

CONSONANCE

ERMIS CHRISTODOULOU

TRANS-MISSION:

VISUALIZING AND IMAGINEERING
A TRANSGENDER VOICE



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TRANS-MISSION:

**VISUALIZING AND
IMAGINEERING A
TRANSGENDER VOICE**

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MA PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

A Thesis presented by Ermis Christodoulou to Master Performance Practices,
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SYNOPSIS

trans-mission: visualizing and imagineering of a trans-gender voice is the title of an ongoing artistic research situated in the intersection of Feminist and Queer Theory, Phenomenology and New Materialisms. The dissertation project facilitates art and science's possible collaborations around the invisible object-voice, as a means to explore the entanglement of matter and meaning, and more specifically the interdependence of the material voice with the technology of gender.

The research derives from the acknowledgment of the gendered logic of the voice, my own transgender experience in relation to it, and the observation that within performance practices there is a gap regarding how a transgender voice is being represented, often giving in to binary-based understandings. Through an autoethnographic approach, literature reviews and practice-as-research, this philosophical, material, and artistic inquiry exposes and deconstructs the vocal gender normativity through the process of visualization, based on the physics of cymatics. Doing so aims to expand the theoretical and practical imagination on voice's perception beyond fixed identity definitions, and to suggest an imagineering of the vocal materiality that renders voice something more than a simple signifier of gender.

The present thesis offers the theoretical foundations and my conceptual and creative methods of working with the voice. Drawing from the process of making my performance work, I propose principles for thinking and practicing voice on stage, hoping to inform performance practices towards disparate discourses and applications of the material voice.

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To acknowledge is to disclose knowledge of something. The act of acknowledgment discloses invisible, yet very pragmatic and materialized, streams of knowledge. Knowledge that varies in form and can take the shape of (artistic) feedback, academic references, theoretical input, lectures, workshops, residencies, online meetings, late-night conversations, long walks, hugs, tears, lets-eat-togethers, wild bodies, music playlists, dances and so forth. To acknowledge is not to forget, to preserve in memory and to honor those who offered their knowledge, time and support.

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Ermis

Arnhem, June 2023

DECLARATION

I, Ermis Christodoulou, hereby certify that I have personally carried out the work depicted in the thesis entitled, 'transmission: visualizing and imagineering of a transgender voice'.

No part of the thesis has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma prior to this date.

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INTRODUCTION

The present thesis summarizes how I have been thinking-theorizing-talking about and playing with the/my voice over the past one and a half year, in the context of my master studies at the HOME OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICES (HOPP), ArtEZ University of the Arts. It is the story of a voice that attempts to expose and challenge the inextricable entanglement of voice and gender, and to offer an opening to the understanding of voice perception. It is a story that follows an intricate path, from theory to practice to wild imaginings and back. It is one more story which hopefully adds to the ongoing dialogue between art, science and philosophy that seeks to describe the interdependency of matter and meaning, how a material voice might be linked to questions around gender identity and the construction of subjectivity.

silence

radio jingle

radio show launches

'Why did you choose this voice-related topic?', R. asks me. R. is a random interviewer with whom I now share the space inside a radio booth and have a brief conversation on my artistic research. R. knows nothing about me before the moment of this interview. R. is the ideal encounter to start thinking

retrospectively about why I ever embarked upon this project of artistically studying the voice, its material aspect, and its relation to gender-specific attributes. I take a moment to formulate my response. I imagine my voice leaving my body, I imagine the now-disembodied voice travelling on airwaves and being transmitted through radio waves, I imagine the listeners out there hearing the radio broadcast of a voice while driving their car, while having their morning coffee, while eating their dinner. I suspect what their knowledge of me and my material gendered body is, only by hearing this voice. I am guessing how their perception is being formed solely based on these voice characteristics. I am trying to remember why I chose my research project, how having been trained in science shaped my understanding and view of the world(s), and why did I ever believe that visualizing vocal vibrations is a way to talk about gender identity. 'So, why are you examining the voice in this way?', R. reminds me that we are live on air. 'Hmm, I think I did not exactly choose it. Instead, it chose me. By the way, dear listeners, the high-pitched voice that you are now hearing, emits from a body that identifies itself as a male one. And I hope that at the end of this transmission, my voice can be more than just a pitch', I respond.

AM radio static noise

silence

Ranging from philosophy, critical theory and gender studies to speech pathology, musicology, visual culture, and performing arts, voice has been a multi-faceted research topic over the past few decades. In her book *For More than One Voice* (2005), philosopher and feminist thinker Andriana Cavarero, rereads vocality beyond the realm of logocentrism. Cavarero explains that through the voice's embodied uniqueness and 'without even the mediation of articulate speech, [the voice] communicates the elementary givens of existence: uniqueness, relationality, sexual difference, and age' (Cavarero, 2005, p. 8). She therefore makes an argument that voice/phonic and meaning/semantic must be clearly differentiated, and she invites the reader to reset the focus on voice's sonic and acoustic aspect. This division between the phonic and the semantic elements of the voice allows for a reflection on other qualities and components of the voice besides that of speech.

By referring to something mute and unspeakable beyond the reach of language, philosopher and psychoanalyst Mladen Dolar, in his book *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006), introduces his investigation on the object-voice and defines the 'acousmatic voice' as simply 'a voice whose source one cannot see', a voice 'in search of a body' (Dolar, 2006, p. 60). By defining the acousmatic voice, Dolar describes a negative space: one that cannot be seen, cannot be heard, and cannot be reduced only to linguistic signifiers, yet is the extension of

the body that produces it. It ties the subject who voices with the Other who receives that voice, but it does not belong to any of the two. Dolar's acousmatic voice indicates an in-between third space, where voice temporarily resides, and highlights its inescapable extimacy¹, thus can be used as a conceptual vehicle to approach voice's sociopolitical extensions and the complex relationships between the individual and social world.

In her first monograph *Queer Voices* (2011), musicologist Freya Jarman deals with the gendered logic of the voice, and thereby of the bodies from which it emanates. By re-examining Dolar's psychoanalytic approach on the acousmatic voice through the critical lenses of queer theory, Jarman argues that the acousmatic voice holds a queer potential as in the third space it exists, it is still gender-less, yet performative. Hence, according to Jarman, the act of listening is already linked to a certain act of gendering, or else the performative voice is subject to the listener's perception of gender.

The intricate relationship between the voicer and the listener is also extensively studied by transgender researcher and sound performer David Azul. Azul describes the voice as a 'chameleon-like creature' that is not fixed at one single state

¹ Extimacy (english translation) refers to the French neologism *extimité* coined by the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, which conjoins ex-teriority with in-timacy and describes the remarkable and intriguing characteristic of the voice to interpenetrate both the outer and inner sphere of a subject.

of being but is rather continuously transformed throughout its trajectory from one mouth to an ear. According to him, 'what emerges from our mouths as a clutter of traveling sound waves is at first transformed from an acoustical to an auditory event when it produces a sensation in the listener's ear' (Azul, 2013, p. 82). Having a background in speech pathology, Azul exposes the pitched logic of gender, one that can be measured and adjusted to gender normative values.

More recently, *The Voice as Something More* (2019) by scholars Martha Feldman and Judith T. Zeitlin, using Dolar's work as a reference point, reorients the examination of the voice from its performative aspect to its material dimensions. Feldman and Zeitlin look at the voice as both an object of desire and a material(ized) object with something more inscribed on it. The multidisciplinary collected essays focus on material qualities of the voice such as the physicality and timbre, the fleshiness of their mechanisms, and the devices that enhance and distort them, and consider the cultural and technological mediations of voice, underlining that voice's encounters with sociality further materialize it.

The inquiry around the invisible object-voice and its potential in meaning-making processes on subjectivity, and more specifically gender identity, is a long and rich one. In view of what is termed as material turn or new materialist approaches, voice-related research can be further advanced.

New materialism has emerged mainly from the crossroads of feminism, post-structuralist philosophy and science studies, and is an interdisciplinary theoretical and practical field of inquiry which critically opposes to the social constructionism that prioritizes an anthropocentric view of the prominence of language, culture and representation. A central principle of new materialist thinking is that matter is an underexplored territory, fundamentally multiple, self-organizing and vibrant. New materialist inquiries focus on entangled entailment of matter (including technologies, inorganic objects, and nonhuman organisms and processes) with discursive practices.

