

## **Vibrant Echoes: A Material Semiotics of the Voice in Music by Iris Garrelfs and Marlo Eggplant**

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*This article explores the materiality of the voice outside of the body in two performances by Iris Garrelfs and Marlo Eggplant. It considers, beyond the body and beyond text, how the voice might be addressed as material in and of itself. In this consideration, the voice is not only a means of delivering text or creating sound in performance, and nor is it (only) expressive of the body: rather, its material and spatial dimensions can be located in physical space and outside of the body. Through this approach, Echo is not understood through her lack of a material body or vocal agency, but as the agentive aspect of the voice that is already vibrant—as described by Jane Bennett—and material-discursive—as described by Karen Barad. Using John Law’s considerations of materiality, heterogeneity, semiotic relationality, process and its precarity, and space and scale within Actor Network Theory, I consider how the materialism of the voice can be mapped as/to a network of interrelations in both real and imagined spaces. This network is explored in contemporary experimental performances that employ the voice as material: Lauschen (2016/18) by Iris Garrelfs, for voice and listening cones, and Marlo Eggplant’s September 2018 performance for voice and electronics at the Fortprocess festival. Through these works, I describe the material agency of the voice as a ‘vibrant echo’.*

*Keywords: voice; semiotic materialism; heterogeneity; Iris Garrelfs; Marlo Eggplant; Marlo de Lara.*

## **The voice outside of the body**

The aesthetic encounter with the voice in music and sound art is not one that is limited to the sung voice or the singer, or to the spoken voice and its speaker. The voice, its production, and the encounter with text, speech, and language through the voice, have been the focus of much interest in both scholarly work and artistic practice, and recent investigations have not unreasonably turned to the body itself, the physical act of singing, and the embodied production of the voice. For example, Nina Sun Eidsheim's extensive work in this area describes how, 'given ontologies of music and voice structure our understanding and practice of listening.' (2015, 133) In this way, she is able to show how an understanding of the voice has resulted from its, 'entanglement in an aesthetic designation combined with an anatomical reality', (ibid., 138) and that a, 'fixed notion of voice as sound' is derived from the western European work concept. (ibid., 139) Eidsheim's re-framing of both producing the sung voice, and listening to it, as 'vibrational' practices draws attention to the physical and material dimensions of the voice inside the body, as a part of the musical work, its production, and its reception. However, her work also hints at the materiality of the voice beyond the body. In describing the aesthetic impact of sound beyond its enactment, she writes of, 'music as a material articulatory process', and states that 'when we make music, we have a material impact on the world. Our musical actions have material consequences.' (2015, 153)

In this article, I seek to trace some of these material consequences of the voice, as encountered in recent music and sound art. In particular, I address the way that such works might be considered as 'material articulatory processes' of the voice. The examples of performances that I will describe—by Iris Garrelfs and Marlo Eggplant—both combine the voice in its production by the artists in question with voices that are not produced in the moment of performance (for example, voices that are mediated through the use of recording or processing). In particular, this combination of live, recorded and processed voices from different sources offers an opportunity to consider the materiality of the voice beyond its production by the body. This involves both the consideration of the material affects of the voice in the world as it is experienced, and a consideration of what its nature as a material 'thing' might be. Rather than distinguish between these two aspects of the voice, here I consider them as in some way interlinked: in order to articulate its material affects, the voice may also point to some materiality of its own; and in order to describe how this materiality

might be conceived, it may be necessary to look at the voice's affects in the world. This involves a conception of the voice outside of the body: as something that can be located in space, between the actions of sounding and listening, and as something whose trajectory in space cannot be solely accounted for by the actions of the voice's producers or listeners. The intention of this approach is not to deny the embodiment of the voice, but to look beyond it; not to an aesthetic ideal that is beyond the body but to the materiality of the voice itself. In doing so, I seek to better understand the role of the voice in musical works that employ the voice as material. The two works that I will consider are the performance piece for voice and listening cones *Lauschen* (2016/2018) by Iris Garrelfs, and a performance for voice and electronics given by Marlo Eggplant at the Fortprocess festival in September 2018. These performances offer different considerations regarding the voice 'beyond' the body, respectively locating the voice in the environment, and foregrounding the voice in its sampling and processing, as I will discuss.

