

# INTRODUCTION TO

VERSION 01

## ***MOUTH IS THE PLACE, VOICE IS THE SPACE***

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

### Abstract:

The PhD project and its related exposition on the research catalogue with the same title, *Mouth Is The Place, Voice Is The Space*, explores an integrative approach to the four main categories of the contemporary performance voice, that is, the singing, speaking, extended and disembodied voice. In so doing the artistic research project proposes a *multivocal practice* in the vocal arts.

As a 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 multibranch and nurtured by experiential, epistemic, phenomenological, technical (voice) and technological (sensors, computer) insights. The artistic research project encompasses documentary videos and audio material of public performances, lectures and artist talks 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, articles and also one email critique.

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 aesthetics 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. A performance of the in-between emerges when vocal and bodily meet those technology-related practices that aim at the expansion of the vocal realm by using custom and gesture-controlled live electronics, i.e. the *strophonion* formerly built at the studio for electro-instrumental music, STEIM, in Amsterdam and, during the course of the PhD, further developed by Berlin-based software programmer Sukandar Kartadinata. On the basis of the audio processing software application *Max 7* from California-based company *Cycling '74*, Kartadinata and I created an intricate configuration that challenges the performer, but at the same time endows with great flexibility.

The notion of multivocality addresses various modes of new kinds 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. But the most 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', addresses its potential groundings in theoretical and philosophical regards. The result is what I would like to call a 'discursive solo performance act' that, by means of the combination of knowledge transfer, on the one hand, and performance, on the other, aims at propelling the discourse on the politics of the contemporary performance voice. 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 of the performance voice today? By detecting limits, on the one hand, and tracing unknown terrains, on the other, the PhD project has become an extensive, material-related exploration of vocal and oral soundscapes as well as of an almost unbounded vocal expressiveness that gets unleashed by both pushing and shifting boundaries.

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

### The oral sphere and the notion of multivocality—a two-strand artistic research project?

Usually the mouth is considered as part of the voice. We can compare the mouth with the ending of the tube of any brass instrument serving as amplifier and modulating the sound as produced by the vibration of the lips in case of the brass instruments and of the vocal chords in case of the voice. In fact, the mouth is the most prominent part of the voice, it makes visible what is not: the vocal chords. Turning away from mere vocal sound production towards the field of speech and language, then the mouth presents itself as signifying tool that, by embedding the vowels and their numerous variations, gives direction to the vowel sounds and in so doing represents the essential part in producing the codes for linguistic meaning. The mouth is the regent in the realm of the consonants, which is the site for verbal fencing. As Brandon LaBelle notes in the *Lexicon of the Mouth* the 'voice is mostly constrained to the arena of communication' (p. 61) while one is prone to add that the mouth is limited to the function of serving as the voice's assistant. This concept is applied ubiquitously and even in the musical realm of the vocal arts and its educational system which, by the way, mostly fosters the aesthetics of the nineteenth century. But what interests me, beyond all that, is the question about the entrenchment of a practice that emphasises on the mouth as sound generator on its own without the involvement of vocal chords. It is my aim to shed light on the potential of the voice as a whole by differentiating the vocal

from the oral sphere. It's true, of course, that they cannot be separated from each other, they work hand in hand so-to-speak, but they also have great potential to exist side by side. The artistic approach to vocal arts through *creative orality* does not only strive to complete the vocal arts, but also to unfold an autonomous and separate strand of vocal artistry. In consequence, wouldn't it be time to bring back and subsume the practice of the *oral arts* under the umbrella of vocal arts as opposed to be a separate strand that is in fact mainly practiced by actors and visual artists as opposed by vocal performers? What has gone wrong? As artistic researcher in the field of vocal performance it is my aim to foster an approach to the vocal arts that takes into account both spheres, the vocal and the oral, and in so doing to illuminate the importance of oral artistry next to the overarching vocal arts. In other words, the oral approach to the vocal arts, the practice of generating sounds by isolating the mouth components, i.e. lips, tongue and palate, from the vocal chords attempts to emphasise the conception of the mouth as sound generator on its own as opposed to its common function as mere amplifying tube and modulator of sounds as produced by the vocal chords.

