

revisited
29 August 2018

ALEX NOWITZ

Mouth is the Place, Voice is the Space

Exploring Multivocality, Extending Voices and
Performing the In-Between
in Vocal Arts

PhD candidate at the College of Opera, Stockholm University of the Arts

[illegible]

heads rolling, still singing
orphyic fantasies
elusive but certainly compelling
haunting and propelling
real and yet not
virtual and dismembered
thriving decapitations
emerged from a child's mind
"led them dive through aural delusions
and die due to vocal deceptions
here am I, and there I'm not
although I was"
listen to me
this is about you
in the aural mirror
that's where it goes
the dream of America
no miracle, a mere recall
is wrapping up the house of hope

Alex Nowitz: Orpheus-Meditation
(englische Fassung)
Potsdam, 19. December 2016

Orpheus-Meditation

köpfe rollen, immer noch singend
orphische fantasien
trügerisch aber sicherlich verlockend
heimsuchend und treibend
wirklich und doch nicht
virtuell und zerstückelt
blühende enthauptungen
entstanden in einem kindskopf,
„lasst sie in hörtäuschungen baden
und wegen stimmlicher betrügereien sterben,
hier ich bin, und dort bin ich nicht
obwohl ich war“
hör mir zu
dies ist über dich
im hörspiegel
dorthin geht er
der traum von amerika
kein wunder, ein bloßer rückruf
packt das haus der hoffnung ein

Alex Nowitz: Orpheus Meditation
(German version translated by the author)
Potsdam, 30 August 2017

categories and paradigms of
the contemporary vocal art voice:

- **singing** voice (opera, pop, rock, jazz, non-Western singing traditions, etc.)
- **speaking** voice (the actor's voice)
- extended voice
 - 1) **extended vocal techniques**
 - 2) **extended by technological means**
- **disembodied** or **acousmatic** voice

*It was a long, manifold, peculiar cry,
and Zarathustra plainly distinguished
that it was composed of many voices: although heard at a
distance it might sound like the cry out of one single mouth.*

Friedrich Nietzsche

Thus Spake Zarathustra, Vol. IV, The Greeting

integrative approach to vocal arts

=>

the multivocal practice

[illegible]

Elective Course I

Given by Alex Nowitz during autumn term 2016 at the University College of Opera, Stockholm Uniarts

The Contemporary Performance Voice in Opera and Music Theatre

An Introduction to Theory and Practice

With regard to the theory of contemporary vocal art, the student reads a small selection of critical concepts, essays and writings by contemporary composers, scholars and philosophers and listens to a number of examples for novel approaches to various vocal art forms. In practical terms, the participant studies a few scores from the repertoire of modern opera and music theatre and presents them to the class. A goal of the course is for the student to acquire skills in vocal acting and improvisation, and to gather experiences with vocal properties through the use of microphone/s as well as sampling techniques by extending the voice through the use of live electronics. After having completed the course, the student should have gained insights into the diversity of contemporary opera works, the repertoire and its underlying concepts. The student should have become familiar enough with the field to acknowledge various different approaches to contemporary vocal art practices and, through the experiences made along the way by applying the notion of an *extended vocality*, to gain a better understanding of the richness of and the potentialities for one's own voice. The course aims to foster the discovery and recognition of alternative ways to use the voice and its capacities with regard to the ever changing and wide-ranging arena of contemporary vocal art forms.

Elective Course II

Given by Alex Nowitz during autumn term 2017 at the University college of Opera, Stockholm Uniarts

Voice Plays

Listening, Materiality and Presence in Contemporary Vocal Art Performances

The title of the course has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, it is a sentence with noun and corresponding verb indicating *the voice which plays*. On the other hand, it can be understood as compound noun which translates into *plays in the sense of games with and for the voice*. The course was designed as continuation of the previous one realised during the term in autumn 2016 titled *The Contemporary Performance Voice in Opera and Music Theatre: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. The course *Voice Plays* is based on the notion of playing focussing on creative aspects of vocal performance practices by applying different modes of improvisation and experimentation as well as composition and interpretation. As opposed to put an emphasis on interpretation of pre-composed works, the boundaries get deliberately blurred, the methodological fields dissolve into each other. The student is also given the opportunity to explore the practices of vocal composer-performers—such as Cathy Berberian, Jaap Blonk, Joan La Barbara, Trevor Wishart—each of whom, exploring the voice and its potential beyond the convention of writing scores, has become increasingly influential in the wide field of contemporary vocal art music regarding the past fifty years. The student should be driven by a strong interest and the curiosity to learn about diversities in terms of practice and aesthetics of the contemporary vocal art performance encompassing the four main categories of voice expression, that is to say, the singing, speaking, extended, and disembodied voice. Given the opportunity to explore the richness of one's own voice and to experience idiosyncratic vocal potentialities in a non-competitive class room situation, the students are invited to elaborate on vocal pieces using aural and visual scores produced in advance by themselves. Encompassing the entire creation process from the initial idea to its manifestation as performed sound object, the students explore the potentialities of their vocal and oral imaginary.

