steps in television productions, until she found her way into fiction films more recently. Since then, she has been a constant presence in film festivals. “Filmmakers on Film” is a course of the MA degree in Cinema of the University of Beira Interior (UBI), in Portugal, which aims to study the

creative process of filmmakers, their thoughts and work methods. The course entailed the students' elaboration of an essay about a filmmaker of their choice out of the films that were selected for the European University Film Award, in 2022. I chose Yanna Soentjens. During the interview, we talked about her work, her cinema, her involvement in *Close*, what attracts her to sound, what qualities someone in her profession must have, and, more generally, her experience in this field, which passes so unnoticed still in the eyes of the general public. This text is a transcription of that interview.

**Cátia Beato** – When did you develop your taste for cinema?

**Yanna Soentjens** – That's going to be an unusual answer, I think, because, in my childhood, I was never a child that watches a lot of television or movies. I have one brother and he was always like the "television guy", who would wake up early and then sit in front of the TV set, and I would be a bit turned off by that, because I wanted to go out and play. Of course, in my childhood, I did watch movies, like big American movies. But I mainly cut a passion for music in my teenage years. When I graduated from High School, I wanted to look for something which had to do with music, but there weren't a lot of options in Belgium. There's the Conservatorium, which means that you need to have a classical background and theoretical music background, which I didn't have. So, I ended up enrolling in a school that had something to do with sound, so I could learn something about the technicalities of sound, and maybe I could use that one day in music. This sound education was in the Cinema School. It hadn't so much to do with music but more with cinema and that's where I think I developed my taste for cinema. There I discovered I really like working on movie sets, because there's such a nice group of people around you who are all a little bit "light-minded" like me, with the same interests and the same mentality regarding life. And I think it's very character-based and personal. I'm not a person who could spend the entire life doing the same thing or sit at a desk or something like that. Working on movie sets allows you, every day, to be in another place and to work with a lot of different teams, because every project is with another team. And you're able to travel to and see different places. That was a nice discovery for me, and I started to enjoy working in the cinema.

**CB** – I read that you worked in television too.

**YS** – I did a lot of things already. But TV, I mean, more like television series.

**CB** – Is there any difference between the two?

**YS** – If we talk about “working”, they lean closely towards each other. Material-wise, you have almost the same equipment. I think the biggest difference is that, in television series, they probably have, in total, a smaller budget. Let’s say, if you have a 19-minute movie and a 90-minute television series you’ll have fewer days to shoot the television series than the movie. There is less time for going into detail, for developing scenes and real perfectionism in what you do in the time that is given to you. Also, for a series you’ll consider that it’s not showing in the cinemas, so you don’t have a real cinema setup of speakers and so on. I think my expectations towards the sound I deliver on television series are a bit lower, because you don’t have the opportunity to go into detail about the sound you have. Well, of course, you try to do the best you can, but keep in mind that it’s shown on television and then, even nowadays often, even just on a phone or an iPad or something like that. It makes you take other decisions on a set. As a team, you also need to be aware of the timing of everything that you do. Maybe you feel that you’re already behind, but you think, “I want to do this sound recording or that sound recording”, or maybe this could have been better, and you need to think “is it necessary for a television series? Is it going to be something that they would like in sound editing for this specific product?” Then you make an analysis and, based on that, you do or you don’t do that. If it’s for movies, you set up and it will be shown in a big cinema screen. All the detail of the sound is going to be much more hearable, and they’ll have more time during post-production to work on the sound. Maybe you want to deliver more ambient sounds, details, and more things that they can work with afterward. So, there lies the difference for me, and I think it’s super important to know whether you’re doing a web series, a television series, a documentary, or a fiction movie. The product is shown in different places and the expectations of the audience for what they are seeing are different. So, your level of perfectionism or expectations should be different as well.

