

# THE OTHER VOICE

*The Self, its Echo & the Silent Participant*

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## ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extension has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements, or where I have previously written it myself under these same conditions.



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*Olivia Francesca Vissers Webb*



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*Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*

# ABSTRACT

## *Exegesis*

Noun    ex·e·ge·sis        \,ek-sə-'jē-səs, 'ek-sə-,\

*Critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture.*

Through the use of the sung voice, this thesis investigates how the voice describes, defines and/or gives meaning to a place or space. The works documented in this thesis explore the reciprocity between the human voice, the places or spaces in which it is encountered and various modes of encountering.

Through a solo performance methodology that draws from my experience as a classically trained choral singer, I explore how the voice, as a metaphor for and extension of the 'self', negotiates its position within a social and cultural landscape through its behaviour in space. By focussing on the 'choir of the self' this study considers the relationship between the voice and the self/other, the voice and its echo in space, and the voice and the listener (audience).

For this thesis, I develop a series of performances that utilise both my live and recorded voice in a variety of performance installation works, often involving multi-channel sound. In using sonic and phonic techniques of repetition, delay/decay and reverberation between my live and recorded voice, I explore the conceptual dimensions to these techniques; a repeated self, an echoed self, myself in space and time. In turn, these ideas are applied to the listener and also to the space itself.

Through my performances I examine how architectural space, and its social meaning, changes our perception of the voice, and in turn our social behaviour. I also examine how certain phenomena of the voice affect the listener; a voice when heard without a locatable source, or the polyvalence of the voice in communication. Through this exploration the sung voice is heard to express meaning beyond everyday spoken communication; thus revealing the complexity of the everyday negotiation of our 'self' in space.

## FOREWORD

The artworks documented in this exegesis are mostly multi-channel, sound-based performances and installations, where the sound is intricately linked to the space in which the performance/installation takes place. My use of multi-channel sound creates for the listener multiple sounds heard from multiple sources within the given space. To this end, it is difficult to accurately document this effect (and likewise, how the sounds shift during the performances) as recording microphones tend to record the overall, general soundscape. Indeed, one of the remarkable things about our *human* ears is that we can focus our hearing, as microphones cannot, actively pin-pointing certain sounds while ignoring other sounds.

To more accurately demonstrate the multi-channel sound effects in the audio-visual documentation that accompanies this exegesis, I have mixed the sound (in post-production) to the left and right channels of your (stereo) computer/playback device, thereby creating a 2-channel sound to exemplify the multi-channel element of my artworks. The documentation with this 2-channel sound is clearly indicated in the title of the video file as “2-channel audio”. To get the best effect of this sound, I ask that you please listen to the works through headphones – preferably ‘on-ear’ or ‘off-ear’ circumaural headphones (see image below).

For other audio-visual material submitted with this exegesis I have kept the original sound file recorded during the documentation of the performance/installation. This too, is clearly marked in the title of each file as “original audio”. I hope that both forms of documentation work together to provide an accurate representation of the artworks made throughout my Master’s study.





Figure 1. *Elevator* [performance still], August 2015



Figure 2. *Elevator* [performance still], August 2015

# INTRODUCTION

## ***A Voice in Time***

In this thesis I investigate a reciprocity between the human voice, the places or spaces in which it is encountered and various modes of encountering. Through my research I explore how the voice defines, describes, and gives meaning to a place or space; and how our voice, as an extension of our self, negotiates everyday exchanges and experiences.

The human voice, as a concept and medium for artworks, was brought to the fore by John Cage, who in the 1940s began a series of compositions (music, essays and lectures) that used the *sound* of the voice, rather than words, as a way to explore and express other possibilities of meaning (Cage, 1973). Since then, and along with the developments in audio recording technology, the voice has been widely explored by many artists; from its bodily sounds (Yoko Ono, Laurie Anderson, Pauline Oliveros) to poetics and spoken word (Bruce Nauman, Marina Abramović) to artists who work with the sung voice as an artistic medium (Joan LaBabara, Janet Cardiff, Tino Sehgal and Susan Philipsz) (Kahn, 2001).

In this exegesis I discuss four performances where I use my *singing* voice to explore the relationship between the voice and the self/other; the voice and its echo in space; and the voice and the listener/audience.

## ***A Voice in Space***

The relationship of the voice in space and with the listener is demonstrated in my performance *Elevator*, created for this thesis. The performance takes place inside three adjacent elevators in the seven-storey School of Art & Design at Auckland's University of Technology (AUT). Located in the building's central atrium, the elevators are the preferable option for most students and staff members moving between floors, and usually provide the quickest, easiest and most direct route.

On each level, the elevators open onto foyer spaces connected to the tall, narrow atrium. As a singer, the aural architecture<sup>1</sup> of the atrium drew my attention. The resonance of the space (due to its hard, flat surfaces) and its cavernous size reminded me of the vaulted space of a cathedral; an echoic space that amplifies the voice. Furthermore, as a church choral singer I was interested in a correlation between singing sacred music in a resonant church and singing the same music in a resonant so-called secular space.

In the performance, three versions of my solo voice occupy each elevator; one coming from myself as a *live* performer occupying one elevator, while the remaining two voices are recordings of my voice, played back through speakers discretely hidden from elevator users. As the elevators transport people from floor to floor my voice is dispersed throughout the building, filling the atrium space. Harmonies are occasionally heard between each of the solo voices as elevators cross paths or as the doors open simultaneously.

▶ PLEASE WATCH:

Video 1. *Elevator* [55 second example with original audio], August 2015

Each voice sings one part of a piece of music written for three voices (a three-part choral composition). The tempo is slowed to such an extent that the piece becomes unrecognisable, becoming revealed slowly over a 30-minute period. In one performance I sing John Tavener's 1985 *Love Bade Me Welcome*; a contemporary choral setting<sup>2</sup> of George Herbert's poem

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<sup>1</sup> According to Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter in their book, *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? : Experiencing Aural Architecture*, the aural architecture of the atrium has a social meaning where the hard surfaces "loudly announce the arrival of visitors by the resounding echoes of their footsteps. In contrast, thick carpeting, upholstered furniture, and heavy draperies, all of which suppress incident or reflected sounds, would mute that announcement. The aural architecture of the lobby thus determines whether entering is a public or private event." (2009, p. 3). The social acoustic of the atrium and elevators is a key aspect to my performance and is discussed in *Part Three: Silent Participation*.

<sup>2</sup> Tavener's composition is originally written for a six-part choir (SAATBB) where the lower voices (the tenor and two bass parts) double the higher voices (the soprano and alto parts). The soprano and altos sing the same melody as the tenors and basses but an octave higher. For *Elevator*, I perform the entire song in the octave range of the three upper parts (soprano and two altos).

*Love (III)*.<sup>3</sup> I selected a *contemporary* piece of sacred choral music to further explore and add to the multiple histories and contexts at play in the juxtaposition of the sung voice in the Art & Design School atrium and elevators. Furthermore, this piece not only refers to the long history of sacred choral music and its use in Catholic liturgy, but is undoubtedly influenced by contemporary developments in music composition and art.



Figure 3. *Elevator* [performance still], August 2015

Elevator users find they are not simply an audience to my singing, but *participants* (willing or otherwise) in a larger performance who inadvertently direct the three voices to various different floors through their everyday elevator use. However, their role as choral conductors is short lived, only lasting the time taken to move between floors. The quick journey time coupled with the slow tempo of the music means participants only experience a fragment of the vocal performance, and predominantly from the perspective of the solo voice in their own elevator. Yet participants take their experience of my sung voice with them as they leave their elevator, and this becomes juxtaposed with other spoken voices in the

<sup>3</sup> Originally commissioned for the Enthronement of the Bishop of Winchester, the song is rooted in Christian liturgy, describing the Eucharist as a feast for a guilt-ridden guest. The poem is told from the perspective of an anxious visitor in conversation with the personification of Love, who welcomes the guest to partake in a feast of Love's own flesh: "You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat." So I did sit and eat" (Tavener, 1985).

School of Art & Design (and in other social spaces). This experience attunes participants to the everyday complexity of negotiating their own voice in space. In addition to this, some participants also share their experience of the work with otherwise unsuspecting future elevator users, often warning them of the live performed voice in the central elevator: the safer option may be to wait for the elevator on the left or right hand side, or take the stairs. I discuss *Elevator*, and particularly the participant's encounter of the performance, in more depth in *Part Three: Silent Participation*.

### ***Prelude***

With *Elevator* and the other artworks that contribute to this thesis, I explore how the voice, through its polyvalence and as an extension of ourselves, can lead to further understanding our relationship with space and each other. I explore these ideas using my personal identity as a performance artist, sound artist, choral singer and Catholic. Through these multiple identities – and a long time devotion to historical choral music – my ambition is to create a series of contemporary performance works that occupy secular spaces while nevertheless referring to their historical precedents, thereby opening up multiple interpretations. Certainly I have underlying interests in challenging narrow readings of organised religion, but I hope the project is more experiential and immersive than it is didactic and explanatory. To this end, I have eschewed working with community groups (as I did with the Physics Room in my 2014 *Voices Project*<sup>4</sup> and other earlier works) and turned the focus upon myself. Accordingly, my intention is that by focusing on the 'choir of the self' and the architectural contexts of the everyday, I will expand the possible meanings and perceptions of the artworks, creating in turn wider possibilities of participation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For further details about my artwork *Voices Project* please see: <http://physicsroom.org.nz/events/olivia-webb-voices-project>

<sup>5</sup> Choosing to work as a solo performer and not with a group (or community) within this thesis enables me to explore less conventional notions of a 'choir' that are present in a group/collaboration.



## **Composition of: *The Other Voice***

In *Part One: Echo & The Self*, I discuss two performances I created for live and recorded sung voice.

*Scale* like *Elevator* explores the negotiation of the voice in social space, and considers the relationship between voices through ideas of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. Directly influenced by the many music traditions present within the congregation at Auckland’s Catholic Cathedral, St Patrick’s, the *a cappella* performances explore discords and harmonies inherent between these multiple cultures. In the performance, I attempt to sing in unison with recordings of my sung voice played back through loudspeakers. The speakers, set on stands at head height in the gallery space, broadcast my voice as if from another person. As the only *live* singer in the performance, I try to remain equal to the speakers in position and volume – performing stationary – using my voice as the primary means of expression.<sup>6</sup>

I explore the consonance<sup>7</sup> and dissonance heard between many voices in space from a phenomenological point of view, using Mladen Dolar and Don Ihde’s theories of the voice to facilitate my discussion. My examination of ‘other’ voices (especially when representative of ‘other’ cultures) is informed by Edward Said’s theory of ‘Orientalism’. I also compare *Scale* to Janet Cardiff’s *Forty-Part Motet* (2001), which also engages with a Christian music tradition, but from the single perspective of a Western music tradition and through audio recordings only, without a *live* performance aspect (all the sung voices in Cardiff’s work are embodied in the speakers).

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<sup>6</sup> My use of the voice as a primary means for expression comes from my training as a Church choral singer, where singing at Mass is not thought of as a performance, but a form of prayer. To this end, meaning is (humbly) expressed through the voice and the music alone, as opposed to performed and dramatic methods such as facial expression and movement (for instance, as is seen and heard in opera).

<sup>7</sup> I use the term ‘consonance’ instead of ‘harmony’ as it is more musically accurate and unbiased. ‘Harmony’ is used casually in daily language to describe something pleasing, or to be in a state of agreement. Whereas, consonance means: “[a] chord or interval that seems satisfactory in itself, or a note, which is part of such a chord or interval. The opposite is dissonance. What constitutes a consonance is not strictly laid down and must often depend on individual assessment” and is therefore a much more flexible and accurate term for my purposes (“Consonance,” 2012).

*Part One* concludes by examining the ‘other’ within my solo performance methodology. To this end, the ‘other’ present in my performances is explored as *another* ‘self’. The second artwork I discuss, *Echo*, steps back from the social space of *Scale*, and focuses instead on an interpersonal vocal exchange between ‘speakers’ (loudspeakers and *live* voice). *Echo* scatters my single voice throughout space by sharing one voice amongst multiple loudspeakers and myself as a *live* performer. This technique is compared to Susan Philipsz’ 24-channel sound installation *Part File Score* (2014) where one composition is fragmented between loudspeakers but when heard at a distance is recognisable as a single piece. I refer to Jacques Derrida’s notion of ‘iteration’ and ‘auto-affection’ and delve into the complexities of the repetition of the self in hearing one’s own voice.

In *Part Two: Absence/Presence* I discuss my work *Passage*; a series of performances that continue to explore the ‘choir of the self’ as heard in *Scale* and *Echo*, but where the performer (and listener) move through space following the voice.

Influenced by Bruce Nauman’s *Corridor* (1969), *Passage* explores movement in thoroughfare spaces and the ability of the voice, and particularly the projected sung voice, to infiltrate a space far beyond the body. Manifesting as a disembodied voice, *Passage* highlights the voices’ presence in opposition to the absence of the body.