Against this rich background, the present autoethnographic research, triggered and informed by my transgender experience in relation to the voice, wishes to re-examine the notion of the acousmatic voice by exposing its material dimensions through a process of visualization, and by bringing the vocal materiality into conversation with questions of gender identity. In doing so, it points towards to how matter and meaning can be re-imagined, and how their intra-action can engender other ways of being, different to the normative structures of the social world. The research aims to open a theoretical and practical pathway, where voice is more than a simple signifier of the gender of its producing body, and a transgender voice can exist beyond a pitched-based binary logic.

The thesis is divided into three parts:

In Chapter 1, I conduct a literature review on the most relevant theories that I work with in my artistic practice, and introduce the concepts of somatechnologies, microperformativity of the voice, trans-poietics and trans-material becomings, which form the theoretical ground of my voice-related research. Briefly, the concepts refer to the inextricable relationship between bodies and technologies, to an approach that employs the microscopic plane as reference and emphasizes technological micro-agencies that associate the invisible microscopic vocal materiality with gender identity, to the poietic dimension of imagination in relation to the transgender voice, and to a new materialist perspective of the intra-action between the vocal matter and the technology of gender, respectively.

In Chapter 2, I proceed with introducing the core notions of the vocal apparatus, gendernaut, imagineering the phantomatter, and trans-material voicescapes that informed the performance strategies and methods applied when creating the performance work trans-mission. In short, the vocal apparatus corresponds to the scenographic decisions I made to stage the somatechnological intertwinement of voice and gender, the gendernaut describes the artistic method of voice gender-bending that I developed through an autoethnographic inquiry, the phantomatter and its

imagineering refers to the visualizing practice I generated based on the physics of cymatics, and the trans-material voicescapes represent the performance strategy I applied in my final performance to represent a transgender voice that is informed by new materialist perspectives. The chapter also includes observations and discoveries that were gathered throughout the research process and the experience of performance making.

In the concluding chapter, I summarize the artistic methods and performance strategies applied in my research, as well as the most important findings. By looking closely upon them, I suggest possible principles of practice and entry-points for future research.

CHAPTER 1. TUNING IN: WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH MATTER

'Matter is promiscuous and inventive in its agential wanderings: one might even dare say, imaginative. Imaginings, at least in the scientific imagination, are clearly material.'

Barad (2015, p. 387)

If imaginings are clearly material, then to imagine the voice beyond what is already known, is an action of resistance that has to go through vocal matter. For years, bodies, and in extension the voices emitting from them, were bound solely to biological characteristics. The emergence of post-structuralist philosophy and feminist-queer theory shed light to the cultural inscriptions and societal norms linked to power structures that shape, define and discipline these bodies.

In the late 1980s, philosopher and queer theorist Judith Butler, drawing from the phenomenological theories on perception and human embodiment by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, started developing their approach on gender performativity. For Butler, the phenomenological perspective of the subjective lived experience that is always embodied and materialized in the world, was condensed into the phrase 'the body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning' (Butler, 1988, p. 521). According to

them, gender is something that is continuously constructed, constituted, and reproduced by a material body that repeatedly performs (enacts) everyday conventional actions.

The same period, feminist theorist with a scientific background in biology Donna Haraway, pointed towards a different direction, and epitomized the intricate relationship of the human body and technoscience into the phrase 'we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism' (Haraway, 1987, p. 2). With that, Haraway underlined the reciprocal co-definition of material bodies and technoscience within social reality, and how they reproduce and reshape themselves in relation to one another.

Originally trained in theoretical physics and quantum field theory, feminist theorist Karen Barad has been approaching matter in an unusual way, bringing forward a post-humanist performative account of the production of material bodies. Their early reflections on posthumanist performativity (Barad, 2003), made a clear statement: matter is dynamic, vibrant, and always already entangled with meaning. Therefore, there is an urgency to look upon it beyond the power of language and culture, in order to accommodate an understanding of the mutual involvement of human and nonhuman, natural and cultural, material and discursive.

At different moments in their history, western feminist theories, informed by their contemporary discourses, have considered the intra-acting sociocultural and material forces. The following chapter examines the gendered voice through the notions of somatechnics, microperformativity, transpoietics and imagineering, and trans-material becomings, to arrive to a reason how the visualization of vocal materiality further contributes to its understanding in relation to gender and why the matter of a transgender voice matters.

1.1. SOMATECHNOLOGIES AND SOFT GENDER

Haraway's cyborgs² introduced the idea of how science and technology act upon bodies and the social world, as well as her unwavering hope that the technoscientific-mediated material reality together with imagination can provide a place of transformation. Philosopher, writer and curator Paul B. Preciado further studied the techno-life of contemporary bodies, especially through the prism of gender (and sexuality). Trying to explain the interconnection of bodies and technoscience, Preciado writes, 'we live in an era of proliferating biomolecular, digital and high-speed technologies; of the soft, light, slimy and jelly technologies; of the injectable, inhalable, and incorporable technologies'

² In her essay *A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s*, the cyborg is defined as 'a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction' (Haraway).

(Preciado, 2008, p.110). For Preciado, technologies are no longer ‘an ortho-architectonic exterior device’ that controls the body, but they rather dissolve in the body and become the body. In the same vein, in my research I conceive gender not as an exterior device attached to the voice. Rather, by taking a post-humanist and feminist new materialist perspective, I think of gender both in terms of discourse and performativity, but mainly of its material effects on a body/voice when it is perceived as a set of technologies incorporated to it.

The hybridization of the embodied subjectivity through technology is highlighted by the concept of ‘somatechnics’, a term coined by transgender historian and critical theorist Susan Stryker (Sullivan, 2014, p. 187), from the conjugation of the Greek words σῶμα (sôma) and τέχνη (techne). The term brings attention to the modes in which corporeality is inextricably tied to sociality and is continuously shaped and transformed through various technologies, which are in turn linked to systems of power and knowledge. Somatechnics as a concept, and as a form of critical practice, invites for a re-examination of bodies with all the normalized, ‘soft’ or invisibilized technologies of power, generated through unconscious techniques of discipline, and for a queering of these mechanisms.

Viewed from the lens of somatechnics, gender in this research project is recognized as a fundamental soft technology, that

inhabits the material body and in extension the voice that emanates from it. Voice (as soma) and gender (as techne) are interrelated components that intra-act and emerge through each other in a constant state of becoming.

1.2. (MICRO)PERFORMATIVITY OF THE VOICE

Despite the plethora of analysis that followed Judith Butler’s writings on performativity³ and the emergence of queer theory⁴, much of the research within the discourse of the performative is focused on theorizing a body without a voice and ignores the performative aspects of the voice. Very few theorists, such as feminist theorist Annette Schlichter, bring attention on the dominance of visuality (or the picture, the visual reenactment of gender) and emphasize the need for the notion of vocality to matter in a theory of gender performativity (Schlichter, 2011).

The fact that voices themselves are stylized and performed and that the reiteration of this act is linked to the production of a gender identity has been extensively studied by David Azul (Azul, 2013), whereas the queer potential of the voice ‘through the physicality of its production and its being-listened-to, genderedness, genderlessness, and

³ Butler first used the term ‘gender performativity’ in their 1990 book *Gender Trouble*.

⁴ Queer theory is the term adopted by academia in the early 1990s and since then used in various disciplines (including among others philosophy, gender and cultural studies, politics, literary analysis) to describe the field of post-structuralism that studies gender and sexual practices outside of the narrow heteronormative regime.

performativity' is the main subject of Freya Jarman's work (Jarman, 2011). This research further explores the affordances of the material aspect of the voice, and more specifically its visual materiality, in relation to the notion of performativity. If the acousmatic voice already suggests a split between the visual and the sonic⁵, then the research investigates modes of juxtaposing the visual capturings of the acousmatic voice with my own single transgender vocal body that produces it, pointing towards a post-humanist performativity of gender.