The voice outside of the body cannot be studied phenomenologically until it re-enters the body through the practice of listening or as felt vibration. The voice outside of the body is both no longer embodied, and also no longer a means of the transmission of language. Dolar points to this when he writes, '[w]hat language and the body have in common is the voice, but the voice is part neither of language nor of the body'. (2006, 73) Once outside of the body, the possibilities for the voice's meaning-making and signification are extended, in particular because the voice leaves behind the body- and language-conventions that it might use to signify. This is both because the body is exceeded by the voice, and because the possibilities of meaning-making through language are exceeded by its aspects that are not related to language but to timbre and materiality, and which Estelle Barrett contends have the 'capacity to multiply the possible meanings of an utterance'. (2011, 10) Language and signification, then, can be considered here as both separate from *and* as part of the body. They are a part of the body in as much as their interpretation by a receiver is essential for their consideration at all; language cannot exist without receivers. However, the voice can exist without the listener; its potential for signification can thus be considered separately from the bodies that utter it and from those that listen to it.

In order to identify the agency of the voice outside of the body, one might think of Echo. In her various incarnations in mythology, Echo represents both the voice without the body, and also the voice without control over language and meaning. (cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses III*:

lines 339-358; 359-401) While in her stories the loss of her body, and the loss of her ability to voice her own thoughts, are presented as restrictions on her agency, one might also look to these myths as indicative of the agentive aspects of the voice itself: Ovid wrote, '[i]t is sound that lives in her'. (ibid., 401) For example, Echo's repetitions *are* signifying, in that they frequently change the meaning of that which she repeats; although she is not the originator of language, she is able to bend and exceed the intended meaning of the original utterances when she reproduces them. Thus, although not the originator of language, she is the originator of a certain signification: Echo's subjective meanings are not understood by the receivers in her stories—who hear their own voices and thus their own intended meanings reflected back to them—but they are understood by Ovid's readers who perceive a change in linguistic signification as a result of the intervention of Echo and her voice. Therefore, her repetitions may be considered agentive (since they express meaning and perform work beyond that intended by the subject who uttered the initial words or sounds), and in this way the persistence of her voice beyond her body is also presented as a kind of immortality. Her voice is embodied corporeally through the act of listening—by those who hear her—but it is not clear that it is corporeally embodied by Echo in its production. Rather, it occupies and persists in space, even beyond its potential to represent Echo as a 'speaker'. This further indicates the opportunity to consider the voice as agentive and signifying, but not only as connected to the body or language. Therefore, in this discussion I consider the 'space' inhabited by the voice, and its instances outside of the body in its resonance, its echo, and its excess.

However, even when considering the voice in these terms, it is necessary first to state that the voice is not a thing like other things. It will not be possible to define its materiality in a similar manner to that of other musical objects, and its entanglement with issues of language, signification, and meaning means that aspects of its description may often be inextricably intertwined with other types of experience. While it might be argued that signifying practices themselves may have material affects in the world, this is not yet the same as the consideration of the voice in space, and as material beyond its signification or connection with the utterance of language. That being said, the voice does meet Elizabeth Grosz's (2005) definition of the 'thing': she writes, 'the thing is the real which we both find and make, [...] the point of intersection of space and time', (132) that 'emerges out of and as substance.' (133) In this reading I consider the voice outside of the body—beyond its producer and in space—so as to conceive of its material agency. In this reading, Jane

Bennett's concept of 'vibrant things' that have, 'a certain efficacy of their own, a perhaps small but irreducible degree of independence from the words, images and feelings they provoke', (2010, xvi) is indeed one that speaks to such a material concept of voice: voice's vibrancy and independence from embodied systems of codification are its characteristics.

