Introduction to the Exposition
'Monsters I Love: On Multivocal Arts'

> Es war aber ein langer vielfältiger seltsamer Schrei,
> und Zarathustra unterschied deutlich, dass er sich
> aus vielen Stimmen zusammensetze:
> mochte er schon, aus der Ferne gehört,
> gleich dem Schrei aus einem einzigen Munde klingen.
> Friedrich Nietzsche[1]

The exposition on the Research Catalogue *Monsters I Love* explores an integrative approach to the four main categories of the contemporary performance voice, that is, the singing, speaking, extended and disembodied voice. By combining a variety of different vocal practices from those categories, the artistic research project proposes a *multivocal practice* in the vocal arts.

As result of a four-year PhD project in the Fine Arts researching in and through the arts, the exposition gives account of all related subprojects through the presentation of multimedia material by interweaving performance recordings with knowledge that, by touching a number of different fields, is multi-branched and nurtured by experiental, epistemic, phenomenological, technical (voice) and technological (sensors, computer) insights. The artistic research project encompasses documentary videos and audio material of public performances, lectures and an artist talk as well as studio productions and rehearsals. The visitor of the exposition is invited to also study scores and different text formats, such as poems, extended programme notes, translations, performance instructions, comments, essays and articles.

The practice of the contemporary vocal performer is loaded by the question of how to detect and solve technical issues involved into the bridging of vocal terrains. In and through a range of artistic practices—vocal, oral, bodily and technology-related—the research project unfolds an excessive vocal imaginary that oscillates between the poles of Dada-influenced æsthetics versus the lyricism of the operatic countertenor voice, between experimentations that unwrap a radical vocality and abstract soundscapes derived from computer-manipulations of vocal material. The artistic practice encompasses the mediation between the logics of the voice, on the one hand, and sound art affordances, on the other. An æsthetics of the *in-between* emerges when vocal and bodily practices meet technology-related ones all of which are aiming at an expanded field of vocal arts. A special focus, in this context, lies on the application of custom and gesture-controlled live electronics, namely the *strophonion* previously built at the studio for electro-instrumental music, STEIM, in Amsterdam.[2] During the

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[1] 'Die Begrüssung' in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Nietzsche Source). 'But it was a protracted, manifold, peculiar cry, and Zarathustra clearly differentiated that it was composed of many voices; even if heard from a distance, it sounded like the cry of a single mouth.' Translation by Adrian Del Crado in Nietzsche, 'The Welcome', in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2006).

[2] See Nowitz, 'The Strophonion — Instrument Development (2010–2011)', http://steim.org/projectblog/2012/01/02/alex-nowitz-the-Strophonion-instrument-development-2010-2011.

course of the PhD project the live electronic instrument was further developed by Berlin-based software programmer Sukandar Kartadinata.[3] On the basis of the audio processing software application *Max/MSP* from California-based company *Cycling '74*,[4] Kartadinata and I created an intricate configuration that challenges the performer, but at the same time endows the musician with great flexibility regarding sound creation and control.

The notion of multivocality addresses various forms of virtuosity all of which are informed by an artistic knowledge that is multifaceted regarding its methods, be it experimental or experiential, technical or technological, improvisational or compositional. A crucial point of this project is driven by two seemingly competing questions both concerning the potentialities of the contemporary performance voice: one, through the formulation and performance of *The Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice*,[5] addresses its potential groundings in theoretical and philosophical regards. The result is what I would like to call a 'discursive solo performance act' that aims to provide insights into developing the principles, premises, politics and discourse of contemporary vocal performance art. The other matter, on the contrary, is rather consumed by the poetics of the voice investigating the thresholds of individualised vocal practices by asking what are and where lie the boundaries for the performance voice today? By detecting limits, on the one hand, and tracing unknown terrains, on the other, the project has become an extensive exploration of vocal and oral soundscapes to unleash an almost unbounded expressiveness of the human voice.