To this end, I am appropriating the notion of microperformativity which delves into more-than-human processes of the microworld(s) and inform technoscientific-based artistic practices in such a way that can address topics of the social macroworld. Microperformativity sees 'beyond the mesoscopic human body' and 'relates the invisibility of the microscopic to the incomprehensibility of the macroscopic' (Hauser and Strecker, 2020, p. 1). In this sense, the study navigates through different scales in the order of materiality (micro) < vocality (meso) < identity (macro), and through this material to personal to sociopolitical trajectory, it eventually links the invisible performativity of the acousmatic voice with the abstraction of gender performativity.

⁵ As mentioned earlier, the acousmatic voice, according to Mladen Dolar, refers to a voice whose source is invisible and it is only perceived by its sonorous characteristics.

1.3. TRANS-POIETICS

The notion of voice's microperformativity holds a great poietic potential (from Ancient Greek: ποιήσις), as it denotes the bringing into being of something that did not exist before. Likewise, the process of visualizing my transgender voice suggests a *trans-poiesis*, by transposing it from the sonic to the visual realm. The produced visualization is not just an extension of reality, but the image making through the voice generates an imaginative creative power that opens a new reality *per se*.

Theoretically, I trace the conceptualization of the visualization process back to the early phenomenological approaches of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gaston Bachelard that celebrate the experience of imagining. In his book *Poetics of Imagining* (1991), philosopher Richard Kearney presents the outcomes of a long inquiry on how phenomenology and imagination feed each other. 'Scientific and poetic creation both derive from a deeper *poiesis* wherein imagination and reality make and remake each other' (Kearney, 1991, p.89), he argues when investigating Bachelard's poetical imagination. Kearney also reads Merleau-Ponty's treatment of imagination based on *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964) and what is to be taken into consideration from that passage is the interpretation of the invisible not as non-existent, but as something that 'pre-exists *in the visible*' (Kearney, 1991, p. 113). It is a latent,

immanent place that can only be imagined but not seen, just like the invisible acousmatic voice. The present research aims therefore to examine ways of exposing this non-place through visualization, and by employing imagination as a creative tool, it aspires to ultimately devise a place of curiosity and wondering of what a transgender voice can be and look like. By magnifying the relationship of vocal materiality and technology of gender the research proposes a trans-poietic imagineering.

1.4. TRANS-MATERIAL BECOMINGS

This research's interest in the matter stems from an understanding that trans-ness is a non-linear, unfixed, and continuous process of becoming. The research thus challenges/undoes normative assumptions of an essentially confined gender binary-based voice, and as an extension something that is materially fixated. Rather than materially stable, I conceive trans bodies and the voices they emit as fundamentally processual and open-ended.

Queer academic and author Jack Halberstam use the term *trans**, with the asterisk, to insist on this ontology of transness beyond gender binarism. He writes, 'the asterisk modifies the meaning of transitivity by refusing to situate transition in relation to a destination, a final form, a specific shape, or an established configuration of desire and identity' (Halberstam, 2018, p. 4). Similarly, transgender scholars Susan Stryker,

Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore use the term 'trans-'⁶ rather than 'trans', because as they explain, the hyphen 'marks the difference between the implied nominalism of "trans" and the explicit relationality of "trans-," which remains open-ended and resists premature foreclosure by attachment to any single suffix' (Stryker, Currah, & Moore, 2008, p. 11). In that sense, trans-material voices can be understood as those in a constant state of (un)becoming, moving within and beyond the gender binary, but never really getting fixed or classified.

This acknowledgment further resonates with the Baradian concept of material-discursive 'intra-actions' (Barad, 2007, p. 33), meaning how matter and meaning are entangled and how specific phenomena emerge and take shape through the synergistic agencies of materialities. Therefore, in terms of voice, its trans-material becoming could be considered as a dynamic process which is co-constituted by the way in which it engages with the material world (i.e., sounds, technologies, practices of vocalizing, listening bodies, and so forth). To think of the trans-material voice in its intra-active character and to think of its imaginings as clearly material, as Barad suggests (Barad, 2015), can provide a fascinating escape from the pitch-based binary logic of the voice.

⁶ The title of my work *trans-mission*, as well as the key terms of this research, follow this type.

Figure 1. The inflatable black booth. Photo by Fenia Kotsopoulou



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CHAPTER 2. BROADCASTING LIVE: FOUR EXPERIMENTS AND SOME FINDINGS

My final artistic work in the context of this Master's programme, entitled *trans-mission* (2023), was presented in a theatre space. Before entering the theatre hall, the audience members received program notes, in the form of a black paper cube, with a brief description of the performance (see Appendix A). The text promised a 'bizarre broadcast' that would follow the journey of a gendernaut performing a series of voice experiments, recomposing his voice as a synthetic landscape of sounds and visualizations. The performance started with the audience entering the theatre on a white noise background and taking their seats. A central spotlight lighted an amorphous black mass of synthetic fabric (Figure 1), and two rectangular box-like black stations were placed diagonally left and right to the center, each equipped with a fluorescent object, a camera, and a beamer on top. It was a symmetrical and geometric environment. A sound of tuning into a frequency was heard, followed by the sound of an air blower⁷, and the black mass was starting to be inflated, finally taking the structure of a black cube-shaped booth. The song

⁷ The sound/noise of the blower stays on during the entire piece.

'Transmission' by Joy Division (1979) begins to play from the interior, and I (the performer) emerged from the booth, dressed in white, bringing two speakers and a wheeled-amplifier outside, and starting setting-up the various devices, until the end of the song.

After this introductory part, the piece unfolds in four parts. The first three parts comprised a series of voice-visualizing acts using three different devices (see Appendix B), accompanied by a pop song⁸ and a recorded text read by a low pitch voice (see Excerpts 1-3, following below), both heard through the speakers attached to the booth. In each part, I performed a unique drag-like character producing various vocalizations and sounds. More specifically, the first character appeared as a drag-like masculine person with a red torch on his head, who used some laboratory equipment to perform a low pitch voice-visualization experiment on a fluorescent liquid inside a white round dish, on the left station (Figure 2). The effect of his voice on the surface of the liquid was captured by the live camera on top and projected upstage. The second character was again a drag-like persona, this time feminine, wearing a wig and performing a high-pitch voice experiment (Figure 3). The visualization was again projected at the back of the stage. The third character wore white glasses and held a device with

⁸ In the following sequence: 'The Nomi Song' by Klaus Nomi, the 'Atomic' by Blondie, and 'The Phantom of the Opera' soundtrack.

a red laser-pointer attached to it (Figure 4). The character was a blend of the previous two, in terms of movement quality and voice-pitch; they moved around alternating their physical posture and sound frequency (from masculine to feminine) voicing inside the device, which returned some red visualization on the floor. The fourth part featured a classical music soundtrack, during which I performed a conductor character who conducted the two previously recorded visualizations (Figure 5).

During the outro of the work, I turned the two beamers on the booth, so that the short films were projected on its black surface, and I entered the cube, while the song 'Radio Ga Ga' by the Queen (1984) was playing. After a while the song faded out, a sound of frequency tuning returned, followed by the white noise, the air-blower stopped, and the booth started to gradually collapse. The visualizations kept playing during the deflation process and they merged into each other, first on what was turning into a black mass of synthetic fabric and finally on the back wall.

The live, solo performance *trans-mission* probed the previously described concepts of somatechnologies, the microperformativity of the voice, the trans-poietics, and the trans-material becomings in a performance setting. and played with the voice itself as material. The following chapter deals with the core notions and methods I used to deconstruct my voice in trans-mission, as well as some early discoveries of these experimentations.

