

New Museum Seminars: (Temporary) Collection of Ideas

VOICE -Possible Subthemes and Preliminary Annotated Bibliography

I. Possible Subthemes

Here are some potential entry points for a study of VOICE. This is a non-exhaustive list of subthemes or conceptual fields that may help in the structuring and development of our collaborative syllabus.

FOUNDATIONS

Underpinning any contemporary study of voice are foundational structuralist, semiotic, poststructuralist, feminist, postcolonial, and queer-theory texts that examine the textual, sonorous, and extra-linguistic capacities of vocal utterances. Although these fields are not listed separately in the categories below, it should be noted that feminism, race theory, queer theory, Marxism, and materialist histories have all informed, inflected, and critically shaped each of these conceptual frameworks for thinking the voice. Many of what we might call foundational texts on voice are structured upon or attempt to critique the dualism that has historically plagued discourse around voice through binaries like speech/writing, reason/emotion, mind/body, thought/feeling, language/sound. These texts lay the groundwork for a more wholistic approach to voice across the disciplines, as well as a better understanding of the particular points of reference—the disparate cultural lineages, frameworks, and conventions—for specific kinds of vocalization

AFFECT

Affects are the experiences and expressions of emotion, and as such they breach the threshold between the cognitive and organic-physiological dimensions of the body. Some types of vocalizations (tone, laughter, sobbing), particularly those that are involuntary, spontaneous, or in excess of consciousness, are forms of affective display that have a complex and nonlinear relation to stimuli. As such they may provide a way to think about voice in a nondualistic way, both in its utterance, and its reception.

ACOUSTEMOLOGY

Acoustemology describes the whole field of sound studies that focuses on the sensorial-sonic. It presupposes that there is an acoustic knowing (that doesn't come after discourse), and figures sound as a central condition for understanding experience. As such, an acoustemological approach could consider the ways in which sound is rendered as a metaphysical, sociological, and agential imperative. Acoustemologies are devoted to sonic ways of knowing and being in the world.

NEW MATERIALISM

There are several strains of new materialist philosophies. One strain has attempted to posit how “things” might exist outside of human thought, including outside of language. Such thinking prompts questions about how objects can be represented without recourse to a human context. At the same time, this anti-humanism that flattens out ontological differences also asks how objects that cannot speak may be represented or allowed to enter a public sphere. Still other new

materialist approaches offer novel ways for thinking about sound as material (sound-object or a sound-event) in itself, rather than merely as qualities of its source.

CRITICAL ANIMAL STUDIES

The distinction between humans and nonhuman animals has traditionally been theorized around the former as having capacity for language (thereby indicating a superior level of awareness of self and others) and the latter as not. Many nonhuman animals, however, also vocalize, even if our abilities to decipher this communication are not (yet) possible. The emergent field of Critical Animal Studies has challenged the historical-philosophic justification of the subjection/subjugation of animals based on the link between speech and thought; speech is no longer a justifiable reason for valuing some lives and not others. And yet animal communication, linguistic or otherwise, is still ripe for discussion.

INTERDISCIPLINARY OPERA STUDIES

Since the late 1990s, opera has been an increasingly popular subject of the humanities. In particular, opera, like other literary texts and live art forms, has been the focus of sustained examinations by musicologists working outside of strict formalist veins, to feminists, queer theorists, critical race scholars, and poststructuralists generally. Against other forms of musical or dramatic performance, opera, with its polyphonic narrative structures, tropes of love and death, and embodied sonic dimensions, has sophisticated ways of framing and mobilizing sex and gender. Most recently, there has been a dramaturgical turn toward contextualizing opera within a theatrical or performance framework, directing attention to the function and effects of opera's music, sound, and libretto, as well as the actual experience of these elements.

POLITICAL VOICE

The public sphere can be thought of as an agonistic space, made up of a heterogeneous public of individuals and conversations that forms around a multitude of conflicting agendas, priorities, and positions. While this kind of public space anticipates dissensus, and therefore a deferral of thorough, unanimous resolutions, it does rely upon common languages and conventions for occupying space in order to function as an arena for political articulation and debate. This includes creating the right conditions for listening rather than just hearing, a crucial part of ensuring free speech, adequate representation, and dialogue. Attention to the complicated machinations of neoliberalism is needed to understand how our public spheres are currently shaped and regulated by market agendas.

VERNACULAR / TRADITION

Folk songs, work songs, spirituals, and protest songs have rich and complicated lineages that are often intertwined with the fight for social justice or with the building of solidarity and self-pride. Activism around labor, suffrage, abolition, anti-war, civil rights, feminism, racial politics, and sexual freedom, among many other causes, when articulated through musical forms, prompts questions about the tensions between art and politics: How is such activism to be approached critically and sonorously? Studies of musical and more generally vocal vernacular traditions require nuanced models for interpreting how different vernaculars intersect or engage one another, reflective of recent constructive approaches to identity politics and notions of community.

PERFORMATIVE UTTERANCES

In the wake of J.L. Austin's foundational text on performatives, or speech acts, numerous scholars have expanded upon the possibilities of what can be done with words. They have theorized and interrogated ways that subjects are constituted via specific modes of speech,

address, and interpellation. Even within Austen's primary text there is some ambiguity, which continues today, about what can be done with words; this question is being redirected to voice in all its dimensions, not just its linguistic one. How does the voice bestow agency to the person who makes an utterance and what does this agency entail? Is presence in vocalization enough? What is the performative nature of the sonic?

DISEMBODIED VOICES / APPARATUS

The voice itself is an apparatus of communication, and yet there are many other techniques/technologies that either augment, amplify, or stand-in for the voice and its message. It's important to consider the political agendas at play with the use of specific technologies—especially with the proliferation of new technologies to distribute, recognize, and imitate the human voice—which are always far from politically/ideologically neutral: the loudspeaker, the human loudspeaker, radio frequencies, various forms of audio recordings, voice recognition technologies, etc. What are the effects and affects of technologies that separate body and voice? What happens to notions of authenticity, of uniqueness associated with the voice? Whose voices are recognized, reproduced, ventriloquized?

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

The flows of power and authority within learning environments have long been upended by radical pedagogues in order to question the traditional teacher-student dynamics. Alternative pedagogical settings seek to emancipate students by fostering new infrastructures for engaged learning that rely upon a redistribution of power, and a reassessment of the value of authority. Essential to this are critiques of the conventions of language and speech that privilege particular kinds of voices—not just individuals, but particular sounds, orders, affects—within academia.

