

# Embodied Voices Research Network



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## Conference Programme

Social Sciences building, University of Warwick

### Day 1. Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April

9:30am Registration and coffee

#### 10am **Keynote 1 (A0.23)**

Ann Cahill and Christine Hamel: *The Embodied Voice as a Site of (In)Justice: Identity, Culture, and Performance*

Chair: Karen Simecek

11:30am

<b>Body in performance (S0.09)</b> Chair: Aurélie Debaene	<b>Ethics and feminism (A0.23)</b> Chair: Jane Boston
Tora Ferner Lange <i>Authentic and personal bodies in interdisciplinary art music performance</i>	Annabel Ali <i>To be (or not to be) Black on stage: Blackness, femininity, and the 'legibility' of bodies in theatre</i>
Kerrie Reading <i>Unveiling the Body: A creative exploration into (re)connecting with the body using performance-based practices</i>	Giulia Mastropietro <i>Speaking Nearby: Claiming Spaces of Voice with Ethical Responsibility</i>
Charlotte Bonneau, Elaine Lillian Joseph and Anna Pakes <i>Voicing the body in audio description of dance</i>	

1 pm lunch

1:45pm – **Performance Lecture (A0.23)**

Nazli Tabatabai-Khatambakhsh: *Conversations with Carmen*

Chair: Toby Young

2:30 pm

<b>Dance and embodiment (S0.09)</b> Chair: Anna Pakes	<b>Inclusivity (A0.23)</b> Chair: Karen Simecek
Alice Marshall Embodied Pain, Authenticity, and Ethics in Performance: Reflections on Tender Steps	Afulodidim Nikefolosi and Brice Catherin (Performance) <i>Solving Diversity</i>
Edyta Kuzian <i>Embodied Meaning in Dance</i>	Jane Boston From logos to embodiment: The sonics of inclusion in the voice studio
Hetty Blades Fungibility, Dance and the Ontological Implications of NFTs	Tony McCaffrey Differentiated Bodies, Dysfluency and Anarchitecture: Questions of Embodied Voices in Learning-Disabled Theatre

4 pm coffee

4:15-5:45pm **Keynote 2 (A0.23)**

Jeanette Bicknell: *Come Together: Group Singing, Violence, and Existential Aesthetics*

Chair: Eileen John

7pm conference dinner (Radcliffe dining hall)

**Day 2. Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April**

**10am Keynote 3 (S0.11)**

Jenny Sealey

Chair: Toby Young

11:30

<b>Ethics and Voice/Voicing (S0.11)</b> Chair: Katharine Jenkins	<b>Authenticity (S0.09)</b> Chair: Kirk Surgener
Anna Helena McLean Voicing Difference and the Listening Act 'Mutuality' as a Framework for Ethical Audience Engagement	Rosa Vince Lying for the Camera: Against the Demand for Authenticity in Pornography

Electa Behrens Do you read me? a provocation on the ethics of voicing and listening as dramaturgical principle	Aur�lie Debaene Lip-syncing, Posing, Fragmented Feminism: Remediation and Re-embodiment in TikTok
Paul Allain Can we (re)possess <i>The Dybbuk</i> ?	Sarah Bell On (not) coming out as crip: performing illness in the dance studio

1pm lunch

1:45 – **Performance Lecture (S0.11)**

Katie Ailes: *Evaluating Embodied Poetics: Towards a New Framework*

Chair: Karen Simecek

2:30

<b>Aesthetic resistance (S0.11)</b> Chair: Ariana Philips-Hutton	<b>Body and emotions (S0.09)</b> Chair: Toby Young
Mahana Narimani (Performance) Censorship and Contemporary Iranian Theatre	Carmen Noheda Undulating the flesh: Embodiment, Desire, and Resistance in Roc�o Molina's <i>Carnaci�n</i> (2022)
Gabriel D�az Voicing Chile's 2019 Social Uprising Through Medium	Zeynep B��ra Eldem Whose Voice Is Heard? Existentialist Traces in Olga Neuwirth's <i>American Lulu</i>
Katharine Jenkins 'Reparative Staging' as a response to racist/sexist canonical operas: the case of <i>Turandot</i>	Eleanor Russell The Carly Rae Jepsen Cinematic Universe: CRJ, <i>Hellraiser</i> , and All That We Can Do With This Emotion