2.1. SETTING UP THE VOCAL APPARATUS

*'Do they know me? Or do they know my voice?
If they heard my voice, could I still be myself?
Am I bound to a frequency?
Though I know my place if science will allow, will they know me?'*

Excerpt #1 (Christodoulou, 2023)

The initial interest to deal with the voice can be traced back in the end of the last academic year when I presented my first year's performance with the title *it's a supercritical voice* (2022), an autoethnographic inquiry and artistic exploration of my transgender experience in relation to voice. The performance was a mixed-media lecture-performance addressing the gendering of the voice and inviting the audience to re-imagine voice as a supercritical fluid,

a substance that combines both gas- and liquid-like properties. In other words, it is a highly compressed and heated fluid that simultaneously acts as a gas and a liquid, a materiality that is temporarily situated in such an environment that promotes transformation, multiplicity, and generation of new possibilities. (Christodoulou, 2022)

By using the metaphor of the supercritical fluid, I set the base of dealing with the voice as a substance in a constant state of trans-formation, a materiality of continuous becoming. I spent the next few months trying to discover ways to artistically challenge the entanglement of voice and gender in my practice. On a try-out with my cohort in the early days of

the second year, I projected a video of vibrating vocal cords, captured during a stroboscopic rigid laryngoscopy exam, on my naked back. Later, I discovered avant-garde artist VALIE EXPORT'S work *i turn over the pictures of my voice in my head* (2009), a 12-minute performance video showing the artist's vocal folds being filmed with a laryngoscope camera, while she speaks over a text that tackles voice's unique property to exist inside and outside. By appropriating the fact that the vocal cords visually rhyme with female genitalia, EXPORT approaches the voice-identity relationship in an unexpected way. The idea of visualizing the voice to expose its fluidity and ability to transform itself into different states started to appear. I was becoming more and more interested to capture what my voice looks like and how could a transgender voice be represented in live performance.

In the development of my experiment of visualizing the voice, I envisaged the object-voice as a meaning-making instrument, an apparatus. Again, according to Barad, 'apparatuses are the material conditions of possibility and impossibility of mattering; they enact what matters and what is excluded from mattering' (Barad, 2007, p. 148). Thinking from a somatechnological point of view, I engaged with the question how the *vocal apparatus* (i.e., the complex anatomical system by which air is transformed into sound) can be informed by new materialist views and applied into a performance setting as a synthesis of theory and practice. In the making of *trans-*

mission, I probed the somatechnological vocal apparatus mainly through scenography. I aimed to configure the space as a technoscientific setup, an experimental installation that would be activated by my physical voice and thus to investigate the intra-active agency of the voice with a series of techno-mediated visualizers that responded to its pitch. The strict symmetry and geometry of the environment suggested a well-tuned machine of technoscience and organism (visualizers-cameras/voice-body), an orchestrated composite anatomy of the voice.

The notion of the vocal apparatus was also essentially catalytic in my decision to employ the scenographic element of the inflatable booth. The black centralized cube on stage served my intention to artistically illustrate the concept in various means: (i) an amorphous soft materiality that is being gradually constructed, (ii) an enclosed organ through which the voice leaks, (iii) a place of constant transformation that generates meaning. Deeply inspired from the elective on Expanded Scenography, led by media-installation artist and scenographer Ariane Trümper. that I attended earlier during the year (but already triggered by the Schizosomatics Elective, led by HOPP lecturer Dr. João da Silva, the year before), the inflatable soft booth with the various technologies attached to it or surrounding it, was my attempt to think through the form, from within what I perceive as a vocal apparatus.

Figure 2. The laboratory man. Photo by Fenia Kotsopoulou



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My desire was to ultimately devise a space where technology is not 'an ortho-architectonic exterior device' (Preciado, 2008, p.110), as previously mentioned, but it exists in the interior of the body (the body of the booth), it runs the body, it is inhalable, incorporable.

Reflecting back on the scenographic decisions that supported the concept of somatechnologies, I discovered that however the soft structure of the inflatable booth, its dominance in space is something that can be considered further. Its size, as well as the constant sound it was producing, rendered it like yet another body, thus thinking of ways to soften its presence and work on its relationship with the rest of the objects on stage, and with gender, can add an extra value to the project.

2.2. THE GENDernaut: FROM APHONIA TO MICROPHONE TO MICROVISION

*'Tonight, we're gonna learn about the minimum interactions between two oscillating air molecules.
We'll get to know about the atomic forces that hold the vocal matter together.
Tonight, it's gonna be magnificent.'*

Excerpt #2 (Christodoulou, 2023)

I started using 'gendernaut' as a nickname at a stage of my transgender experience when I had not chosen my male name yet. The term was inspired by German filmmaker Monika Treut's documentary *Gendernauts: A Journey Through Shifting Identities* (1999) that follows the lives of a group of transgender individuals who defy bi-genderism and cis-normativity. For me, gendernaut encapsulates trans-

ness in a poetic, yet very pragmatic, way: in motion, a story of crossings, an endless sequence of becomings.

In *trans-mission*, the gendernaut holds a catalytic role: they are the ones who activate the transition from the audio to the visual, but also mediate the shift from gender performativity to micro-performativity of the voice. Alternatively, they are the ones who travel the long distance from aphonia⁹ (as in not-being-able-to-speak) to microphone (voice) to microvision (the magnified visualization of the voice), they produce the voice of dissent. The gendernaut simultaneously constitutes:

- (i) an autoethnographic reflection on my transgender experience in relation to the voice and its pitch (with all the invisible atomic forces that tie matter and meaning together),
- (ii) the active agent who conducts a set of voice-visualizing experiments (that bring the minimum interactions of the air molecules in light), and
- (iii) a method of crossing/blurring gender boundaries (magnificent!).

As described earlier, on stage, the gendernaut exists through

⁹ Here, I am referring to aphonia as a self-imposed voiceless state, due to my sense of inability to produce vocal signals that would match the voice I was perceiving as being my own. The silencing of my voice was, on many occasions in the past, a common practice in order to escape a female identification based on the receiver's interpretation of its pitch.

Figure 3. The fem-like character. Photo by Fenia Kotsopoulou

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different characters and performs the pitch. This performance strategy emerged through my understanding of the way in which my voice production occurs within a social context and is being perceived based on its frequency. If, as David Azul observes 'we attach meanings to the perceptual categories we have created and might call high-pitched, melodious, and gentle sounds "female"; and low-pitched, monotonous, and forceful sounds "male"' (Azul, 2013, p. 82), by performing a multiplicity of bodies/characters and voices/pitches, I wanted to suggest a more dynamic and diverse function of the trans-voice materiality. By modifying the resonance frequencies of my voice through articulatory activities (i.e., by stretching or protruding my lips, by moving my larynx up and down my throat), I actively adapted the pitch-based vocal quality. By further amplifying this quality through the microphone (but also through the drag-like performativity of the characters that I explain below), I aimed to artistically challenge the established medical, biological, and social constructionist understandings of a transgender voice, and propel an arrangement where one vocal body can provide the site of a multiplicity of genders.

More than serving a very personal urgency to reclaim the pitch(es) of my voice, the gendernaut acts as the substantial person who carries out the voice-visualizing experiments, thus enabling voice's trans-position to the visual communication channel and orienting the discussion from gender

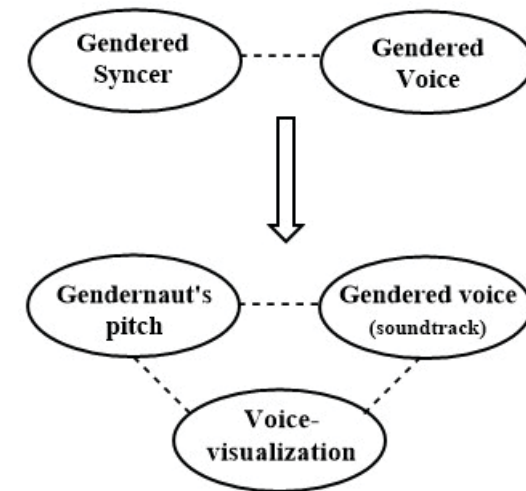
performativity towards the so-called micro-performativity of the voice. Within this trans-process, the gendernaut puts matter into circulation, controls the input of the voice (pitch, rhythm, drama) and observes its projected output (Figure 3), adds sonic qualities and generates visual patterns, and finally, stimulates the intra-action between voicing and perception, the material and discursive in a performance setting. In this world that is being unfolding on stage, the gendernaut is the one in charge of gradually revealing how this is happening, by exposing the process of becoming.

