

Aesthetical oxymoron or fruitful relationship?

Building Bridges between contemporary composers and the classically trained singers

Singing and composing Modern Vocal Music with Classical Vocal Training

1. Introduction

1.1. Spotting the problem

*You open the attachment. A totally new piece of music, written for you.
No one has ever sung this piece before. It is up to you to give life to what the composer
imagined. What an opportunity, what a challenge!
You open the file excited and you start browsing through the score... is it doable?*

*You press the send button. You worked months and months on this. It is by far your best
composition. You put all your knowledge in it, your found unique and revolutionary ideas,
you designed every sound, gesture and texture with such care.
It does look a bit difficult though...
Can the singer do it?*

*In best case you have three rehearsals. Three shots, only three attempts to get to the best
result, before you give birth to your new baby.*

*It is out of range,
The book said if you are a soprano you should be able to sing this!
Its more a bad tessitura
A what now?
I can't sing that in one breath
Breath?
I can't sing so high soft without vibrato
Why always so heavy and inflexible
There is no reference point in these chords
You don't have a tuning fork?
This jump is too big
You just didn't study your part!
Can you show me what you mean by this sign?
Why can't you do it? Its like this: *&^%(\$)#@
I can do this effect but you over-orchestrated it, no one can hear me doing it
Have you no commitment?
You don't write any expression marks, what character do you imagine?
Character? Hmm... just... neutral, please.*

*What is the subtext of this piece?
... (
You know, the message?*

*If I could say it with words I would have been a poet.
But what did you want with this piece?
Why are you so 19th century?*

*Why do I have to do all of this?
Why did I have to write for you?*

Time to find a better way of communicating.
You sing great, and you compose great.
You just need to understand each other better.

1.1.1. Singing the 'unsingable'

Many singers suffer when they have to sing modern music. They think it is weird, they can't show the beauty of their voice, or even worse: they are destroying their voices by doing contemporary pieces. Most pieces are 'not well written for the voice'. Many composers suffer when they have to write for classically trained singers. They can't read music well, they are not flexible, they always sing with wide vibrato and heavy, with allures and no honesty – they fear. Many singers are 'just not able to do it'. The need arises to have more understanding from both sides.

1.1.2. An instrumental metaphor/ analogy

In the life of every musician comes the times of obligatory piano playing. If not from own initiative, at least from an institutional pressure people start playing Bach. Playing his keyboard music on modern piano resembles a bit a similar discrepancy of how composers think of the voice nowadays, and how is that related to the classical training of a singer.

So, when one plays Bach on a piano, one might use the pedal, as it is part of the instrument, changes the overall sound, helps legato where it is impossible to find continuous fluent fingering, and when used smart, it can have a huge impact of the character of the music and thus being one of the most important tools of expression.

Yet, in some old fashioned ideas, we shouldn't use pedal when playing Bach, as that is a romantic way of playing, and Bach didn't have a pedal on his piano.

Wait, Bach didn't have a piano. We can't be playing authentic Bach on a piano, as his works were written for other instruments. So each and every attempt to play it on a modern keyboard is a transcription, an interpretation, for which one has to choose one's own boundaries.

In the analogy, if the first thing that a modern composer writes in the score, is to forbid the singer of using a big part of his or her instrument, namely: the vibrato, he limits the possibilities of the sound, expression and the comfort of his performer.

In most cases it also turns out that behind the word 'vibrato' lies a whole other set of tools: resonance, projecting, understandable text-projection, voice colouring, subtext and intention etc.

So shall one completely deny one's own instrument, just because the modern composer didn't take that into consideration as coming together in one package?

Another example:

When a composer takes apart a clarinet, to use it without the mouthpiece, and produce a beautiful and special sound, it is called 'kaval' effect (getting its name from the traditional wind instrument of the Balkans that it imitates).

It can be a very special moment in a piece to use this timbre, and satisfy our need of exotic, unorthodox sound ideals of contemporary music.

But if a whole piece is written for only Kaval effect, the moral question arises: why wouldn't then a composer chose for a real kaval, and not make the clarinetist play on 'half of his instrument'?