I discuss *Passage* with regard to the temporal space created by the movement of the voice and body. Using Derrida’s notion of ‘temporality’ and ‘now-ness’ I question how the voice exists when distanced from its source.

*Part Three: Silent Participation* shifts the focus from my own perspective as a solo performer to the experience of the audience in my artworks. In

this section, the conventional separation<sup>8</sup> between the performer and the listener can be interpreted as a further extension of the ‘self’ and ‘other’. Yet, as I will demonstrate through works discussed in *Part’s One* and *Two*, distinctions between the ‘self’ and ‘other’ become blurred. It follows from this that the same is true for the audience, who find themselves *participants* in my performances, willing or otherwise.

In *Part Three*, I again use *Elevator* as the primary example to explore the experience and role of participants in my performances.<sup>9</sup> I compare *Elevator* to an account of a similar work by Tino Sehgal in the 2009 exhibition *After Nature* at the New Museum in New York, where an operatic soprano blasts a single note at people as they exit an elevator. In Sehgal’s work and my own, I examine how the sung voice interrupts the audience’s experience of space (public and private-public), and how an, albeit harmonious and melodious voice, can still break social etiquette. Furthermore, just as sound momentarily imprints on a space (see *Part Two: Absence/Presence*), we find that it also imprints on the listener as they experience a sharp break with the norm; an extra-ordinary everyday experience.<sup>10</sup>

*Part Three* discusses the participant as a *silent* contributor to the performance but without whom the sung performance would not be complete. I discuss this ‘silent’ participation in *Elevator* by drawing comparisons between John Cage’s famous composition *4’33”*, and a silent durational (and participation based) performance by Marina Abramović *The Artist is Present* (see figure 29).

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<sup>8</sup> The reference I make here is to my 2011 honours year project (at Massey University) where I made artworks that attempted to close the distance between performer and audience. In this exploration I practised singing a piece of music in public spaces, performing the *process* involved in learning a piece of music from beginning to end; mistakes and all. I looked closely at the differences between performance, rehearsal and practice influenced by Richard Schechner’s text: *Performance Theory* (1977/2003).

<sup>9</sup> Audience participation is a crucial aspect to all my performances, but unfortunately I do not have the space in this exegesis to discuss the different responses garnered across *all* performances. I use *Elevator* to facilitate this discussion, as it requires a direct (and often unavoidable) form of audience participation.

<sup>10</sup> Again, the reference I make here is to research undertaken in my honours year project at Massey University. In this instance I am referring to my study of Henri Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life* (2002).

## Composer's Notes

My artworks and the ideas discussed in this exegesis are organised chronologically but are by no means linear. To this end, this exegesis can be seen to function like a polyphonic choral score. The multiple ideas present in each of my artworks are, for this exegesis, composed in three chapters. I think of each of these chapters as expressing one part of a three-part polyphonic choral score, where parts intertwine and relate in a variety of ways.

While my art practice is *informed* by polyphonic choral music, it is musically (technically) inaccurate to describe the use of the voice in my performances in this way. I use 'polyphony'<sup>11</sup> as a metaphor that addresses the multiple ideas present in each artwork as operating in 'counterpoint'<sup>12</sup> to the linear structure of the exegesis.

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<sup>11</sup> The term 'polyphony' derives from the Greek word *poluphōnos*: *polu-* 'many' + *phōnē* 'voice, sound': meaning many voices or many sounds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* defines polyphony as: "[m]any sounds. Music in which several simultaneous v[oices] or instr[ument] parts are combined contrapuntally, as opposed to monophonic music (single melody) or homophonic music (one melodic line, the other parts acting as acc[ompaniments])" ("Polyphony," 2012).

<sup>12</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* defines 'counterpoint' as: "The ability, unique to music, to say two or more things at once comprehensibly. The term derives from the expression *punctus contra punctum*, i.e. 'point against point' or 'note against note'. In common usage the word refers to the combination of simultaneous parts or v[oices], each of significance in itself and the whole resulting in a coherent texture, and is, in this sense, synonymous with polyphony. In its more strict usage, however, 'counterpoint' implies an underlying system of rules for the organization of simultaneous voices." ("Counterpoint," 2012). The word 'counterpoint' is also used in everyday language to emphasize contrast, and I use the term in as a pun, adopting both meanings of the word.

# IPSISSIMA VOCE!

*To approximate the main message  
without using the exact words . . .*



Figure 4. *Scale (#1)* [performance still], April 2015



Figure 5. *Scale (#3)* [performance still], September 2015

## PART ONE: ECHO & THE SELF

### **Scale**

*Scale* (#1) takes the form of a duet between myself and a loudspeaker set on a stand at head height in a studio space reminiscent of the archetypal ‘white cube’ gallery. The speaker and I stand ‘face to face’ at a distance of about 5 metres and the audience gathers (by their own volition) around an invisible oval perimeter, maintaining a comfortable distance between the speaker, myself and other audience members (perhaps to avoid being implicated in the performance – see *Part Three: Silent Participation*). The speaker and I simultaneously sing a sequence of eight single notes on the vowel ‘e’, each note held for a length of six seconds, with a silent six second pause in between. The sung vowel sound produced is simple and has no added vibrato or deliberate colouration in both the live and recorded delivery. The hard, flat surfaces of the studio add a resonance to the voice, reflecting and dispersing the sound throughout the space and into surrounding studios and corridors. The performance is revealed over four, slow moving repetitions of the eight-note sequence. At times the speaker and I sing notes of the same pitch, and at other times the notes differ, sounding at times consonant or dissonant.

▶ PLEASE WATCH:

Video 2. *Scale* (#1) [1 minute 36 second example with original audio], April 2015

### **The Self**

*Scale* explores an experience familiar to us all: the negotiation of the voice in social space. In his book, *A Voice and Nothing More*, Mladen Dolar describes this ubiquitous use of the voice in everyday communication, stating:

We use our voices, and we listen to voices, at every moment; all our social life is mediated by the voice.... We constantly inhabit the universe of voices, we are continuously bombarded by voices.... There are the voices of other people, the voices of music, the voices of media,

our own voice intermingled with the lot. All those voices are shouting, whispering, crying, caressing, threatening, imploring, seducing, commanding, pleading, praying, hypnotizing, confessing, terrorizing, declaring . . . – we can immediately see a difficulty into which any treatment of the voice runs: namely, that the vocabulary is inadequate. (2006, p. 13)

The experience Dolar describes centres on the ‘self’, where one’s own voice is heard and understood in relation to the voices of others. This experience is explored through the composition and installation of *Scale*, where my cultural identity is manifest in my solo, live voice, (myself as the ‘subject’ and ‘self’) and the anthropomorphic speaker sounds the voice of ‘other’ cultures (Said, 1978).

The performance references the lived experience of the diversity of cultures present in our society. To access this I draw on my experience of the congregation at Auckland’s, St Patrick’s Catholic Cathedral. In this busy central city church, people from different cultural groups negotiate their culture and their individual musical traditions and histories through a Catholic, Western music framework. I studied examples of musical scales from four different music traditions present in the congregation: the Indian Bhairavi Rāga; the Indonesian Pelog Gamelan scale; the Chinese Qing Shang hexatonic scale; and the Korean p’yŏngjo pentatonic scale.<sup>13</sup> I made recordings of myself singing these scales for the performance, which then play through the speaker, one by one, while I repeatedly sing (live) a Western C-major scale over the top.<sup>14</sup>

Performed as a duet, *Scale (#1)* appears to foreground the duality and stark opposition of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. This is shown particularly through the ‘subject-hood’ embodied in the presence of my live body and

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<sup>13</sup> These scales were selected after researching the four music traditions, and in consultation with various community members, ethnomusicologists and musicologists - all of whom gave me excellent guidance and advice. I do feel that this research to date is elementary compared with the breadth and depth of research in the field of ethnomusicology, however, I see this project (*Scale*) a beginning for further research.

<sup>14</sup> I selected a C-major scale as it has no ‘accidentals’ (sharpened or flattened notes), and is therefore a simple example of the intervals heard within the twelve-tone equal tempered scale in Western music.

voice, and the ‘object-hood’ of my mechanical voice placed in the anthropomorphic speaker (Dolar, 2006). However, as the performance unfolds the relationship between the speaker as ‘other’ and myself as ‘self’ becomes blurred through a repetitive, musical exchange.

As the voices synchronise the harmony and discord revealed through the unlikely coupling of scales illustrates the subtle and complex relationship between the voices, as each maintains its own individual note and musical identity. The voice of the ‘other’ from the speaker does not always adhere to Western rules of harmony and counterpoint. Instead, by sharing both harmonious *and* discordant moments, the voice of the ‘other’ announces *itself*, and not as an *idealised* other – or, as Said describes, the exotic ‘Orient’ as is fantasised by the West (Said, 1978). Indeed, the sound of the voices and scales blending together reveals a relationship far more complicated than any idealised versions of the ‘self’ and ‘other’.

I attempt to draw attention away from my live body in the space by remaining motionless – becoming object-like myself – as well as maintaining an equal vocal volume with the speaker. The stillness of the performance allows the consonant and dissonant relationship between the voices to come to the fore, and draws attention to the tonal similarity between my live voice and the voice of the recorded ‘other’ (they are, of course, both my own voice). Through this process we become aware of the “infinity of traces” history leaves in us “marks through heredity, through collective experience, through individual experience, through family experience through relations between one individual and another” (Smith, Talreja, & Jhally, 1998).<sup>15</sup> Hearing my own voice approximating the musical

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<sup>15</sup> This quote is from a video interview with Edward Said where he refers to *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. In this text Gramsci’s explains how “[i]n acquiring one’s conception of the world one always belongs to a particular grouping which is that of all the social elements which share the same mode of thinking and acting. We are all conformists of some conformism or other, always man-in-the-mass or collective man. The question is this: of what historical type is the conformism, the mass humanity to which one belongs?...To criticise one’s own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity and to raise it to the level reached by the most advanced thought in the world.... The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. The first thing to do is to make such an inventory” (1971/1999, pp. 627-628).



traditions of other cultures, while at the same time singing my own Western tradition, may serve as a starting point to understanding the polyphony of cultural ‘marks’ and ‘traces’ within the self (Smith et al., 1998).

### ***Self Reflection***

As a duet, *Scale* (#1) is problematic and can be seen to foreground the power hierarchy Said discusses between the West and ‘Orient’ East – the only live performer in the performance is a white European who speaks on behalf of the ‘other’.<sup>16</sup> However, *Scale* does not aim to provide answers or offer solutions to ‘Orientalism’, but rather attempts new ways of questioning the ‘self’ within this relationship, exploring the coexistence as a contrapuntal (polyphonic) score, as Said describes:

The great goal is in fact to become someone else... to transform from a unitary identity to an identity that includes the other without suppressing the difference.... Not only to understand oneself, but to understand oneself in relation to others... to understand others as if you would understand yourself. Where difference is understood without coercion. (Smith et al., 1998)

In *Scale* the identity of the ‘other’ is reflected in the ‘self’ as my live voice in the performance is vulnerable and conspicuous, open to the possibility of error and thus dependent upon the ‘other’ voice from the speaker for cues and clues in pitch and the held duration of each note. The notion of the ‘self’ reliant on the ‘other’ upsets perceived hierarchies between the voices, and we find that the “stronger party overlaps with and, strangely, depends on the weaker” (Said, 1994, p. 192).

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<sup>16</sup> My hope is that *Scale* will develop into a participatory/collaborative performance, involving the communities to whom my research refers. Indeed, I have always thought of this work as a group performance. However, because of the short duration of this Masters (9 months), I did not feel comfortable asking communities to meet my immediate deadline (and from my experience working with groups, there would not have been enough time to do the work justice).



Figure 6. *Scale (#2)* [performance still], May 2015

### ***The Choir of the Self***

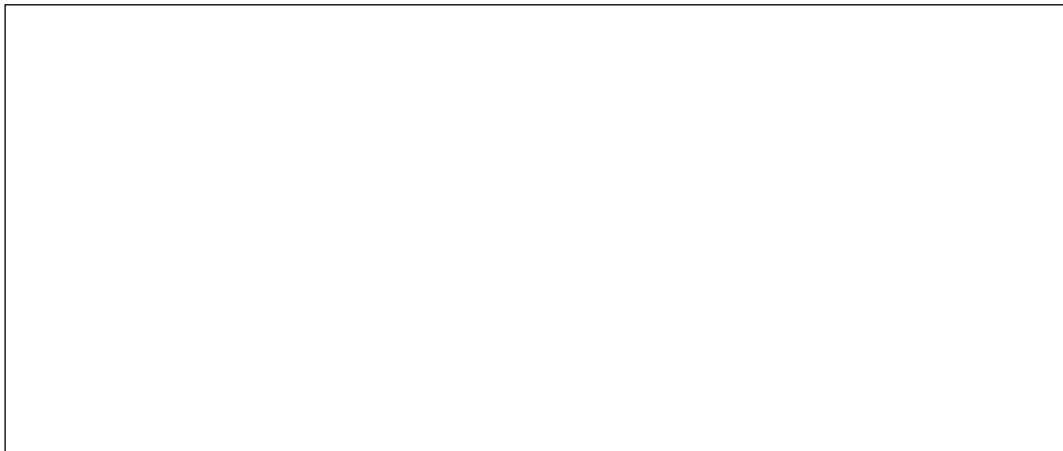
This exchange is also experienced and expressed through a phenomenological approach to the voice. Don Ihde discusses the ‘self’ and ‘other’ as a “polyphony of experience” found in two modes of listening; the “monophonic” mode where the listener is simply a receiver of sound, and “imaginative mode” which gives “existential signification” to the sounds we hear (2007, pp. 115-117).