The four subprojects of the PhD-project

1) *Staging the Mouth, Directing the Voice*

(documentation of works for voice solo, 2015)

2) *Voice, Sounds, Gestures and Space: Choreographing the Extended Vocal Art Performance and Moving the Voice*

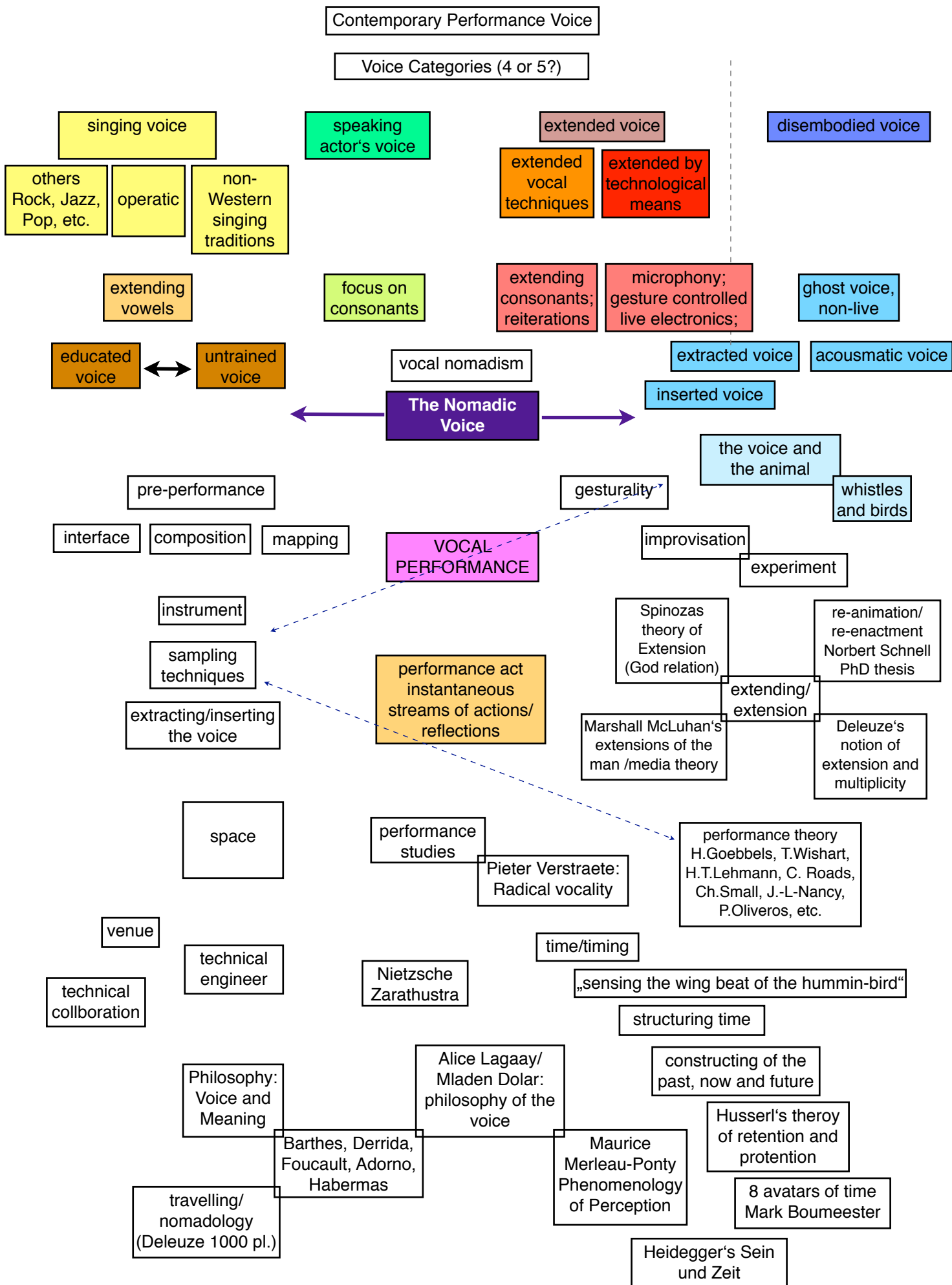
(collaboration with dancer-choreographer **Florencia Lamarca** and programmer of audio processing software **Sukandar Kartadinata**, 2015 - 2018)

3) *Extending Voices, Sampling the Other*

(collaboration with vocal ensemble **Auditivvokal Dresden**, 2016)

4) *Excursions to the Voice of the Musician*

(collaboration with **Ensemble Mosaik Berlin**, 2016, and the refusal to collaborate by the **Philharmonic Orchestra Cottbus**)



Consonantal, In- and Egressive Vocal Sounds,
Breath and Breathlessness, Cut-up Techniques

Panache

for one voice

+

Playing with Panache

for one voice and strophonion

[illegible]

The Strophonion - the original, wooden and the 3D-printed backup version



What does Strophonion mean?

- 1.) **strophé** (Greek), which means rotating, turning, spinning or twisting, is the beginning of the term. Musical parameters, such as pitch, volume, frequency filtering, sample lengths and sample position and many others, are controlled by the rotation of the right hand (using the 3-axis accelerometer).
- 2.) **phon** (Greek) means voice and/or sound. This syllable forms the middle part.
- 3.) The ending of the term, **ion** (Greek), is an atom or molecule, that gives electrical charge, and means: 'going'. But, as being part of the neologism Strophonion, it shall also allude to the way of playing the left hand device, which may recall the way of playing an accord-ion (distance measurement via ultrasound).

Tongues and Ghosts – Alex Nowitz

*a spatial concert performance for a vocal performer with gesture
controlled live electronics, fixed media and multiple speaker system*



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*Multivocality and Multitasking —
Mapping the Terrain
for the Contemporary Performance Voice*

Predecessor of the Strophonion



The Stimmflieger with two Wii-remotes
(STEIM, Amsterdam 2007-2010)

From Sense to Sound
From Sound to Sense

The Equipment of the Strophonion

The Contemporary Performance Voice in the Stretch of Legacies