

# **“Voice Lab: Songs of being as embodied philosophical inquiry”**

**John Brennand**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (by Creative project)

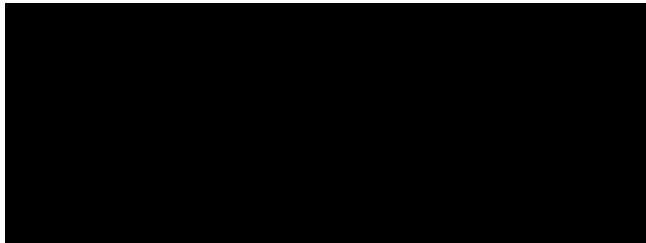
College of Arts

Victoria University 2017

**Doctor of Philosophy Declaration (by creative project)**

I, John Brennand declare that the PhD exegesis entitled “Voice Lab: Songs of being as embodied philosophical inquiry” should be at least 18,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This exegesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this exegesis is my own work.

Signature:

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature.

September 1, 2017

## **Acknowledgements**

My Supervisory team:

Original Supervisor Dr Margaret Trail

Interim Supervisor Dr Elizabeth Dempster

Professor Ron Adams

Dr Paola Bilbrough

Dr John Howard

I would like to acknowledge the magnanimous support of the Body Voice Centre in Melbourne and the Yoga Cycle studio in Adelaide.

Special thanks and appreciation to the generous participants who contributed to this project.

## Contents

Abstract .....	1
Prelude – Travelling on the Arachne avatar .....	5
Situating the inquiry .....	6
The acquisition and conveyance of knowledge in a performative art practice; an invitation .....	13
Motivations and Influences: Locating the Self .....	16
Convergence and Divergence with Beuys. Where we meet, and depart .....	22
Embodied Resonance: theoretical and practical context .....	29
The Method(s) .....	33
Voice Lab: An overview; a confluence of contextual influences. Finding connecting threads on the virtual exegetic web .....	42
The Performance .....	58
Mapping of a 'virtual' Voice Lab workshop: developmental processes, origins & functions .....	64
A review of workshop practices; a virtual Voice Lab .....	65
Voice Lab part 1.....	67
Tea-Break .....	75
Voice Lab part 2.....	76
Participants' Experiences and Insights: To find a voice .....	82
Suppositions and Outcomes .....	91
References.....	95
Appendix .....	103
Voice Lab Participants: a brief biography .....	103
Participants Questions and answers .....	104
Participant summary reports .....	126

## Abstract

This PhD by Creative Project consists of three distinct but interwoven parts – the development and investigation of a wordless vocal performance practice with volunteer participants, a culminating performance ‘product’ which creatively documents, elucidates and illuminates the investigation, and a written exegesis which contextualises and complements the investigation and culminating production.

The project sets out to cultivate an original voice practice and performance practice philosophy through an innovative re-interpretation and application of established practices and ideas. I locate the core generating propositions of the project in three recurring themes derived from the articulations and artistic life of Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), around the potential of every person as artist, the notion of artist as shaman, and the notion of creativity sourced at its spring point. I both concur with and diverge from Beuys through these themes in the cultivation of a practice and practicing philosophy that speaks of my desire to acknowledge and engage with the invisible yet emergent forces inherently available in inspiration, emotion, instinct, intuition, and perception, as implicit in the multi-resonant possibilities of voice, and as material for art practice and creative agency. The research project proposes that this immersive experiential performance practice can provide creative methods that broaden the constituents of knowing via the expansion of each individual’s perceptual and expressive palette, in relational creative engagement. The thesis is conducted through, for, and into, performance as art practice and generative method, as process and outcome via a practice led research methodology.

The performance practice explored in the project is the primary site of embodied knowledge production. The practice drew upon, synthesized, and developed from a very broad range of established body, perceptual, meditative and theatrical voice and breath-based practices. This includes influences and melding of practices from Ilse Middendorf (Perceptible Breath), Paul Newham (Voice Movement Therapy), Karlheinz Stockhausen (Composition "Stimmung"), Yoga (Prana and Nada), Chi gong, voice for actor training of Zygmunt Molik and of Michael Chekhov, the extended voice work of Linda Wise, and includes methods that have evolved from my own dedicated practice over several decades. The complementary exegesis performs as a map of the evolution, contextualization, and imbrication of the practice towards performance and performance philosophy, and comprises 30% of the overall creative project. The exegesis will be provided to examiners immediately following the performance.

The creative component of the thesis comprises 70% of the project and included conducting voice workshops with two groups of volunteer participants from Melbourne and Adelaide spanning a period of one year. The heart of the creative project involved conducting intensive monthly four-hour workshops with participants in two groups - one in Adelaide, one in Melbourne - over a period of one year. These workshops evolved through the process of applying, and building upon, techniques drawn from the practices listed above, and included reflective journaling.

This workshop process was followed by a systematic collection of individual improvised vocal recordings, and interview/conversational recordings from participants over a further four months. The journals were exclusively used as a resource for the participants own reflections, which they were able to access and review during the audio recording process. At the end of the recording phase of the project I asked the participants to fill out a questionnaire regarding their personal experience with the practice and the project. The

intention of the questionnaire was to provide reflective space and bring to the surface any additional insights and reflections regarding the participants' experiences. This information is integrated to the exegetical writing regarding the experiences of the participants in "Participants' Experiences and Insights" (p. 82) and provided in full in Appendix (p. 103). The culminating multi-modal performance uses audio recordings from the participants' engagement in wordless improvisation collaged with recordings of interviews with the participants about the effects and affects of the practice.

The multi modal performance of orchestrated pre-recorded audio, visual projection and live solo performance is a creative documentation and applied extension of the practical philosophies cultivated in the project. The performance itself is designed to provide reflective space for the audience to have individual generative subjective responses, in alignment with and as an extension of Beuys' notional potential of 'everyone as artist' and as an extension of the project's intention toward inviting subjective perceptual agency. The development of the performance draws propositional dialogic ground from the work and ideas of artist Susan Hillier and her notion of 'Voice as body', which suggests that the 'truth' of the body is found in the voice as non-representational extension of the body as opposed to body represented by image. I also propose a multi-sensory embodied perceptual reading of the performance by drawing alliance and constructively imbricating Maurice Merleau-Ponty's assertions on synaesthesia as performative philosophical ground.