I hear not only the voices of the World, in some sense I “hear” myself or from myself. There is polyphony in a duet of voices in the doubled modalities of the perceptual and imaginative modes. (pp. 115-117)

Furthermore, the ‘imaginative mode’ imparts meaning beyond that of communicable word or text – meaning of *relation*. It is a phenomenon, explained by Mladen Dolar, as being particularly associated with the sung voice, operating on a level of expression beyond everyday speech:

[Singing] brings the voice energetically to the forefront, on purpose, at the expense of meaning. Indeed, singing is bad communication; it prevents a clear understanding of the text.... [Yet] singing takes the distraction of the voice seriously, and turns the tables on the signifier; it reverses the hierarchy – let the voice take the upper hand, let the voice be the bearer of what cannot be expressed with words. (2006, p. 30)

The polyphony of experience in the ‘perceptual’ and ‘imaginative’ modes is explored in *Scale (#3)*. This piece shifts toward expressing a ‘choir of the self’ by adopting Janet Cardiff’s technique of representing individual voices in single speakers, as used in *The Forty Part Motet* (2001) (see figures 7, 9 & 10). In this 40-channel sound installation, Cardiff recorded each voice from the Salisbury Cathedral Choir individually as they performed Thomas Tallis’ 1573 *Spem in Alium* – an ambitious piece of polyphonic choral music composed for a forty-part choir. By imitating this technique in *Scale*, the voices of the ‘others’, now individually embodied in four speakers, are given their own agency, outnumbering my ‘self’ as a live performer. A concentrated effort is required of the live voice to negotiate its own part within the five-fold harmonies and discords created by all voices singing at once. This phenomenological ‘imaginative mode’ of listening sees the ‘self’ navigate its own passage (journey) through the now polyphonic cultural landscape (Ihde, 2007).



*This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Figure 7. Janet Cardiff, *The Forty Part Motet*, 2001

It is worth noting that when performing *Scale (#3)* I have to continuously work to avoid singing my live solo part *against* the many other voices, and instead sing *with* them; so as not to assert my part *over* the others. This non-collaborative tendency is a result of feeling vulnerable and open to

failure<sup>17</sup> as the single live voice within the tight tone clusters. When rehearsing, I found it difficult to resist the tendency to increase my volume and drown out the other voices, so as to only hear my live voice as assurance I was singing the correct melody. This tendency was at odds with the work, and is often where the issue lies in real cultural exchange; I focus on the melody, my personal part that can exist in *isolation*, instead of focussing on the harmony or polyphony of singing with and listening to other voices. The result in rehearsals was that the melody changed in pitch and timing as it became more freeform, and thus, I inevitably lost time and pitch with the other voices. Moments and intervals that ought to have been harmonious became discordant, and the text was blurred even further as the lyrics went out of synchronisation. As the solo performer, I actively work against this rejection of the other voices, aided by my training as a chorister where ignoring the other parts is detrimental to any piece of choral music.<sup>18</sup>

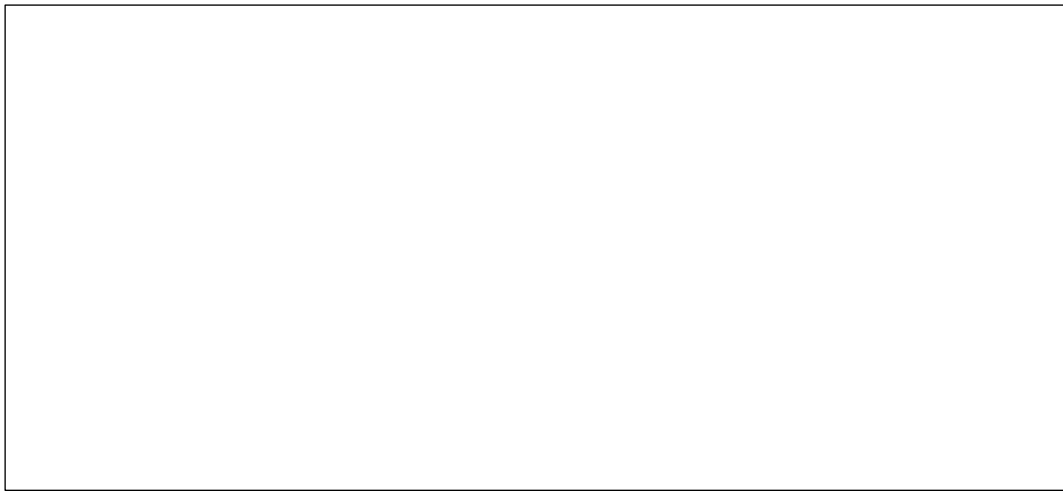


Figure 8. *Scale* (#3) [performance still], August 2015

<sup>17</sup> 'Failure' is a recurring theme in my performances but not one that I immediately address in this thesis. I explored failure in my honours year project in 2011 by bringing my private singing practice into the public, and also through *Voices Project* in 2014 where the communities who formed my choirs seemed to build a rapport through failing together while learning to sing a complex piece of music.

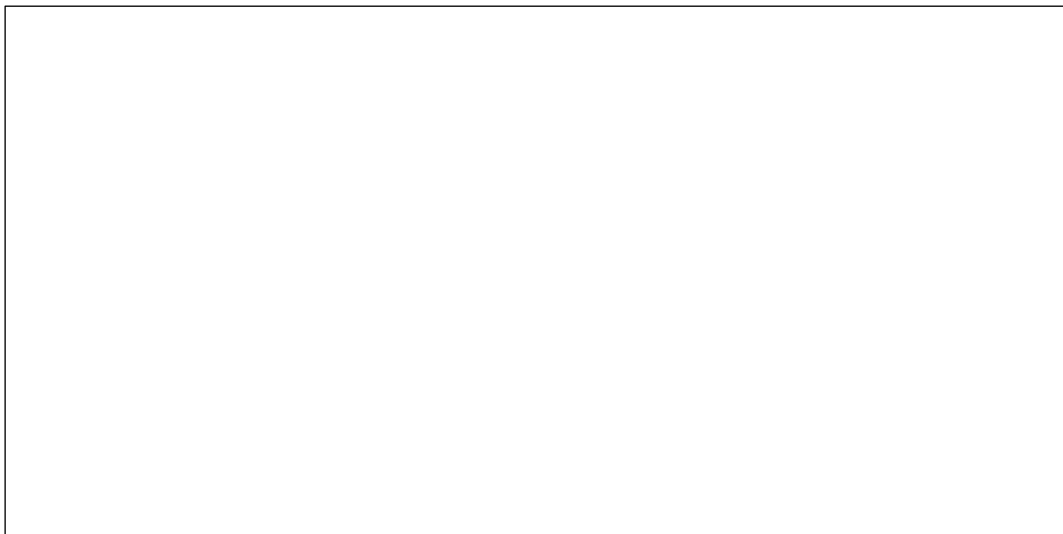
<sup>18</sup> It is not necessarily in the best interest of *Scale* to disclose what was revealed in my rehearsals, yet I believe that this honest account of the working process helps further understand *Scale*'s everyday manifestation of cultural exchanges. This is a rich field, explored by a great number of ethnomusicologists and social theorists, and an area that I wish to attend to through further research. While I cannot do justice to this research in this exegesis, I present these ideas as questions (as opposed to answers) for further study beyond my Masters thesis. To this end, my artworks are still progressing, but offer different insights along the way.

The relationship between the ‘self’ and ‘other’ present in Cardiff’s work is one between the speakers and the audience. She permits the listener a rare opportunity to get very close to each individual voice – indeed to put your ear literally on the speaker – and thus experience the voice in an intimate space extraordinary to everyday experience. Alternatively, the listener can step back into the acoustic ‘sweet spot’ and let the collective voice of the whole choir fill the gallery space. Cardiff creates a sublime experience in *The Forty-Part Motet*, celebrating the historical (and religious) Western choral tradition.



*This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Figure 9. Janet Cardiff, *The Forty Part Motet*, 2001



*This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Figure 10. Janet Cardiff, *The Forty Part Motet*, 2001

### **Scale (#3)**

*Scale (#3)* on the other hand, attempts a present-day embodiment of Catholicism in New Zealand.<sup>19</sup> It does this by moving away from non-lyrical voices singing scales, to each voice singing the Gregorian chant sequence *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (Come Holy Spirit). The chant, traditionally set in the medieval hypolydian mode<sup>20</sup>, is transposed into the four non-Western musical scale systems represented in each speaker (Indian Rāga, Indonesian Pelog, Chinese Qing Shang, and Korean p'yŏngjo). Each voice sings its own transposition of the chant, together with my live voice singing the original version. The result is a homophonic rendition of a traditionally monophonic chant; a chance based composition that includes many tight tone clusters and non-traditional harmonics.



Figure 11. *Scale (#3)* [performance still], September 2015

<sup>19</sup> While the scales sung in earlier versions of this work remind the listener of sacred music (largely due to the timbre of my voice and training as a choral singer) I wanted the performance to refer back to my lived experience of the multi-cultural congregations within the New Zealand Catholic Church, and that the music be specific to Catholicism. In turn, the many cultures currently present within the New Zealand Catholic Church provide an insight into the (ever increasing) diversity within our population.

<sup>20</sup> The Hypolydian mode is equivalent to a Western major scale where the interval between each note follows the progression/pattern: tone, tone, semitone, tone, tone, tone, semitone – (or “Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La, Ti, and back to Do” as from the *Sound of Music*). The Hypolydian mode is also known as the Ionian mode. Music modes are used to describe the intervals or relationships between sequences of notes that form a scale, but in the case of modes these scales are not bound to one root note of a certain pitch. For instance, a major scale follows the same interval sequence as the Hypolydian mode (tone, tone, semitone, tone, tone, tone, semitone), but if you start the major scale on the note ‘D’ the scale is called a D-major scale: D-E-F#-G-A-B-C#-D. Different modes follow different interval patterns too, and are not bound to the same structure of major and minor scales.



Sung at the Catholic feast of Pentecost, *Veni Sancte Spiritus* refers to the occasion of the Holy Spirit's descent upon the twelve apostles, which gifts them with the ability to speak all languages. The miracle can be understood in two ways (and as a polyphonic experience (Ihde, 2007)): either the apostles are able to speak the individual language of everyone present, or they speak one language that is *understood* by everyone present. The sung voices of the 'self' and 'other' exclaim and express the meaning of this miracle through their multiple, consonant and dissonant intertwining. By doing so, *Scale* demonstrates the complexity of the voice to express an experience without using intelligible words, as Dolar states:

[E]xpression versus meaning, expression beyond meaning, expression which is more than meaning, yet expression which functions only in tension with meaning.... Expression beyond language is another highly sophisticated language; its acquisition demands long technical training, reserved for the happy few, although it has the power to affect everyone universally. (2006, p. 30)

The sung voices express the everyday experience of negotiating and understanding our voice and 'self' in pluralistic society – an experience we each understand without comprehending any lyric meaning.

▶ PLEASE WATCH:

Video 3. *Scale* (#3) [1 minute 36 second example with original audio], Sept. 2015



Figure 12. *Scale* (#3) [performance still], August 2015

### ***The Alter Ego: Echo***

In *Scale*, the voices (whether in duet or a five part choir) simultaneously imitate and repeat each other, behaving like a sound mirror and reflecting the ‘other’ back at and as the ‘self’ (Derrida, 1977/1988; Dolar, 2006). Indeed, the ‘self’ is understood only in relation to the ‘other’ (Said, 1978, 1994; Smith et al., 1998).

In shifting toward understanding the ‘other’ as an ‘other self’ it is useful to examine Jacques Derrida’s notion of ‘iteration’, a term derived from ‘itara’, Sanskrit for ‘other’, “and the logic that ties repetition to alterity” (Derrida, 1977/1988, p. 7). Following this logic, we see that repetition is never absolutely identical; that things are never exactly the *same* repeated.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, (and as explored in my work) the alterity linked to repetition is understood as the *same* that is *always different* and always in delay. For example, an echo of my voice is never in the same time as my initial sound, nor is it the exact same sound, but rather an *iteration* of my voice.