4pm coffee

4:15 – **Keynote 4 (S0.11)**

David Davies: *What's ineffable and why?*

Chair: Karen Simecek

5:45 Close



**Arts and  
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## Abstracts

### Day 1. Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April

#### 10am-11:30 Keynote 1 (A0.23)

**Ann Cahill and Christine Hamel: *The Embodied Voice as a Site of (In)Justice: Identity, Culture, and Performance***

This presentation will explore some of the central ideas developed in our book *Sounding Bodies: Identity, Injustice, and the Voice* (2021). We will present a conceptualization of the body (and therefore of the embodied voice) as socially and politically meaningful and central to both human existence and to ever-developing senses of the self, in contrast to a Western metaphysics that approaches embodiment as a foundational layer prior to social and political forces. We will then explore our notion of intervocality, which grounds the embodied voice in relationality and materiality, thus establishing it as a site of intense political and social relevance. Intervocality, we argue, does not contradict the fact or experience of vocal identity, but instead allows for the role of social membership in identity formation to be more clearly and persistently recognized. That recognition plays a central role in developing a model of vocal justice that emphasizes the ethical importance of the presence of the receiving body to the proliferation of vocal possibilities and the mitigation of harms imposed by structural inequalities such as racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, and cisnormativity. Finally, we gesture briefly to our new essay that addresses the voice's crucial connection to both the expression and experience of emotion, arguing that emotion is itself shaped by social and political forces. By centering the constructed theory of emotion and the key role of culture in the course that emotions run through the voice and body, we suggest new models for performance training that are culturally nuanced and resist a universalizing of the embodied experience of feeling and its expression.

#### 11:30-1pm Body in performance (S0.09)

**Tora Ferner Lange: *Authentic and personal bodies in interdisciplinary art music performance***

This presentation is based on an ethnographic study of the creation and rehearsal process of a multimodal art music piece by composer Jennifer Walshe, accordionist Andreas Borregaard, and the contemporary music ensemble Oslo Sinfonietta in 2021. Focusing on how bodily authenticity and personal identity are negotiated within such performative musical contexts, the presentation also incorporates insights from audience members through a focus group discussion. The presentation explores how corporeal authenticity and identity are enacted and perceived and examines the perspectives of all participants.

The study highlights how interdisciplinary practices in contemporary art music challenge traditional notions of music as a disembodied art form, emphasizing the presence of performing bodies as integral to the musical experience. It reveals tensions between the practitioners regarding personal expression and performative conventions, based in different traditions and ideologies of stage embodiment.

The research examines the complex interplay between composer intentions, performer agency, and audience perceptions, raising questions about authorship and authenticity in

contemporary music practices. Audience members in the New Music field perceive in this piece the performers' movements as extensions of the composer's artistic creation, illustrating how performance context influences perceptions of identity and authenticity.

The study invites further exploration of these dynamics and their impact on understanding the status of the performing body in contemporary art music performance practices. By examining how notions of bodily authenticity and personal identity are negotiated, the research contributes to a broader understanding of the role of the performing body in multimodal contemporary art music and its ability to challenge and redefine existing conventions.

**Kerrie Reading: *Unveiling the Body: A creative exploration into (re)connecting with the body using performance-based practices***

This paper explores early-stage research investigating the dynamics between public and private spaces in performance-making, with a particular focus on how these contexts influence my relationship with my body. I examine both domains to consider whether embodying practices during the creation of performance has an immediate, embodied impact—or whether transformation only becomes possible through the act of being witnessed.

Central to this inquiry is the development of a methodology that may later be shared with women who have experienced sexual trauma, with the aim of supporting them in repairing potentially fractured relationships with their own bodies.

To frame this exploration, I draw on autobiographical performance (Heddon, 2008) and autoethnographic methods (Spry, 2001/2003) as internal lenses through which to interrogate both lived experience and the broader politics that shape such work. As Heddon reminds us, 'As feminists have taught us, there is nothing "indifferent" to the body. The body is also a place' (Heddon, 2008, p.15).

**Charlotte Bonneau, Elaine Lillian Joseph and Anna Pakes: *Voicing the body in audio description of dance***

Audio description (AD) is a spoken word practice which seeks to make the visual content of a performance event accessible to blind and partially sighted audiences. Dance and physical theatre pose specific audio description challenges in so far as they are typically centred on non-verbal action and kinaesthetic response. Our presentation considers Soundscribe's audio description of *Impact Driver*, a work choreographed by Eve Stainton and collaborators in 2023, which explores and celebrates queer identities and sexuality. We examine the process of creating the AD for this work and explore some ethical questions this process raises: specifically, how do the describers' own identities shape perception and mediation of a performance event? Who gets to (in the sense of both who *does* and who *should*) audio describe? We argue that lived experience of (in this case, queer) identity is an important facet of the variegated expertise required to audio describe works which themselves emerge from such experience. We contend that, like other translators, the audio describer has various loyalties and obligations: remediation involves prioritisation of these obligations and therefore position-taking, which challenges received views about the describer/translator's neutrality or objectivity. Given the persistence of such views and the prevalence of pragmatism over ethics in

choices about who audio describes, broader structural change is likely needed to acknowledge the importance of describers voicing their own embodied experience through AD.

