The article is taken from the publication Geoff Cox, Azadeh Fatehrad, Anya Lewin, Andrew Prior, Laura Hopes, Hannah Drayson, Allister Gall, 'Artistic Research Will Eat Itself. Proceedings of the 9th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research', *Research Catalogue* (2018), PDF pp. 380-94, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/512748/512749/0/0 [last accessed 26 January 2019].

MANIFESTO FOR THE MULTIVOCAL VOICE: PRINCIPLES FOR A PERFORMANCE VOICE IN THE VOCAL ARTS (ABRIDGED VERSION)

Alex Nowitz

Abstract

The lecture-performance *A Manifesto For The Multivocal Voice* (30 minutes) is a performative presentation that explores the principles of a performance voice in vocal arts today. The presentation as lecture-performance, at the 9th SAR, took place verbally (words) and vocally (sounds) issued by one person being both the author and the vocal performer. Encompassing speaking and singing as well as extended and disembodied voices, the presenter's voice itself becomes the subject of investigation. The live presentation therefore is an exposition of self-reflection with the means of various different vocal art practices. The aim of the paper, as well as of its preceding live presentation, is to unfold the connections between artistic intentions and socio-cultural impacts, to elucidate the crossings between the trajectories of extended vocal practices, on the one hand, and philosophical outreach of an expanded field of artistic vocality on the other. The paper refers to video documentaries ranging from vocal live performances with and without live electronics to an outdoor event during which the performer *whistles to and with* birds. The actual result of the extended voice may sound exuberant, excessive, even monstrous. But this paper attempts to illuminate an æsthetics of vocal diversity countersigned by a philosophical approach to mapping the contemporary performance voice and its potentialities.

Introduction

Due to the lack of a concise and plausible term to outline the theoretical foundation for vocal art performance today, I devised the notion of the *multivocal voice.*[1] Even though applied in a rather generic sense, with regard to the field of vocal arts, it derives from my experiences, discoveries, developments and findings that I have been coming across by learning and performing as vocal artist on various different stages over the period of three decades.

---

[1] The *Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice* is influenced by a number of artists that I valuate highly, composer-performers such as Michael Edward Edgerton, Joan La Barbara, Meredith Monk, Trevor Wishart, interpreters such as Nicholas Isherwood, Ariane Jessulat, Salome Kammer, as well as those from Auditivvokal Dresden or Maulwerker Berlin, and vocal performers such as Tomomi Adachi, Jaap Blonk, Phil Minton, Mark van Tongeren, Ute Wassermann, and many others. Special thanks go to pianist/vocal performer Sten Sandell and, above all, to experimental prose writer Rolf Hughes who tirelessly supported the writing process and cleaned up my *Denglish*.

As both producer and recipient, we need to understand the foundations of vocal art performance as well as its impacts. What are the premises? What form of expression is included and what is excluded? Is there a philosophical ground that vocal art performance is built on? What are the intentions of the respective vocal æsthetics? In order to frame the reference points on a generic level and to map the realm of vocal artistry towards a critical and expanded field of artistic research, I've chosen the form of the *manifesto*[2] which, precisely because of its non-linear character, permits the curating of provocative claims, confrontational intentions and sometimes maybe exaggerated views, all of which help shape a notion of *multivocality*.

Regarding artistic research, it needs to be noted that, even today, it is a highly debated, controversial field that still seems to be entangled in the objective/subjective dilemma.[3] Owing to these circumstances, the Barthesian approach to research, the question of 'what is missing?',[4] still provides a productive and suitable guideline to frame the reference points and, by doing so, to map the field.

In its written form, the *Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice* [5] has a wide-ranging footnote section aiming to create a platform that pokes the natural sciences with regard to physiological aspects of vocal experiments, but also to foster the discussion toward the realm of the humanities currently 'undergoing a vocal turn' as American philosopher and electronic musician Brian Kane refers to.[6] All in all, the aim of the manifesto is to open up the field of contemporary vocal arts towards a thinking in and through the voice — something we all are both extremely familiar with and, at the same time, alien to.

---

[2] Antonin Artaud's seminal work 'The Theatre of Cruelty: First Manifesto' was a great source of inspiration in regards to the notion of *vocal extension*. He asks to search for new pathways in treating speech and voice: 'Abandoning our Western ideas of speech, it turns words into incantation. It expands the voice. It uses vocal vibrations and qualities, wildly trampling them underfoot. It piledrives sounds. It aims to exalt, to benumb, to bewitch, to arrest our sensibility' (Artaud, p. 64).

[3] According to German philosopher Dieter Mersch who, in the chapter 'Artistic Research' (pp. 24 - 44) of his book *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, elucidates that science has gone into opposition to the arts. 'The historical differentiation between art and science […] goes back to the rationalism of the eighteenth century and its ideal of objectivity. Only then did science begin to assert itself in opposition to artistic practice, which was degraded as *subjective*. During the Middle Ages, *ars* was considered the height of *scientia*, so that the two were intersecting — not competing — forms of knowledge' (Mersch, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, pp. 30 - 31).

[4] See essay 'Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers' (Barthes, pp. 197 - 98).

[5] The paper is a distilled version of my 17 page *Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice: On Principles and Perspectives for a Performance Voice in the Vocal Arts.* The original version written in German is titled *Manifest für die vielstimmige Stimme: Zu Prinzipien und Perspektiven einer Vokalkunststimme*.

[6] See Kane, pp. 91 - 112.

If you celebrate it, it's art: if you don't, it isn't.
John Cage[7]

Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice
This text would rather be performed than read.

The term *multivocal voice* (*vielstimmige Stimme*)[8] outlines a concept that has been ripped from my vocal art practice yet remains at its core.