The following considerations are to be regarded as an excursion, but by no means are they dispensable to get the full picture of this approach. It is worth noting that the beginnings of a creative orality, which is often also called *sound poetry*, has been in practice since the beginning of the twentieth century and thus is nothing new. The movement of *Dada* with its focus on nonsensical, but precisely because of that, highly political outcomes is to be considered as the immediate response to World War I and thus a protest against the absurdity of war logics and the massive, serial and mutual killings of humans. It is in Dada and Futurist poems that an oral sphere came to the fore by renegading against the pathos of the *belcanto* voice of the bourgeois opera gradually becoming the artistic representation of the society at the time not only allowing, but pushing forward the machinery of war. Eventually, with the advent of electronic amplification and the possibility of using microphones and loudspeakers to extend the voice's volume, the singing voice was no longer constrained to focus on its capabilities of being loud and penetrating enough to reach beyond the orchestra. More importantly, the softest voice sounds imaginable now could be projected and thus become of great importance entailing, eventually, a shift in aesthetics. Since then, suddenly hisses and whispered sounds, just to name two, could compete with percussion instruments and provide a novel soundscape. I cannot illuminate this field in detail, since it would go way beyond the scope of this work, but it is important to mention the huge impact on the voice that the development of electronics always had and still has once the means of state-of-the-art technology were available and applied. In fact, it has almost turned into an equation that each invention in the field of electronics related to vocal sound production, one way or the other, had a tremendous impact on how we listen to the voice's properties that then entails immediate changes on the aesthetics of the voice.<sup>1</sup> Returning to the movement of Dada as starting point for an awareness

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<sup>1</sup> All these considerations are nurtured by John Durham Peters: *Speaking into the Air: A history of the idea of communication*, Jonathan Sterne: *The Audible Past: Cultural origins of sound production* and Theodor W. Adorno, especially the essay *Opera and the Long-Playing Record*. However, a thorough investigation waits to

of the *oral sphere*, one might ask whether it carries the potential to be a site for rebellion and resistance or not. Or, on the other hand, is this question connected to and therefore dependent on the surrounding socio-cultural frame works? It is not my main thesis, but it's worth mentioning in the context of upheaving the oral sphere that it seems to be engraved in Western culture that, almost like a display of enhanced alterity, oral art practices do bear a subversive power that has the potential to undermine the standards of communication.

The second main aim of the artistic research project *Mouth is the Place, Voice is the Space* is to propose a *multivocal* practice in the vocal arts, which 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 voice apparatus. Following this idea, so-called *extended vocal techniques*, equally important as the singing or speaking voice, are going to be applied. In another, rather broader sense, the *multivocal* practice includes also the deployment of technological means which allows to work on cumulative as well as manipulative strategies to multiply generate an artificial voice that, in return while in so doing, strengthens the original, the human live voice. For, precisely because of the juxtaposition of the copy with its original, we gain a better understanding of the potential of the performance voice, of what it could be, and of its philosophical groundings, of what it means to us.

*Planet Earth's the sound of guns, anger, frustration.*  
Sun Ra—Space is the Place

### The title of the PhD project *Mouth is the Place, Voice is the Space*

The title is inspired by the 1974-released science fiction movie and the soundtrack with the same title, *Space is the Place*, by Jazz musician and composer, the Afrofuturist *Sun Ra* who together with *his Arkestra* protested against racism and hatred in the world in general and the USA in particular. Similarly to the Arendtian observation, one is only safe from anti-Semitism on the moon, Sun Ra, through the film and its title as well as by means of an aesthetics of the fantastical, gave expression to the utopian idea that Afro-Americans have only one option left on planet Earth, that is, to go to outer space.

The perspective of the secluded, segregated and ostracised is what this artistic research exposition and its title *Mouth is the Place, Voice is the Space* attempts to draw on, too. It follows this way of thinking aiming at a two-fold implication. The first part *Mouth is the Place* points 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.