## 11:30-1pm Ethics and feminism (A0.23)

### **Annabel Ali: *To be (or not to be) Black on stage: Blackness, femininity, and the ‘legibility’ of bodies in theatre***

The presence of a body on stage, locked in performance, serves as a device to expand meaning, not only of the text being performed, or the character being embodied, but of the body of the actor themselves. Current concerns and anxieties surrounding ‘race-swapping’ and ‘rewriting history’ on stage throws light upon the ways in which the racialised body is ‘shaped’ to play a role. This paper considers the material and discursive histories associated with Blackness and womanhood that ‘script’ the appearances of and provide interpretative potential to bodies on stage. Touching on the ways in which the orientation of bodies around whiteness lays out the limits of the very definition of what is considered ‘human’, the paper will also think through the ways in which Black female bodies are often seen as foreign, dangerous, and challenging and threatening the boundaries of what defines the human—whether this be in relation to animal imagery or, as Matthieu Chapman and Joshua Kelly argue, the figure of the witch. I will also consider the history of ‘sight-reading’ race on stage, taking and reworking Chapman and Kelly’s theories on visual dog-whistling to explore how race and gender are ‘coded’ in specific ways that appeal to specific biases, before considering whether there is scope for these codes to be re-written, re-scripted, or re-interpreted.

### **Giulia Mastropietro: *Speaking Nearby: Claiming Spaces of Voice with Ethical Responsibility***

Borrowing from Trinh T. Minh-ha’s concept of *speaking nearby*, this presentation explores the ethical implications of voice, silence, and representation within contemporary performance practices. Challenging the Western ethnographic gaze and its extractive logics, I reflect on how “voicelessness” is often framed as a personal deficit rather than as the result of structural systems of power—sexism, racism, classism, ableism, and heteronormativity.

Framing the voice as intersectional and never neutral, I interrogate the politics of listening: who is heard, and who remains “preferably unheard”? Can we truly *give voice* to those who already possess it, though systematically silenced?

Focusing on the transnational project *Personal Accounts* by South African artist Gabrielle Goliath, I analyse how the removal of spoken language operates not as erasure, but as a radical gesture of care and resistance. Through the testimony of Deinde Falase—an exiled Nigerian journalist and queer asylum seeker—Goliath displaces narrative closure and foregrounds paralinguistic utterances (breaths, sighs, silences), invoking what Édouard Glissant calls the *right to opacity*. This refusal of transparency resists voyeurism, the commodification of trauma, and the extractive tendencies of “hungry listening.”

Drawing on the work of Sara Ahmed, Judith Butler, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Lauren Berlant, I propose a framework for understanding how performance can enact alternative modes of witnessing—resisting both legibility and appropriation. Rather than translating pain into

coherent narratives, these practices call for an ethics of listening that honors singularity, opacity, and the irreducible presence of lives deemed ungrievable.

## 1:45-2:30 Performance lecture (A0.23)

### **Nazli Tabatabai-Khatambakhsh: *Conversations with Carmen***

This performance-lecture keynote reanimates the operatic figure of Carmen through an epistolary structure unfolding between Nazli, a fictional feminist librettist, and Carmen, reconstituted as a fugitive text. *Conversations with Carmen* is part lecture, part lament, and part invocation—a redacted feminist text and score composed through citation, breath, and refusal.

Staged through spoken projected erasures, sonic fragments, and live narration, the lecture probes the politics of redaction, archival violence, and speculative dramaturgy within diasporic feminist art-making. Drawing on the works of Afsaneh Najmabadi, Sara Ahmed, Audre Lorde, Donna Haraway, and Forough Farrokhzad, the piece situates the “unwritten libretto” as a space of critical resistance, where redaction is not absence but affect, and citation becomes method and shield.

Through letters that are at once personal, theoretical, and performative, the work meditates on themes of surveillance, censorship, desire, and revolutionary imagination. It responds to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement not as subject but as score—an aesthetic and political grammar of refusal.

The performance asks: What does it mean to write from within silencing structures? What dramaturgies emerge from what is withheld? What if the pause, the glitch, the erased name is the real aria?

*Conversations with Carmen* is both an offering and a challenge: to re-hear freedom not as anthem, but as interruption; not as conclusion, but as a compositional breach. If you are the bird that cannot sing the aria, perform the pause.

## 2:30 - 4pm Dance and Embodiment (S0.09)

### **Alice Marshall: *Embodied Pain, Authenticity, and Ethics in Performance: Reflections on Tender Steps***

In *Tender Steps*, a dance-for-film exploring baby loss, I examine how lived experience shapes performance and meaning-making. Rooted in my own grief, the piece reflects how embodiment carries emotional and cultural weight. My body, having endured this loss, became the primary site of storytelling—where each gesture and stillness arose from personal memory. This authenticity, I argue, cannot be replicated by another performer, as it stems from the unique intersection of emotional, physical, and narrative truths.