Even ignoring this philosophic question, a practical one arises:

Did the composer respect the limitations this 'loss' causes on the instrument (in range, speed, expression etc)

1.1.3. Research Questions?

Why are most modern pieces written without the knowledge and understanding of how a classical singer works?

Why is the aesthetics of a classically trained voice so far from the sound ideal of contemporary composers?

Why is it often ignored that the human voice has physical limitations as well?

If *bel canto* is one of the finest systems to control all the bodily participants of singing – how come with such precision we, classical singers still can't satisfy the needs of modern composers for a 'pure, flexible, diverse non-operatic, non-dramatic sound?'

Where does this sound ideal come from anyway?

(music historical background, psychological analysis, change of acoustics and involvement of electronics and amplification).

With the increasing need for diversity as a performer and specially as singer we have to observe the possibilities to how to be able to develop a voice in an operatic direction but keep its flexibility to perform in a contemporary field, with all its requirements.

As modern composers, we have to be true to our own voice and dare to create our own sound image in the vocal music we compose, according to our own background, personal taste, diverse (musical) experience.

How can we bring these two worlds closer? How can we

How can we create a common vocabulary, a method to translate?

1.2. Personal background

'Hi, I'm Georgi, I finished two masters in composition. I'm a tenor, but have a darker colour, so I can also sing baritone sometimes. I also do countertenor, then I'm a higher voice, like more a mezzosoprano. I also do a bit of Bulgarian folk singing and some extended techniques.

Would be so nice to get a piece like a mini-opera for three characters, a heroic tenor, a fragile falsettist and a raw power-voice.

Who wants to compose for me?!

(Silence - all 10 composers looking at the floor...)

1.2.1. Why me?

Being a composer and a singer, I was always most excited to be part of premiering a new piece. When I started my professional training as a classical singer, my preconceptions of singers and composing for the voice in general started changing as well.

Slowly, I started focusing more on the singers' side: that was the new lifestyle that I needed to invest more time and energy in.

Last year I reached a level, where I can be in balance between the two.

More and more, I started getting requests for coaching and teaching – mediating between the two.

I felt finally that my both educations, experiences and all the in-between activities slowly come together and ripe into having all to become a specialist.

I dedicate my master research to this process.

1.2.2. What do I do?

I finished two masters in composition, one in Liszt Academy, Budapest, and one from the Royal Conservatory, The Hague. In the same institution, I started my Bachelors in singing in 2012, finished my BA in 2016 and continued to my Masters in singing with Sasja Hunnago.

As a composer I have a wide spectrum of works: from oratorio to opera, from songs to chamber music, choirs, vocal and instrumental ensemble pieces, music for theater and film, Collaborative works with other art forms, open form pieces and text pieces,

Yet, since I received the Tenso Young Composers Award in 2014, I get more and more choir commissions and focus more on vocal composition.

As a singer I have a big choir background (Hungarian Radio Children's Choir, World Youth Choir, several professional chamber choirs and ensembles), which resulted in now having a half job in the Groot Omroepkoor (Radio Choir of Holland).

As soloist I also sung mostly many premiers, but also early music and romantic opera.

I take smaller solos in oratory and chamber settings, and I still sing many new pieces

After having experience in conducting as the leader of the Chamber Choir of the Centre for young Musicians, The Hague, and being the guest conductor of the National Boys Choir of Holland, I also

I am the vocal coach and compositional supervisor of the Young Composers Meeting in Apeldoorn with orkest 'de ereprijs' and I teach a course in the Royal Conservatory 'MoEnSi' – Modern Ensemble Singing, where I guide composition students how to compose for a vocal ensemble and I prepare singers how to study modern music and I conduct them singing the composing students pieces.

I will use all this experiences and background to create a guide, brining classical singers and contemporary composers closer to each other.

1.2.3. What to do now – or, How to build a bridge?

I will observe all my activities; from the point of view of what is useful to be able to mediate between the two worlds.

Which experiences make me more receptive of the needs of both sides?
How can I help composers and singers communicate better and achieve even greater collaboration?

1.3. The process

Is research just what I do anyways?