As both illustration of the preceding and sonic anticipation of the following paragraph, I suggest to listen to and watch the video documentary of a short composition for voice solo called *Panache*.[9]

The concept of the multivocal voice represents a range of expressions within contemporary vocal arts – a multitude of voices, all of which can be produced either *by* or *with* one singular voice. *By* indicates a voice as the sole source of sound (as the example of *Panache* aims to demonstrate). W*ith*, on the other hand, points to the aspect that the voice is used as sound material, but is multiplied through the application of technological means. In order to define the notion of the *extended voice*, we ought to differentiate two ways of how it can show itself. Firstly, it's the application of those techniques that expand the field of vocal artistry by going beyond the Western cultural norm of the operatic voice. These practices have come to be called *extended vocal techniques*.[10] Secondly, the voice might as well be *extended* by the application of technological means, such as live electronics allowing the alteration and manipulation of vocal material. Certainly, all kinds of mixed forms between the two categories of an extended voice are

---

[7] This is what John Cage answered while entering a restaurant after being asked by music journalist and critic Heinz-Klaus Metzger about the difference between an ordinary way of opening a door and doing so as an artistic action (Riehn, p. 97).

[8] See the definition of *multivocal* in the Merriam-Webster dictionary: 1. signifying many things; of manifold meanings; equivocal; S.T.Coleridge: 'meet with an ambiguous or multivocal word' 2.[multi- + vocal] vociferous. F.L.Paxson: 'so bustling and multivocal in pacifism'; S.H.Adams: 'scandals and horrors of the moment in multivocal … clamor', in https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/multivocal [Last accessed 29 April 2018].

[9] See https://vimeo.com/168750034 [Last accessed 27 April 2018].

[10] As one of many results of the highly politicised period of the sixties and seventies in the 20th century, the term *extended vocal techniques* has been coined in order to differentiate them from the Western norm of the bourgeois opera that had its peak in the 19th century. Nevertheless, extended vocal techniques were applied much earlier. Arnold Schönberg's *Sprechgesang*, as introduced by the composition *Pierrot Lunaire* premiered 2012, might be regarded as one of those starting points. In regards to the history of vocal extended techniques, the collaborations of seminal vocal performer Cathy Berberian with Luciano Berio and John Cage, dating back to the fifties, have become very influential. If we then, in contrast, also take into account those vocal techniques that are applied in non-Western cultures by calling them *extended*, a Euro-centric, post-colonial issue emerges, since the techniques used in the respective cultures are inherent in the approach to vocal expression, whereas the Western model, for them, has by no means any relevance. Therefore the term *extended vocal techniques* has gained an anachronistic and problematic overtone that I prefer to avoid. However, I still use it in this case due to the lack of a better word and the fact that it has become an established term in the context of Western culture, known by a broader audience to denote the vast field of vocal practices beyond the norm. But it's worth noting that exactly the implications of an imprecise terminology have become one out of many motivations for me to propose the notion of the *multivocal voice*.

possible as well. Serving as an example for both categories, I propose to listen to and watch the video documentary of *Playing with Panache*,[11] a composition for voice solo and live electronics (*strophonion*).[12]

During the performance, the multivocal voice refers incessantly to the origin, posing the question: where do I come from? At the same time, it constantly raises the flag of destiny (*Bestimmung*), asking: where do I go to?

The multivocal voice shows responsibility not for one but many voices. It creates many orbits and is therefore multi-atmospheric.[13]

The voice contains a certain momentum that sets another person into motion. The motion (*Bewegung*), triggered by the voice, can take place purely on the inside, for instance in the form of an emotional activation *(Bewegtheit*) leading to a specific mood and atmosphere. Or, on the contrary, the condition of being moved comes to the fore, on the outside, through the play of diverse facial and gestural expressions. Even the whole body can be affected – through the expression of bodily movements or even dance. The voice touches the other by producing and sending out sound waves that set into vibration not only the ear drum but the whole auditory apparatus of the other person.[14] The voice in general and, particularly, the multivocal version sends and receives uninterruptedly. What adheres to it, is the instant, the blink of the eye (*Augenblick*) and the certainty of the oncoming (*das Entgegenkommende*).[15] It emerges in the moment and exists through

---

[11] See https://vimeo.com/187540317 [Last accessed 27 May 2018].

[12] For more information on the strophonion see the online article *Designing and Playing the Strophonion: Extending vocal art performance using a custom digital musical instrument*, retrievable at https://econtact.ca/18_3/nowitz_strophonion.html [Last accessed 27 April 2018].

[13] From Greek *atmos* meaning *vapour* and *sphaera* meaning *zone*, *sphere* or *ball*.

[14] French otorhinolaryngologist (usually better known as ear, nose, throat doctor), Alfred A. Tomatis, was specialised in the treatment of singers, researched and disclosed the complex interplay of physiological and psychoacoustic processes that take place during the act of singing. 'The listening faculty requires optimal hearing to control the whole ear, both vestibule and cochlea. […] The vestibule produces an enormous flow of stimuli, feeding the cerebral cortex with information received through its connections to the muscles and joints and to its action over the entire skeleton. When it is functioning well the cochlea also adds important stimulation central to listening. [...] So it makes sense when someone doesn't want to listen he may turn his back or step aside, so that he presents the parts of his body that has fewer sound receptors. [...] When one person speaks to another, the listener is made to experience the same proprioceptive sensations as the speaker and frequently the listener models his body posture on that of the speaker. When the listener resonates in his body, his posture and his verticality are affected and he opens himself up to receive the speaker's words. The entire peripheral nervous system, both afferent and efferent, galvanizes. The information it sends sparks sensory responses towards the central nervous system, and involves the whole organism, including the cerebral cortex itself. The cochlea stimulates virtually the entire brain, while the vestibule controls the rest of the motor and sensory nervous system. In order to listen, the cochlea must summon the vestibule to position the body so it can receive the maximum amount of stimulation through postural responses, including the energy supplied by resistance to gravity and the presentation of sound receptors in the skin on the front of the body, etc.' (Tomatis, pp. 83-84). Furthermore, Tomatis points toward the transmission of sound through bones: 'In singing posture, the larynx sends resonance to the bones that touch it. The spinal column then sets all structures that touch it into resonance. Once the bones begin to sing, they cause the cavities to vibrate. The voice becomes vibrant, and more harmonious. It is the resonance emanating from every bone in the body that causes this change' (Ibid., p. 89).

