

# SONIC SCENES



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MUSIC

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## THE NEW BEAT OF BRUSSELS' PERFORMING ARTS SCENE

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SOA RATSIFANDRIHANA & BONNIE BANANE

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Geluid speelt in vrijwel elke voorstelling of performance een belangrijke rol. In de vorm van muziek, als sfeermaker; als soundscape, om ook auditief een wereld te scheppen; of als autonome stem, klank die als klank aanwezig is en onderzocht wordt. Toch wordt geluid zelden belicht of besproken als kunstvorm an sich. Al te vaak wordt het gezien als iets ondersteunends, dienstbaar aan een groter geheel. Nochtans is het internationale (podium)kunstenveld heel wat eigenzinnige en getalenteerde geluidskunstenaars rijk, die elk op hun manier zowel bijdragen aan werk van anderen als een persoonlijke praktijk en signatuur ontwikkelen.

Met deze editie van *Etcetera* willen we inzoomen op de vele geluiden die onze podia luister geven, en daarmee ook op de artiesten achter die geluiden. Maar hoe begin je daaraan? Hoe maak je een overzicht van iets wat weinig in kaart is gebracht? Waar bevinden de verschillende *sonic scenes* zich en welke invloed oefenen ze uit op het podiumwerk waarmee ze zo nauw vervlochten zijn?

Op zoek naar antwoorden gingen we in gesprek met gast-redacteurs Myriam Van Imschoot en David Helbich. Ze zijn beiden makers, in vele betekenissen van het woord, die zich bezighouden met klank, in zo mogelijk nog meer betekenissen van het woord. Op een hete junidag spraken we elkaar rond de keukentafel in Davids appartement in Brussel. De witte gordijnen wapperden in de welgekomen bries en verhulden deels het uitzicht op het Justitiepaleis. De geluiden van de speelplaats van de nabijgelegen school en het sissende espressoapparaat vulden de ruimte.

Tijdens het gesprek hadden we het over het toenemende belang van *outside ears*, de persoon die iets over een bepaalde scene binnen de (podium)kunsten kan zeggen, zonder daarvandaan te komen. Zo kwamen we naadloos bij de spannende maar moeilijke opdracht die ons te wachten stond: het zichtbaar maken van de veelvormige weefsels van kennis over geluid. Wie moet zeker aan het woord komen? Welke personen die vandaag zelf niet (meer) over hun werk kunnen spreken, moeten via een andere stem een plek krijgen in de mozaïek die deze editie van *Etcetera* is?

Ook het idee van specialisme bespraken we uitvoerig. Moet je muziektheorie gestudeerd hebben om iets over geluid te

kunnen zeggen? Wellicht niet. Toch hebben bepaalde mensen een soort zesde zintuig voor klank, en anderen niet. Hoe komt het bijvoorbeeld dat een bepaalde keuze van een dj ervoor zorgt dat iedereen ineens aan het dansen gaat? Voor de een is het een gevoelsmatige reactie, voor de andere een gevolg van een ritmische verschuiving die je zou kunnen analyseren. Beide zijn waardevol, en vermoedelijk zit er in het combineren van die beide soorten kennis een enorme rijkdom.

Al vrij snel kwamen we tot het inzicht dat we in deze *Etcetera* zo veel mogelijk stemmen en soorten kennis aan het woord wilden laten. Niet louter vanuit theorie of beschouwing, maar vanuit de praktijk. Wat is het werk achter geluid? Hoe breng je een groep aan het (samen)zingen? Hoe klinkt een theaterzaal? Hoe ontwikkel je een gedeelde woordenschat over geluid? Wat is het belang van luisteren in dit alles?

Het luidop stellen van al deze vragen resulteert een halfjaar later in een opeenvolging van beschouwingen en praktijken. Je kunt dit nummer opvatten als een performance over geluid, waarin elke scène wordt geregisseerd en gecomponeerd door een andere maker of denker. Niet vanuit een claim op volledigheid, maar juist vanuit een grote nieuwsgierigheid, een exploreren en openbreken van het mycelium van praktijken die klank maken, doorgeven en beschrijven.

In de *opening act* pleit David Helbich voor een nieuwe vorm van luisteren die geluid serieus neemt en naar waarde schat, als een act van cocreatie die een diepe impact heeft op de ervaring van het publiek in een theaterzaal. Myriam Van Imschoot tekent een bevlogen portret op van kunstenaar en stemdocent Jean-René Toussaint. Op het moment dat hij begint te dementeren, reflecteert Van Imschoot op de impact die hij heeft gehad op haar werk en dat van vele anderen. Voor choreografe Lisa Vereertbrugghen begint elke creatie met geluid. Pas wanneer ze weet hoe de voorstelling moet klinken, wordt duidelijk wat ze precies wil maken. Voor *Etcetera* deelt ze dialogen met haar vaste cocreator Michael Langeder, met als resultaat een zeldzame inkijk in een gesprek tussen artistieke verwanten en hun gedeelde vocabulaire.

Voor maker en performer Jule Flierl is de stem een politiek gegeven. In haar essay brengt ze in kaart hoe de stem zich als een rode draad door haar creaties en samenwerkingen manifesteert. Ook het artistieke parcours van Jean-Baptiste Veyret-Logerias wordt bijeengehouden door een onophoudelijke fascinatie voor de stem. In gesprek met Simon Baetens brengt hij in kaart hoe het faciliteren van samenzingen hem steeds weer naar nieuwe

plekken leidt. Friedemann Dupeluis buigt zich over wat hij *new vocality* noemt. Vanuit gesprekken met leden van de collectieven Glossa en YouYou Group analyseert hij hoe auteurschap over vocale technieken steeds meer gedeeld wordt.

In de reeks *Notes on Sound* laten we maar liefst veertien geluidskunstenaars aan het woord. Wat kan werken met geluid betekenen? We vroegen hun om in de vorm van een kort statement of inzicht te inspireren en te ontwrichten. We sluiten af met een kort verhaal van Emi Kodama, over de vele onomatopoeën die het Japans rijk is en hoe geluiden in haar herinneringen een sleutelrol spelen.

Veel lees- en luisterplezier,

Alina, Charlotte, Floris, Natalie en Simon

De redactie van *Etcetera*,

In gesprek met gastredacteurs Myriam Van Imschoot  
en David Helbich

*Na vijf jaar betrokkenheid bij Etcetera is dit het laatste nummer waar hoofdredacteur Simon Baetens aan meewerkte. Etcetera neemt met Simon afscheid van een ontzettend verstandige, grappige, stijlvolle en integere hoofdredacteur. We zullen hem, zijn immer scherpe redacteursbrein, onvolprezen woordmopjes en all-round creatieve geest missen. Bedankt, Simon, leve Simon!*

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*Soundmuseum*, David Helbich © D Museum

**p. 6 WE HEAR EVERYTHING AND NOTHING. AT THE SAME TIME.**

By David Helbich EN

David Helbich challenges the often unexamined assumptions surrounding the role of sound in performance, calling for a deeper and more integrated listening culture within the performing arts.

---

**p. 18 HET WERK VAN DE STEM**

Door Myriam Van Imschoot NL

Een portret van Jean-René Toussaint, een man die van zoeken naar een rijke perceptie van de singuliere stem zijn levenswerk heeft gemaakt. Voor Myriam Van Imschoot is hij bovendien een leermeester en een vriend.

---

**p. 32 HOE KLINKT EEN VOORSTELLING?**

Door Lisa Vereertbrugghen NL

Choreografe Lisa Vereertbrugghen deelt gesprekken met haar partner in crime Michael Langeder over hoe het samen zoeken naar het geluidsontwerp van een voorstelling steevast het creatieproces vormgeeft.

---

**p. 40 GEGEN DIE HÖRIGKEIT IM HÖREN (AGAINST THE OBEDIENCE IN HEARING)**

By Jule Flierl EN

What if the voice is not just a carrier of meaning but a choreographic force, a movement in itself? Jule Flierl explores how voice and listening co-constitute each other, both on stage and in the world.

---

**p. 50 'WE HAVE SO MANY VOICES INSIDE US'**

By Simon Baetens EN

An interview with singer, dancer, and facilitator Jean-Baptiste Veyret-Logerias about how voice lives inside the body, and how singing together can become a space for trust, curiosity, and transformation.

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**p. 60 A 'NEW VOCALITY'?**

By Friedemann Dupelius EN

Does the simultaneous emergence of vocal groups Glossa and YouYou Group herald a new era of vocality? Friedemann Dupelius explores their coincidentally linked origin stories.

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**p. 72 NOTES ON SOUND EN/NL**

Fourteen artists share short, inspirational statements about the importance of sound in contemporary performance.

Veertien kunstenaars delen korte, inspirerende statements over het belang van geluid in de hedendaagse podiumkunsten.

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**p. 88 CHIRIRIN**

By Emi Kodama EN

In this short story, Emi Kodama explores the importance of onomatopoeic expressions in the Japanese language and how they have given form to her childhood memories.

---

*We hear everything and nothing. At the same time.*

**Imagine the sound  
of a party at  
the neighbours,  
or in the bathroom  
of a club.**

[The following text is illegible due to low resolution]

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6 

Why is music in performances often so naïve? Why do the decisions about sound seem guided merely by taste? And conversely: why is the performative aspect of concerts often so dusty, so outdated?

Is it not a kind of tokenism when, on the one hand, performance in concerts is simply reduced to ‘everything that happens’ or ‘everything on stage,’ while at the same time every preceding discourse and every experience of physicality, seeing, choreography, intention, etc. is left unacknowledged?

Or when, on the other hand, music is simply reduced to a social event and bonding agent, and centuries of research (or years of individual practice) on silence, listening, time, intonation, simultaneity, ensemble culture, and instrument building and mastering play no role?

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“Most musicians/composers have never experienced a conceptual dance evening or ritual theatre, and only very few choreographers or theatre makers have endured four and a half hours of Feldman’s string quartets or spent entire afternoons in listening sessions with field recordings.”

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Of course, some of this can be explained by working conditions and formats—two or three rehearsals as opposed to two or three months in the studio. But it also stems from a deeper fact: rarely is one truly the other’s audience. There is a lack of lived experience. Most musicians/composers have never experienced a conceptual dance evening or ritual theatre, and only very few choreographers or theatre makers have endured four and a half hours of Feldman’s string quartets or spent entire afternoons in listening sessions with field recordings. To overcome artists’ blind spots regarding the sonic or the performative, it would be far more meaningful for them to have been an audience than merely to have studied.

## **SOUND IS UNDERESTIMATED**

I believe sound is underestimated—in its versatility and in its uniqueness at the same time. Especially within the visual and performing arts, sound is thought of either as a medium or even as an item. But just as the alignment of media with senses fails (‘to each sense its medium’?), sound cannot be reduced to musical carriers of meaning. Just as music is already more than familiar songs or historical pieces, sound is more than just music. And listening itself, in turn, is more than mere sound identification.

To cultivate a sound perspective within the performing arts requires acknowledging that sound is not only what can be shaped for the ear. It also fundamentally conditions the non-sonic dimensions of a work. In the context of performance, sound is not a technique or an add-on medium; it plays a leading role in the (often unconscious) perception of the audience.



It determines spatial orientation—of objects, performers, and the audience body, but also of the space itself, as volume or as furnished, arranged. Or temporal orientation—of events, of the relation to duration, in space, in the piece, in one's own body. Sound is also the only element that can aim at bodily participation, assuming that sound waves actually touch all bodies and can set them into resonance.

Furthermore, listening holds the key to illusionistic forgetfulness—namely, our ability to switch back and forth between stage (or 'performance') and audience space. Regardless of the presence or absence of a fourth wall, I, as a spectator, can be among people, in the theatre space, or in the illusion of the performance. On the one hand, that lies within my own power. On the other hand, this attentional control is also in competition with planned or unplanned (sound) events around me. Hearing steps on stage while the voice comes from the loudspeakers can break a fourth wall, while a cough behind us brings the social space of the audience back into consciousness—and thus briefly dissolves the fifth wall, the one between me and the others in the room.

The switches are the ears, for two reasons. First, because their doors are always open and thus, alongside what is focused, they simultaneously embody rhythmic details (like head-banging), anticipate bladder-bursting durations (like how Wagner's dramaturgy is bathroom-break management), and feel subtle social stress (like the balcony at one's back). Second, because our brain has appointed discrete bouncers with a selection mandate (the 'cocktail party effect'), who, like an algorithm, follow our interests and make a preselection of what is allowed in and what is not. We hear everything and nothing. At the same time.

The hearing of the audience is always active: a co-performing listening, much more than other parts of the body. And it reads more than sound—whether it wants to or not. For me,

this is the key in every work to understanding what is really happening in the room: how a piece is actually experienced or can be experienced. And therefore a much larger playing field than compressed loudspeaker sounds would suggest.

---

“When I teach dancers and choreographers,  
I try to emphasise that a piece is always already  
sounding, not only once music is glued onto it.”

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In this sense, I believe sound is often underestimated when composers, musicians, sound designers, or producers are asked to ‘make the sound’ of a work—because it is rarely understood how far the question, and thus the possible collaboration, actually extends.

An expanded sound perspective can help avoid missed opportunities. For that, time (and space!) must be created in the working process of a piece, just as fundamentally already in the training of choreographers and theatre makers. There, music history is often taught, but rarely sound as such—what sound is and can be, and the insight that music is only one of the many possibilities of bundling sound.

Looking back, I find it astonishing how late we learned something about acoustics in my training as a composer. When I ask participants in workshops and masterclasses what sound is, musicians as well as other students quickly become very poetic. The answers are usually correct, but few have a real idea of what is happening in the air (or in the wood, or in the room, or ...). Yet a concept of—or at least a feeling for—the physical side of hearing can open profound poetic depths.

When I teach dancers and choreographers, I therefore try to emphasise that a piece is always already sounding, not only once music is glued onto it. Just as musicians and composers must learn that the body of an instrumentalist does not vanish when the tone fades, and that concert conventions are themselves forms of theatre—and therefore performative decisions.

## **SONGS ARE LITTLE IDENTITY MIRACLES**

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When techno happened, the real liberation was not the new drugs or the new venues—not even the new scale of the parties. The real liberation was from the song. And more precisely, liberation from the meaning- and identity-giving side of songs.

Gone were the get-on/get-off scenarios of dance floors, where half would go get a drink because this wasn’t their thing, while the other half jumped up in excitement. Instead of three minutes of ‘I know what’s going on,’ we got three hours of ‘we just keep going.’ Quasi-formless, apart from a few drops, which were no interruptions, but more like nudges of the waves.

There was no retreat in that sense—the kick was like thick air in surges, the halls were saturated, it was loud everywhere—instead there was endless space for thinking, looking,

and moving. The formal revolution was not stylistic but sonic. The ‘sound’ was no longer one’s own, but the encompassing—the all-encompassing. No droning fourth wall, but a space without front or back: a shared space.

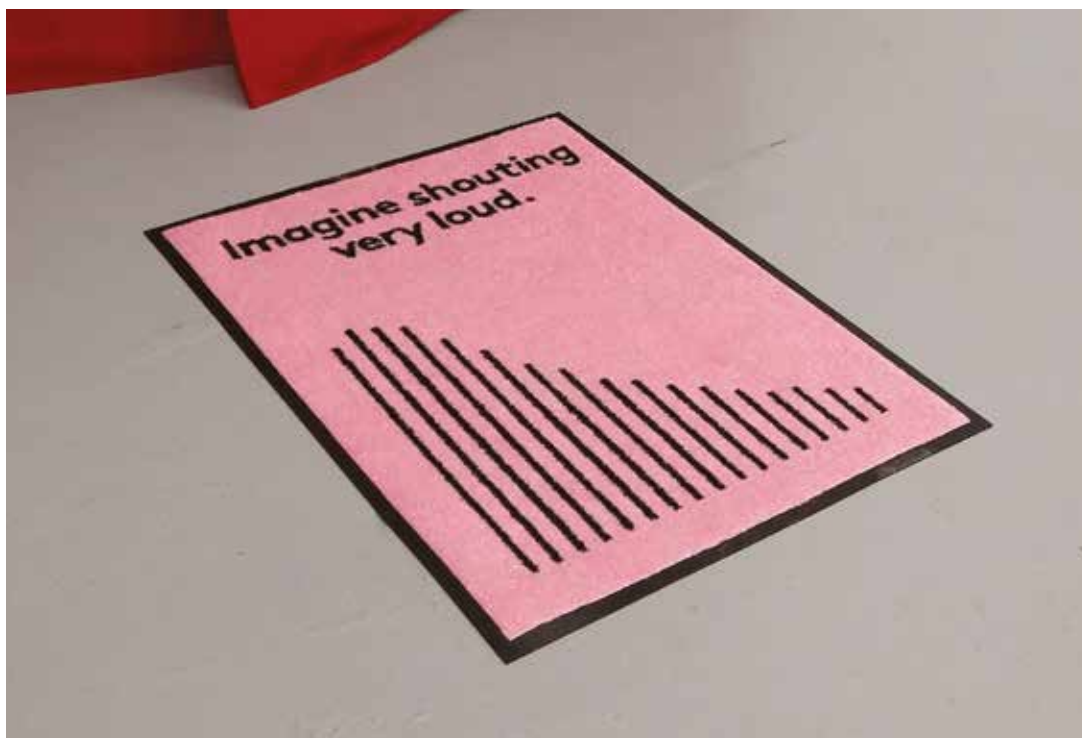
I understand why most keep affixing songs onto their dance and theatre productions. Songs carry instant legibility: in a few seconds we know who they are and where they come from. Their duration is self-explanatory (short!) and surprises are rarely to be expected. They are packages of certainty and therefore so popular in the performing arts—as atmospheric props, so to speak.

Longer musical works, classical music included, also have their advantages. For example, they can serve well as a timeline. In the search for cues, most choreographers actually read music mainly structurally. The dramaturgy in micro- and macro-time can be applied to everything and is relatively easy to analyse.

In this sense, music is a practical solution. It helps organise material. Loaded with historical or cultural identities, it can serve as an atmospheric surface—both above and beneath.

### **MUSIC IS MORE THAN SONGS**

Of course, there are many different kinds of music. Just as you can make music with anything, basically anything can be music. That one can really push the definition of music beyond every last boundary has been demonstrated sufficiently by the experiments of the



last century—from music as the mere gesture of what is meant as music, to algorithmic generation without listeners.

In our workshop ‘Composer-Performer’, which composer Jennifer Walshe and I developed some years ago for the Darmstadt Summer Course for New Music, the question often came up about commonalities among works conceived from entirely different disciplines and backgrounds. The lowest common denominator, so to speak. ‘The love of sound’ was our answer—with which we countered an objective definition with a subjective one.

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“I understand why most keep affixing songs onto their dance and theatre productions. Songs carry instant legibility: in a few seconds we know who they are and where they come from.”

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The great thing is that each music works differently and must therefore also be heard differently. This depends on cultural codes but also on playback conditions—technical, spatial, and social. Whether something is played live or comes from loudspeakers also makes a musical difference.

What kind of loudspeakers, where they are hanging, whether you hear people playing or electronically produced music, or both, whether the whole space resonates or everything sounds very close, whether it comes from the front or from everywhere, whether someone kisses the microphone or screams, whether the lights are on or off, whether I am alone (as listener) or with 40,000 people, only with experts or with a bunch of kids... And of course, what the music itself does, what happens in it? Can I sing along after two chords, or somehow know exactly what comes next? Can my dancing leg (or nodding head) rely on a pulse?

Music can open an infinite number of listening and experiential spaces for us. It can tell us about its ingredients and strategies and about the people who made the music. It can be very controlled, or it can also give itself over to chance and intuition.

In experimental and ‘new’ music and sound art, listening conventions are often established only through the music itself. The work teaches its own listening. The listening instruction is then the music itself: it clarifies in the course whether a sound belongs to the music or is ‘only’ a by-product of playing (like the scratching of a guitar string). Do I recognise a structure—does something develop or repeat—or do I hear a static situation, a sound carpet, a texture? Do I understand the influence of the musicians, or is the playing cryptic, or from ‘tape’?

Questions such as the extent to which music can explain itself, and how listening habits can be expanded and experimented with, have been intensively explored in the experimental music and sound scene for over a century. Yet this research has had only limited influence on the sonic dimension of theatre and dance. However, it is precisely such open questions that make music exciting—already from a dramaturgical perspective, since uncertainty creates greater tension.

But such approaches also demand space. And space is scarce in the performing arts—stage space no less than time space. Above all, however, it is headspace—the space of the audience. Everyone involved in making a performance wants to enter that space, the place where the work seeks to be understood, read, and experienced. Yet the listening space is not merely a chamber within the palace of a work, but its very roof. For sound is not everything—but everything is sound.

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“We hear movements we do not see, we hear breath, we hear steps, shoes, fabric, we hear the reverb in the room, the movement of sound, our seat neighbour, the street.”

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## **SOUND IS MORE THAN MUSIC**

Much more difficult are readings of the sonic within music. It is not only tones that give music its identity. Structural aspects also sound: the simultaneity of musical processes, the elements of the mix, the temporal characteristic of sound events. And bodies sound—the resonance bodies of the instruments, the loudspeakers, as well as the bodies of the performers. You hear their striking force on the drumhead and their innermost lungs in the flute.

Music also simply competes with material. All touring sound technicians know this: it sounds one way sometimes, another way another time. That depends on the loudspeakers, the height of the room, how and where the audience sits, whether it's winter or summer (thick sweaters!), etc. We hear movements we do not see, we hear breath, we hear steps, shoes, fabric, we hear the reverb in the room, the movement of sound, our seat neighbors, the street. These are all sonic qualities, sometimes in the music and sometimes as independent elements. The space itself sounds, from the walls to the eardrums.

In theatre, the audience comes, sits down, and takes its time. Or it gives time. Both are somehow true. The time can then be taken and filled. That is the social deal. I believe this is also why the convention in music exists of applauding after each piece—simply to mark the social time period.

Sound theoretically contradicts this agreement; it cannot simply be assigned to time units. Light can change quickly—a slideshow of light spaces, for example, is no problem. That does not work with sound, because sound travels differently through space. And spatial sound has its own time. You need a sound event in order to hear the space, and space needs time.

If I just want to hear a reverb, I first need an event, and then the time afterward—and then I have to have heard everything to the end in order to know how large the space is, for example. So, I cannot make a slideshow of sounds, because each space has its own time. As does every sound. Perhaps it would almost work with event-sounds—signals and sounds that appear quickly and object-like and represent their sound source (a shot, a falling glass,...). But it



certainly doesn't work with complex structural sounds and textural sounds, as composer Helmut Lachenmann once called them—that is, sounds that only reveal themselves as a process, that have a dramaturgy (in textural sound, a micro-dramaturgy). Spatial sound is itself a structural sound, and spatial experience a capacity of hearing.

## **LISTENING IS MORE THAN SOUND**

One could say music distinguishes itself by its own intentionality, but it also has to travel through space to reach us. On its way, it becomes sound. There it encounters many things—walls, air, and jackets—and not least the directedness of our listening, which is as versatile as people are. The intentionality of listening (of the audience) is not aimed only at music, not even only at sound.

We hear our own listening. We hear our ears—their individual abilities and peculiarities. We do not only hear sound waves, but also our memories of sound and music, and what we have imagined—our conscious or unconscious inner inventions of sound. In listening, we contribute to sound; we co-listen. We actually hear ourselves in the encounter with spaces and contents. I imagine listening in this sense as an oscillation between inner and outer worlds, where we are not merely exposed to sound but actively shape the listening process. Listening is creative.

Mostly unconsciously—but here we can also intervene playfully. Mentally, but also physically. The simplest example: if we look left or right, we change all sound directions, virtually rotate the space, but also filter frequencies in and out—we shift our sound image, so to speak.