1.3.1. The two worlds – an inner need to unite

When you chose to start a second profession, you will by nature experience splitting of your attention. To think again in analogies, when parents get a new child, they say: but we will love you the same way! Yes, their love wont split. But their time and energy wont duplicate in ratio with the growing needs of two children.

Similarly, for years I experienced how I don't put enough time and focus in managing my composer's carrier, and how much time and energy it consumes from me to become a classically trained singer.

Slowly, the two sides started growing into common ground, and becoming a professional singer as well as a professional composer brought equality between the two from where I can see the similarities and differences, and build a common vocabulary on it.

1.3.2. Setting borders, choosing frames

After collecting ideas, recordings, topics, and thinking a lot, first step was setting up a structure of the research.

I soon discovered that I need guidelines to narrow my focus.

To make the research practice-based, I decided to observe my activities that combine both worlds, and extract the information that could sum up into a language or method to 'translate' between creators and performers of vocal music.

It was also a decision to not focus on the being a composer and a singer at the same time, as such a self-observation would be directed to less people, (who are also in the same duality as me) thus the research would affect less people.

The main focus remained to use my diverse experiences to mediate between composers and singers.

1.3.3. What to expect? A small overview

Introduce the questions,

- Where the conflict comes from
- my own position in it
- the desired result to find a way of guiding composers and singers wishing to work together.

Spotting the problem,

- having a small historical overview of their relationship during the centuries,
- mentioning a few composers and their attitude towards singers in the 20th century,

- showing where this aesthetic difference comes from and where it is today.

Then, showing both sides, how to observe the singers and composers sides?

Interviewing singers of different background singing both classical and modern music:

- Do they use different technique to sing modern?
- How do they prepare? What special skills are needed to do modern music?
- How do they work with composers? How do they introduce their own voice?

Interviewing composers,

- how they think of the voice, what is their own singing experience
- their background with vocal composing, studies and compositions
- their view on the aesthetic differences, why and how it derived from a linear connection
- Their experiences with singers so far

Choosing case studies, where I was a singer of vocally challenging modern pieces:

- One major masterpiece where I was thrown in the deep water, and had to sing mission impossible tenor solo. Problems with range, tessitura, stamina, text, forbidden usage of vibrato, voice type fitting etc
 - One premier, with special problems of changing between countertenor and tenor, no specific indications of when and how to switch, no classical singing attitude, no traditional sound projection (the piece being with a guitar)

Showing two cases of coaching and teaching:

- the Young Composers Meeting, where I was the vocal coach last year, and gave a lecture to the young composers about writing for the voice
- the course I gave to composers and singers in the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague, where I supervised composers write for vocal ensemble, and created one out of singing students of the department

1.3.4. Where could it lead? –A guide for composers and singers

The best would be to condense what I found out during the research process and my

A summary of such could lead to a guide, where creators and performers of vocal music could find both some guidelines of how to collaborate, such as:

- Defining processes
- Mapping the voice correctly from both sides (create a questionnaire, show both sides their own responsibility)
- Finding the common impulse – intention – resulting subtext
- Prepare both sides for possible common traps.

In this research I won't aim yet to produce a booklet, more just share an essence of the experiments I conducted to be a mediator.

Further work however could result in a publication or a small book, that could even be used also in education, interdisciplinary workshops and personal development of both composers and singers.

Look for sources! Help?

2. The relation of Composer and Singer – a broken bridge or a cliff
 - 2.1. A short look through of a long relationship
 - 2.1.1. The birth of separation – Machaut, religion and service
 - 2.1.2. The ‘missing link’ – troubadours, **trouvailles**
 - 2.1.3. Solist or chorist – mistress or mistress (the topic to put aside)
 - 2.1.4. The first **tilt** – the birth of stars (Castrati)
 - 2.1.5. The lied - Is there more to it, than church and opera?
 - 2.1.6. Growth - How bigger buildings made bigger people

Start text

- 2.2. The 20th Century – the separation
 - 2.2.1. The ‘break up’ – ‘Here, honey, a gym membership for Xmas!’
‘Did I become too fat now?’
 - 2.2.2. New techniques
 - 2.2.3. New genres
 - 2.2.4. New acoustics