[15] Compare Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura*, p. 142.

what comes. The latter can be understood in two ways – either as an oncoming vocal sound material or as a reaction of the recipient, who interacts within the process of vocal production. The recipient is at no time part of an inert mass but always a co-player.[16]

A multivocal voice performance is an audibly and visibly becoming 'setting-itself-to-work of truth', to use an expression by Martin Heidegger.[17] In concrete terms, it is a *vocal truth* that sets itself into the work. During the performance, the multivocal voice artist immediately puts the voice into the work; that is to say, within the performance, the multivocal voice directly produces a work and exhibits it at the same time. In a best case scenario, it isn't the carrier of the multivocal voice who does something, but *the voice itself alone*. Because, when the voice becomes an *it* by saying *it sings in us and outward from us* or *it performs without our input just as by itself*, that's when we have reached that level on which the voice is threefold: *material*, *production tool* and *work* at the same time. This *it*-status is, for the multivocal voice performer, highly desirable.

As opposed to its subsequent interpretation, which is a secondary creation (*Sekundärschöpfung*), the immediate primary creation (*Primärschöpfung*) in and out of the instant skips the compositional process in the traditional understanding of involving an additional artist. The multivocal voice artist therefore can be both composer and performer in union — a *composer-performer*. The performance act is then also an *instant composing* procedure as long as the performer decides not to produce a score in advance in order to enact it during the performance situation. The performance, executed by a composer-performer, therefore is a composition in *real-time*[18]. And the composition consists of a performance with compositional

[16] During the live presentation of the *Manifesto of the Multivocal Voice* at the 9th SAR International Conference On Artistic Research in Plymouth, the English translation of the original was presented by slides while I read the paragraph in German: 'Die Stimme im Allgemeinen trägt ein Moment in sich, das den Gegenüber, also den Anderen, in Bewegung setzt. Die von der Stimme ausgelöste Bewegung kann sich rein innerlich vollziehen, etwa in Form einer emotionalen Bewegtheit, die zu einer bestimmten Stimmung führt. Oder aber die Bewegtheit drückt sich äußerlich in diversem Mimen- und Gestenspiel aus. Sogar der ganze Körper kann betroffen sein, was sich im Ausdruck des Tanzes zeigen kann. Tatsache ist, dass die Stimme den Anderen berührt, und zwar dadurch, dass sie Schallwellen erzeugt und aussendet, die das Trommelfell und den gesamten Hörapparat des Gegenübers in Schwingung versetzt. Die Stimme und die vielstimmige in besonderem Maße sendet und empfängt ununterbrochen. Das, was an ihr haftet, ist einzig der Augenblick (blink of the eye) und die Gewissheit des Entgegenkommenden. Sie entsteht im Moment und existiert durch das, was kommt. Letzteres kann in zweifacher Weise verstanden werden, entweder als kommendes Stimmklangmaterial oder als Reaktion des Empfängers, der beeinflussend auf den Stimmproduktionsvorgang einwirkt. Der Empfänger ist nie Teil einer trägen Masse, sondern immer auch Mitspieler' (Nowitz, unpublished).

[17] 'Art is the setting-itself-to-work of truth' (Heidegger, p. 49). Also, 'one essential way in which truth establishes itself in the beings it has opened up is its setting-itself-into-the-work' (Ibid., p. 37).

[18] The word real-time is borrowed from computer science describing real-time computing systems as being responsive within a specified time range. In the context of music transmission a latency of between 6 and 20 milliseconds is considered to be tolerable. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real-time_computing (Last accessed 28 April 2018). Also, note that *real-time* in combination with *composition* or *music* can have a slightly different meaning: *real* in the sense of *authentic*. Since the nineties of the 20th century, in Berlin, the term *real-time composition* has been used, even the music was improvised, in order to indicate a difference to the notion of *improvisation* that has its roots in Jazz and Free-Jazz music. The German equivalent term of real-time music, *Echtzeitmusik*, puts emphasis on the authentic quality of music performed in the moment. The term *Echtzeitmusik* has been coined by a group of young musicians

layers, in case of a solo presentation, comprising voice and body. If the performer then adds novel technology-driven devices such as gesture-controlled live electronics, s/he gains three compositional layers to deal with: the voice, the body and the instrument. In this way, the notion of the *multivocal voice* can also be understood as a *polyphonic performance voice* that, with regard to the application of electronics on the one hand, and of artifices concerning advanced vocal techniques, such as *multiphonics*, on the other, allows the splitting up (*Aufspaltung*) into further voices and diverse voice proportions. As an example for the three-layered performance practice involving voice, body and technology, that I propose to call *voice-induced sound dance*, I suggest to see the video documentary of *Untitled*,[19] a composition for voice, strophonion and a chair to be ignored.

One basic prerequisite for attaining a multivocal voice is to sharpen its control mechanisms, that is to say its cybernetics[20] – perception at all levels, but first and foremost at the auditory level.[21] For the ears, together with brain, lungs, pharynx, mouth cavity and *mouth tools* (*Mundwerkzeuge*), as I call the components of tongue, soft and hard palate, lower and upper lip, and eventually with the vocal apparatus itself, hence that flexible suspension system which comprises an interweaving of muscles, fasciae, and cartilages which catch, dandle and embed the vocal folds, they all form a mutually dependant and influencing, complex feedback loop, within which all protagonists of the entirety of the vocal body (*Stimmkörper*)[22] are both attentive and involved in constant interplay with each other.[23]

(at that time) which I was part of, performing in various ensembles, such as the trio *No Doctor* together with Nicholas Bussmann and Hanno Leichtmann or Tony Buck's *Astro-Peril*, all of which performed at newly found venues in East Berlin such as the Anorak or Lychi 60 (now called Ausland). 'The introduction of the term *Echtzeitmusik* reflected an attempt to distinguish itself from Berlin free improvisation and free jazz circles, which were identified with FMP and the Total Music Meeting festival. Although connections were present in the beginning, when for example the ensemble Butch Morris Berlin Skyscraper at the Total Music Meeting in 1995 featured a number of musicians from Anorak, the generational gap seemed too great and the æsthetics and musical goals too different' (Blažanović, pp. 29-52, p. 39). To gain further insights into the author's involvement in the Berlin Echtzeitmusik community, see also footnote 15 on p. 50 as well as the photo documentations on p. 56 and p. 107.