Research Questions and Aims
Therefore, even though a generic one, the main question of the research project is: *What and where is vocal performance art today and how can the performance voice be extended?* It is clear and, not to say, unavoidable that from the perspective of the performer this approach can only be highly subjective. But by auto-ethnographical means and through the display of a variety of diverse examples I aim to provide possible threads for answering this question. The exposition seeks to find and, in so doing, proposes methods that any vocal performer can read into and apply for oneself. By defining the material and revealing the emerging requirements of interdisciplinary approaches, the exposition eventually aims to provide a better understanding of the vocal potentialities and the respective thinking behind. As already expressed in the preceding introduction to the field, it is my aim to scrutinise and come to know the process-related nature of the practice as it is performed. A crucial question in consequence therefore is nudged by Arendt's account of 'what we are doing'[6] when

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[3] See http://www.glui.de/wp/.

[4] See https://cycling74.com/.

[5] The essay is central to the artistic research project at hand and can be found in chapter four with the same title. Furthermore, it is published in German and English and presented to the public on the 12th of April 2018 during the 9th SAR International Conference on Artistic Research at the University of Plymouth (English version), on the 2nd of June 2018 during the new music festival *intersonanzen 2018* in Potsdam (German version) and on the 13th of December 2018 within the dissertation performance *Moving Tongues: Playing Space* in the Reaktorhallen Stockholm. See Nowitz, 'Zur Vielstimmigkeit der Stimme', in *Musik & Ästhetik* (2019), https://www.musikundaesthetik.de/journal/mu_2019_01 [last accessed 26 Dec. 2018]; Nowitz, 'Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice', in 'Artistic Research Will Eat Itself ', *Research Catalogue* (2018), https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/512748/512749/0/0 [last accessed 26 Dec. 2018].

[6] Arendt, *A Human Condition* (1958), p. 5.

we're extending the voice by applying extended vocal techniques. This brings into focus the question of what actually the voice's boundaries are and where they are located. In terms of physiology, the assumption is that there are definite ends; nevertheless, I'm interested in trespassing them. Over the course of twenty-five years experiencing a variety of diverse vocal practices from different æsthetic fields, such as opera, improvisation, new music compositions, Jazz and Rock-related experiments, etc., I have come to learn that there are ways to go beyond boundaries hitherto considered impossible. The question then was and is how do we achieve to transcend the limits and, by doing so, how far can we actually go. One inevitable prerequisite to answer this paradoxical question is that we need to come to know the material that we are applying and working with, that is, the vocal and the oral or, in other words, the vocal cords-related and the mouth-focussed sphere. Beyond pure vocality lies also the affordance that the intermingling of vocal and oral material with contemporary sound art practices brings into play, i.e., the usage of custom, wireless, gesture-controlled live electronics in combination with various sampling techniques. A collision takes place when concrete, emotion-related vocality interweaves with computer-generated soundscapes and their power to create distancing effects and to estrange the original material of the voice. Both areas seem to oppose each other. Allegedly these collisions produce gaps all of which need to be filled by the performer one way or the other to render the performance comprehensible to an audience. *It is exactly this what the exposition aims to unveil, namely to find ways to uncover, by artistic means, the blind spots that emerge in the cross sections of the logics of diverse vocal practices, but also in combination with those of movement and technology.* Each sphere, be it contemporary vocality, sound art or bodily practices, provides and offers its inherent æsthetics and reveals primary routes that with regard to my practice constantly cross each other. In effect, if the performer allows this to happen and even forwards this idea, then the ways as we ordinarily think what the performance voice shall do or is supposed to be, get destabilised. Thus the conventional understanding of the voice in its function either to convey information in terms of linguistic codes or to express emotional states, becomes questioned. Therefore the initial, rather generic question of asking what and where the performance voice is today, spirals upwards and transforms into the question about *what the performance voice potentially could be*. In the context of practice-led research, in consequence, one then needs to ask *how to unlock the potential—a question that actually gets raised every time anew when laying bare the practice by performing in public*. In this regard, the performer-researcher is always thrown back to the ephemeral state and condition of performance *per se*. It's then only in the very act of performing that the question can be fully addressed. Therefore, as opposed of reflecting by taking a detour of re-verbalising what happened during the performance—which indeed I sometimes apply, but rather distrust due to the potential of creating misunderstandings and the generation of further questions trigged by language insufficiencies—the exposition aims to uncover the practice through the display of the practice itself. Embarking from a highly subjective position, but proposing a variety of diverse examples and an almost lexical approach to the research project, I strive to illuminate the multitude of diverse aspects and thus reveal the complexity that, by nature, resides in the question of extending vocal performance art. It is evident and unavoidable that the research question as raised is heavily entangled with the personality of the performer-researcher and the always relevant question of the reciprocal relationship that s/he is able to establish together with an audience during the actual vocal performance act.