The thesis questions the ingrained and pervasive logocentric world-view that prioritizes the rational and seen over the invisible but perceivable felt. Instead of the Cartesian dictum of "I think therefore I am", as a practice based researcher I suggest a notion of resonant embodiment that shifts and broadens the locus of self and knowing, proposing a more relational dictum of "I resonate therefore I am in

active concert with all that is becoming". This project creatively addresses the knowledge gap inherent in dominant scientific academic epistemologies arrived at through verbal argument and deduction, by focusing on the acquisition of wordless tacit generative 'living' knowledge evoked through engaging experiential emergent and creative endeavour, to discover 'what works', while inviting insightful rhizomatic perspective, and asserting multiple ways of 'knowing'.

This project, through both the performance and exegetic components, suggests that engaging in the experiential process specific to this performance practice offers transformative meta-value for those that participate, and is analogous to and builds upon Beuys' notion of the expanded concept and function of art to enliven individual and interconnected creative capacity.



## Prelude – Travelling on the Arachne avatar

I recommend this exegesis be read as a kind of intertextual bricolage of multiple contextualizing threads in synthesis with the multi-modal layers of application and method integral to the project. I propose a fluid Deleuzian rhizomatic reading of the exegesis to aid the reader's journey through its many connecting threads. Imagine if you will a flowering iris with its exposed rhizomatic roots as a working metaphor. At the root of this project is the developing, but stable and contained ever evolving/budding Voice Lab practice. From this source root is grown the diverse multi-coloured flowering of the participants' engagement and reflective responses, in resonance with the development of a complex multi-modal culminating performance. Add to this image a complex pattern of a spider's web which weaves and spirals its way through the roots, stems and flowers of this blooming iris, as metaphor for an exegetic map that weaves contextual connecting threads through the conceptual and material form of the flowering iris. These gossamer threads represent a connecting web that works as complementary to the form of the iris in dialogical relationship. Add also the notion that this virtual image is not a fixed still life image, but that it sings, shimmers, vibrates, resonates, changes colour and shape, and morphs in living, breathing multi-relational synesthetic interaction, its meanings most luminous at its affecting relational edges, its form and perspective shifting without losing its definitive parts. I invite you, the reader and viewer, as you travel the woven threads of this exegetic mapping on a virtual eight-legged vehicular avatar, to acknowledge you are also creating and adding your own living vital-virtual perceptual thread according to your own perceptions, preconceptions, associations and creative imaginings, extending and realizing the notion of everyone as artist.

## Situating the inquiry

The driving thrust of the evolving philosophy of practice in this project is primarily located in the project's convergences and divergences with the cited philosophy of Beuys. The new is found in the overall cohesive and coherent form at the root of the project, in symbiotic resonance with its many connecting threads found in analogous ideas or theories. The connecting threads of the overall project as conveyed in the exegesis are fortified by the syncretic relationship with analogous theories or practices. This is in resonance with Robin Nelson's comments regarding literature/practice review in *Practice as Research*.

PaR is likely to be interdisciplinary and to draw upon a range of sources in several fields; and while it is not possible for a PaR student to equal the specialist in all disciplines drawn upon, the shortfall does not amount to a lack of thoroughness. Rigour in this aspect of PaR lies elsewhere in syncretism, not in depth mining (Nelson 2013 p. 34).

The inquiry asks whether a wordless, improvised voice practice can provide an accessible creative cultural platform for the expansion of perceptual insights toward knowledge intrinsic to embodied and expressive being, and seeks to demonstrate methods by which this quest is creatively developed and conveyed. In alignment with a performance studies investigative context, the creative practice is the source, frame, and primary method of research in this project, driven by an "enthusiasm of practice" (Haseman, 2006, p. 100). Additionally, integral to the ideology is a proposal that "artistic practice be viewed as the production of knowledge or philosophy in action" (Barrett and Bolt 2010). This inquiry aims to develop and initiate a new performance practice form through the synthesis, re-interpretation, re-integration and re-application of established practices and theories, and the developing application of a unique and novel practicing philosophy.

In this PhD by creative project the practice is integral to the inquiry and I ask what does the practice do in relationship to the three themes cited from Beuys located as generating proposals to this project? What does the practice provide, what is its potential, and how do I 'perform' the 'story' of this quest? There are two key personal epiphanic moments or experiences that are core notional undercurrents to this project that intersect and intercede with Beuys' generational propositions and reveal the driving momentum behind the creative inquiry. I will briefly introduce these here and will elaborate and give fuller contextual account of my experience of these practices in "Motivations and Influences: Locating the Self" (p. 16) and how they intercede with Beuys in "Convergence and Divergence with Beuys. Where we meet, and depart" (p. 22). The first is a personal experience of perceptual insight reached through a nada yoga practice more than thirty-five years ago. The concepts of nada yoga propose there is an internally perceivable primordial sound at the core of silence that with attention can provide meaningful perceptual insight. The second is to do with perceptual shifts, which occurred through the investigation of solo improvisational wordless voice practice that I found favourable to my personal well-being. Collectively these two experiences acquired through personal practice invoke what I will call gentle altered states of perception that simultaneously provided or provoked intimate insight into the nature of my own being, and a new perspective on culturally or socially acquired understandings of myself and my relationship with the world.

I am locating the immersive studio practice as the primary site of emergent knowledge in this research project. This includes the development of a multi-modal performance event to convey the complex multi-level 'story' of this project. The exegesis provides complementary commentary and contextualizes the practice within the broader frame of contemporary performance practice and theory. This inquiry proposes there is insight available in these wordless immersive experiences that can only be fully understood or acquired through embodied engagement, and cannot be fully investigated, understood, or conveyed through logocentric means. I use

the participants' own voice and words as reflective evidence of the acquisition of insight via the affecting and effecting experiences imbued in the practice. I propose through this experimental project the development of a practice, grown out of my own experiential insights and seeking, which can invoke perceptual shifts favourable to artistic facility and general well-being that are personal, relevant and unique to each person that engages with them. This inquiry involved an immersive investigation with volunteer participants via monthly workshops over a period of one year that invited them to engage in the evolving development of the practice. I use creative means in answering the inquiry through a layered performance outcome by orchestrating audio excerpts of the participants' engagement in the practice, and personal insights gleaned from conversational interviews with the participants, in combination with the use of visual analogous symbols and metaphors through the employment of dual video projection, and presenting myself in live performance for the duration of the performance as symbolic representative of the inherent and enacted embodied knowledge imbibed in the evolving practices.

To situate the project most appropriately in its relevant field it is important to recognize the distinction I place on inquiry as a broad driver of the project. The notion of inquiry is common practice within performance-based research and the reasons for doing so are complex and multiple. I align with author of *Practice as Research in the Arts*, Robin Nelson, and his stated preference in this regard.