19 See https://vimeo.com/187541243 [Last accessed 27 April 2018].

20 'Cybernetics is the science of the mechanisms of control. Although this claims to be a new science, it is based on principles as old as time. Plato touches on these laws in his writings about government. They are as impossible to transgress as they are timeless. In cybernetic terms, a system is regulated when its functioning is subject to a control. Each organ of the human body controls a specific function' (Tomatis, p. 65).

21 'There is nothing complicated about singing. Every sound that a singer makes follows rules that are controlled by the listening function' (Ibid., p. 65).

22 The English and literal translation of *Stimmkörper* is 'voice body' or 'vocal body' and denotes the entirety of the voice in the body, thus all essential parts of the vocal apparatus, i.e. lungs (breath), larynx (vocal production), pharynx (amplification tube), tongue, palate, teeth and lips (all of which are shaping timbre and the final sound). Therefore, the term belongs to the realm of physiology and should not be confused with the, nevertheless, fascinating conception of the 'vocalic body' or 'voice-body' as elaborated by Steven Connor analysing the cultural history of ventriloquism: 'The principle of the vocalic body is simple. Voices are produced by bodies: but can also themselves produce bodies. The vocalic body is the idea—which can take the form of dream, fantasy, ideal, theological doctrine, or hallucination—of a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice. The history of ventriloquism is to be understood partly in terms of the repertoire of imagings or incarnations it provides for these autonomous voice-bodies. It

The multivocal voice is, strictly-speaking, an oxymoron. Usually, the term *voice* signifies *one single* individual, thus one singular entity. The application in plural, of *many voices,* refers to many individuals or entities accordingly. If two contradictory, inappropriate and incongruous (*unstimmig*) terms are put together within one semantic construction, the prerequisites to create an oxymoron are fulfilled. The conceptual pair of the *multivocal voice* would appear to be one such oxymoron. However, it is undeniable that many voices, in a single voice, or in a single vocal apparatus respectively, are not only latent, but truly reside there. Jean-Luc Nancy formulates this aspect as follows:

> […] *la* voix *est* toujours en elle-même articulée (différente d'elle-même, se différant elle-même), et c'est pourquoi il n'y a pas la voix, mais les voix plurielles des êtres singuliers.[24]

Hence, by using the term *the voice* in the singular, it should not be assumed that only a single voice is indicated.

The multivocal voice eludes clear representation other than that of its own kind, plural in appearance, singular in its uniqueness.[25] Multivocality, I claim, is the

---

shows us clearly that human beings in many different cultural settings find the experience of a sourceless sound uncomfortable, and the experience of a sourceless voice intolerable' (see the sub-chapter 'The Vocalic Body' in Connor, pp. 35-43). After asking 'What kind of thing is a vocalic body?' and 'What sorts of vocalic bodies are there?' Connor amends: 'Such bodies are not fixed and finite, nor are they summarizable in the form of a typology, precisely because we are always able to imagine and enact new forms of voice-body. The leading characteristic of the voice-body is to be a body-in-invention, an impossible, imaginary body in the course of being found and formed' (Ibid., 36).

23 'The whole art is to abandon yourself, to allow all the regulatory processes, or cybernetic loops, to operate by themselves. A cybernetic loop is a circuit that has a circular path, with the end returning to the beginning. The act of singing is controlled by a number of such circuits. […] The organ of control for singing is the ear and the whole system is under control of the listening function' (Tomatis, p. 65). Moreover, giving a striking example for cybernetic control, he says: '[…] when we hear ourselves, we hear a preponderance of lows. When we listen to our own voice on a recording, we are always surprised to hear how we sound. While making sounds in a room with good reverberation, the feedback we get allows us to control high and medium frequencies as well as lows. This is an example of cybernetic control. Singing obeys the same laws of regulation and hearing becomes listening' (Ibid., p. 67). Eventually Tomatis labels the mutually dependent processes of the act of singing and controlling as 'auditory-vocal loops' or 'control loops' parsing them in detail as 'audio-facial loop', 'audio-mandibular loop', 'audio-larynx loop', 'audio-pharyngeal loop', 'audio-lingual loop', 'audio-thoracic loop', 'audio-mouth loop', 'audio-nasal loop', 'audio-recurrential loop', 'audio-lumbar-sacral loop', 'audio-cervical loop' and the 'audio-corporeal loop' (Ibid., pp. 67-76).

24 'The voice is always divided in itself (different to itself and differentiating itself) and, therefore, there isn't the one voice, but a multiplicity of voices within singular voices' (my translation of Nancy, p. 189).