As proposed so far, the concept of the multivocal practice means to constantly bridge and continuously merge the four categories of the singing, speaking, extended and disembodied voice and, by doing so, to relentlessly dissolve the alleged boundaries. But, beyond that, what if we conceive the concept of a multivocal practice in a broader sense and apply it also in the context of research? Will it disprove or underscore the thesis? In this regard, the secondary, yet driving aim of the project *Monsters I Love* is to instigate the discourse of the politics of contemporary vocal performance art by applying and probing the concept of the multivocal practice. The idea is to develop a solo vocal act with discursive qualities and elements aiming to display possible threads to describe a philosophical ground and socio-cultural premises and principles of extended vocal performance art. By means of the format of a lecture performance, *The Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice* touches upon the principles of the performance voice in regards to physiology and the performance process, upon the ubiquitously observable phenomenon of pedagogical stagnation as well as upon anxiety issues against the unknown and unfamiliar. The way to nudge the discourse of vocal performance art, as I claim, is to contemplate our actions as performers by means of performativity. This doing, my aim is to peel off what conceals behind the question of 'what we are doing' when we are expanding the range of the voice going back and forth between prescribed functionality and vocal experimentations. The attempt to elaborate a 'discursive solo vocal act', *The Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice*, strives to provide insights into developing the principles, premises, politics and discourse of the contemporary performance voice through the practice itself. Possibly, this may contribute to the overarching and interdisciplinary field of voice studies as such. To draw on living philosopher John Durham Peters, 'the voice is at the center of the sciences and not only Geisteswisssensenschaften. […] The voice functions as art precisely because of its happy links with other zones. The voice is a preeminent object of interdisciplinary interest.'[7] In this sense, referring to the top of this paragraph and re-articulating the secondary research question, I'd like to formulate it more precisely and in concrete terms: *What are the politics of contemporary vocal performance art and by what means can I—as multivocal practitioner—reveal them?*

Ultimately, with regards to vocal performance art as presented in its entirety in *Moving Tongues: Playing Space*, my aim is to reach out for an electrified space of vocal expression and a heightened perception mode. The concealed research question is how to expand vocal performance art by means of multimedia, be it interactive or accompanying, taking into account and making use of the acoustic conditions of the performance space as given. Conceptualised as solo presentation, *Moving Tongues: Playing Space* is accompanied by video works, slide presentations as well as audio material all of which strive to illuminate the vocal and oral material of the human voice. As always given by the acoustic conditions that the performance space provides, the *Reaktorhallen* at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, in which the dissertation performance took place, deserves special attention due to its long reverb times as well as irregular and idiosyncratic room acoustics, phenomena

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[7] Peters, *The Voice and Modern Media*, in *Kunst-Stimmen* (2004), pp. 85-100 (p. 85). According to Peters, the conception of the voice as 'object of interdisciplinary interest' includes the voice as 'metaphor of power', 'medium of communication', 'vehicle of art and aesthetic expression', 'physical (or physiological) organ and as 'love-object', a 'site for the collection of desire […] and horror' (pp. 85-88). Further on, remarkably, he conjectures this: 'The most revolutionary developments in modern media may lie less in the visual than in the acoustic register' (p. 88).