However, this approach raises critical ethical questions. While lived experience can deepen resonance, it also risks re-traumatisation. The creative process was emotionally taxing, revealing the need for supportive frameworks when working with embodied trauma. Asking performers without direct experience to embody such pain can feel ethically fraught, potentially reducing complex realities to performance.

Through this presentation, I explore how we can support artists in navigating the demands of personal storytelling. Practices like building a compassionate team, incorporating therapeutic tools, and normalising vulnerability are essential. *Tender Steps* thus serves as both a personal case study and a broader inquiry into authenticity, ethics, and care in performance. How do we honour lived experience without harm, and what responsibilities do we carry as creators of embodied narratives?

### **Edyta Kuzian: *Embodied Meaning in Dance***

The aim of my presentation is to articulate the meaning manifest in contemporary dance. I develop an account of what I call *aesthetic bodily intentionality*, which I argue is non-goal oriented bodily movement. I clarify the basic notion of bodily intentionality through Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. For Merleau-Ponty, bodily intentionality is essentially non-representational—we exhibit sensitivity to the environment without representing it or using concepts. While I endorse this account of the body as non-representational conception of the body, I argue that Merleau-Ponty's framework is ultimately limited. Specifically, he mostly restricts his consideration of bodily intentionality to the kinds of bodily movements involved in task-fulfilment. I further argue that this restriction leaves him unable to account for purposeful but non-goal oriented spontaneous movements, such as that manifest in dance, children's play, and gestures. In the second section I develop the framework in which to appreciate the non-goal oriented movement as artful. For this purpose I refer to Immanuel Kant's notion of judgments of taste, which demand that in appreciating beauty, we ought to view it as purposive without purpose. The main idea behind the aesthetic model of bodily intentionality is to view bodily movement as capable of being artful in just this way, as serving no instrumental purpose, yet as meaningful. In the final section of the paper, I argue that the normative aesthetic force of the body in dance is a *sui generis* manifestation of a non-categorizable intelligibility. To support this idea with examples I turn to contemporary dance choreography, which draws on spontaneous bodily movement as an inexhaustible source of meaning.

### **Hetty Blades: *Fungibility, Dance and the Ontological Implications of NFTs***

The ownership of dance has garnered much critical attention in legal, academic and media contexts in recent years. Practices in the area of social media dance have raised important questions about the ethics of copying dances, in particular when dances created by Black choreographers are re-embodied by white dancers without credit (Aldape Muñoz 2023; Boffone 2021; Davis 2022; Johnson 202). The lack of acknowledgment of Black artists on sites such as TikTok has resulted in calls to recognise the 'non-fungibility' of dances created by Black choreographers (Aldape Muñoz 2023; Davis 2022). One mechanism that is being explored by artists and scholars is the use of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) to 'mint' dances (Aldape Muñoz 2023, Skybetter 2022). Dance is often considered a 'multiple' art form, meaning that works can have many different performances or 'instances' (Davies 2024: 21). Multiple art forms are generally considered different to 'singular' artforms for which a "strict instance" of a work only occurs via a single entity (Davies 2024: 21). The minting of a dance with a NFT appears to create a unique or 'singular' version of that dance (Aldape Muñoz 2023: 228). Drawing on existing work on NFTs (Aldape Muñoz 2023, Caldarola 2022, Skybetter 2022) and multiple art forms (Davies



2024), this paper explores how we might therefore understand the ontology of dances minted by NFTs.

## 2:30-4pm Inclusivity (A0.23)

### **Afulodidim Nikefolosi and Brice Catherin (Performance): *Solving Diversity***

We are Afulodidim Nikefolosi, a Zambian decolonial and postcolonial scholar and artist, and Dr. Brice Catherin, a French performance artist and art scholar. Our aim in writing and performing this piece *Solving Diversity* was, as the co-writers/performers, to enact art as therapy and to illuminate the embodied experience of being a young black woman in a white-dominated space. The performance deals with questions around representation, minoritised voices and race politics, not only on stage, but also in re-telling of experiences of everyday life.

*Solving Diversity*, like most of our collaborations, attempts to move major contemporary issues such as decolonisation, feminism, artificial intelligence, climate collapse and transhumanism into the realms of fiction and humour. Like Chinua Achebe before us, we believe that fiction and humour are essential tools for spreading ideas and a certain (counter-)morality, by touching people's hearts more intimately. Humour also allows us to laugh with desperate joy at the atrocious world that globalised commercial society imposes on us more aggressively every day, and to break taboos.

### **Jane Boston: *From logos to embodiment: The sonics of inclusion in the voice studio***

An inclusive re-positioned vocal praxis in the twenty-first actor training studio, places the sonics of the speaker at the centre. By so doing, the ideologies of social exclusion are challenged, and the privileged assumptions reproduced in logocentric studio-based voice practice are de-centred.