25 The Italian philosopher and feminist thinker, Adriana Cavarero, puts emphasis on the notion of 'uniqueness' which, from the start, is an intrinsic part of every single voice: 'In the uniqueness that makes itself heard as voice, there is an embodied existent, or rather, a "being-there" [*esserci*] in its radical finitude, here and now. The sphere of the vocal implies the ontological plane and anchors it to the existence of singular beings who invoke one another contextually. From the maternal scene onward, the voice manifests the *unique being* of each human being, and his or her spontaneous self-communication according to the rhythms of a sonorous relation. In this sense, the ontological horizon that is disclosed by the voice—or what we want to call a *vocal ontology of uniqueness*—stands in contrast to the various ontologies of fictitious entities that the philosophical tradition, over the course of its historical development, designates with names like "man", "subject", "individual"' (see the chapter 'A Vocal Ontology of Uniqueness', Cavarero, pp. 173 - 182).

intrinsic and veritable determinant of the vocal art voice from today and tomorrow. The multivocal voice doesn't accept being misused through becoming a vocal specialist in the sense of the one-register voice, and thus doesn't accept being wedged in a tight, functional corset. It wants to avoid states of malaise (*Verstimmung*), which appear all too often when an interpreter slips into roles. It can lead to anachronistic and effectively spurious and apocryphal performances if the character has nothing to do with the situation of the present time, as there is the moment of personal development and the sociocultural framework that determine the life of the interpreting artist, on the one hand, and that of the recipient, on the other, at the given time of the performance.[26]

It is key that the performance voice, if it opens up itself to the possibility of multivocality, develops *including powers* as opposed to adhere *conceptions of exclusivity*. The approach to vocal art practices is usually characterised for being exclusive — compartmentalising, isolating, sealing off the practitioner, and ostracising, segregating. If practising opera singing it's then implicit that one should not rehearse the Rock or Jazz voice. Genre distinctions are strictly preserved in the interests of satisfying the existing market. In this way of thinking, experiments, regardless of type, are also excluded.[27] A conventional vocal art voice, according to the traditional Western model, is a *one-register voice* only. In contrast, the conception of the *multivocal voice* rather opposes such considerations just because it resists being restricted. The multivocal voice is not a one-register voice, but a *multi-register voice*.

As a matter of principle, the enabling and the acquisition of a multivocal voice, and thus a multi-tempered voice, presupposes a multivocal thinking, thus an extended thinking. This thinking comprises a thinking in vocal sound banks and in vocal sound entities, a thinking in vowel planes and consonant fields, a thinking in segments, in registers, in vocal range sections, all of which, in regards to the possible entirety of vocal sound areas, exhibit gaps and show sites of fracture. For the voice in the totality of its potentially emerging segmentations produces those gaps naturally, yet cannot, at the present time, be continuous, but rather is non-linear. Looking at the evolution of the voice at the present time reveals the fact that it isn't always possible to continuously and gradually go from one technique to the other. In order to illustrate this thought, I point to the potential of blending two different singing techniques into each other. *Low tone singing*, as I'd like to call it, or harmonic singing, as know from the Mongolian *Kargyraa*-style, sacred chanting of Tibetan monks or the *bassu* voice from the Sardinian *canto a tenore*-tradition, is produced by reinforcing harmonics applying mainly the vibrations from the ventricular folds.[28] In contrast, the singing voice from the Western

[26] And, in addition, directors that repeatedly try to transpose the works of the old masters (*Alte Meister*) into a contemporary setting by imposing the *Zeitgeist* on them don't change much in regards to the matter as described.

[27] And the same applies conversely – artists from the experimental and improvising scene, as a rule, don't think much of belcanto singing, its æsthetics and inscribed sociocultural culture of representation.

[28] For all of those readers who may detect a post-colonial issue in applying harmonic low-tone singing techniques, I'd like to counter with a quote by composer and vocalist Michael Edward Edgerton who points out that 'harmonic singing has been reported to have originated around inner Asia, most notably

tradition uses only the vocal folds in order to reach any part of its register and, therefore, also the lowest register. Within the concept of the *multivocal voice* now, the performer tries to gradually cross and blend both techniques even different muscular proportions are applied which is the reason why the task appears to be impossible.[29] But that's exactly what the *multivocal voice* sets oneself to do, namely to acknowledge such a paradox and try to dissolve it - not to let the impossible remain impossible, but to venture the experiment, which is in this case the continuous, gradual and unbroken transition from one vocal art technique to the other, and to at least tackle and to eventually try to perform it with an unbiased, thus open attitude. The task and goal are therefore to achieve a *permanent traversing and flowing into each other of the divergent vocal proportions.* Maybe or, in other words, only if this succeeds and such thinking possibilities will have been transformed into unmistakably audible (*unüberhörbar*) realities, the foundations are laid to advance the evolution in a way which brings the human in proximity to his or her actual destiny (*Bestimmung*). For if there is an objective of human evolution at all, then perhaps it's what creates an *outright permeable being*, a kind of *fluidum* of the Self, and therefore approximates a *homo mundi*, that kind of seemingly utopian *earthly human*, no longer foreign to him/herself and the Other[30], regardless of her/his respective whereabouts on the globe.[31] Of course, we are far away from

---

from Tuva and Mongolia. However, harmonics are universal and are the physical basis behind the quality and strength of the sound produced by instruments (including voice). Although the original style may have originated in central Asia, no one should claim ownership of harmonic reinforcement, but only the significant markers that are unique to a specific style or culture. […] while elements of a codified tradition may be claimed by members of a particular society, an expression using harmonics disembodied from the culturally identified tradition should be seen for what it is—a musical resource available to all' (Edgerton, p. 60).

[29] When touring through Russia in 2002, together with pianist Vladimir Miller, I was told by several people I met along the way that some bass singers coming from Bulgarian and Russian singing traditions are able to blend between the two practices. Unfortunately, at the moment I don't have any examples of practitioners to confirm this assertion.