**CB** – And what are your references?

**YS** – It shifts a lot. I remember, as a teenager – the days when there was *The Matrix*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and all the second series of the *Star Wars* movies – I remember watching this making of *The Lord of the Rings*, where you could see ‘behind the scenes’, how the movie was

made, which was super interesting for me back then. I also don't think that a lot of movies had this making concept back then. And I remember that there was a part on the sound design of the movie and that they followed a guy who was going out at night to the graveyard to record sword sounds because at night it's silent and the graveyard was very open and a reverberant space. And for me, that was like "Wow, that's crazy". So that was something I looked up to in the beginning. But when you start working, you also quickly realize that this is very unique, you don't have many chances to work on such a huge, big movie. And I think after that I started to like more movies that are story-driven and less fantasy-like. Like, you have this book called *The Hours* (Cunningham, 1998) and they made a movie about it.<sup>1</sup> I like that one. But lately, it switched more towards author movies, like *Close* (2022). It's very trying to capture the realism of everyday life and real emotions. So, it's like bordering on the edge of whether it is a documentary or a fiction movie. When I watch a movie, I pose myself this question, "is this real? Did they add this to the scene? Was it directed [i.e. staged]?" When you start doubting, I think the movie is successful. So, I like working on that.

**CB** – What was the part you took on *Close*, on the sound department?

**YS** – I was a sound engineer or a production sound mixer. It's the same thing. And I also followed up on the final mix a bit. I didn't mix myself, of course, but as I know Lukas for a long time – we made his first short movies together and we worked on different projects together – and when you have a long-lasting collaboration, you kind of feel what the other person wants to do and wants to tell with sound. For example, the post-production guys... it was the first time working with them, so I remember that when the movie got selected for Cannes we had just one week for mixing the whole movie.<sup>2</sup> Because of this pressure of time, they appreciated me being there to translate what was going on in the set to sound terms. I'm just thinking with multiple people at the same time. It's too short a time for them to make this thing happen. That was good.

**CB** – And what is the role of the sound engineer?

<sup>1</sup> *The Hours* is a book written by Michael Cunningham, published in 1998. This novel, inspired by the life and work of Virginia Woolf, was turned into a movie, with the same title, directed by Stephen Daldry and released in 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Soentjens is referring to the 75th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, which took place in May 2022, in France, when *Close* won one of the Grand Prix awards.

YS – I think it starts with getting interested in a project and reading a script. And for me, it's important to understand what the director wants to tell with a story and what could be added value to the story. With a lot of movies, you can still make adaptations to the script or have ideas on how to change things or how to add things. And that's good to talk about before you start shooting, so it can be integrated into the script and integrated with planning. Or maybe it will even influence other departments. Suddenly, you want to change how you tell a scene and then the camera needs to make something different as well. Of course, it doesn't happen on every project, because there's always limited time or a limited budget, but, for me, that's a super important part of it. If I can make that happen, I'll try to make that happen, and especially for a movie like *Close*, there were a lot of challenges to talk about beforehand. So that's the first thing the production sound mixer needs to do. And, then, based on the script, what I try to do is break down the entire script and what is expected for what scene, what is expected equipment-wise, what I need to rent for this location for that scene, how I need to install things and how much time I need for that scene. Also, if I need to have conversations with other members of the crew. For example, maybe I need to hide microphones in the clothing somewhere and then I read that they characters will be wearing bikinis, or maybe there are challenging costumes and we need to talk about how this shall be done. Or maybe I need to ask the art department to change something. It's all on the level of still breaking down the script. Then, there are location visits which are very important for sound. When you visit the location, it's important to see if there are disturbing sounds, so you can ask somebody to cut them down. Imagine you're shooting in a hospital or something like that. There is this air refreshment system and it's a very big [bureaucratic] process to ask the technical service to shut it down. On a location visit, you can ask the right people if they can make that happen on the day of shooting. Or maybe you need to block the streets, because you're shooting in nature, but the real location is next to a street. It's also important to already address that. So, location visits are very important. And, then, there's usually a breakdown meeting with the entire crew to talk about the entire script, where problems arise, and you talk them through. So that's all the preparatory phase. That's already a big chunk, but I'm a person who likes to be super well prepared because, on the day of shooting, fewer surprises will show up than if you aren't well prepared. And I think as a sound engineer or as a sound department it's very important to take as less space and to be less visible as possible.