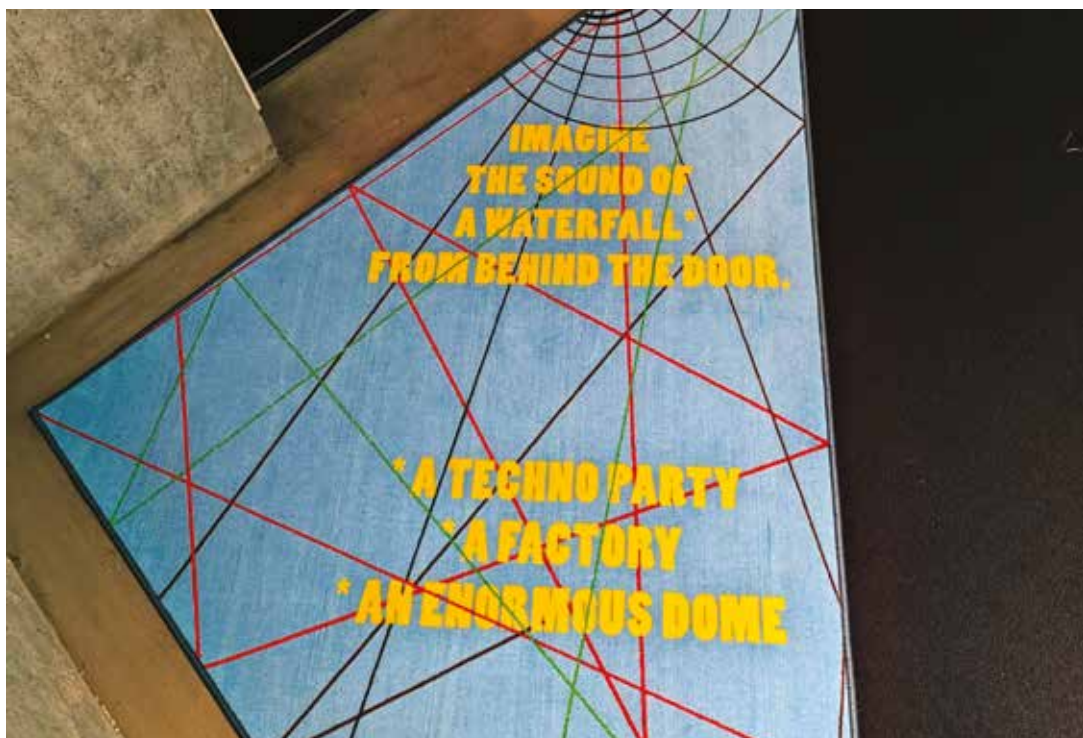
*Small tip: turning your head is very interesting with very high tones—sine-tone beeps, for example. There you can actually virtually co-compose in that way. Which is no sacrilege, because acoustically there is no ‘right’ version anyway.*

But even the mere shift of concentration is creative and, in this sense, performative. A shift, for example, from the observation of instrumental playing technique to room acoustics, from harmonic progression to intonation, from the search for references and meaning to the current perception of time, from critical listening to trance—can proceed controlled, wild, random, or purposeful—probably all of that back and forth.

In the attempt at simultaneous listening to various parameters and voice progressions hides a kind of koan, an unsolvable riddle, which can nevertheless lead to insight, or simply pleasure. It is self-performative in the intro-active sense. I have adopted this term in distinction from interaction, where the performative moment takes place on the communicative level. Intro-action for me is the individual, internal activation—preferably in play—in any case within the realm of aesthetic experience. Art (and other things) can give it a push, but doesn’t have to, which is why I think it is self-performative in both cases.

## PERFORMATIVE MUSIC

Performative listening can, in reverse, lead to performative music: music that is aware of its performative side—that knows the communication of musical and sonic concepts takes place throughout the whole room, in the bodies of the performers just as much as in



those of the audience. The individuals in the audience, it must be said. For the performative moment is a relationship that takes place in space, but not necessarily in social space. That, however, can reinforce and carry it—and thus is also one parameter among many.

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“An artistic approach that acknowledges how meaning depends on bodily and social experience must also search for a different relationship to the mediation of art. Knowledge does not flow only from art to the audience, but back and forth.”

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Music has become more performative in the last 25 years. Not only the conventions of musical practice—the applause, the clothes, the handling of instruments—were suddenly in the spotlight. Through the dissolution of the separation between low- and high-tech, the entire ‘dirt’ of a concert experience was now brought to the surface. The (to this day still dominant) attempts at exclusive listening—the exclusion of ‘non-intended’ elements in music—suddenly appeared absurd, and so conspicuous that they began to stand in the foreground. The effort for cleanliness in musical concepts revealed the impossibility of purity.

That changed a lot. It lifts, for example, the separation of instrumentalists, performers, and composers, who suddenly blur together and thus make careers in various hybrid forms possible—or rather, necessary. In my own teaching practice, I notice a rapid increase in demand for interdisciplinary teaching concepts.

## **LISTENING TO THE AUDIENCE LISTENING**

Extending the perspective of an expanded art of listening to the entire field of the performing arts would also mean embracing its inherently experimental character. This would inevitably affect play, text, movement, and more—simply because it would shift the relationship to the audience. An artistic approach that acknowledges how meaning depends on bodily and social experience must also search for a different relationship to the mediation of art. Knowledge does not flow only from art to the audience, but back and forth.

The site of experimentation is therefore less a secluded laboratory and more a public space, where results condition one another. This brings uncertainty into the work—not everything can be predicted—but that very uncertainty can also grant an artistic work a sense of openness.

## **AH, IF ONLY IT WERE MORE LIKE YOGA, AND LESS LIKE TELEVISION**

The vision of an audience-centered perspective does not focus on a particular content of artworks, but on other modes of working and on a different momentum from which art is created. Here the notion of practice becomes central, describing the permanence of work.

Instead of assuming that each piece represents a self-contained concept, experiment, or research field, this perspective speaks of constant rehearsal—an ongoing attempt that continues even between productions.

In this sense, works function as training grounds—training camps for experiences of experience. Every work is a kind of routine, a rehearsal, and thus never stands alone. All participants are involved, and thus the problem of didactics in mediation dissolves: just like in yoga, it is not enough to have once learned the positions. Experience must be practiced anew each time.

This also brings us back to the idea mentioned at the beginning: that the recurring experience of being an audience is precisely what enables artists to engage with the expanded field and to collaborate with others on equal terms. The constant shifting of roles within art—and between art and audience—then becomes the wellspring of expanded creativity.

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Beelden: *Imagine there was no roof—Sound meditations*  
© David Helbich

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# Het werk van de stem

In onze beeldgedreven samenleving wordt de stem al te vaak naar het achterplan verdreven. Ze is in dit tijdsgewricht dan wel aanwezig dan ooit — van *The Voice* tot sociale media, van autotune tot AI —, maar toch zijn stempraktijken door de decennia heen onderbelicht gebleven. Ook die van Jean-René Toussaint, leermeester en vriend van Myriam Van Imschoot. Met Toussaint als leidraad gaat ze in dit essay op zoek naar een nieuw ‘klankperspectief, een ethischer of utopischer appel voor singulariteit, collectiviteit en relationaliteit’.

© Myriam Van Imschoot

© Myriam Van Imschoot

Er is iets niet pluis in de mail van Jean-René. Hij zegt het met niet zoveel woorden — ziekte, hoe gaat het met jou, ik hoor dat je kunst goed gaat — maar het klinkt niet goed. Wanneer ik eind maart terugkeer uit Australië, ga ik daarom meteen naar hem toe voor een tête-à-tête in Rotterdam.

Een film speelt zich af wanneer ik uit de metro Coolhaven stap en de weg terugvind naar de zolder waar ik gedurende twee jaar de opleiding Stemwerk volgde. Een striemende wind bijt in mijn gelaat terwijl ik over de brug naar het kadehuis stap. Na een klim op de steile trap, omhelzen we elkaar innig op de overloop. We meten langer dan gewoonlijk de barometer van ons weerzien op.

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“Toen Jean-René Toussaint in de jaren 1980 met een groep doven werkte, ervaaarde hij hoe het hele vibrerende, ontvankelijke en responsieve lichaam oor én stem kon zijn.”

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Op de bank vertelt Jean-Réne rustig, wat in de mail niet geschreven kon worden; hij wordt dement. Het is eruit. Nu gaat het nog wel, maar, en hij wijst naar de ruimte, hij zal de studio sluiten en alleen nog klanten ontvangen voor privésessies bij hem thuis in Den Haag — niemand weet voor hoelang nog. Reizen voor workshops, laat staan om theater te maken, zit er niet meer in. Ik luister open, zonder projectie, zoals ik dat van hem heb geleerd, maar op de terugreis naar Brussel brandt de anticipatiepijn. Het landschap achter het raam schuift voorbij in strepen. Wat betekent het om je geheugen te verliezen, jezelf, je taal en uiteindelijk ook je stem?

De stem is het domein waarop Jean-René Toussaint zijn levenswerk bouwde als acteur, regisseur, denker en therapeut. Een vaak door hem aangehaald sleutelmoment is toen hij in de jaren 1980 met een groep doven werkte: daar ervaaarde hij hoe het hele vibrerende, ontvankelijke en responsieve lichaam oor én stem kon zijn. Des te pijnlijker was het dat de doven hadden geleerd hun rauwere keelklanken en hun geaspireerde en meer-tonige stemmen te verstommen. De geschrokken gezichten van hun toehoorders hadden immers een schok teruggekaatst: dat de stem van de ‘doveman’ abject was, buiten de norm, verwerpelijk zelfs. En dus werd ze in de kiem gesmoord.

De basisbeginselen van Stemwerk zijn in deze werkervaring vervat als in een *oerscène*. Jean-René zal steeds onderstrepen dat stemmen rijker zijn dan de ‘afgevlakte versie’ die wij ervan hebben gemaakt in de loop van onze cultuurhistorische ontwikkeling, met almaar dunnere spraakprosodieën — een verarming die ook veel geschoolde, uitgestreken zang treft. Bovendien zal hij steevast een waakzame houding aannemen tegenover het latente geweld dat in socialisatie schuilt, en ervoor pleiten dat iedereen een stem heeft die het verdient gehoord te worden. We moeten leren luisteren naar het open boek dat ze is met al haar raadsels en subjectiviteiten, zonder dat ze ooit volledig samenvalt met één vaste ‘identiteit’.

De meeste stemproblemen hebben, volgens Jean-René, hun oorsprong in (ver)oordelend luisteren. Geïnterioriseerde controle leidt tot zelfcensuur en ten slotte ook tot *self-harm*.

Tegenover het ‘horizontale’ stemgebruik—gericht op betekenisoverdracht, verstaanbaarheid, sociale codering—pleit hij voor de herwaardering van de ‘verticale’ doorleefde en resonante stem, verbonden met impulsen en beweeglijkheid. Wanneer hij voor een *primitive voice* pleit, is dat niet om terug te keren naar een ongerept primitief verleden, maar om een veronachtzaamd fundament in ere te herstellen.

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“Stem hoefde niet alleen om prestatie te draaien,  
maar kon ook een manier zijn van in relatie  
staan—van resoneren, luisteren, samen trillen.”

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Antonin Artaud is niet veraf. Fysiek lijken de twee Fransmannen op elkaar, vind ik, maar Jean-René wuifde dat weg toen ik dat ooit opperde. En toch. Beiden hebben frêle silhouetten die een uitsnede in de ruimte kerven waaruit intensiteit oplaait; of ik zie plukjes dof haar rondom verfromfaaide gezichten waarin kinderen en oude wijzen huishouden. Net als Artaud kreeg Jean-René te maken met een vermorzelend ‘medisch apparaat’. Ook hij werd, zij het om andere redenen dan zijn voorganger, op jonge leeftijd gehospitaliseerd. Als *survivor* van *medical malpractice* zal hij ook in zijn therapie opgelegde ziektebeelden en diagnoses als dwangbuizen van zich afschudden en die counteren door de singulariteit en zelfbeschikking van de persoon centraal te stellen. Een radicaal open luisteren wordt zijn ethiek, met de stem als richtsnoer. Net zoals bij Artaud is het vooral de eschatologische stem—te horen in de kreten, het roepen, het hijgen, gesis, het kreunen—die een herbezieling kan inluiden, op de rand van taal.

Ook resoneert Jean-Réné's aanpak met die van Alfred Wolfsohn, de Duitse, naar Engeland uitgeweken zanger die getekend door de oorlog de schreeuw en het uiterste bereik van de menselijke stem tot leidraad maakte. Via hem beïnvloedde dit denken het Roy Hart Theatre, waarin de stem niet beperkt bleef tot zang of tekst, maar een zoektocht werd naar een verruimd register. Andere lijnen lopen naar de collectieve dynamieken van koren, mantra's en scanderingen in het Living Theatre van Julian Beck en Judith Malina, de stem als ‘orgaan van relaties’ bij The Open Theater van Joseph Chaikin, of het laboratoriumwerk van regisseur Jerzy Grotowski, die via zijn totale lichaamspraktijk de stem onlosmakelijk met aanwezigheid en transformatie verbond.

Hoewel Jean-René deze referenties tijdens zijn onderricht slechts zijdelings aanhaalde, kan hij gerust tot die voice-lijn vanaf de jaren 1960 en '70 gerekend worden, waar theater, stem, levenskunst, maatschappijkritiek en/of alternatieve therapie in elkaar vallen. Het ging niet alleen om voorstellingen maken, maar om een geïntegreerde belangstelling die de grenzen tussen kunst en leven voortdurend oprekte. Jean-René Toussaints Stemwerk sluit niet alleen bij die avant-gardistische stemtraditie aan, maar schrijft er een geheel eigen hoofdstuk in.

Dat alles flitst door mijn hoofd op de trein naar huis, naast andere, moeilijker te articuleren kwesties. Hoe komt het dat in de geschiedschrijving van de avant-garde de nadruk meer is komen te liggen—zeker sinds de jaren 1980—op de visuele of dramaturgische innovaties terwijl de voice-lijn gaandeweg is gemarginaliseerd, zoniet uitgewist? Is dat geen amnesie



waar we collectief aan lijden? Of is het nu eenmaal het lot van klank in een spektakelmaatschappij om dienstbaar te zijn aan het beeld? Wat zegt het over ons theaterbestel dat we nog wel Philipp Glass naast sterren als Isabelle Huppert, Tom Waits en Marina Abramović vermelden in de in memoriams voor Robert Wilson<sup>1</sup>, maar niet zijn vaste medewerker Hans Peter Kuhn, die dertig jaar innoverende sounddesigns realiseerde? We kennen de imposante taferelen van Romeo Castellucci, maar Claudia Giudi, die bij het gezelschap Societas de deconstructivistische tekstzeggingen en texturen voor haar rekening nam, blijft onderbelicht. Het lijkt wel alsof klank- en stempraktijken meer ondergronds hun invloed verspreiden. Diffuser ook. Maar zijn ze daarom minder reëel en substantieel?

## VOCAL TURN

Toen ik in 2011 met *Stemwerk* van Jean-René Toussaint begon, had ik net de solo *Living Archive* gecreëerd, een performatief hoorspel op basis van cassettebandjes uit mijn jeugd. Als een verstomde poppenspeler liet ik vintagerecorders de stemmen van anderen en mezelf vertolken, stemmen die ik koesterde en uiteindelijk ook uitdreef. In de openings-scène leverde ik een *scrambled speech* af als een stukgelopen plaat met glitches. Dat beeld van de ‘spreker’ of ‘voorzanger’ als een ontheemde plek strookte met Derrida’s kritiek op het logocentrisme: in plaats van thuis te komen in de spraak zijn we hoogstens spreekbuizen—niet de oorsprong van betekenis, maar het kanaal waardoor verschil, herhaling en afwezigheid spreken.

Die gedachte vond ik ook terug bij twee van mijn bijbels uit die tijd met, niet toevallig, een buikspreker en zijn pop op de kافت: Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck. A Cultural History of*

*Ventriloquism* (2000) en Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006).<sup>2</sup> De auteurs leggen het problematische statuut van de stem en haar onzekere herkomst bloot. Connor schetst het diepe wantrouwen dat in de westerse cultuur heerst jegens stemmen zonder lichaam en hun koppeling met macht, van Delphische orakels en buikspreekers tot computerstemmen.<sup>3</sup> Dolar zag de stem evenzeer als een *uncanny* object: geen expressief venster op innerlijkheid, maar iets dat balanceert tussen binnen en buiten. Na een lezing in Extra City raakten Dolar en ik aan de praat bij een sigaret op de stoep, en ik nodigde hem later uit naar *Voice Day* (2009), het sluitstuk van mijn residentie met Kristien Vanden Brande in de Jan van Eyck Academie. Hij zou er nog jaren terugkeren om Lacan-seminaries te geven.

Rond die tijd tekende de *vocal turn* zich steeds scherper af in de beeldende kunst en theorie. Versterkt door het broeikaseffect van de Jan van Eyck Academie ervoer ik dit scharniermoment als een belofte: een uitnodiging om zich vanuit verschillende disciplines te buigen over de stem als een domein waar tijdsvragen konden worden scherpgesteld. Het prisma was breed en actueel. Binnen dezelfde tentoonstelling konden posities kantelen van ecologie naar community, van juridisch-forensische analyses naar poëtische evocaties. Ik denk aan de koortjestrend waarmee het voor mij begon<sup>4</sup>, maar ook *Mother's Day* (2006) van Smadar Dreyfus, waarvoor Syrische jongeren hun moederdagswensen met soundsystems over de bezette Golan-hoogte katapulteren; de sjamanistische mens-diermutaties van Marcus Coates; en later ook de pushbackgrenscontroles aan de hand van accentherkenning van Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Vormvernieuwing was er bovendien bij de vleet, met invloed van *sonic arts*, installatiekunst en *audio walks*, evenals koppelingen met films en videokunst.



*Nocturnes for a Society*, Myriam Van Imschoot & Lucas van Haesbroeck © Veerle Vercauteren

In de tentoonstelling tijdens *Voice Day* speelde onder meer de video *Shoum* van Katarina Zdjelar, waarin een groep Servische mannen met volle overgave ‘Shout’ van Tears for Fears zingt. In het naoorlogse Belgrado, met zijn uitgesproken machocultuur, klinkt deze nogal knullige remake van een wereldhit in gebrekkig Engels als een anthem voor onderdrukte mannelijke gevoelens. Wie zingt wat, en welke boodschappen seinen we door? Kan een liedje een cover zijn voor politieke onrust en collectieve pijn?

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“Als kind was ik altijd al gevoelig voor klank.  
Ik had een spraakgebrek. Ik kon de intense  
gedachtestroom in mijn hoofd niet overzetten  
naar mijn tong.”

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In de podiumkunsten zijn er zeker parallellen te trekken. Terwijl Jérôme Bel rond 2000 nog popmuziek had ingezet in een ‘kale’ semiotische esthetiek, begon een nieuwe generatie choreografen en performancekunstenaars muziek als affectieve breekijzers binnen te halen met bravoure en pathos. Zingende samplemachines verenigden probleemloos het meesterlijke en het monsterlijke, zoals de counter-diva in de bodyart-drag van Ivo Dimchev (*Lili Händel*, 2004), waarin elke spierspanning verklankt wordt. Helemaal door het dak gingen Trajal Harrell, Cecilia Bengolea, François Chaignaud en Marlene Monteiro Freitas in *Mimosa* (2011), met hun flamboyante voguing en vanonder het stof gehaalde hits vol poses van gespeelde bekentenissen.<sup>5</sup> *Mimicry* en *mockery* lagen er dicht bij elkaar.

Niet toevallig verscheen in die tijd het televisieformat *The Voice* (2010) in volle prime-time, waarbij de jury met de rug naar de kandidaat zit (het oor boven het oog). Ook dit fenomeen—de opvolger van *Idool*—behoorde tot dezelfde culturele golf waarin de stem opnieuw het podium opeiste. Streamingplatforms als YouTube en Spotify maken de stem alomtegenwoordig in oneindige circulatie en gepersonaliseerde afspeellijsten—*on demand*, gedeeld, geremixt, tegelijk intiemer én massaler dan ooit. Digitale effecten als autotune, granulaire bewerkingen en compressie lieten stemmen klinken alsof ze volledig kneedbaar waren: plooibaar naar elke maatstaf van perfectie of gewilde vervorming.

Voor een jonge kunstenaar die haar eigen stem zocht—letterlijk en figuurlijk—waren dit ongetwijfeld boeiende tijden, dobberend in een uitdijende oceaan van losgeweekte stemmen die uit telefoons, iPods en computers lekten. Maar de ogenschijnlijke diversiteit bracht ook een auditieve verschraving met zich mee—denk maar aan de *voice-trends* die ons door *preference*-algoritmes almaar meer door de strot werden geduwd. Nog nooit klonken stemmen zo kundig, exposed en voorspelbaar. De criticus Mark Fisher zou dit gesloten circuit n zijn gelijknamige boek benoemen als *capitalist realism* (2009). Voor de valkuil van virtuositeit had filosoof Paolo Virno al gewaarschuwd in *A Grammar of the Multitude* (2004). Wanneer elk gebaar—elk geluid, elke expressie—op voorhand publiek wordt en zijn waarde ontleent aan zichtbaarheid, dreigt de daad zelf leeg te lopen. Virtuositeit, zegt hij, is performatief maar zonder eindproduct; ze schittert maar verteert zich in haar eigen schittering. In die zin is ze een uithollend spiegelbeeld van onze tijd: indrukwekkend maar ook vermoeiend, een oefening zonder rustpunt.

Kortom, ik voelde een gemis. Iets knaagde. Dit was niet het klankperspectief waarnaar ik zocht. Ik verlangde naar een ethischer of utopischer appel voor singulariteit, collectiviteit en relationaliteit. Stem hoefde niet alleen om prestatie te draaien, maar kon ook een manier zijn van in relatie staan — van resoneren, luisteren, samen trillen.<sup>6</sup> Zocht ik daarom Jean-René Toussaint op?

## **DE WEG VAN HET LUISTEREN**

Hier ligt het voor me, mijn groot dik notitieboek *Stemwerk* met theorielessen, oefeningen en aantekeningen op de inmiddels vergeelde bladen.

De eerste pagina's komen me te keurig voor. Het afgemeten handgeschrijf staat bol van goede intenties, maar ook van waakzaamheid. Blijkbaar was ik op mijn hoede om met een goeroe te maken te krijgen. Er lopen er wel meer rond die met valse beloftes zwaaien om je 'ware' stem te vinden. En je zou versteld staan hoeveel geld sommigen willen neertellen om overtonen te leren of diepe mongoolklanken te rochelen. Rond de stem leeft een markt van zelfhulp, spirituele make-overs en extractivisme van skills.

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“Bewonderenswaardig is dat Jean-René nooit afbreuk doet aan de radicaliteit van zijn methodes, maar ook niet bitter is over de marginaliteit van zijn positie.”

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De eerste les gaat over luisteren. Mooi. Daar zaten we allemaal met stemzucht, de drang om ons vocaal te manifesteren, alle registers los te slaan, en dan gaat het over ontvangen in plaats van te produceren. Maar dat is nu juist betekenisvol: luisteren komt eerst. Expressie, als je het zo kunt noemen, is een gevolg.