Lastly, I would like to juxtapose the performance strategy of gendernauting to the well-known practices of drag and lip-sync and address some of its attributes, in hopes of suggesting an enriched approach to artistic genderbending. Simply given, drag is an act of critical mimicry, containing a distinct element of exaggeration of the quotidian gender expression in terms of aesthetics and performativity. The practice of drag has been vastly developed through the years, and its reflection on gender in terms of gendering, de-gendering, cross-gendering has been extensively studied and theorized by various scholars (Rupp, 2010 & Farrier, 2020). Common techniques that drag artists employ revolve around dress-up, make-up, body shaping, gestures, the use of props, and, of course, lip-syncing. I would describe the version of drag that I propose in my work as a soft one: no dress-up, no body prosthesis, no make-up, a do-it-yourself, simple and

quick version, featuring an unconventional practice of lip-syncing. I composed my drag-like characters based on one single prop respectively (red head-torch, wig, sunglasses), each one of them interacting with a unique visualizer using a different substance (fluorescent liquid, fluorescent powder, laser beam) and a voice frequency, accompanied with some hyperarticulated (feminine/masculine) movement. From an autoethnographic point of view, the simplicity and easiness of transformation, and the effortless access to the various impersonations, emphasize the banality of drag, the everydayness of gender crossings (in terms of movement/voice performativity), the non-stylized traversals, the gendernauting that has been morphed into a norm.

However, what is even more bizarre about this cheap drag approach is how it deals with what could be considered a lip-sync technique. In investigating lip-sync's theatricality and relationship to camp aesthetics, Freya Jarman argues that lip-sync represents the disconnection between syncer and voice, brings attention to the mis-/dis-located voice, and essentially negotiates a gap, 'the gap between the body and the voice' (Jarman, 2018, p. 112). The gap indicates a particular split between the bodily production of the voice and the sound of it. The visible, but muted, body of the drag performer/syncer, performs the voice of the gender being enacted, while the gendered voice is emitted from a sound system. What I then tried to achieve with my version of syncing was to further

experiment with the idea of the gap (i.e., the acousmatic voice), and, by visualizing it, to add one more split from the audio to the visual and one more parameter to the synced relationship:



Scheme 1. Voice-syncing

In my work, there are two gendered voices (the one coming each time from the playlist, as well as the gendernaut's vocalizations) that are being heard and one that can be seen. This voice-sync strategy suggests a complex interrelation of visual and acoustic perception, where the gendering of the visualized voice requires the existence of a gendered body/voice (that of the gendernaut), and moreover this very process of gendering is being witnessed, by both the audience and the gendernaut, the moment it is occurring *in situ*. In that

sense, a fascinating opening is appearing with the potential to take the topic of the visualized voice a step further, as it becomes evident that the gendernaut can alternate and control, by means of drag and pitch, voice's identification when it comes to gender.

Two strong considerations that were raised after the showing of the work and feel crucial for the future development of this research, is the careful weaving between the three voices of Scheme 1 (i.e., the voice of the gendernaut, the visualized object-voice under study, and the many voices from the playlist). From a dramaturgical perspective, there is a lot more that needs to be scrutinized in terms of the way these voices synchronize and/or affect the study. Moreover, both in a practical but also in a theoretical view, the consideration of silence and the articulation of its place in the constellation voice-body-gender, might be very promising to explore.

2.3. IMAGINEERING THE PHANTOMATTER

*'Voice is made of phantomatter.
He loves phantom vibrations. He captures them, translates, and transmits them back.
Sometimes he transforms their frequencies.
She is studying the disappearing and reappearing voice figures.
She generates small circular shapes.
They both dreamt of vocal phantoms. They know they're real.'*

Excerpt #3 (Christodoulou, 2023)

Phantoms have been an essential part of my artistic research as soon as I embarked upon it. Influenced by the idea of the Merleau-Pontian phantom limb, the phantoms imply invisible

materialities that are there, but cannot be seen. During the first year of the master programme and in the context of the module Bodies in Dissent, I performed *The Supersoma Lecture* (Christodoulou, 2022b). The work was a blend of theory, biography, lecture, and performance, dealing with a perception of the embodied self as an always under-construction bodily becoming. The supersoma that was presented during the lecture was a conceptual body-model that aimed to stretch the bounds of materiality and that was equipped, amongst others, with a phantom dick.

When I first encountered late-nineteenth-century Welsh singer Margaret Watts Hughes' voice figures (Watts Hughes, 1891) and read about her experimentations on making voice visible using an instrument called 'eidophone', the phantoms came back to me. I imagined the voice being made of invisible phantomatter, and I thought it was a creative challenge to try capturing it. My research led me to the science of cymatics, which is the study of wave phenomena, and especially sound and vibration, and their visual representation. That simply means that when a wave (Greek: κύμα) encounters a membrane, a plate or a liquid surface, it imprints an invisible pattern of energy. For the sake of my project, the wave-input would be my own voice.

The works of media artist and musician Ulla Rauter (*Sound*

Drawings, Voice-void-noise, Magnetic Sound Matrix)¹⁰ inspired me to start building my own DIY voice visualizers. The three cymatic-based visualizers that eventually made it to the performance *trans-mission* (see Appendix B), allowed my voice to encounter three different materials (liquid, solid, light) and rendered its signal into a visual pattern, thus addressing the vocal materiality in a poetic, performative and deconstructed way.

The process of visualization is an action of trans-formation and transition of the vocal materiality into optic data, or a translation into a new abstract language, a means of making, a poetic act. In the making of my set up, my creative process was profoundly motivated by Klaus Spiess' and Lucie Strecker's participatory experiment *Microbial Keywording* (2018). Based on theories of posthumanist performativity (Barad, 2003), they worked with oral microbes, and they transformed biological matter into linguistic information and vice versa. To do so, their team built an experimental phonetic set up, where the response of the oral microbes to speech is being tested live (Spiess, 2020). Of course, I am not claiming that my work holds many parallels with theirs, as there are at least two major differences: (i) whereas *Microbial Keywording* is a live experiment that allows audience participation and

monitors a test real time¹¹, *trans-mission* is a performative demonstration of an experiment, and most importantly (ii) my work does not examine the response of any living matter. Despite that, having a magnified visualization that renders what is happening in microscale accessible, an amplified voice over the microphone, and lastly, a way of 'freezing' the micro-activity (whether it is the biological cycle of a microbial culture on a petri dish, or the cymatic effect of the voice upon a surface) has many similarities in means of set up.

By employing the physics of cymatics and by using the above-described format, I developed an artistic method for the visualization of the voice (therefore a process of translation), which, to the best of my knowledge, has not been applied in performance practices before. I discovered a practical way of navigating through scale, from the micro (= vocal materiality) to the meso (= vocality) to the macro (= gender identity). That is, my techno-mediated working method of visualization provides an amplified view of the micro-performativity of voice's invisible phantom matter, which in turn enters a dialogue with the sonic attributes of the physical voice and its gender-specific connotations.

At the same time, I suggested a made-easy-to-understand

¹⁰ Available at: <http://www.ullarauter.com> [Accessed: 14 Jun. 2023].

¹¹ Even though, the creators clearly state that the performance was 'less a controlled experiment to test a hypothesis than a weighted manipulation of conditions in order to generate a desired artistic outcome' (Spiess, 2020).

scientific experiment for a theatre audience. This quasi-scientific approach, and in a further step the level of audience participation, is something that I am interested in diving into and continuing exploring, since it holds a great potential in artmaking and to what can be defined as imagineering.

Over the two-month experimentation with cymatics, I can acknowledge the exciting input it brought to the project. However, it is a visualizing method that can be further tuned in order to serve the demands of a voice. During the process of working with the liquid media, I noticed that the obtained vibrations were weak, and the two liquids would very quickly dissolve into each other. This fact made it difficult for the audience to observe the cymatic effect and to have a clear image and a meaningful experience of the visualization process. Therefore, considerations regarding the selection of the working materials (and/or the used speakers) as to how visible their produced effect is, are necessary. Furthermore, in-depth examination and analysis of how the cymatic effect of each visualizer is pitch-dependent, i.e., how the alteration of voice frequency can potentially impact the produced vibrations, is certainly worth considering. Mapping the vocal phantomatter's microperformativity and its relation to voice characteristics can provide fascinating ways of further playing, modulating and dragging this materiality. Lastly, investigating other ways to capture or magnify visualizations is an interesting field for additional research. Especially in



Figure 4. Visualizing the voice with a laser-pointer. Photo by Fenia Kotsopoulou

the case of the laser-based visualizer, that produced a slight ephemeral signal that was not recorded, there is great inquiry potential.