such as flutter echoes or immersive sound perception all of which are emerging at specific spots only. In the first case the listener needs to stand close to the wall of shorter sides. The positions for the second case are given by standing furthest from the ceiling. This requires subtle dealings with regard to amplification of the voice as well as level control of the media as played back. On the other hand, it also gives the opportunity to develop multivocal presentation modes other than those that are usually expected from the format of a solo vocal performance. In this regard, it was during the entry situation that the listener is given the opportunity to move around in space to discover the position-dependent acoustics by listening to low-tone chantings as disseminated by single small loudspeaker from the floor below where the reactor used to be situated before the period it was shut down. Another way of making use of the acoustics as given in the performance space was to present an aria-like scene from the balcony behind the audience to experience the unamplified singing voice in the countertenor register. With regard to the overlapping of video and the live performance voice as displayed in compositions such as the one for voice and video called *Mönche am Meer*, simple ways of interaction between the two fields are presented. More intricate though it gets when during the second performance part, called *Voice And Live Electronics: The Strophonion*, the boundary between the human live voice and its sampled aural copy, the acousmatic voice, becomes blurred. This is explored by a wireless system consisting of two custom hand controllers, computer and sensor technology. An æsthetics of the in-between and uncertainty emerges entailing an encounter with the unfamiliar and the unpredictable, which makes us become alert and attuned to vocal soundscapes that at first might be unfamiliar, exotic and strange, but nevertheless increase the awareness of perception, which gets opened up and triggered by the pervasion of a variety of different listening modes, ever-changing during the performance act. The audience of such performances is invited to hear and listen, see and watch, and, by doing so, to tune in (*einstimmen*) to one vocal apparatus resonating in a space to experience, with a deepened attentiveness and expansive quality, the sounds of the voice.

> *Infinite readiness for the surprising, the unusual, the questioning also with a maximum of insecurity (security in insecurity), with a maximum of despairing restlessness (rest in the despairing restlessness)—searching is infinitely more important than finding.*
> Luigi Nono[8]

Expanding the Field of Vocal Arts through Multivocality, Live Technology and the Distinction between the Vocal and the Oral Sphere

One aim of the artistic research project *Monster I Love* is to propose a *multivocal* practice to the vocal arts. This is largely nurtured by my fascination of the multiple use of the voice and the underlying notion that many voices can be produced by and through one vocal apparatus [*Stimmapparat*]. As opposed to treading those paths that the concept of a one-register voice, as practiced in the vocal arts according to Western standards, suggest, I'm embarking to explore the possibilities and implications of a *multi-register* voice. Following this idea, *extended vocal techniques*, as equally important as the practices of the singing and speaking voice, are applied not only to expand the field of the vocal arts *per se*, but to allow a relentless research on the individual capabilities and qualities of human expression.

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[8] Nono, *Seguente*, (2014), liner notes to *Guai ai gelidi mostri* [Woe to the cold monster], for two alto voices, ensemble and live electronics (1983), pp. 39-40.

In a wider sense, the notion of a *multivocal practice* comprises as well the deployment of technological means which allows the performer to extend the voice even more so by working on transformative strategies to generate and multiply an artificial voice that, once disseminated via computer and loudspeakers, shows the power to highlight the original, the human live voice. For, precisely because of the juxtaposition of the original with its copy, the disembodied, acousmatic voice, the aim is to reveal not only the potential of the performance voice, what it could be, but also its philosophical groundings, what it could mean to us at the present time.

Another thread that I follow is to consider the mouth as an exclusive site for producing sounds. What interests me is the question concerning the entrenchment of a practice that likes to emphasise the mouth as mere sound generator that doesn't involve the vocal cords. Such a concept doesn't prioritise the mouth limited to a linguistic function, but in fact unleashes a plethora of oral sounds. It is a basic prerequisite of my practice to consider the glottis and the mouth as two different, possibly separated sound generators and therefore to differentiate between a vocal and an oral sphere. This dualistic approach to vocal sound production within one vocal mechanism or, in other words, the equal share of vocal and oral aspects within the potential of a voice is an important premise to recognise the voice as a whole. It is my view that a practice of various different oral art forms, a *creative orality*, doesn't only enrich and expand, but in fact seems to complete the field of the vocal arts.

What's a monster to be loved?
The title of the research project suggests that the artistic outcomes are odd, anomalous, aberrant. But yet, they ought to be loved, I propose, exactly due to their unfamiliarity, uniqueness and peculiarity. Usually, monsters are violent. But, here in this case, whom do they fight against? What all monsters have in common and address is an unruliness regarding norm and standards. The hidden agenda of the research project is an æsthetics of differentiation. What appears monstrous to you, might not be the case for me.