Door de hele cursus heen zal het luisteren in alle toonaarden terugkeren. Alleen al met de formuleringen waarmee Jean-René het appel van het luisteren kracht bijzet kun je een boekje maken. *‘The silence of listening wants the opportunity of sound.’ ‘Listening with the body is a daring process in which you risk yourself.’ ‘Learn to listen to a “no”.* Bots je op een muur van verzet, dan is het een uitnodiging om een andere weg naar de overkant te vinden. Vul ook nooit de woorden van iemand in of aan, blijf open staan voor verrassing. *‘Listening is participating in a stream, you never step twice in it in the same way.’*

Luisteren is zeker geen altruïsme waar je je verliest in het gat van de ander. Het is eerder een spiegel waarin iets verschijnt en ontdebelt, maar dan wel voorbij het narcisme van het spiegelbeeld als fetisj. Al luisterend kom je immers de ander en jezelf tegen — via adem, vibratie en wat terugkomt, feedback, echo en resonantie. Het is een ‘soort zwangerschap waar iets geboren kan worden’. Je zou verbanden kunnen leggen met de *kūki* van de Japanse filosoof Kiyokazu Washida, die het luisteren koppelt aan het ‘lucht lezen’. Wat niet in taal gezegd kan worden rijst op in een veld van aandacht, in het interval of de tussenruimte van *ma*.<sup>7</sup>



De allereerste oefening die we krijgen is een toonbeeld van dat generatief principe. In de YouYou Groep, het stemensemble waarvan ik sinds 2014 deel uitmaak, is het een standaard geworden. Je gaat in de ruimte dichtbij een element staan — een muur, een raam, de vloer, een stoel of om het even welk object — en je maakt klanken waarmee je de aard van het element opneemt, zowel met de oren als met het hele lichaam. Eerst merk je inderdaad dat de *reverb* op een hard oppervlak anders binnenkomt dan een geluidsabsorberende matras, maar met enig geduld ontstaat in de akoestische situatie een feedbackloop of een relationele verstrengeling van klinken en weerklinken die ook andere empirische en affectieve info oplevert en de stem op haar beurt wijzigt.

Stemwerk biedt vele variaties op dat principe. Je kunt interageren met een object maar ook met iemand; nu eens geef je alleen stem, dan weer samen of met meerderen. Het gaat er vaak fysiek aan toe, met manuele aanrakingen van zachte beroering tot hardhandiger agiteren en schudden. Soms drukken we de lippen op het lichaam om klanken in het lichaam te stuwen, wat ik in mijn eigen werk verder tot *bone-blowing* ontwikkelde, waarbij je de beenderen van het lichaam als een misthoorn bespeelt.

Ik blader voort en zie thema's als horizontaliteit/verticaliteit, emoties, seksualiteit, communicatie enzovoort defileren. Er is een morfologie van het lichaam. De voorkant/achterkant, linker- en rechterzijde van het lichaam hebben andere gevoelsgesteldheden. We leren meer vooraan op de zolen van onze voeten lopen, omdat ze 'gevoeliger' informatie opnemen dan de hielen. Schouders, ribben, heupen passeren onze handen en monden. Vooral de rug blijkt een boeiend resonantievlak te zijn. Doordat hij ontsnapt aan de controle van een frontale communicatiecultuur is hij een opslag van herinneringen en emoties. Hij is ook een ideale plek om vergeten stemmen op te wekken.

Een hele kenniskorf wordt maand na maand aan ons overgedragen. Doordat het met mondjesmaat gebeurt, wordt het onderricht niet pedant of ostentatief, maar opent het vooral een denkwijze. Het brengt ons naar evolutionair en cognitief onderzoek, culturele antropologie, EMDR, de klinktalen uit Afrika, het smeden van bronzen klokken, de akoestische plekken voor gemeenschapsbeleving en verering, zoals in de grotten in Spanje of de romaanse abdijen van Zuid-Frankrijk waar het gezang van monniken vanuit de benedenruimte opstijgt en zich mengt in de welvingen erboven. Er is ook een lange uiteenzetting over Artaud en alchemie, allicht omdat Jean-René omstreeks die tijd ook een stuk had gemaakt rond *alchemical theatre* bij het Frear Ensemble Theater in Philadelphia.

Naarmate de cursus vordert kom ik duidelijk meer in de flow van de oefeningen te zitten. Met het groeiende vertrouwen tussen de deelnemers lukt het beter om elkaar te spiegelen. We ontwikkelen een nieuwe zintuiglijkheid en communicatie-instrument. De vocale 'stroom' vergelijk ik weleens met een lillend klankplasma dat tussen ons uitrolt in de ruimte en diepte-inzicht verschaft, zoals de gevorkte tong van een slang chemische informatiedeeltjes lijmt en rijmt. Sciencefictionauteur Octavia Butler zou dit geweldig vinden, denk ik nu.

Bewonderenswaardig is dat Jean-René nooit afbreuk doet aan de radicaliteit van zijn methodes, maar ook niet bitter is over de marginaliteit van zijn positie. De meeste vernieuwende ideeën leven aan de rand voor ze in de mainstream worden opgenomen, zegt hij. Hij ziet dat proces niet als recuperatie of annexatie, maar als een organische verwerking van informatie die we als mensheid nodig hebben. De buitenstaanders hebben een rol.



*newpolyphonies*, Myriam Van Imschoot & HYOID © Beata Szpagarowska

Met terugwerkende kracht zie ik dat het mensbeeld dat achter Stemwerk zit meer politiek dan therapeutisch is. Niet genezing is het doel, wel transformatie. We balanceren allemaal continu tussen gezondheid en aandoeningen, maar in plaats van te focussen op de kwaal kunnen we méér zijn dan een probleem. Durf opnieuw te beginnen, altijd opnieuw, of vind andere invalshoeken in het narratief. Leef als een vraag. *Sur-viving* betekent vooral 'meer leven' in plaats van 'over-leven'. Bovendien is er een plicht naar de volgende generaties toe. Levensles. De wereld verander je niet vanuit grote utopische constructies, maar als een werk aan de basis, te beginnen met jezelf. Stemwerk. Vergis je niet, Jean-Réne zou een perfecte *ally* kunnen zijn van de op dat moment almaar sterker wordende *care movement*, ware het niet dat hij woorden als *care* systematisch uit zijn lijstje schrapt. Hulpverstrekking houdt volgens hem asymmetrische rollen van afhankelijkheid in stand terwijl hij een meer impulsgerichte levensdrang wil opwekken, die reflexen activeert om 'te nemen en genomen te worden'. *Take support* in plaats van hulp te krijgen. Het is misschien wel de moeilijkste les voor mij.

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“Tegenwoordig zijn stemcoaches meer in trek dan dramaturgen om performers klaar te stomen voor ingenieuze vertolkingen. Maar men neemt de skills mee en niet de filosofie.”

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De les die ik koester gaat over authenticiteit. Hij heeft reserves bij het ware 'ik', zegt hij, en hij voelt weinig voor identitaire fixaties omdat het dreunverhalen zijn die niet meer bewegen. Hij gelooft niet in het defaitisme van '*there is no alternative*', want we kunnen voortdurend keuzes maken. Maar maken we ze ook?

Laatste les: we leren bestaande oefeningen van Jean-René ombuigen of nieuwe maken. Zijn lessen zijn geen leer voor een school met volgelingen. Ga op eigen benen staan. Het experiment houdt nooit op. Je blijft hoe dan ook luisteren, want er zijn geen pasklare formules. Enfin, hopelijk kun je er wat mee. En dan, dan is het afgelopen. In tegenstelling tot Deep Listening van Pauline Oliveros en BMC (*Body-Mind Centering*) van *somatic researcher* Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen krijg je bij afloop geen certificaat. Je maakt geen deel uit van een gemeenschap of een instituut met een titel en *discounts* bij nieuwe publicaties. Je gaat de wereld in.

## DE ANDERE KANT VAN NABOOTSGING

Toen ik de Stemwerk-opleiding volgde, kon ik niet voorspellen hoezeer dit parcours mij zou tekenen. Jean-René heeft mijn werk nooit gezien. En ik vroeg hem nooit om artistieke raad, behalve die ene keer over *Stripsody* van Cathy Berberian, een speels zangstuk op basis van een visuele partituur met stripgeluiden. Cathy Berberian was in de dyade met componist Luciano Berio een muze, co-schepper en vertolker van vele van zijn werken, zoals het iconische *Sequenza III* dat op haar lijf geschreven was. Haar theatraal instinct, ongedwongen multistijl en humor konden de uitbreiding van het stemvocabularium in

de nieuwe muziek geloofwaardig maken, en in zekere zin was ze de voorloper van de performatievere wending van de jaren 1960 en '70, waarin het lichaam van de uitvoerders zelf tot partituur werd.<sup>8</sup>

Ik kwam bij Jean-René met het idee af om ook een grafische score te maken die de Tarzan-kreet, *the yodel-jingle of the jungle*, zou mixen met andere 'wilde' kreten uit de populaire film en literatuur, waarmee het Westen heropvoert wat het eerder 'monddood' maakte. Tegelijk zou het kantelen naar een ander stemgebruik. Als oprichter van *'primitive voice'* zou Jean-René de perfecte vertolker zijn, toch? Hij schudde zijn hoofd en prevelde wat over oppervlakkige nabootsing. Ik begreep het wel. Het was slim, zo'n postkoloniale ontregeling van noties als het 'barbaarse' en *'le sauvage'* in een semiotisch spel van betekenaars, en ja, kunst kon dieper gaan.

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“Jean-René, je lessen zijn goud waard,  
en het grootste cadeau zou zijn als je ze terug  
aan jezelf kan schenken.”

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Nabootsing was op dat moment nog een overlevingsstrategie voor mij. Ik kon breken uit het solfège van de muziek door de klanken rondom mij als nieuwe noten in te zetten. Als kind was ik altijd al gevoelig voor klank. Ik had een spraakgebrek. Ik kon de intense gedachtestroom in mijn hoofd niet overzetten naar mijn tong.

Gaandeweg leerde ik al luisterend om te communiceren en verstaanbaar te spreken. Mijn eerste groepsstuk *What Nature Says* (2015) is één groot spel van vijf performers als *foley artists* die zowat alles imiteren: de autostrades rond Kortrijk, Afrikaanse savannes, ontbossing van tropische wouden. En ik stel er de vraag wat het betekent te luisteren naar biotopen in crisis en hun noodkreten. Ketsen we ze af, of doorvoelen we ze door ze diep in ons te laten weerkaatsen?

Maar met *newpolyphonies* (2021) stap ik door de mimetische spiegel. Met de vier zangers van HYOID—Fabienne Seveillac, Andreas Halling, Gunther Vandeven en Els Mondelaers—ontwikkel ik mijn klanktaal met wereldklanken verder vanuit de meest eenvoudige, kleine cellen en laat ze uitgroeien tot bouwstenen van een auditieve kosmologie. Ze is nog wel geïnspireerd door insecten en machines, krekels en knekels, vliegen en vliegtuigen, maar het gegons slaat om in minder bestemde tremolo's, vibrato's, geronk en gedonder voorbij specifieke referenties.

Op tournee nodigen we telkens vijftien lokale deelnemers uit—muzikale ervaring niet vereist!—om in enkele workshops deze triltaal te leren en vervolgens met ons op te treden als een zwerm. Bij aanvang van de voorstelling rijzen we op uit het auditorium, een voor een, en worden we een collectief klanklichaam dat de ruimte overneemt.

Een van mijn favoriete momenten is de zwanenzang in de slotscène, waar Jean-Rénés invloed tastbaar is. Een performer tippelt met een perche-microfoon voorzichtig (niet vanuit hielen!) tussen een groep *bone-blowers* (lippen bespelen lichaamsdelen als fluiten!).



Zij vangt hun klanken en laat ze versterkt klinken op het surroundsysteem in de zaal. Houdt ze de microfoon dichtbij, dan vergroot ze zo een detail, verderaf komt veel meer het geheel samen. Het publiek wordt één met haar oor en hoort een orkest van misthoorns, het gezoem van een bijenkorf of zelfs het rottingsproces van vlees. Tot het gaat tollen in een wervelwind waarin iets anders meezingt.

In *newpolyphonies* is klank niet alleen polyfoon vanwege de meervoudige stemmen in de massa, maar door te werken op een meervoudige 'perceptie'. Ik noem het 'sympathische consonantie'. Klanken, zoals het gezoem van een vlieg, worden *portal sounds* en openen een deur naar weer een andere betekenis, een motor, een bourdon ... En zo schuift het maar verder door tot we uit de cirkel van identiteit breken. Dat is duizelingwekkend, maar ook troostend: in dit verstrengelde resonantiesysteem kan zelfs het kleinste gebaar een kwantumsprong worden.

Als er één werk is dat ik Jean-René had willen tonen, dan wel dit werk: ik leerde in dit werk *com-poneren* — telkens opnieuw bijeenleggen wat uiteen dreigt te vallen. De voorstelling ontstond en ging midden in covid in première. Terwijl adem een gevaar werd, stonden twintig performers in de Bijloke te blazen, hissen en sissen. Het masker werd een membraan. Juist in een tijd van angst en afstand hielden we vast aan de verbeelding van het collectief.

## EN ATTENDANT UNE NOUVELLE (VAGUE)

Het is mei en ik vraag Jean-René of ik hem kan terugzien voor een interview voor *Etcetera*. Tussen de regels zal hij begrijpen dat ik iets wil bewaren nu het zwarte gat aan hem trekt. Maar afspreken lukt niet. De groeiende verwarring van mijn leermeester blijkt uit de tegenstrijdige berichtjes die ik krijg via WhatsApp, Messenger, sms en ten slotte ook e-mails die niet voor mij bestemd zijn.

Het wordt juni en zomer. Aandringen op een reactie vind ik onkies. Ik begin naar de opnames van zijn lessen te luisteren die ik heb gekregen van Michel Yang, die na mij de opleiding volgde, kort voor ze in 2020 overleed. Het is in zekere zin haar erfenis aan mij. En telkens wanneer haar stem even hoorbaar is tijdens de uiteenzettingen van Jean-René flitst het hiernamaals met een knipoog.<sup>9</sup>

Ik maak een map met citaten en kernbegrippen. Deze luisterbeurten zijn als een herkansing. Opnieuw leren. De map groeit als een spin. Ik voel me minder triest nu. Zeker wanneer ik denk aan het laatste moment op de bank in zijn Rotterdamse studio, toen hij zijn telefoon bovenhaalde om de foto's te laten zien van het volkstuintje waar hij en zijn partner zo graag verwijlen. Bomen staan in een tooi van pril groen, bloemen omzomen gangpaden, en daar is ze, een rosse poes met een staart als vraagteken. Zo eindigde mijn bezoek; met het bladeren in een fotoalbum met een poes die van foto naar foto springt.

En attendant begin ik deze tekst te schrijven. Ik schrijf maar door. *Tot het zover is*. Tot er geen afspraak meer kan komen omdat ik op toernee naar Australië, Japan en Korea vertrek. Tot zeeën en continenten ons scheiden. Tot de *Etcetera*-deadline er is. Tot de tekens op zijn. En tot ultimatus irrelevant zijn geworden. Deze uitwisseling zal een andere gedaante krijgen.

Ik zou hem zoveel willen vragen. Bijvoorbeeld, hoe staat hij tegenover virtuositeit? Tegenwoordig zijn stemcoaches meer in trek dan dramaturgen om performers klaar te stomen voor ingenieuze vertolkingen. Maar men neemt de skills mee en niet de filosofie. Onder de podia slurpt een moeras dat betekenisvolle gebaren weg draineert omdat er niets stolt in een collectief veldmoment. We zijn inwisselbare paradepaardjes in de tredmolen van intelligent vertier.

Is hij in theater blijven geloven? Artaud heeft het nooit meegemaakt, hetgeen waarvoor hij pleidooide. Het bleef een profetische *art to come*. Zoals de alchemisten werkte hij er een leven lang aan zonder garantie op resultaat. Vindt Jean-René ook, zoals Artaud, dat eerst iets moet ontbinden (de zogenaamde symbolische dood) vooraleer het naar een hoger element kan klimmen?

Ik heb vragen over vragen. Jean-René begreep de methodiek van het zoeken: 'Een vraag is tien keer meer belangrijk dan een antwoord.' 'Leef als een vraag.' Ik vraag me af hoe de ziekte hem momenteel verandert en of hij zijn leven zal beëindigen voor het einde? 'Sterven treedt pas in als we ons vermogen tot beweeglijkheid verliezen', klinkt het op de opname.

Jean-René, je lessen zijn goud waard, en het grootste cadeau zou zijn als je ze terug aan jezelf kan schenken. Je sprak over 'steun nemen', maar je lijkt me een *loner*. Dat vertellen die kiekjes van de rosse poes. Ze kijkt naar jou, onvoorstaanbaar in het pact van toeval en affectie. Schurkt tegen je benen. Loopt alweer een volgend bloemenperk in. Weg is ze.

Voor mij is gemeenschap het antwoord. Ik weet dat het een modewoord is, maar het bestaat echt. De tijdelijke *sonic communities* van *Nocturnes for a Society*, de praktiserende gemeenschap van de YouYou Groep. Het openen van een ruimte in Manchesterstraat als een *commoning* van praktijken rond stem, klank en luisteren voor al wie wil. Dat was nog maar het begin, Jean-René. Ik beloof het. Ik zweer het.

Ik hou van wolven, meer dan van poezen. Ze huilen in hun nachtelijke samenkomsten elk op een eigen frequentie, hartverscheurend. Gemeenschappen als klankroedels. Waar was het ook alweer in Frankrijk, het voorbeeld dat je gaf van monniken die in een ruimte onder de vloer hun stemmen lieten opstijgen tot aan de gewelven van de kerk, als was het gezang van de hemelen, maar ze kwam van *benen*. We zullen aards zijn of niet zijn. Het bestaat ook werkelijk, op de golfslag van frequenties boodschappen terugkrijgen, als we maar luisteren. Ik luister!

Hoe heet die poes? Mini? Mouche? Momo?

Poes, het is aan jou nu. Miauw maar tegen je baasje, en geef hem een kopje.

- 1 “Of all his collaborators, Kuhn has exercised the most significant influence on Wilson, and the two have radically altered the relationship between sound and image in theater. (...) I want to wake up people who spend their lives sleepwalking in a perceptual fog. Sound is a miracle.” Citaat komt uit een interview met Arthur Holmberg in Holmberg, A. (1996). *The Theater of Robert Wilson*. Cambridge University Press, 176.
  - 2 Het beeld op de kaften is van de pop ‘Erich von Stroheim’ (soms ook *Erich* genoemd) en de acteur Michael Redgrave uit de film *Dead of Night* (1945), een Britse horroranthologie geregisseerd door o.a. Alberto Cavalcanti.
  - 3 Een voorbeeld uit de podiumkunsten dat sterk resoneerde met de literatuur van Connor en Dolar, was *Jerk* (2008) van Gisèle Vienne, met Jonathan Capdevielle als buikspreeker. De poppen in dit stuk verbeelden de seriemoordenaar en zijn handlangers. De voorstelling onderstreepte hoe ventriloquie, net als bij Connor en Dolar, een metafoor wordt voor macht en manipulatie.
  - 4 Meer bepaald met *The Singing Lesson 2* (2001) van Artur Żmijewski, waarin een groep doven Bach zingt. Vele kunstenaars maken koortjes, het is een onophoudelijke trend. Allicht het bekendste initiatief is de *Complaint Choirs* (vanaf 2005) van Tellervo Kalleinen en Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen, waarin burgers hun klachten in zang omzetten.
  - 5 *Mimosa (Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church (M))* (2011) maakt deel uit van Harrells dansreeks *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church*, waarin hij een fictieve ontmoeting verbeeldt tussen de vogueingscene van Harlem (Paris Is Burning) en de postmoderne dans van de Judson Church (New York, jaren 1960). Andere voorbeelden van
- ‘voorstellingen-als-concert’ verdienen een plaats, maar vallen buiten de scope van dit artikel. Toch graag nog deze: Sanja Mitrović in 1: *Songs* (2009) van Nicole Beutler (op arrangementen van Gary Shepherd) voert een reeks tragische vrouwenfiguren uit de theatergeschiedenis op in een verbluffende vocale medley.
  - 6 Hier hoort Adriana Cavarero thuis met *A più voci. Filosofia dell’espressione vocale* (Feltrinelli, 2003) / *For More than One Voice. Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford University Press, 2005). In haar relationele opvatting van de stem is er aandacht voor de unieke singulariteit van wie spreekt, maar altijd in verhouding tot een ander die luistert. Stem is geen instrument van representatie, maar een gebeurtenis van *exposure*—een ethische, kwetsbare vorm van in-relatie-staan.
  - 7 De link komt niet van Jean-René, maar leg ik zelf. Er zijn verschillen met Washida’s moralistischer gekleurde interpretatie van het ‘lezen van de lucht’. Toussaints praktijk is meer teruggekoppeld naar het lichaam en de ‘lucht’ is letterlijk hoorbaar en voelbaar als drager van het ongezegde, een veld van nabijheid en trilling.
  - 8 In *Composing under the Skin. The Music-making Body at the Composer’s Desk* (2014, Leuven University Press) onderzoekt Paul Craenen hoe componisten in hedendaagse muziek niet alleen klank maar ook de performatieve, zichtbare en fysieke dimensie van het musiceren integreren in het compositiemateriaal. Het lichaam is geen neutraal medium meer, maar een drager van expressie, weerstand en betekenis, waar de grens tussen componeren, uitvoeren en waarnemen vervaagt.
  - 9 Danseres, choreografe en stemkunstenares Michel Yang (1973-2020) maakte samen met Caroline Daish en Justine Maxelon deel uit van Oracle, een collectief dat stemonderzoek koppelt aan performatieve praktijken. Oracle ontwikkelde een *eyes-closed vocal improvisation practice* die ruimtes ‘leest’—van het innerlijk van het lichaam tot publieke plaatsen zoals parken, stations of musea—en via stem en minimale beweging de grenzen aftast tussen individuele expressie en gedeelde ruimte. Ook hier leven ideeën van Jean-René Toussaint voort.

*Myriam Van Imschoot* maakt performances en creëert geluidspoëzie, vocale stukken, video- en geluidsinstallaties. Ze beweegt tussen verschillende institutionele velden en media en legt zich toe op het experimenteren met contexten, als ze al niet zelf een context creëert.

# *Hoe klinkt een voorstelling?*

Choreograaf Lisa Vereertbrugghen werkt momenteel aan een nieuwe creatie met haar vaste geluidsontwerper Michael 'Mike' Langeder. Door de jaren en creatieprocessen heen ontwikkelden zij een unieke modus operandi. Van Lisa's eerste, ruwe ideeën over Mikes input tot de uiteindelijke synthese in een overweldigende geluidsband: hoe gaan zij te werk? In deze dialoog blikken Lisa en Mike terug op hun gezamenlijk parcours.



Wat volgt is een weergave van een gesprek tussen Mike en mij, opgenomen met mijn telefoon, begin september 2025—we staan dan aan de start van een nieuwe creatie. Ik maak choreografisch werk, Mike is architect en vormt samen met Bernardo Riskey het duo Different Fountains, dat experimentele elektronische muziek maakt. Voor ik overga tot het gesprek, misschien nog een woordje over de manier waarop wij samenwerken. Toen ik Mike in 2016 ontmoette, was ik al drie jaar intensief hardcore techno aan het onderzoeken, zowel in dans als in muziek. Ik was op mijn 30ste ook net opnieuw naar België verhuisd vanuit Amsterdam, waar ik een dansvoorstelling rond gabber en drie aansluitende installaties had afgewerkt (waarvoor ik zelf de geluidsmix creëerde). Mike had op dat moment nog nooit met techno gewerkt.

Voor mij is het essentieel om, nog vóór ik met Mike een gesprek over een nieuwe creatie begin, precies te weten wat het geluidsconcept is en hoe het klinkt. Ik doe dat om zelf te weten waarover de voorstelling überhaupt gaat. Het moment dat ik weet hoe de show *klinkt*, weet ik ook wat de show *is*. Ik verzamel specifieke tracks, die ik bewerk tot ik het ‘juiste’ geluidsuniversum heb (wat zijn de *beats per minute*, wat is de vibe, naar welke subgenres wil ik conceptueel verwijzen, welke tracks passen en hoe moet ik die bewerken om ze nog beter te laten aansluiten). Pas dan kan ik het gesprek met Mike beginnen, dan kan ik hem laten horen waar ik precies naartoe wil en kunnen we samen enthousiast worden. Er volgen verschillende café-bezoeken en studiosessies. Mike stuurt me korte probeersels, ik geef gedetailleerde feedback, hij werkt verder en de try-outs worden langer. Mike overtreft altijd al mijn referenties.