2.4. TRANS-MATERIAL VOICESCAPES

This last step of the project reads more as a speculative gesture in relation to the trans-material voice that emerged through the creative explorations of my practice-as-research and is based on my current knowledge/understanding of the Baradian theory on an agency of matter.

As I previously mentioned, from the outset of my artistic research, I was addressing the transgender body not as a fixed integrity, but as an in-pieces design, a constantly under-construction becoming. For a reasonable amount of time, I was referring to the metaphor of the 'LEGO architecture' that Jack Halberstam uses to describe trans* bodies. According to him, trans* bodies are always 'in a constant state of emergence and collapse', fragmented and unfinished, and they 'represent the art of becoming, the necessity of imagining, and the fleshly insistence of transitivity' (Halberstam, 2018, p. 136). I added the LEGO architecture as in my artistic toolkit and started applying it as a creative method to compose different versions of fabricated trans-bodies - both in terms of the used media, but also content-wise. This idea was further fed by the surrealist technique of the *exquisite corpse* (*cadavre exquis*), which simply refers to a game where an assemblage

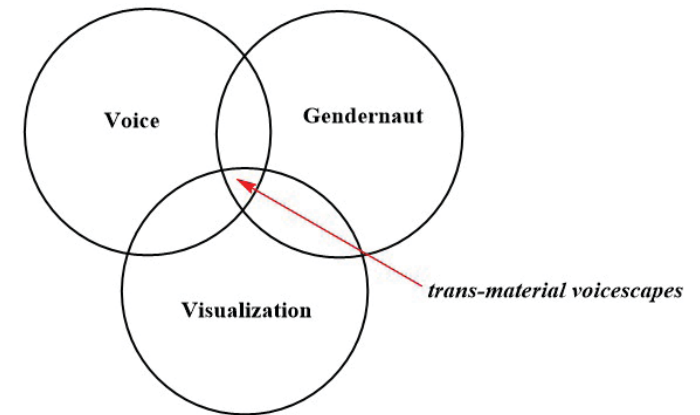
of words or images is produced collectively. Each player adds to the composition in sequence, but without knowing what the previous person contributed, whilst the final collective work is uncovered only at the end. A LEGO architecture that emerges and collapses, a synthetic landscape that is completely revealed by the end - what a fascinating way to talk about my transgender voice!

Searching for ways to implement this method into my practice-as-research and to inform the concept of the trans-material becomings, I came up with the *trans-material voicescapes*, which aim to emphasize the matter-culture intra-actions and the transitivity between the two. In my final work, I employed the trans-material voicescapes as a performance strategy in two ways:

- (i) by blurring the boundaries between subject/object, analyzer/analyzed, and
- (ii) through the trans-play of the produced visualizations and their final imprint.

At the early days of *trans-mission*, I was introduced to choreographer and performer Antonia Baehr's work *Rire / Laugh / Lachen* (2008), a self-portrait project composed of a series of scores, where Baehr explores laughter as a form of expression. Baehr is looking at laughter as an object

itself, an entity with its own sound and shape, music and rhythm. I decided to go for the same with my voice: to treat voice as an object (of identification and study) by trying to strip the causalities added to it. Then I recalled another intriguing work that I have encountered at a previous stage of my research, choreographer and dancer Xavier Le Roy's performance lecture *Product of Circumstances* (1999). Le Roy uses a blend of artistic and scientific methods to describe his process of becoming a dancer after quitting his career as a molecular biologist. His speech is accompanied by physical actions, such as bending and stretching, to create a narrative about his embodied journey from the laboratory to the dance studio, how his body became simultaneously 'active and productive, object and subject, analyzer and analyzed, product and producer' (Le Roy, 1999). Coming from a scientific background, I found myself many times deliberating over the well-defined, rigid boundaries between object and subject, observer and observed. With my work, I wanted to suggest a place where subject and object, the producer and the product dissolve into each other. I call that place trans-material voicescapes, and it emerges through the following relationality:



Scheme 2. trans-material voicescapes suggest a new relationality.

A gendernaut performing gender, a physical voice (its sonorous materiality) and its visualized form: three distinct carriers of material properties and of meaning that, very similarly to a chemical reaction (or more properly an intra-action), are converted/transformed into a new entity. I argue that the trans-material voicescapes can be read as a Baradian phenomenon, 'a specific intra-action of an "object" and the "measuring agencies"' (Barad, 2007, p. 128). The object-voice in its relationality and intra-action with the 'measuring agencies' of matter (in the visual form) and meaning (the gender of the gendernaut), allow for the trans-material voicescapes to emerge. A moment of the performance that strongly depicts this phenomenon is the moment when the conductor conducts the visualized voice (Figure 5). It is the moment where the voice emerges as a trans-material becoming, controlled by a system of intra-actions, and the bounding lines between object and subject slowly begin to fade.



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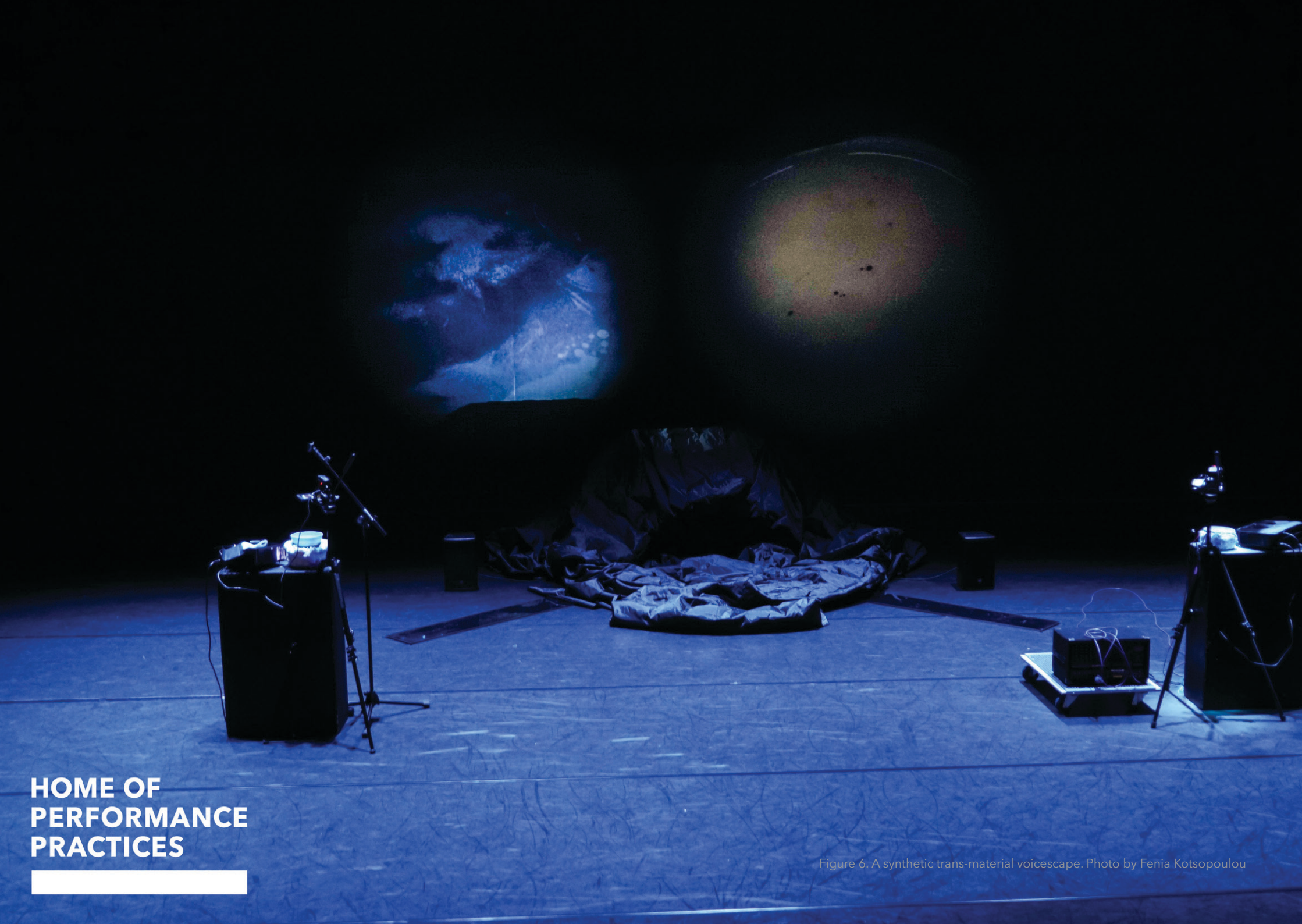
Figure 5. The conductor conducting. Photo by Fenia Kotsopoulou