As touched upon in the previous paragraph, one task of the research project is to point to the claim that the mouth is a concrete entity for which I argue that it is or can become an exclusive site for sound production. The other implication of the project refers to the notion of *multivocality*, inherent in every single voice, and the potential diversification of the voice and its material by means of so-called vocal extended techniques. The third aspect comes into play once live technology is implemented to produce multiple voices out of one. In this way the term *mulivocality* is taken literal. The implicit proposition of a multivocal art practice is that the voice consists of many voices, on the one hand, and that it essentially comprises more than just the state of being a tool for mere communication and information transfer in linguistic terms, but rather hosts a multitude of expressive dimensions touching sonic spaces of uniqueness and a quality hitherto unknown. The artistic concept of *multivocality* and the affordances that an extended voice provides aim to discover novel kind of terrains and unexplored territories for the voice in the vocal arts.

In regards to its reception, as the history of the *other voice* shows which still is to be written, the notion of multivocality and an extended practice to entrench an unusual

vocal art form carries it straight into the niche, a place far from being acknowledged by a broader audience. Every artistic attempt to extend the voice beyond the norm, in its traditional understanding as mere tool for communication, often ends up—still—in head-shakings and misunderstandings. Therefore, the multivocal practitioner is always already doomed to perform exclusively for the initiates and well-informed circles. It is against this backdrop that *Monsters I Love* also formulates an utopian idea of becoming a potential site to flee to, a place of refuge. For, to leave the semantic aspect of a voice projecting words with intended meanings takes us into a space where the sound of the vocal (*phone*) not only supersedes the word (*logos*), but yields an *in-betweeness*, an unknown terrain whose agency, at first, might appear elusive and obscure. And yet, listening at and watching the production of vocal art utterances beyond linguistic meaning, and its deconstructed counterparts afforded by computer manipulations, new territories of vocal art expression emerge all of which claim to bear their own idiosyncratic and manifold modes of meaning. Utterance, severed from the connection to human intention, which becomes explicit through the production of linguistic semantics, uncloses *new spaces of sheer expressivity* that aim at the entrenchment of a transgressive performance voice relentlessly seeking for intensification and transcendence and, therefore, for a 'radical vocality'.[9]

It is in this regard that the artistic research project with its title follows a line tracing back to the Artaudian doctrine as exposed in the seminal work 'The Theatre of Cruelty (First Manifesto)':

> 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.[10]

Conclusively, the philosophical discourse of the voice oscillates back and forth between the poles of an understanding of the voice as mere acoustic phenomenon, on the one hand, and the metaphorical application, on the other, as it displays in expressions such as the voice of the composer, the voice of the author, the voice of the people, etc. Regarding the voice exclusively through these two strands obviously narrows the complexity that is inherent in the vast realm of the voice. My goal is to show that there are many more dimensions in play when the voice comes to play. *Monsters I Love* aspires to nudge a thinking that stretches and thus challenges the common definitions and boundaries of the voice that, once exposed into and pervaded by the continuous flow of sound and music, yields, instead, multitudinous modes of meanings.[11]

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[9] See Verstraete, *Radical Vocality in Performance* (2009); Verstraete, *Vocal Extensions* (2011), pp. 1-5, 15, 17-18; Verstraete, 'Radical Vocality, Auditory Distress and Disembodied Voice: The Resolution of the Voice-body in The Wooster Group' *La Didone*' in *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance* (2011).

[10] Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, p. 64.

[11] For more insights on the history of the philosophy of the voice see Dolar: *The Voice and Nothing More* (2006), Ihde: *Listening and Voice* (2007), Lagaay's book chapter 'Towards a (Negative) Philosophy of Voice' in *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance* (2011) and, last but not least, Cavarero's insightful and inspiring book *For More than One Voice* (2005).

<u>One Chapter a Day—Encountering the Research Project in a Week</u>
If excluding the introduction, the exposition *Monsters I Love* consists of seven parts
each of which, by displaying a few artistic research subprojects, highlights one
specific aspect from the entire artistic research project. By doing so, seven chapters
evolve that in hindsight matches the way I was structuring the work over the course of
a week. In analogy, I'd like to invite the visitor of the exposition to explore one
chapter a day. For this reason I added the week days to the actual chapter titles as
accessible under the menu item CONTENTS of the exposition or through the page
Table of Contents:

<u>MONDAY</u>:
Chapter one, *Voice-Vision*, maps out a variety of works for the solo voice, realised by
myself, with the goal to reveal the potential range of the performance voice and to
unfold both the vocal and oral imaginary without the use of live electronics.