Partly because aspects of 'the scientific method' are occasionally enshrined in the discourse of university bureaucracy as noted, you may be asked to define your research question. This may involve no more than formulating in an interrogative form for your enquiry as you have established it. However as indicated, I prefer the term 'research inquiry' to 'research question' since questions may imply answers and the kinds of work typically undertaken in the PaR [Practice as Research] PhD context, while they yield findings, do not typically produce solutions to problems in the mode of answers (Nelson 2013 p. 96).

Further to this notion is the preference of an open-ended approach that is applicable to a creative inquiry as articulated by Brad Haseman and Daniel Mafe regarding the potential quandary establishing a 'question'.

... unlike traditional researches, even those whose research questions do mutate and change, the practice led researcher may find problem definition is unstable for as long as practice is ongoing and it is only when the practice is done, and possibly in the final phases of candidature, that the final research problem will be decided (Haseman & Mafe 2009 p. 214).

This conundrum is further expressed by Professorial Research Fellow in Performance at Warwick University, Baz Kershaw.

The main objection to 'questions' aired in the UK practice as research community has been that even the most open and carefully expressed queries inevitably imply a more or less predictable range of responses, which flatly contradicts the qualities of radical openness and excess that creativity of performance practice at its best can produce (Kershaw 2009 p. 112).

In the context of this performance-based creative project the inquiry has multiple layers which require the acknowledgment of a myriad of ways the inquiry is able to 'yield findings'. This is particularly relevant to my aim of seeking to recognise the generative possibilities of individual and collective artistic agency arrived at through the processes employed in the project. I ask myself and the generous generating participants what the practice does through the immersive doing of the practices and project. The answers simultaneously arrive and evolve via the processes of the project. The participants provide multiple perspectives in answering the quest, which provide a generative 'flowering' of diverse insight and knowledge rather than a narrowing down to one distinct definitive view. While the

inclusion of diversity and difference is key, I also find common linking threads in the experiences of the participants that arrive through the application of the practices and speak of the collective potential of the practice. At the same time, I recognise that I am ultimately the creative driver of the project, making finite decisions about what gets included and shaped in to the culminating performance event according to my own questions, perspectives, creative predispositions and aspirations. The project has aspects of auto-ethnography in the manner that I draw on the participants' experience and the way they facilitate an understanding of the 'culture' of the Voice Lab workshops and how that intercepts with my own findings and intentions.

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*). This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act. [...] Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011 p. 1).

The project falls under the umbrella of a broader performance studies based investigation in the manner that I am drawing from and building upon the lineage of specific artists, practices and practitioners, and my own prior work in the processes of the project and in the final performance 'product' of this project. I am primarily aligning with methods particular to a performance studies research project, as outlined in the chapter on Method(s) (p. 33).

As previously stated I locate the seeds of the evolving philosophical enquiry of this practice around three key generative propositions by Joseph Beuys:

1 The potential of every person as artist.

"This most modern art discipline – Social Sculpture/ Social Architecture will only reach fruition when every living person becomes a creator, a sculptor, or architect of the social organism" (Beuys cited in Kuoni 1993, p.22).

2 Artist as shaman.

"My intention is obviously not to return to earlier cultures but to stress the idea of transformation and substance. That is precisely what the shaman does in order to bring about change and development: his nature is therapeutic [...] So when I appear as a kind of shamanic figure, or allude to it, I do it to stress my belief in other priorities and the need to come up with a completely different plan for working with substances". (Beuys cited in Walters 2010, p.42).

3 Creativity sourced at its 'spring point'.

"I mean that the idea of art has to be changed. And you have to look for the spring point, where the creative principle begins" (Beuys in Kuoni 1993 p.31-32).

My initial in-depth exposure to Beuys, his works, and his methods, was as an Art School student in Canberra in the mid to late 1980's. While his performances and art have little in common in outward appearance with mine, his ideas and philosophies have exacting influence in my own artistic motives and evolving philosophy of practice. My own artistic evolution has shifted over four decades from working solo, producing two-dimensional works on paper, to working with the immediacy of improvisational voice as a performance art medium that can be enacted in a shared creative social frame within a contained form. Integral to the ambitions of this PhD project is a philosophy of practice that seeks availability to every 'body', via the common ground of embodied resonance. In this project I am addressing the influence the Beuys' citation has on my pursuit regarding the potential of every person as artist. My research in improvisational vocal practices, and associated perceptual practices, has grown from a desire to develop an art form that is: located in living, breathing, embodied perceptual awareness; located within an unfolding creative act of becoming; woven through interactive creative engagement; and intrinsically and intimately located in the immediacy of shared experience in embodied presence, rather than reflectively and perceptually distanced from it, as is the case with a 'finished' artwork hung on a wall.



## The acquisition and conveyance of knowledge in a performative art practice; an invitation

The codified scientific methods embedded in western traditions of knowledge production tell us that an ultimate authoritative factual knowledge or 'truth' can be found through rational deduction and empirical evidence and reasoning. The notion of coming to definitive truth through verbal deduction and argument is at odds with a project which suggest there is a wealth of 'living' knowledge available in wordless immersive 'experiences' that cannot be codified and conveyed by language alone in the form of logos. Empirical comes from the Greek word for experience, (*empeiría*). What is the measure by which we know empirically/experientially, and who or what is at the epicentre? In the context of this project, where I am inviting participants to immerse themselves in a multiplicity of bodily engaging practices, there needs to be an inclusion of multiple inter-subjective perspectives in the outcome of the inquiry. Inter-subjectivity suggests meanings are not contained in singular form but exist within networks of relations as expressed here by author of *Art Practice as Research*, Graeme Sullivan.:

This broader interpretation of intersubjectivity, which places the construction of meaning in a liminal or "in-between" space, instead of within a dichotomy, opens up possibilities whereby plural views, ambiguous notions, and uncertain outcomes become opportunities to help see things differently (Sullivan 2010, p. 40).

The participants in this project acquire embodied knowledge primarily through engagement with the practice, not through verbal instruction. This notion of knowledge acquisition is at odds with the western academic tradition which privileges mind over body and verbal language over embodied practice. Nelson and Pears address the notion of knowledge acquired through practice as know-how through the metaphor of knowing how to ride a bike:

I know how to ride a bicycle, but I cannot say how I balance because I have no method. I may know that certain muscles are involved, but that factual knowledge comes later, if at all, and it could hardly be used in instruction (Pears cited in Nelson 2013, p. 9).