LANGUAGE ECOLOGIES

Languages are not stable, unchanging things, but rather each language is influenced and affected by other languages it interacts with, as well as by the society that uses it. As such, language is acutely responsive to shifts within its environmental sphere (the actual interaction of languages through bi- or multilingual speakers) and social changes (the socio-political-cultural changes within speaking groups that affect life cycles, or integrity/morphology of specific words). How does contemporary language usage reflect changes of the digital/internet era? How might recent language usage in the US be a response to an increasingly globalized, and yet still regionally specific, context?

II. Annotated Bibliography

Abel, Samuel D. *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performances*. Queer Critique. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996.

ANNOTATION: This book is written from the position of a gay man's experience of opera and argues that opera is not like sex, but is sex, and calls for attention to the desire that's tied to the performing bodies. Abel considers the embodied voices of operatic performers as well as the visceral responses to them in his discussion of opera's polyvalent nature and its subsequent openness/appeal to multiple kinds of erotic interpretations (rather than addressing one specific mode of sexual being). He attempts to plumb why this is so, and why opera more generally is considered an erotic form that elicits visceral response, drawing on music history and theory (although without attending to opera as descending from seventeenth-century Venetian drama *per musica*, a form which subverted religious, cultural, and gendered mainstream positions), as well as looking at opera's casts of travesti, divas, and castrati. In this text, and especially in the culminating final chapter, "The End of Opera," Abel ultimately attempts to "rescue" opera from (then) recent criticism with its overwhelming readings of female victimization or homosexual closeting that fail to understand opera as embodying inherently queer desire.

Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001.

ANNOTATION: This is one of the French (-Algerian) Marxist philosopher's chief publications (first published in 1968, France; translated into English in 1971). It includes the important essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes towards an Investigation)," which developed Althusser's theories of ideology, and in particular the idea that subjects are constituted by dominant ideologies: religious, legal, political. This process, which Althusser coined interpellation, is explained through a theatrical example of "hailing" someone: An individual recognizes that they are being directly addressed when someone calls out "Hey, you there"; and their recognition that it is them being hailed, as well as their response, makes them a subject, even when their status as a subject is necessary to their being directly addressed in the first place. Less literally, Althusser theorized this relationship between the (hailing) ideology and individual subjects it "recruits" in ways that become important for thinking about the autonomy of the individual voice, and whether it is possible to speak, address, respond, or generally communicate outside of society's dominant institutions.

Austin, John Langshaw. *How to Do Things with Words*. Edited by James Opie Urmson and Marina Sbisa. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975.

ANNOTATION: In this foundational text on speech act theory (originally published in 1962, after the lectures of 1955), British philosopher of language J.L. Austin investigates the elements and effects of spoken language. The text is best known for containing Austin's coinage of "performative utterance" or "performatives" to denote words or phrases by which "to say something is to do something"; this is in comparison to constantives—statements that attempt to describe reality and are in some way true or false. Basic examples of performative utterances are explored, including promises, betting, and naming, as well as an explanation of how they have happy/unhappy dimensions rather than being true/false. The lectures build upon one another to comprehensively investigate how performatives and constantives function, as well as their locutionary, perlocutionary, and illocutionary forces, with Austin eventually concluding that the two kinds of utterances are in fact not completely distinct (consider that to state something is also to do something). This text has important bearings for later thinkers including Althusser and Butler.

Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhajlovič. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011.

ANNOTATION: This publication brings together four essays written by the Russian philosopher, literary critic, and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) between 1934 and 1941. Collectively, these essays focus on the specific language of the novel, which Bakhtin posited in ways that were innovative for the time as well as important in the West decades later with respect to theorizing

intertextuality. Against what he saw as an understanding of literary style and language as non-genre specific, and tied to an individual author, a stylistic school, or general poetic phenomena, Bakhtin proposed that the novel was uniquely dialogic: the author, the narrator, and each character within is in dialogic contact; or put another way, the novel “dialogizes from within.” Bakhtin explains that: “The language of the novel is a *system* of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other. It is impossible to describe and analyze it as a single unitary language.” Two additional major concepts introduced in these essays were heteroglossia, the combination/interactions between different kinds of speech-genres, and chronotope, the unique “time space” of a particular genre. These concepts produced an understanding of literary works as hybrid, polyvocal, and uniquely assembling from across distinct time-spaces. While the essays did expand out from the novel to a philosophy of dialogic language more generally, they could also be supplemented by his essay “The Problem of Speech Genres,” which considered the tensions between language as a closed system or as a living dialogue.

Barthes, Roland. *Image - Music - Text: Essays*. Translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978.

ANNOTATION: This publication includes Barthes’s key poststructuralist texts pertinent to any consideration of voice, most notably “Death of the Author,” which posits that for any text, meaning is made as much by the reader’s interpretation as by the author’s intention; and “Grain of the Voice,” wherein Barthes addresses language’s inadequacy for interpreting music. Of the latter he proposes: “rather than trying to change the language on music [working against adjectives], it would be better to change the musical object itself, as it presents itself to discourse, better to alter its level of perception or intellection, to displace the fringe of contact between music and language.” Barthes uses the word “grain” for this space between language and a (musical) voice. Although he focuses mainly on classical music in this text, Barthes does speculate on the possibilities for thinking the grain (“the body of the voice”) in other contexts: More generally music itself (through its geno-song) is a form of writing; its pheno-song inadequately points to the communicative aspects. Barthes wants to judge music by “the image of its body (the figure) given me.”

Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

ANNOTATION: Lauren Berlant here considers the persistent optimism that has existed since 1980s, in spite of the increasing clarity of neoliberalism’s inability to provide for individuals as well as its associated modes of precarity, contingency, and crisis. This optimism is structured around affective responses within relations, such that feelings associated with a perceived and peddled “good life” become the way that people are able to keep going. She argues that the historical present is experienced, first and foremost, *affectively*. The “cruelty” of this optimism is that it “stands in the way of one’s flourishing”: the social crises and the problems inherent to late capitalism are not adequately addressed. Of particular relevance in the text is the final chapter on “The Desire for the Political,” which discusses the shift from a public that encounters itself through vocal address (conversationality, debate) toward a withdrawal from conversationality, instead creating an affective public of the political, or “ambient citizenship.” The text looks at specific works of art as well as legacies of silent protest and noise politics, and considers ways that affect has and might be rerouted and bound to the political.

Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

ANNOTATION: In this text, Judith Butler builds on her theories of speech acts and interpellation of subjects that she began in *Bodies That Matter* and *Gender Trouble*, extending these ideas to include a consideration of particular kinds of “excitable speech.” Butler considers hate speech, pornography censorship, and the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy of the military, in light of the inherent instability of language (including its ability for resignification), analyzing the subsequent problematics that come with speech regulation. Through her examination of speech and acts, and in particular in the chapter “On Linguistic Vulnerability,” Butler also teases out further the relationship between speech and the body, arguing that the two are never utterly separate, and yet never unified, but rather they speak together to produce a social speaking subject. It is in the gap between speech and embodied action

that Butler finds possibility: This is the space of the excitable, the uncontrollable, and hence, the performative. Butler argues against most forms of speech regulation, preferring instead legibility of power within excitable speech in order to open up the possibility for the resignification of injurious language.

Carlyle, Angus, and Cathy Lane, eds. *On Listening*. Axminster, UK: Uniformbooks, 2013.

ANNOTATION: This anthology brings together forty perspectives on listening from individuals across disciplines that include “anthropology, bioacoustics, geography, literature, community activism, sociology, religion, philosophy, art history, conflict mediation and the sonic arts including music, ethnomusicology and field recording.” The publication premises listening as situational—a combination of experiencing everyday audio through our given surroundings, and the active process of meaning being distillation. The latter presupposes the relationship between sound and environment in listening as situational, and thereby a phenomenological experience. The entries—which are brief—are at once widely diverse and disciplinarily specific, with texts that range from the history of the radio as a listening device, to Zen’s killing of inner voices, and the onomatopoeic names of birds to Rwanda’s post-Genocide workshops. There are four sections within the anthology: “Listening Perspectives,” “Listening Spaces,” “Listening Devices,” and “Listening to Self and Other.” While the focus of this book is on listening, and much of it about sound rather than voice, it is a provocation for thinking about the conditions of possibility for vocal utterances to be received, engaged, and deciphered.

Carson, Anne. “Gender of Sound.” In *Glass, Irony and God*. New York: New Directions Book, 1995.

ANNOTATION: *Glass, Irony and God* is a collection of Anne Carson’s narrative poems, along with the lucid and speculative final essay, “Gender of Sound.” In this last text, Carson declares that the sounds people make are paramount for our perception, understanding, and judgments of them, explaining that every utterance is autobiographical by way of being simultaneously from the inside and the outside. She takes for granted the gendered hierarchies of voice (both its qualities and its uses) following the work of classical historians and feminists. Carson is more interested in “how our presumptions about gender affect the way we hear sounds,” and in particular, how the “radical otherness” of females has been historically figured through a strong aversion to and disavowal of female utterances. Drawing examples from the history of ritual, primal, guttural, nonlinguistic, “non-rational,” and animal-like utterances produced by females, she asks: “Why is female sound bad to hear?” She leaves unanswered the question of where such vocalizations figure in relation to highly regulated civic spaces as well as in relation to the controlled/repressed self.

Cavarero, Adriana. *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.

ANNOTATION: *For More than One Voice* is divided into three sections: “How Logos Lost Its Voice,” “Women Who Sing,” and “A Politics of Voices.” Together they structure a critique of Western metaphysics’ interpretation of the human as a specifically rational animal. Looking to literary and musical examples, Cavarero refigures the relationship between speech and thought so that the human is instead a “speaking animal,” an animal possessing a voice with meaning (“phone semantike”). Unlike many others theorizing voice, Cavarero thinks the phonetic and semantic aspects of voice should be clearly distinguished in order to rectify the historic privileging of language over the sonorous qualities of voice. Cavarero gives much attention to the infancy phase (drawing on Cixous and Kristeva), critically examining and shifting the power traditionally afforded by the law of the father more toward the power of the maternal *chora*, such that the voice is figured as presymbolic, and thereby not exhausted by signification (speech). Through this, the voice is rendered embodied, unique, and always relational, which directs weight not to what is being said, but to who it is that is speaking.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings*. Edited by Luce Giard. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

ANNOTATION: *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings* is a collection of Michel de Certeau's texts that collectively consider the conditions that make it possible for politicized voices to be heard. The title essay was written in the wake of the May 1968 student uprisings in France, and is very much a response to these events, although it still reads as pertinent to today in thinking not about who has the formal or legal right to speak, or to be represented, but rather how dominant ideologies encourage or deny the conditions for socially marginalized or oppressed groups to be heard. Or put another way, it raises questions about the capacities of individuals to acquire political expression and participate politically. "The Capture of Speech" as a title suggests not just voices being "received" or heard, but also suggests a one-way, and thereby ineffectual, communicative encounter that fails to produce a response: Speech is taken into possession rather than being part of a reciprocal exchange.

Chapin, Keith Moore, and Andrew Herrick Clark, eds. *Speaking of Music: Addressing the Sonorous*. 1st ed. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.

ANNOTATION: The collected essays within *Speaking of Music* are concerned with how language is used to describe, interpret, and experience music, even while arguing for the inextricability of music and language. The editors intend for the book to "preserve the difference and specificity of music and language but also to establish a collaborative space for the two, in which the limit is at once established, transgressed, deterritorialized." The essays tend to focus on music from the Western tradition, and as a collection they represent a variety of disciplinary conventions and methodologies. They also explore ways that music is engaged and understood beyond standard music notation, paying particular attention to how embodied physicality, space, and temporality deeply affect and are affected by the sonorous and how it is articulated. The effects music has on autonomous agency, self-individuation, and interpersonal and community relations are posed as contradictory and therefore worth plumbing.

Clément, Catherine. *Opera, Or, The Undoing of Women*. London: Tauris, 1997.

ANNOTATION: This feminist critique of opera is written by French cultural critic and feminist philosopher of a psychoanalytic tradition, Catherine Clément (first published in 1979, France; first translated into English in 1988). It focuses on the repetitive victimization of female characters in operas, as the author identifies the normative trope of male domination and female oppression (more specifically "homicidal misogyny" or domination by death or domestication) across thirty major operas. Clément mostly considers operatic music to be an "opiate" (she acknowledges it is sublime) for the libretto and action that take place: It appeals to the subconscious in order to overwrite, or eroticize, the tragedy and horror that take place. Her text, however, is biased against the music and vocal qualities of opera, failing to interrogate their capacities to set forth other narratives (and narrative structures), critical dimensions, and authorial powers. Where she does acknowledge the equality (even superiority) of female operatic voices, she interprets this as women singing their own demise.