Start text

- 2.3. The 21st Century
 - 2.3.1. Unique, honest, connected
 - 2.3.2. Local and global
 - 2.3.3. Aesthetic choices, technical opportunities

PENDING – sources, waiting for interviews

3. The Composer’s Side
 - 3.1. General (mis)beliefs
 - 3.2. ‘What do I feed it with?’
– how much do composers know about singers in general?
 - 3.3. Education in vocal composition
 - 3.4. The aesthetics of the preferred voice
 - 3.5. A few examples of aesthetics
 - 3.5.1. Kurtag – the ‘extreme’ as a performance experience
 - 3.5.2. Ligeti – Mission impossible – as virtuosity
(Dance Macabre, Barbara Hannigan)
 - 3.5.3. Andriessen – no vibrato!
 - 3.6. The interview for composers
Attachment: Interviews with composers

PENDING – waiting for interviews

4. The singer’s side
 - 4.1. The classical vocal training
 - 4.2. Where and when does modern music come in the picture?
 - 4.3. Different genres, different techniques?

- 4.4. Thinking and singing
- 4.5. 'No,no,no' – why am I here then?
- 4.6. Cathy Barberian – singing everything: everything that is singing
Attachment: Interviews with singers

PENDING – collecting recordings, waiting for interviews

5. Case studies

- 5.1. Louis Andriessen: De Materie
 - 5.1.1. The request, the task, the sources
 - 5.1.2. The role
 - 5.1.3. Preparing
 - 5.1.4. Coaching – by Marcel Beekman
- 5.2. Gyula Csapó: Trilce V
 - 5.2.1. The vocal analysis
 - 5.2.2. The challenge – being in constant in-between
 - 5.2.3. Different solutions (Premiere, Recording, Experiment)

Almost done

6. When in the middle

In der Mitten sieht man alles

*Setz dich in Mittelpunkt, so siehst du alls zugleich,
Was jetzt und dann geschicht hier und im Himmelreich.*

- Angelus Silesius,

6.1. My own singers' ideal as composer before starting to learn singing

As a composer I always had a special connection to the voice. I was also looking for this pure, honest sound, the most human instrument, the teller of stories, conveying a message, using text, and my ultimate favourite: more voices melting together.

I was also looking for the extremes of the voice, I was in love with highs, ethereal, light, crystal clear.

Diversity of styles and genres was important to me, reflecting on our every day life, that contains so many different influences and is on its primal level multicultural.

Expressive, free, and unique sounds – that's what many of us are looking for.

The extremes of the voice get the singer out of a routine where everything is easily controllable.

Here an example of a piece I wrote for a singer friends of mine, who studies classical, but also jazz singing, and next to several methods, also *Libero canto*.

RECORDING, later may be explaining about *libero canto*

6.2. Voice – the subconscious connection

There is an element I still wonder about as an artist. The human voice always contains elements that are remains of our animalistic communication. These messages are received on a subconscious level, and give us basic information about the speaker's/singer's physical and mental state, his or her surroundings and a potential imperative reflection (there is food, attack/defend yourself, let's flee etc...)

In classical vocal training we spend so much time with creating a technique that we can count on in any moment, thus when we go to the opera, we don't want to detect that the singer has a bad stomach, some personal life problems, or has too strong light in his/her eyes. We want to hear him/her sing gorgeously, according to the canon of classical sounding (operatic) voice, and conveying the feelings and thoughts associated with what we expect from his/her character on stage.

Sometimes in that way the personal 'truth' gets lost, even though the true artist put in a lot of their persona, it still stays a

No one brings his/ her own self on stage.

In alternative music, many singers sing so expressive that it overwrites the importance of other parameters: intonation, timing, balanced color, etc.

Yet, we get a lot of this personal connotation. She/he really feels/thinks/is like that.

How can we, or can we at all get this personal in a classical singing idiom?

Is this what the modern composer is looking for?

6.3. Private or personal

The above-described effect could be further thought through. I wanted to achieve it so badly, that as a performer I had to learn to not want to be so personal that I become private (as my coach- pianist, *Phyllis Ferwerda* tells me always.)

Short story about private or personal

6.4. Singing with a composer's ear – playing a synthesizer or piano?

On my final exam on the minor in singing I sang a confusing program with diversity not just in composers, styles and periods of music history, but also in voice types.