Nelson's suggestion that the bicycle riding example evidences a kind of practical knowing-doing is at the heart of Practice as Research (Nelson 2013, p. 9). I invite the participants to experience an immersive engagement of practices toward illuminating their own artistic agency. This is also in alignment with Nelson's call toward a softening of rigorous verbal argument that seek finite facts, toward a more fluid emergence found in visceral and vigorous engagement of practice (Nelson 2013, p. 52). The participants find their own plurality of meanings and 'voice' in the liminal inter-subjective spaces deliberately made available in the multiplicity of practices. Finding resonance between the emergent practicing philosophy of the project, the culminating performance 'product' and the written exegesis is also key. I add to Nelson's bicycle metaphor with an invitation toward a different notion of truth found in the spinning wheels of the bicycle. A bike wheel with perfectly tuned and aligned spokes runs 'true'. I am looking for ideas, practices, theories, practitioners that add to artistic lineage, that align and merge with the emergent practical philosophy of this project, that add context and roll 'true' with the open-ended invitation of the inquiry. In *Art as research: creative practice and academic authority* Iain Biggs cites Sally Morgan's essay "A Terminal Degree – fine art and the PhD" in revealing the tension between the inscribed scientific method "concerned with 'an exposition which is consciously argued and "concluded" by the author in an attempt to avoid ambiguity', and creative art practices, with their 'synthesis of sensual and intellectual allusion'" (Morgan cited in Biggs 2009, p. 39). The institutionalised hierarchy that privileges words over practice is ever present in the academy. Throughout the application of this project I have repeatedly felt the discord articulated by Dawn Albinger regarding the disconnect that occurs when theory subsumes embodied knowledge, though I do not call myself a feminist.

[d]espite the seduction offered by the siren song of theorists, the feminist practitioner can also experience a stultifying asphyxiation or amputation if she loses her connection with her own body of knowledge (Albinger 2010, cited in Robson 2013, p. 130).

The immersion in theory within the exclusive purview of logos can lead to a sense of divorce from the inhabited lived knowledge which is at the heart this investigative practice, and can dilute rather than strengthen the 'liquid knowledge' (Abramovic cited in Nelson 2013, p. 52) of embodied noetic that arrives through practice. It is vital then that there is a marriage between the favourable sense of alignment that I am finding and enabling in the practice, and the capacity to extend this sense of alignment to the analogous written material. I want to infuse the notion of invitation and resonant findings to the exegesis, to imbibe the notion that this is a living open-ended inquiry toward a creative philosophy of practice and practicing philosophy. I am leveraging breathing space to soften the grip of colonizing suffocation that seems to be ever threatening where experiential artistic enquiry meets the weight of academic tradition. As Baz Kershaw writes:

When the challenge of artistic research meets established hierarchies of knowledge, the result might match that mythical moment in physics when an irresistible force meets an immovable object: an inconceivable disturbance (Kershaw 2009, p. 106).

## Motivations and Influences: Locating the Self

To give a more complete overview of this project, I will identify some key personal and artistic events or epiphanies which help situate the motivations inherent to the project more clearly, and identify some the earlier seeds from which it has germinated. A pivotal event, which sparked a fascination for perceptual states that reach beyond the ordinary everyday experience, occurred while working on a farm in far north Queensland some 35 plus years ago. Leading up to that time, I had spent five years from the age of fifteen working in factories in South Australia, over three years on an assembly line in a vehicle assembly plant. The farm owner, who I met on a fun run in Cairns, ran and practised yoga and meditated before breakfast every day. While living and working on the farm I duplicated his practice. Within a week I was experiencing stillness-induced blissful states of transformative ecstasy. This experience has had a profound and lasting effect on my perception of the constituents of self, being and agency.

When working on the factory production line I was deeply embedded in the anxiety-inducing and mind-numbing programming of treadmill production and consumption. “Look busy” was a common mantra in this clock-on clock-off world where my time belonged to a company and my body primarily served as a productively functioning robot. The meditation practices enabled me, for the first time in my life, to experience an insouciant ease of being. I was able to find brief respite from the relentless clouding chatter and anxiety of my own incessant programming, which had been induced by societal presentations and expectations, and cemented by habit and repetition. In a relaxed state of stillness, while focused upon my breath, vitality, and what is called ‘primordial tone’ in nada yoga terms (sound at the core of silence), an immense electrical surge of overwhelming emanation and envelopment emerged which I can best describe as a kind of enrapture, felt as a glowing resonance infused with feelings of illuminating love; an emergent emanation innate to an

authentically relaxed but alert and focused state of being. It could be described in terms of a divine, sacred or a religious experience, but this phenomenon did not emerge from religious devotion. All it took was momentary refocusing of my attention away from the ordinary everyday societal machinations, which demand engagement, toward perception of innate embodied resonance and vitality.

While the initial intensity faded, the emergent embodied understandings from that experience remained, later growing to encompass the generation of vocal sounds without words as a means to extend this experience from an internalizing perceptual state and space toward an externalizing communication and inter-subjective state of play. *Sound and Tone* in this context is itself the implicit discernible language of an embodied spectrum of innate and communicable resonances.

This project gives an opportunity to investigate the illuminating intelligence inherent in the felt experiential phenomena that is explicit in these wordless voice practices, and to further develop, propagate and contextualize the potential of the practices in a broader cultural context. Within the project I seek to identify and bring to functional view vital perceptual nuances that are ignored or on the periphery of general contemporary western perception. My interest with voice really took hold when I heard a radio transmission of the Tibetan Gyoto Monks doing their deep droning chants, during the time I was a Visual Arts student at the Canberra School of Art from 1985-88. I was immediately struck with the way the sound evoked a strong visceral 'deep in the guts' effect. Although I had some interest in the context and content of their chanting, as a visual artist I was much more interested in the physical material qualities of the sound and its capacity to impact upon the emotional fabric of my being. I began to think of voice and sound as an art medium, which can share the same formal and evocative descriptive language used for painting, drawing, or sculpture, defined by tone, colour, depth, intensity, texture, contrast, form, scale, complexity, simplicity, tension, balance, harmony. Descriptive material components or qualities of sound that can be orchestrated and manipulated in much the way that paint or sculpture can be. I had also become very interested in the fluid

creative process as it unfolds in the act of making a work of art, and over the following years endeavoured to explore the sphere of vocal improvisation practice, which engages the voice as a visceral communicative art medium, rather than as bearer of linguistic meaning, and locates artistic practice in the 'now' present moment of creative impulse and performance, in process rather than static artefact.