In the book *Time Travels*, Grosz describes how this 'degree of independence' might be identified as change when she writes, '[w]hat endures, what is fundamentally immersed in time is not what remains unchanging or the same over time, a Platonic essence, but what diverges and transforms itself with the passage of time.' (2005, 110). Similarly, Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn describe this effect as, 'matter immanently escaping every possible representation'. (2012, 107). In escaping representation, the voice, conversely creates the possibility of new significations; an 'aesthetics of voice' thus might be traced across works of clearly dissimilar style, compositional technique, or genre. It is precisely this aspect of the voice and its excess that this analysis seeks to uncover through its echo; of particular relevance to the consideration of contemporary practices that might be seen as part of a chain of constant translation, resonance, and re-imagining.

Outside of the body, the voice has direction and reflection that might be considered parts of its agency. The aesthetic considerations that the voice introduces to the investigation of music and sound art are not those of technique, style, or technology. Rather they are those of trace, and of enduring resonances or connections. Artistic practice introduces the possibility of asking questions about contemporary, lived experience that overarch considerations of genre signification. Beyond this description, the reasons to investigate this aspect of the voice through artistic practice are many: the importance and presence of the voice in contemporary music and sound art performances is just one of them. Art works are unique in their ability to reveal the excess of signification of their materials through the aesthetic image. Barbara Bolt addresses this when she writes that, 'through creative practice, a dynamic material exchange can occur between objects, bodies and images'. (2004, 8) Although concerned with visual art (her book does not mention sound works specifically), the 'aesthetic image' of the voice in sound or its recording as a resonance, reflection, or echo is exactly that which is here in question, and that reveals aspects of its materiality. Further, Bolt writes that for Bruno Latour—whose Actor Network Theory I reference in my analysis, below—'material practices [...] profoundly influence the way knowledge is made and distributed'. (ibid., 27) Thus, the artistic practices and processes that I will describe should not only be considered to *employ* the voice, but to *reveal* it in their

unfolding materiality and material practices. Karen Barad's concept of 'intra-activity' captures this. She writes that, '*the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity*'. (2010, 152 original emphasis) Therefore, here my analysis looks not only for the vibrant and agential effects of the voice, but its material-discursive characteristics. In Barad's description,

[n]either discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither is reducible to the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other. Neither is articulated or articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. (ibid., 152)

For the purposes of this approach, this means that the linguistic or signifying properties of the voice outside of the body cannot be separated from its resonant and echoing properties; both are needed in its material identification. Barad's description of the 'agential cut': (2003, 815) a localised distinction between observer (or 'measuring agencies') and the observed (or 'measured object'), further explains what is observed here: the characteristics of the voice in its moment of observation, in relation to its observer. Rather than a Cartesian subject-object distinction, the agential cut is differently re-created in each unique set of circumstances and each moment of observation. Artistic practice, here, foregrounds what might be considered a material-discursive discovery of the voice.

Practically speaking, in seeking to analyse this aspect of the voice in contemporary practice, I have employed John Law's (2007) conception of material semiotics within Actor Network Theory (ANT). This approach considers the relationships that make up the social aspects of a situation and the natural world as a network connecting heterogeneous actors of many types (cf Latour 2005, 10-11 for a description of the characteristics of ANT analyses). In particular, non-humans are granted the role of actors and are not only described as the 'hapless bearers of symbolic projection (ibid., 10). This is of particular relevance to the consideration of the examples here since technologies, ideas, and processes might all equally be considered as 'actors' alongside individuals. As a material-semiotic approach that conceptualises exchanges between things and concepts, ANT offers a particular set of tools with which to consider the voice as agential, and separately from the speaker, in the context of its instances in sound art. While it is true that the proponents of ANT actively opposed its consideration as a framework—and rather stressed its ability to highlight the complexity and irreducibility of the social through its employment of description—Law's (2007, 7) conception of material semiotics offers some valuable methodological tools to the consideration of material aspects of the voice. If metaphorical description becomes the only way to explain

aspects of the voice outside the body (of the speaker, performer, or listener)—which cannot be experienced linguistically or phenomenologically—then a description that embraces complexity and heterogeneity offers a way of framing the complex associations and resonances of the voice that I seek to uncover. From Law's list of considerations, I have extrapolated a kind of framework in order to structure such a description of the voice across my two examples. In using this as a lens through which to approach and compare artistic work, I am not applying a method proposed by Law but rather presenting the possibility of a structured understanding along the lines of his thinking. In particular, I have focused the description around five aspects for consideration that Law claims categorise ANT: semiotic relationality, heterogeneity, materiality, process and its precarity, and space and scale. (ibid., 7) The combination of spatial, relational, and material understandings that arise here make this approach particularly suitable to consider the voice in terms of echo, her lines of flight, and the referential space in which they occur.