(Dowland as mezzosoprano, own pieces in Japanese as a soprano, Stravinsky songs as a tenor, a Spanish folksong arrangement as baritone, and an own folk song arrangement in Bulgarian throat voice.)

I got a 10 out of 10 and everyone was very happy.

A few weeks later, with almost the same program I went for my entrance exam for the singing department. They were very confused.

Well, you have vocal talent and you are a great musician – but what can we do with you?

Which is your voice-type? Or which one do you want to train in?

(This already seemed so conservative at that time to me! Why use these predefinitions and train *into* an expected direction, because of certain repertoire that was written for it?

When defining voice types, we also return to the period when music was written for that voice-type, and if one is devoted to perform mostly modern music, one doesn't have to be taking into consideration traditions, musical paradigms and vocal expectations of old times, just of the composer's desires.)

They said they accepted me because of my sight-reading. Well, not because I could sight read the excerpt perfectly (I am a sight reading champion since I was 13, I was the second best in Hungary) but because they heard my real voice, without preconceptions of how it should sound. And that the voice that they heard there excites them, and they could imagine working on it. IF I am interested in that (and that they cant help me with Bulgarian throat voice!)

I replied that for me having a basic technique would be the goal, I know that I have a vivid (musical) imagination and that I am adventurous enough to experiment later on with extended techniques – but for that one needs basic technique.

Singing colours is not imitating musical ideas. If one wants to truly find his voice, one shouldn't aim to 'have' many voices, but to always sing on one's 'own' voice, in different ways. With an instrumental analogy again, a pianist can sit at a synthesizer, and play a flute melody with fake flute colour, and change to brass sound to play two horns, but could also play on a piano with a fuller, richer sound the horn topos, and play flautando, dolce and light flute solo.

Healthy singing should always come from a healthy bodily feeling. Once one starts to build up an inner feeling of these technicalities, one can always return to this as an origo and take it as the basis of one's singing.

Years later, when I started feeling that I am already doing this subconsciously, I remembered the critique of singing too much with my 'composers' ears' and not really finding my inner voice, and its natural colours according the different initiatives in music.

Also, for similar reasons more teachers suggested to continue my vocal studies in the first few years only in my male voice, as they find that more communicative and naturally coming from me, and leave my falsetto for a few years, although it has a unique, crystal quality (as training at both at the same time might interfere in a negative way – especially in the part of the voice where the tenor stretches further and opens to head voice and the falsetto relaxes down to reach low notes – see more about this problem in the case study of the Csapó piece.)

This advise –although in the beginning difficult to commit to – later brought its effect, and last year I could return to observe how is the falsetto behaving now and what is its relation to the

6.5. Composing with a singer's ear – after after tasting your own pudding

6.6. The last scene of Twin Peaks – 'Second years' Vocal Project'

When I was 7 years old, I watched a few episodes of Twin Peaks (thanks to having ultra-understanding, hippy parents). In the last episode, the main character wakes up of a long (psychedelic) coma and goes to brush his teeth alone. Thinking that all is fine already and all scary moments are gone, the viewer gets calm and even happy. Yet, suddenly the man in the mirror grabs the original guy and 'pulls him in the mirror'.

For months I couldn't wash my teeth alone, one of my parent had to come with me.

I had a similar feeling, when in second year bachelor I was on the singers' side in the Vocal Project. In this project, second year composers write a song for a second year singer. This is called Vocal project, because it is mainly the Composition department's project, and to distinguish it from other projects, they always name the type of performers. But whenever I talked to my singer peers, and I mentioned 'the Vocal Project', they always looked at me like: but Georgi, all the projects we do, are vocal! We are singers! So I realized, now I'm on the other side of the mirror, here it is: the Composers' project!

The initiative of the project is great, and is exactly addressing the lack in teaching vocal composition. The students should visit each other's lessons. Or at least the composers should visit singing lessons, learn about the voice and see their singer in the light of other repertoire that they are studying with their teacher.

Unfortunately many times this continuous work is skipped, the singer gets a score two weeks before the premiers, and there is not much that can be done anymore.