Ons huidige project is een dansvoorstelling rond de slow (ja, de klassieke *tegelpakker*). Het bewegingsmateriaal is nieuw, maar het geluidsconcept sluit aan bij ons eerdere werk. Ik wil werken met vertraagde harde techno, op de helft van de normale snelheid. Die notie van ‘vertraging’ in de muziek is essentieel. Het geluidsconcept ontwikkelde ik voor een slowdansinstallatie voor het festival Dansand! in Oostende. Ik maakte toen zelf een mix. Mike heeft mijn mix ondertussen beluisterd. Dit gesprek is ons tweede overleg daarover. Sinds de sluiting van het Brusselse café Daringman zijn we als duo verloren. Toen ook café Midpoint dicht bleek, belandden we op een willekeurig terras. Het was een tegenvaller. Mike bestelde een bier met ‘rave’ in de naam om de vibe goed te krijgen.

## HET GESPREK

**Lisa** Wat wilde je me laten horen?

**Mike** Weet je nog die David Lynch-track die je me had gestuurd, die je zelf niet had gebruikt voor Dansand? We zeiden toen dat die moeilijk te combineren was omdat hij zo anders klonk dan de technotracks. Ik heb er toch een mix mee geprobeerd en eigenlijk werkt het verrassend goed. Het klinkt donkerder, maar daardoor zie ik het als een sterke opening voor de voorstelling. Het heeft die sfeer die jij beschreef:

een duistere kroeg met een jukebox, drie uur 's nachts, een paar vrouwen aan de toog, een koppel danst... Ik heb er ook een andere track bij gemixt die jij ook had gebruikt, die repetitieve met die herkenbare baslijn...

**Lisa** Mr. Fingers?

**Mike** Ja, die!

(Mike legt technisch uit wat hij heeft gedaan, welke soft- en welke hardware hij gebruikte en laat Lisa via een kop-telefoon luisteren)



While we are here, Lisa Vereertbruggen © Bea Borgers

**Lisa** Heel cool. Inderdaad, een goed potentieel begin voor de voorstelling. Meteen die sfeer van een louche, mysterieuze nachtclub. Het kan nog alle kanten op. Het ritme doet me ook denken aan een soort hedendaagse blues. Het heeft iets ontevredens, iets boos. Het enige wat ik me afvraag: hoe maken we dan de overgang van *spaced-out* Lynch naar onze techno?

**Mike** Heel simpel. Sowieso ga ik deze track helemaal bewerken en onherkenbaar maken. Alle gitaarklanken worden vervangen door technoklanken. We behouden ritme en sfeer, maar veranderen de esthetiek en de context.

**Lisa** Ja, ik denk dat we in één klankwereld moeten blijven. Geen losse scènes, maar één track zonder onderbrekingen. De vocals doen me denken aan ons gesprek van vorige keer, toen ik je vertelde dat ik eventueel zang wil gebruiken in de show, met vocoder of autotune. Ik hou van de overgang van menselijk naar digitaal in dit

project. De slow gaat over de noodzaak van lichamelijk contact in een gedigitaliseerde wereld. Dat spanningsveld tussen fysieke en digitale aanwezigheid: de vocoder belichaamt dat volledig. De transformatie van de stem is het punt waar materie immaterieel wordt. Ook bij autotune, dat is deels vlees en deels machine.

**Mike** En het verbindt de dans ook met de toekomst. Nostalgie willen we vermijden, toch?

**Lisa** Absoluut. Geen sentimentele slow, maar verlangen naar verandering en utopie. Geen conservatieve gevoelens. Fuck dat. (*lacht*) Ik herlees trouwens het boek *Radical Intimacy*. Het gaat over hoe neoliberalisme zelfs onze intieme relaties binnendringt. Intimiteit verwijst daarin niet naar seks, maar naar innige nabijheid: met jezelf, met vrienden, met partners... Die intimiteit wordt zeldzaam en meteen geïmproviseerd door productiviteit en consumptie. Neoliberaal denken structureert en organiseert onze intiemste relaties.

Mike Komt dat consumentisme ook in het stuk?

Lisa Nee, het stuk wordt juist de weergave van een utopie. Natuurlijk zit er hedendaagse vervreemding in, maar de lichamelijkheid van de voorstelling verzet zich tegen efficiëntie en snelheid.

soundtrack! Een uitdaging! Eigenlijk vond ik dat heel cool, heel abstract. Maar ja, heel experimenteel en onze samenwerking was ook nog niet zo helder. We waren niet zo betrokken bij elkaars processen.

Lisa Klopt. Een jaar later kwam ik terug naar jou omdat ik opnieuw met gabber

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“Ik hou van jouw hyperspecifieke opdrachten. Ik vind het geweldig dat jij je zo diep in een genre ingraaft dat je me zo’n concrete taak kunt geven, waarin ik me dan volledig kan verliezen.”  
—Michael Langeder

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Mike We tonen hoe het óók kan.  
Dus: één trip voor het publiek. Met één doorlopende soundtrack, toch?

Lisa Jep, inderdaad.  
Weet je nog ons eerste gesprek? Toen vroeg ik je sound te maken voor mijn heel abstracte voorstelling *The Extraordinary Way She Moves*\*.

*\*Noot van Lisa: deze voorstelling van 2016 was een reactie op het gebrek aan interesse en context dat ik in Nederland ervoer voor mijn onderzoek naar gabber. Ik besloot (waarom waarom) een heel abstract beeldend solowerk te maken met objecten dat doordrongen was van techno-esthetiek (zwarte zeilen, grote ventilatoren, bomberjacks), maar zonder technodans of -muziek. Het moest abstract refereren aan het affect van techno. De voorstelling was deels in Amsterdam gemaakt, maar miste nog muziek. Het ontbreken van voldoening na dit werk zorgde ervoor dat ik hierna mijn gabberonderzoek voortzette, met een nadruk op de politieke aspecten. En met Mike!*

Mike Ik mocht alleen geluiden van ventilatoren en plastic gebruiken voor de

wilde werken. Dat was het échte begin van onze samenwerking voor mij.

Mike Het duurde even voor we de juiste connectie vonden tussen sound en dans. Zoals onze laatste voorstelling werkt ook ons huidige project met één geluidstrack en één doorlopende choreografie. Zowel geluid als dans volgen één ‘trip’. Onze samenwerking *Softcore* (2018) was heel anders. Het werkte radicaal met *hard cuts* in geluid en dans en probeerde niet om een vloeiend geheel te zijn. Dat stuk werkte juist omdat het zo duidelijk een assemblage was.

Lisa Ja, in *Softcore* stonden tekst, sound en dans naast elkaar. Ik had toen ook veel te zeggen, na jaren research naar hardcore. Het moest een lezing, een dansvoorstelling en een dj-set worden. Ik wilde een voorstelling maken met de structuur van een hardcoretrack: abrupt, zonder opbouw. Dat had ruwe randen nodig. Herinner je je nog ons allereerste gesprek voor *Softcore*?

Mike Ik kende hardcore techno toen nog helemaal niet. (*lacht*)

**Lisa** Ik kwam bij jou met referenties en we begonnen meteen op onze nu vertrouwde manier te werken. Ik bracht de tracks mee en legde uit wat ik in elke track goed vond: de bas, de melodie, het ritme, de synths... Jij maakte, gebaseerd op die referenties, een volledig originele, steengoede soundtrack.

monteerde, zodat de beats exact bij de volksdans pasten. Ik vond het waanzinnig om te ontdekken dat die volksdans hetzelfde ritme had als de techno. Dat was het begin van ons onderzoek naar hoe minimale folkreferenties te verwerken in technomuziek. Dat soort specifieke ideeën maakt me enorm enthousiast.

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“Ik weet nog dat ik je moest vragen om 70 procent van wat we hadden gemaakt weg te gooien en meer op het bronmateriaal te focussen. Ik voelde me daar verschrikkelijk schuldig over.”  
— Lisa Vereertbrugghen

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**Mike** Voor jou werk ik anders dan normaal. Meestal begin ik volledig van nul. Met jou werk ik aan de hand van jouw concrete referenties binnen een genre. Ik begin dan met het samplen daarvan en vervolgens transformeer ik alles tot iets origineels. Die manier van werken is nieuw voor mij.

**Lisa** En jij gaat altijd mee in mijn rare ideeën! Voor *Softcore* vroeg ik je bijvoorbeeld om voor één specifieke scène ‘de meest minimale hardcore’ te maken. Ik vroeg je om alleen de structuur van hardcore te gebruiken, maar de geluiden zelf moesten heel minimaal zijn en mochten niets met hardcore te maken hebben. Geen *distortion*, geen zware bas. Jij maakte daar toen een sublieme track van. Een soort pingpongbalgeluid dat hardcore belichaamt zonder als hardcore te klinken. Zelig. Ik kreeg achteraf eens de vraag: ‘Was that Steve Reich in a hardcore piece?’

**Mike** Ik hou van die hyperspecifieke opdrachten. Ik vind het geweldig dat jij je zo diep in een genre ingraaft dat je me zo’n concrete taak kunt geven, waarin ik me dan volledig kan verliezen. Zoals bij ons laatste werk *While We Are Here*, toen je technomuziek op video’s van volksdans

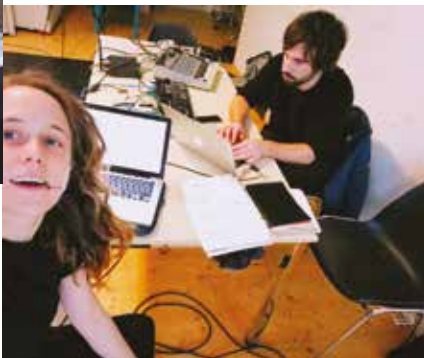
**Lisa** Ja, wij vertrekken van referenties, van een strak kader. Ik hou ervan om een genre te nemen en het te bevragen en vervormen, zonder de referentie volledig achter te laten.

Tijdens het werkproces voor *DISQUIET*, dat we volledig in de zwaarste lockdown maakten, waren we dat uit het oog verloren. Door het isolement en het uitgerekte proces zijn we beginnen te overproduceren en maakten we experiment *for the sake of* experiment. Ik weet nog dat ik je toen moest vragen om 70 procent van wat we hadden gemaakt weg te gooien en meer op het bronmateriaal te focussen. Ik voelde me daar verschrikkelijk schuldig over.

**Mike** Het was goed dat je dat zei. Jungle, drum-’n-bass en gabber moesten ook herkenbaar blijven.

**Lisa** Ja. Ik heb dat kader nodig. Zonder die restrictie voelt vrijheid voor mij te willekeurig. Dan kan alles en niks tegelijk. Ik heb datzelfde gevoel ook binnen de dans.

**Mike** Voor mij was dat een aanpassing: jij verwijst altijd naar een genre, terwijl ik vroeger genreloos werkte aan volledig nieuwe, experimentele muziek.



**Lisa** Ja, maar omdat jij niet aan dat genre gewend bent, ben je ook heel experimenteel binnen die grenzen — en dat maakt het interessant. Als ik met een techno-dj had willen werken, zou ik dat gedaan hebben. Ik verkies onze outsiders aanpak. Ons nieuwe stuk wordt experimenteler, maar nog steeds techno. Vertraagde, vervormde techno. De actie van het vertragen moet voelbaar zijn, dat is het concept van het stuk.

**Mike** En ga je in de dans ook techno-referenties gebruiken?

**Lisa** Misschien, dat weet ik nog niet. Ik ga sowieso raven met de cast, maar of dat op scène komt, zien we nog.

*(Er volgt een kort intermezzo over ijssalons in Brussel, welke de beste zijn, en dat pistache bruin moet zijn en niet groen.)*

**Mike** Misschien kun je proberen om met de dansers in stilte te werken, zodat de dans op zichzelf alles zegt. Om te zorgen dat je niet afhankelijk wordt van de muziek om de aandacht van het publiek vast te houden.

**Lisa** Goed idee! Moeilijk ook. Het is

natuurlijk makkelijk als jij onder alles geweldige muziek zet. *(glimlacht)*

**Mike** Over die aandacht en betrokkenheid van het publiek... In onze vorige stukken zat de intensiteit zowel in dans als muziek. Als de slow als dans nu minder intens is dan de harde soundtrack, wordt het misschien moeilijk...

**Lisa** *(onderbreekt)*

...dan ligt de intensiteit elders. Dan zoek ik die in intentie en relatie. Ik onderzoek hoe dezelfde dans steeds anders gelezen kan worden doordat de intentie van de performers voortdurend bewust verandert. Zo verandert de perceptie van de dans voortdurend: eerst zie je geliefden, dan beste vrienden, dan twee verlegen tieners, dan twee dronken, geile mensen in een bar... Dezelfde dans krijgt steeds een andere betekenis doordat de intentie verschuift. De intensiteit kan ook daar liggen, denk ik. En dat houdt het publiek vast... Hoop ik.

**Mike** Ja, interessant, dat choreografen van intenties... Heb je dat al uitgeprobeerd?

Het doet me denken aan mijn eerste

slowdance. Ik was 13, op zo'n kinderfeestje. We deden dat fruitspel, ken je dat? In Oostenrijk was dat standaard. Je danst als koppel met een appel tussen je voorhoofden. Omdat niemand zo dicht bij elkaar durfde te dansen, je durfde nog niet eens een meisje aan te raken, gebruikten we het balanceren van fruit als excuus. *(lacht)*

Elk koppel moest slown terwijl het die appel ter plekke hield. Het was een wedstrijd: het koppel dat de appel het langst vasthoudt, wint. Natuurlijk raakte je hyperopgewonden omdat je nog nooit zo lang zo dicht bij een meisje was geweest... Maar tegelijk moest je die appel op zijn

plek houden... Het was best moeilijk om de focus te houden. *(Mike en Lisa lachen)*

**Mike** Weet je wat? Je zou dit fruitspel met je dansers moeten proberen! Wie weet komt er iets van.

*Het gesprek gaat nog een uur door. Work-talk is voorbij en we praten over Mikes ontwerp voor zijn keuken, die eigenlijk meer een mysterieuze sculptuur is dan een praktische keuken; en over 'life in Bruxelles'. Er worden nog drankjes besteld. Daarna nemen we afscheid. Thuis gekomen download ik de tracks die Mike me die avond nog heeft gestuurd.*

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*Lisa Vereertbrugghen* is een Brusselse choreograaf, danser en dramaturg die onderzoek doet naar *social dance* en hoe muziek en dans interageren op de dansvloer. Sinds 2014 doet ze onderzoek naar hardcore-technomuziek en -dansstijlen. Haar werk uit zich in verschillende formats tussen dans, performance, installatie en technomeditaties. Ze werkt meestal samen met haar vaste medewerkers Michael Langeder, Vera Martins, Sophie Guisset en Mads Bycroft.

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*Michael Langeder* is een Oostenrijkse kunstenaar, architect en componist die in Brussel woont. Hij studeerde architectuur en stedenbouw aan de Technische Universiteit van Graz, de Universidad Politécnica de Valencia en de Universidad Politécnica de Caracas. Zijn multidisciplinaire werken omspannen tijdelijke sculpturen, performances en lichtinstallaties tot geluidscomposities.

DO 22 - ZA 31 JAN 2026

CREATIEBIËNNALE

# DE CARTA 26

MARTHA CANGA ANTONIO / JOLENTE DE MAEYER / DIDEM COSKUNSEVEN  
MICHEL VANDEVELDE / BRYGGEN / BRANDY BUTLER / BASHAR MURKUS  
KHULOOD BASEL / KHASHABI THEATRE

## SINGEL



Vlaamse  
overheid



knack

De Standaard



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2025 - 2026

WO 14.01

**Spinvis & Saartje Van Camp**  
(Neveldieren XL)

MOM

WO 21.01

**Dunia Dance Theatre**

REFLECTIONS [ON MONSTERS]

DO 22.01

**Compagnie Gérard & Els Dottermans**

Blauw (of iets voor aan de muur)

ZO 25.01

**Lady Linn & Ataneres Ensemble**

Strings in the House 2.0

ZA 07.02

**Bert of Roy**

SKETCH 5 (MAN KOOPT KUNST)

WO 04.03

**One Space**

Antigone in Jerusalem

ZA 28.03

**Lander Severins (Grof Geschud)**

Broer

WO 01.04

**Anemone Valcke & Verona Verbakel**

Het Ego



ONTDEK HET VOLLEDIGE PROGRAMMA OP [WWW.WESTRAND.BE](http://WWW.WESTRAND.BE)

# *Gegen die Hörigkeit im Hören\**

*\*Against the obedience in hearing*

What if the voice is not just a carrier of meaning but a choreographic force, a movement in itself? What if the act of listening is not passive reception but an embodied, political, and relational practice? Jule Flierl traces a path through contemporary voice performance, dance, protest, and interdependent artistic practices to explore how voice and listening co-constitute each other, both on stage and in the world.



## **CONTEMPORARY VOICE-SCAPE**

I am a contemporary dancer. Instead of following the voice of the teacher or obeying the tact of the music, I produce sound with my body while I move. I have followed my voice's desire through overtones, noisy experiments with vocal reflexes, beatboxing, bel canto, screams, and public speaking. I insist that voice is a form of movement. I explore voice as a tool for choreographing the relation between the eye and the ear. I listen to how my inspiring art colleagues' articulations have infused my ears and how their sound has shifted my vocal imaginary. My voice does not sound independently; it is strongly interdependent with my environment, the atmosphere in the audience, and the emotional tone in the public sphere. If my voice is not only an instrument but also a sensory organ, then how does what goes on in the political sphere affect my voice somatically? How do institutional and governmental tactics like silencing, gaslighting, and defunding—for example, in relation to demands for human rights for Palestinians in the German art field—create an environment of suffocation for artists' voices in these times?

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“While voice practice is essential for artistic and political self-empowerment, the responsibility for being heard doesn't lie with the voicing person alone.”

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The role of voice in the dance field is not resolved, rather, the question of how vocalization shifts the experience and perception of a dancer's body remains an open field of exploration. In this text, I will give examples of experimental voicing that ask the listener to question how they relate to others' voices. New voice-bodies are proposed through practices in the public sphere, the performing arts, and in the private body. These voice-bodies can in themselves be a message that asks the listener to recalibrate their mode of listening.

## **TO MAKE YOURSELF HEARD OFFLINE**

The offline voice carries the burden of the biographical body and its relation to enduring its own sound. To have a voice. To own your voice. To unleash your voice. To gather voices. Voice has become a prominent analogy for agency, potency, and responsibility within social, cultural, political, and public life. Speech-acts, public discourse, elections, and chanting at demonstrations are voice-based tools for participation within self-defining democracies. Voicing is practiced in diverse ways in protests—proclaiming strong slogans like ‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadi’ (Woman, Life, Freedom) in Kurdistan and Iran, or ‘El violador eres tú’ (The rapist is you) in Argentina and Chile. Silence, too, is used as a disruptive voice-act, as in the standing man protest in Istanbul or the recent protests in Serbia.

‘Sometimes you have to shout because you are not heard. If you have to shout to be heard, you are heard as shouting.’<sup>1</sup>

In preparation for the abortion rights demonstrations during the right-wing PiS government in Poland, sound and performance artist Edka Jarzab trained female-socialised people in screaming, getting loud, and making themselves heard. This practice broke

through the hard layers of cultural voice embodiment for feminised voices, that are conditioned to be patient, humble, and calm. This practice offered a way to break out of habitual voice patterns, disturb social norms through raising the volume, and regulate the demonstrators' nervous systems while chanting on the streets together. The current global poly-crisis puts a huge weight on voices to articulate themselves loudly, correctly, and self-confidently. While voice practice is essential for artistic and political self-empowerment, the responsibility for being heard doesn't lie with the voicing person alone. Listening to voices, stories, and narratives that don't correspond to one's own agenda—listening in a non-competitive and non-instrumental mode—is a task for anyone who is part of the public. Next to voice training, can there be an education of the ear, an exercise in listening?

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“I wanted my body to become a divine riddle, an opaque technological innovation, a virtuoso player that prompts viewers to ask questions about the body as a source of vocalisation.”

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## LISTENING AS CARE-WORK

In their 2022 book *Sounding Bodies: Identity, Injustice and the Voice*, Ann J. Cahill and Christine Hamel focus on voicing as an event that is mutually shaped by the listener and the vocaliser. They call this shared responsibility ‘inter-vocality’: ‘Voice is a fundamentally interactive event. Vocal emanations do not exist as self-contained, self-defined phenomena, but always vibrate between and among entities (human bodies, built and found infrastructure, etc.).’<sup>2</sup>

Voicing creates relations that are multi-directional. When I performed my 2015 solo *Operation Orpheus*, I sang while turning around my axis and sculpted the reflection and resonance of diverse surfaces my voice met in the architectural space. When I held a speech against the Kulturkampf and budget cuts in the arts in 2024, I experienced two types of listening: the crowd resonated and amplified my voice, while the politicians present were more like molton curtains, absorbing the sound and content of the protest. When decision-makers don't have listening as part of the job description, how should discourse in a democracy work—where everyone speaks and no-one is listening?

‘The meanings and evaluations of those vocal emanations—whether they are viewed as disruptive, or impressive, or shrill, or beautiful—are never inherent to the emanations themselves, but are the products of power and value discourses masquerading as natural or given. An ethics of envoicing thus entails a recognition of responsibility for how both individual and collective practices produce certain kinds of voices and receiving practices.’<sup>3</sup>

How do we listen to the emotional charge of loudly screaming feminised voices at abortion rights protests—voices that do not perform rational speech acts but shout for a rational cause and embody their urgency? How can our ears postpone their listening expectations and work as hard as the speaker does?



‘Where previous philosophical approaches to the human voice have frequently focused on its mine-ness, its irreducible association with the unique individual, here we are emphasizing the ways in which voiced human beings are responsible for each other’s voices, individually and collectively, sonorously and politically.’<sup>4</sup>

Cahill and Hamel describe how voice-acts are shaped by the ways they are received. Thus, it is not a one-way relation in which a voice shapes the listener; voices depend on how they are listened to as well. In art and society, how can we take care of each other’s voices, despite being embedded in an economy designed around competition and exclusion? In the current crisis of listening, we need new formats and practices for approaching ears and minds. What can choreography contribute to this desire?

## RELATIONAL VIRTUOSITY

This summer I witnessed Angela Schubot-Vitec’s performance *YA!*, performed by three able-bodied dancers and five performers from the Thikwa Theater—a group of artists with different abilities. If I had known the voice of a plant was the topic of the performance, I might not have entered into the state it offered, which touched me so deeply. It was the practice itself—witnessing the listening and relating among performers and beyond human ears—that moved me.

On 7 July 2025, I wrote: ‘Instead of being crowded by stage action, the space was inhabited by bodies that inter-related calmly through simple gestures, as well as charming and witty sounds. All were humming, one person snored, melodies appeared and words of a particular fantasy language were uttered. One person spoke to themselves, one person

repeatedly proclaimed an unknown word with great oral intensity. The space was covered in raw wool, with a hood towards one side from within which a body yearned, while the voices in the space around hissed and hummed. The audience was later invited to enter this crib, and it felt like entering a body. While hearing a melodic soundscape from the outside, a spontaneous chain reaction of voicing by the diverse bodies in the hood was initiated by the snoring performer. This performance left me touched, unable to understand what had just happened. *YA!* was a tender encounter between audience and performers that fulfilled my post-pandemic desire for a curious and soft community.’

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“I like to think of voice-acts that happened in other moments as being eternally present and resonant. They echo into other historical contexts, with other discourses around them.”

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This performance located virtuosity not in the physical or musical form but in the ability to create relations—to a herb and between the mixed-ability group of performers, and the audience. As an audience member whose senses are already overstimulated before entering the theatre, this performance offered me access to a gentle, careful state of togetherness that was at the centre of the movement, voice, and performance practice. The performance allowed me to receive a message through unexplored sensory pathways.