It's disturbing for actors when you take too much space or too much attention, or when you need to go and break their flow of playing because you need to go and alter something. After all, there is ventilation that you didn't think of beforehand. So, you try to avoid that on the set when you're shooting. The actors can play and enter their scene, or the director can also really do his thing without being disturbed by something that was not solved. So that is, for me, the main goal – to make that possible and still have a good sound. That's why I really like to be prepared. And when we are shooting, the role of the sound engineer is to make a very good direct sound, the best direct sound possible to deliver to post-production, so that you want to avoid postings like ADR sounds and, maybe, you can even provide some added materials, like ambient sounds, which are very specific to a certain location.<sup>3</sup>

**CB** – And how was the shooting of *Close*?

**YS** – Well, I think what's special about Lukas, as a director, is that he has an unusual way of shooting a movie, which is indeed a little bit in between documentary and fiction in comparison with other fiction movies. So, when you do a real fiction movie with actors it's more of a traditional way of working. But with Lukas you know that he'll work often with non-experienced actors. I don't know if you saw *Girl* (2018), but the main character was also just a ballet dancer, and not an actor, and a lot of the peers around him were also not actors. And, then, Lukas sometimes adds in some actors to carry a scene, or, often, for publicity reasons, so that the movie finds an audience. But it means that he can't just tell a person who is not an actor, or who is often a child, to go and play the scene, because it doesn't work like that. Very rarely are there child actors who can just do what you ask them without seeming like it's being acted, and for Lukas to arrive at a scene with a very realistic situation requires a bit of a documentary style. He provides a setting, like a location, and maybe he'll ask the actors to get into a certain mood or to do a certain action or something, and then we just start filming. In a scene that takes, in the movie, maybe 30 seconds, we could spend half a day about it with the same setting, just trying out different things, pushing it into another emotion or another direction. So, shooting a movie is like anything can happen any time, which is challenging. And

<sup>3</sup> ADR stands for Automated Dialog Replacement, which can also mean "looping". It is the process of re-recording the dialogues by the original actor in a more controlled and quieter setting, like a studio. This is a way of improving the quality or perfecting the dialogues.

taking that into account you're going to shoot in a kind of a fiction-movie-documentary style, where the camera is always following the main character, but just handheld following, and anything could happen, it's something to think through beforehand. Of course, there are difficult situations and easy situations. When you have the two kids playing together, we know anything can happen, but we have only two kids that can talk, so it's manageable. But when you have a whole school of kids that could come and talk with this main character at any time, that becomes a challenge. In these types of challenges, we talk a lot beforehand, like the school, where there are a lot of kids playing the character's peers, which is also unclear beforehand. Some of the main character's classmates will have a close relationship with him, or none at all, because it's something that grows naturally during the shooting. It's like a real class, what Lukas creates but this is dependent on who gets along and who acts the most realistic. The group changes and develops as the story develops, and maybe some people will start to get closer to the main character, while other people are going to be pushed more to the background, but you don't know that beforehand. So, my job was knowing that any of his classmates could talk at any time, and we want to understand this, which is challenging. Also, the part on the ice hockey was something we talked about a lot beforehand, because there were a lot of kids that play hockey, but you also have two teachers and the ice. There were also two live concerts in the movie that we also talked about beforehand. I already knew Lukas, so I know how he wants to work, and I could prepare a little bit to make it possible to enter a day where anything can happen and know that it's going to be possible. To achieve that, there were a lot of conversations beforehand. But, luckily, Lukas is someone who's very smart and who understands the consequences of things, and what's necessary, and he will also fight to make it happen.

**CB** – What captivated me more in the movie was the silence of Leo. The sounds of the characters pushed me to understand their emotions. I don't usually relate directly to the character and their traumas. What I tend to do is to give their traumas my traumas and I relate to them that way... through silence.

