

TRANSCRIPT
Onomatopoeia
Dancing in the Dark

Devon DiComo: I'm on my way to a dance class in Prospect Park. But it's not an ordinary dance class.

I'll be freestyle dancing, at a silent disco, with a bunch of strangers.

No outsiders will have any idea what we're dancing to. But they will certainly see us.

[TAPE] "Elevator Time", theme music by Lee Feldman

I'm Devon DiComo and this is Onomatopoeia- a podcast about the people and places of New York City.

In this episode,
DANCING IN THE DARK

[TAPE] The voices of 5 Rhythms attendants play in the background.

At the park entrance, three women direct me to a large, grassy clearing. That's where the dance class, called 5 Rhythms, will take place.

As I wait for the event to start, I'm handed a set of headphones. They light up a bright blue color.

The sun has set almost completely, so the area is lit by a single lamp post. I walk toward the glow of at least 30 sets of blue headphones.

[TAPE] "All Melody" by Nils Frahm fades in.

As I put the headphones on, a beat fills my ears. The song is called All Melody by Nils Frahm.

People around me begin to dance. Some sway. Others twirl.

I decide to start with a simple side step back and forth, trying to feel the beat moving throughout my body.

I keep my hands in my coat pockets, unsure of what to do with them.

Under the cover of darkness, I'm just a puffy-coated silhouette.

[TAPE] “Unpack Your Heart” by Phillip Phillips

A new song comes on - Unpack Your Heart by Phillips Phillips - one that has lyrics to it. The upbeat rhythm feels more familiar and I start to incorporate my arms into my dancing.

I hear the dance instructor’s voice through my headphones. She tells us to let go of whatever we’re carrying with us. To get rid of what’s bothering us. To open ourselves up.

Across the clearing, two people embrace. They just stand there, hugging each other for several minutes.

[TAPE] “Nataraj” by Ganga Giri

Next song- Nataraj by Ganga Giri. The beat is loud, intense, and sounds like a song you’d hear in a club. People are dancing all over the place. Some are even on the ground.

I feel isolated from the rest of the world. Like only I exist.

I move closer to the center of the group. I bounce around. My head bobs back and forth.

I make eye contact with a woman and we start to sync up our movements. Others are dancing in pairs too. Some are in fours.

[TAPE] Silence

I take my headphones off for a moment to catch my breath. And I hear...silence.

I hear people taking heavier breaths.

I practice my breathing too. I close my eyes. It’s calm and serene. In this sea of silent strangers, I feel safe.

[TAPE] “Elevator Time”, theme music by Lee Feldman

This episode of Onomatopoeia- was created by me, Devon DiComo. Onomatopoeia is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Joanne Faryon is our executive producer and professor. Original theme music by Lee Feldman. Our graphic was created by Sunni Bean. Special thanks to Columbia Digital Librarian Michelle Wilson.