I have chosen *Lauschen* by Iris Garrelfs and Marlo Eggplant's performance at the Fortprocess festival (as opposed to her practice in general) as both performances use or imply voices other than those of the performers and introduce an understanding of space. They are clearly different from each other in what might be termed their technical aesthetics, but also similarly offer the possibility of the consideration of the voice outside the body, experienced through material and technological interventions, and through an understanding of the space in which the voice moves. Both performances signal these considerations through aspects of their presentation as well as their material and relational aspects. Of course, as an analysis of two works, this investigation isn't in itself conclusive: rather it helps to advance an understanding of what it means to consider the materiality of the voice outside of the body, and to situate this as a representation of an aesthetics of its materiality. Finally, these performances are suited to the type of analysis derived from ANT that is proposed here precisely because of their multiple layers, processes, and sonic materials. As in Barad's (2010) conception of materiality, these performances offer the opportunity for a consideration of the intra-action of the observer (the listener or analyst), the observed (the performer/the performing body, and the voice itself), and observing instruments (in this case, the listener as an instrument, but also material and technological instruments implied in the performance); all of these are agential both in the performances and in the network that they imply and allow to be described.

## **The Materiality of the Voice in Performance**

## *Lauschen*

The sound artist and performer Iris Garrelfs creates work that often includes her own voice as a performative device. In her work, she describes how, ‘using her voice as raw material, sounds are transmuted into machine noises’. (Garrelfs 2019b) In general, she describes herself as an artist who is, ‘interested in modes of listening as a way of connecting to the world, exploring interrelatedness, patterns and interaction’, resulting in work that is, ‘a poetic evocation of presence on the one hand and presence within a space or situation on the other’. (Garrelfs 2019a) *Lauschen* is a performance work that she has created for voice and listening cones, that was premiered at Lewisham Art House in 2016, and later revived for the ‘It Sounds Divicive!’ Exhibition at Fringe Arts Bath in 2018. The title, in German, means ‘eavesdropping’ or ‘overhearing’, something that is demonstrated performatively in the piece, not only by the composer-performer but by the audience. Importantly in this work, the sonic and visual aspects both point to an aesthetics of voice, rendering this accessible even when not directly experienced by every member of the audience. Garrelfs, as the composer-performer, is present centrally in the space, and can be surrounded by the audience. She wears a hands-free microphone that allows her to amplify her voice throughout the performance, as she also moves through the space. Beyond amplification, her voice is processed before it is heard through the PA speakers; in the performance she ‘wears’ the equipment needed to do this, allowing the performance to move beyond the space and outdoors.

The ‘listening cones’ employed in the piece are large cones made of black card that the composer provides for the audience. In the two documented performances, there are not enough listening cones for every member of the audience, highlighting the importance of the visual aspect of this part of the piece as well as its effect on sound. This visual aspect also highlights the link of Garrelfs’s work with what might be termed ‘phonography’: the relationship of the listening cone with the cone of the phonograph is one that contextualises its role in focusing and amplifying sound. However, it additionally links the sounds it enables within the musical performance as opposed only to ‘found sounds’ in the space. Once the listening cones have been provided to the audience, they are free to use them as they choose, opening the possibility of their listening more closely to Garrelfs or to other aspects of the sound in the space. In her performance at Lewisham Art House, members of the audience can be seen using two cones to ‘listen’ in multiple directions simultaneously (Garrelfs 2016, 4’20” - 4’50”); in the performance at the Bath Fringe Festival, the audience can be seen ‘listening’ to the electronic equipment itself (2019c, video 2’37”) or to the environment in the graveyard. (ibid., 5’08”; cf. Figure 1) The moments of listening

demonstrated by the cones also visually signal the presence of multiple ‘agential cuts’, both through the presence of the observational equipment, and through the heterogeneity of the moments of experience and interpretation that take place as a result of its use by multiple

Figure 1: Iris Garrelfs performing *Lauschen* at 'It Sounds Divicive!', Fringe Arts Bath, 2018.