Figure 13. *Scale* (#3) [performance stills], August 2015

In *Scale*, when attempting to synchronise my live voice with the recorded repetitions, I find myself simultaneously singing and listening – as any choir member does. Except in this instance, the singing and listening multiplies as iterations of my voice sing at once, highlighting the simultaneous sameness *and* difference between the voices (Derrida, 1977/1988). Once again Ihde’s doubled modalities of the perceptual and imaginative modes manifest as a ‘polyphony of experience’; a choir of the self (2007).

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<sup>21</sup> In his essay *Signature Event Context* (published in *Limited Inc.*) Derrida explains iteration through the example of the act of writing one’s own signature, which must be the same, but in its live performance (its signing) is never the same (1977/1988).



With this in mind, it is necessary to consider the paradox of one's own voice in the process of speech; that the voice signifies or refers to itself. Derrida discusses this as 'pure auto-affection', where:

To speak to someone is doubtless to hear oneself speak, to be heard by oneself; but, at the same time, if one is heard by another, to speak is to make him repeat immediately in himself the hearing-oneself-speak in the very form in which I effectuated it. This immediate repetition is a reproduction of pure auto-affection. (1973/2012, p. 498)

In *Scale*, the multiple iterations of my voice are also heard as repetitions of the 'self'; reproductions of auto-affection. Yet as my voice is also heard as the voice of the 'other', *Scale* highlights the complexity of 'auto affection' whereby hearing myself speak I also hear the 'other' through myself. Moreover, this interpretation neglects the audience who are also repeatedly, 'hearing-themselves-speak' in the form in which I have effectuated it (I address this in greater detail in *Part Three*) (Derrida, 1973/2012).

Derrida, Said, and many cultural theorists would avoid binaries such as the 'self' and 'other'. By navigating the space *between* the subject and object of meaning, the signifier and the signified, the self and the other, the sung voice creates an immediate and incomprehensible iteration of the self *and* the other. Indeed, Dolar states that:

The voice can be located at the juncture of the subject and Other... the voice is the element which ties the subject and the Other together, without belonging to either, just as it formed the tie between body and language without being part of them. We can say that the subject and the Other coincide in their common lack embodied by the voice, and that "pure enunciation" can be taken as the red thread which connects the linguistic and ethical aspects of the voice. (2006, p. 103)

The notion of iteration is extended in *Echo*, a series of performances I created that explore the interplay between the ‘self’ and ‘other self’. In *Echo*, two loudspeakers are hidden from view, heard but not seen by the listening audience and myself gathered together in the performance space.

A voice materialises from one speaker concealed in an adjacent space; one hummed note, sustained for about eight seconds. Standing amongst the audience, I imitate the speaker’s voice through a hum of my own; the melody develops and overlaps, and I continue to echo the speaker’s call and in turn am echoed by the speaker.

▶ PLEASE WATCH:

Video 3. *Echo* [1 minute 12 second example with 2-channel audio], June 2015

*Echo* is inspired by Susan Philipsz 2014 work *Part File Score* (see figures 14 & 15), exhibited at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart, in Berlin. In her piece, Philipsz sets three film music compositions by Hanns Eisler (1898-1962) to play through a 24-channel sound installation. Each part was recorded individually by live musicians in the studio, and then fragmented throughout the Hamburger Bahnhof, with each note played back separately through one of 24 speakers installed in the space. The entire composition is shared across all speakers and is only understood as *one* unified piece of music when heard throughout the entire space.



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Figure 14. Susan Philipsz *Part File Score*, 2014



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Figure 15. Susan Philipsz *Part File Score*, 2014

The composition of *Echo* passes the hummed voice between the unseen speakers and myself, similar to Philipsz' technique of sharing sound between speakers, but instead focuses on mimicking an echoic lag. Rather than many parts heard as a whole throughout a space, *Echo* aims to pull the voice across time and space, effectively scattering any origin<sup>22</sup> of the sound and surrounding the listener with an unlocatable 'other' voice that is in fact the 'self'. By scattering the source of the voice, I dislocate the 'self' from its origin, inserting a temporal difference between hearing my voice as 'pure auto-affection' and hearing this self-same voice as a delayed iteration (Derrida, 1977/1988, 1973/2012). Through such temporal iteration, the 'self' is transformed into an incomprehensible echo. This echo can also be heard as a continual deferral of the 'self', through a loss of origin which Derrida discusses as a blurring of the primary and secondary terms (the 'self' and the 'other') becoming a "non-origin which is originary". (Derrida, 1967/2001, p. 255).

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<sup>22</sup> Derrida discusses iteration of the 'self' in regard to the signifier, stating "this unity of the signifying form only constitutes itself by virtue of its iterability, by the possibility of its being repeated in the absence not only of its "referent," which is self-evident, but in the absence of a determinate signified or of the intention of actual signification, as well as of all intention of present communication" (1977/1988, p. 10).

The delayed call and response between voices in the performance addresses the temporal nature of the voice. At the beginning of the performance, an unlikely length of time elapses between the speaker's hum and my own. As the tempo quickens, it becomes apparent that my live voice is repeating the speaker's hummed notes. The tempo increases again, and both voices begin to continuously overlap becoming locked in a cyclical exchange, echoing each other, deferring to the other and learning from the other. We find that "the echo delivers our own alter-ego" (LaBelle, 2011, p. 15).

Moreover, the echoed voice can be heard as a delayed reflection of an immediate past event. Derrida explains that within the experience of the present there is a small moment of difference, a 'now-ness', that blurs the present moment with the past and future (1977/1988). *Echo* exaggerates this usually imperceptible 'now-ness', exposing the temporality of the voice in space, creating a heightened delay that draws the work into a conversation with time and space. I discuss this movement toward temporality in the next section, *Part Two: Absence/Presence*.



Figure 16. *Echo* [performance still], June 2015

*Mein Flügel ist zum Schwung bereit,  
My wing is ready for flight,*

*Ich kehrte gern zurück,  
I would like to turn back.*

*Den bleib ich auch lebendige Zeit,  
If I stayed timeless time,*

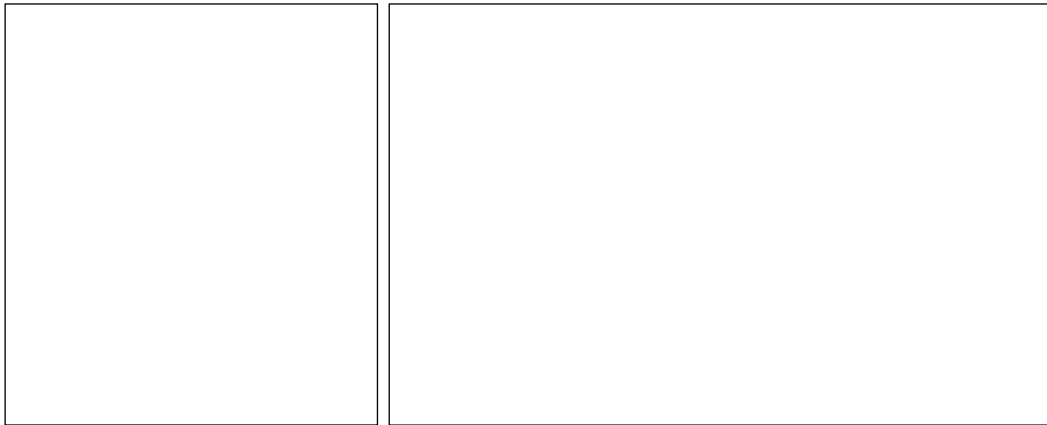
*Ich hätte wenig Glück.  
I would have little luck.*

*His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awake the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.*

Walter Benjamin with *Gruss vom Angelus* by Gerhard Scholem  
*Illuminations* IX (1955/1968)

## PART TWO: ABSENCE/PRESENCE

In *Echo* the voice moves through space and over time, becoming dislocated from its source.<sup>23</sup> This idea of a travelling and temporal voice distanced from its body is the focus of *Passage*, a performance series that explores the movement of both the source of the voice and the listener. *Passage* utilises thoroughfare areas such as corridors, tunnels, hallways, stairwells, and elevators as the performance space. Such thoroughfares are in-between spaces; temporarily occupied, liminal zones designed to connect other spaces (Blessner & Salter, 2009; LaBelle, 2011).



*These images have been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Figure 17. (left) Bruce Nauman *Live-Taped Video Corridor*, 1970

Figure 18. (right) Bruce Nauman *Corridor*, 1969

### ***Bruce Nauman's Corridor***

My idea to implement thoroughfare spaces to transport the voice was developed after studying examples of contemporary artworks that involve directional movement of the performer or participant.<sup>24</sup> *Passage (#1)* for

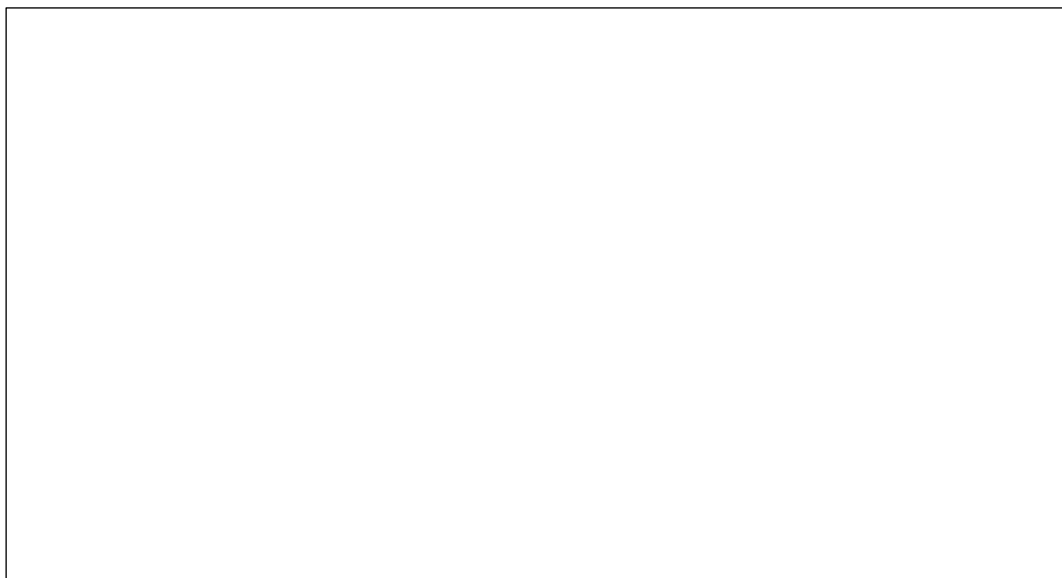
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<sup>23</sup> My work is influenced by Don Ihde's concepts on 'timeful sound' where he responds to Husserl's temporal field, stating: "[t]he field of time, however, is shown to contain a great deal of complexity. The coming-into-being of a perceptually temporal experience is spoken of as a "welling up" with a "leading edge" that Husserl often characterised as a *source point*. The other extreme of the field is a "running off" of phenomena in *retentions* that are sometimes characterised as *reverberations* or *echoes* that "sink" into the just-past" (2007, pp. 91-92)

<sup>24</sup> Other examples included 'situations' by Tino Sehgal; Janet Cardiff's *Sound Walks*; numerable works by Bill Viola including *The Fall into Paradise*, Bruce Nauman's series of pacing his studio; Richard Long's *A Line Made By Walking*, Marina Abramović and Ulay *Great Wall*, *Imponderabilia* and *Relation in Space*; and Francis Alÿs' *The Green Line*.

instance, attempts a sound-based version of Bruce Nauman's *Live-Taped Video Corridor* (1970); one of a series of corridor works Nauman made using a very narrow, dead-end corridor fabricated from two pieces of wallboard supported by a simple wooden frame (see figure 18). Janet Kraynak writes about Nauman's works explaining how they rely on the beholder's direct participation for their completion; "[e]ncountering the sculpture, the viewer must physically enter its tight space in order to 'see' it, taking the place of the artist as the performer" (2003, p. 28). *Part Two: Absence/Presence* focuses on the *movement* through time and space necessary to experience such artworks, and in my case, the movement and temporality of the voice. (I address the movement and participation of the beholder in *Part Three: Silent Participation*).

Nauman's *Live-Taped Video Corridor* includes the additional element of a closed circuit video loop (see figures 17 & 19). A television monitor at the far end of the corridor displays the image seen through a video camera positioned at the corridor entrance. If you walk into the corridor (and further away from the camera), you find yourself walking toward a diminishing image of yourself observed from behind. The paradox is that despite the live televised image, you cannot turn to meet yourself face to face in this space.