In a further step, I examined this trans-material becoming through the merging of the produced visualizations. As described earlier, during the outro of the work, the recorded films were projected on the surface of the black booth, whilst the booth was gradually collapsing until it was completely down. That allowed for a three-step process to appear: a progressive overlapping of the two projections, then a visual fusion, and finally the interchange of the projection side (Figure 6). Or else, the phenomenon of the trans-material voicescapes emerged through a state of trans-play¹². Prior to this point, the two voice visualizations were existing completely separated, assigned to a specific pitch (low/high), thus implying an association with a certain gender identity (male/female) and a binary condition. With the action of trans-play, the object-subject voices blend, share and exchange properties, inform each other. The synthetic voicescape that remains, with all technologies that have produced and are reproducing it (cameras, beamers, microphones, soft inflatable booths, liquids, powders, cables and gendered bodies), indicates the process of transformation, the trans-material becoming,

I would like to place the imprint of trans-mission in relation to the Muñozian ephemera, and approach it as a material trace

¹² I am using the word trans-play here, to describe the effect of the interplay, the reciprocal relationship, the intra-action between the two visualizations.

that evince queer worlds, and more specifically transgender voices. Performance and cultural studies scholar and queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz explains ephemera as a modality of 'anti-rigor' and 'anti-evidence' that resists dominant systems of aesthetics and generates new possibilities. He writes, 'What is left? What remains? Ephemera remain. They are absent and they are present, disrupting a predictable metaphysics of presence' (Muñoz, 2009, 71). Ephemera can grant a constant escape of the body from being imprisoned in predetermined social constructs. The synthetic trans-material voice that I composed during *trans-mission*, balances between the presence and absence, suggesting an ongoing becoming and self-making, and pointing towards how the matter and meaning of a transgender voice can be imagined, beyond the evidentiary logic of gender normativity.



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Figure 6. A synthetic trans-material voicescape. Photo by Fenia Kotsopoulou

CHAPTER 3. HARD TRUTHS AND SOFT CONCLUSIONS

To imagine a transgender voice beyond gender is not an easy task.

To imagine how this voice looks like is not simpler, either.

It is a harsh truth that, throughout adulthood, dealing with my own voice and its gender-related social connotations has been a challenging task. The softness of how gender is embedded upon vocal characteristics made it very tricky to me to relate with the sound of it, as it would always feel unmatched to my gender self-determination. Furthermore, how voice would be represented in the field of performing arts would not turn the situation any easier, since conventional approaches of using voice in various artistic practices usually fall into reproducing gender norms. In the course of experimenting with (visualizing) the gendered voice and writing this thesis, I discovered a few ways to practically synthesize knowledge from disparate disciplines and offer some suggestions regarding the application of a transgender voice into performance practices. But most importantly, I managed to a certain extent to shed light to its invisible material splendor, to re-imagine voice within scale and in relation to my body, and thus to re-connect with it.

The main focus of the present autoethnographic artistic

research has been to investigate art-science possible collaborations in order to discover modes of visualizing my voice, and through this process to propose an imagineering of the transgender voice. By introducing a feminist new materialist way of thinking, and by stressing the importance of looking upon the vocal materiality as an underexplored material-discursive territory, I responded to what I perceived to be the aforementioned gap in performance practices regarding the strategies applied when addressing the transgender voice, which very often reinforce a pitch-based logic of gender.

Through this thesis, I have identified the core concepts of somatechnologies, microperformativity of the voice, trans-poietics and trans-material becomings, which form the theoretical ground for my artistic practice to emerge. I also analyzed the core notions of the vocal apparatus, gendernaut, imagineering the phantomatter, and trans-material voicescapes that were utilized as performance practices or methods in the making of my work. Below, I provide a compact overview of the most important findings and propose some principles of practice and considerations for further research.

The vocal apparatus has been a practice-based approach, through the scenographic method, to stage a somatechnological voice, i.e., a voice intertwined with the

'soft' or invisibilized technology of gender. The creative exploration of looking at voice (soma) and gender (techne) as interrelated components that intra-act and emerge through each other, and the experience of translating this relationship into a spatial design, afforded a practical toolkit of thinking through the form and/or through the materiality. I propose that working with such a techno-mediated, experimental setup that is being activated through the voice and is in constant conversation with it, is an exciting practice that can unlock new ways of staging the concept of somatechnics and creatively work with the imagination that lies in it.

By employing the physics of cymatics, I developed an artistic method for the visualization of the voice, which, to the best of my knowledge, has not been applied in performance practices before. The proposed method provided a magnified view of the micro-performativity of the voice on different media, and offered a tangible way of navigating through scale, from the micro (= vocal materiality) to the meso (= vocality) to the macro (= gender identity). The physics of cymatics artistically served the concept of trans-poietics, by transposing vocal materiality from the sonic to the visual realm. Doing so proposed a mode of *imagineering* voice's invisible materiality (the phantomatter) through image-making. My experience with working with this simple, yet effective, method of voice visualization showed that it can hold a vast potential in artistic research and performance making, as it suggests a new

way of understanding and reading voice, focusing on less common vocal qualities. Instead of thinking of voice in pitch, the process of visualization invites for a voice vocabulary that is based on shapes, sizes, densities, movements, and so on. And that, I think, is an exciting pathway for an artist-researcher to take!

Through the autoethnographic reflection on my transgender experience in relation to the voice, I introduced the *gendernaut*, as well as the performance strategy of *gendernauting*. Both terms describe the overall artistic method of voice gender-bending that I developed, through employing different drag characters on stage combined with a voice-sync (inspired by lip-sync technique) strategy between the visualized and audible voices on stage (i.e., the voice of the *gendernaut*, the visualized object-voice under study, and the voice from the playlist). The *gendernaut* demonstrated a great ability to alternate and control, by means of drag and pitch, voice's identification when it comes to gender, and the proposed method of *gendernauting* highlighted in a sharp way the interdependence of voice and gender establishing an interesting linkage among gender performativity and the microperformativity of the voice. I claim here that further investigation of this relationship (i.e., gender and microperformativity), as well as of the applicability of *gendernauting* strategies can provide meaningful artistic outputs that destabilize, expand and train the perception of the audience

with regard to gender-related voice/body characteristics.

Lastly, the proposed *trans-material voicescapes* depict the performance strategy applied in the performance work *trans-mission*, to represent a transgender voice that is informed by new materialist perspectives. This speculative gesture was materialized in order to further question and blur the boundaries between subject/object, and to support the argument of the voice as a trans-material becoming. The operation of the trans-play between the produced visualizations, provided a strong visual effect, and the remaining imprint of the voice(s) opened up an imaginative, affective place for the audience. I argue that exploring modes of bringing this (or similar) trans-play on stage, can be a powerful tool for performance practitioners that appreciate vocal matter and would like to work with its micro and subtle agencies within a new materialist context.

No doubt this research portrays the results of actualizing the above-mentioned performance strategies and practice-as-research methods in a specific aesthetical setting. However, the findings of the described experimentations allow assessing their potential by utilizing them in diverse performance settings. This is nothing but a temporary closure of what is, anyways, not a finalized formula of deconstructing gender voice norms through a playful and imaginative mode.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Program notes for the performance trans-mission: (a) inside, (b) final form, and (c) the description text.

A:

*Voice-and-gender not separate.
Listening always bound to social worlds.
To tell the story of my voice then,
I need a new language.*

TRANS-MISSION is a bizarre broadcast where voice, from a personal object of self-identification, becomes the object of study and the method of inquiry. It follows the journey of a gendernaut performing a series of voice experiments using different technologies. By focusing on the vocal frequency, the rhythm, the drama, the microtensions and tonalities, the gendernaut recomposes his voice as a synthetic landscape of sounds and visualizations that walks a tightrope between two worlds; social reality and imagination.