Photograph showing participants listening both to Garrelfs and to the environment using listening cones. Photograph (c) Lee Riley, 2018. Used with permission.

observers. Each member of the audience searches for, and experiences something of, the voice outside the body through the use of this apparatus; these experiences are always relational both in terms of the positioning of the observer in the space, and the trajectory of the voice in that same space.

In *Lauschen*, the space and scale of the work are subject to change, and are in constant flux during the performance, both as a result of the changing performance space in each instance of the piece, and as a result of the changing space for performance during each iteration as the performer and the audience move around. The use of voice in space is also troubled by the listening cones: listening in *Lauschen*, whether through the listening cones or not, implies hearing small sounds and/or reflections—both as a result of the vocal performance and in addition to it. While listened to, some of those sounds may yet still be ‘unheard’: a scale is implied between the amplified voice of the performer and the possible overheard voices, with the latter assumed to be present even when they are not perceived by the audience collectively or even individually. Thus, in presenting sound that comes from

outside the intentional acts of the performer in the work, *Lauschen* introduces not only environmental sounds, but also a specific act of searching for voice or echo: this situates the voice away from the performer and within the environment, even as the performer uses and amplifies her own voice. As mentioned above, the set up of the performance clearly and visually reflects the listening acts; this is a part of the semiotic relationality of the piece. If the participant doesn't listen, she is still drawn to the interpretation of listening, and to the idea of reflection or echo: the aesthetics of voice that are encompassed in the piece are thus communicated prior even to sounding. While the space and scale of the piece are visually signalled by its performance space, they can also be understood in terms of the potential agency of the voice. The listener and the artist both negotiate overheard and seen signs during the performance, while also looking for those not-yet-heard: in imagining the trajectory of these sounds or voices, they are therefore not only considering the trajectories of the sounds made by the performer but also the traces of sounds that may remain in the space itself, as a result of their previous use. Thus the potential space of the piece is always already present as a result of the invitation to listen and to experience voices as reflected in the space.

Heterogeneity or constant difference is here further emphasised through the piece's centring of multiple individual perspectives through this practice of de-hierarchised listening. It must be observed that the performative acts of listening that emphasise reflection, echo, and multi-directionality—and consequently heterogeneity of the sound source—are equally and phenomenologically different for every individual who takes part in the piece. This is networked, in the sense of group activity, and in respect of the connections between the individual and the environment. The vibrancy of the voice is emphasised in its potential to be heard or encountered from any facet of the performance space, aided by the listening cones. In addition, its intra-action is further emphasised by the performative nature of the action that is needed to allow its vibrant echo to be discovered. This materiality in performance is signified by the physical object in performance—the listening cone—that situates the listener's body in the work through its use. However, as an extension of this, one might also consider voice as a material within the content of the vocal gestures made by Garrelfs that become situated outside of her body, not only by their production but in the expectation that they will be reflected. The use and presence of the listening cones indicates not only that reflections of the voice present in the space might be encountered during the time of the performance, but also that the Garrelf's voice—as it is used to fill the performance space—may also be encountered beyond the immediate moment of performance. Thus, the spatial nature of the voice outside of the body is emphasised.

A risk or precarity of the process in *Lauschen* might therefore seem to be that of ‘not listening’: if the audience do not engage with the cones, these aspects of voice and direction may seem to pass them by. It may be thought that the question of communication or the aesthetic experience of the work is limited to the question of what is reflected. However, as I have described above, reflection in this case is not an active process on behalf of the listener, but in fact communicates something of the agency of the voice outside of the body. Indeed, this aspect is not controlled by the performer or her audience, but is part of the ‘material articulatory process’ of the voice in the work, within a particular place and space, and as such the vibrant echo may be unexpected. In this way, *Lauschen* reveals something of the materiality of the voice outside the body not only in the piece’s sounding performance, but also in its visual presentation, performance circumstances, and concept. One need not experience every aspect of the performance in order to derive some of the material aspects of the voice that it reveals. Further, beyond the performance itself, these aspects of voice persist: one might imagine the echo of Garrelf’s voice in the performance space long after the performance is finished.