<u>TUESDAY</u>:
With regard to the entirety of the exposition, chapter two represents one out of two
excursions and is entitled *Interludes with Voices of Musicians*. By presenting two
compositions, a chamber music piece and an orchestral miniature, this chapter
examines the potential as well as the pitfalls of incorporating the voice of the
musician as compositional material into the creational process.

<u>WEDNESDAY</u>:
Through a variety of different media in chapter three, it is the interfacing of the voice
with live electronics, i.e. *The Strophonion with LiSa (Part 1)*, which is explored
within the context of my vocal art performances. LiSa, the abridged version of Live
Sampling, was the software component that I used to apply in extended vocal art
performances until February 2018 when I began to deploy a newly developed
software on the basis of Max 7 which is elucidated in chapter seven. Chapter three
The Strophonion with LiSa (Part 1) provides the online article *Designing and Playing
the Strophonion*, published at the Montréal-based online journal for electroacoustic
music *econtact!*, as well as a number of documentary videos of public performances
and studio productions all of which present works for the strophonion almost all of
which in combination with my voice.
<u>THURSDAY</u>:
Titled *Interaction with Allies*, chapter four gathers four subprojects three of which are
realised in public. The artistic research projects in this chapter focus on different
strategies to explore the notion of musical conversation by means of improvisation
between musicians and me as vocal performer with or without live electronics. The
exposure of two trios and one duet, exploration the pervasion of the voice paradigms,
i.e. singing, speaking, extended and disembodied voice, and in so doing gives insights
into the *transgressive and integrative* approach to vocal arts. Different to the previous
ones focusing on the exchange with musicians, the fourth project called *Ties and
Bonds* is a collaboration with dancer-choreographer Susanne Martin from Berlin
demonstrating the encounter of extended vocal art practices with those of
contemporary dance through the exploration of various modes of improvisation and
experimentation live onstage.

<u>FRIDAY</u>:

Chapter five displays *The Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice*. Presented in both German and English language, this project attempts to fathom and reveal the principles for the contemporary performance voice regarding its philosophical, socio-cultural and educational grounds. Both versions, each of which through a documentary video, include a public presentation and the underlying essay. In both cases, the written account is more detailed if compared to the oral presentation displaying a densified version.

The documentary video of the German original displays a lecture-performance, whereas the English version, performed at first, namely during the 9th SAR, an international conference on Artistic Research at the University of Plymouth in April 2018, represents a lecture.

This chapter not only reveals philosophical groundings for the contemporary performance voice in the vocal arts, but also demonstrates the process from essay writing and giving account in the form of a lecture to finally performing the knowledge transfer. In this regard, the chapter provides the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the process necessary to develop a practice that strives to achieve the combination of knowledge transfer, on the one hand, and performance practices, on the other.

SATURDAY:
Containing the second excursion of the exposition, chapter six called *Interpretations by Trained Singers*, addresses the question concerning mediation of idiosyncratic vocal practices to other vocal performers. This has been implemented through the artistic research project *Extending Voices, Sampling the Other* together with the vocal ensemble Auditivvokal Dresden.

SUNDAY:
The last chapter *The Strophonion with Max (part 2)* rounds off the exposition by focusing on the project *Haunted Territories* which is an extended vocal and bodily art performance for two soloists, a female dancer and a male vocal performer combining the human voice with gesture-controlled live electronics. Realised at the Radialsystem V Berlin in February 2018 and documented through a video of the premiere performance together with an interview by the audience right after that, the artistic research project explores the notion of performing the *in-between* when equally engaging into vocal and oral, bodily and technology-related practices. The visitor of the exposition gain a better understanding of the three year-long production process and its intricacies related to computer, sensor and wireless technology if reading the essay called *Intercourse with Ghosts: 'Haunted Territories' revisted* and visiting the related page that gives insights into the current software configuration of the strophonion based on the audio processing software *Max 7* programmed by Berlin-based developer of musical interfaces Sukandar Kartadinata. The artistic research project critically engages with advantages and pitfalls of wireless technology. As presented in *Haunted Territories*, the practice of *voice-induced sound dance*, as I propose to call the practice of combining the performance voice with gesture-controlled live electronics, is embedded in a rather dance or theatrical setting as opposed to the realisation of a mere concert-like performance. In so doing and also by encountering Franz Kafka's thinking, this project aims to fathom the narratives of the strophonion as a custom-built, gesture-controlled, computer- and sensor-based live