*Voice is the Space*, on the other hand, is referring to the notion of *multivocality*, inherent in every single voice, and the potential diversification of the voice and

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be written, especially when looked upon from a perspective that emphasises the interdependent relationship between the development of electronics, on the one hand, and the perception of the voice and its related aesthetics, on the other.

its material by means of extended techniques, on the one hand, and live technology, on the other. The implicit proposition 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 hitherto unknown quality and uniqueness. The artistic concept of *multivocality* and the affordances that the extended voice provides aim to discover new 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, by the way, is still to be written, the notion of multivocality and an extended practice to entrench a novel 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 forced misunderstandings. Sometimes it even reaps resistance loaded with pugnacity. Therefore, the multivocal practitioner is always already doomed to perform exclusively for the initiates and well-informed circles. It is against this backdrop that *Voice is the Space* also formulates the 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-betweenness', 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 a radically intensified and transcendental vocality.

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 his 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.<sup>2</sup>

Conclusively, the philosophical discourse on 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 people, etc. Regarding the voice exclusively through these two strands obviously narrows the complexity that is inherent in the voice's realm. My goal is to show

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<sup>2</sup> Artaud, p. 64

that there are many more dimensions in play when the voice comes to play. *Mouth is the Place, Voice is the Space* aspires to nudge a thinking on the voice 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.<sup>3</sup>

*What I propose, therefore, is very simple:  
it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.*

Hannah Arendt  
'Prologue' in *The Human Condition*

### Research questions and opening Pandora's box

The PhD project departed for the exploration of the possibilities for the contemporary performance voice tracing the potential of the extended voice and transgressing the voice paradigms, i.e. singing, speaking, extended and disembodied voice. From there on, a number of questions unfolded on a subordinate level, like how can we pursue this in an integrative rather than exclusive way? In so doing what do we impart? Other questions arose, since they are not the same and require different responses, like how to extend both the voice and the vocal art performance. What do we learn from considering the space as co-player and how does that change the practice? Furthermore, when it comes down to the implementation of gesture-controlled technology, what conceptions and strategies can be pursued to translate gestural vocabulary into sonic and musical parameters? How does that effect the performer's presence onstage? A number of questions also came up within the context of presenting the artistic research project, like how to transfer the insights and findings to both the peers as well as those who are no experts in the field? Similarly, with regard to the former, I ask myself how can I convey idiosyncratic practices outside the norm to other vocal performers. Is this possible or a paradoxical undertaking? If so doing what do we actually gain? What methods emerge and which are indispensable to be applied in order to come to satisfying artistic outcomes or, at least, to some conclusions. Another matter that was concealed from the beginning, but found its way to the surface was the question if the presentation of artistic research itself can become an artistic event? What's the line between art and research actually? Sure, every case is different and therefore hard to tell one may be inclined to reply. But, to put it quite bluntly, what's the point of artistic research if it doesn't make a difference in comparison with the main research strands, the natural and human sciences? In any case, as a preliminary conclusion, I'd like to point to this: the more performative we're able to present our work, the more convincing and appealing it should be in the end. But then again, is this kind of concept more about seduction than research? However this may be, what has been bugging me with regard to the PhD process as an artistic

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<sup>3</sup> For more insights on the history of the philosophy of the voice see Mladen Dolar: *The Voice and Nothing More*, Don Ihde's seminal book *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, Alice Lagaay's influential essay 'Towards a (Negative) Philosophy of Voice' in *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance*, pp. 57-69 and, last but not least, Adriana Cavarero's inspiring and insightful book *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*.