Student-led co-constructed sonic awareness enables the vocal subject to better evolve expressivity on their own terms. It also stands in marked contrast to the praxis that foregrounds and privileges trainer knowledge at the expense of sensory intersubjective exploration that are led by the infinite qualities of the voice itself.

I suggest that a framework that is critical and transparent about voice makes the training offer more inclusive and accessible; it gives greater agency to the protagonists involved, and fosters questions that are revelatory about the proxemic, temporal and textual qualities in individual vocal sonics. I briefly examine the terms for a praxical framework in the voice training studio that, in its privileging of intersubjective embodied sensation, poses a theoretical challenge to the domination of logos. Its pedagogical design, instead, invites multiple ways to access the thought, the felt, the sensed and the imagined so that the speaker's autonomy is re-centred, and the ensuing vocal expressivity can be said to have been individually 'authenticated'.

**Tony McCaffrey: *Differentiated Bodies, Dysfluency and Anarchitecture: Questions of Embodied Voices in Learning-Disabled Theatre.***

My own lived experience of twenty years' researching and making theatre alongside the learning-disabled artists of Different Light Theatre tells me that presenting the embodied voices of the performers is not a clear, untroubled process of the transmission of some pre-linguistic lived experience into theatrical expression. World renowned Back to Back Theatre from Geelong, Australia, over a number of years have developed a range of strategies in order to afford and to question the emergence of diverse embodied voices in learning disabled theatre. This project comprises nothing less than a radical reconsideration of what constitutes the vocal and physical presence of the actors, and by implication, all actors.

I will be considering three specific examples of different kinds of disability performance and three different approaches to analysis. Firstly, that of disabled artist and performance scholar Felipe Monteiro for whom the presence of his own 'differentiated body' – 'atrophied by progressive spinal amyotrophy' - confronts the audience with vulnerability, their own included. Secondly, Joshua Saint Pierre's concept of 'dysfluency', grounded in his own experience of stammering, as a re-examination of the aesthetic and social potential of diversity in the articulation of words and the turn-taking of rhetoric in public and theatrical communication. Finally, I will be drawing on the recent re-appropriation by Jack Halberstam of work by Gordon Matta-Clark and the 'anarchitecture' art collective of the 1970s to reimagine and reconsider trans embodiment as 'not figure but ground, not body but landscape, not building but demolition site.' I will seek to re-apply Halberstam's use of anarchitecture as a kind of theoretical and practical framework within which to deconstruct binaries of 'disabled' and 'non-disabled' in the embodied voices of (learning)-disabled performance.

#### **4:15-5:45pm Keynote 2 (A0.23)**

**Jeanette Bicknell Come Together: *Group Singing, Violence, and Existential Aesthetics***

In this talk I consider the forcible control of group singing within the context of existential aesthetics. I consider three historical examples of singing that was forcibly or violently controlled – either through imposed performance or through enforced prohibition: the suppression in the twentieth century of Inuit throat singing by the Canadian government and religious authorities; both the prohibition of group singing and the coerced singing of enslaved persons in the antebellum American south; and the violent control of music and singing in concentration camps during the Holocaust. Considering the existential implications of group singing should give us a richer and deeper understanding of this important cultural and artistic practice. A second aim of my talk is to address a current gap in philosophical aesthetics and discuss the potential existential significance of art for groups as well as individuals.

**Day 2. Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April**

**10-11:30am Keynote 3 (S0.11)**

**Jenny Sealey**

**11:30-1pm Ethics and Voice/Voicing (S0.11)**

**Anna Helena McLean: *Voicing Difference and the Listening Act 'Mutuality' as a Framework for Ethical Audience Engagement***

Contemporary performance is undergoing an ethical reckoning. This research emerges at the intersection of contemporary feminist theory, embodied practice, and personal experience to ask: how might we reimagine listening - not as passive reception, but as an active, ethical, and mutual act?

Grounded in doctoral research at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, the study interrogates a legacy of hierarchical training inherited from the Polish laboratory theatre tradition. My early work with Gardzienice revealed how performance lineages can obscure dynamics of power, gender, and voice. Revisiting this training through a feminist critical lens, the research reimagines Mutuality (a lab method rooted in the Polish word *wzajemność*, or 'togetherness') as a critically reimagined framework for repositioning the performer in practice and performance.

Developed over six years and across six performance-based case studies - with Black, trans, and neurodiverse artists - the project disrupts conventional reception norms, foregrounding listening as an embodied, situated, and politicised act.

A narrative thread in the research is Virginia Woolf - not only a literary icon of early white feminism - but also a dramaturgical device for locating the self in practice. In one core project, *A Voice Lesson*, I was deliberately cast as a contemporary Woolf (renamed Orla). This casting both enabled and unsettled the research, confronting me with questions of complicity and responsibility as a teacher, director, and listener. The echo of *Orlando* - Woolf's gender-shifting time-traveller - offered a dramaturgical structure through which to explore transformation, fluid identity, and systems change from early 20th-century lab theatre, through #MeToo, to now.