*This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Figure 19. Bruce Nauman *Live-Taped Video Corridor*, 1970

### **Passage**

In my sound corridor, *Passage (#1)*, the video camera and monitor are replaced with a microphone and speaker to imitate this visual closed circuit loop. My piece yields very different results due to the ways we experience audio and visual signals. Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter discuss the physiological differences between seeing and hearing in their book, *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? : Experiencing Aural Architecture*:

Consider a crackling (noisy) candle, emitting both light and sound energy in a room with a mirror surface that reflects both forms of energy... the *experience* of reflected light and that of reflected sound diverge. Whereas multiple sonic reflections are generally perceived as a single fused sonic event even when sound arrives from different directions and at different times, multiple visual reflections always remain distinct. Under normal circumstances, aurally, we would perceive only a single noisy candle... visually we would perceive two candles, an actual and a virtual one. (2009, p. 56)

Likewise, the image of oneself experienced in Nauman's corridor stretches continually out-of-reach upon your approach; your real body in the real corridor stretches into the repeated 'self' walking down the corridor in the monitor. In *Passage (#1)*, the repeated 'self' (the re-iterated 'other self') meets you 'face to face' as the voice is thrown from you into the microphone and back at you from the speaker in a kind of circular ventriloquism or feedback effect (Dolar, 2006). As mentioned in *Part One*, this repeated feedback effect also acts as mirror, reflecting the 'other self' back at the 'self', again linking the repetition of the 'self' to alterity (see page 21).

This feedback effect can also be seen to describe a possibility of movement *within* the 'self', where subjectivity as such can never be a fixed entity. Through this internal shift the 'self' experiences the 'other' simultaneously as in Don Ihde's 'polyphony of experience' (see page 15). Such 'polyphony



of experience' is also akin to Edward Said's ambition that we transform as an entity that includes the other without suppressing difference (see page 14).

I tested the limits of this relayed<sup>25</sup> voice by singing one long note while slowly walking between the microphone and speaker and found that the ability to hear the voice echoing from the speaker diminished with each step I took away from the microphone. As both voices (original and echoed) fill the entire corridor space, the space in turn disrupts the temporal difference between the live and relayed voices. This inaudible difference can be explained using Derrida's notion of 'now-ness' where the immediacy of hearing my voice directly as I sound *into* the microphone (as 'pure auto-affection') blurs with the relayed voice as an artificial echo *out* of the speaker at the other end of the corridor (Derrida, 1977/1988, 1973/2012). By highlighting this difference, our experience of the voice as 'pure auto-affection' extends outward into conversation with the space containing it (Derrida, 1973/2012).



Figure 20. *Passage (#1)* [performance/installation stills], June 2015

<sup>25</sup> Here I am referring back to my mention of delay at the end of *Part One* as the echoed voice is heard as a delayed reflection of an immediate past event. Delay, relay (Derrida also uses the French word *retard*) are all connected to the temporalisation of deconstruction; we never fully comprehend, never fully get there.

## **Echoed Spaces**

Hearing my voice echoed back to me in the corridor space emphasises the relationship between the sound of the voice and the space containing it. Don Ihde discusses this reciprocity, explaining that “the mute object does not reveal its own voice, it must be given a voice. ... One thing is struck by another, one surface contacts another, and in the encounter a voice is given to the thing” (2007, p. 67).

This insight alters our understanding of sounds in space. An experience of echo is not simply a repeated self, nor the voice defining the space, but is also the voice of the mute object; the space itself:

There is clearly a complication in this giving of voice, for there is not one voice, but two. I hear not one voice, but at least two in a “duet” of things.... True, just as in listening to an actually sung vocal duet, I can focus auditorily on either tenor or the baritone; but my focal capacity does not blot out the second voice, it merely allows it to recede into a relative background. Thus in listening to the duet of things which lend each other a voice, I also must learn to hear what each offers in the presence of the other.... [W]ith echo the sense of distance as well as surface is present. (Ihde, 2007, pp. 67-69)

This duet between ‘objects’ takes on another meaning when discussing the voice, as the sound reflected back is not simply a *noise*, but recognisably another *voice*; the space ‘speaking’<sup>26</sup> – a disembodied voice.

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<sup>26</sup> As an aside: in his 2014 book *Sonic Wonderland: A Scientific Odyssey of Sound*, Trevor Cox, tests how a space can speak through a ‘manifold echo’ experiment proposed by 17<sup>th</sup> Century Jesuit scholar, Athanasius Kircher, (in his 1650 book *Musurgia Universalis*); an experiment that “produces multiple distinct reflections of a voice” (p. 120). By placing large, upright panels at increased distances away from the speaker, a series of echoes are created, rendering the voice capable of multiple meanings. Kircher’s five-panel design was created for the Latin question “Tibi vero gratias agam, quo clamore?” “How shall I cry out my thanks to thee?”. The echoes from the last word “clamore” are reflected back from the five-panels respectively, and become shortened as the sound travels further from each panel back to the speaker. The answer echoed is “clamore, amore, more, ore, re”, which can be translated as ‘with thy love, thy wont, thy words, thy deeds’ (Cox, 2014, p. 121).

### ***The Disembodied Voice***

The disembodied voice is the focus of *Passage (#2)*, a performance that aims to distance the voice from its source and thereby questioning to what extent the voice can be present without the body.

The performance takes place in a thoroughfare with a resonant acoustic; a long, dark, narrow tunnel connecting two chambers in the North Head gun emplacement on Auckland's North Shore (see figures 21 & 22). In this work I sing a single note while slowly walking through the tunnel. My movement is determined by my breath and voice; I rest when my voice rests, I stop when my voice stops. Long single notes are projected outward, sustained and then passed through as the tunnel reflects the voice throughout the space, stretching it *beyond* my body. I walk toward my voice, following its echo. My voice is present when my body is not; audible when my body is invisible. *My present yet disembodied voice becomes an echo of my (absent) body.*

▶ PLEASE WATCH:

Video 5. *Passage* [1 minute 15 second example with 2-channel audio], June 2015



Figure 21. *Passage (#2)* [performance still], June 2015

By associating the ‘absence’ of the body with the ‘presence’ of the echoed voice, *Passage (#2)* teases out a temporality of the voice as it travels between surfaces. Indeed, “[t]he space of sound is ‘in’ its timefulness” (Ihde, 2007, p. 69). This contrast shows that the ear does not have to ‘face’ the mouth and that we presume the origin of the disembodied voice to come from a body — as it is a familiar and communicable sound that we understand (Dolar, 2006; Ihde, 2007; LaBelle, 2011). Moreover, the presence of the voice and body occupy both space and time differently, as Derrida discusses:

As a relation between an inside and an outside in general, an existent and a non-existent in general, a constituting and a constituted in general, temporalisation is at once the very power limit of phenomenological reduction. Hearing oneself speak is not the inwardness of an inside that is closed in upon itself; it is the irreducible openness in the inside; it is the eye and the world within speech. (1973/2012, p. 502)

Derrida alerts us to the possibility that the experience of a disembodied voice has a temporal movement, as it is a *projection* of the ‘self’ out into time and space, out into the world. Furthermore, the temporality of the ‘self’ is infinitely repeated and incomprehensible as multiple delayed iterations of the voice (the other self) echo back at the ‘self’. This can be understood as an experience of timelessness — having no beginning or end — as Brandon LaBelle explains:

With the return of the sound event in the form of echoes, origin and horizon fold back on each other to create feelings of timelessness.... things stand still by also coming back; the echo, in bringing sound back, breaks the sense of progression.... The echo comes to stand in space, as a figure whose shape and dimension remains unsteady, but whose meaning suggests an ambiguous field of signification: every echo seems to *come alive*. (2011, p. 14)

We find that the disembodied *sung* voice through the timelessness of echo, also suggests a different signification of space as an uncertain reverberation, or iteration, of liveness. LaBelle describes this possibility through the concept of the ‘acousmatic’:

The acousmatic carries forward the tracings of a voice that leaves behind the material world, to appear as is from the shadows... a sound no longer bound to earth. That is to say, the echo is a sound that comes back to haunt, returning as transformed through its diffusion and ultimate regrouping into an altogether different expression.<sup>27</sup> (2011, p. 15)

While we know the voice to be from a body, we also experience that same voice as transcending the body. In *Passage (#2)* the sung voice, when perceived as disembodied, creates in the listener their own transcendent, out of body experience.<sup>28</sup>



Figure 22. *Passage (#2)* [performance still], June 2015

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<sup>27</sup> LaBelle explains the term acousmatic as “detailed by Pierre Schaeffer (and Michel Chion) within the field of electroacoustic music, the acousmatic is a sound heard whose origin we do not see.” (p.14). The “acousmatic” is therefore a (general) sound equivalent to the “disembodied” that I use to refer to the voice whose origin we do not see.

<sup>28</sup> As a singer, I often experience my own voice as a disembodied voice as I have been taught to trust that my technique is correct by the absence of any tension; honing an acute sense of relaxation, so little if any sensation of producing the sound is felt. As a soprano, I have also been taught to place sounds and notes in various points in my head. In a class with operatic soprano Judy Bellingham, she told of how some singers place the sound so far “back” in their heads that they actually place their own voice in an imaginary person standing behind themselves – an imagined and perceptual disembodied experience. This is an unusual experience when we think about the Idhe’s polyphony of experience, where the perceptual mode is a disembodied experience of ones own voice at the same time as knowing it is ones own voice as it was “imagined” before sounded.

This experience, aided by the timbre of my voice, has strong connections to sacred music. A choir in a Catholic Church often sings from the organ loft, an elevated position out of sight of the congregation. The congregation does not watch the choir, but instead experiences their voices in the midst of church ritual. By distancing the voice from its source, churchgoers are permitted to experience the voice as a sound “no longer bound to earth” – as a choir of angels (LaBelle, 2011, p. 15). This experience is emphasised by the purposely-resonant acoustics of churches. The silence of the mute-space that is the house of God is given voice through echo.

I developed versions of *Passage* that explore a timelessness created by the disembodied voice and echoic spaces – where the voice suggests an imagined and historic passage through time. However, as these works raise many topics beyond the content of this thesis discussion, I have only included them in the appendix as an illustration of my research into how the sung voice can blur time and space.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> In *Paradisum*, created for the 2015 Oceanic Performance Biennial (a conference concerning sea-level rise and the cultural implications of climate change in the Cook Islands), addresses this “imagined passage through time”, but is a problematic divergence from the ideas discussed in this section. Involving a sung procession of a Requiem Mass chant from the shore into the ocean, the performance involves a complete submersion of the voice underwater this work raises many topics beyond the content of this thesis discussion. I have therefore elected to only include this work in the appendix as an illustration of the way the sung voice can bridge a history of time and space.



## PART THREE: SILENT PARTICIPATION

In *Part One* I discussed the voice (sung and heard) from the perspective of the self – particularly myself as a live solo performer. *Part Two* then detailed how the voice is heard in space, and ways the voice can be present without the body, distanced from its so-called origin. This too was discussed from my position as a solo performer.

*Part Three* considers another perspective; the voice as heard by a listener, one who did not create the sound, but through hearing the voice is transformed from ‘spectator’ to ‘silent participant’. I use the term ‘silent participant’ as an attempt to describe the shifting role of the audience in artworks where *people* “constitute the central artistic medium and material...” (Bishop, 2012, p. 2). The term does not infer that participants are necessarily silent, but that they become, more or less, unwittingly implicated in an artwork. In this context, Claire Bishop’s 2012 book, *Artificial Hells*, discusses the shifting role of the artist and audience in the “expanded field of post studio practices”, charting the rise of ‘participatory art’<sup>30</sup> as a movement where:

The artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of *situations*<sup>31</sup>; the work of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product is reconceived as an ongoing or long-term *project* with an unclear beginning and end; while the audience, previously conceived as a ‘viewer’ or ‘beholder’, is now responsible as a co-producer or participant. (p. 2)

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<sup>30</sup> Bishop chooses the term ‘participatory art’ (over other terms such as: ‘socially engaged art’, ‘community-based art’, ‘collaborative art’, ‘social practice’, etc.) as it “connotes the involvement of many people (as opposed to the one-to-one relationship of ‘interactivity’) and avoids the ambiguities of social engagement...” (Bishop, 2012, p. 1)

<sup>31</sup> According to Bishop, term ‘situation’ derives from Walter Benjamin’s explanation of Brechtian theatre, which “abandons long complex plots in favour of ‘situations’ that interrupt the narrative through a disruptive element, such as song. Through this technique of montage and juxtaposition, audiences were led to break their identification with the protagonists on stage and be incited to a critical distance. Rather than presenting the illusion of action on stage and filling the audiences with sentiment, Brechtian theatre compels the spectator to take up a position toward this action” (Bishop, 2006, p. 11). Tino Sehgal (and many other performance based artists) prefer to use the term ‘situations’ to describe their artworks, rather than referring to their works as ‘performances’.



Accordingly, the shifting roles of audiences are unclear, as we will see by again examining my performance *Elevator* as well as through examples of performance and sound based artworks by Tino Sehgal, John Cage and Marina Abramović. What is essential to each of these works is that, while generated by a single artist, the ‘situations’ created demand more than audience ‘interaction’. In fact, the works can only operate in relation to audience *participation*. This is similar to the operations at work in experiencing Bruce Nauman’s *Corridor*, and where I quoted Janet Kraynak saying that the effect of the corridor is made possible by relying on the beholder’s direct participation for its completion... (see page 28) (2003).