Connor, Steven. *Beyond Words Sobs, Hums, Stutters and Other Vocalizations*. London: Reaktion Books, 2014.

ANNOTATION: Steven Connor has organized his investigation into voice around groups or families like "Ahem," "St...st...st," "Grrr," "Hic," "Mmmm" etc. These all exemplify the complication between intentionally meaningful (though non-semantic) noise and involuntary sounds of vocalization. Spurred by Aristotle's writings—in particular *De Anima's* declarations about voice and soulful beings—and the idea of value judgments of the sounds of a language, Connor's work considers how imagination, specifically iconicity in sound as well as magical thinking, is central to understanding voice. His is a "popular poetics of language" rather than a study of language or linguistics, an intentional challenge to how we understand the operations of the communication of meaning.

———. *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

ANNOTATION: Steven Connor, in *Dumbstruck*, brings together a wide range of sources of ventriloquism throughout history, as well as sources of this history, constructing a lineage that

descends not so much from very early examples of illusionistic speaking, but rather from the history of spiritual mediums, possessed voices, etc. What makes this compelling is that Connor is using ventriloquism to stand in for a broad idea of the disembodied, or dissociated, voice and its relation to situated social and cultural events in order to identify this separation of voice from source as endemic. Examples range from demonic possession, to recording devices, to other forms of telecommunications from the telephone to the internet. Connor seems to argue that ventriloquism doesn't just indicate a dissociated voice, but rather that there is a voice-body involved too: an implied body attached to the untethered voice. Ultimately, Connor's project is to illuminate how voice and space are bound together: "the bodily or phenomenological conditions of the voice determine and are determined by cultural and historical orderings of space." The criticism is that he does not read against the grain of the histories he has received, nor does he consider agency or identity of the voices involved.

———. "Rustications: Animals in the Urban Mix," July 10, 2013. *Modern Soundscapes*, Lecture: University of New South Wales.

ANNOTATION: Steven Connor considers animals in the city, however anomalous, to be a part of the soundscape or acoustic terrain of the urban environment. He discusses the composition of a soundscape in comparison to a landscape, focusing on the relations that exist between elements of each of these. Not only do animals enact a "sonic infiltration" of the city, they also bring an interiority to its soundscape: Their interactions with other animals as well as with humans or nonliving elements are based on them listening and responding. As audible actants they help reorient the perception of urban environments from a singularly human terrain—our hearing them indicates a retreat of the human. Connor touches on ideas of environmental conservation and behavioral adaptation, ultimately conveying that "the sonic infiltrations of animals are not so much a haunting as a harbinger of a new, more convivial world-city."

Couldry, Nick. *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*. Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2010.

ANNOTATION: Nick Couldry urges the reader of *Why Voice Matters* to critique neoliberalism's reduction of social, cultural, political, and economic life to functions of the market. Crossing media and economic studies in an unusually integrated way, Couldry argues that it is crucial for individuals to affirm themselves through giving accounts of their own personal narratives in order to bring a human dimension back to life: Neoliberalism, with all its complex machinations, is most destructive according to the author, because of the primacy it gives to the market over all other aspects of life. The fallout is the homogeneity it supports and perpetuates on account of what works (or rather, is normative) for the functioning of the market. Couldry posits voice as the most likely/important way to create an alternative to neoliberal politics, because it can offer counter logics to the market and anticipate a different, more socially cooperative democracy. Importantly, Couldry posits that it is not enough simply to have more voices circulating, but rather that voice needs be thought of in relation to (1) value and (2) process. By this Couldry asserts that key to a post-neoliberal political domain is a society that actually values and listens to the increasingly numerous and diverse voices that are active. The argument, while neither utopian nor resolved, is methodically worked through via definitions of voice and neoliberalism, a critique of neoliberalism, a canvassing of counter-perspectival resources, and a propositional future that values voice.

Cox, Christoph. "Beyond Representation and Signification: Toward a Sonic Materialism." *Journal of Visual Culture* 10, No. 2 (August 9, 2011): 145–61.

ANNOTATION: In this paper, Christoph Cox considers why sound art has been so profoundly under theorized, and why it has failed to generate a rich and compelling critical literature. His answer is that until recently, the theoretical models—mostly based in linguistic theory—have been inadequate, on their account of privileging signification, representation, and mediation as well as their structuring of aesthetic engagement around the primacy and logic of the visual. This necessarily marginalizes the audible or sonic dimensions of sound. Cox's way out of this quagmire is to consider

sounds not as qualities, but rather as individual objects, or better still, as temporal events, that also exist separately from their sources. Thought in this materialist way, “we might begin to treat artistic productions not as complexes of signs or representations but complexes of forces materially inflected by other forces and force-complexes. We might ask of an image or a text not what it *means* or *represents*, but what it *does*, how it *operates*, what changes it effectuates.” Cox’s argument is clearly influenced and indeed constructed through the philosophies of Deleuze, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and a host of contemporary art and music practices.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Corrected ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

ANNOTATION: *Of Grammatology* (first published in 1967, France; first translated into English in 1976) is one of, if not the most, essential foundational texts of deconstruction. Its main structural concern is the differences between speech and writing—Derrida explains how throughout history, the speaking voice has been privileged (phonocentrism) over the “derivative” spoken word, which by contrast, always denotes an absence. *Of Grammatology* is an early poststructuralist text that attempts to enact a different kind of reading, made possible through a foundational deconstruction of metaphysics. It alludes to a science of writing that cuts through the logocentrism that has elevated speech above writing, instead thinking about language as formed through the interplay of the two. Derrida analyses a number of literary texts to illustrate his point, perhaps most notably Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics*, with its proclamations that writing is completely distinct from language and that it exists merely to represent language; this is followed by other deconstructions, including Claude Levi-Strauss’s *Tristes Tropiques*. This is a key text for thinking about the relationships within language of speech and writing. The introduction, written by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is particularly helpful in explaining Derrida’s moves.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Translated by David Wills. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.

ANNOTATION: A transcription of a ten-hour talk Derrida gave in 1997 on “The Autobiographical Animal.” In this text Derrida is predictably critical of the treatment of animals by humans in modern industrial society, yet is unsatisfied with the discourse surrounding animal rights. Derrida is concerned with deconstructing the historical distinction between man and animal with its basis in Cartesian dualism. This is done in part through the often-referenced encounter between the philosopher and his cat, which hinges on the facts of the philosopher’s nakedness and the cat’s “looking.” The text brings up important problems of speaking for others who are unable to respond.