Drawing on the work of Sara Ahmed, Rosi Braidotti, and Virginie Magnat, the research foregrounds four interdependent modalities of ethical listening: Intentionality, Presence, Embodied Listening, and Transdisciplinary Fluency. These are not linear steps but onto-epistemological dispositions - ethical tools for cultivating mutual encounters between performer and audience. Together, they underpin the development of the Integrated Physiovocality (IPV) Toolkit: a six-stage resource for actors, offering practical, critically-informed strategies for ethical engagement in contemporary performance-making in the UK.

This 22-minute presentation shares key findings from the thesis, drawing on performance fragments and inviting the audience into a live dialogue around voice, reception, and responsibility. An accessible print version of this talk and accompanying slides are available in advance or on request. Please email [anna.mclean@stu.gsmd.ac.uk](mailto:anna.mclean@stu.gsmd.ac.uk) or speak to me at the conference to receive it in your preferred format.

**Electa Behrens: *Do you read me? a provocation on the ethics of voicing and listening as dramaturgical principle***

*Listening', is often considered a key aspect of both theatre and life.*

*What if we consider listening*

*As ethical necessity - but also impossible?*

*If I invite the possibility that you will misread me - I will misread you,*

*Even if we listen/speak with an 'authentic voice'...*

*Can we understand 'listening' as partial, temporal and layered - and exactly because of its imperfection, a key tool for exploring ways to miss/meet others in resonance and dissonance?*

This presentation considers 'what happens' when texts and bodies (both human and non-human) 'become one' in a performative moment. What is at stake in the slippage between merging materialities and how is the listener/audience an active participant? How might vocal strategies which intentionally resist integration, such as glitching, hesitation, code-switching, multilingualism and decomposition make space for a text/body to remain in a process of becoming rather than a representation of singular truth? How might this manifest the politics of voice in the physiological act of voicing? How does 'embodiment' extend beyond the body? This work is in development at the Norwegian Theatre Academy and through dialogues with colleagues in the postfeminist Grotowskian diaspora. It unpacks 'voice method as dramaturgical practice': voice is always time-based and relational –about sound bouncing off and transforming because of - a wall, person, community, worldview. Listening scores, aural diversity, exercises of vocal hybridity will be methods explored. I will examine how constructing dramaturgies of listening, both in exercises and in performance dramaturgy, can invite audiences and performers to 'slow down' their own ears, stumble on their assumptions and potentially open up for unfolding ways of being heard.

*The presentation may include some participatory invitations and video.*

**Paul Allain: *Can we (re)possess The Dybbuk?***

In 1992 I was Movement Director for a production of Solomon An-sky's play *The Dybbuk* (1913-16) directed by Katie Mitchell at the RSC. The play is about a community of Orthodox Jews in Ukraine in which the daughter of a rich Rabbi is possessed by a dybbuk. It was based on extensive fieldwork conducted by An-sky and a team of ethnographers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in what is now Ukraine. Our production, performed with a cast of 24 including musicians for a Klezmer band followed An-Sky's own interests by attempting to create a realist version. The process included various representatives of and experts from the Jewish community in London as well as fieldwork in Ukraine. Rabbi Rabinowicz loaned religious artefacts and clothes for the production. My role of Movement Director was vital for creating the sense of a community; building the ensemble; for helping the actors enact ritual and religious practices as well as embody the cultural and historical 'world of the play' including a wedding dance; and most importantly, for the possession of Leah itself. In the process, I drew on my extensive practice with Polish theatre company Gardzienice Theatre Association, who used in their own training some aspects of Jewish culture, such as Hasidic spinning and songs. My paper will examine aspects of the rehearsal to reflect on our attempt to create an authentic

experience, historically and culturally. How did we attempt to embody, rather than represent, trying to avoid stereotypical portrayals? It will ask what the implications are for staging such a production in 2025. Can we (re)possess *The Dybbuk*?

## 11:30-1pm authenticity (S0.09)

### **Rosa Vince: *Lying for the Camera: Against the Demand for Authenticity in Pornography***

We see demands for more 'authentic' sexual material from anti-pornography feminists, feminist pornographers, and feminist pornography audiences. I argue that these demands cannot help us realise feminist goals and may do more harm than good. There are a few reasons that 'authenticity' in pornography might seem appealing. First, one might think that most pornography gives an unrealistic picture of what women really want, such that audiences learn various kinds of bad behaviour from it. If porn were more 'authentic', perhaps viewers could learn the truth about what women really want. Second, 'authentic' pornography might involve performers doing sex acts that they really desire to be doing, with people they really want to be doing them with. One might think that worries about exploitation in the creation of pornography could be alleviated if performers were encouraged to act on their own desires. I argue that calls for authenticity based on the kinds of considerations above are misguided. First, I show that 'authenticity' does not track the wellbeing of pornography performers. Attempting to capture sexual activity arising from workers' real expression of their desires may raise more worries about exploitation, rather than fewer, as the workers are asked to give their employers much more than it is fair to demand. Second, I argue trying to capture 'what women really want' is a hopeless endeavour. Women's tastes differ, and there are no sex acts that all women like. Further, even if pornography does mislead audiences about what women want, it's not clear why that would be a problem on its own. The kinds of bad behaviour that we, as feminists, are concerned about, do not seem to be causally connected to lies about women's tastes. Authenticity is a red herring.