Although we tried to work together with my composer, the piece I got wasn't suitable for my voice.

- The tessitura was uncomfortable,
- my dynamic nuances were not available in the range, so the balance with the accompanying English horn wasn't always achievable,
- some passages are too difficult to maintain and were tiring etc.
- there was no text or expression mark, so it was very abstract to build up a character, or find honest initiatives, which made the voice even less in flow

These uncomfortable details and the not yet fully developed technique of mine make me be the nightmare composers imagine when thinking of singers.

I was:

- complaining what I don't like
- holding notes shorter when it wasn't comfortable to hold them
- I sung other notes much longer, even if they didn't match the accompaniment
- I used vibrato where he asked me not to
- I wasn't able to phrase, on micro and macro level. The piece didn't go anywhere
- It wasn't an inspired performance, there was no energy or flow
- Thus, the subconscious information in my voice was somewhere between boredom, annoyance, feeling of punishment and pure shame.

I realized, I became a singer.

Later I realized, I wasn't even one.

Luckily, I was still just on the way.

6.7. Becoming fluent in changing sides – a longer ripening process

By being both composer and singer, I can also see on which side is the communication stuck, and correct that side with having the trust of that colleague (as I understand his/her wish and work to achieve it).

Yet, when I see that in that case it might be exactly the other way round, the same similarity effect can be used on the other side.

NOW – almost done

7. When in-between

7.1. The specialist

*'You just have more things you do, Georgi,
it will need more time till they all ripe and come together'*
- Katalin Schultz, singing teacher

It automatically found me, that both my separate activities started reaching out for each other. I won the competition for choral composing and started focusing more and more on vocal music. I was singing modern premieres of my fellow composers and more and more famous seniors.

With my conducting and teaching experience the circle closed, and I was asked

'We know more and more about less and less' – states the famous saying about the over-specializing of our times.

In this case getting wider and doing a second, seemingly not totally related musical professional study arrived to the stage, where the two interests together can be brought together in narrow focus (on the in-between), instead of a too broad musical interest.

Thus, with keeping my *'multidisciplinary artistry'* (quoting also my extinction from my BA diploma concert) I still could become the specialist: of exactly being both and being in the middle.

Check where quote is from

7.2. Vocal coaching at Young Composers' Meeting

7.2.1. Personal background

Each year the 'orkest de ereprijs' organizes a one-week long meeting for very young composers from all over the world. They combine their musical powers with 3-5 singers, from The Hague Royal Conservatory since more than 20 years, thanks to Gerda van Zelm. Suggested as a tip from my former composing teacher, Martijn Padding encouraged me to apply and in 2013 I participated as a composer.

Already then I saw that the singers don't have enough time to study all the pieces, and many pieces are written again with a different aesthetic ideal. Having exciting ideas, but sometimes not really vocally written, or lacking preparation and knowledge from the composers' side. Sometimes singers who are invited are doing for the first time modern music, and are thrown in the deep water.

My piece was for example way too difficult for the singers, who were my colleagues at school, and I worked together with them, so I should have known their vocal and musical

skills and characteristics the most. Yet, the density of the piece and the difficult solfege required was a complete mismatch with circumstances and the level of the singers. In this sense, my piece was a failure in creating the right balance between the performers and the desired sound ideal.

A year later, in 2014 I was invited to be part of the performers as the tenor singer. This time I experienced 'on my own skin' how is it to do 10-13 pieces per person and give birth to 16 premiers, all written in very different styles, genres and idioms, all in only one week. My concerns were formulated in a list with suggestions (from the initiative of a singer colleague: 'if you want to make things better, don't just talk about it, do something!') All leaders were very positive and opened to try out some changes I suggested, including Gerda van Zelm vocal coach, Wim Boerman, conductor of 'orkest ereprijs' and Rob Vermeulen, conductor of the project for this week (it also is good to mention he is invited years ago to take over this project from Wim, as he is also a choral conductor and works brilliantly with singers – while Wim doesn't have /or want/ a lot of experience with those kind of weird people – the singers).