Dolar, Mladen. *A Voice and Nothing More*. Short Circuits. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.

ANNOTATION: Mladen Dolar, Slovenian philosopher, complicates the voice in culture through looking at how the voice has been theorized in linguistics, metaphysics, physics, ethics, and politics, as well as in the works of Freud and Kafka—these inquiries each take a chapter of the book. Ultimately what Dolar proposes is a paradoxical object-voice, that is, a notion of the voice that works against the common practice of perpetuating a dualistic rendition of voice. On the one hand is the voice of phonocentrism and logocentrism as deconstructed by Derrida; and on the other hand is the voice understood on purely aesthetic (and hence fetishized) terms. Dolar’s object-voice stands in between these two poles, embracing difference, slipperiness, and the uncanny while rendering irrelevant binaries between nature and culture, body and language, inside and outside. Dolar is particularly indebted to Lacan, especially to the philosopher’s later work that took as its psychoanalytic object the voice that resisted linguistic totalization.

Droitcour, Brian. “Making Word: Ryan Trecartin as Poet.” Rhizome (July 27, 2011).

ANNOTATION: Ryan Trecartin’s use of language in his video works is here discussed by Brian Droitcour, who considers the variety of ways it figures in and informs his practice, from the liberated grammar of his scriptwriting to the rendering of plurality. Droitcour considers Flarf and Conceptual Writing as perhaps inadequate to understanding Trecartin: the artist’s work is not just a reflection of the internet or of the digital age, but rather as Droitcour contends, swaying to the influence of

contemporary speech itself: “A speaker is obliged to use words that come from outside her—and can be understood by others—while making them her own at the moment of the utterance, in order to make it seem like the utterance comes from inside her. And *K-CoreaINC.K (Section A)* dramatizes that condition in dialogue.”

Edgerton, Michael Edward. *The 21st-Century Voice: Contemporary and Traditional Extra-Normal Voice. The New Instrumentation No. 9.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004.

ANNOTATION: Michael Edgerton’s *The 21st Century Voice* is an extensive reference manual for extra-complex vocalization within nontraditional voice work, and in particular, within singing. It is vast and thorough in its scale, which has led to its praise and criticism: Its scope is admirable and yet at times discussions are cursory rather than critical or in-depth (it has been described as a “shopping list” by one critic). Due to this, the publication is most useful as a compendium that introduces the reader—likely a composer or vocal trainer—to various forms of extra-normal voice, with a selection that extends far beyond Western examples. Included is a CD that features examples of the techniques discussed and suggested reading lists appear at the end of each chapter. Sections are created around Airflow, Source, Resonance/Articulation, Heightened Potentials, and Context, the last of which considers the techniques discussed within an artistic framework.

Eidsheim, Nina Sun. “Marian Anderson and ‘Sonic Blackness’ in American Opera.” *American Quarterly* 63, No. 3 (2011): 641–71.

ANNOTATION: In this text, Nina Sun Eidsheim makes the claim that African-American operatic voices are heard through a complex of social registers that includes slaves’ voices, burlesque opera, and minstrel shows, which have together led to the notion that there are sonic qualities to black vocalization. Eidsheim posits this theory while attending primarily to the African-American opera singer Marian Anderson, who, while being one of the first African Americans to become well known in the field, would still be relegated to performing marginalized roles even at places like the Metropolitan Opera in 1955. Through this case study, Eidsheim claims that listening as a cultural-historical process “carries with it the resonance of the past.... Each period deposited a new perceptual layer, adding to the sediment from which American audiences’ ears are molded.” She argues that while discourse around the black voice has been reconfigured, practices of typecasting and of listening still lag behind. In addition to being well researched and having copious notes, an appendix directs the readers to where they can access the examples mentioned in the article.

García Lorca, Federico. *In Search of Duende.* Edited by Christopher Maurer. Translated by Norman Thomas Di Giovanni. New York: New Directions, 1998.

ANNOTATION: This publication brings together several texts throughout the career of Spanish poet, dramatist, and theater director García Lorca, in which he discussed the idea of duende. Etymologically, duende refers to folkloric tricksters, goblins, or poltergeists, but in García Lorca’s work, the term is used to describe a complicated but profound set of feelings associated with great art (both its making and its reception). Specifically, García Lorca located duende in dance, music, and the bullfight. Taking from the metaphor of the trickster, duende is at once close to death and yet inspirational. While García Lorca’s discussion of duende is rich and enticing, it is also elusive and at times contradictory, although perhaps this is reflective of duende itself. The term has been taken up by many cultural producers of all kinds in the attempt to pin down or put a name on creative forces and the depth of emotion they conjure, drawing upon so-called primal earthiness, primitive pasts, and a sense of the gravitas of history.

Goldsmith, Kenneth. “Flarf Is Dionysus. Conceptual Writing Is Apollo.” *Poetry Foundation*, n.d.

ANNOTATION: This very short text by Kenneth Goldsmith attempts a cursory discussion of current forms of poetry, in particular Flarf and Conceptual Writing. In contrast to fragmented forms of the recent past, Goldsmith identifies a few characteristics of these two kinds of internet-age poetry: identity is up for grabs, and materiality and a certain disposability are foregrounded. Flarf is improvisatory and channels the flux of the internet, of socializing, and samples of web texts but

within recognizable forms of poetry. By contrast, Conceptual Writing attempts to mimic the machine of the internet—its structures reflect this, so that they often don't read as poetry.

Gregg, Melissa. *Cultural Studies' Affective Voices*. Basingstoke, UK; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

ANNOTATION: Melissa Gregg's contribution to Cultural Studies discourse is to look at the field itself and ask about its affective capacities. Specifically, Gregg sees the lack of affective registers in much scholarship and academic learning as detrimental to the field. Against this she attends to the work of key figures: Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, Andrew Ross, and Meghan Morris, each of whom she devotes a chapter to. This is a particularly good book for thinking about the conditions for speaking and listening that academia fosters, as well as the political and activist power of affective strategies of articulation, sympathetic reading, empathy for subjects, self-reflexiveness, and anecdotal critique. Gregg's book makes a link between the field's original political ambitions and those of the contemporary generation who are committed to engaged, public intellectualism in spite of the present conservative neoliberal climate.

Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Revised and expanded ed. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008.