A common experience of embodied voice, familiar to many people, is singing or humming in the shower. It is a simple expression in unison with a state of being. You could say it has no meaning, especially when it is not based on a song that you know, is simply something you are 'making up'. The question of meaning is of interest in this context. Do we have to be cognizant of an assigned meaning for it to be meaningful? The experience of singing in the shower is a simple and pleasurable extension of being in a space where we are safe in our nakedness, where the resonance of the space is sympathetic and provides pleasing reflection, where space can be found to give voice to flowing creative impulse free from the definitions of language and prescribed cognizant meaning. Meaning in this instance is found in the resonant interplay between our emotional being and environment. In a way it is a tangible affirmation of our own existence, an experience of unison or harmony between voice and resonance of being. It is an act of embodied consciousness in flow, free of the constraints of habitual mental proclivity.

From this example it is probably not such a great stretch to imagine a group of people exploring the interplay of voice, where creative impulse is given space to play, in a social interactive context. Where a simple hum can become a drone of many voices, or the beginning of a song with no boundaries or preconceptions. Within this frame an improvised interactive song can provide supported ground for unexpected empathetic synergies to emerge in the spontaneous unfolding of shared vocal evocations. Its value is in the pleasure of discovery, in the free interwoven play with others in a safe way, in making new subjective discoveries about the possible dimensions of

expression and vitality, to re-cognize dimensions of social 'being' and 'becoming', and shared experience, where the act of surrender to sound and a sense that a song can flow through you is possible.

What is important here is the difference between words and wordlessness. The same words can have different meanings according to who is speaking or scribing them. There is an expectation of assigned ownership interwoven in words. Words have cultural and institutional authority in accordance with beliefs and established knowledge. Singing without words gives the singer authority and authorship of what is being sung. It gives value to the unique sound and bodily resonance that only that one person has, gives a tangible dimensional platform on which to extend the understanding of identity, which can be supported in voice by the diverse but united uniqueness of the many.

The voice, which is embodied in the plurality of voices, always puts forward first of all the *who* of saying. As a faithful testimony to the uniqueness of the one who emits it (Cavarero 2005, p.30).

Singing wordlessly can cross the boundaries of manifest reality through interweaving embodied imagination with produced material sound. It unites the tangible present with material and immaterial presence. Following on from my shower example, it can also provide a tangible experience of intrinsic worth, felt in the generative, integrative, and affecting feeling tones of resonant well-being.

Music in the West is dominated by the tempered scale and exacting measure, and these days by computer music programs where the value of mathematical precision is taken for granted. Where what is 'scribed' and 'pre-scribed' takes precedence. An open-ended

improvised vocal recording does not mesh easily with the platform of a computer-generated music program. I appreciate music in all its forms, but I am conscious of what is left out of what could be considered as common understandings of music.

I am reminded of the famous 4' 33" silent composition of John Cage, which was influenced by Zen meditation and a visit to anechoic chamber, a room designed to absorb all sound. John Cage told an engineer that he heard two sounds, one low, one high. The engineer told him the high note was his nervous system in operation, the other his blood circulation. It confirms the notion that there is a symphony of resonances and rhythms innate in the living body.

While I was an undergraduate in performance studies at Victoria University I wrote a passage in an essay about my journeying out on cold dark nights to find resonant spaces around Melbourne to sing alone, which included venturing down dark underground waterways and tunnels to satisfy a very personal longing for experiences of expressive and reflective resonance, and how it is possible to review the impact of the constructed social matrix through the application of these intently applied improvised vocal practices.

I connect with an intelligence which underlies existence and refuses identification. Alignment is everywhere in this dimensionally altered state. I am propelled to enter this space from the drives of my own subjective desire and being. I locate the meaning within the dimensions of resonance of being, rather than in human character or psychological aspects of identity. I believe that the [vocal improvisation] practice gives me an opportunity to feel the impact of the socially constructed cultural matrix which plays upon being. I can momentarily find a resting place. A doorway which enables me to re-cognise the hypnotic spellbound effect of mass consciousness. I feel the requirement to stand against the flow, while still swimming deep in the river of social being and becoming (Brennand 2005).



The personal and artistic insights gleaned from these solo voice practice experiences add another dimension to my earlier nada yoga experiences, from which these voice practices have evolved. These experiences are at the heart of my desire to create and develop a shared practice in which to evolve these personal insights to a cohesive interactive performative practice. I seek to provide space to explore dimensions of experience which offer affecting insights that can shift or expand the familial known. My personal experience with nada meditation provided an epiphany of affecting insight, which forever altered my perception of self and self in the world. It brings with it implication regarding knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge. In this case the event provided a spontaneous and affecting embodied knowing which was acquired through the experience. There were no words, no language, nothing spoken, nothing read. I continue to gain cognitive understandings of the experience through research, application, revisiting and re-integrating and expanding the initial experience. While the experience itself remains in the invisible, ephemeral realm of highly intelligent, alert and attentive listening, sensing, and feeling.

## Convergence and Divergence with Beuys. Where we meet, and depart

The three themes that I have cited from Beuys all come under the umbrella of his “expanded conception of art” and “social sculpture” (Sacks cited in Harlen 2004, p. ix) which looks at the relationship of the experiential to transformative social process and speaks of a potential for a broader application of art in life and life as art. I reach toward Beuys and his concept in an analogous way in seeking answers to the potential of Voice Lab practices. In Voice Lab practice the social element is held within the containing frame of the practice. I suggest the process of the practice can have affecting influence beyond the frame of the practice carried by the immersive experiences of the practice. When Beuys talks about everyone is an artist he is proposing social transformation through the recognition of creativity to “reshape and reform society”:

Now this concept is apparently too lofty for many people; many object that not everyone can be an artist. But that’s precisely the point: to make the concept into one that once more describes the essence of being human, the human being as the expression of freedom, embodying, carrying forward and further evolving the world’s evolutionary impulse (Beuys cited in Harlen 2004 p. 10).

When Beuys talks of a shamanic process as “a completely different plan for working with substances” (see above p. 11) he is not just talking about substance as material qualities of a medium, or meaning imbibed in a sculptural form; he is suggesting a different approach to substance in regard to artistic process. Beuys includes the notion of a soul process that with attention imbibes art with a measure of sacrament. In my work, where voice is the primary medium, I reach for and ask for attention to embodied presence, a devotion to listening and observations of subtle nuance, of allowing and noticing the arrival of clear creative impulses. I encourage in myself and in the Voice Lab participants’ multiple levels of perception while being aware of self as receiver, director and creator of those

perceptions as part of a process. This level of attention intercepts with Beuys and his notion of everyone as artist, and his proclamation that the idea of art has to change, in looking for the spring point where the creative principle begins. It is an invitation toward artistic process at the most primary level of creation and creating. Beuys includes will and thought as part of the sculptural process.

Yes, it becomes clear that the will as warmth impulse, is necessary for independent thinking. One is involved in a sculptural process here, about which one can rightly say; thinking is practically a sculptural process. It can be understood as a truly creative achievement, engendered by the human being, by the individual himself, and not a process indoctrinated by some authority or other (Beuys cited in Harlen 2004 p. 17).