### ***Elevator and the Silent Conductor***

*Elevator* derives from my research around the disembodied voice (see page 32).<sup>32</sup> This artwork specifically explores my live and recorded sung voice within the three elevators that traverse the seven-storey School of Art & Design building at AUT. I selected a musical composition (as noted in the *Introduction*) written for three voices and recorded myself singing two of the parts separately. These recordings play back through individual speakers installed in two elevators while I stand inside the third elevator singing the final part.

On each floor the elevators open onto a foyer area that in turn is connected to a tall, narrow atrium. Sound and voices resonate throughout the atrium to the extent that people entering the building on ground level can be heard from the 7<sup>th</sup> floor foyer. The ‘aural architecture’ of the building takes

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<sup>32</sup> For *Elevator*, the link to the disembodied voice from *Part Two* is that each voice, including my live singing, is heard as disembodied as the singing fills the atrium – we hear the voice without seeing where it came from. This is an extension of the experience of the aural architecture, where sounds of people entering/exiting the building at ground level can be heard from other floors – we hear people entering/exiting but do not see them. Furthermore, I was interested in how my disembodied recorded voice differed to my live voice *inside* the elevators, especially as there is already a disembodied voice within each elevator alerting users to which floor they are on and the opening and closing of doors.

on a ‘social meaning’ as it publicly announces arrivals and departures through echoing footsteps and conversations (Blessner & Salter, 2009).<sup>33</sup>

Before performing *Elevator* for the first time, my consideration of the *social* aspect of the atrium space was secondary to my interest in the *acoustic* nature of the space. My intent was to isolate each voice in the three-part composition and test if the atrium itself could re-harmonise the voices when the elevator doors opened.

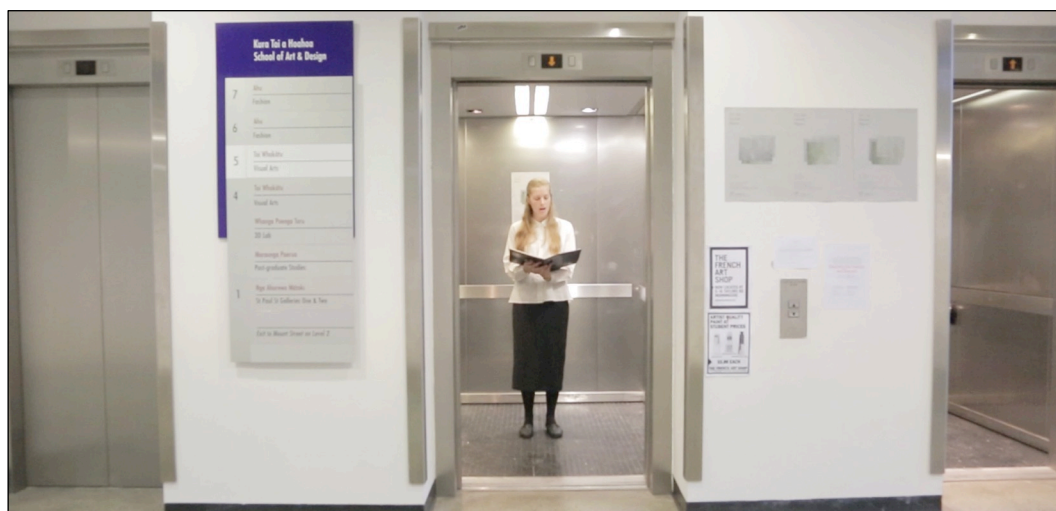


Figure 23. *Elevator* [performance still], August 2015

However, this performance relied upon elevator users and when I performed the work for the first time, I realised that incidental elevator users played a key role as music/choral conductors (Bishop, 2012; Kraynak, 2003; Meyerhold, 2007).<sup>34</sup> Much like a conductor, these unsuspecting participants did not contribute to the work by singing. Instead, through the push of a button, the participants directed both the

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<sup>33</sup> As mentioned in footnote #1, Blessner and Salter explain the social meaning of aural architecture: “[f]or example, the bare marble floors and walls of an office lobby loudly announce the arrival of visitors by the resounding echoes of their footsteps. In contrast, thick carpeting, upholstered furniture, and heavy draperies, all of which suppress incident or reflected sounds, would mute that announcement. The aural architecture of the lobby thus determines whether entering is a public or private event” (2009, p. 3).

<sup>34</sup> Vsevolod Meyerhold draws comparisons between theatre and orchestral concerts where “...a symphony orchestra without a conductor is possible, but nevertheless it is impossible to draw a parallel between it and the theatre, where actors invariably perform on stage without a director. A symphony orchestra without a conductor is possible, but no matter how well rehearsed, it could never stir the public, only acquaint the listener with the interpretation of this or that conductor, and could blend into an ensemble only to the extent that an artist can re-create a conception which is his own” (2007, p. 267).

movement and position (harmonising) of the voice in each elevator, and the dynamics (volume) of the singing through the opening and closing of elevator doors. In most cases, the ‘conducting’ was unintentional and resulted in chance crossovers of the voices, as participants were simply utilising the elevators. Moreover, the unification of the three sung voices, while at the behest of the conductor/s, was achieved without verbal instruction. Just as a conductor silently directs a choir, the elevator users silently participate in my performance.

### ***Tino Sehgal: Silent Conductors***

A friend once shared with me his experience of becoming an unwitting participant in an artwork by Tino Sehgal.<sup>35</sup> The ‘situation’ he described, took place in the New Museum in New York as part of the 2008 *After Nature* exhibition. He took the elevator to the next floor, and when the doors opened he was blasted by a single high-pitched note sung by a soprano opera singer.

The volume and intensity of the sung voice created a shocking disruption to the normal volume of voices in the gallery. It also departed from an elevator etiquette that implicitly requests that users politely refrain from conversing until they exit an elevator. Newcomers to the floor were caught off guard by the operatic announcement, which contrasted severely with the polite silence observed by the participants on their (vertical) journey toward the singer. Furthermore, the soprano *only* sang when the elevator doors opened and people emerged. We can assume that she did not sing at any other time and instead silently awaited the prompt from elevator users-cum-participants, as she might have from a conductor. In this sense, the sung announcement *depended* on the presence of the elevator users coerced into Sehgal’s ‘situation’, becoming participants willing or not. The same could be said of my performance where, to avoid directly participating, elevator users must take the stairs.

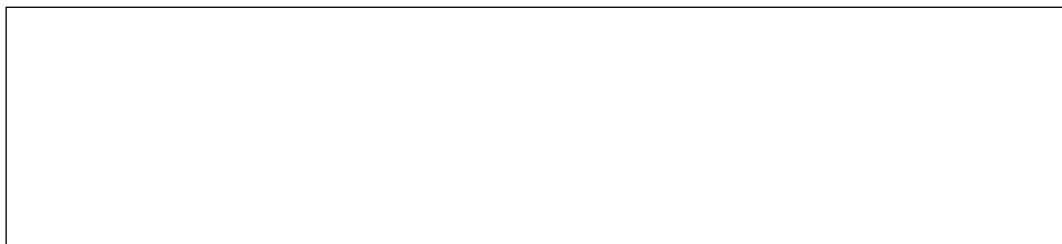
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<sup>35</sup> Sehgal has a desire to not pollute the world through art objects and creates ‘situations’ where people can become art themselves. He also encourages no official documentation or recording of his work. Instead, his ‘situations’ live on through the retelling and relaying of the experience as shared by others – most often the audience and participants.

The retelling of Sehgal's work incurs inaccuracies and multiple interpretations. Yet, participants find their voice and place in the performance upon relaying<sup>36</sup> it to others. This is perhaps also the case for the participants in *Elevator* where many of them tell others – friends and strangers alike – about their encounter with the sung voice (recorded or live). My silent participants find their voice upon exiting the elevator and through relaying their experience to others; whether as an opinion, an instruction, a simple remark or a caution (such as alerting others to the elevator with the live voice). Furthermore, the performance itself, and thus my voice, receives a second life through its iteration in the form of an explanation from participants (Derrida, 1977/1988).<sup>37</sup>

### ***Elevator Etiquette***

As mentioned, a sung voice inside an elevator breaks an (unspoken) elevator etiquette that bids users journey through such private yet public spaces in silence (Carter, 1997). This confined and inescapable space makes it almost impossible to *not* overhear other conversations, or ignore any talk addressed at oneself. While we can choose to not look at other elevator users (indeed making eye-contact is discouraged in good elevator etiquette), we cannot escape the sounds heard within the elevator until we reach our destination – ears cannot blink!<sup>38</sup>



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Figure 24. Ben Barry, *Elevator Etiquette 'How To Guide'*.

<sup>36</sup> I intentionally use the word 'relaying' as it relates back to the ideas of 'delay' and 'repetition' discussed in *Parts One* and *Two*. This repetition of the work by the audience (in its retelling as a form of dispersal and documentation) is a process of alterity.

<sup>37</sup> Sehgal would even say that upon hearing/reading the retelling of his work we too are now participants in the 'situation'.

<sup>38</sup> This difference between how we see and how we hear is discussed by many theorists and acoustic engineers I have studied including: Douglas Kahn (2001), Caleb Kelly (2011), R. Murray Schafer (1977/1994) and Trevor Cox (2014).

Upon hearing my recorded and live singing, elevator users are forced into a *silent* participation. Moreover, the *presence* of my sung voice in *Elevator*, ironically emphasises the silence of typical elevator journeys. John Cage, in his *Lecture on Nothing*, aptly points out that “[w]hat we require is silence, but what silence requires is that I go on talking” (1959/1973, p. 109). Similarly, Susan Sontag states that: “[s]ilence never ceases to imply its opposite and to demand on its presence... Silence remains, inescapably, a form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue” (1969, p. 5)



*This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Figure 25. Ben Barry, *Elevator Etiquette 'How To Guide'*.

My sung and recorded voice reveals to participants the otherwise silent social acoustic qualities of the elevators and the atrium. By not adhering to the socially accepted vocal behaviour of these spaces, my sung voice reveals the social meaning in the aural architecture. For the participants, this can lead to different experiences of each space, as is touched upon by Blesser and Salter:

In musical performance space, acoustic attributes can produce a blending of sequential notes, almost like chords. In certain religious spaces, they can produce a reverberation that conveys a sense of awe and reverence. As with all sensory aspects of architecture, cultural values and social functions determine the experiential consequences of spatial attributes. In different social settings, the same acoustic features have different meanings, which then influence the mood and behaviour of the people in those settings. (2009, p. 3)

Moreover, the musical timbre of my voice is juxtaposed with other voices and sounds found in these spaces, thus reminding listeners of another space, tradition and temporality. Accordingly, a so-called secular art school building might become acoustically reminiscent of a resonant cathedral (Blessner & Salter, 2009).

### ***John Cage: Silent Participation in Music***

In transforming the experience of the elevators and atrium for ‘silent participants’, *Elevator* echoes a history of ideas in sound art influenced by John Cage’s famous composition, *4’33”*. In 1952, the audience awaiting the first performance of this piece, which involved a motionless pianist, inadvertently found themselves the performers or instruments in the work. Cage’s intention was to demonstrate that every sound is music, everything we do is music, by enhancing the audience’s listening ability through ‘silence’, thus revealing that ‘true’ silence is impossible (Cage, 1973; Schafer, 1977/1994).

It is common for present-day audiences attending a performance of *4’33”* to sit in silence (although the piece does not instruct this), thereby gaining an acute aural awareness of the surrounding acoustic environment as well as of their own (bodily) sounds and thoughts (Cox, 2014; Dolar, 2006). That the audience’s participation is silent for a ‘re-enactment’ of this performance may be due to prior knowledge of Cage’s work<sup>39</sup> and to the description of the work as a ‘silent composition’, or, more generally, a longing for a quiet space in an increasingly noisy world (Cage, 1973; LaBelle, 2011; Schafer, 1977/1994). It is also likely linked to the formal and socially accepted behaviour of (listening) audiences in concert halls, art galleries and museums (Blessner & Salter, 2009; Cox, 2014; LaBelle, 2011).

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<sup>39</sup> When researching and watching multiple performance/renditions of Cage’s piece I came across one video on youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7C5qfMfhjZk>) that plays no audio for *4’33”* while a text on the screen indicates which movement the piece is up to. After listening to other video documentation of *4’33”* this personal concert being given to me through John Cage on youtube left me too sitting in silence listening to the hum of the room and my computer.

## ***Silent Conversations***

All that said, as demonstrated by Cage in *4'33"*, silent participants are never truly silent. For *Elevator*, the socially accepted standards of behaviour are different from an art gallery but, nevertheless, not unrelated. Participants do not cease making sounds, involuntary or not. Likewise, when sharing a so-called 'empty' space, participants did not necessarily stop conversing.