research project, is the question of why are we doing all this and accept all the additional work, time and efforts that it needs to take while trespassing? On the one hand, the artist as researcher is confined by the alleged frame of fulfilling research standards that, in the realm of artistic research, are actually undefined and need to be set by each single researcher. On the other hand, the researcher as artist, uncertain of the expectations in the domain of artistic research, gradually, but certainly becomes unsettled during the PhD process. All the well-intentioned advices that the PhD procedure in artistic research shall strengthen the researcher's artistic practice get, at the same time, undermined by qualitative and quantitative research standards, as conducted in the human and natural sciences, and the expectations brought along entailing categorising, sizing, filing, classifying and arranging, sorting and systematising procedures. It's a paradoxical undertaking when the artist becomes researcher, understood in the narrow sense, because it implies in almost every case that the artist would have to give up the methodology as performed until then which, to a great extent, was nurtured by a subjective approach and specific experiences made along the way. It gets really troublesome, on top of everything else, if the artist-researcher encounters one of the most crucial matters that gets unveiled during the process of a PhD project that is the question of how to present an artistic research topic if the object of investigation, here in my case my own voice as an art object, literally coincides with the voice of the researcher. At this juncture, it is the subjective/objective dilemma as outlined by contemporary philosopher Dieter Mersch, to name just one out of many, that becomes not only evident, but also a quite distressful momentum in the work for the artist-researcher. Even more, probably due to reasons to compensate the imbalance, the research project seems to become a rapacious beast unstoppable in asking for more and more and more and more questions. Therefore, it seems quite obvious that delineating the project's goals is a good advice to give for the person concerned in order to carry on. However, if the artist-researcher has a good hunch of what to achieve during a four year-PhD project even though one might not be able to formulate it adequately at the beginning (which is the definition of hunch...), the artist-researcher might still be able to conclude the research project in a successful way. But that doesn't take away the painful process the artist-researcher goes through.

Anyway, it must be remembered that, when it comes down to possibly answer one question, it can be assured that the next question is already awaiting around the corner to be raised. But is the highly reflective stance of the artist-researcher really an indispensable premise to conduct artistic research? Does it really strengthen the artistic practices? De facto, when it comes down to answer one question, we cannot ignore the emerging next one since all questions are actually inter-connected with each other weaving a net on which the artist-researcher's practices are grounded? Therefore, ignoring an evolving question is a *no-go* for the artist-researcher unless there are really good reasons for, that it might be too far-fetched, leading away from the actual topic, and so on. On the contrary, it is my believe that it is the duty of the artist-researcher to allow and even facilitate ramifications and the proliferation of the research topic in order to, eventually,

reveal the 'hidden dimensions' of the project and/or the related field.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the ramifications within a research project, as expressed through a variety of questions, are inherent in an artistic research project. Maybe this is what, in the end, distinguishes knowledge production in artistic research from that in the natural and human sciences. Artistic research is far from being an easy undertaking. But what it should reveal in any case, is the subject's complexity as chosen and its embedding in the intricacies of socio-cultural and philosophical matters at the present day.

Returning to *my* research questions, I want to note that after having read a great amount of literature on the philosophical discourse around the voice it came to my mind that there isn't much to draw on when it comes down to the question about the philosophical fundament of the contemporary vocal art performance. Instead, much too many assumptions are made without asking why they are made the way they are. In order to question these assumptions, I wrote the *Manifesto for the Multivocal Voice* and, subsequently, performed it—in order to reveal the philosophical groundings, the educational impasses and the socio-cultural impacts for the vocal performer today. By doing so, I tried to equally combine the aspect of knowledge transfer with respective performance actions.

Along the way of the course of the PhD, especially in regards to the last project called *Haunted Territories*, a number of questions emerged having been on my mind from the beginning, but due to time management issues related to the technical process of developing a new software environment for the strophonion, I wasn't able, until then, to address them properly: what are the narratives of playing gesture-controlled live electronics, i.e. the *strophonion*, a custom-built, digital musical instrument, in a rather theatrical context than in a mere concert-like performance? In consequence, what are the possible ways to embed a novel performance practice into the logics of staging it? Based on the interweavement of practices, the vocal and oral as well as the bodily and technology-related, what are the possible ways to present the practice of applying the strophonion in combination with the live voice which I like to call *vocal* or *voice-induced sound dance*? In so doing even more questions steal in: what is the frame work to create a music-theatre piece with live electronics such as the strophonion? What are the quality benchmarks for the creation of music-theatre performances today anyway, without making use of concepts of mere representation, on the one hand, and without bluntly repeating the past, on the other?

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<sup>4</sup> Compare Coessens, Crispin, Douglas: *The Artistic Turn: A Manifesto*, p. 181.