**YS** – That's indeed a very interesting remark. What we try to do, in general, is what we call "seemingly realistic" – the movie needs to seem realistic all the time. So, that's why for Lukas direct sound is super important, because this is the most realistic thing you can work with. It's the sound that's directly coming from the moment we recorded it. In

post-production as well, we try to work with the direct sound as a base, and then just add little things, often to create a nicer, fuller environment for it to be shown in the cinemas. Also, there are very subtle things, I think, at the beginning of the movie, when there is still his friend, you still have this playful childishness and, seemingly, no worries. There is a livelier environment around, so you'll have birds and crickets and you'll have the life of animals around him. You'll have machines. Everything is a bit more vibrant. But from the moment that his friend dies, life around the main character becomes a bit dead. He will hear fewer animals around him, and fewer birds in the forest. And everything – like machines, tractors and stuff – will be a bit harsher in sounds. It's all very subtle, but it helps to create an atmosphere. So, it's seemingly realistic, because the viewer is not aware of that. In comparison, for example, you can also work with music or sound design – that, for us, is more like escaping from this realism and giving the viewer an emotion to enter. Of course, we sometimes use cinematic tools to carry the viewer, and I think the camera editing does it in the movie on very specific moments, and the sound editing as well. For example, when the protagonist exits the bus after his mom has told him what happened, you really dive into his head and go with him on this trip. And we added some sound design to carry that moment. But it's very rare in the movie. The most important goal is that the viewer always gets confronted with a type of realism, and not that we use a cinematic tool to render things more beautiful. The same they did, for example with colour grading. Instead of going for the perfect green or the perfect forest colours, they didn't go for perfection, but they tried to keep this realistic look. It works more on an unconscious level. You don't experience it as a viewer's cinematic tool, you are kept inside of some kind of realism.

**CB** – When Leo is running to Remi's house, we feel like we're in his head and that we're underwater, so we don't hear much of the sound outside or his mom screaming. We don't perceive that very well, but there's another sound too. I think in one of the first scenes in bed, Leo is relaxing Remy by making a wind sound. I think that sound appears a lot in the movie. Is it the same sound?



**YS** – Oh, very good. This is the “red thread” throughout sound.<sup>4</sup> It’s a kind of blowing sound, because you also have Remy who plays the oboe, which is also a blowing sound. You have little wind sounds that come back in the soundscapes, but also in Leo, who initiates it. Like this gentle waving sound.

**CB** – In the scene when Remi’s mom needs to go outside, the same wind sound appears. And I associated it with a time of relaxation and putting down anxiety.

**YS** – That’s also something that we talked through beforehand. After I read the script, we started talking about it, so we could integrate this idea of Leo initiating these wind sounds already in the script. So, we’re coming back to what is very important: the story and talking about it on the level of when you’re reading the script and preparing for the movie. The same goes for all the other departments, like clothing, cinema, or filming ideas, which could already develop in this phase instead of in post-production. And that makes things come together more as a whole.

**CB** – And what about the equipment? You had to choose all of it?

**YS** – Yes, I do have my own equipment. It’s just the way it works in Belgium. We don’t have a lot of renting companies and most of the sound engineers have their own equipment, so I have it as a base setup. And, then, depending on locations or set up or scenes, we rent extra stuff. For example, in the school there were, of course, much more children that could talk, so we had, I think in total, twelve wireless microphones. I don’t have them all days with me, so we rented some extra ones. What Lukas likes to do is – for example, you have a classroom where there is one teacher and a lot of kids – through the teacher, he tries to initiate some moments, some scenes that could be started to be in the film. So, we give a microphone to the director and another one to the teacher. Thus, without interrupting the class, Lukas can direct through the teacher and ask him “can you say that?”, “can you interrupt that person?”, I like to steer it a little bit towards the teacher, so it always seems like a real situation going on, which is a nice trick. It happened a lot in *Girl*, also because it had this teaching environment as well, with the ballet class and then the two teachers. On the ice hockey, we also used this trick. For example, for the concert scenes, we rented