I want to extend Beuys' notion of artistic process to the idea that creativity is imbibed in perception itself. My personal experiences with nada yoga, of the blissful clarity of perception and being that arrived through the practice, are interwoven with later experiences in meditative solo improvisational singing in cavernous resonant spaces. These experiences are key compass points in the motivation of this project and its intersection with the influences of Beuys. These personal experiences offered favourable shifts in my sense of self and being in the world by loosening the shackles of culturally ascribed or imbibed notions of self and identity. I want to extend Beuys' notion of freedom beyond authority of other to the experiential spaces of wordless voice. These experiences give insight to the way language is inscribed with institutionalized and acculturated authority. The wordless offers embodied cognitions of felt meaning not prescribed and authorized by other. Freedom in my version of everyone being an artist is in realizing the effects and affects socially conditioned reality has on perception, recognizing one's own song of being, realizing self as ultimate authority, and choosing what to sing, while being aware of the relational 'dance' we perform as we resonate in active concert with the whole field of evolutionary becoming. The project provided the opportunity to propose, develop, test and share these ideas in a practice grown from my own personal experiences interwoven with Beuys far-reaching proclamations. Within the Voice Lab practices I suggest there is

transformative affect available in the embrace of everyone as artist in the ground of perception itself. The Voice Lab practices invite a perceptual shift where the internal and external dimensions of perception are fluid, subjective, resonant with one's own emanation. A singing reality, where the reading of the world has an effect, and altering states of perception offer a new reading. All of reality being felt as symphony of songs in concert, full of accord and discord, ordinary and sacred.

The considered synthesis of the broad range of practices with which the participants have engaged is at the forefront of the workshop phase of the project in combination with the evolving gravitational push and pull of my own 'expert intuitive' perceptions and interest. This is a process of trusting my own intuitive insights as they emerge in the engagement with the evolving practices, the participants, and my imagination, drawing from my past experience/knowledge as it merges with new impulsively informed and inspired insight. As I and the participants became more comfortable and confident in the monthly participation and engagement with the practice, I introduced material that facilitated more personally significant individual and collectively affecting 'resonance' and range. I needed to be alert to intuitively guided creative inspiration and directions as they emerged, in alignment with the creative framework of this project that it not become too predetermined and risk stagnation.

Further to the evolution and refining of a practice is the process of bringing ideas/practices/philosophies to a performance that effectively conveys the notions explored. I create the conditions where the audience to the final performance is deliberately given space between the mediated elements of the performance to enable a subjective/creative response to the layered information presented. The multimodal presentation of orchestrated audio, projected image and live performance, is a creative documentation and applied extension of the practical philosophies cultivated in the project.

The heart of the creative project involved conducting intensive monthly four-hour workshops with participants in two groups - one in Adelaide, one in Melbourne - over a period of one year. These workshops evolved through the process of applying, and building upon, techniques drawn from the practices listed above, and included reflective journaling. This workshop process was followed by a systematic collection of individual improvised vocal recordings, and interview/conversational recordings from participants over a further four months. The journals were exclusively used as a resource for the participants own reflections, which they were able to access and review during the audio recording process. At the end of the recording phase of the project I asked the participants to fill out a questionnaire regarding their personal experience with the practice and the project. The intention of the questionnaire was to provide reflective space and bring to the surface any additional insights and reflections regarding the participants' experiences. This information is integrated to the exegetical writing regarding the experiences of the participants in "Participants' Experiences and Insights" (p. 82) and provided in full in Appendix (p. 103). The culminating multi-modal performance uses audio recordings from the participants' engagement in wordless improvisation collaged with recordings of interviews with the participants about the effects and affects of the practice.

I invited participants via the email contacts of the two workshop spaces utilized in the project. This being the "Body Voice Centre" space in Footscray, Melbourne, Victoria and "The Yoga Cycle" space in Thebarton, Adelaide, South Australia. More people came to the first information sessions in both states than was manageable, but the number of participants committed to the project for its duration of one year of monthly workshops eventually came to sixteen. This was six participants in Melbourne and ten in Adelaide. The Melbourne group was all female, while the Adelaide group was made up of four males and six females. Some had extensive previous experience in voice, many did not; some had experience in body-based practices such as Yoga, Middendorf Breathwork or Authentic Movement; and some had experience in more traditional visual art practice. I chose to go through the avenue of established venues of body-based

practice to invite participants because I believed it more likely they would commit to the ongoing time and energy required for the research if they had some appreciation, enthusiasm and understanding of the discipline required to participate, and the possible benefits. The participants were given a consent form and information form prior to commencement, which outlined the intentions of the project and what would be expected of them. Having two different groups of people enabled divergent group and personal dynamics to emerge, contributing to the depth and breadth of the 'data' gathered, and resulting performance and exegesis outcome. The participants had broad skill levels, a great variance of previous experience in any kind of voice practice, and wide variance in professional backgrounds and cultural/ethnic heritage. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 61 at the outset of the project.

I encouraged written statements of individual intent at the beginning of each workshop to promote the sense of authority for each participant. I leant toward a diversity of multiple and expansive layers of meaning, revelation and association, rather than reductive or deductive 'answers' to the overall enquiry. The research inquiry sought insight and knowledge from the creative state of play that generates interest, energy, inspiration, a constant seeking, desiring, and movement toward more expansive or fulfilling becoming through creative action, interaction and engagement.

Integral to the working methodology of this creative project is the notion that the investigation is in a continual state of emergent evolution. The discoveries and insights provide, generate and invigorate further interest and energy toward further evolution, motivation and discovery. The knowledge is living fluid knowledge always in the process of becoming. In that sense any conclusions are always the foundation for new beginning, finding synergy with Margaret Cameron's research inquiry which speaks of a methodology as "whatever generates possibilities and delays closure" (Cameron 2012 p.11). While the project has a definitive ending, the inherent inquiry will never find complete conclusion, for it is always in the process of seeking regeneration. It is a seeking and calling that

requires immersive engagement, deep listening, and allowing. As previously stated the practices have been sourced from multiple origins, reborn and altered in my imaginative and intuitive interpretation and application, synthesized in application with participants, and broadened by the participants' subjective experience and engagement of them.

The practice is at the heart of this process where knowledge and theoretical imbrication is generated and derived from the knowing/doing/being of the practices, with considered care to bring greater understanding to the project through identifying analogous concepts and contexts. This is aligned with Robin Nelson's assertion in identifying the defining nuances of research based in practice in the arts.