electronic instrument, which allows the application of various different live sampling practices and manipulations and, in so doing, the immediate juxtaposition of the original with the copied version of the human voice.

What I propose, therefore, is very simple:
it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.
Hannah Arendt[12]

Driving Forces, Motivation and Departure Points for the PhD project

What helped me finding the path through the thicket of an artistic research project were questions as formulated by no one else than two great thinkers of the twentieth century, Roland Barthes and Hannah Arendt. In regards to the question of what the task of research is, I focussed on constantly asking myself borrowing the Barthesian question 'What is missing?'[13] On the other hand, it was the Arendtian demand to ask 'what we are doing' which helped me analysing the artistic research process. This way I was able to make consecutive decisions not only for myself as artist, but also in regards to the question how the artistic research project and its related questions are connected to the vocal arts as research field, which is illuminated in *The Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice*.

The artistic research project *Monsters I Love* puts an emphasis on methods borrowed from the area of improvisation and experimentation. Composition in its narrow definition of writing a score to be performed afterwards is applied as well, but only in regards to some parts of the PhD project, especially in those cases when other musicians and vocal performers are invited into. In order to explore and reveal the hidden dimensions of the project, an improvisational and experimental methodology does not only enable an approach to vocal arts that is intuitive, but also instantaneous. Concerning the possibilities that the computer provides, I would like to point to the notion of an extended composition as specified by Trevor Wishart in *On Sonic Art*:

> The power of computer to help us construct the internal architecture of sounds from first principles allows us to broaden the concept of composer to include the notion of sonic sculpture.[14]

The conception of composition in the sense of sculpturing sounds gets strengthened even more if gesture-controlled interfaces are applied to shape sound and music in real-time while making the sound production process visually plausible, at least to a certain extent. For more insights on composition in its extended understanding, I'd like to point to chapter 7 and the corresponding part *Towards a thinking of improvisation as practice of instant composition* from the essay *Intercourse with Ghosts* (p.11-12).

With regard to the application of compositions within the artistic research project in the form of written scores and thus in its traditional understanding, I didn't see the need to explore it much further, especially in the case when the practitioner is both in personal union, composer and performer. Conversely, the other case, which is to

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[12] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 5.

[13] Barthes, 'Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers', *Image, Music, Text* (1977), p. 197.

[14] Wishart, *On Sonic Art* (1996), p. 8.

compose for others, represents an area that, previously to the PhD project, I explored extensively by spending a good deal of time creating a number of compositions in the field of vocal chamber music and, above all, two works for the opera stage that is *Die Bestmannoper* [The best man's opera] for 14 solo singers, a female and male choir and orchestra, and the *Traumnovelle* [Dream novella] for seven singers and 14 musicians. Insofar, to some extent, by then I started to explore the notion of a multivocal practice in its meaning of transgressing the four performance voice paradigms of the singing, speaking, extended and disembodied voice.

The second departure point is obviously the practice of vocal art performance without the use of technological means. Over the course of eleven years, during the time before graduation as *Diplommusikpädagoge*, which is conceived equivalent in comparison with the master in music education, in 2000 at the University Potsdam Germany, I focused on the classically trained tenor voice, voice teaching and elementary music education as well as music theory including composition. In regards to the *belcanto* voice, I studied with a few voice teachers in Germany and in the USA: Christoph Dobmeier from the University Ludwig-Maximilian in Munich, Dr. Michael Büttner and Gerold Herrmann from the University Potsdam Germany and with Floyd Callaghan from SUNY Potsdam (NY) USA. Apart from academic studies, I explored the possibilities of my own voice ranging from the classical repertoire to improvisations, from whistling to experimental performances. Being involved also in Jazz and a number of Punkrock projects in the 1990s, I was given the opportunity to gain good insights into what the voice is able to achieve and, above all, to bear. The physiological limits have been tested so-to-speak. By going through and collecting all these experiences representing a special form of body knowledge the potential of another approach to vocal arts and therefore of an *other* performance voice unveiled right in front of me creating some urgency to further explore its potentialities and investigate the æsthetics entailed.