### *Marlo Eggplant*

My second example, by Marlo Eggplant, is not a re-performable or re-creatable piece in the same sense as *Lauschen*. Rather, it might be more helpfully thought of as an instance of an ongoing creative and performative practice that has been developed by, and is unique to, an individual artist. Marlo Eggplant is the stage name of the US artist, and DIY and avant garde musician, Marlo de Lara. Originally from Baltimore, USA, Marlo Eggplant was based in the UK improvisation and noise scenes until 2019. She curates the label ‘Corpus Callosum’ and series of events titled ‘Ladyz in Noyz’. Her current work might be associated with the term ‘sonic cyberfeminism’ that ‘seeks to understand how invisible sound waves affect bodies in a physical manner’. (Masewicz 2018) While aspects of her performance practice could be described more generally in terms of their relationship with the voice, this analysis looks at a particular performance that took place underground in a bunker that is part of Newhaven Fort, the venue for the Fortprocess festival, on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2018. This performance in particular emphasises aspects of the aesthetics and materiality of the voice in relation to its spatial and vibrant aspects. This building in which the performance took place has a previous military context, and today usually functions as a military museum rather than an art venue. The particular location within the Fort that was employed for Marlo Eggplant’s performance at that festival was an underground concrete bunker: a space that was quite restricted in size and involved a long staircase down and a walk along

underground tunnels to access. In this respect it communicates a certain aspect of military experience that might be linked with ideas of ‘siege’, ‘espionage’, or ‘covert operations’.



Figure 2: Marlo de Lara performing as Marlo Eggplant at the Fortprocess Festival on 22.09.2018. Photograph copyright Agata Urbaniak. Used with permission.

The performance opened with a sample of a radio broadcast, which fitted the military context in its relay of operational information, combined with a personal message to the broadcaster’s family, and expressions of the fear and difficulty of the situation in which they found themselves. Only the end of this sample can be heard in the online video documentation of the performance. (Marlo Eggplant 2018) This sample, in fact, is drawn from a reading or interpretation of the last morse code messages sent by Corporal Irving Strobing from Corregidor on 6th May 1942, before the island was captured by the Japanese army. (Bos 2013) In a personal email, the artist described how she, ‘had visited Corregidor as a child and felt the tour was deeply claustrophobic’, and this informed her research in the creation of the performance. (M de Lara 2019, personal communication, 31 July) This personal reflection can be immediately linked with the performance and its circumstances, but the sense of it is also effectively communicated to the audience in the space and scale

of the work, even as they may be unaware of this impetus: the constriction of space in the bunker itself is in immediate contrast to the performance of *Lauschen* that embraced the outside. Movement, for either the performer or the audience, was not a possibility or aspect of the work in this case. Indeed, both the performance circumstances and the connotations of the sample that opened Marlo Eggplant's set signify smallness and restriction: in the live performance a few people (who arrived early in advance of the advertised time) were able to sit in the room with the performer. Still others stood in the doorway, and even outside of the room without much or any of a view in order to hear the music.