ANNOTATION: The key texts within this anthology of Heidegger's writings may well be the introduction to *Being and Time*, "Letter on Humanism," and "The Way to Language." Across these three texts, one can get a sense of Heidegger's concerted mission to examine the Being of that being who thinks of Being. Grossly simplified, Heidegger identified the beingness of being (human) as the very questioning of being itself. Further, since for Heidegger there is no answer to this question of being, mystery lies at the heart of Being, and thereby human experience. Coupled with this ability to question being is the possession of language and thereby the capacity to think beyond a primarily useful engagement with the "environment" that surrounds us. Heidegger's text is useful as a provocation for determining what kinds of meaningful worlds might exist outside of language—ultimately his notion of world-building does not allow for this, and yet there is scope in his embrace of "mystery" (that which is unanswerable, beyond language) and his writings on art, to suppose that such world-building might be possible.

"Hey Hey Glossolalia: Exhibiting the Voice," 2008. Exhibition: Creative Time, New York.

ANNOTATION: "Hey Hey Glossolalia" was a series of events and lectures throughout New York City that looked at voice in a variety of art and textual practices. Curated by Mark Beasley, its premise stemmed from the catch-all, non-language-specific greeting of "Hey," as well as the definition of glossolalia. Derived from the Greek *glossa* "tongue" and *lalia* "to talk," the term refers to all kinds of vocalizations that don't necessarily fall under the umbrella of sensical speech, for example the vocalizations of "infants, poets, schizophrenics, mediums, charismatics." Participants included Robert King Wilkerson & Rigo 23, Liam Gillick & Tirdad Zolghadr, Ryan Gander & Bedwyr Williams, Adam Pendleton, Frances Stark, Dexter Sinister, Mark Leckey, Ian Svenonius, No Bra, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Chris Evans, Carey Young, Rammelzee, and Vert. The exhibition was accompanied by a two-volume catalogue, including recordings, transcripts, and responses to the exhibition, as well as a section curated by Adam Pendleton around gospel music and the voice in song.

Kun, Josh. "The Aural Border." *Theatre Journal* 52, No. 1 (2000): 1–21.

ANNOTATION: In "The Aural Border," Josh Kun focuses on the performances of Guillermo Gomez-Pena and the Pocha Nostra in order to examine the sonic composition and performative musical praxis characteristic of the complex US-Mexican border region. While this text is regionally specific, it forms part of Kun's larger project of constructing an aural border archive that is more than an exhaustive laundry list of audio artifacts, but instead "a new archive of historicity and analysis, a new methodology of understanding the audio formation of national and social identities within specific, delineated geopolitical territories." Kun speculates on the US-Mexico border as a field of sound comprising "music-making, of static and noise, of melodic convergence and dissonant clashing." This paper formed part of the research for Kun's book *Audiotopia: Music, Race and America* (2005), which

inserts popular music into conversations about American identity in order to consider the landscape of various discrete but interacting “republics of sound.”

Lane, Cathy. *Playing with Words: The Spoken Word in Artistic Practice*. London; Cromford: CRiSAP (Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice), London College of Communication; RGAP (Research Group for Artists Publications), 2008.

ANNOTATION: Composer, sound artist, lecturer, and researcher Cathy Lane asked forty leading composers and artists to contribute to a text in which they address their practice in light of the sonic dimension of words. The entries are as diverse in form (writing, graphics, poetry, photographs, and interviews) as they are in genre (electroacoustic music composition, text sound composition, and sound poetry) and discipline (digital arts, electronic, concrete and experimental poetry, performance art, and fine art). While textured and ambitious, the compilation is premised on an ultimately futile task: that of translating into language the sonic dimensions of words. This is addressed lightly and with an acknowledgement of its irony a couple of times throughout the book; ultimately the notion of “play” in the title is explained as representative of the tensions and lack of stability as the texts jitter around the aural and the textual. Among the contributors are Laurie Anderson, Trevor Wishart, Joan La Barbara, Language Removal Services, and Jaap Blonk.

“LOUDSPEAKER: A Symposium on the Voice,” May 2013. Concert, Symposium: Performa, New York.

ANNOTATION: “Loudspeaker” focused specifically on the history and current manifestations of extended vocal technique and avant-garde vocal performance, through lecture-presentations, live vocal demonstrations, and video documentation of specific techniques. It addressed a variety of formats, and approaches (vocal trills, ululation, melisma, death growl) across a range of participants including pioneering vocalist Joan La Barbara; writer, musician Jace Clayton; artist Florian Hecker; contemporary vocalist Gelsey Bell; musician and composer Alex Waterman; and curator Mark Beasley.

Milder, Patricia. “Teaching as Art: The Contemporary Lecture-Performance.” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 33, No. 1 (January 2011): 13–27.

ANNOTATION: In this extended essay, Patricia Milder surveys the recent upsurge in artist lectures, and in particular artists’ novel responses to invitations for this form of “live performance.” As well as asking why this is happening now, Milder also looks at precedents throughout art history, with special attention given to the lineages within the dance and theater worlds. The writer gives sustained analysis of works by the Bruce High Quality Foundation, Sharon Hayes, Joseph Beuys, Jerome Bel, and the National Theater of the United States of America, considering many of these practices through the lens of contemporary forms of institutional critique; Milder pointedly critiques them for their aesthetic forms as much as their conceptual base.

Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

ANNOTATION: In this text, scholar Fred Moten reads the traditions of radical black thought and performance against Western philosophy (Heidegger, Kant, Husserl, Wittgenstein, and Derrida). In doing so, Moten expands upon the earlier arguments of Amiri Baraka who had argued that jazz was exclusively an African-American art form, and argues that all black experience of culture, politics, sexuality, identity, and blackness itself is performative, and in particular, a form of improvisation. He states: “Blackness is an ongoing performance of encounter: rupture, collision, and passionate response.” The book is divided into three sections—“The Sentimental Avant Garde,” “In the Break,” and “Visible Music”—that are structured by two overarching themes, both of which are “resistances of objects.” The first resistance is Aunt Hester’s scream, in which Moten sets the tone via an attention to the voice, the cry, and other “phonic substances” associated with black experience historically; the second resistance is Adrian Piper’s Theatricality. Moten’s book is rigorous, lyrical, and polyvocal, as he works between and across various epistemologies and cultural theories as well as different conventions of speech and writing. Moten says, “I’m interested in the possibility of non-exclusion that is located on the outside of the fullness of speech and I’m wary of the inclusion—

within already existing reality—that redress implies, wary of any suturing of the gap in the order of things."

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Listening*, 1st ed. Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.

