

# **VOICE and the UNKNOWN**

## **an international vocal performance research symposium**

28 to 30 of January 2019 at Inter Arts Center, Malmö

Selected symposium abstracts:

**GLORIES to NOTHINGNESS** (Elisabeth L. Belgrano & Björn Ross)  
is a performance-installation-act exploring intimate encounters between  
past/presence/future...

This vocal performance installation stages eight performances of music by Luigi Rossi, Claudio Monteverdi and Francesco Saccati. Different events intra-actively set the stage: A vocal reading of a manuscript in Rome around 1640 / a reading of the same musical manuscript in the library of Cardinal Richelieu in Paris after 1640 / vocal readings, performances and recording sessions of the same manuscript in Gothenburg, Paris, Santa Fe, Boston, Seattle, Bloomington, Rome, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Venice between 2001-2017 / artistic research, performances and articulated fragments on vocal madness, lamentation and nothingness part of a PhD project carried out at Univ. of Gothenburg 2006-2011 / reading the volume *Le Glorie Del Niente* (Glories to Nothingness) from 1634, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, 2009-2010 / reading the volume *Le glorie della signora Anna Renzi romana* from 1641, Venice, 2010-ongoing / studies of posthuman and new materialist theories from 2012-ongoing ...

### *PROLOGUE*

On stage a voice appears. Alone. At first. Unaccompanied. Naked. Solo. Vulnerable. Fearful. But there is no such thing as being alone. The act unfolds itself into a poetics carried out by a single voice and all its multiple relations: Ottavia, Deidamia, Maria Eleonora, Renzi, The False Mad, The Un/Know, unexpected stories entangling themselves into every corner of space/time. What vocally appears on stage touches the edge of a pen and little by little differences, colors and shades infiltrate an empty space on-line. What is performed in one event transforms into multiple others. Space/times -where we all become performers in one way or an/other (Barad 2010). <http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/226423/226424>

Ref.

Barad, Karen (2010) Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come, *Derrida Today* 3.2 (2010): 240–268

DOI: 10.3366/E1754850010000813, Edinburgh University Press, [www.eupjournals.com/drt](http://www.eupjournals.com/drt)

## **LESSONS in the SHADOWS of DEATH (Elisabeth Belgrano)**

A performance as A VOCAL LABORATORY IN RELATION TO LIFE AND LIVING.

Part of the larger artistic project with the same title:

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/364135/364136>

This performance will be staged as the opening event of the symposium.

Suggested venue: the old water tower at Pildammsparken.

*“Let us listen to a voice without voice. A voice that tells about sorrow and human disaster. A voice describing the fall of a city, its inhabitants, visitors and intruders. Let us listen to a voice performing what cannot be seen because of eyes being so full of tears. Let us listen to a voice that, without limitations, enters our bodies and minds until nothing else can be voiced. When voice passes its own self, only NOTHING remains. This Nothing is our HOPE. It is in the state of experiencing HOPE that we can live our lives in trust and peace. “*

*Elisabeth Belgrano,  
Kyoto March 2017*

Around 1662/63 Michel Lambert composed his first complete cycle of *Leçons des Ténèbres*. (He completed a second cycle dated 1689.) They were performed in front of the king in Paris at *L’Eglise de Feuillants*. The lessons are a series of *meditations* that from my personal understanding and experience aim at bringing listeners and performer beyond the shadows of death and sorrow into close acts of life and living in itself, allowing for a sensation of wholeness rather than separation between pain, uncertainties and hope. The musical manuscript is coloured by detailed written out vocal ornamentations. I am currently engaged in an artistic research study of these meditative lessons and their vocal ornaments.

Throughout the study I read the score through the philosophical understanding of two concepts: the concept of NOTHINGNESS and the concept of JE-NE-SAIS-QUOI. In the process of performing the musical ornaments I set off on a journey into a certain-something-not-yet-known, that cannot really be described, since the score at first can be viewed as rather ‘irrational’ but at the same time extremely detailed and specific. It is in this spacetime in-between reason and non-reason where I search to translate this wonderful meditative music from the 17<sup>th</sup> century into meaning and sound.

The music featured in this event is one out of nine vocal lessons/meditations being part of Lambert’s manuscript. The event will be documented and made available in the research catalogue database.

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/364135/460352>

## **SWEPT AWAY (Felicia Konrad)**

To be swept away by the power of the Voice is going to be created especially for this occasion. It will be kind of a story, and a meditation instruction for Voice. (Voice Meditation-Installation)

## **LET THE VOICE LEAD (Felicia Konrad)**

This workshop is aiming at creating possibilities for allowing VOICE to lead into the UNKNOWN. Explorations include focused deep listening departing from Pauline Oliveros *Deep Listening* (2005); vocal experimentation with resonance, silence and vibration, departing from the different chakra points.

In our contemporary culture, there is generally a lack of focus on the human voice in an extended timeframe, as well as on the desire of vocal expression. The intention of this workshop is to open up for an intimate and wondrous adventure into the flow of vocality through improvisation and listening. (Workshop)

<http://www.feliciakonrad.se/>

## **PEDAGOGIES of the UNKNOWN (Lisa Nyberg)**

In this presentation, Lisa Nyberg will share some thoughts on her PhD project “Pedagogies of the Unknown” and also treat you to a short guided meditation.