## MISMATCH

In 2020, I witnessed Joana Tischkau’s *Play B(l)ack* at Tanzplattform München. The piece is based on lip-synching by a group of performers, who embody diverse characters from German Schlager history with precarious and mostly racist relationships to Blackness. The bodies of the live dancers are staged as vessels for prerecorded voices. The choreographic principle relates to the historic pop band Milli Vanilli (1988-1990), for which two Black male dancers were cast as performers, while the white producer recoded his own singing voice, and put it into their appealing bodies. The utilitarian mindset of pop culture toward bodies and identity is painfully exemplified by how the dancers’ bodies were hollowed out, to be stuffed with the voice of the author, who desired to be represented by Black bodies. In both Milli Vanilli and in Tischkau’s TV-show-like live performance, the labour of the dancers—who contribute the (sexy) images that illustrate the physical realness of the voice-givers—is not reflected in the sound of the prerecorded voices. Here, voice is not a sign of performative authenticity, but a seductive tool that demands submission from the body whose task it is to embody that voice. In *Play B(l)ack*, Tischkau uses drag to offer insights into the creation of commodified bodies, the racist dynamics of listening, and how what we see of a body informs the filter in the ear.

I am reminded of Nina Sun Eidsheim, who proposes a practice of critically listening to listening. She writes about the racialising practices of listening to vocal timbre in classical singing and demands that we put pressure on the positionality of the listener in her 2019 book *The Race of Sound*: ‘Keeping in mind that listening is always already political, listeners would



examine any interpretation or judgment, acknowledge that it is the process of listening and interpreting that willed that particular meaning into being, and interrogate why it was projected onto a particular vocal timbre. In other words, through such a process, listeners would know that any meaning that arises is based on their own meaning derivation.<sup>5</sup>

She describes how listening is not a neutral or passive act, but seems to be about identifying who a person is. In a talk about her book<sup>6</sup>, she mentions that, because she was adopted from Korea by a Norwegian family and grew up fully Norwegian but looking Asian, her surroundings often interpreted her voice as sounding Asian or not fully Norwegian. Her appearance shaped the expectations of listeners and produced what they could hear in and from her.

## TONTANZ

After many rejections and comments that the question of voice wasn't relevant for dance, I decided to work on the genealogy of the question of how voice inhabits a dancer's body. Not to confirm the authority of canon over the lived practices of makers, but to intervene in the writing of dance history as an artist. I was searching for a way to describe something that existed in practice, but didn't yet have a graspable context: the practice of voice in dance. I had seen many outstanding works by colleagues and was on my own path of exploring how my voice could mess with my bodyimage. Then I discovered the concept of TonTanz: 'Can one not also dance with tones? When you feel like dancing, you enter into a state of drunkenness, that can transform originally naturalistic tones into dancing tones.'<sup>7</sup>

In 2016, I went to the dance archive in Berlin and found articles, manifests and a sound reel by Valeska Gert, a Jewish genre-breaking grotesque dancer from the Weimar Republic, whose art was later classified as degenerate, forcing her to flee Nazi Germany. She claimed to be the first dancer who danced with her voice!

In her writings, Valeska Gert made connections between cinematic effects and her performative use of speed and slow motion. She also described her innovation of TonTanz in relation to the newly developed TonFilm (sound film). While most practitioners of modern dance searched for a 'natural' way to move, she categorised her dance within the field of media and its newest developments. When I worked on a speculative re-interpretation of her *Tontänze* for my 2018 solo *Störlaut*, I asked myself, what my body's answer to the latest medial development was. I came up with the method of dissociation, in which I dissociate the tonal activity of the larynx from my facial articulation. I sing the melody of Wagner's *Liebestod* and dance with my face independently. It is a refusal to lip-sync my own voice, separating image and sound imprints that stem from my live performing body. I wanted my body to become a divine riddle, an opaque technological innovation, a virtuoso player that prompts viewers to ask questions about the body as a source of vocalisation. With TonTanz I excavated the name of an artistic field, for which I had had no name until then. TonTanz became the fictional starting point for my cocky genealogical project.

I realised that I wanted to learn from contemporary artists of the TonTanz genre and set out on a quest to meet and host other artists' voices.

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"From childhood on, I observed that a person whose speech is not decodable is given the status of an object that must be clinically administered within our speech-centered society."

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For my 2017 lecture performance *I Intend to Sing*, I learned Simone Forti's *Throat Dance* from a written score that is accompanied by a drawing. I learned the voice score from *My Dog Is My Piano* by Antonia Baehr from the score and her feedback, and Myriam Van Imschoot taught me her *Scrambled Speech* in live meetings. To map out the voice performance landscape that already existed and bring together artists with similar interests in Berlin, I founded, together with Alessio Castellacci, the series *From Breath to Matter*<sup>8</sup> in 2016, where we hosted voice performances by artists from dance, new music, and visual arts. From 2018 through 2021, I continued the series with Mika Hayashi Ebbesen, with whom I transformed it into the *Aerosol Lab* during the pandemic, featuring online performances and a series of podcast interviews<sup>9</sup> with artists like Edka Jarzab, Siegmur Zacharias and Myriam Van Imschoot.

## OBJET PETIT A

I realised that my perspective toward the heirs of TonTanz was tied to my environment in Berlin. While the dance field is international, its historical focus is clearly on Western countries, despite one part of Berlin having belonged to the Eastern Bloc. When my friend and inspiration Irena Z. Tomažin invited me in 2019 to research and improvise in Ljubljana, the 1970s Yugoslav performance artist Katalin Ladik was pointed out to us as an artistic relative after our improvisation evening.

Irena and I began researching her work in 2020, but due to the pandemic we couldn't meet her personally. We created the duet *U.F.O. — Hommage to Katalin Ladik*, whose title references Ladik's most famous work, *UFO Party*. Most of her contemporary critics commented only on her naked body, her look, and her actions, while we thought that her work with voice and breath was quite outstanding. For us, the 'Unknown Flying Object' from the title also became an analogy for the voice-body, which doesn't relate to gravity and remains an unruly physical function. In this duet, we developed a voice-body that is like a UFO or like the famous Lacanian *objet petit a*, which signifies an object of desire that one can never fully grasp or control.

In 2024, we published the LP *U.F.O.* and invited Ladik to see our show in Berlin, join a panel discussion, and teach a masterclass. Forty artists wrote motivation letters and came to meet her. Alongside her voice teaching and scores, she offered stories about producing her work in a socialist country, as a single mother, as part of the Hungarian language minority in Vojvodina and as an artist who created pioneering work alongside breadwinning jobs. How had her context shaped her voice-body relationship? Why was she compared to Yoko Ono and Hannah Wilke, when these artists worked in the USA under completely different conditions? Why is the context often made invisible when discussing her aesthetics, and how could the reception of her work in Western countries include its mode of production?

## WRITING THE FUTURE

I like to think of voice-acts that happened in other moments as being eternally present and resonant. They echo into other historical contexts, with other discourses around them. I like to interrogate and listen to past voices, asking how the past performative act enables and feeds into my live performance, and how my present attention and perspective can feed back and alter the past in return. If I can rewrite the past, can I also find a way to carve out figures of the future?

During the pandemic, I worked with Antonia Baehr on *Die Hörposaune*, which first took the shape of a film<sup>10</sup>, in which we wore transparent helmets by plastique fantastique, reminiscent of those worn by the Jetsons in the 1950s animated series. We imagined a voice performance in a distant future, reading and touching three-dimensional scores while vocally interpreting their content: human anatomy and flower blossoms, relics of an organic past. Our voices were closely recorded, emitting noisy, smacking, and airy sounds. When *Die Hörposaune* could finally be performed live in 2022, we performed without helmets and the audience received our microphoned voices through headphones. There was a strong intimacy between the subtle mouth articulations and the audience's ears. We added another layer by placing small microphones into our genitals before the eyes of the surrounding audience. Our stomachs' digestive voices became audible through the walls of our genitals and travelled into the earphones, tickling the aural cavities. The ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) performance directly bridged the feeling of isolation and alienation through the distance and no-touch rules of the pandemic. We explored new modes of listening and what they do to the nervous system—where sound isn't about cultural reproduction, but about stimulation and wonder.

## THE SENSORIAL EAR

In the course of writing this text, my father suddenly passed away, and I reflected again on how his presence shaped my demand for listening to bodies with an experimental ear. After a car accident in the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification, a severe brain injury left holes in both of his speech centres, and he lost his ability to articulate thoughts, wishes, or questions. Despite the absence of linguistic information, there was speech—a speech mixed with breath, automatised speech-like movement, and digestive oral articulation. From childhood on, I observed that a person whose speech is not decodable is given the status of an object that must be clinically administered within our speech-centered society. How can we listen to a body with the intention of learning something about that voice-body and about one's own listening? Reflecting on my artistic work in relation to my father's vocal presence, I realised that the training of a sensorial ear is deeply political.

How to do things with voice during the global authoritarian turn?

What we live through politically imprints itself in artists' bodies, voices and practices. It seems to be a crisis of voicing. I would argue that it is, in reality, a crisis of listening. The collective nervous system is targeted by politics of shock and escalation that lead to a constant fight-or-flight mode. Letting go of the physical grasp of this defensive state requires hard labour. This state reduces listening to a mere scanning for decodable information, affirming what we already know and deciphering only sounds we can categorise. Experimental voice performance and choreography propose transformative listening practices, challenge normative conceptions of body, identity, and communication, and leave us in a state of wonder.

- 1 Sara Ahmed in Revell & Shin, p. 289.
- 2 Cahill, A.J. & Hamel, C. p. 64.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Edsheim, N.S. (2019). p. 71.
- 6 Podcast, *New Books in Sound Studies*, Nina Sun Edsheim, "The race of Sound: Listening, Timbre and Vocality in African American Music", 4.11.2019
- 7 Gert, V. (1936). *Meine Auffassung von Tanz*. Article, translation by the author.
- 8 <https://www.frombreathmatter.com/salon>
- 9 <https://www.frombreathmatter.com/podcast>
- 10 Directors: Isabell Spengler, Antonia Baehr, Jule Flierl; in a visual installation by Nadia Lauro.

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Jule Flierl is a choreographer who explores the interconnection of voice and dance through the lens of somatic and expanded voice techniques, voice philosophy, contemporary dance, and historical examples of dance-makers who have voiced their movements.

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# Like the full moon says

In première op 30 januari 2026 in Theater Malpertuis  
Op reis t.e.m. 3 juni 2026 - alle info op [www.malpertuis.be](http://www.malpertuis.be)



*‘We have so many voices  
inside us’*

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What happens when we breathe together? Simon Baetens speaks with singer, dancer, and facilitator Jean-Baptiste Veyret-Logerias about how the voice lives in the body, and how singing together can become a space for trust, curiosity, and transformation. From his early days in school choirs to conducting, dancing, and working with fascia, Veyret-Logerias’s practice is one of radical presence. Over the last 15 years, he has contributed to a vast number of projects and collaborations. What are the recurring threads he sees in each of them? In this interview, he sheds light on concepts and co-variation, amateurism, and on why the most important work is often about *not* knowing.

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Simon Baetens **Your artistic practice takes on many forms. How would you describe your parcours so far? How did you end up doing all the things you do today?**

Jean-Baptiste Veyret-Logerias **Where to begin?**  
The starting point would be the practice of singing, but more specifically choir singing. It was never my goal to be a soloist. I did sing solos in some choirs that I was a part of, but it was never the point for me. And when you're a soloist in a choir, you're never truly alone anyway, because you're always with a group of people. I never really felt comfortable being seen as a soloist. In any case, I started out as a chorister, as we would call it, in a pop singing group when I was in middle school. And this was really great as a first experience with singing. Around that time, I got asthma, and singing offered a way to work on breathing. And coincidentally, I also started learning the transverse flute around the same time. It just kind of happened intuitively. However, choir singing really was and still is my root practice. I keep coming back to it, and it holds together all the other things.

emerged between the singers and me. And at the end, my friend came to me and said: 'You know, you should really dance.' I told her I had no clue what she was talking about. Dance was totally not on my radar.

She said, 'Okay, I will just take you to a dance show at some point.' We went to a show maybe two months later. Seeing that performance was like a big slap in the face. Not a bad slap, a good one: it opened me up to a field and practice that I was not aware of.

**Do you remember what show it was?**

Veyret-Logerias I do. It was *Les hommes en colère* by Odile Azagury, a piece from 1999. And it blew my mind. I felt, wow, that's totally what I want to do. There was a lot going on at that moment in my life. Around that time, I was starting to really embrace my homosexuality. In the piece, there were only men on stage, so you can imagine I was projecting a lot in the way I was looking at it. Dance was presenting itself as a way of being with your own body that was totally new to me. All of a sudden, there was so much potential opening up to me.

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“Choir singing has some similarities with contact improvisation. Because, in a way, you are in contact with each other without touching each other.”

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**And how did you start conducting?**

Veyret-Logerias A bit later. I started conducting—or as I would say today, being a facilitator—around my early twenties. What's funny is that through conducting, I ended up dancing. Actually, a friend of mine was part of the choir that I got the chance to conduct on a specific song. It was a women's choir, and I got quite emotional from the relationship that

It's funny that conducting really led me to dancing. I took my first Feldenkrais workshop one month later, I think. And then I started dancing at the university. Maybe five years later, I studied in Angers, at CNDC. I didn't do the programme for dancers, but rather the programme for project makers. It was called *Essais* ('Attempts') because it was process-based rather than aiming for finished pieces.



IN KOORI, Myriam Van Imschoot & Willem de Wolf © Phile Deprez

And then—now that I am tracing everything back—when I was in Angers, I had a bit of a tough period. A lot was happening in my mind and in my life. There was a lot of joy but also a lot of things to look at. A friend of mine then told me about fasciatherapy as something that had helped her a lot. That's how I first got taken care of with fascia, and then I started training and learning the Danis Bois method. I guess you could say that somatics really became another anchor point in my life and practice. It all kind of came together, from choir to dance to fascia, through giving rooted body sensations to the practice.

**It sounds so organic now that you say it like that, but it's been a long trajectory.**

**Veyret-Logerias** That's how life drew me. One thing was always connected to the other. And today, I cannot really disconnect one practice from the other. Everything is very much intertwined. That's also the way I teach. I transmit a lot; I facilitate a lot for groups singing together. Another thing that keeps finding its way back to me is

philosophy. I studied philosophy at the University of Nanterre, and somewhere in my second master's year everything started to come together. I was analysing social movements in public space, both dance gestures and vocal gestures. That's what I'm still working on today with my PhD.

**It's amazing how the voice has been the starting point for all of this. Do you remember how you first discovered that the voice is your language? Did someone point you to that? Maybe we can go back to your childhood, even. Were you a kid that was experimenting with their voice?**

**Veyret-Logerias** That is tricky for me to answer. I cannot really trace back any kind of extraordinary fascination for the voice when I was a kid. I do have a lot of memories of me mimicking the vocal music that my parents were listening to. The aria of the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, for example. I remember that I would embody the singer's voice over and over again, and my parents were very amused by that. But even though I really enjoyed doing that, I wouldn't say I was

experimenting with my voice a lot—more that I was sensitive to other people's voices.

**So the fascination started by picking up on things and trying to emulate them and finding fun in that. What age were you when this first began?**

Veyret-Logerias About five or six, I would say. But I think something shifted when we moved from the countryside back to the city, to Tours, a few years later. My mother then enrolled me in a music school that followed a special pedagogy which maybe also gives a hint about my entry point into music. It's called the Martenot method, which is not about learning music theory but rather about learning by playing and experimenting. It was also at that school that I started singing. I remember that I had very specific sensations there, but I cannot really tell you much more than that something was happening that I really liked. I was eight or nine by that point.

**different ways in which singing brings people together that you have observed throughout your parcours?**

Veyret-Logerias One thing that is somehow very basic but that I keep coming back to is that singing has to do with vibrations of the body. This is very exposing for some people. Somehow, I observe time and time again that people are drawn to their own voice—it triggers something in them that dance movement does not. Which doesn't mean that dance movement is not engaging; it's just another kind of trigger. But in singing, there is this vibration and also the shared vibration, because you can feel the vibration of other people's bodies: you can be impacted by the voices of others when you're close enough to them. So singing is actually very physical, which links it to dance and to movement: voice is a gesture as much as dance is one. It's a funny thing to say maybe, but to me, choir singing has

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“One of the first things that I try to reinforce in people is trust. Especially when working with amateur choirs, which is what interests me the most. I really consider myself an amateur, and I feel my practice, whatever it is, is an amateur practice.”

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And then when I was ten, I went to what we call *collège* in France, which is where I started practicing choir singing. I was in a choir that was part of the school and led by the music teacher, whom I was really fond of. I really loved my music teachers. It seems like my journey through music and dance is somehow connected to people I trust and like.

**The school choir was your first real experience with singing in a social setting, something that has since become very central in your work. Can you tell us about some of the**

some similarities with contact improvisation. Because, in a way, you are in contact with each other without touching each other. And because you are depending on each other. I don't like the term 'codependency' though, because I don't trust it so much.

**Why not?**

Veyret-Logerias Codependency has so much to do with biology and ecology, which I don't think is the right paradigm to analyse what I see happening in music or dance. I would rather speak about co-adaptation and co-variation. This idea

of co-variation is super enjoyable to me, because you're always moving with others, reacting to what others are producing. In a way, you're always with the others. You can never just indulge yourself and be with yourself. This is also never the case when you're singing in a choir. You're always in touch and in a relationship—a strong relationship—which is happening on many levels. The level of vibration, the level of kinesthesia, the level of kinesthetic empathy that Hubert Godard speaks about, but also an emotional level, which can come from the vibration, but also from this connection to others. Feeling yourself in connection with others can really draw strong emotions in you.

breathe. It's not surprising then that this can be emotional, destabilising, or re-stabilising to practice.

Another hypothesis that I have is that singing has a lot to do with lengthening your breath. Usually in speaking we don't do that, unless you want to speak for a very long time or say a very long sentence. You don't even think of your breathing when speaking, except maybe in emotional situations. In singing, we are purposely extending the breath. And I think the joy also comes from there. That in a way, you're experimenting with—and stretching—your own capacity to breathe in and out. Breathing out is about how much breath you draw to the world,

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“I want to work from the awareness of the body, and how the gesture is shaped into it. I try to always approach the vocal gesture as a movement inside yourself which draws you outside yourself.”

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**I remember when you were guiding us in the piece *IN KOOR!* by Myriam Van Imschoot and Willem de Wolf, where I and maybe twenty other actors played a practicing choir, that I would sometimes get very emotional during rehearsals. Not necessarily from the music or its content, but rather from the physical sensations, from using my body in ways I rarely do otherwise.**

**Veyret-Logerias** Exactly. The breath also plays a huge role in this, I guess, and thus so does the diaphragm, which is in a way the connection between your torso and your lumbar, with your psoas and the posterior muscle chain. You could say that through the diaphragm, you're anchoring yourself in the ground, meaning that breathing has to do with being able to root yourself—or not, depending on how you

and not from the world. Which I think is something quite significant, this gesture of putting a certain awareness and effort towards this movement outwards. Especially when you hear others doing the same towards the world and thus also towards you. Then it's all about sharing this movement out and in, the sound gets back to your ears and is drawn out and back to the ears again. This reinforcement of your own gesture and that of others can be very nourishing.

It has to do with generosity as well: to me, when it comes to choir singing, if you're not here to share with the others, then the sound will suffer. But the practice can also draw people to start sharing with others. I can feel a big distinction between choirs in the way they sound. There is a certain way of sounding which is 'warm' and another which is 'cold'. In some professional choirs, you hear the

skill level, but it's very cold. You hear the music, but not the relations within the group. Or rather, you hear professional but not close relations in the sound. And I'm very interested in this sensation you somehow get through listening of how the group is working and sharing together. That closeness or intimacy can be revealed. Choir singing should be about this to me. If not that, then what? I feel the same way about orchestras. That's why I like some orchestra conductors and others less, because some lack the ability to bring people together. Which I think is needed — especially nowadays.

**How do you train that ability of bringing people together? That can't be something you're either just capable of or not.**

**Veyret-Logerias** You have to reinforce the group and the relations within the group.

This is always an aim. You can never achieve it, in a way. But it's essentially what I'm looking for. It has to do with trust, I think — trust and relying on the others. It's the same as contact improvisation, once again. You have to see who has those specific skills that the others can rely on. This distribution of skills within the group is always moving; it never stays the same. And it's not that you can rely on this person specifically for this specific skill always. It's constantly changing, depending on where people are in their own learning process. Some people will be quicker with the music, but less quick with relations toward others; for others it's the exact opposite. Learning to sense and nurture this is a set of very tiny skills that are super important in a group. Because when it works, it can really make connection happen.

So one of the first things that I try to reinforce in people is trust. Especially

*Plurissons © Jean-Baptiste Veyret-Logerias*



when working with amateur choirs, which is what interests me the most. I really consider myself an amateur, and I feel my practice, whatever it is, is an amateur practice. Most amateur singers, especially people who have not sung much, usually feel that they cannot sing, or that they sing out of tune, that they have no clue what to do. I believe that we already know everything we need to sense to be able to sing, but you have to make people see and believe it. So the trust has to be built from very basic practices, namely listening: what am I producing? How am I producing it? And also listening to others: what is this person doing? How am I affected by this? Do I like it? If I don't like it, then why? Even if I dislike it, can I find something in it that I could be interested in, that I could feed with my own sound? You need to move beyond judgment.

What do you like to do? Be silly. Play with it. Don't be clever with it. Don't try to invent something new. Play with the others. It doesn't matter—just do something. Then it starts to be interesting because judgment is pushed out. This is not easy, because we are judgmental beings. But suspending this judgment and creating the conditions for it to be as suspended as possible—that is one of my goals.

**It's really interesting to me that you said that you see yourself as an amateur, because at the same time, everything you're describing requires an enormous amount of skill and a sort of hyper-awareness of all these little things and dynamics that are going on in a group.**

**Veyret-Logerias** I'm not an amateur economically. I'm not an amateur in terms of the status that I have in the dance field and the music field. But I feel like an amateur when I'm entering a studio and I'm starting to practice. I do have

experience, and I have developed skills from these experiences. But still, I feel like an amateur. Why? Because somehow in the social perception of professionals, you always feel like they are in the know. I don't feel like I'm in the know. I don't know shit about music. I don't know shit about singing. I'm searching. In many ways, I feel like some amateur musicians have developed skills on a technical level that I have totally not developed. What I'm trying to say is that by putting myself in this category of the amateur, I'm trying to keep myself interested, intrigued, and alert. Being a 'professional', I'm not sure that it actually brings anything to the practice in the studio. Yes, I have tools, but my main point is to keep being an amateur.

### **Letting go of a certain pursuit of perfection.**

**Veyret-Logerias** Exactly. Every day I try to tell myself: work with what is there. If my voice is only breath today, it's only breath. It's fine. Maybe we can make something out of it. Some days it's annoying; it's frustrating. Yes. How can we still make something out of it? So maybe being an amateur is just one way to get back to the sensation of things.

### **To stay curious.**

**Veyret-Logerias** Yes. To remain active in what I'm doing and to not stick with what I know. We all have skills and habits that we repeat, which is fine, it's good to have anchor points. But I think you also need to reinvent those anchor points. I can get very bored with habits, because they put me in a certain perception of myself. That's something that I started questioning through dancing. Dancing has this capacity to draw us toward certain inner sensations that are hardly reachable and require a lot of attention and curiosity.



**Why do you think people ask you to join a project? What do you bring to a collaborative practice?**

**Veyret-Logerias** In preparation for this interview, I tried to make a list of projects that I was part of in the last 10-15 years. I realised that all the people that I worked with somehow have a connection to dance. So, the people who call me always have a certain dance practice. My guess is that that's where we meet—that's the bridge—because we share a common imagination, common skills, and an awareness of how the body is engaged in making a gesture happen.

I work a lot with choreographers who call me to facilitate the transmission of songs to their groups. I think that also has to do with a certain sensitivity to movement that I have, and the idea I believe in that singing is all about movement. When I facilitate singing in people, I draw attention to movement,—the movement of breath first of all, and how it emerges and how one can shape it. From there, you can start building.