*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.*

Dieter Mersch

'Artistic Research' in *Epistemologies of Aesthetics* (2015)

### Driving forces: Roland Barthes, Hannah Arendt, Trevor Wishart

Admittedly, this compilation of artistic research questions as just outlined might confuse the reader who looks at it from an outside perspective. But I was and am inside the subject matter which forced me to pursue each single question of the aforementioned bringing me to where I finally got. All the questioning have become necessary to carve out each artistic research subproject. I received great support and inspiration through the supervision provided by Rolf Hughes and Sten Sandell. In addition, what helped me finding the right path through the thicket of an artistic research project, was to constantly square the steps that I sensed I need to take with two main questions as formulated by no one else than great thinkers of the twentieth century, Roland Barthes and Hannah Arendt. Thus, in regards to the question of what the task of research is, I tried to focus on the Barthesian question *What is missing?* On the other hand, it was the Arendtian notion of *What are we doing?* which helped me analysing the research process and making consecutive decisions not only for myself, but also in regards to the question how the artistic research project and its related questions are connected to the overarching artistic research landscape of the vocal arts. There isn't a vast array of predecessors to draw on, but certainly Michel Waisvisz, the former director of STEIM, needs to be mentioned in regards to the development and playing of new musical interfaces which has been 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 three. Concerning the combination and juxtaposition of voice and live electronics there are few colleagues who pursue similar approaches, although quite different in regards to technical implementations as well as aesthetics: tenor and composer Carl Unandar-Scharin from Stockholm, who contributed to the field by creating interfaces for the singing voice and a number of installative concert performances. Furthermore comparable goals might be found when comparing my practices with those of Franziska Baumann from Zurich or Pamela Z from San Francisco. Based on my experiences of working with and on my own voice exploring the potential of vocal and oral sounds, the artistic research project of *Mouth is the Place, Voice is the Space* is obviously a speculative one. In this sense, the artist-researcher is even more relying and dependent on what has been done before. Insofar, the work by composer and vocal performer Trevor Wishart as displayed in his seminal book *On Sonic Art* was not only of great inspiration, but also represented an anchor to which I could always return to helping me not to lose faith in the project. However, drawing on the matter of subjectivity, I would like to claim that without the power of subjectivity I wouldn't have come to where I got. For, without subjectivity, objectivity lacks of the beating heart, the driving force. Without objectivity, on the other hand, subjectivity runs into danger of spinning around and moving in circles. It's evident that, when we talk about demarcating the field of artistic research, it's a balance between the two that the artist-

researcher needs to reach out for whilst, at the same time, allowing experiences to take place and creations to take shape.

### One chapter a day—encountering the multivocal practitioner in a week

If excluding the introduction, the exposition *Mouth is the Place, Voice is the Space* 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 at the end of the chapter titles accessible under the menu item CONTENTS of the exposition:

1) 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.

2) 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.

3) 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.

4) 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.

5) 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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.

6) 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.

7) 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' revisited* 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.

### Departure points and motivational aspects for the PhD project *Mouth is the Place, Voice is the Space*

The artistic research project *Mouth is the Place, Voice is the Space* 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 add and 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.<sup>5</sup>

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 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

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<sup>5</sup> *On Sonic Art*, p. 8.

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 aesthetics 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. For me at the time starting in autumn 2007, a completely new musical realm unfolded: the development of and the performance with live electronics. It opened up novel kinds of performance possibilities and practices that I became fascinated to work 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 and whose software was based on components developed at STEIM, that is, LiSa (live sampling) and the connectivity software junXion.<sup>6</sup> It happened that, with regard to this instrument, I made the first prize for live electronic music projects hosted by the ECPNM (European Conference for Promoting New Music) at the ISCM (International

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<sup>6</sup> See article Alex Nowitz, 'Voice and Live-Electronics using Remotes as Gestural Controllers', in *eContact! 10.4 — Temps réel, improvisation et interactivité en électroacoustique / Live-electronics—Improvisation—Interactivity in Electroacoustics*, Montréal: Communauté électroacoustique canadienne / Canadian Electroacoustic Community, October 2008, [https://econtact.ca/10\\_4/nowitz\\_voicelive.html](https://econtact.ca/10_4/nowitz_voicelive.html). Note that at the time of the article's publication in 2008, 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*.

Society for Contemporary Music) in Gothenburg in 2009. The second, but no less important collaboration was the one with audio processing software designer from STEIM, Frank Baldé. 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 Byung-Jun Kwon who proposed various versions and finally assembled and tested the electronics as they exist to the present day.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 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/>.