It must be understood that here we are talking about a category in which knowing-doing is inherent in the practice and practice is at the heart of the enquiry and evidence of it (Nelson 2013 p.10).

This is an important defining proposition where I am focusing on building and conveying knowledge in the realm of wordless embodied and immersive, engaging experiences. This applies to both the immersive experience of the participants that engaged with the project, and to the observers that witness the artful documentation of the overall project final presentation.

... the proposed enquiry necessarily entailed practical knowledge which might primarily be demonstrated in practice – that is, knowledge which is a matter of doing rather than abstractly conceived and thus able to be articulated by way of traditional thesis in words alone (Nelson 2013 p.9).

This reflects the process of tacit knowing or experiential knowledge that emerges from engaging in the immersive practices. This applies to my own experience, and that of the participants, of learning through the embodied understandings that evolve and clarify through the engaging propositions and activity of the practices.

Above all it asserts the primacy of practice and insists that because creative practice is both on-going and persistent; practitioner-researchers do not merely 'think' their way through or out of a problem, but rather they 'practice' to a resolution. (Nelson 2013, p.10).

I seek to build applicable artistic knowledge via the engagement and development of this performance and performative practice toward productive future projects. It is also self-directed apprenticeship toward my own professional artistic development, and the building of embodied knowledge and a practice which it is proposed can perform a valuable socio-cultural function. It is vital that the knowledge gained is applicable to a functional practice and future aspiration for the practice, and not just floating in abstract theory. At the same time the practices themselves invite the exploration of the rich abstract terrain of nuanced felt meaning and felt knowing not reducible to rationally nominated cognition. The insights that answer this inquiry are found in the cohesive synthesis of components of the project and the way they intercept in the productive outcome.



## Embodied Resonance: theoretical and practical context

I consider it vital that the practices have a tangible connection with the spectra of felt experience. The resonances of breath and voice span a range from very subtle perceptual nuance to blatantly obvious emotionally affecting expression. Important in all of this is aliveness and alertness of spontaneous revelation: something unexpected that is given space to come to the surface. Something revealed in the practice of giving breath to the vocal folds and voice to breath in a weave of imagination and the emotional fabric of embodied being and the continual renewal of presence, in combination with the sheer pleasure of creative ignition. Many of the workshops started with an inward focus and awareness on the oceanic tidal flux of breath and its subtle dance with body. With deliberate awareness of breath and its resonating passage through the throat and its multiple functional and creative layers in interaction with body and being, it can be considered a whisper of our individual existential presence. When the breath is invited to vibrate the vocal folds it immediately extends this existential presence into social and environmental dimensions, while audibly resonating within and from the definitive fleshy cavities of each uniquely formed and spirited body. I acknowledge the value of each individual's unique journey through this practice through the universal ground of embodied being.

I test Beuys' notional potential of everyone being an artist via the common ground of the emergent and becoming resonant being and body. The notion of "embodiment" has its locating nuclei in the intellectual contributions of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and his assertions on the centrality of the body as the primary ground for perceptual experience, as opposed to Cartesian mind/body dichotomy.

The essential notion for such a philosophy is that of the flesh, which is not the objective body, nor the body thought by the soul as its own (Descartes), which is the sensible in the twofold sense of what one senses and what senses. What one senses = the sensible thing, the

sensible world = the correlate of my active body, what responds to it ----What senses = I can not posit one sole sensible without positing it as torn from my flesh, lifted off my flesh, and my flesh itself is one of the sensibles in which an inscription of all others is made, the sensible pivot in which all the others participate, the sensible-key, the dimensional sensible. My body is to the great extent what everything is: a *dimensional this*. It is the universal thing (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 259-60).

It is the non-dualistic 'dimensional sensible' aspects of perception integral to the universal and relational body that I am nominating as integral to the notion of the resonant body. It is made multi-dimensional through its meta and matter poly-rhythms from cellular vibrations to pumping heart, cycles of breath, emotional tones, brain wave frequencies, thought, and affecting relational encounters with other multiple resonant bodies and beings. The notion of "resonance" is intimately woven to the complex material qualities of breath upon vocal folds transforming movement of air into frequencies of audible oscillation resounding through a living body of resonant cavities and beyond out to reflective space, to become sculptural material medium. It is also metaphorically a notion that provides active ground for a kind of multifaceted emergent extrication, arising from embodied perceptual and expressed nuances, impulses, feeling tones, imaginings, and layered meanings. Resonance is a metaphor commonly expressed in everyday language as "that (idea, belief, practice, form, place) resonates with me", meaning a resounding felt sense of favourable attunement. I suggest a notion of felt experience on a spectrum of discernible resonance that can extend beyond the liminal edge of materiality, to the realm of non-physical but affecting expansive experiences of illuminating consciousness. Instead of the Cartesian dictum of "I think therefore I am", resonant embodiment suggests a more relational dictum of "I resonate therefore I am in active concert with all that is becoming". At the core of this project 'Voice' is the referential evocative and productive substance that makes viscerally felt and material the available volatile subterranean/invisible fields inherent in the full spectrum of conscious and perceivable presence.

“Resonant thinking allows for vibrational coupling of seemingly unlike concepts or ideas” (Price 2011, p. 13).

The concept of “Embodied Resonance” enables recognition of common ground across multiple embodied practices, practitioners, theories and theorists. The term 'resonating' is shared by Ilse Middendorf's "Perceptible Breath" practice and Eugene Gendlin's "Focusing" practice to describe the action of bringing attention to perception of bodily sensations, feeling tones and felt meanings. Middendorf uses a formula of "breathing, focusing, perceiving" (Middendorf 1990, p. 18), to reveal subtle perceptions of breath as a "guide-rope" that leads the body, and with it the spiritual and mental into new openings to achieve a wider clarity of consciousness (Middendorf 1990, p. 12). Gendlin's experiential psychology places emphasis on experiencing what is bodily felt, “rather than thought, known, or verbalized. It is ... lived experience rather than constructs, abstractions, or generalizations about experience. It is pre-conceptual”(Friedman 2004, p. 2). Resonating becomes the perceptual platform between felt sense and concept. This notion of felt perceptible resonance can be extended to the full spectrum of felt vitality in association with breath awareness common to pranayama in yoga practice, vital energy in Qi-gong practice and conscious self-awareness in mindfulness meditation. In his PhD dissertation “Phenomenology of the Experience of Qigong” Haruhiko Murakawa writes:

*Qigong* reclaims the significance of the “body as a flow of *qi*,” whose characteristics challenge the Cartesian view of the body and its modern offspring of the Western biomedical body based on the metaphor of “biochemical machine.” (Murakawa 2002, p. 7)

While seeking to locate a notion of embodied experience in the common ground of ineffable living breathing existence, I also seek to marry this to the diversity and authority of each individual's unique resonant evolving presence and emergent voice. I propose a concept of felt experience, of body and being as symphony of multitudinous songs in concert with other singing bodies, beings, objects,

environments, always in constant flux and flow of becoming. This has resonance with Gershon's notion of sound as site for the investigation of embodied knowledge and implicit meaning.