### **Aurelie Debaene: *Lip-syncing, Posing, Fragmented Feminism: Remediation and Re-embodiment in TikTok***

I consider the rise of a re-embodied, fragmented feminism by means of short form online videos on TikTok, rooted in collectively determined 'formats', modes of arranging and remediating audiovisual fragments into aesthetically grounded videos which invite further remediation. I first explore feminist philosophy and art historical considerations relation to the treatment and representation of women. Second, I trace how embodiment and indeed posing are key to engaging with these audiovisual fragments. Third, I argue for the re-embodiment of voice as a crucial feature, analysing the use of lip-syncing to re-embody and critique ideas. Fourth, I discuss aesthetic appropriation and where a risk of misrepresentation, assimilation or flattened experience may occur. The philosophical consideration of these cases explores their didactic and aesthetic value in how they achieve a deeper understanding of feminist ideas and formulate a next participatory step in a long art historical iconographic tradition respectively.

### **Sarah Bell: *On (not) coming out as crip: performing illness in the dance studio***

Interrogating the moment when a ((semi) fictional (or not)) disabled dance student decides to sit out of an exercise, and – aware of how her (apparently able) body will be read as she makes her way to sit at the side of the room – makes the decision to exaggerate her limp, this paper dives into the ambiguities of finding oneself ‘performing’ what one is (but does not seem to be).

Revelling in the absurd logic of the student who not only fakes a limp, but fakes hiding it, this paper takes up Robert McRuer’s concept of ‘coming out crip’ – that is, the dual idea of coming out as what one already is, but also what one is (apparently) not – deploying it as a vehicle for thinking through the tensions that emerge in the ways the unwell body, as a non-visibly disabled body, is not just read and received, but is actively *performed* in the context of the dance teaching studio.

Reading this moment in relation to Lacan’s and Derrida’s respective interpretations of the feigned faint, this paper considers what the (failed) performance of disability means in a context where the take up of a subject position in the teaching space is contingent upon, not just linguistic, but corporeal intelligibility. In doing so, I thus explore questions of disclosure, perceived commitment to one’s art, and the tensions at play when the performance of disability is deployed as a survival strategy in the context of a practice that not only artistically and politically valorises authenticity, but where the intelligibility of the body is at stake in the internal logic of the practice itself.

## 1:45 –2:30 Performance Lecture (S0.11)

### **Katie Ailes: *Evaluating Embodied Poetics: Towards a New Framework***

Over the past few years, several prominent UK poetry prizes have opened new categories for spoken word and poetry in performance (i.e. the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem Performed). This welcome inclusion provides both an opportunity and a challenge: how do competitions designed for print-based poetics adapt to include embodied poetics?

When the visible and audible presence of the poet’s body in a video submission nullifies the potential for anonymity, how can objectivity be considered in the judging process? Is it more fair to require poets to submit recordings of live performances, to allow to-camera self-tapes (with the potential to re-record), or to compare both in the judging process? And how should the quality of the text and the quality of the performance be weighted against each other (if even possible to gauge separately)?

This presentation builds upon a workshop facilitated through the Embodied Voices network last year which collaboratively explored key factors in evaluating embodied poetics with the aim of developing practical guidance for embodied poetry prizes. In working towards this new critical framework, this research asserts the importance of developing genre-specific assessment criteria for performed poetry which recognises the centrality of embodiment to this art form.

## 2:30-4pm Aesthetic resistance (S0.11)

### **Mahana Narimani (Performance): *Censorship and Contemporary Iranian Theatre***

In this practice research, I investigate the mechanisms of censorship in Iranian theatre following the 1979 Revolution. My focus is on the impact of censorship on theatre practitioners,

particularly women, and the strategies they employ to navigate and challenge various forms of censorship imposed by different institutions at different times. This research will explore how the daily lives of artists and their professional identities are intricately intertwined, with their bodies profoundly shaped and defined by the boundaries imposed by both internal and external forces, including censorship. The study will explicitly address the impact of constraints on the artist's body and will investigate how these bodies are manifested on stage and how the dynamic between artists and the censor further shapes and defines these performances.