This obsession became even more propelling after I started to apply gesture-controlled devices to steer the sonic and musical parameters on the basis of sensor and computer technology. This was made possible due to numerous residencies as provided and supported by the studio for electro-instrumental music, STEIM, in Amsterdam. In regards to the development and playing of new musical interfaces, which is investigated and unveiled in the online article *Designing and Playing the Strophonion*: *Extending vocal art performance using a custom digital musical instrument*, as presented in chapter two, *Voice and Strophonion (Part 2)*, it is certainly Michel Waisvisz, the former director of STEIM, whose influence needs to brought into focus. When I first visited STEIM in Amsterdam in 2007, I had the chance to attend a class with Waisvisz. His way of designing and playing the instrument, *The Hands*,[15] which he developed since the mid 1980s, was mind-blowing considering the mastery he has reached as musician and as designer of interactive musical instruments including software and hardware development. Together with flautist Sabine Vogel we were even given the opportunity to play in a trio formation with Waisvisz and recorded the session as it spontaneously took place in one of the rehearsal spaces at STEIM.[16] For me, at this time a musical realm with seemingly unlimited possibilities

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[15] See http://www.crackle.org/TheHands.htm.

[16] See http://steim.org/2009/04/first-date-michel-waisivz-alex-nowitz-sabine-vogel-2007/. It was only a few months later, on 18th of June 2008 that Waisvisz passed away. Since then, his advice in

unfolded: the development of and the performance with live electronics. It opened up novel kinds of performance practices that I became fond of working with. With the great support of sound designer and composer Daniel Schorno, I was given the chance to develop the *stimmflieger*, whose hardware components consists of two remote controllers from the Nintendo Wii playstation and whose software was based on components developed at STEIM, that is, *LiSa* (live sampling) and the connectivity software *junXion*.[17] In 2009, it happened that, with regard to this instrument, I received the first prize for live electronic music projects hosted by the ECPNM (European Conference for Promoting New Music) at the ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music) in Gothenburg. As a result, from beginning of 2010 through to 2011, STEIM offered me the opportunity to develop a live electronic instrument from scratch. This gave me the chance to closely collaborate with great software designer Frank Baldé, a long-time collaborator of Waisvisz and programmer of LiSa and junXion. Apart from revealing the functionality of the instrument and displaying video documentation, the article *Designing and Playing the Strophonion* provides more insights into the fantastic six-year-long collaboration with Baldé—an irreplaceable experience that I'm extraordinarily grateful for. Throughout numerous working sessions, we developed the first software configuration for the *strophonion* whose hardware components of two asymmetrical hand controllers and its wireless communication system were developed and built during a two year-long residency at STEIM in close collaboration with and on account of the craftsmanship of visual artist Florian Goettke who designed the housings of the controllers and Korean musician Byung-Jun Kwon who proposed various versions and finally assembled and tested the electronics as they exist to the present day.[18]

developing and playing the instruments, the *stimmflieger* and, later on, the *strophonion*, was heavily missed. See http://steim.org/archive/Michel/index.php?lang=EN.

[17] See Nowitz, 'Voice and Live-Electronics using Remotes as Gestural Controllers', in *eContact! 10.4* (2008), https://econtact.ca/10_4/nowitz_voicelive.html. Note that at the time of the article's publication, I haven't yet given a name to the instrument consisting of computer, analogue-to-digital interface and two wireless remote controllers from the Nintendo Wii. This happened to be the case only afterwards, naming it the *stimmflieger* [voice kite] in order to distinguish it from the newly, custom-built live electronics, the *strophonion.*

[18] For further insights see Alex Nowitz, 'The Strophonion – Instrument Development (2010-2011)', in *STEIM's projectblog*, January 2012, http://steim.org/projectblog/2012/01/02/alex-nowitz-the-strophonion-instrument-development-2010-2011/.

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