By starting from these tiny sensations, you can discover another type of singing than the one that I was taught, which is more purely 'technical': I took a lot of classes where the body was seen

as an instrument, was instrumentalised to reach a certain quality of sound, as if the body would be just a vehicle for the voice. I don't want to work in this way. I want to work from the awareness of the body, and how the gesture is shaped into it. I try to always approach the vocal gesture as a movement inside yourself which draws you outside yourself.

**Do you notice a lot of differences in how dancers approach singing as compared to people who aren't used to working with the body in the same way?**

**Veyret-Logerias** Yes, because of the imagination that it requires, I guess. Dancers have a strong capacity to enhance their sensation with a certain imagination. They trigger certain ways of perceiving an inner feeling or movement, and stay there. That's where they work from. Some musicians, I feel, have the tendency to work from outside of their body, as if the voice can only be this immaterial being floating in the air, as if the body can only be the vehicle, as if the voice can't be first and foremost bodily, carnal. I also see this in people who have never sung before.

Usually, they think that they have to push their voice out to make it exist in the world. Whereas the more you amplify your voice inside, the more you're the conveyor of your own voice outwards. It's not outside of you, it's in you, because that's the only way you can draw it out. This is a strong paradigm shift for some people, because it draws them back to the sensation of their own body and how it gets involved in the vocal gesture. This can sometimes be very confronting.

**Are dancers more used to going there?**

**Maybe this linked to the idea of talent as well? There is such a perception that there are people who can sing and people who can't sing, and also that your voice is very personal to you. That inherently leads to a less social way of working with it. We have so much vocabulary to describe one's voice, words like range, timbre, colour... As far as I know, in dance, we don't use so many words to describe someone's body as something that you can develop and train, but that is somehow personal to you.**

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**"We hear a lot: 'You have a talent. You have this very specific timbre that you have to be cautious with. You have to nourish it.' Fuck that. The idea of vocal identity, meaning fixity, bores me."**

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**Veyret-Logerias** Dancers train for a double awareness: 'I'm there with you, but I'm never out of myself. And it's not because I'm there with you that I need to be out of myself, and out of my weight.' Moreover, dancers tend to have a very strong practice of sharing in the studio. They ask each other things like 'How do you do this move?' 'What do you go through?' 'What is your imagination of this movement?'

**This doesn't happen between singers?**

**Veyret-Logerias** In my experience it rarely does. Rehearsals for professional musicians and singers are usually like this: you come knowing the score and your voice already warm, you work on the score, you leave. So, there is hardly any sharing of practices. I don't want to make any distortion here though: for many practitioners singing and dancing come together and are linked.

**Veyret-Logerias** Absolutely, this idea of vocal 'identity' is very present still. I'm very cautious with this term of identity, which I feel is very dangerous in a way. I think singularity is more accurate.

The singularity of the body is the same because we don't have the same tonicity. We don't have the same posture. We don't have the same length of bones. We don't have the same length of muscles. We didn't train the same. So, we don't have the same cultures and nature didn't give us the same things. It's not that it's either natural or cultural. It's both, always. And voice is exactly the same. If I sound like this today, if my vocal 'identity' is this one, it has to do with a certain culture. It has to do, yes, with the length of my vocal cords, which give me a certain height, with the length of my pharynx and the larynx and the shape of my mouth and everything. Yes, this all gives me a certain range. But that doesn't say anything about how the quality of the sounds I can produce, and how I can play with my voice and reach

a multiplicity of sounds. You can't have an essentialist approach of the voice.

We hear a lot: 'You have a talent. You have this very specific timbre that you have to be cautious with. You have to nourish it.' Fuck that. You have so many voices inside you. The idea of vocal identity, meaning fixity, bores me. Unless identity is something to be constantly reinvented. It's true that when you call me on the phone, I will know that it's Simon from your voice. That's the way your voice sounds by habit (and not 'naturally'). But you could, for fun or for any reason, be sounding differently. And then I would be like, 'whoa, whoa, who's speaking?' That's exactly what I was trying to say before, this thing of being playful with it. Because then you can start to explore. That's also another pedagogical tool, actually, to draw people to discover their own voice. The ways in which we can make our voice sound are highly performative. So very moving and very plastic, always changing. It has nothing to do with the fixed 'identity' that we usually associate with it. I think that's what I try to encourage in myself and others, to stay curious about where our voices can take us.

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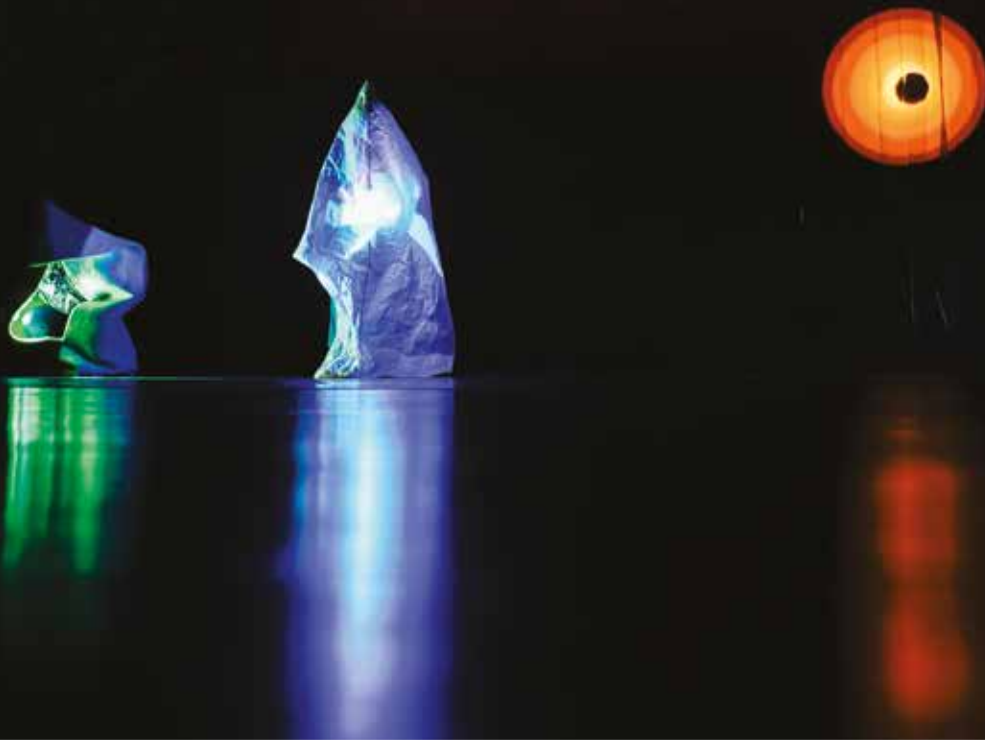
*Jean-Baptiste Veyret-Logerias* takes part in the making of performances. He has been facilitating the vocal practice in many groups, and has been the editorial co-coordinator of *watt*. After a long practice of singing and a first experience in movement through choir conducting, he started dancing when he was studying linguistics at university. As a mover and/or vocalist he has worked with Myriam Van Imschoot, Martine Pisani, Begüm Erciyas, Yannick Guédon among others.

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*Simon Baetens* is co-editor in chief of *Etcetera*. He works as a theatre maker, dramaturg, and performer. He has collaborated with Lisa Vereertbrugghen, Thomas Verstraeten, Micha Goldberg & Rosie Sommers, Pablo Lilienfeld & Federico Vladimir, among others. In 2024, he created the performance *I'm Not Done*.

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# *A 'New Vocality'? Approaching Two Multivocal Groups: YouYou Group and Glossa (Γλωσσα)*



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Without knowing about each other, several ensembles have formed in Central Europe in recent years that bear striking similarities: groups of people who work experimentally with the voice, were founded by women, function as collectives, and often perform beyond the classical concert stage. Friedemann Dupelius explores the question of whether one can speak of a 'new vocality' in this context. If so, does it encompass only technical and compositional aspects of vocal sound, or also social, psychological, and political ones?

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## **TALKING ABOUT VOICES IS INTIMATE. VOICE IS INTIMATE.<sup>2</sup>**

*It's June 21, 2023, the longest day of the year, late evening and still some sunlight outside. A dozen members of the Glossa (Γλωσσα) choir sit in front of the Makroscope, a cultural centre in Mülheim an der Ruhr, western Germany. A soccer ball kicked by kids next door lands first among the choir group and then bounces loudly off the wall of the town hall opposite. Beer bottles pop, conversations burble.*

Glossa has returned to the city where the choir performed publicly for the first time in September 2020—and where its founder and director Elisa Kühnl comes from. As part of a residency, the group is working on its 'archive' here—with a touch of self-irony: Can you really have an archive after only three years of existence? Even if you can, why would you need it so early on? But perhaps what was 'new' in 2020 will already be history by 2023. How long is a 'new vocality' new?

The residency at Makroscope illustrates what defines Glossa as a group: like in a small ant colony, tasks are distributed (including cooking, washing up, cleaning) and small groups are formed. Anyone who has always wanted to try something new can do so here and experiment with others, perhaps even teaching them something. A sounding pendulum triggers and distorts recordings from the Glossa archive—the disembodied voices morph through the room in regular meter. Other vocal snippets creep into the space of Makroscope's library like woodworms—emanating from contact speakers onto the surfaces of tables and tubes. On a sunny afternoon, the choir returns on pedal boats to the bridge over the Ruhr, where its first performance took place in 2020—except that back then, it was the audience who used pedal boats and the choir was on the riverside. Now the archived voices flow over the Ruhr via in-ear monitors into the choir members' auricles.

At the end of this week, contrary to what one might expect from a choir, there is no concert, but instead many new thoughts about the group's self-image and ideas for the future. For one day, the temporary laboratory welcomes a visitor from Brussels: Myriam Van Imschoot eats, listens, and talks with the group. She is part of the YouYou Group, founded in Brussels in 2014. When she learned about Glossa in 2021 and met Elisa Kühnl shortly after, they both realised they were not alone in their practices and interests. The YouYou Group also meets regularly, without rehearsing for a concert in the traditional sense. From the beginning, there was the Club Zaghareed, which recently moved from its former artist-run Manchester Space in Molenbeek to the KBR, the Royal Library in the heart of Brussels, where the group is currently in residence to make a book and continue its practice. In an informal setting, YouYou members and interested newcomers come together once a month to eat, drink tea, chat, and devote themselves to the vocal practice triggered by the YouYou sound.

## **REGULARITY, FORM, AND STRUCTURE LEAD TO TRUST.**

'In preparation for my first piece *YOUYOUYOU*, Khadija Lazaar suggested I'd organize a club,' recalls Myriam about the early days. 'Although my intention was to shape a piece, I was equally interested in encounter and research. The club format created a convivial space where people felt at ease, close to the joy that the custom represents or triggers.'

After a few gatherings, it was clear that everyone wanted to be in the piece, and the focus shifted naturally to rehearsing. But the lesson remained—that conviviality and practice can coexist, and it has stayed at the heart of the group’s philosophy.’

The YouYou, known in Arabic as *zaghareed* (or in Moroccan Arabic, *zaghareet*), is the sound that the Belgian group revolves around. Myriam was drawn to it after initially exploring the Alpine tradition of yodelling and then living in Egypt for a while. She developed the idea of creating a performance based solely on YouYous. To this end, she sought out 12 women who were familiar with this type of vocal production (also known as ululation)—or who were open to learning it—and thus the Club Zaghareed began.

**DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUAL VOCAL PRACTICE. EXPERIENCE IN SINGING IS NOT A PREREQUISITE. EXPERIENCE IN SINGING IS NOT A CRITERION FOR EXCLUSION.**

Glossa also began with informal meetings—albeit in an academic research context. Unlike Myriam, Elisa’s intention was not to develop a piece, but rather her master’s thesis. As part of an artistic research practice on ‘The Voice as an Instrument of Given Circumstances’ in the ‘Klang & Realität’ (‘Sound & Reality’) programme at the Robert Schumann University of Music in Düsseldorf, she invited friends and fellow students to open voice labs over several months. From the beginning, they were labelled ‘choir rehearsals.’ The constellation was different in each rehearsal—most of the participants are now part of the larger Glossa body. Many of the scores Elisa developed for these rehearsals are now integral to the group’s repertoire and performances.



Glossa © Sebastian von der Heide

The close intertwining of informal gatherings and concentrated rehearsals is something both groups have in common, as is their laboratory-like character and process-oriented work on pieces. Both are united by a curiosity for the possibilities of vocal expression and the previously unimagined sonority of their own voices—even and especially when this seems strange, irritating, or embarrassing to others (or even to themselves). Both groups were founded by a woman who incorporates her previous artistic practice into the ensemble but allows the collective to transform and modify it. This feeds into new forms of co-creation. Both groups are similar in size: around 40-50 members are active on a mailing list (Glossa) or a WhatsApp group (YouYou), from which a slightly different constellation comes together for each performance.

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“Both groups are united by a curiosity for the possibilities of vocal expression and the previously unimagined sonority of their own voices—even and especially when this seems strange, irritating, or embarrassing to others (or even to themselves).”

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But there are also differences: the members of Glossa are all around the same age—somewhere in their thirties, or just below or above—while the age range of the YouYou Group extends from 14 to 74. Glossa has grown out of a homogeneous social milieu: many are students and graduates of art schools and/or are involved in other artistic and musical projects. The migration background<sup>2</sup> is not as strongly present as in the YouYou Group, where almost all participants share it: one third have family roots in Morocco, others in Algeria, Nigeria, Palestine, Iran, Greece, Italy, or Australia. And since the eponymous sound of the YouYou Group is practiced exclusively by women in its African and Middle Eastern regions of origin, the YouYou Group—unlike Glossa—also consists exclusively of women.

### **JUST BECAUSE SOMETHING IS VERY FAMILIAR DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU KNOW IT.**

Time flies and yet somehow stands still. The spring awakening of 2021 fluctuates between the feeling of an endless loop and the shy promise of a better future. People with masks gather in front of a window facade in Brussels, as if behind it were the only television broadcasting the latest infection statistics. The air hums; the building seems to be leaking sound to the outside. But above everything, the tram rumbles; in fact, Brussels' notorious inner-city traffic dominates acoustically—for now. At some point, however, it can no longer be ignored: a YouYou, several YouYous, they emerge incessantly from the building like an audible liquid. Those who step closer experience the strange effect of hearing less but seeing more: two circles of women inside behind the glass, each around a microphone they seem to worship like an artifact. Daffodils and delicate light-green leaves blow in the wind, as does the supermarket bag of a woman strolling by. A powerful ritual takes place here—even in difficult times it assures us: we will continue together.

The YouYou / Zaghareed is a type of vocal tremolo sound. While the vocal cords vibrate



Mars, YouYou Group © Lotte Knaepen

at high speed, rapid tongue movements (e.g., trills against the palate or alveolar ridge) and sometimes uvular vibrations contribute to the characteristic modulation of the sound. It is practiced by women in West Asian, North African, and some other African cultures to express joy, and sometimes grief, in ceremonial contexts such as weddings, births, or funerals. It is passed down from generation to generation, although by no means all women in a particular culture practice it. Anissa Rouas from the YouYou Group describes it as follows: 'I'm sure I heard my first YouYou shortly after I was born. When I was 15 or 16 years old, I wanted to learn it myself, so I practiced with my aunts. It's a power that you can bless or celebrate something with your voice!'

The YouYou is ambiguous in many ways and changes depending on the context—as it does with the shift away from traditional rituals toward artistic performances. 'When I started with the YouYou group, it felt strange to me to do this outside the context of a ceremony. When I talked about it with my family, they didn't understand. But now it gives me strength to do it with other people. It's not the same as in ceremonies. It even sounds different.' Anissa talks about how she has changed and developed her YouYou through practice with the group. She had to find techniques that allowed her to repeat it more often while exploring new body postures for it. *YOUYOUYOU*, the first performance developed with the original Club Zaghareed, was groundbreaking in this respect: the basic idea was to prolong the YouYou until it felt like an eternity—an eternity that ultimately lasted 'only' eight minutes, but in which the sound never stopped once it began. In addition to developing new vocal and physical techniques, the group found ways to cooperate with each other. Divided into small groups, they could pass the sound to each other. To give the transfer a sense of continuity, they omitted the typical closing gesture.

Over the years, so-called 'family members' have developed from the basic sound—no longer true YouYous, but variations and derivatives such as miniaturised cries or vocal techniques that plunge into the lower spectrum of the pitch range. The group's vocabulary has continually grown through these and other modulations. The performance *SEGEN*, last staged in

September 2025 on a vacant lot in Molenbeek, is based on a six-second YouYou that gradually merges into a compressed, layered sound generated by all throats overlapping each other. According to the makers, the tension in composing and performing with the YouYou lies in treating cultural tradition with respect while still creating something new that breaks new ground both sonically and contextually—a culturally sensitive, transcultural practice. In the process, the original emotional associations of the source sound change meaning, yet something is still carried across from the seed into the new spaces of perception that are opened.

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“The YouYou or Zaghareed is practiced by women in West Asian, North African, and some other African cultures to express joy, and sometimes grief, in ceremonial contexts such as weddings, births, or funerals.”

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### **SHOUTING IN GENERAL HAS AN IRRITATING EFFECT ON LISTENERS.**

Before founding Glossa, Elisa developed a vocal technique that she performed solo on several occasions<sup>3</sup>—a kind of scream not unlike the YouYou technique, sounding somewhere between a herd of goats and an analogue ring modulator. After about 20 minutes, her physical (and mental) strength is usually exhausted. Elisa has already tried to teach Glossa this sound—with varying degrees of success—but unlike the YouYou Group, the group’s vocal repertoire is not based on this sound. Rather, it focusses on the questions that accompany it: When is my own voice alienating—for me and for others? What associations does a vocal sound trigger when it is decoupled from its original emotion? When is a person (originally: a woman) allowed to raise their voice in public? When do you feel ashamed of the sound of your voice, and how can you deal with that?

In Elisa Kühnl’s and Glossa’s practice, these questions lead to ever-changing experimental arrangements. The central means for this are scores, which are used to structure rehearsals. Some of these later find their way into performances. They can be very simple, such as the ‘standing rule’: each choir member positions themselves in the room according to an individual rule that they do not reveal to anyone else (e.g., ‘always one meter to the left of Elisa’). In Glossa’s latest performance, *Die Traube* (The Grape), this standing rule determines the initial constellation of the group. This is followed by a score in which everyone sings the beginning of Bach’s chorale ‘Es ist genug’ as slowly as possible, each at their own tempo. A typical Glossa score consists of a sequence of different scores of this kind, usually in written form, sometimes also in graphic form. Elisa tries to keep these scores as simple and memorable as possible, which in turn allows individuals freedom of interpretation.

### **VOICE CAN ALSO BE WRITING—OR, MORE PRECISELY, NOTATION.**

The compositions of the YouYou Group also emerge from collective practice, but the score usually comes later, toward the end of the process. Pieces build on and expand an ever-growing repertoire of developed sounds, techniques, and embodied memories that are

kept alive through ongoing practice, giving a strong sense of shared ownership. Since 2021, Myriam has ceased to be the sole author of the group's compositions; for each piece, a team of directors — a core team — guides the process, primarily in the sense of responsibility and caretaking, rather than for purposes of directorial profiling.<sup>4</sup>

In February 2021, Kassel, the geographical centre of Germany, is covered in snow. But by afternoon, the melting process starts. Water drips from the roof of the Fridericianum onto the ground, where people are passing by, wondering about the strange voices that emerge through the tilted windows from inside the premises of the Kasseler Kunstverein. A deep, vibrating hum, like that of an oversized male chest in its physicality. A cautious, female-sounding search movement, asking a wordless question. A flock of crows crossing an imaginary winter sky. A frightened passerby adds her own scream to this bestiary of voices.

At Glossa, there have already been attempts to expand authorship: choir member Josephine Stamer played a key role in developing the dramaturgy for a performance in Cologne's Stadtgarten Park in 2024. The division of authorship went furthest in the *CHOLERA* project. For this, Glossa collaborated with the artist collective RHO and morphed from a choir first into a light and sound installation at the Kasseler Kunstverein, then into a radio play — without ever having been performed live. A total of ten people were involved in the project in various authorial roles.

Within the YouYou Group, different visions of the social organisation of the group coexist. Arezoo Khazanbeig explains: 'I'm quite new to the group, as a coordinator. What I can tell is: many women in the group have strong alpha energy—and that's great. Different variants of leadership can coexist. We have natural leaders, matriarchal leaders, moral leaders, founders, etc. It's a rather complex mix, with cultural biases too. You won't get anywhere without the consent of the older members—because that's shaped by the cultural values many of us share.'

For some, the sound, the music, is the focus of the project; for others, it is the social interaction; for others still, it is the opportunity to immerse themselves in an activity without having to assume responsibility.

Over the past five and a half years, there have been several visions of holding a Glossa rehearsal without Elisa—but this has not yet really happened. The workshops and experiments at Makroscope in 2023 came closest to the idea of a leaderless collective. Nevertheless, a certain 'soft leadership' can be observed in both collectives, which have created ecosystems that are largely self-developing. Each member contributes their own sounds and individual interpretations of the given scores to the overall sound—inspiring the others and setting in motion sonic and social processes that are then reflected in the performances. There are always spin-offs and side projects, such as when Glossa member Simon Waskow samples individual voices from the choir and uses them for a film soundtrack. And the distribution of tasks at residencies such as Makroscope, or even in a secluded house in the Eifel region, is only possible if everyone sees themselves as an equal and equally responsible part of the collective.

What could disrupt this ecosystem? A football from next door? At Glossa, probably not—it would be integrated into the group's play. A new member, perhaps? That too is unlikely,



probably because the focus is not on individual artistic ability, so no one needs to fear being displaced on the basis of quality. It would be more disruptive if a new member failed to accept how the ecosystem functions. Perhaps the potential for disruption in both collectives lies more in the encounter between ecosystems — when one meets another, for instance during a performance in public space.

**PUBLIC EVENTS LEAD TO OUTSIDE OPINIONS, WHICH MAY EVALUATE, CRITICISE, AND QUESTION. THERE ARE NO UNIFORM ANSWERS OR ATTITUDES TOWARD THIS.**

*Cell phone alarms interrupt sleep with merciless melodies. Glossa has rarely been such a silent ensemble as it is this morning before sunrise on a farm in Olfen, on the northern outskirts of the Ruhr area. The choir members warm themselves with cups of tea. They are about to head to the first of four bridges on the Alte Fahrt. In the past, goods for the steel industry were transported here by ship. Today, the former canal is a biotope—and the stage for an all-day performance by Glossa, for which there is no invited audience. Four times between sunrise and sunset, the choir performs scores in which they connect with old stones, young ducks, and, last but not least, with themselves. The last sound of the day is Elisa's infamous scream. After dark, it pierces through the bones, much like this morning's phone alarms, signalling the previously scattered group to reunite one last time.*

Alongside creating pieces for institutional houses, both groups share an interest in performing in places 'that are not covered by Google Maps'<sup>5</sup>—here a wasteland in Molenbeek, a street in Brussels, or a park in Sofia, Bulgaria (YouYou), there a disused railway line in the Ruhr area, the hollow body of a bridge over the Rhine, or an underpass on the outskirts of the city (Glossa). In many places, an invited audience may be present — in others, no invitation is sent at all, and the performers engage with the people, animals,



*Hamel, YouYou Group © Veerle Vercauteren*

and other organisms that happen to be there. With *Glossa*, one sometimes gets the feeling that the group is performing for itself, that it doesn't need an audience at all—and that's probably true. Nevertheless, there is this interaction, most clearly when sounds from the environment or lettering from billboards find their way into the performance, or when, at the end, someone from the audience asks when the next rehearsal is and whether they can join in. Or when the YouYou Group blesses an overgrown property with an open future in the middle of Brussels with its ululations, or makes the façade of an art centre bleed acoustically while welcoming spring—for an outdoor audience placed on the other side of the window front.