In this way, the voice in the sample and in performance were carried beyond the space, and the idea of listening remotely—as to the radio broadcast—was recreated. The sample itself signifies incomplete communication. The 'voice' heard is not the voice of the individual from whom it originated; rather, the voice of a nameless intermediary re-presents the linguistic content of the morse code message. The result of the interpretation is a disjointed and almost monotone delivery of a message that contains fear, humour, and personal sentiment, increasing the distance between the listeners and the sender as well as the disjunction between the voice itself and the message's content. Although a general, 'historical' time period might be assigned to this sample by listeners—perhaps as a result of the overall broadcast sound quality—a particular time, conflict, or location is not specifically identified by the recording. It may be possible that listeners with a knowledge of US military history might associate the recording with the battle that it preceded, however this particular series of events within World War II are not within the canon of those frequently recollected in the UK. Although broadcast, there is no guarantee that such a message would have been received, and of course the audience of the performance is not its intended audience. If this communication were unsuccessful, then there is an implication that the voice remains in the bunker, encountered only through the act of entering. The voice of the original broadcaster in fact did not escape the bunker from which the message originated, being translated into morse code. Of course, the listeners know that this is a sample, but its spatial relationship with the performance space 'reflects' or 'sounds' aspects of its meaning. This also further draws attention to the referential space of the piece. These many potential meaning-relationships may be experienced by the listeners, and are signalled for the performer by the sounding of the sample; some may relate to its linguistic content, others to its sound-quality, others to its relationship with the space in which it is sounded. All, however, can be understood as trajectories within the piece, and all begin with the reflection of the voice in the space.

Marlo Eggplant's DIY electronics set up is also referenced by and referred to by the sample she has selected; in this performance she uses a smaller amount of electronic equipment than can be seen in some others, even despite the usual 'minimalism' of her performance set-up (cf. Figure 2). Here, her performance was centred around the playback of the sample, the autoharp, a looper pedal, and her voice. The performance space might be a practical reason for this: compared with a stage space given to performers in many venues, she has a relatively small area in which to perform. However, materially this also links with the idea of restriction, by limiting the sound-making possibilities that are open to the performer. Where sound in electronic performance might be thought potentially limitless, here the space and its resonant properties are reflected in the boundaries placed on the sonic possibilities of the performance by the limits of the electronic equipment available. This, then, further emphasises the contrast between the sample and other types of sound used in the set, since the methods of production of each remain opposed to each other.

The opposition set up by the means of electronic production of sound (radio broadcast, live electronics) are further emphasised by the contrast in vocal sound and production in the performance. Marlo Eggplant's voice is a central part of the sound of her work but—unlike that heard on tape at the opening of the set—it is always changed before it reaches the audience. While she can be seen singing and vocalising into a microphone throughout the set, there is always some manner of processing employed to extend the sound, to minimize its attack, and to change its pitch and register. Rather than being an instrument, understood as an extension of the body, the voice in this aspect of the work becomes a controller for, and extended by, the electronics. If anything, this aspect of the performance comes closest to the aesthetic concept of voice as abstract sound that Eidsheim (2015) questioned as an ideal. However, in this case what is presented is not an idealised conception of the voice unencumbered and unshaped by the body, but rather an expression of the vibrancy of the voice through and despite its encounter with technology. Similar sonic effects might have been achieved using oscillators or other sound sources (such as acoustic or electronic instruments). Despite the use of processing, what remains of the voice in its sound in Marlo Eggplant's performance is precisely its timbre, its affect as a result of breath, its constant difference from moment to moment. While processing operations might internally aim towards a stable or homogenous sound, the voice as a sound source constantly escapes this aim. Indeed, this aspect of the voice prior to and beyond processing reflects a kind of heterogeneity within the performance that is constantly moving and changing while ostensibly repeating.

Precarity, as it is encountered in this performance, is then something that can be ascribed to the voice outside of the body. Aspects of the processing of the voice within the electronics are mirrored by its reflection and echo in the space. The materials of the bunker (largely stone) are highly reflective of sound, although the space's restriction and the bodies of the audience present in it during the performance caused it to be less so. Two aspects of the voice can therefore be further considered in its interaction with this space as a result of this performance and beyond it: first, that reflection and echo are most effective and agential in this space when fewer people are present to witness them. This emphasises that the voice persists outside of the body in a way that is separate from its observers. Second, as a corollary, restrictions for individuals wishing to interact with the voice are not themselves restrictions for the voice when considered materially outside of the body. It can be considered how, here, the music itself emphasises the potential for the voice beyond the body to remain unheard or unreflected. The sense of restriction communicated at the beginning of the performance, and by its circumstances, also translates into the restriction of the voice: when confined in the bunker, the voice may be almost infinitely reflected, and yet still remain unheard. However, this is not a question of successful communication or its lack: the intention of the radio broadcaster is not the intention of the voice. Rather, the agency of the voice belongs solely to its echo or its reflection. Thus, the change of context, and therefore of meaning, that colours the use of the sample in this piece, can also be read beyond its communication of linguistic meaning. Far more important is its interaction with the voice and its processing in the 'live' aspect of Marlo Eggplant's performance; this part of the work is where the extension of the vibrancy and agency of the voice might be found. It is exactly this aspect that can be identified as its 'material articulatory process': beyond linguistic content or mode of production, the interaction of the voice outside of the body and in the space is what leads to these conclusions.