Consequently, In 2015 I was with an in-between function of being one of the singers but also being responsible for the vocal ensemble, and trying to prepare them beforehand. However, the attempts of organizing the singers prior the start of the working week was impossible due to their personal schedules, and on the spot also didn't have too much chance to work with them.

In 2016 Gerda gave me her official position as vocal coach, although came in most days to check up on me and make sure all is going smoothly. Also, she was a great help as an outer ear, as I was still a singer too, I couldn't hear things about balance and amplification. The singers this time were part of my vocal group, the VF6, or VocalFederationSix, which this time was involving only 5 singers (out of which 2 were replacements). In this constellation I worked with singers I knew a bit better, but also with some new colleagues. The challenge of coaching them and discover their diverse (musical) personalities and (musical) attitude to different parts of the process was almost as if they would be students I would have to coach. The edition that year ended with special compliments to the singers, from many participants: orchestral members, The coaching and mediating between two worlds was found useful.

I would focus only on the 2016 session, as this was the one that I had a function similar to what this research is about.

7.2.2. Helping the singers

As having an in-between function, as a vocal coach, but also as a composer, I could help with some of the following things:

- Finding reference points in the full score for entrance notes, especially useful in cases where the 'vocal score' didn't include a piano reduction or cue notes
- Helping with analysis of full orchestral harmony or cleaning up a cappella sections, tuning special chords (different sound with different analysis of complex chords)

- Intonating and tuning quartertones (for example in Vasileios Filippou: *Swash* and Elisabeth Angot's *Piece for 5 voices & ensemble*)
- clarifying special effects (for example in Monika Szpyrka: *Counting to ten*, and Szymon Stanisław Strzelec: *Supereclipse*)
- balance and coloring of voices, blending
- usage of microphones, as part of the instrument (being tool of expression, realizing
- balance in amplification (only partly done by me, also with the help of Gerda)
- Isolating cases of not properly notated rhythms, gestures, unclear usage of different noteheads (for example in Szymon Stanisław Strzelec: *Supereclipse*)
- Timing issues, in graphic/special notation (as in Jimena Maldonado's *Tidewater*) or with difficult tempo or bar changes (Ryan Lindvelt: *Morning*)
- Finding different subtext, half-staging, or characters of performing (such as in Nina Fukuoka's piece for solo soprano, the different cats in Piyawat Louilarpprasert: *Cat's song*, and the diversity of expressions and characters of even just the same word, as in the winning piece, Ali Can Pusculcu's *Malkovich*)
- Setting up priorities of parameters when there is too much information on many levels (Aya Yoshida: *Singing in the rain*, Harmon Roché van Tiddens: *Ik verlang*)

In cases of difficult combination of parameters, not vocal thinking or unefficient notation and setting up, I tried to implement changes with composers, including:

- Text changes
For example: Elisabeth Angot's *Piece for 5 voices & ensemble* requires to keep sharp, staccato notes, very rhythmical, but with precise intonation and no changing syllables, just on a single vowel. This made each singer feel very uncomfortable about their personal technique: as it is a very difficult combination for a vocalist.
I tried to interfere and ask the composers permission to sing da-da-da or la-la-la, with a soft consonant in front of the open 'a' vowel
- Voice distribution
For example: Blanka Stachelek had a piece written for two female voices (*Banish from air*) which first we tried to be sung by an alto and a counter-tenor, then a soprano and a mezzo, ended up in a soprano and counter-tenor combination, resulting the lighter sound the composer had in mind (although she had first a problem with the gender changing from only female to mixed duet)
- Using the voice in different ways, changing amplification
For example: in Patrick Giguère's piece, *Some fantasy*, a strong contrast was required between a very soft legato homophonic texture in the vocal ensemble, and a massive sound in the orchestra. We ended up changing completely the position of the singers, standing in front of orchestra and singing unamplified.
- Rhythmic division
Paul Zaba's smart idea to connect delay rates of airports in *Delays* and compose the text in various delays had diverse options of notating grouping of rhythms. The bar meters he chose were not always helpful to the singers or musicians.

Paul made a new score for the orchestra on the request of the conductor, yet some of our singers still sung from the old score.

- Dynamics

For fixing the balance between orchestral and vocal parts, sometimes the change had to be implemented in reducing the dynamics of the instrumental parts, such as in Roché van Tiddens: *Ik verlang*, most dynamics were reduced with 1-2 levels for the instruments.