Concept, Production: Ermis Christodoulou
Performance: Ermis Christodoulou
Supervisor: Pavlos Kountouriotis
Mentor: Lucie Strecker
Technical Assistance: Bram Allard
Assistant/Light design: Ryan O'Shea
Movement Advice: Inês Furtuzinhos
Images: Vicky Meier
Program Design: Hanbal A. Naeem



tracklist:

joy division – transmission
klaus nomi – nomi song
blondie – atomic
the phantom of the opera (instrumental)
j. s. back – air on a g string
queen – radio ga ga

no trans-mission would be possible without the support of some amazing human beings.

my sincere thanks

to daz disley, fenia kotsopoulou, joão da silva, pavlos kountouriotis and lucie strecker for their valuable input at different stages of the work;
to my HoPP peers for sharing their voices in the most insightful and generous ways,
to my friends whose voices always take me to the most exciting places,

and my deepest gratitude and love

to my sis, Ryan O'Shea, for the kindness, the joy, and the inspiration he had been bringing me every single day, while this project was being developed.



B:



C:

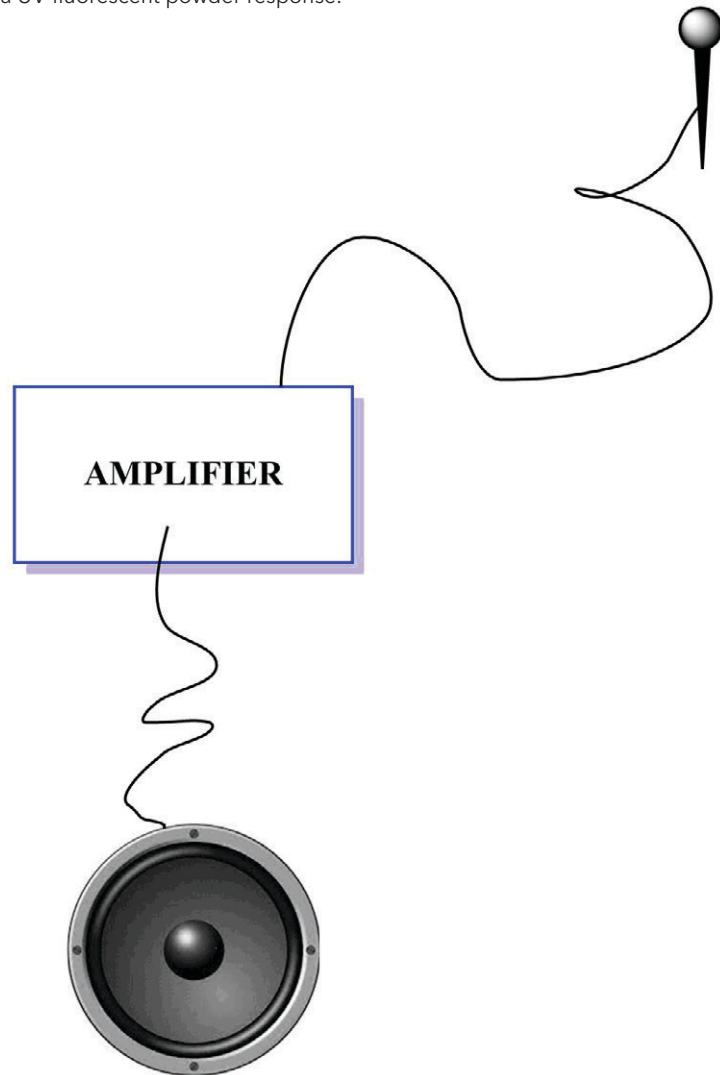
*Voice-and-gender not separate.
Listening always bound to social worlds.
To tell the story of my voice then,
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TRANS-MISSION is a bizarre broadcast where voice, from a personal object of self-identification, becomes the object of study and the method of inquiry. It follows the journey of a gendernaut performing a series of voice experiments using different technologies. By focusing on the vocal frequency, the rhythm, the drama, the microtensions and tonalities, the gendernaut recomposes his voice as a synthetic landscape of sounds and visualizations that walks a tightrope between two worlds; social reality and imagination.

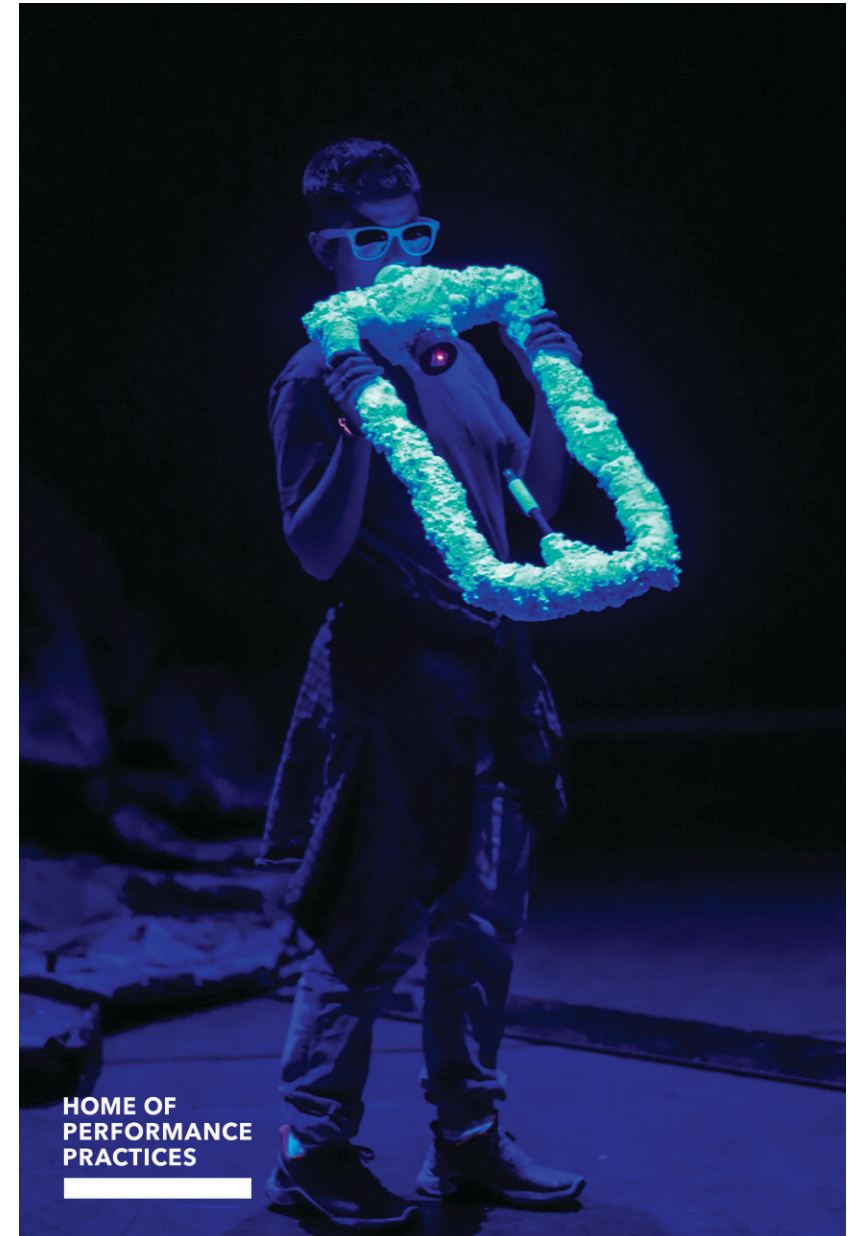
APPENDIX B

The three experimental voice-visualizers I used during trans-mission: (a) schematic overview of the two amplified systems, and (b) the laser pointer-based device.

A: A loudspeaker connected to an amplifier equipped with a microphone. On top of the loudspeaker two different cymatics experiments took place: (i) a liquid-liquid interaction, and (ii) a UV-fluorescent powder response.



B: Photo : Fenia Kotsopoulou



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