## **Conclusions**

In both the performances described above, the encounter with the voice is complex, layered and heterogeneous. Thus, these works may not seem the most obvious or straight-forward cases in which the aesthetics of the voice might be studied. However, it is precisely this heterogeneity that reveals aspects of the voice that this investigation has sought: in neither performance can the voice be detached from its multifaceted nature, and it is precisely this that reveals aspects of its materiality. Through the description of these performances, I have sought an aesthetics that have led to my consideration of the voice as agentive, material-discursive, and vibrant. Beyond the vibrant voice as an extension of, or production of, the

body, in considering the vibrant echo I have considered what the voice might mean beyond its production and its embodiment.

However, it remains that this aspect of the voice is still beyond direct experience, even if I have not situated it beyond description. As such, one might ask why it should be necessary to understand the voice outside of the body. It is precisely the intra-action of the voice in artworks such as those explored here that necessitates this understanding. Through its material articulatory processes in these performances, the voice contributes to the excess of signification that can be encountered through the aesthetic image. Thus, such an aesthetics does not explain how meanings are created by artworks, nor what those meanings should or might be, but rather offers an indication of how the conditions for such an excess of meaning might be created as a result of the artwork and its materials in the first instance. This is Barbara Bolt's, 'dynamic material exchange': (2004, 8) in order to participate in such exchanges, the voice must itself be material. In my description, the direction and agency of the voice outside of the body can be concurrently imagined both in the physical space in which it is encountered or sounded, and in its signifying aspects. Thus, its materiality might be understood not only in its vibrational nature—that is experienced and identified by the body as well as being located in space—but also in its direction and its trajectory. It is precisely this location and movement in space that is beyond the body that point to its agentive and material aspects, allowing for meaning-making beyond its original utterance: this reflects its jointly material-discursive nature, and accounts for its apparent ephemerality, even in its understanding as material.

Of course, many other examples of music might have been posited, or could have been examined in this way. The aesthetics of voice advanced in this investigation is not one that only arises from contemporary practice, but rather one that indicates aspects of the voice that were always vibrant. No doubt these might also be identified in earlier work than the contemporary performances described, not through a link with technique or style but purely in the presence and function of the voice. However, the understanding of the performances described here indicates how such an aesthetic investigation need not trace the lineage of a particular technical or stylistic concern, but may indicate something about the future *and* the past of the voice: its existence as a material reflection of previous practices, and its potential reflections in future work. This, in itself, is reflective of the agentive aspects of the voice; an aspect of the aesthetics of voice that can be traced here as a reflection.

There can be no firm conclusion from this approach in which I describe the materiality of the voice in a way that is comparable to the materiality of physical objects that can be found and encountered in the world, even as I identify it as a 'thing', as it is for Grosz. (2005) It is also not possible to conclude that this aspect of the voice does not, in some way, remain problematic. Where the materiality of the voice is evident in its affects, there may yet be work to be done to identify it phenomenologically beyond the body. However, my goal here has not been to arrive at an exhaustive description of the materiality of the voice that may conclude its aesthetic contemplation, but only to seek to deepen what its contemplation may further contribute to aesthetics. In this aspect, the material-discursive interactions that have been observed, and their ability to link disparate practices that are beyond the consideration of compositional or performative technique, offer this in their ability to consider the voice in its aspects resonance, echo, and excess. This is what the voice as a vibrant echo has to offer: a picture of the agentive aspects of the voice in, through, and beyond its performance.

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