Reactions to the disembodied (recorded) voice were sometimes different to reactions to the live voice and my *presence* as a live performer. Many maintained their conversation alongside the recorded singing, adding more voices to the music, while those in the elevator with my *live* voice were silenced by my physical proximity and, no doubt (as noted above), some formal protocols associated with live performance.



Figure 26. *Elevator* [performance still], August 2015

Also, and perhaps in a similar fashion to Tino Sehgal's work in *After Nature*, the intensity of my sung voice expressed my intention to not only involve participants *inside* the elevator but also those in the adjacent elevators and the atrium beyond.

For participants, this might create an uncomfortable tension in the performance. To one extent, the solo voices singing in the elevators offer an intimate and private concert<sup>40</sup> for elevator users as they travel between floors.<sup>41</sup> Alternatively, and upon hearing the voices from other elevators through the lift shaft and in the atrium, it might become apparent that my live voice is one of three voices singing together, in conversation with each other and with the space. The melodic, solo and private performance in each elevator is reheard as one voice singing as a harmonious polyphonic whole.

The singing voices interrupt normal everyday exchanges between people in the School of Art & Design, exposing the complexities of socially acceptable behaviour in public and private spaces. By doing so, *Elevator* provokes a conversation about relationships between my live and recorded voice, the participants and the space.

The elevator doors could be said to signify the curtain or veil that traditionally separates audience and musician or performer. Standing outside the elevator, listeners experience a distance between themselves and performer, allowing the resonant atrium to blend and layer my voice through multiple echoes. Listeners hear (though at times distantly) my voice as if performed in a concert. Whereas, inside the elevator participants can be seen to step into an intimate space of rehearsal<sup>42</sup> or performance, as if on stage. Yet, participants are able to move between these spaces, following my voice as I cannot, repeating and echoing my voice through their movement.

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<sup>40</sup> Some participants asked me if they were in fact free to use the elevator that I am singing from – as if my voice marks a private territory within a private-public space they are then hesitant to enter and share (Carter, 1997).

<sup>41</sup> The live sung voice in such a setting is particularly unusual for listeners, as singers are not normally heard in such close proximity. In fact many singers work intimately with the acoustics of their performance space in order to achieve the best possible sound for their voice resonance and focus points. This is one of the appealing aspects of Janet Cardiff's work (see page 16), where the listener is given the rare opportunity to share an intimate space with a singer. In the case of *The Forty Part Motet*, this is achieved through the embodiment of the singer's voice in a mechanical speaker, thus removing the feeling of an invasion of personal space; the exchange is not person-to-person, but person-to-speaker.

<sup>42</sup> Similar to the rehearsal and practice space I explored in my honours year performances (see footnote #9 on page 8).



Shedding light on this movement between spaces, Michael Carter's 1997 *Putting a Face on Things: Studies in Imaginary Materials* explores the codes of public-public, public-private, private-public and private-private space (p. 60). Where public-public spaces might be those of streets and parks and private-private spaces might be intimate places such as bedrooms, the categories in between are more difficult to define. The Art & Design building in which *Elevator* takes place could be designated public-private, while the space of the lift itself could be described as private-public.

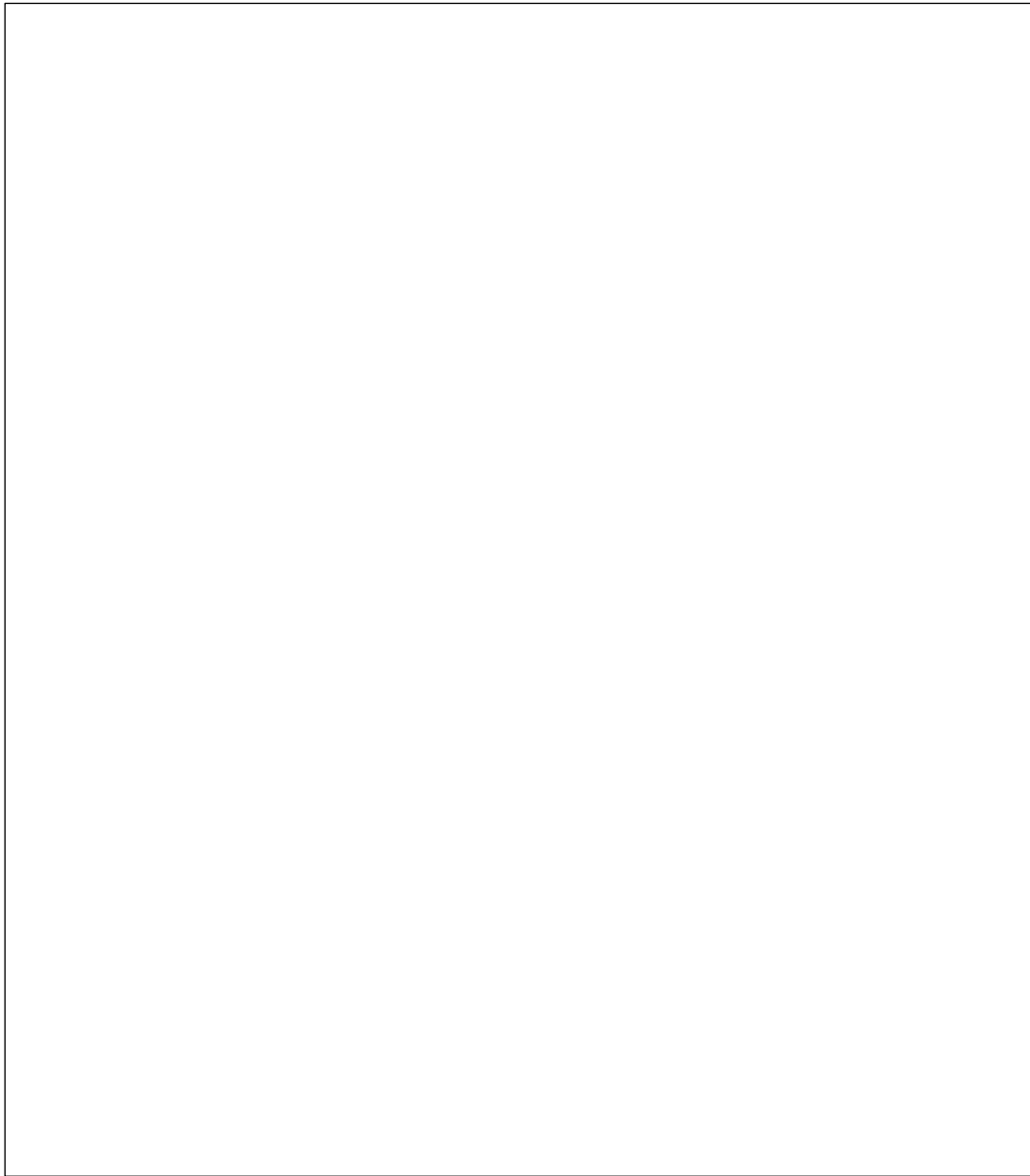
These codes of private and public space also adhere to individuals circulating through social space. In one sense, I am the protagonist with the more publicly dominant voice (on stage as it were) intruding on the privacy of others and sometimes silencing them. Yet, I cannot overlook the reaction of many participants who, upon experiencing my (harmonious) *sung* voice (and its associations with sacred choral music), are appreciatively silent. Despite my breaking elevator etiquette and creating a potentially uncomfortable elevator journey, some participants seem content sharing an elevator with me while I sing (or a speaker 'sings'). For some participants the elevator itself becomes the 'destination' and they remain in the space for long periods of time while others gather or pause in the foyer spaces to listen to the song.<sup>43</sup> That the participant's silence was at times voluntary reveals the correlation between serenity and silence – an experience common to sacred choral music.



Figure 27. *Elevator* [performance still] August 2015

<sup>43</sup> Some participants thanked me, applauded me or blew me kisses when they left the elevator.

But such a seemingly clear division of roles and spaces overlooks *my* vulnerability in the space. By singing in the shared and intimate private-public space of the elevator, I become vulnerable to the listeners (see page 16-17). Such close proximity allows participants to hear my voice directly, before it resonates throughout the space and blends with the other recorded voices. My fear and anxiety increase knowing I cannot fully depend on the resonance of the atrium to support my voice when the elevator doors are closed. Will my mistakes be obvious? Will others notice the faults and kinks in my voice, particularly as I tire?

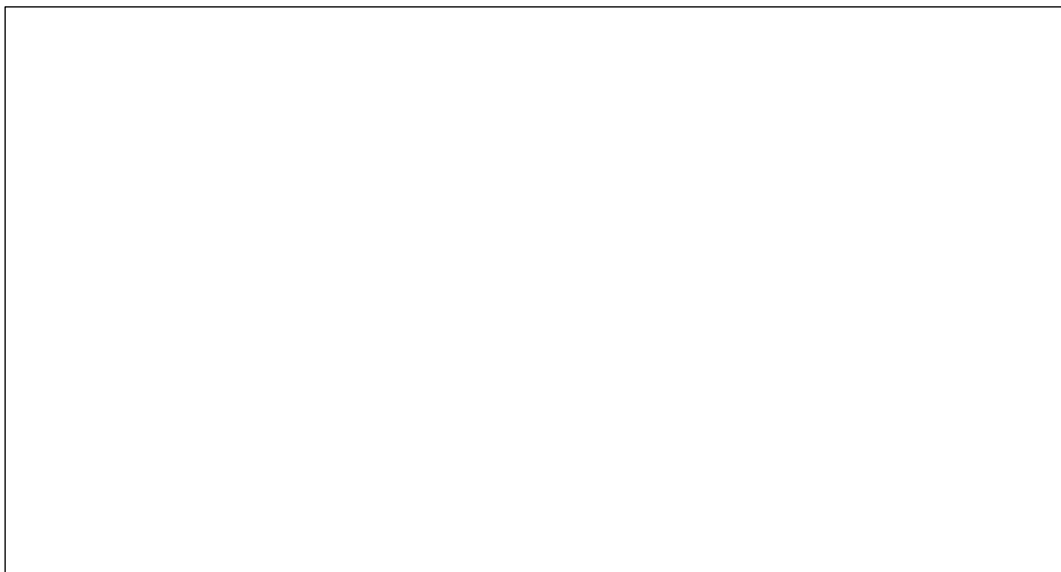


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Figure 28. Thomas Hirschhorn, *Spectre of Evaluation*, ink on paper, 2010

### ***Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present***

There is a correlation between the vulnerability of the vocal performer and vulnerability of the silent participant. The silence of the listening participant relates to the *presence* of the artist (Bishop, 2006). Marina Abramović explored this silence as an exchange between performer and participant in her intimate 2010 performance *The Artist is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. As she sat silently in MoMA's atrium for 700 hours (7 hours a day for 100 days), visitors to the gallery were invited to sit in an identical chair facing her and remain there for as long as they wished. Most participants sat in silence, mirroring Abramović's silent performance. This intimate exchange contrasted with the public space of the gallery in which the performance took place. With each participant Abramović formed a private space within a public space, through the use of intense silence.



*This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Figure 29. Marina Abramović, *The Artist Is Present*, 2010

Furthermore, as performer and participant locked eyes, one can imagine a myriad of unspoken communication: information from first impressions (age, ethnicity, gender, class); assumptions about personality based on their appearance; and subtle interpretations of body language (how participant and artist sat in the chair and how they held eye contact, etc.).

As each silent conversation unfolded, one imagines a bond formed through the shared and prolonged intimacy. The intensity of the silent exchange had one participant (and art critic) liken the work to a “700-hour silent opera” where participants are “cast as rapt audience, commenting chorus, [or] supporting soloists” to the protagonist artist (Cotter, 2010).

This observation draws an interesting connection between Tino Sehgal’s ‘situation’ in *After Nature* where the intensity of the sung voice from the soprano (high in pitch and volume) is similar to the intensity of the shared silence in Abramović’s performance – a deafening silence. Moreover, the intensity of both exchanges – silent and sung – disrupts the social space in which each performance takes place – namely, the space shared between participant and performer.<sup>44</sup>

That such a disruption to social space can be achieved silently and through singing further extends Dolar’s notion that meaning can be expressed without words (as quoted in *Part One*: see page 20).<sup>45</sup> In the case of *Elevator*, our understanding of the social meaning of the space where the performance takes place (elevator and atrium) is expressed, not only through the sung voice, but also through the silence of the participant.

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<sup>44</sup> As Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter discuss, the aural architecture of a space dictates to a certain extent the acceptable social and thus vocal behaviour of the space. In Sehgal and Abramović’s works the space is disrupted by both an intensely loud voice, and a prolonged silent exchange that seems out of place in a public atrium (albeit in an art gallery). My performance *Elevator* takes place in a space we not typically expect to encounter choral singing, albeit at an art school. While art audiences are becoming increasingly accustomed to experiencing artworks outside of the traditional gallery space, the art is often still met with a silence peculiar to hushed art galleries (be it bafflement, reverence or social etiquette similar to the hushed tone of libraries).

<sup>45</sup> “...expression versus meaning, expression beyond meaning, expression which is more than meaning, yet expression which functions only in tension with meaning” (2006, p. 30).