### **Gabriel Díaz: *Voicing Chile's 2019 Social Uprising Through Medium***

This presentation explores how postmigrant *testimonios* in performance can mobilise both individual and collective forms of agency. I argue that *testimonios* on stage can serve as vehicles of memory in contexts of political crisis, while also raising ethical questions concerning representation, mediation, and authenticity. I will ground this discussion in *Medium*, a play I have co-created and performed in since 2020. The piece confronts the challenge of bearing witness to the 2019 Chilean social uprising from a position of distance. Through an analysis of two key scenes, I will show how *Medium* engages with voices rooted in the territory—not by representing events from afar, but by staging conditions that allow these testimonial narratives to emerge, be heard, and be held in their complexity.

### **Katharine Jenkins: *'Reparative Staging' as a response to racist/sexist canonical operas: the case of Turandot***

This paper offers a philosophical contribution to ongoing attempts to reckon with the apparently sexist and racist nature of many canonical operas, using the case study of Puccini's *Turandot*. I outline a possible response to apparently racist and sexist operas that, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of 'reparative reading', I call 'reparative staging'. This consists of creating a production of an opera that exploits the existing features of the score and libretto to offer an anti-oppressive and hopeful version of the story. I briefly illustrate this technique through discussing how it could be applied to *Turandot* to reconfigure prima facie sexist elements of the opera into powerful critiques of rape culture. I argue that reparative staging has significant power to prevent the harms that people rightly worry may result from performing racist and sexist operas; that it need not come at an artistic cost; and that it is available in some surprising cases. My discussion also demonstrates that the philosophical literature on responding to morally troubling art is enriched by paying attention to 'works for performance' (artworks – such as operas – that are intended to be performed on multiple occasions).

## **2:30-4pm Body and emotions (S0.09)**

### **Carmen Noheda *Undulating the flesh: Embodiment, Desire, and Resistance in Rocío Molina's Carnación (2022)***

This proposal explores Rocío Molina's *Carnación* (2022), a flamenco performance that delves into the intersections of corporeality, identity, and voice, as a case study to address central questions about embodiment in the performing arts. Molina's work deconstructs traditional



flamenco by embracing an experimental approach to movement, voice, and the materiality of the body, thereby finding another form of pleasure in pushing her body to the limit.

### **Zeynep Büşra Eldem: Whose Voice Is Heard? Existentialist Traces in Olga Neuwirth's *American Lulu***

Alban Berg's incomplete opera, *Lulu*, has inspired several reinterpretations, among them is Olga Neuwirth's music theater *American Lulu* (2006-2012), in which the composer reimagines Berg's opera within the context of Civil Rights Movement, directing our attention to the subjects of racial discrimination and social injustice. By recasting the White queer characters, Lulu and Countess Geschwitz -in Neuwirth's adaptation "Eleanor"- as African Americans, the composer presents an intersectional approach to race, gender, and sexuality. In her portrayal of the subjugated characters, Lulu and Geschwitz, as emancipated subjects, Neuwirth advocates for agency, a perspective examined through the lens of Sartre's existentialism and de Beauvoir's concept of the Other. *American Lulu* explores Black self-determination through the figure of Eleanor, who evokes the Sartrean notion of "for-itself", contrasting with the portrayal of "white-masked" Lulu, representing inauthenticity. This dichotomy is reflected in the distinct musical expressions of the two characters: While Lulu's European musical language, echoing Berg, evokes "in-itself" as a symbol of the character's immanent nature, Eleanor's music, reminiscent of 1970s soul, is identified with her Blackness, hinting at her authenticity. In *American Lulu*, Neuwirth navigates Black liberation with an attitude that fosters courage. However, the composer's engagement with race contains certain problematic aspects, one of which is the romanticization of the Black experience.

### **Eleanor Russell The Carly Rae Jepsen Cinematic Universe: CRJ, *Hellraiser*, and All That We Can Do With This Emotion**

In this paper, I theorize the relationship between the recorded voice, looping, and the pleasures of repetition in the act of listening to the Canadian popular music artist and performer Carly Rae Jepsen. Deploying a varied and always playful methodology that combines close listening analysis, speech act theory, and feminist media theory, I identify the ways in which Jepsen as a celebrity, cultural signifier, and performer, enables the politics and pleasures of repetition as a performative category in popular music. This methodology and my theoretical contribution are in dialogue with scholarship from, namely, Amber Musser, Daphne Brooks, and Robin James. In addition, however, this project also draws from queer theory and cinema studies, as the ultimate relationship I argue that Jepsen's vocal performativity, sonic affect, looping, and repetition stage, however, is a similar investment in corporeality and libidinal transgressions exemplified by the multidisciplinary artist Clive Barker; specifically, the first two movies of the *Hellraiser* franchise (1987 and 1988). Roland Barthes' work will figure prominently in this queer analysis that wields sonic performance theory to Jepsen's specific performativity—and theatricality.

### **4:15 – 5:45 Keynote 4 (S0.11)**

**David Davies: *What's ineffable and why?***