<sup>4</sup> The “red thread” is used to describe something that follows a theme. In this case, the wind or the blowing sound is a red thread sound because its presence is consistent throughout the movie.

some nice microphones for the musical instruments to make them out, because we also wanted to use the live performance in post-production. It was a positive challenge, I would say, to think through all these technical setups. Because, for example, in the school, it's really a big environment, and if you have twelve wireless microphones on kids and you have two wireless booms while walking around, you can't just have it all in your sound bag and run behind them all day long. You can't have a proper mix; you can't listen very well. It doesn't fit inside a bag. You'll be just physically broken after a day. So, I needed to have a fixed setup somewhere but also be able to receive all the sounds through the classroom and the playground. It's quite a big environment, because at any moment they could decide to go back to the classroom and, then, we would need to follow them. What we thought beforehand was to put a lot of antennas everywhere in the school and, then, just have masses of the cable coming through my sound card, so that there was an analyser that would analyse constantly which antenna was giving the best signal on the wireless stuff coming through my sound card. Setups like these were exciting and nice to think through. It was something I'd never done before. And I also think that, in this movie, the sound department sometimes had the biggest setups to make. Because, basically, the camera was just handheld shooting and following the character all the time with available light, and there was very little light setup. Because you're always shooting everywhere, like 360° around you, you can't put any lights anywhere without them being in the frame.

**CB** – What about your work routine through the shooting?

**YS** – That would be different from day to day, depending on which scenes we would be doing. Almost every day we had two boom operators to cover all the improvisation going on. I would go and talk with Lukas and the first assistant in the morning, while they were unloading the equipment and starting the installation. And then we would talk about the general idea of what we'd be doing with Lukas, the first director, and the cameraman. And I would start to brief it out to my assistants. Usually, I'm the one who wires the actors. Imagine, if something is sounding not right at their microphone, because I put it myself, I can say "maybe it's that thing that needs to be changed", and I can quickly go and change it. We make a good installation of everything we need and, then, we usually just start filming without stopping until it's done.

**CB** – Really?

**YS** – Yeah, it's like nonstop. The camera goes on and is only stopped for battery change or card change and the rest of it just keeps on filming to try and capture every moment that can start to exist. You have this beautiful moment, I think, when Leo makes a drawing of Remi and then he turns it around, and Remi has this very beautiful laugh, because he finds the drawing so awful and if you hadn't pressed record, then you wouldn't have captured that moment, because it's like five seconds within a four-hour-long attempt at shooting something in that scene. The camera is just constantly shooting, shooting, shooting, waiting for such a moment to pop up.

**CB** – And when the sound doesn't turn out as you expected, do you record it again?

**YS** – In this movie it's difficult to do that, because you can't just ask, "can we do that again?" It's not a fiction movie in that way. We never do the same thing twice. Not in this movie. I would just work with what we've got. If there was a problem, I would address it to Lukas and he would decide that maybe "we need to do that again" or make a "variation of that again", or "no let's let it go". And, of course, if you're shooting so much material all day long, some moments won't be perfect. It happens. But while we're shooting, we're also constantly analysing what might be an interesting moment, or what might be not so interesting. Or that this one was not so good for sound. But I don't think it's super interesting if you develop different senses to know that "oh, that was a magical moment, and I don't have that and now I need to ring the alarm bell and we need to see what we do about that". In a more traditional fiction movie, it's different, because you do a shot here, a shot there, different takes of it, and if it's bad for sound, I would say, "it was bad, can we do that again?" But, normally, we try to avoid that.