ANNOTATION: In *Listening*, Jean-Luc Nancy continues his theorizing about difference, community, and a singular plurality of being by proposing an acoustemology (a new field within musicology)—a way of being for which listening is inherent. Since Nancy's being presupposes an otherness (it exists via an innate otherness), the relationality implicit to listening—as opposed to hearing (which involves something like the identification of a separate subject)—is convincing, as is Nancy's further exploration into how acoustic resonance and spacing, which when combined produce a self-reference, a feeding back and through the listener, enable the listening subject to articulate or generate an understanding and connection with place. *Revoï*, or resonant sound, is key for Nancy in thinking about the self's relation to itself. Nancy's text is invigorating but somewhat open-ended as it covers different kinds of listening and various sonic objects, from sound through speaking voice and music. It addresses the problems of thinking about "technico-musicological" discourse and interpretive discourse on music, which he sees as distinctly separate, at times exclusively so. To this, Nancy offers the sonic as a way for thinking about music. "Listening is musical when it is music that listens to itself. It returns to itself, it reminds itself of itself, and it feels itself as resonance itself: a relationship to self deprived, stripped of all egoism and all ipseity."

Neumark, Norie, Ross Gibson, and Theo Van Leeuwen, eds. *Voice: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media*. Leonardo. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.

ANNOTATION: This collection of nineteen texts begins from the awareness that sound, and the voice in particular, is receiving increasing attention in the visual and digital arts. Its main premise is for thinking through the complex matrix of the authentic and the mediated voice, as both of these are articulated sonorously and as text. It teases out cultural and social influences and the tendencies of the discourses around voice that focus on authenticity, the magical or spiritual voice, the ghostliness of disembodied voice, the apparent uniqueness of the unmediated voice, and the posthuman voice. The texts are singular in their approaches, collectively covering the intellectual terrain of history, philosophy, cultural theory, film, dance, poetry, media arts, and computer games, and clustered into sections on "Capturing Voice," "Performing Voice," "Reanimating Voice," and "At the Human Limits of Voice."

Osterreich, Norbert. "Music with Roots in the Aether." *Perspectives of New Music* 16, No. 1 (n.d.): 214–28.

ANNOTATION: This text tries to account for *Music With Roots in the Aether*, an epic work by Robert Ashley and his peers (David Behrman, Philip Glass, Alvin Lucier, Gordon Mumma, Pauline Oliveros, and Terry Riley), which is somewhat of a documentary work that is later referred to as a "television opera." The work comprised fourteen videotaped segments of an hour each, followed by a recording of their live performances. This text is useful as an early document of thinking about voice, music, media, and representation in art, and particularly with respect to some of the most important composers (including vocalists) of the last forty years. It does, however, convey an early lack in the language available for thinking about sonic material (here, for example, music is referred to as image), although Osterreich sets his task as in part an attempt "to clarify and give body to such notions as shared conceptual worlds, medium behavior, images free of metaphorical significance, and responsive conditions; and, clarifying these, it will venture to give some sense of the experiences from which they arose." The text is also interesting as a documentation of practices/works that think through the intersection of altered consciousness and new media.

Schaffner, Ingrid. "Queer Voice." Exhibition Catalogue. Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 2010.

ANNOTATION: Published on the occasion of an exhibition held from April 22 to August 1, 2010 at ICA Philadelphia, this publication brings together a series of responses to curator Ingrid Schaffner's prompt, "Describe the queer voice." Its sheer multiplicity of materials, perspectives, and tonalities is

perhaps an attempt to create a truly queer publication; its intention, much like the exhibition, is to bring together the fields of discourse that have burgeoned around the voice or queerness. Whereas the exhibition

focuses on the work of eight artists across three generations—Laurie Anderson, Harry Dodge & Stanya Kahn, Sharon Hayes, John Kelly, Kalup Linzy, Jack Smith, Ryan Trecartin, and Andy Warhol—over eighty artists, academics, and art professionals have contributed to the publication.

Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E Brady. *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012.

ANNOTATION: This tome of over seven hundred pages gives a thorough account of how unequal representation and participation are in American democracy. *The Unheavenly Chorus* looks at “the political participation of individual citizens alongside the political advocacy of thousands of organized interests—membership associations such as unions, professional associations, trade associations, and citizens groups, as well as organizations like corporations, hospitals, and universities.” With a heavily statistical analysis, looking at tens of thousands of organizations over twenty-five years, as well as countless in-depth surveys of individual citizens, this text considers America’s tradition of ambivalence towards equality, the influence of political polarization, and the exponential increase in inequality emerging alongside the weakening of unions and the reappropriation of market resources for political advocacy (think Koch, Murdoch). It speculates on whether equality is important, desirable, or even possible in America.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Series Q. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

ANNOTATION: In *Touching Feeling*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick uses affect as a tool for non-dualistic or binary thinking; both “touching” and “feeling” immediately suggest this quality of being simultaneously emotional and physical, and are used to prompt an extended discussion of texture. She takes as her major interlocutors in thinking about affect, pedagogy, and performativity, J.L. Austen’s *How To Do Things with Words*, Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, and the first three volumes of Silvan Tomkin’s *Affect Imagery Consciousness*. In introducing this collection of essays Sedgwick brings up her methodological and conceptual approach of thinking “beside” in order to think otherwise to all kinds of binaries or linear forms, including linguistic/nonlinguistic and essentialism/anti-essentialism, as well as other kinds of spatialized relations (she likes Deleuze’s planar ones). For example: “I assume that the line between words and things or between linguistic and nonlinguistic phenomena is endlessly changing, permeable, and entirely unsusceptible to any definitive articulation.”

Sewald, Ronda L. “Forced Listening: The Contested Use of Loudspeakers for Commercial and Political Messages in the Public Soundscape.” *American Quarterly* 63, No. 3 (2011): 761–80.

ANNOTATION: In this article, Ronda Sewald gives a sustained account of the history of loudspeakers used on American sound trucks in the early to mid-twentieth century, and reveals that there is still an inadequate critical framework for which to understand the soundscape disputes that have taken place through recent history. Sewald discusses previous theories of noise, such as those of Jacques Attali, who famously defined noise as “a language of resistance used against hegemonic powers to bring about social change.” This was coupled with an understanding of public quiet being cherished by the bourgeoisie (in Britain, for example). Sound trucks in America were contested across race, class, and gender divides in a way that histories haven’t accounted for. These trucks, peddling political, commercial, and religious messages, were even contested in the Supreme Court three times, giving an indication of the level of uncertainty over which should prevail: the right to free speech, the right to be audible, or the right for sonic privacy. In addition to an interesting historical account of the loudspeaker or sound truck as a contested apparatus, this paper also argues for the need to create more nuanced accounts and understandings today of sonic conflicts over noise that expand on the framework of class-warfare.