## CODA

My performance work *Elevator* embodies the main themes of my thesis: the voice and the self/other, the voice and its echo in space, and the voice and the listener (audience). This work, along with *Scale*, *Echo* and *Passage*, considers the voice as an extension and metaphor of the self. Our extension into space through our voice, as well as our relationship to others and to the space, is heard as the *force* of the operations of iteration, echo, and participation. A state of change, mediated by the voice, ensures that we are always forming and becoming another ‘self’. Moreover, how we negotiate ourselves within a variety of cultural and social spaces – and how we navigate these spaces in relation to others and in relation to our own self in time – is embodied in the function of our voices in everyday behaviour, communication, culture and belief.

In *Elevator*, these ideas manifest as an exchange between a vocal performer and a ‘silent participant’. Indeed, the use of the voice to disrupt private-public space considers the unspoken social behaviour we expect of such a space – that the sound of harmonious choral music seems just as out of place as the sung voice itself with its similarities to Sehgal’s soprano.

Yet this exchange is only effective due to the *silence* of the participants. There is a dependency within the performance; the participants are silenced by the proximity of my sung voice, but at the same time, their silence is what gives the voice meaning.

Dependency is vital in the social transaction – our extension in space, and the meanings we take from that, is constantly in flux as we negotiate ourselves as individuals within social space. Indeed, the goal, as Said explains, is to:

...transform from a unitary identity to an identity that includes the other without suppressing the difference.... Not only to understand oneself, but to understand oneself in relation to others... to understand others as if you would understand yourself. Where difference is understood without coercion. (Smith et al., 1998)

In *Elevator* we experience *both* silent *and* sung voices (as was also demonstrated through the silence of Abramović's and Cage's work). This gives an insight into the use of the voice in all my performances, where despite being the so-called 'solo' performer, the sung voice elucidates a polyvalence of exchange. This expression is beyond a simple repetition of the 'self' and 'other' and is always "expression beyond meaning, expression which is more than meaning, yet expression which functions only in tension with meaning" (Dolar, 2006, p. 30). Furthermore, such meaning is subject to the phenomenon that Derrida calls 'auto-affection' whereby the audience repeatedly, 'hear-themselves-speak' (1973/2012). It is such a 'polyphony of experience' that *Elevator* and my other performances seek to voice (Ihde, 2007).

## AFTERWORD

THE OTHER VOICE : *The Self, its Echo & the Silent Participant* covers many rich ideas and fields of study. I think of this Master's thesis as a starting point to further exploration and research into the voice, and especially the *sung* voice, as an extension of our self in space. It is my ambition to spend time researching this topic from a musicology and ethnomusicology point of view, and to continue to research the philosophical and sociological aspects of this idea. The solo performance methodology I used this year has been useful in uncovering the ideas detailed in this exegesis, and I hope to now extend these ideas outward into the community as I did with my 2014 *Voices Project*. Future artworks might once again involve working with groups of singers as well as collaboratively with musicians and composers.

Upon completing this exegesis I was excited to read and hear about Camille Norment's exhibition *Rapture* at the Nordic Pavilion in the current 2015 Venice Art Biennale. Internationally, artists such as Camille Norment, Susan Philipsz and Janet Cardiff as well as many theorists and composers are making works and searching for the language to best express the voice and our sonic/phonic experience of our self in the world. I hope to join them in this exciting exploration.

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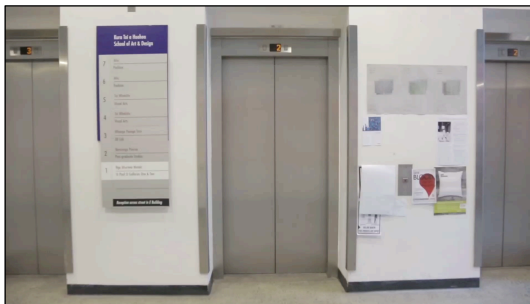
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## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF WORKS

This appendix provides details to the audio-visual documentation submitted with this exegesis, as well as some images of upcoming exhibitions for these performances. I have also included three images of *In Paradisum* – a performance linked to my *Passage* series.

### ***Audio-Visual Material from the exegesis***

#### ***Video 1. Elevator***



##### ***Elevator***

55 second example with original audio.

Elevators in the School of Art & Design, AUT

(August 2015)

Video by Noel Meek

#### ***Video 2. Scale (#1)***



##### ***Scale (#1)***

1 minute 36 seconds example with original audio

Testspace, School of Art & Design, AUT

(April 2015)

#### ***Video 3. Scale (#3)***



##### ***Scale (#3)***

1 minute 11 seconds example with original audio

Testspace, School of Art & Design, AUT

(September 2015)

**Video 4. Echo**



*Echo*

1 minute 12 seconds example  
with 2-channel audio  
Blackbox, AUT  
(June 2015)

**Video 5. Passage (#2)**

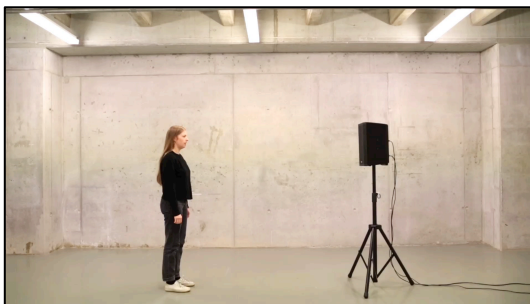


*Passage (#2)*

1 minute 15 seconds example  
with 2-channel audio  
North Head tunnel gun  
emplacement, Auckland  
(June 2015)

**Additional Documentation**

**Scale**



*Scale (#1)*

8 minute performance clip  
Live voice and 1 x Loudspeaker  
Testspace,  
School of Art & Design, AUT  
(April, 2015)



*Scale (#1 & 2)*

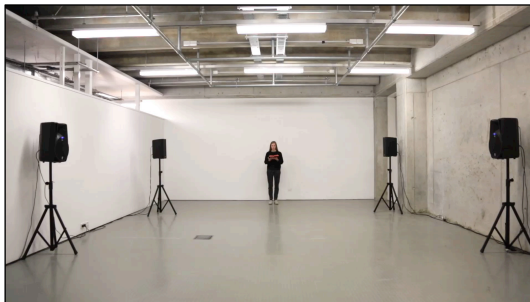
6 minute 15 second selection of  
various performances  
Live voice and 1 x Loudspeaker  
Testspace & Foyer of School of Art  
& Design, AUT; North Head gun  
emplacement (April, 2015)



*Scale (#3)*  
17 minutes 18 seconds  
selection of full 30 minute  
performance  
Live voice and 5 x Loudspeaker  
The Auricle, Christchurch  
(August, 2015)



*Scale (#3)*  
4 minutes 47 seconds selection  
of full 30 minute performance  
Live voice and 5 x Loudspeaker  
Testspace, School of Art &  
Design, AUT (September, 2015)



*Scale (#3)*  
4 minutes 47 seconds selection  
of full 30 minute performance  
Live voice and 5 x Loudspeaker  
Testspace, School of Art &  
Design, AUT (September, 2015)



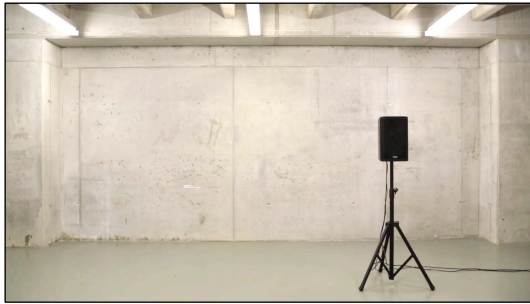
*Scale (#3)*  
5 minutes 16 seconds  
performance for critique  
Live voice and 5 x Loudspeaker  
Testspace, School of Art &  
Design, AUT (September, 2015)



*Scale (#3)*  
Upcoming 4-channel sound  
installation at Te Tuhi Art  
Gallery (November 2015 –  
February 2016)



**Echo**



*Echo*  
4 minutes 49 seconds  
performance  
Live voice and 1 x Loudspeaker  
Testspace, School of Art &  
Design, AUT (May 2015)



*Echo*  
2 minutes 40 seconds  
Live voice and 1 x Loudspeaker  
Performance in bathroom  
(May 2015)



*Echo Test*  
2 minutes 45 seconds  
Live voice  
North Head tunnel, Auckland  
(May 2015)

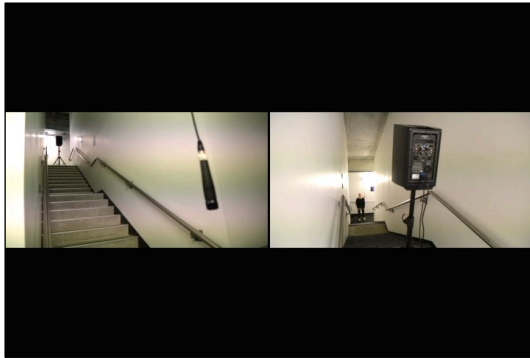


*Echo*  
7 minutes 6 seconds  
Live voice and 1 x Loudspeaker  
Documentation of critique in  
Testspace  
School of Art & Design, AUT  
(May 2015)



*Echo*  
6 minutes 9 seconds  
Live voice and 2 x Loudspeakers  
Blackbox, AUT  
(June 2015)

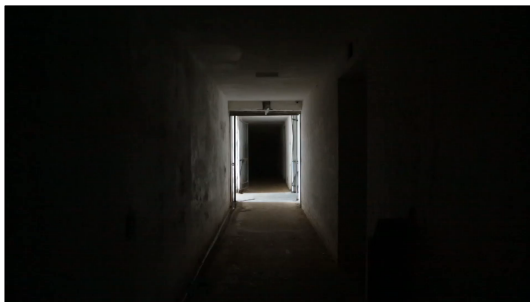
## Passage



*Passage (#1)*  
4 minutes 4 seconds  
Performance of a sound version  
of Bruce Nauman's *Corridor*  
Stairwell, School of Art &  
Design, AUT  
(June 2015)



*Passage (#2)*  
3 minutes 40 seconds  
Performance in tunnel in  
North Head gun emplacement,  
Auckland  
(June 2015)



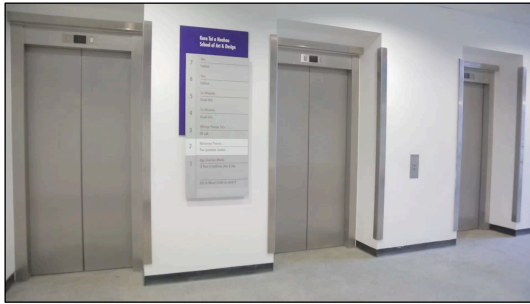
*Passage (#2)*  
3 minutes 28 seconds  
Performance in tunnel in  
North Head gun emplacement,  
Auckland  
(June 2015)



*Passage*  
Upcoming installation in  
Audacious, Festival of Sonic  
Arts, Christchurch,  
(October 2015)



## ***Elevator***



### ***Elevator***

12 minute selection of 120 minute performance.  
Elevators in School of Art & Design, AUT  
(August 2015)  
Video by Noel Meek

## ***In Paradisum***



### ***In Paradisum***

Performance at Oceanic Performance Biennial  
Rarotonga, Cook Islands,  
(July 2015)  
Photo by Solomon Mortimer



### ***In Paradisum***

Performance at Oceanic Performance Biennial  
Rarotonga, Cook Islands,  
(July 2015)  
Photo by Solomon Mortimer



### ***In Paradisum***

Performance at Oceanic Performance Biennial  
Rarotonga, Cook Islands,  
(July 2015)  
Photo by Solomon Mortimer

## APPENDIX 2: FINAL EXHIBITION

This appendix contains documentation of my final examination that took place at the annual end of year exhibition for the AUT School of Art & Design (AD15). On the opening night on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015 I performed two works for examination: *Scale* and *Elevator*.

*Elevator* ran on a continuous loop during the exhibition opening and I performed live as the third voice for 1 hour at the beginning of the evening. The opening was very busy and the elevators were in high demand. At times I was sharing a crowded elevator with 10 people as I sung the alto line in Tavener's *Love Bade Me Welcome*.

*Scale* was both a sound installation and live performance that began on the hour and at 30 minutes past the hour. In the performance of this work I stood and sang behind a music stand positioned within the arc of speakers. As an installation the space around the music stand was vacated and listeners were able to stand in this position and see the chant book (*Liber Usualis*) on the music stand.

I performed *Scale* and *Elevator* at various times over the three-day exhibition period.

My thanks to Noel Meek and Heather Webb for filming and photographing my artworks for this exhibition.

### ***Elevator***







**Scale**







## Master of Performance & Media Art AD15 Catalogue

The Master of Performance & Media Art (MPMA) class produced an exhibition catalogue to accompany the end of year exhibition. Dr Janine Randerson provided a foreword to the catalogue providing details about the MPMA programme. Below are three excerpts from the catalogue.

The catalogue was designed by Lucy Meyle.