[30] The concept of and distinction between the other and the Other has its roots in psychoanalysis stemming from Sigmund Freud who uses 'the term other speaking of both der Andere (the other person) and das Andere (otherness)' (Evans, p. 135). Influenced also by Parmenides on the one hand and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel on the other, French psychoanalytic Jacques Lacan further developed this concept. 'In 1955 Lacan draws a distinction between the little other (the other) and the big Other (the Other) (S2, ch. 19), a distinction which remains central throughout the rest of his work. Thereafter, in Lacanian algebra, the big Other is designated A (upper case, for French Autre) and the little other is designated a (lower case italicised, for French autre). Lacan asserts that an awareness of this distinction is fundamental to analytic practice: the analyst must be thoroughly imbued with the difference between A and a (E, 140), so that he can situate himself in the place of Other, and not of the other (Ec, 454). 1. The little other is the other who is not really other, but a reflection and projection of the EGO (which is why the symbol a can represent the little other and the ego interchangeably in SCHEMA L). He is simultaneously the COUNTERPART and the SPECULAR IMAGE. The little other is thus entirely inscribed in the imaginary order. For a more detailed discussion of the development of the symbol a in Lacan's work, see OBJET PETIT A. 2. The big Other designates radical alterity, an other-ness which transcends the illusory otherness of the imaginary because it cannot be assimilated through identification. Lacan equates this radical alterity with language and the law, and hence the big Other is inscribed in the order of the symbolic. Indeed, the big Other is the symbolic insofar as it is particularised for each subject. The Other is thus both another subject, in his radical alterity and unassimilable uniqueness, and also the symbolic order which mediates the relationship with that other subject' (Ibid., pp. 135-136).

[31] And this could be easy since we are, in technological terms, more connected today than ever before. Living in the age of globalisation and digitisation, we are in fact living in a 'global village', as Marshall MacLuhan predicted already in 1964. However, technological progress as we are about to discover doesn't necessarily always support an idea of shaking off fears. Even though one would assume that the

this idea. The vehicle, though, to set off in this direction can be, according to the framework of a *plural society*, the *plural voice* — a specifically experienced as well as consciously imbued concept of multivocality which renders the individual a *human fluidum* that allows him/her to encounter the voice of the Other in the sense of a *looking through* (*hindurchschauen*) and a *listening beyond* (*hinüber hören*), thus a *permeation with an authentic-empathetic* gesture.[32]

A few preconditions for how the multivocal voice is able to generate many voices out of one vocal source have already been mentioned as well as the thinking in vocal territories all of which, from day to day, are to be discovered anew. In a more extended sense, but no less important, there are vocal sound areas beyond linguistic classification, such as whistled sounds and combinations of those with voiced or hummed sounds, respectively.[33] All whistled sounds are produced bypassing the regular vocal apparatus. In case of the *lower lip whistling*, as I propose to call it, the airstream gets channelled by the tongue assuming a tube-like form and then directed against the edge of the extremely stretched lower lip which, comparing to the flute playing, serves as mouth piece. This happens on the first level of sound production. On a second level, the fingers come into play and are applied as modulators allowing instant pitch changes that, at a great velocity, can create virtuosic effects such as trills. To give an example see the video documentary of *Searching the Magpie*,[34] an outdoor event for voice and

---

global interconnectedness of people would reduce fear of the Other, quite the opposite is the case. Internet offers endless opportunities to propagate hatred and discord and to amplify anxiety while social media platforms have the power to seduce the user to live in a bubble cut off from real life which eventually fosters segregation and exclusion. McLuhan considered technology as extensions of man. The car (or bike) is an extension of the running legs, the computer (or pencil) an extension of the writing hands, glasses an extension of our eyes, the loudspeakers an extension of our ears, etc. In consequence, technology as available at the current time is an extension of our consciousness, that has changed to a remarkable degree within an incredibly short period of time. The internet addresses and thus concerns the main senses. We cannot tell at the moment what the effects, as enormous as they are, might entail. With regard to social media, technology has already conquered the social sphere, meaning both the public and private sphere, and therefore changed, at a tremendous speed, the behavioural standards. The ability to develop respect and empathy for others seems to decline when the face-to-face communication is abandoned for the sake of quick electronic comments and instant postings. In this regard, considering the technological progress that we are engendering and at the same time confronted with, the utopian idea of a sustainable way of living together, a vision of genuine solidarity and the willingness for unconditional sharing seems to drift away from us. No matter how multifarious the reasons are, the gap between poor and rich become increasingly bigger, at an unchecked velocity, entailing hierarchical structures, imbalance and injustice on a global scale, all of which accelerate the planet's already severe situation ranging from climate change and its dramatic effects to the devastating impacts on the living conditions of people (those who survived!) in warzones from the Middle East, just to name a few.

[32] French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty expressed it bit differently but nevertheless pointed to the same direction saying 'our view of man will remain superficial so long as we do not return to this origin, so long as we do not rediscover the primordial silence beneath the noise of words, and so long as we do not describe the gesture that breaks this silence' (Merleau-Ponty, p. 190).

[33] This is not to be confused with the whistle register that denotes the highest possible register of the female voice according to the operatic singing tradition from the Western culture.

[34] See https://vimeo.com/267405030 [Last accessed 1 May 2018].

potential birds, recorded 2015 by flautist and sound artist Sabine Vogel[35] in the rural locality of Bend of Island, Victoria, in Australia.

The multivocal voice seeks exchange. The methodological foundation of the multivocal voice is in fact the exchanging drive to play with other multi-attunements (*Vielgestimmtheiten*). The question arises how playing with other multi-attunements can be understood. It's in this context that a special role is assigned to *mimesis*. Something that needs to be avoided is above all the depletion of the vocal art act by mere imitation.[36] For mere imitation, thus the voco-pedagogical means that is often applied here and abroad, carries the risk of caricature and not least the grotesque.[37] As a matter of principle, it must be said that pedagogics is always a tool to realise an ideology[38] and, accordingly, bears the impress of demagogy.[39] Without pedagogics there wouldn't be any ideology, and without ideology no demagogy, without demagogy no ideology and without ideology no pedagogics. Therefore voice pedagogics can be said to release manipulative powers. This requires a word of warning. An artist's instinct must never be subordinated to external vocal education, unless of one's own accord and above all as conscious decision. If this is not taken into account, a style of pedagogics arises that is fallen out of time so-to-speak, and therefore makes itself redundant.[40]

---

[35] See Sabine Vogel's website: http://www.sabvog.de/en/index.html [Last accessed 29 April 2018]. For further information on the concept of 'Tuning-in' as environmental arts practice see her article with the eponymous title (Vogel, pp. 327 - 34).