“Sexing Sound: Music Cultures, Audio Practices, and Contemporary Art,” February 21, 2014. Symposium: CUNY Graduate Center, New York.

ANNOTATION: This symposium took place in association with the exhibition “Sexing Sound” at CUNY’s James Gallery, which focused on archival materials and documents on women’s sound of the last two decades. The symposium looked at “music cultures” and “audio practices” through the lens of sexual difference and sexuality, and brought together a range of cultural producers from theorists and curators to vocalists and a turntablist.

Shank, Barry. “The Political Agency of Musical Beauty.” *American Quarterly* 63, No. 3 (2011): 831–55.

ANNOTATION: Barry Shank considers the debates around racial politics of music, considering instances of cultural appropriation, “miscegenation,” and interweaving of musical traditions with their specific political significations. He argues for a new way to think about the political agency of music that takes into account that through music, the polis is experienced bodily. Furthermore, music’s political agency is stated as deriving “from its capacity to combine relations of difference into experiences of beauty.” Shank draws on Chantal Mouffe and Jean-Luc Nancy to consider group identification, plurality, and agonism, and following that, Jacques Rancière, in order to consider the “mutual interactive coproduction” of the musical and the political through mobilizing his concept of the distribution of the sensible. Shank is clear that musical beauty does not take a political position, but instead its political agency comes about through a reconfiguration of the common around the auditory sensible (i.e. the creation of an emergent political community). This essay gives a sustained account of Moby’s track “Trouble So Hard” and its sampling/remixing of Vera Hall, as well as the recordings of Hall by ethnomusicologist John Lomax. Through a formal analysis, Shank argues that the musical beauty of Moby’s focus on pleasure cuts through the fraught historical maneuvers, bringing out the “intensity of [the original song’s] articulation of the political.”

“Sound and Affect: Voice, Music, World,” April 18, 2014. Conference: Stony Brook University, New York.

ABSTRACT: “Stony Brook University’s conference, ‘Sound and Affect: Voice, Music, World,’ seeks to investigate the varied intersections of sound and affect. In the voice as it speaks, stutters, rustles, hesitates, chokes, sounds ‘accented,’ or cries; in music, whether vocal, instrumental, or electronic; in our sonic environments, whether natural or manmade; and in the many modalities of listening that respond to our sonic worlds, the sounds we make and hear can seem to externalize, reflect, evoke, recall, or catalyze affective states. Moreover, the many linkages of sound and affect are far from stable or autonomous. Race and class, gender, social, cultural, and political experience, and diverse forms of historical change can all condition the relays and relations of sound and affect.”

“Talk Show,” 2009. Exhibition: Institute of Contemporary Arts, London.

ANNOTATION: This extensive, interdisciplinary, cross-program, and multi-venue endeavor featured over one hundred participants whose practices centered on speech including artists, performers, speech and vocal performers, linguists, speech therapists, sociologists, and voiceover artists. It attempted a comprehensive consideration of the primacy of speech in understanding and negotiating meaning and agency in art, life, and politics. “Talk Show” was curated by artist, writer, and designer Will Holder, with Richard Birkett and Jennifer Thatcher of the ICA, and with the help and support of The London Consortium (a multi-disciplinary graduate program in humanities and cultural studies). In addition to an exhibition, publication, gallery talks, and performance, “Talk Show” also featured a reading room of archival recordings and workshops for vocal training.

“Tate Series: ‘Her Noise: Feminisms and the Sonic,’” May 3, 2012. Talks, Screenings, Symposium: Tate, London.

ANNOTATION: This series of events investigated feminist discourses in sound and music through a program of talks, performances, discussions and film screenings, all intended to challenge standard readings of feminism and sound. The symposium topics included: “Situating Her Noise,” “Affinities, Networks, and Heroines,” “Vocal Folds,” and “Dissonant Futures,” collectively addressing genealogies, discursive frameworks, voice and sociology, technology and the voice. It brought together a range of thinkers, artists, and sound makers, mostly UK- and Europe-based. A film

program centered on practices with affinities to the work of Meredith Monk; an artist talk by Pauline Oliveros also took place.

Utz, Christian, and Frederick Lau, eds. *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West*. Routledge Research in Music 3. New York; London: Routledge, 2013.

ANNOTATION: *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities* considers the ways voice (linguistic, phonetic, semantic, musical) is routinely associated with means of articulating power or else its counter-hegemonic capacities for liberation. In “intercultural” settings, the expression, representation, and reception of voice are often highly ethnicized, such that either cultural hybridity or cultural essentialism become the standard ways to articulate vocal practices. Utz and Lau’s publication tries to work around this, with essays by Asian and Western authors that are collected under the rubric of a “reflexive globalization”—the idea that globalization isn’t something imposed by the outside, but instead is a dynamic between local and global processes that operate differently to corporate capitalism and international politics. The voice has a capacity to be both authentic but also to transcend identities, and in this the editors locate the power of voice to shape intercultural dialogue.

Zižek, Slavoj, and Mladen Dolar. *Opera’s Second Death*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

ANNOTATION: The idea that opera is as much about death as it is about love is captured by the title of Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar’s *Opera’s Second Death*, which is indeed structured around opera’s multiple engagements with death across different registers, including its exploration into the nature of death. The title refers to the Lacanian second death, which is not a natural or biological death, but a symbolic death, an “extermination” of opera’s symbolic universe. Dolar writes, “opera remains a huge relic, an enormous anachronism, a persistent revival of a lost past, a reflection of the lost aura, a true postmodern subject par excellence.” He adds: “And perhaps it is no coincidence that the fall of the opera coincides with the advent of psychoanalysis.” The text is divided between the two authors: Dolar writes first about Mozart’s operas, and after an intermission, Žižek picks up to focus on Wagner. Apparently the two key figures of the history of opera, both Mozart and Wagner are posited as following a similar trajectory in their works through a climactic “lethal despair” through to a blissful ending, achieved variously through reconciliation or an immortal death through the pursuit of love. The text is somewhat baffling—definitely in the intentionally and dynamically digressive style of Žižek, and perhaps intentionally putting into play opera’s polyphony—and the threads between psychoanalysis and opera do lack clarity.