- Counting repetitions

Loops in repetitive music are normal to be notated with repeats and numbers of repeats. Yet, in Nathan James Dearden: *We cannot let this stand*, we got a new score with written out repeats. Some singers still sung from the old score, as they got used to that counting system. The changing lengths and metrum were still too tricky to get the piece performed perfectly on the premiere.

- Range, tessitura, endurance problems

Such as in Ryan Probert: *Five broken pieces*, where the soprano has to hold a high g# for a whole movement – in the end we managed it with doubling in whistle and our alto singing it in ‘head voice’.

All in all the singers felt taken care of and could perform with bigger conviction with having an active vocal coach for them, who could also translate the needs of the composers.

Summarize powerpoint

7.2.3. A lecture for composers

Get feedback done!

7.2.4. Feedback of participants

WRITE AFTER ALL IS DONE

7.2.5. Some conclusions

7.3. Teaching ‘Composing for Vocal Ensemble’

7.3.1. Preparing the composers

7.3.2. Working with the singers

7.3.3. Feedback of participants

WRITE AFTER ALL IS DONE

8. Conclusions – a guide for composers and singers who work together

8.1. The beauty and the beast of such collaboration

8.1.1. The most personal instrument – a person itself

8.1.2. Unheard: un-compared and incomparable

8.1.3. Fruitful relations

8.2. Thoughts for the creator

8.2.1. ‘But Cathy could sing anything!’ – Thinking in parameters

8.2.2. ‘But I can also do it, why cant you?!’

- or, the power of self-testing
 - 8.2.3. Brain and pain – notate only the necessary
 - 8.2.4. Intention – the real motor of the voice
(kissing example)
- 8.3. A few thoughts for the singer
 - 8.3.1. Detecting the desires- what do you want?
 - 8.3.2. Setting up the reachable goals – needs, wishes, dreams
 - 8.3.3. Health above all – Practicing the ‘Sure, honey’ face
 - 8.3.4. Being caring or, how should I ask/confront/kill a composer?
- 8.4. Questionnaire: - What should I ask? - How should I answer?
- 8.5. Closing thoughts

9. Appendix

- 9.1. Interviews
 - 9.1.1. Singers
 - 9.1.1.1. Claron McFadden
 - 9.1.1.2. Noah Frenkel
 - 9.1.1.3. Marcel Beekman
 - 9.1.2. Composers
 - 9.1.2.1. Louis Andriessen
 - 9.1.2.2. Yannis Kyriakides
 - 9.1.2.3. Gyula Csapó
 - 9.1.3. Teachers, collaborators
 - 9.1.3.1. Martijn Padding – composing teacher
 - 9.1.3.2. Sasja Hunnengo – singing teacher
 - 9.1.3.3. Katalin Koltai – guitarist of Csapó piece
 - 9.1.4. Students surveys
 - 9.1.4.1. Composers - Young Composers Meeting
 - 9.1.4.2. Singers – Young Composers Meeting
 - 9.1.4.3. Composers - Vocal Ensemble project
 - 9.1.4.4. Singers – Vocal Ensemble project

10. Media

- 10.1. Excerpts of mentioned vocal pieces
- 10.2. Excerpts of own pieces
- 10.3. Louis Andriessen: De Materie
 - 10.3.1. Youtube - The precedent recording
 - 10.3.2. Audio - The Hague own performance
 - 10.3.3. Audio - Utrecht own performance
 - 10.3.4. Audio - Showing the development
– a series of recordings from vocal lessons
- 10.4. Gyula Csapó: Trilce

- 10.4.1. Video recording of the 'recording session'
 - 10.4.2. Audio of premier
 - 10.4.3. Critic from Hungarian newspaper?
 - 10.4.4. New recording – to be made (Kata!)
- 10.5. Young Composers Meeting
 - 10.5.1. Audio recordings of pieces
 - 10.5.2. Photo of giving lecture
 - 10.5.3. Slide show 'Composing for the voice'
- 10.6. Vocal Ensemble Project
 - 10.6.1. Audio of pieces