[36] 'No art is imitative, no art can be imitative or figurative. […] One imitates only if one fails, when one fails. The painter and musician do not imitate the animal, they become-animal at the same time as the animal becomes what they willed, at the deepest level of their concord with Nature. […] Becoming is never imitating. When Hitchcock does birds, he does not reproduce bird calls, he produces an electronic sound like a field of intensities or a wave of vibrations, a continuous variation, like a terrible threat welling up inside us' (Deleuze/Guattari, p. 354 - 55).

[37] I'd like to point to the master classes of the famous German baritone, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, who certainly was a fantastic interpreter of German Lied and of the operatic repertoire. He also merits recognition due to a numerous amount of new works that he premiered for both the opera stage and the concert hall. What is striking though is the moment listening to the voices of his disciples. He created a whole generation of baritones that sounded exactly like him. I'm inclined to call them clones as their goal was to erase every tiny little aspect that may have sounded like and reminded them of themselves. This is a good example how voice education can go wrong ways or, in other words, it proves the manipulative powers of vocal pedagogy.

[38] Compare paragraph 2 of chapter 12, 'Research or Craftsmanship? Nine theses on the future of an education for the performing arts' by German composer and director Heiner Goebbels: 'Every craft, every technique is ideological. Voice training can extinguish the sound of a personality, can make the biography, the accent, the uniqueness of one's own voice inaudible, in order to conform to a given aesthetic standard. Similar things may be true for singing lessons or other areas – working on roles in actor training and the staging strategies in directing schools, which still struggle artistically to deal with non-psychological, postdramatic texts without dialogue or without linear narrative' (Goebbels, p. 77).

[39] According to the online dictionary of Merriam-Webster, *demagogy* is borrowed from the Greek 'demagogos' composed of 'demos', meaning 'the people', and 'agogos', meaning 'leading, impelling'. See https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/demagogy [Last accessed 30 April 2018].

[40] Compare Deleuze/Guattari who, in the opening of chapter 4 'Postulates of the Linguistics', dismantle the language as used by the schoolmistress in the classroom situation teaching arithmetic or grammar '[…] and order always and already concerns prior orders, which is why ordering is redundancy. The compulsory education machine does not communicate information; it imposes upon the child semiotic coordinates possessing all of the dual foundations of grammar (masculine-feminine, singular-plural, noun-verb, subject of the statement-subject of the enunciation, etc.). The elementary unit of language—the statement—is the order-word.' (Deleuze/Guattari, p. 88). Further on they confirm the assertion by

An important characteristic of the multivocal voice is that it is nomadic (not to be confused with the voice of the nomads!). The multivocal voice is constantly in transit and thus always carries its *home*. At the same time, it is always looking for the best possible life and framework conditions, making it not only a concept, but an attitude toward life opening up through the exploration of the Other.[41] Only if the *I* unlocks itself and allows the *Other* to enter the voice and, in so doing, incorporates it in order to eventually release it at some later point in time, the *I* experiences approaches of a possible entirety that the multivocal voice continuously searches and strives for. Thus it follows instinct and intuition, on the one hand, and pursues all those traces of the Other that it is able to locate, on the other hand. This means it is also a tracker, insofar as the multivocal voice compares with both an anthropological-cultural archive of voices and a multi-ethnic vocal catalyst.

Rounding off this paragraph and preparing the next, I suggest to listen to the *Labyrinth*,[42] for 8 loudspeakers and no light (2013), composed at EMS (Elektronmusikstudion) in Stockholm.[43] The material of the composition derives, on the one hand, from Berlin-based voices all of which, in different languages, are reciting the poem *Minotaurus* by German stage designer Sonja Kloevekorn.[44] On the other hand, the piece consists of the voice material stemming from one voice encompassing the countertenor voice and a multitude of vocal sounds produced by various extended vocal techniques that are expanded by either the application of live electronics (*stimmflieger*)[45] or the use of studio equipment.

Above all, the multivocal voice is recording and playback device in one. It is a chest of memory full of remembrances that are saved within the body until death. Let's look at the example of the countertenor's voice. It is the manifestation of the *retention of the boy's voice over and beyond the puberty vocal change* into the embedding of the muscular proportions of the adult man's voice. In this regard, the countertenor is mainly a memory performance. Of course, there are psychological, gender-specific and socio-cultural moments as well as music-related aspects that act upon the muscular and mental memory. It seems important though to maintain the bridge to this particular memory and not to cut it off. In the case of *retaining the boy's voice beyond adolescence*, it's, above all, the *sound*

---

saying that 'newspaper, news, proceed by redundancy, in that they tell us what we must think, retain, expect, etc. Language is neither informational nor communicational. It is not the communication of information but something quite different: the transmission of order-words' (Deleuze/Guattari, p. 92). See also the chapter 'Politiken der Stimme (Deleuze)' in Till, pp. 145 - 70 (p. 148).

[41] Compare the artistic research project *Extending Voices, Sampling the Other* by Alex Nowitz in collaboration with the vocal ensemble Auditivvokal Dresden, https://vimeo.com/219480673 [Last accessed 19 February 2018].

[42] Listen to https://soundcloud.com/alexnowitz/labyrinth [Last accessed 27 April 2018].

[43] For further information on EMS, Elektronmusikstudion Stockholm, see the website http://elektronmusikstudion.se/ [Last accessed 29 April 2018].

[44] See http://www.sonjakloevekorn.de/ [Last accessed 1 May 2018].