In her research she is looking for pedagogies that can engage with the future in times of crisis. In light of anthropogenic climate change, a global environmental crisis, and its destabilizing impact on social and economic systems, there is an urgency to examine the relation between pedagogy and an unsettling future. How could a pedagogy look like that is open to not knowing, to contingency and change?

At the center of her project is a performance practice that explores the format of guided meditations, drawing from lecture performance and meditation as a quotidian and creative practice. The guided meditations combine traditional elements with interventions that disrupts the anticipated trajectory, allowing for an unsettled storytelling, with the aim of examining how an embodied pedagogy can engage the participants in imagining otherwise.

Simultaneously, the project raises a critique of Western constructs of utopia as the dominant form of imagining otherwise, by looking to feminist and decolonial theory that resists utopian fatalism and claims to universality. The aim is to make a critical shift from utopia towards a constantly changing and undetermined future – the unknown.

<http://www.lisanyberg.net>

## **Visible Darkness — a work in progress (Misha Penton)**

Performance / Installation / Artist Talk

‘...in ‘visible darkness’,  
where always something seemed to be flickering and shimmering...’ —  
Jun’ichirō Tanizaki (356).

In his essay, ‘In Praise of Shadows,’ Jun’ichirō Tanizaki uses the phrase ‘visible darkness,’ embracing a murky interiority ‘...in which ghosts and monsters were active, and indeed was not the woman who lived in it... —was she not of a kind with them?’ In my current

performance practice work-in-progress, I explore inner darkness: the breaking apart and putting-back-together of the self: a (re)remembering and (re)invention of identity / selfhood through an exploration of the voice and body. I liken this process to feminine expressions of the transformative monstrous in Western mythos, such as the iconic images of Medusa or Arachne as well as futuristic technological interventions of the body-machine in cybernetics. These investigations question the stability of self / identity and its subsequent reinvention, with vocality serving as the creative / expressive conduit.

<https://mishapenton.com/>

## **Vital Tones (Julieanna Preston)**

My live art seeks to make the vitality of earthly materials tangibly audible. Voice and gesture are employed to listen to the vibratory energy of materials; to greet them with respect for their own agency, origins and capacities. I have created site-responsive works specific to organic and synthetic materials such as a river, a cliff, boulders, coal, eggs, wool, timber, bitumen, fencing, an ancient city wall, gypsum board and air conditioners.

Each work bore out the affective quality of voice, not as song, but as guttural tones, which pointed to a material's life and plight, and tell a story aurally rather than through verbal language. Consistent amongst these works is a reoccurring sense of grief, sorrow, or lament for a material's (ill) health and well-being.

*Vital Tones* will critically reflect on three videos that amplify the experience of an original performance work in another media, to another audiences. I will contextualise each work in the field(s) of performance/sound theory to highlight the power of sonic works to draw out and disrupt deep-seated emotions towards materials as dead things.

*Aue* (2015) offers an aural lament using my mouth and throat as a likeness for the NZ river's polluted mouth. In an indeterminate and enigmatic water-land-body relationship, it evokes sorrow for water that is not fit for entering, let alone consuming. The words it repeats and mis-speaks are translated from Te Reo Māori as oro (resound, echo, resonate), awa (river, stream), waha (mouth, entrance, voice), wai (song, water, liquid) and aue (cry, howl, wail).

<https://vimeo.com/239165795>

The video *wwwww* (with Joshua Lewis, 2017) recalls a performance at Matiu Island, NZ where I became an embodied sounding instrument charged by the wind to read the fence continuously as long as it took to circumnavigate the quarantine facility. Pitched as an aural weather forecast, the performance's score was informed by techniques of repairing the metal fencing as well as local climatic data. <https://vimeo.com/244252200>

*Erratic Refrains* (with Joshua Lewis, 2018) revisits *RPM hums*, where I sought to syncopate with air conditioning condensers, which, through a transfer of energy, produce airflow via kinetic movement that misaligns brushes, distorts magnets, and expands/contracts copper wire, generate a irritating noise. Tuning to their out-of-round rotations, I quivered and spasmed as a complimentary humming machine. <https://vimeo.com/305808363>

[www.julieannapreston.space](http://www.julieannapreston.space)

## **The otherness of the self - a voce sola in dialogo (Elisabeth Holmertz)**

- **How to connect and disconnect the roles of the Baroque soprano and her postmodern Otherness.**

A singer is a musician who has her instrument with her at all times, who can never leave her instrument or switch to another when the other is tired, old or wrong. If she wants to do different styles, and give voice to different roles and characters, she has to find the changes in her own mind, muscles and vocal chords.

It is an artistic research project is about Roles. I'm investigating how they sound, how are formed inside me and how they interact with each other and with Me. I am searching for the connections and disconnections that light up and muddle the paths between my different singer roles; the baroque soprano, new music, postmodern singer; the singing half god; the young girl in love...

The method is to create a performance on Monteverdi's opera L'Orfeo with myself in all roles. In this presentation I will sing the female roles; Euridice, Messagiera and Proserpina. I will tell and sing the story of the opera from their perspective with their voices, echoed in and inspired by voices in today's music.

How can the idea of the Acting Singer help me find their voices? Can extended vocal techniques be used in 17th music? Can I get help from music written today to find a baroque voice inside me? How different is really my voice when I perform different styles and roles? What happens in my mind those seconds when I go from one character to the other, from one language to the other, from the otherness of myself to the other mess...? Is it there, in those glimpses I find myself?