**CB** – What was your biggest challenge during the making of *Close*?

**YS** – I think a big challenge was the number of actors, the amount of people, in combination with filming in a documentary style. Like, anything could happen all the time. And also making it sound like a fiction movie that could be shown in cinemas. I would rather say this was a positive challenge, because it meant a lot of thinking beforehand on how we could deal with that and that and, then, make it happen. Another challenge was the great flexibility you had to have for a movie like this. Sometimes we'd enter a day and we'd see on our call sheet that we were going to do this and this, and then we'd arrive, and it could be completely different, because people were in a different mood, or the

story would develop differently. The script that Lukas writes is not a fixed script, it's very dependent on the subtleties, such as how characters develop within the movie, how the kids will play, it's very character based. You can't write all the emotional subtleties, which are owned by a child or character. Maybe after one day of shooting, he would say that it's going to develop more like that instead of how he wrote it down. And, then, the scene that you have to do on the day after changes as well. This big flexibility means that things can change every day or that at any moment something can stop working. So we say, "ok, now we go to this location over there and we go and try that because that might work". When you're tired, when you've been shooting for many days in a row, it becomes more and more difficult to have this flexible mindset and to just pack up everything and do something completely different again. So that was a challenge. Maybe also the constant focus that you need to have. There are very few breaks in between to relax a little bit and rest your mind, because you're always shooting. So, you're always looking at your screen and listening all day long to everything that's happening, and it requires an enormous amount of focus. So, even after just eight or nine hours of doing that, you're exhausted afterwards.

**CB** – How do you maintain your focus through all those hours?

**YS** – I don't know. Persistence sometimes, I think. You must also enter a little bit in a spiral or in a wave that takes you, because there is always something happening. And either you are a part of it or you're not, so it also grabs you, these moments. And, especially, if something magically is developing in front of the camera, then, you're really sucked into the screen. I think in a movie like that, it's very intense, so there is always something to do, even if you're not shooting or if your mind is a bit distracted, you're already thinking, "next we have ice hockey coming up", or something like that, which is complex and which I still need to arrange. So, it keeps your mind very busy, and I think it's only when you come home or on weekends, or even after the movie has come to an end, that you feel you need to take off a time of decompression to relax.

**CB** – For your profession, what other skills do you think you need to have?

**YS** – Except for a little bit of sound knowledge, these are all skills I think everybody can learn. I find it's very important that people have soft skills. I get interns and I find soft skills more important than the things I can teach them. For example, what I find important is the capacity to listen, which is very important for the sound department. Everything

starts with being able to listen and to analyse what you hear. But, in general, what I think is super important if you work in the cinema, not only for sound but for every department, is communication. You always work in a team. You need to be able to be a good team player and to have a very good capacity for communication. It makes all the difference if you have people on set who have a bit of violent communication or bad communication. It changes the whole work atmosphere. I think that working in cinema requires a flexible mindset. You need to be able to always change something, to change your environment, in which you may have to change your hours or change the people with whom you're working with. So, just a flexible mindset. What I also find very important is what we already talked about – as a sound engineer, you must be able to understand the scripts and think what you can add to it, such as some perspective to the story, or how to interpret things, so you can also make decisions on set which are relevant, and not just a technical issue.

**CB** – How was the relationship you had with the team in *Close*?

**YS** – It was, mostly, the same team, but not 100%, which is never possible. I think that Lukas likes to surround himself by people he likes working with and whom he develops a trustworthy relationship with. It's also about the investment you make in people and the trust you put in them to develop this work together. So, yeah, that's why I think a lot of people had already worked with him. But some people changed their availabilities and things like that. So yeah, most had been part of the team we had for the movie *Girl*.

**CB** – Did you take part in the sound editing of that movie?

**YS** – No, I was just present in the mixing. But we, of course, kept the communication throughout the projects between the different departments. We talked a lot with the sound editor, while we were shooting, about some ideas he had, like “can you record this and this as well?”. Sometimes we also did some evaluation of how things were going or were developing.

**CB** – What do you consider to be your greatest contribution to the film?

**YS** – I don't know if there's a “greatest contribution”... Maybe just succeeding in some of the challenges that we talked about and being part of the movie from the beginning until the end. I'm glad that I managed to initiate some ideas and also bring them to the final mixing table, that I could keep on thinking things through and have a nice teamwork altogether.