Going out in public was an intuitive decision for the YouYou Group. For many centuries, public space was the domain of men—and even today, a woman who raises her voice in public may still face many prejudices. YouYou member Fatiha Settouti describes the 2016 terrorist attacks at Brussels Airport and the Maelbeek metro station as a moment of crisis in the history of the group. In the first YouYou print publication<sup>6</sup>, she recalls: 'The Belgian population once again points fingers at Moroccans, because the attacks were carried out by Moroccans. So once again we're singled out, pushed aside, and there's fear of seeing Moroccans. There were women who were insulted; there were women whose veils were torn off.'

At the same time, the group was preparing their second performance *HELfel*, a public, 20-minute sound choreography in Brussels' Parc de forest<sup>7</sup>. The members continued as planned, and it felt like a 'form of resistance.' Even though it wasn't discussed in the group in so many words at the time, the Club Zaghareed felt like a haven, and the performance became a way to project another image of public presence—as a positive action.

A YouYou that you unexpectedly stumble upon in a park can, and perhaps should, sometimes be irritating—not in an aggressive sense, but in a way that challenges your own perception of public space, the space shared by all. This is not quite as explicit with *Glossa*,

although the feminist-emancipatory aspect formed the seed of the ensemble through the artistic work of Elisa Kühnl. Glossa is also very much about discovering the foreign within oneself—being disturbed by the sound of one’s own voice at times—entering the zones of shame and enduring them in public. This is easier to do in a collective.

Both representative groups of this ‘new vocality’ find themselves in a field of tension that affirms self-awareness but is not satisfied with mere feel-good practices. It is about relating one’s own voice to others—finding one’s place within an ecosystem, showing consideration for its other inhabitants, and approaching the environment with an empathetic ear.

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“It is about relating one’s own voice to others—finding one’s place within an ecosystem, showing consideration for its other inhabitants, and approaching the environment with an empathetic ear.”

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## **IT IS UTOPIAN TO THINK THAT ONE CAN GRASP THE FULL DIVERSITY OF THE VOICE.**

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It may be somewhat far-fetched to claim a ‘new vocality’ based on two examples. However, in recent years, other ensembles have emerged that share similarities with Glossa and the YouYou Group. The Glitch Choir, founded by dancer and choreographer Deva Schubert in Berlin, also draws on a cultural tradition of the female voice in public ritual—more specifically, that of the professional mourner. In deconstructing Italian lament singing, the ensemble seeks the ‘connection in cacophony.’

In Antwerp and elsewhere, the Quantum Choir—which functions as a ‘nomadic ensemble,’—sets up camp. Its founder, Tomer Damsky, reconstructs the mystical musical practice of Carmelite nuns from 16th-century Spain, with a lineup that changes depending on the location. She describes this as ‘heavy folk,’ where ‘heavy’ refers to the spiritual and existential content of the music, but also to a certain devotion in the vocal expression. ‘Folk’, on the other hand, stands for a popular, non-academic approach to singing.

Asserting a new artistic movement often seems like an exaggerated gesture. This is not a manifesto for ‘new vocality’; rather, it is an attempt to outline a current development. What unites the discussed collectives is their exploratory approach to the sound of the voice, its transfer into the collective, the creation of a unique yet open ecosystem—all practiced against a feminist backdrop and with socio-political curiosity, in places with soft boundaries and an open view.

In 2026, an osmosis between the two groups will take place to continue—on a larger scale—what began when Myriam first visited the Glossa lab. Then the *Kinotita* project will start, bringing together various artists to further explore and develop ‘new vocality’ in various forms. In addition to Myriam, Anissa, and Elisa, three other vocal artists—Anne-Laure

Pigache (Grenoble, France), Jule Flierl, and Doreen Kutzke (Berlin)—are involved in the three-year, three-country project. With an open view of vocal performance, a holistic approach that does not distinguish between trained and amateur vocalists, a feminist stance, and an interest in making art in groups, the participants aim not only to exchange experiences and skills, but also to develop a shared toolbox (for future generations to use), to create performances (the first is scheduled for November 2026 at the opening ceremony of the newly renovated museum Kanal-Centre Pompidou in Brussels), and to reveal and discuss their process through podcasts and publications. We stay tuned.

*However, to recognise the subtleties in things, I must first understand their scope. If my own voice is capable of surprising me, then I have probably not yet learned enough about the human voice.*

- 1 All of these quotes are cited from Elisa Kühnl's master's thesis *Γλωσσα. Die Stimme als Instrument gegebener Umstände* and were translated by the author of this text.
- 2 However, Elisa Kühnl has Greek family roots, which is why not only the name of the choir and some of the pieces are in Greek, but also why the tradition of Greek choir singing and motifs from Greek mythology regularly feature in their work. In 2023, parts of Glossa travelled to Crete to follow the thread of Ariadne and the sounds of caves.
- 3 Most of the members of either group have not undergone professional vocal training. Elisa Kühnl was a self-taught singer-songwriter for a while and later joined the Mülheim band collective Nasssau for vocal improvisations.
- 4 For example, *HAMEL* was directed by Hoda Siahtiri, Anissa Rouas, Caroline Daish and Myriam Van Imschoot and went on tour with Hoda, Anissa and Caroline.
- 5 Credit for this beautiful phrase goes to Verena Hahn from the Cologne music magazine *Noies*.
- 6 *YouYou Group, a li'nuage* was created collaboratively in September 2025 under the guidance of Will Holder and Justine Maxelon. It includes interviews with group members, sketches from free writing exercises, a reflective thread on the topic of performances in public spaces and a longer text about YouYou by Nezha Haffou. The group will continue to publish episodically in print over the next 18 months to complete a process of deep collective reflection.
- 7 In Moroccan Arabic, spoken by many members of the YouYou Group, also: Zaghareet.

*Friedemann Dupelius* works with sound and language. He writes radio features and texts on electronic, experimental, and contemporary music and other sound phenomena. He wrote the libretto for Clemens K. Thomas's opera *Dollhouse* at Staatsoper Hamburg. Friedemann produces genre-fluid electronic music as Friday Dunard and lends his voice to the Glossa choir. He is co-curator of the SPA music label and the Brückenmusik series in Cologne.

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Conversations between the author and Myriam Van Imschoot, Arezoo Khazanbeig and Anissa Rouas, 06.08.2025 & 17.09.2025 via Zoom

The author's own membership in and experience with Glossa / Γλωσσα since 2020

Encounters with Myriam (since 2021) and members of the YouYou group (since 2023)

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# Notes on sound

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© Yann Leguay

*What is the power of sound? How can it transform a theatre space into a world where the auditory takes on a life of its own? Fourteen artists share brief, inspiring statements on the role and significance of sound in contemporary performing arts.*

*Wat is de kracht van klank? Hoe kan het een theaterruimte laten transformeren tot een wereld waarin het auditieve een autonoom bestaan leidt? Veertien kunstenaars delen korte, inspirerende statements over de rol en het belang van geluid in de hedendaagse podiumkunsten.*

# Lieven Dousselaere

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Klank = muziek = performer.

Een onzichtbare speler die altijd aanwezig is. Zelfs in stilte.

Ik maak geen strikt onderscheid tussen klank en muziek. Of beter: ik hoor muziek in klank.

In de context van de podiumkunsten is het vaak een onderschatte speler: mensen merken haar meestal pas op wanneer er iets fout loopt — het geluid dat wegvalt, een microfoon die feedbackt, een valse noot. Toch beïnvloedt ze sterk onze perceptie, zonder dat we ons daarvan bewust zijn. Ze prikkelt de aandacht onderhuids en opent andere manieren van kijken.

Muziek maken voor theater, dans of performance is niet hetzelfde als een album maken: wat op scène gebeurt zie ik als een extra stem in de muziek die je de nodige ruimte geeft.

Samenwerken met dansers, theatermakers of performers begint voor mij zonder direct over klank of muziek te spreken. Ik luister, stel vragen, verzamel indrukken en beelden, en probeer tijdens de repetities dingen uit. Zo voel je meteen wat werkt.

Klank en muziek zijn voor mij het onderbewuste van een voorstelling. Zelf kan ik vaak moeilijk verwoorden waarom ik bepaalde beslissingen neem. Het moet vooral juist aanvoelen. Het thema dat je als maker naar voren schuift, is ook niet noodzakelijk wat het publiek er uiteindelijk in leest. In dat verschil tussen intentie en beleving leeft volgens mij de muziek.

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*Lieven Dousselaere* is componist en geluidskunstenaar. Naast het uitbrengen van muziek met zijn bands Tape Tum en Synthômas componeert hij muziek voor film, theater, installatiekunst en hedendaagse dans.



# Hannes Seidl

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I like situations best where it is not entirely clear what is intended as part of the performance and what is not, especially in terms of sound. Performances, installations, and hybrid forms that create a framework in which the incidental and the intentional, the random and the coordinated coexist in such a way that I, as an audience member, can only experience the event as a whole, are among the most intense aesthetic experiences that I seek again and again — including in my own pieces.

Especially in some of the music theatre pieces I have developed in collaboration with director and documentary filmmaker Daniel Kötter we have tried to create such environments. In several pieces, people on stage did mundane things: sawing, hammering, drilling, cooking, but also speaking, playing an instrument, singing, etc.

The attitude of the performers remained the same whether they were building something or playing their instrument. It was always inward-looking, focussed on the work itself and absorbed in the activity. The sounds that came out—accidentally or on purpose—became exaggerated in an aesthetic way, by amplifying, looping, or relating them to each other by rhythmic or melodic values. While the activities ‘made sense’ in terms of the topic of the piece, the overall soundscape created its own musical logic. For example, in *Land (Stadt Fluss)*, the sounds of a trumpet player playing to himself could be heard as a duo with the rhythmically pulsating sound of carrots being cut, or the person’s footsteps in *LIEBE* became the basic beat of an increasingly intense love song.

Nevertheless, there is a big difference depending on whether the pieces are performed within a musical or theatrical context. The situation is determined not only by the ambiguous actions but also by the expectations of the audience. If these expectations are rejected (‘nothing’ is happening, ‘there is no “real” music’), a situation can arise in which sounds can be “read” in relation to their source (‘I hear someone cooking,’ ‘I hear someone playing the trumpet’) as well as heard musically (a duo for knife and trumpet). In this openness, everything that happens becomes meaningful—even the slamming of a door by a disappointed spectator.

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*Hannes Seidl* works as a composer of instrumental and electronic concert music and—often in collaboration with other artists—on music theatre, installations, and other cross-genre formats.

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## Anne van de Star

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### Hoe ik makers uitdaag om over klank na te denken

Als sounddesigner en componist vertrek ik altijd vanuit één vraag: kan klank de verbeelding stimuleren en een ruimte oproepen die het geheel van interacties tussen alle geluiden in een omgeving voelbaar maakt? Een ecosysteem waarin actie, beeld, licht en subject samensmelten. Waar het decor sober blijft, krijgt klank de ruimte om het toneel te vullen—niet als versiering, maar als ademend weefsel dat de verbeelding van de toeschouwer in beweging zet. Voor mij is luisteren nooit vanzelfsprekend—ik onderzoek voortdurend de positie van de luisteraar. Activeren we echt het luisteren, of ontstaat er eerder een gevoel, een sfeer die de toeschouwer meevoert?

## Techniek en samenwerking

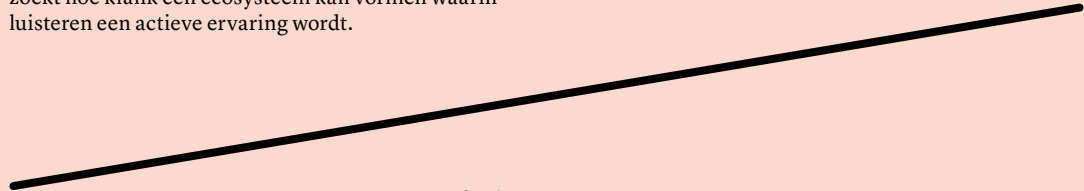
Wanneer ik een voorstelling mee op tournee begeleid, vertrek ik vanuit de set-up die tijdens het creatieproces is ontstaan. Toch vraagt elke ruimte om aanpassingen: oppervlaktes, afmetingen en akoestiek hebben hun eigen grenzen. Dat zie ik niet als beperking, maar als een kans om te spelen met wat de ruimte teruggeeft. Ik ga daarbij altijd in gesprek met de technici ter plaatse—hun kennis is vaak onmisbaar. Zo voelt het touren niet als een louter technische opdracht, maar als een gezamenlijke zoektocht.

Op papier bestaan er altijd theoretische oplossingen, maar de realiteit van klank is grillig. Geluid beweegt, weerkaatst en gedraagt zich soms onverwacht. Pas in de ruimte zelf laat het zich echt horen. Precies daar ligt voor mij de kern van mijn vak: samen afstemmen, meebewegen en telkens opnieuw ontdekken hoe klank een voorstelling kan dragen.

Klank is voor mij nooit alleen een technisch middel, maar een uitnodiging tot verbeelding—een manier om werelden hoorbaar te maken die anders onzichtbaar zouden blijven.

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Sounddesigner en componist *Anne van de Star* onderzoekt hoe klank een ecosysteem kan vormen waarin luisteren een actieve ervaring wordt.



## Alain Franco

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### A Few Aphorisms on Music Dramaturgy

1. Not ‘for’ but ‘with’ the performing arts. I prefer to keep the principle of ‘applied arts’ at a reasonable distance because it lacks the essential element: thinking in proximity.
2. We still have a long way to go, but musical and sound dramaturgy deserves wider recognition. Some of my colleagues see it as nothing more than a form of DJing—which is as absurd as confusing commerce with economics.
3. Independent ideas do not contradict common thinking.
4. The material is not identical to music or sound. This inequality is productive, but it has no effect without an adequate working methodology.
5. The paradigmatic dimension has a conceptual advantage over the thematic one. This also explains why history—in all its manifestations—remains relevant in my work.
6. History and theory are transcendentals: dramaturgy is their dialectic.
7. The greatest achievement is the next one.

8. Whenever a task can be considered to have achieved its goal, it is because decisions have been made beyond the availability of choice. It is also here where theory and practice intersect.

9. I assume I don't see performance work in the same way performers do: I remain convinced that their listening is in no way comparable to mine, which is transhistorical and memorial.

10. I am not always convinced by what we define as 'work.' This is undoubtedly because I do not idealise the production/reproduction dichotomy. In this sense, I see no problem with dramaturgy remaining a behind-the-scenes affair. But then in the sense of Don José Nieto Velázquez in *Las Meninas*: the éminence grise.

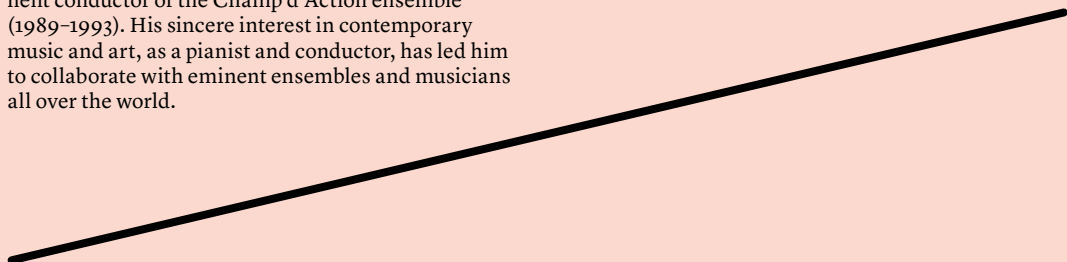
11. Editing is definitely a constant requirement in my way of working. But in doing so, I am only perpetuating what modernity has been mediating for at least two centuries.

12. 'The Open Artwork' was almost a style. 'Works in Openness,' on the other hand, allow for 'analytical creativity.' This is clearly the approach I endorse.

13. I am still waiting to be able to grasp what was intended through what is represented.

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*Alain Franco* studied music at the conservatories of Brussels, Liège, and Antwerp. He was the permanent conductor of the Champ d'Action ensemble (1989–1993). His sincere interest in contemporary music and art, as a pianist and conductor, has led him to collaborate with eminent ensembles and musicians all over the world.



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## Mareike Dobewall

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Sound in theatre goes far beyond atmosphere. It can be scenography, actor, or story in itself. Performance expands how we listen, opening us to dimensions usually overlooked. I often think of 'space care': a tending to the fragile, shifting space that emerges through the gathering of people, beings, and things. Theatre can offer listening as a form of care—an invitation to step beyond passive reception into active reaching.

Through sound, we sense connections between bodies, materials, and actions. Relations are revealed in how one element interferes, resonates, or resists another. Sound as material in performance can help us notice what often passes unheard, reminding us that what lies beyond the obvious is always present and accessible when we give it our attention.

Listening also involves a choice: how much do we reach towards what we hear? To listen is not only to receive, but to decide. In theatre, cues for listening can guide us safely into

unfamiliar realms, attracting our attention and curiosity. They remind us that sound is never mere background, but relation, action, and presence.

For many years my main instrument has been the voice, as it is for many performers. Voice connects us both concretely, through language, and abstractly, as vibration and resonance. It can be ‘just’ sound or music. A shift between the two can happen in an instant, and that shift can transform everything. With a single sound, certainty may be unsettled. When the ear contradicts the eye, assumptions fracture and imagination begins to root and spread.

In this way, sound in performance is not accessory but generative: it forms worlds, unsettles certainties, and calls us into attentive relation with what is present—and with what might yet emerge.

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*Mareike Dobewall* is a director, scenographer, musician, and composer. Her work is not bound to a genre but rather crosses the boundaries of genres and includes various art forms.

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## Marcela Lucatelli

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### **MODULATION: Corporifying Othernesses from Here to Now**

Modulation is one of my decolonial composition concepts—creative precedents that I teach and activate through my work. All of these concepts relate to performativity, simply because the only music that interests me is the music of transformation.

When the somatisation of the sacred exceeds verbal expression of myths, a corporeal logic emerges. This can be evinced through modulation. Here, modulation does not mean tonal shifts, but the adoption of body and aesthetic presence as a means of accessing and corporifying a new reality. The leap between normalised human perception and this connective state characterises modulation, where a meeting with othernesses can occur. This meeting is only possible without imposing non-corporeal logics—such as Western rationale—and from this frictional artifice creative potency can emerge.

Examples of modulation of consciousness appear in trance states, such as Afro-Brazilian channelling of guides, deities, and ancestors. In Yoruba cosmology, the body is permeable to both historical world and mythical cosmos, malleable enough to erode the self and ritualistically display its resonant movement between potential and actual. This modulation of self into others is a substitution: there for here, you for me, it for I. In haptically modulating into othernesses, a body subverts coloniality and calls for transformation.

Unlike the Western psyche, binarily divided into conscious/unconscious, this opening modulates existence into multiple contacts with aesthetically nourishing, opaque sources. Origin and death symbolically meet through the expressive displacement of bodies, unfolding extraordinary relations and mediating individual and collective conflicts.

What about a moment of listening to wisdom beyond a pornographically informed reality? ‘The bed of a river does not decipher the water; it receives the water from the river,’ says Brazilian Indigenous thinker Ailton Krenak. Modulation is received, not decoded. A body—permeable and malleable—embraces both ancestral and future consistencies like a riverbed holding flowing waters, weaving collectivity and challenging objective notions of self. Politically, the struggle to modulate states of presence toward enchantment becomes a radical deviation from the commodification of life, organisation, and bodies. It asks us what else is possible beyond a utilitarian notion of existence—a refusal to let time be owned by measure, an invocation of enchantment as an irresolutional praxis.

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*Marcela Lucatelli* is hailed as one of the most innovative vocalists and composers of her generation. Born in Brazil and based in Denmark, she has earned international recognition for her highly original, sensuous, and politically charged performance works.

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## Sébastien Roux

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One of the hardest things I find when making music for dance is figuring out the right sound level—the volume that inhabits the living space without overwhelming or destroying the dance.

In 2008, I worked as an assistant to the American composer Morton Subotnick on the revival of Anna Halprin’s *Parades and Changes*, for which he had originally composed the music in 1965.

After an initial meeting at his home in New York in the spring—where Morton gave me the material to be played during the piece—we all gathered in Armentières with the full team to bring together dance, light, and music.

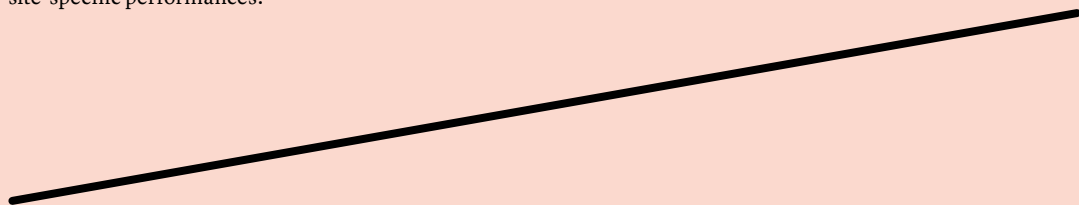
While I was mixing the different tracks, Morton would give me his directions. He let me operate the interface I had designed and conveyed everything to me verbally while watching the dancers on stage. The idea was that, once the premiere was over, he would return to New York and I would take full responsibility for the soundtrack on my own.

To adjust the volume of the music during the performance, Morton once told me something along the lines of: 'If you feel like the dancers look too small, it means the music is too loud.'

This advice may sound a little strange, but I can honestly say that I've used it ever since, whenever doubt takes hold of me.

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*Sébastien Roux* imagines listening situations using algorithms, games, movement, spatialization and diagrams. His work takes a variety of forms: guided listening sessions with loudspeakers, concerts with projected graphic scores, sound installations and site-specific performances.



## Kent Olofsson

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### Rethinking Sound and Music in Theatre

On my journey of exploring the role of sound and music in theatre, it has become clear that to unlock their potential in this context, we must rethink concepts, practices, and processes.

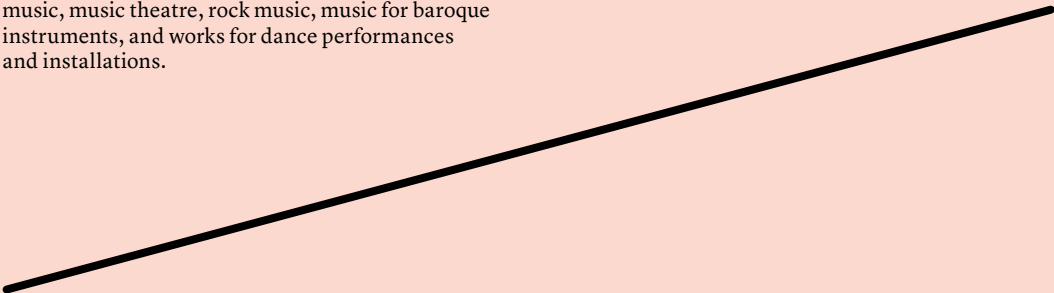
First, we must reconsider our understanding of sound and music. When reduced to fixed functions—illustration, support, or ornamentation—their dramaturgical and scenographic powers remain not only underused but also hidden. The space in between what is usually thought of as sound and what is considered music is a fertile and unruly terrain of possibilities, where this invisible force can shift from creating a subtle atmosphere to forming a dynamic scenography, and further transform into an active co-actor alongside performers.

To achieve this approach, the creative process itself needs to be changed, which means a re-evaluation of sound design and musical composition practices. To unlock its full potential, work with sound and music must be integrated into the overall conceptual and dramaturgical process from the very beginning. This demands collaboration that is open, non-hierarchical, and non-linear. Composers, sound designers, directors, actors, scenographers, and technicians must all be part of a process of shared and reciprocal experimentation. This includes technical aspects as well—such as the design of the loudspeaker setup, mixing, and programming—which must be considered essential artistic elements. Emerging new audio technologies like immersive sound, spatialisation, and virtual acoustics intensify the need for new collaborative models and invite new modes of creation.

In this fluid ecology, sound gains new dramaturgical agency. It resists fixed definitions and calls for a re-examination of its roles as music, scenography, co-actor, and structural force. This continuous shifting enables a more expansive understanding of sonic practice in theatre—one where disciplinary boundaries dissolve and sound asserts itself as both autonomous and intermedial.