[45] For further information see the online article *Voice and Live-Electronics using Remotes as Gestural Controllers*, retrievable at http://econtact.ca/10_4/nowitz_voicelive.html [Last accessed 27 April 2018]. Note that at the time writing the article, I haven't yet given the instrument the name *stimmflieger*. This happened after the article was published.

and, in the more narrow, specifically cultural sense, the *music* that create the bridge.[46]

In conclusion, the work on the multivocal voice is characterised by remembrance work, on the one hand, which allows the performer to draw on a moment once retained, and by the capability to anticipate, on the other, which ensures that the sound captured is elaborately released again, at the right moment and with the help of a forward-looking as well as forward-listening attitude. This storage capacity spans long durations – years, decades, or even one's whole life. Once embodied it won't be forgotten that easily. Often, if untouched for a long time, the once embodied vocal material may slip off into unknown realms of our memory. But it can be retrieved if we pay careful attention to the entirety of musico-sonic and the associated emotional-psychological and sociocultural circumstances that we were in, at the time when we experienced and went through those vocal moments that were to be remembered. All that determines the entirety of our condition to a specific moment in time, must be learnt and rendered memorable and retrievable. Only if this technique of *vocal mnemonics* is made available, are the premises for access (*Rückgriff*) to a vocal treasure created – a treasure which is never really lost but, instead, always awaits its discovery. Once retrieved, we just have to unlock the vocal treasure of the multivocal voice. Perhaps, it is a consequence of our task to insist, ceaselessly, on unclosing our voice. But it is exactly this literal audacity (*Waghalsigkeit*) that allows the anticipation and thus the celebration of vocal treasures that eventually open doors that lead to a better understanding of ourselves, from today to tomorrow, this being one of the necessary conditions not only to contemplate our next evolutionary step, but also to take it.

Bibliography

- Artaud, Antonin, *The Theatre and its Double*, transl. by Victor Corti (London: Alma Classics, 2014).
- Barthes, Roland, *Image, Music, Text*, essays sel. and trans. by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).
- Blažanović, Marta, 'Social History of the Echtzeitmusik Scene in Berlin', in *Echzeitmusik Berlin: Self-defining a Scene*, ed. by Burkhard Beins, Christian Kesten, Gisela Nauck and Andrea Neumann (Hofheim: Wolke, 2011).
- Cavarero, Adriana, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. by Paul Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
- Connor, Steven, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Deleuze, Gilles/Guattari, Félix, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2014).

[46] In the context of an adult-male producing an elaborate and artful countertenor voice, compare the discussion on the notion of *becoming* by Deleuze/Guattari, e.g. 'becoming-music,' 'becoming-child,' 'becoming-woman,' 'becoming-intense,' etc. (Deleuze/Guattari, p. 348 – 60).

- Edgerton, Michael Edward, *The 21st-Century Voice: Contemporary and Traditional Extra-Normal Voice*, The New Instrumentation, No. 9 (Lanham, Toronto, Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2004).
- Evans, Dylan, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, (London: Routledge, 1996).
- Goebbels, Heiner, *Aesthetics of Absence: Texts on Theatre*, trans. by David Roesner and Christina M. Lagao, ed. by Jane Collins, consult. ed. by Nicholas Till (London, New York: Routledge, 2015).
- Heidegger, Martin, *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- Kane, Brian, 'The Voice: a Diagnosis', *Polygraph*, 25 (2015).
- MacLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London, New York: Routledge Classics, 1964).
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Donald A. Landes (London, New York: Routledge, 2014).
- Mersch, Dieter, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics* (Zurich, Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015). ___, *Ereignis und Aura: Untersuchungen zu einer Ästhetik des Performativen*, 4th edn, Aesthetica Edition Suhrkamp 2219, ed. by Karl Heinz Bohrer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2011).
- Nancy, Jean-Luc, *La Communauté Désœuvrée* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1999).
- Nowitz, Alex, 'Designing and Playing the Strophonion: Extending vocal art performance using a custom digital musical instrument', *econtact! 18.3 — Sonic DIY: Repurposing the Creative Self* (December 2016), https://econtact.ca/18_3/nowitz_strophonion.html [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
___, *Extending Voices, Sampling the Other*, Vimeo video 'EXTENDING VOICES, SAMPLING THE OTHER' (4:26), 30 May 2017, https://vimeo.com/219480673 [Last accessed 19 February 2018].
___, *Labyrinth* (2013), Soundcloud audio 'Labyrinth' (14:22), 17 February 2014, https://soundcloud.com/alexnowitz/labyrinth [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
___, *Panache* (2015), Vimeo video 'PANACHE by Alex Nowitz' (1:34), 31 May 2016, https://vimeo.com/168750034 [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
___, *Playing with Panache* (2015), Vimeo video 'PLAYING WITH PANACHE by Alex Nowitz' (02:02), 16 October 2016, https://vimeo.com/187540317 [Last accessed 27 May 2018].
___, *Searching the Magpie* (2015), Vimeo video 'Searching the Magpie' (03:44), 1 May 2018, https://vimeo.com/267405030 [Last accessed 1 May 2018].
___, *Untitled* (2016), Vimeo video 'UNTITLED by Alex Nowitz' (03:29), 16 October 2016, https://vimeo.com/187541243 [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
___, 'Voice and Live-Electronics using Remotes as Gestural Controllers', *eContact! 10.4 — Live Electronics, Improvisation and Interactivity in Electroacoustics* (October 2008), http://econtact.ca/10_4/nowitz_voicelive.html [Last accessed 27 April 2018].
- Riehn, Rainer, 'Noten zu Cage', in *Musik-Konzepte Sonderband John Cage I*, ed. by Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, 2nd edn (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1990).
- Till, Sabine, *Die Stimme zwischen Immanenz und Transzendenz: Zu einer Denkfigur bei Emmanuel Lévinas, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida und Gilles Deleuze* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014).

- Tomatis, Alfred A., *The Ear and the Voice*, trans. by Roberta Prada and Pierre Sollier (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005).
- Vogel, Sabine, 'Tuning-in', *Contemporary Music Review*, 34:4 (2016), 327 – 334, https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2016.1140475 [Last accessed 30 April 2018].