**CB** – Is there something you take from this movie with you for future projects?

**YS** – I think it was a very big learning process. I did some technical things which I'd never done before, things you're pushed into discovering. And I think that, for all of us, it was a growing process. When I compare my collaboration with Lukas in the short movies to what we did in *Girl*, and also in this last movie, it's clear that every movie was more and more difficult. From every movie we learn something and, then, hopefully, we can bring it to the next project as well.

**CB** – Do you prefer to record in this style of movie or would you prefer to do other genres, like action?

**YS** – I really like working on this type of movie, because it brings a lot of variation. You never end up doing a scene fifteen times over again, from different perspectives of the camera. There's always something new, which I find very interesting and intriguing in comparison to doing something repeatedly. And it keeps you sharp and focused. I also think that when you have movies where there is a lot of waiting time – for example, when you have big light installations because it's a very cinematic movie – you tend to lose your focus a little. After all, you're waiting a lot for too long. It depends. I just like this way of filming, because it's always different and because it also provides this platform where something magical can happen. A situation or an emotion that you hadn't think of before suddenly starts to exist in front of your eyes and that's something I find really rare. It's rare in fiction movies where there's more directing of the actors going on.

**CB** – By way of conclusion, can you describe to me your experience working with sound?

**YS** – I think working in the sound department requires a specific character from a person. We work a little bit more on the subconscious level of the audience, not on their conscious level. I think human beings are, first of all, visual beings, and then other sensory things come. You notice that a lot, even when you're working on the set as a team; for a lot of people, it's difficult to grasp what sound is there, or what sounds can be disturbing or not. It's a very subtle art. So, I've found out throughout the years that working in sound requires a lot of patience. You don't have to position yourself as someone who is present in the set all the time. You're working, mostly, on the function of the story or on the function of something visual which is being told, and I think you need to be able

to feel good about your work even when it's not so noticeable to others. And you need to be able to do that a little bit on the side of all the visual things that are going on, because most of the stuff is being done for the visual aspect of it. You have the light, the camera, and even the art department, the clothing, and the makeup – it's all very visual. So, I think it's not for everyone. You don't get this recognition, as with the image, because sound doesn't bring that kind of recognition to you. You work a lot of time by yourself on something you think can be added to the story. And it's not always that we have directors who understand what sound is or what sound can bring to a movie. Lukas is very unique in that sense, because he really understands the unconscious added value that sound can bring to the story, and he'll also think and work with you on that. But not all directors have the ability to do so.

### Filmography

*Close* [feature film, digital]. Dir. Lukas Dhont. Menuet, Diaphana Films, Topkapi Films, Versus Production, VTM, RTBF, Belgium, France, Netherlands, 2022. 104min.

*Girl* [feature film, digital]. Dir. Lukas Dhont. Frakas Productions, Topkapi Films, Menuet, Belgium, Netherlands, 2018. 105min.

*The Hours* [feature film, digital]. Dir. Stephen Daldry. Paramount Pictures, Miramax Films, Scott Rudin Productions, Robert Fox Productions, United States, United Kingdom, 2002. 114min.

## O Realismo de *Close* (2022) e o 'Valor Acrescentado Inconsciente' do Som no Cinema: Uma entrevista a Yanna Soentjens

**RESUMO** Entrevista a Yanna Soentjens, engenheira de som, sobre o ambiente sonoro construído em *Close* (2022), realizado por Lukas Dhont, no qual trabalhou. Soentjens reflete sobre diversos elementos presentes no filme, bem como estes foram pensados, captados e misturados. Aprofundando o conhecimento do seu percurso profissional, a entrevista permite compreender melhor o seu processo criativo e a importância do som no cinema, não só como um elemento inseparável da imagem, mas também como instrumento de ligação entre o filme e o espectador.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** Cinema; engenheira de som; direção de som; som direto; sonoplastia; realismo.