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*Kent Olofsson* is a composer with an extensive artistic output of over 200 works that span a broad range of genres, ensemble types, and contexts—including music for orchestra, chamber music, electroacoustic music, music theatre, rock music, music for baroque instruments, and works for dance performances and installations.



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## Yann Leguay

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A theatre is a luxury playground—a black box and a blank space/time frame simultaneously; an empty page, but very well equipped. Sound-wise, it's definitely a place for experimentation. The field of possibilities in this context is huge, and to have the time and even a team to try things, to give space to doubts, to succeed as much as to fail, is an absolute privilege.

When you come from the DIY music and sound sphere, as I do, and you look backstage at the quantity and quality of material available, it's like being in wonderland. And I believe that crossing the methods of alternative culture with more institutional practices opens up new approaches and gives a wider perspective on both means and meanings.

I have worked across very different fields and projects—from contemporary and conceptual art to experimental and electronic music, radio art, curation, composition for films, and performances. I have tried never to get stuck in one of those fields, always moving and playing around with different approaches, trying to cross and overlay references and inspirations, blurring the boundaries. One field nourishes another, creating interdependence. Meanwhile, another provides the solid foundation on which fragile balances are built.

Being autonomous with the techniques is also something that can drive creativity and makes it possible not to draw too sharp a line between the technical part and the scenography, or between the performer and the technician—and vice versa.

I remember being in residency in a theatre, and a technician getting upset at us because we were pulling cables and making weird shapes with them. He told us, 'Stop it! You have to use the material for what it was meant to do!'

Well... my starting postulate in experimenting may be the exact opposite of that. Bending things and giving objects and techniques the time and space for their sense to come out of their form. What is a cable? What is the symbolism of wiring? And if a cable breaks — then what becomes the meaning of a broken cable?

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At the border between sound art and music, *Yann Leguay* develops a paradoxical way of thinking about technological evolution. He has been active internationally in the experimental scene since 2007.

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## Marijn Ottenhof

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Omdat ik niet als muzikant ben opgeleid, verhoud ik me tot muziek als een hele of halve barbaar, als een outsider. Ik verzamel stemmen, drones, machinelawaai, walvisgeluid, liftmuziek, installeer wat ik maar aan gratis software kan vinden en gooi alles zonder respect voor de oorsprong door elkaar.

Ik spreek vaak makkelijker de taal van een regisseur of beeldend kunstenaar dan die van een muzikant of technicus. Dat leidt soms tot misverstanden, maar ook tot experiment. Soms heb ik in mijn hoofd een geluid dat ik niet kan maken. Dat frustreert, maar het dwingt me om te hakken met het gereedschap dat ik wél heb: echo's, filters, samples die ik bewerk tot ze onherkenbaar zijn. In de mislukking en het 'verkeerd' gebruiken van technieken vind ik vaak de mooiste parels.

Ik zie mijn werk altijd als performance. Of ik nu een set draai, eigen muziek speel of samenwerk met een regisseur of danser: zelfs als je thuis naar een album van mij luistert, zie ik de betekenis van mijn werk ontstaan in de ruimte tussen jou als luisteraar en mij als performer. Wat klank in die ruimte doet, verschilt. Soms is klank de onuitgesproken en onuitsprekbare rouw in het verhaal dat een acteur neerzet over het verlies van een geliefde, soms is klank het onderhuids kloppen van een hartslag terwijl een danser een façade van stilstand is, soms creëert klank een onpeilbare diepte achter een plat beeld, soms is klank een stilte om de gedachten van het publiek te dragen. Het is voor mij altijd: een taal die je niet machtig hoeft te zijn.

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*Marijn Ottenhof* is beeldend kunstenaar, componist en dj. In haar videowerken, livesets, radioshows en clubsets is dystopie de overheersende sfeer.

## Travis Just

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My music and sound practice in a theatrical context is almost entirely within a 20+ year artistic collaboration with my performance group Object Collection, and most of all with my main creative partner, writer/director Kara Feely. This working situation has evolved over time but has always been based on the foundational idea of putting experimental musical and theatrical practices on equal footing at all times and in all stages of our productions.

As a composer, I have long been drawn to theatre as the most perfectly collaborative art form. What this means for me in a practical sense is working with a sonic and formal structure that is necessarily filled with gaps: holes and spaces in the composition where potentially contradictory, if not wholly unrelated, material can exist. Musically, this is a recognisable part of several progressive aesthetic lineages, though it remains an outlier in how composers normally think.

In spite of being committed to living in these gaps, I have to constantly remind myself to simply leave things out: to sketch a gesture while leaving large portions of the stage-canvas blank. I find this way of working exciting, and the resulting pieces endlessly surprising. This sometimes chaotic collision of independent, tightly constructed material is now the dominant feature of Object Collection's works. Since I am frequently performing in some fashion onstage in our shows, I often don't get to see the fully finished piece until I watch the video after we have closed the show. I have come to prefer this methodology. I have little interest in some auteur-level control over all facets of our pieces.

During some of his concerts in the early 2000s, Prince would go out into his audience and ask individuals whether it was better to lead or to follow. Those who said it was better to lead would be ignored. The first person who said it was better to follow would be brought up for a seat on the side of Prince's stage. Better to do away with leaders.

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*Travis Just* is a composer and performer best known for his work with the experimental performance group Object Collection. His practice integrates composition, text, and performance into a hybrid form of experimental theatre.

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## Julia Mihály

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I develop music performances in public spaces, working in very diverse locations. It might be a forest, a city centre, a residential area, or a garden. The pieces I create are site-specific: they deal with the history and the current situation of the respective locations themselves, are produced on-site, and are also performed there.

During the creation phase, I often conduct listening and observation sessions together with the performers and musicians involved, trying to understand the place as a microcosm with its own dynamics of everyday life.

Depending on the artists' experience in working with sound, it is sometimes necessary to sensitise them to recognise a theatrical potential in sound itself, and to understand that a narrative does not necessarily require a permanent performative action, but can also be told purely through sound.

I also make field recordings, which are later integrated into the piece as snapshots of past presents. When it comes to the sound of a place, I'm interested in two aspects: first, the already existing sound characteristics, which are determined by everyday activities and thus do not originally pursue a musical intention. These can be incorporated into the piece like a readymade, as the soundscape of the everyday.

Second, I look for objects that can be transformed into musical instruments through consciously musical playing—for example, metal fence bars of different pitches that can be played with mallets or a double bass bow, or the surface of a rough house wall on which abstract rhythmic patterns can be amplified with a microphone.

During the shows, the performers lead the audience on a route through various locations where such sound objects can be found. Their sounds can be produced either through performative actions or through deliberately exhibited music-making. Through the interweaving of these sound layers, different states of the past and present of a place come together to form an auditory narrative—a sonic theatre.

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As a composer, *Julia Mihály* works at the intersection of new music, performance, and music theatre. She develops multi-layered compositions combining sound, video, and performative elements, often in conjunction with electronic media.

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## Berno Odo Polzer

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Music, it is said in German, is a *Zeitkunst*—a 'time art.' The phrase is easily spoken, yet its meaning is far from simple. Is music merely a time-based art, one that unfolds *in* time—or is it the *art of time* itself, the art of shaping time and its lived experience?

This question is especially compelling when we turn to the listener and to listening. The temporal dimension of music—the experience of time through music—feels mysteriously distinct from its sounding experience, from the musical parameters and the entire

cultured apparatus of knowledge that Western art music has often considered essential for artistic appreciation. Unlike musical syntax, semantics, or aesthetics, the experience of time in music requires no privileged access through knowledge. It manifests in the situated listener, whose entire bio-psycho-social being receives—and gives—the gift of time through listening.

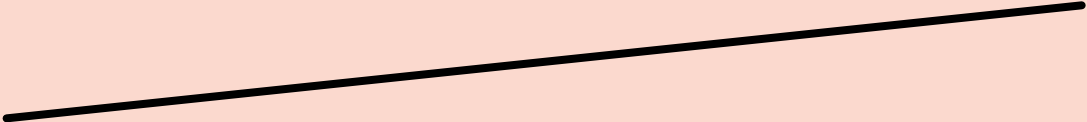
Music's being-in-time carries an intrinsic resistance to acceleration, compression, and short-circuiting. Listening to three seconds of a piece cannot grant access to its being or its experience. In this sense, *Zeitkunst* may suggest that if its temporal foundation is compromised, the experience collapses—it ceases to exist. As banal as it may sound, music both needs and demands time—and in turn, bestows the gift of it. In an age of social acceleration, the economization of attention, and the maximization of sensory consumption, this quality becomes an act of quiet disobedience against the chrononormativity that structures our system. Music and listener are time-bound, interdependent. The insistent temporality of music and the devotion of listening are, I believe, what we need most today.

Perhaps the true gift of music as a time-bound art is to remind us that acceleration, compression, and the short-circuiting of lived experience come at a heavy cost—a cost whose currency we are only beginning to understand.

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*Berno Odo Polzer* is a researcher, curator, and dramaturg with a background in experimental music, sound-related art, and performance. His practice combines interdisciplinary research and theory with artistic, curatorial, and dramaturgical approaches to create communal spaces of listening and (un)learning.

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## Peter Lenaerts

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I like the sound of a quiet theatre.

The sound of anticipation, concentration. The sound of surprise, even concern.

A sound that's charged, and far from empty. Or quiet.

When used deliberately, it's loud. A disturbance that breaks fourth walls.

Louder than a scream, a cymbal crash. The sound of a quiet theatre.

When the speakers are still on, but they've stopped playing.

A quiet that is often short-lived.

Inevitably someone coughs, or moves uncomfortably.

Preprogrammed to fill the void, we voice the quiet with sound.

When hearing becomes listening.

When affect becomes effect, charged with affect.

I like the sound of a quiet theatre so much that I create my soundtracks around it.

With every new score, I ask myself: when is the theatre quiet? When do I stop sending my soundtrack to the speakers?

In this absence, in this moment of alienation, we become aware of ourselves as participants, spectators, and listeners.

We become active, in charge.

Charged, like the sound of a quiet theatre.

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*Peter Lenaerts* is a sound artist, composer, and sound designer. He has created the soundtrack for over 50 dance and performance works by artists including Mette Ingvartsen, Salva Sanchis, Andros Zins-Browne, Eszter Salamon, Wayson Poon, and Rhiannon Newton.

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## Billy Bultheel

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**Je werkt soms voor andere makers, waarbij je de muziek voor hun projecten maakt, en soms maak je eigen werk, waar je beslissingen over de performance en het geluid en de muziek zelf in handen hebt. Wat gebeurt in de switch van de ene rol naar de andere? Hoe communiceer je je ideeën in processen met anderen? Hoe wordt er gesproken over klank en de rol/betekenis van muziek/klank?**

De overgang tussen het componeren voor anderen en het maken van eigen werk is eigenlijk heel organisch geworden. Wanneer ik muziek maak voor andere makers, fungeer ik vaak als een soort klankarcheoloog. Ik graaf naar wat hun werk sonisch nodig heeft, welke frequenties en texturen hun verhaal kunnen ondersteunen. We communiceren vaak met referenties, niet alleen muzikale, maar ook tekstuele of visuele om een wereld te delen. Het is een proces van luisteren en vertalen.

In mijn eigen werk heb ik de luxe om over klank, ruimte en dramaturgie tegelijkertijd na te denken. Daar wordt de compositie een soort architectuur. De compositie wordt in zichzelf een scenografie waarin verhalen een plaats vinden, zoals in mijn recent werk *A Short History of Decay*, waar ik een instrument bouwde in de vorm van een preekstoel die zowel altaar als partituur is.

**Je maakt voorstellingen waar je sterk geproduceerde elektronische muziek met akoestische instrumenten tegelijkertijd laat klinken. Dat zijn twee klankvelden met verschillende behoeften, qua ruimte en luisterhouding. Speelt dit een rol, of hoe ga je hiermee om? Wat zijn je ervaringen?**

Deze spanning tussen elektronische en akoestische werelden staat eigenlijk centraal in mijn werk. Wat mij interesseert is niet zozeer het integreren van deze klankvelden, maar juist het contrasteren ervan: hoe iets fragiels en levends kan worden geplaatst naast iets overweldigends.

In mijn laatste werk *The Fugue State* beginnen de composities elektronisch en ontwikkelen ze zich geleidelijk tot zachte melodieën, live gespeeld door muzikanten. Het gaat niet om volume of kracht, maar om hoe deze klank kwaliteiten elkaar ondermijnen. Het gaat om een klanktransformatie die de luisterervaring begeleidt.

Ik gebruik—door middel van performance—de ruimte vaak als een extrapolatie van mijn composities. Het is hier dat beweging, architectuur en klank samenkomen, ik noem dit ‘psychoakoestische choreografie’. Mijn fascinatie hiervoor is de middeleeuwse kerkarchitectuur en hoe hier ritueel, klank en echo in verband worden gebracht.

Het interesseert me om voor mijn publiek complexe luisterhoudingen te ontwikkelen. De spanning tussen livemuziek, elektronica, tekst en beweging creëert een soort sonisch labyrint waar verschillende betekenissen kunnen ontstaan.

*Fragment uit een conversatie met David Helbich, juli 2025.*

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De experimentele composities van *Billy Bultheel* combineren hedendaagse muziek met middeleeuwse en renaissancepolyfonie. Zo ontstaan locatiegebonden uitvoeringen waarin muzikanten dynamisch interageren met architectuur, beeldhouwkunst en speciaal vervaardigde instrumenten.

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# *Chiririn*

*Emi Kodama*



My mom likes explaining how to cook things. For a long time, her life revolved around food. She's retired now, but she had a Japanese restaurant in the suburbs of Vancouver for twenty-two years. Although she wasn't officially a chef, she stepped in to cook whenever they were short-staffed. Her explanations are usually to illustrate how easy a recipe is, by which she means I should try making it. There's often a lot of stirring involved, which she describes as *guruguru*, a Japanese onomatopoeia. She'll say, 'You have to let it simmer on low heat, add the sugar, and stir it *guruguru*, *guru-guru*.' She's talking about how to make *anko*, a sauce made of red beans used in Japanese desserts. The onomatopoeia conveys the duration and patience required, until the sauce first says *pukupuku* and then *bukubuku* as a delicious scent rises from the pot.

My mom has a musical way of talking, and her use of onomatopoeia adds to the rhythm. She'll say the table is *guragura* and put a piece of cardboard under one leg. Or how she sat on the muffin, and now it's *pettanko*. Or that she was too busy to drink anything, so her throat is *karakara*.

She often sang around the house when we were growing up, mostly Japanese pop songs, and I thought she had a lovely voice, even though she always said, 'I'm a terrible singer!' I worked at the restaurant, and she sang there too, along with a CD or the TV. There was a five-disc CD player, impressive at the time for the number of songs you could shuffle at once. And there was a Japanese channel on TV—she would sit on a stool behind the bar and watch concerts when the restaurant was slow.

But once, when she was singing particularly loudly, her business partner laughed and said, 'You might be singing your heart out, but you're off-key.'

I didn't think she was, and I told her so. But my mom was insulted and swore never to sing again. I remember a sinking feeling because I knew she was serious. She was stubborn, unforgiving, and always kept her word.

They both worked long hours to make ends meet. For years they worked seven days a week because they couldn't afford to hire extra staff or close the restaurant. My mom was always the last to eat lunch and dinner because she waited for all the customers to finish. She didn't have time to go out for a meal or shop at her favourite stores. And now she wasn't going to sing either.

Sometimes her partner would walk around and sing the first line of 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer' as 'Ta-ra-ra-ra-ra-ra-ra'. My mom told me he was feeling lonely when he did that. 'Really?' I asked. "How do you know?" It was still many months until Christmas.

She gave an unsatisfying answer: 'That's what he always does.'

I was in my early twenties, and I knew I was supposed to be an adult, but adulthood felt like an uncomfortable new suit. I tried to imagine what made him lonely. He was surrounded by staff, a family he went home to every night, and friends he golfed with. He loved to talk, and got to do as much of it as he wanted because he was the boss. He was a chef and I was a server, so we didn't often speak, but I heard snippets of stories about the local salmon run, the Hubble Space Telescope, the roots of Christianity. Mostly, I saw him work steadily, stoically, day in and day out. It had never occurred to me that he had a private inner life. A part of him I had never imagined opened up.





Japanese onomatopoeia not only imitate sounds; they also make inner feelings and sensations perceptible. Consider how in English many words beginning with *gl*—such as *glance*, *glare*, *glint*, and *glow*—evoke a visual quality. *Hinyari*, for example, depicts the feeling of cold: like on an evening after the last days of a dwindling summer, when you suddenly realise you need a jacket. You’ve felt autumn coming—the shorter days, the cooler winds—and now it has arrived. The glimmer of a new beginning. A quietness, like sediment settling at the bottom of a pond, the impression of coming to rest.

The restaurant had glass walls, and the entrance faced west. Sometimes, on early summer evenings, a blinding golden light spilled in through the front. In the lull before the dinner rush, leaning against the counter, the light washed away my view, and in the emptiness appeared the feeling of an ending. Of the day, of my time at the restaurant—the knowledge that some things are for the last time and you don’t know it.

*Ufufu*, a mischievous laugh.  
*Wakuwaku*, a feeling of excitement.  
*Nikoniko*, your beaming face.  
*Kirakira*, your sparkling eyes.  
*Patapata*, my shirt in the wind.  
*Parapara*, the first drops of rain.  
*Sappari*, feeling refreshed.  
*Tatatatata*, running feet.  
*Puri*, a small fart.  
*Buri*, a big fart.  
*Geragera*, uncontrollable laughter.

*Gorogoro*, a grumbling stomach.  
*Gosogoso*, rummaging around.  
*Paka*, a lid opening.  
*Pakupaku*, eating quickly.  
*Ponpon*, a full stomach.

Then the bell over the door would tinkle, chiririn, the first customers would walk in, and we would swing into action. Ice would clink, the hot plate would sizzle, and we would be too busy to notice the setting sun, the darkening sky, daylight replaced by the lights of the city.

I hadn't heard my mom sing in more than a decade when she started singing again for my son.  
Funnily enough, she's sometimes off-key.

*Kaeru no uta ga*  
*Kikoete kuru yo*  
*Gwa gwa gwa gwa*  
*Gero gero gero gero*  
*gwa gwa gwa*

—*Kaeru no uta*

*I can hear*  
*The frog's song.*  
*Croak, croak, croak, croak,*  
*Ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit,*  
*croak, croak, croak.*

—*The Frog Song*

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Illustrations: Katrien Van Breedam

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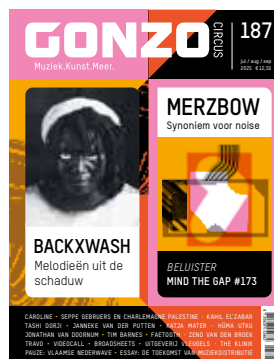
*Emi Kodama* is a Japanese-Canadian artist from Vancouver. She has been living and working in Ghent since 2008, when she started the post-graduate programme at the Higher Institute for Fine Arts (HISK). Through a multidisciplinary practice that includes writing, performance, and installation, Emi layers elements of daily life with dreams and memories to create stories that you can explore and expand. Her work has appeared in *Ricepaper Magazine* and *The Malahat Review*. Her collection of short stories and drawings 'If I Were You' was published by MER. Paper Kunsthalle in 2012.

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# Simons Crypto

Door Simon Baetens

## ONGEHOORD?

Gelijke getallen staan voor gelijke letters. De woordbalk in de middenkolom bevat een naam of een begrip.

|   |  |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |  |
|---|--|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|---|--|
| A |  |   |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |    |    | 13 |    |    |    |   |    |   |  |
| B |  |   |    |    |    |    | 1  | 4  |    | 12 |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |  |
| C |  |   |    | 16 | 6  |    | 4  |    |    |    |    | 3  |    |    |   |    |   |  |
| D |  |   |    |    | 8  | 8  |    |    |    |    | 5  | 10 |    |    |   |    |   |  |
| E |  |   |    | 7  |    |    |    |    | 12 |    |    | 3  |    |    | 9 |    |   |  |
| F |  |   |    |    |    |    | 6  |    |    |    | 2  | 1  |    |    |   | 1  |   |  |
| G |  |   |    | 2  |    |    | 15 | 8  |    | 9  |    |    |    |    | 1 |    |   |  |
| H |  |   | 11 |    | 18 | 1  | 16 | 9  |    | 12 |    |    |    |    |   | 15 | 3 |  |
| I |  |   |    |    |    | 7  |    |    |    | 7  | 7  |    | 17 |    |   |    |   |  |
| J |  |   | 2  | 13 |    | 9  |    |    |    | 2  |    | 13 |    |    |   |    |   |  |
| K |  |   |    |    |    | 6  | 4  |    |    |    |    | 11 | 4  |    | 7 |    |   |  |
| L |  |   |    | 5  |    | 14 |    | 8  |    | 3  |    |    | 17 | 17 |   |    |   |  |
| M |  | 1 |    | 12 |    |    | 3  |    |    |    |    | 10 |    | 3  |   | 10 |   |  |
| N |  |   | 12 |    | 14 | 4  | 18 |    |    | 5  |    | 9  |    |    |   |    |   |  |
| O |  |   |    |    |    | 8  | 8  |    |    |    |    | 12 |    |    |   |    |   |  |
| P |  |   |    |    | 15 |    |    | 16 |    |    | 2  |    |    |    |   |    |   |  |
| Q |  |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 5  |    |    | 10 |    |   |    |   |  |
| R |  |   |    |    |    |    |    | 18 |    |    | 9  |    |    |    |   |    |   |  |

LETTERBAK  
(IJ = 1 VAK)

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

- A: **Pijpen in de kerk**  
B: **Steeds hetzelfde liedje**  
C: **Het beeld was waarachtig maar de...**  
D: **Zijn moeilijk uit het hoofd te krijgen**  
D: **Zangaanvoerder**

- F: **Het tegenovergestelde van een stilzwijger**  
G: **Bekent kleur in zwart-wit**  
H: **Resultaat van niet-opgeladen (spirituele) batterijen**  
I: **Stemmig meubel**  
J: **Gyprocacteur**  
K: **Spionagevogel**

- L: **Misbruik van versterking**  
M: **Duidt aan hoeveel jaar men reeds stralingsurfer is**  
N: **Houdt doofheid op afstand**  
O: **Expositienatuur**  
P: **'Kedeng-kedeng' of 'kukeluku'**  
Q: **Stemzege<sup>(FR)</sup>**  
R: **Telefonische uithaal<sup>(ENG)</sup>**

OPLOSSINGEN CRYPTO ETC 180: A: Ik-vorm B: Ezelsoren C: Naturalisme D: Kortverhaal E: Rode haring F: Speculatie G: Gemeenplaats H: Raamvertelling I: Karakterontwikkeling J: Bewustzijnsroman K: Hoofdpersonage L: Intertekstualiteit M: Magisch realisme N: Ijsbergtheorie O: Autofictie P: Mise en abyme Q: Hardcover R: Literair S: Verzonnen

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geen catharsis*

ESSAY — MARGOT  
DE GRAVE LOYSON

"Ik kan niet spreken of schrijven  
over femicide en gegenderd geweld  
zonder dat daarin ook mijn affectieve  
'ik' opspeelt, mijn gevoel erin sijpelt,  
mijn lichaam zich opdringt."

*Tien ideeën voor de toekomst  
van de podiumkunsten*

VISIES VOOR HET VELD  
— DRIES DOUBI

"Wat als de hele sector mee  
zou stemmen voor de selectie  
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## *Radio Etcetera* We zijn nog niet uitgepraat



Onze nieuwe podcast *Radio Etcetera* neemt je mee achter de schermen. Hoe komt een nummer van *Etcetera* tot stand? Waarom net deze thema's, nu? Welke ideeën zijn blijven liggen, en welke teksten lokken debat uit?

In *Radio Etcetera* zoomen we in en uit op het nummer met



de redacteurs en auteurs die de editie vormgaven, en polsen we naar reacties van makers, spelers en lezers.