Ontological and epistemological understandings of the interconnectedness of things are similarly present in a multitude of spiritualities and philosophies outside of the Western canon. In short, if everything sings and resonates, then sound serves as both a strong theoretical site for conceptualizing what might "count" as "data" in qualitative research and how such methodologies might function in practice" (Gershon 2014, p. 2).

I ask questions about the capacity of this art practice to provide a shaman-like function, directed toward personal and social creative engagement, enlivenment, enrichment, communion, and well-being, while also speculating on the value of making available experiences that transcend everyday ordinary perception. I propose and question through the practice, through the interactions with participants, and through the overall presentation of the final performance, in what ways this art practice has potential to provide generative and practical social and personal benefit and insight.

## The Method(s)

With the intention of garnering and conveying the complexities at play in this project which shares commonality with other performance studies based research I cite here seven characteristics of method summarised by Julie Robson (2013, p. 135) from Mercer & Robson, “The backbone of live research”, the introductory chapter in *Live Research: Methods of practice-led inquiry in performance* (Mercer *et al.* 2012). Mercer and Robson’s chapter draws out the seven characteristics from ten essays in *Live Research*, a book that came out of a two-day symposium at QUT in Brisbane in February 2008. I describe how these methods weave through this project.

...the methods employed are, first, underpinned by the artist-researcher’s pre-existing arts practice, which can usually be linked with industry lineages and traditions (Robson 2013, p.135).

I draw from a diverse body of voice, theatre, meditative and body based practices, and my own developed practice to evolve a practice which is in synthesis with the evolving intentions of the project. The following is a brief overview of the lineage of vocal research practices which I have synthesised to my pre-existing practice, and which underpin the methods employed in workshops with volunteer participants. I give an elucidation of the practices and the way they have been synthesised in the later chapter on a virtual Voice Lab workshop (p. 65). I investigate and employ voice and its subtle intimate connection with breath, vitality, presence. This includes influences from breath-work practices of Ilse Middendorf, as introduced to me by John Howard, free form or spontaneous Chi gong as taught by Margaret Wu in Adelaide, as well as integrating practices from multiple yoga teachers. This includes my previously mentioned experience of nada yoga, which I have nominated as a significant insightful driver of the project. I incorporate extended and dynamic expressive range, colour and sculptural possibilities of voice. This includes reference to Alfred Wolfsohn’s extended voice work, which

has a lineage through Roy Hart and Roy Hart theatre training to the present-day work of Linda Wise. I include Paul Newham's voice movement training and the embodied voice practices of Zygmunt Molik and of Michael Chekhov, as integrated in the comprehensive body-voice practices of Helen Sharp and John Howard. I also investigate the transcendent or meditative properties and effects of sustained song, tone, and harmonics, drawing on practice and knowledge gathered from many years of interest and application, partially modelled on Stockhausen's application of the phonetic alphabet in the composition "Stimmung" (Wörner 1973, p. 65). I also employ aspects of play, impulse, utterance, glossolalia and rhythm. This draws on extensive and diverse theatrical training, as well as experience gathered from improvisation performance collaborations and my own ongoing engagement and practice in voice.

The inquiry provides the ground to test my own art practice based hypotheses about the potential value of this model, while simultaneously developing and refining its intent and application through the leverage of the lineage of practices and practitioners I draw from, in resounding inter-subjective relationship with the willing participants.

Second, rather than being prescriptive, rigid or predefined, the methods are typically multi modal, hybridized and plastic, morphing as necessary throughout the study so as to be genuinely led by the current practice (*ibid.*)

The original title proposed for this PhD project was; "Experiments in perception; Investigating voice, moving image, presence, performance". This was going to be a solo investigation and development. It evolved and morphed over time to become a project which includes participant engagement, giving it a much broader and richer inter-subjective investigative scope, and provided a vast body of research 'data' in the form of audio recordings and written material from the participants.

While the practices with participants form the central core of the inquiry, I also search for artistic method to tell the story through performative means using multiple artistic mediums of live and recorded audio, live and recorded visuals, and live performance, which brings to bear an entirely different artistic lineage and method from the incorporated voice practice. This includes reference to the ideas and practices of Susan Hillier. I will elaborate further on the influences of Hillier in the chapter on the performance (p.58). There is a doubling up of the exegesis in the sense the audio recorded material also performs a critical exegetic function within the frame of the final performance, by providing a kind of elucidation and explication of the participants experience and creative voices.

Third, the methods tend to be highly idiosyncratic, in that they are personal, instinctual and compelling, arising out of what Haseman has now famously called 'an enthusiasm of practice' (*ibid.*).

The project has grown out of my own personal epiphanic moments of creative experience, which are core to a devotion to an investigation, which is on a continuum of my life's work and artistic evolution. I have woven an alliance between these core notions and provocations derived from Joseph Beuys regarding 'everyone as artist' through the universality of the lived body, 'artist as shaman' as method that subverts logocentrism, and the location of creativity at its 'spring point', which I align with improvisation as a method which opens intelligent dialogue with the yet to be known becoming via intuitive, instinctive and inspirational impulse, and as emergent creative practice not bound by codified language. These themes become intertwined to method throughout the project.

Fourth, the methods inevitably evolve through (cycles of) failure and generosity, frequently dashing preconceived ideas and continuously asking to be reinvented, adding to the dynamic of 'emergence and complexity' that Haseman and Mafe speak of (Haseman and Mafe 2011,

p.221-2). To describe and theorize such expert intuitive artistic processes, it is not uncommon for arts researchers to extend the reliance on symbolic language (*ibid.*).

In the process of bringing the performance to its final complete form, I presented three preliminary developmental showings of the work in front of a small knowledgeable audience. The purpose was to see what was working and what still required further development. It revealed a blurry line between research and practice, when the combination of audience response and my own intuitive reading were slightly at odds with my sense of care and responsibility toward the participants' words in the orchestrated material, as vital research information. I want to provide as much of their valuable verbal response as is conceivable within an eighty-minute showing of a work, but felt I was compromising the integral artistic developmental possibilities of the performance by limiting myself to the material that was chosen for the first showing. Intuition plays an enormous part in any artistic endeavour, and has been vital at every stage of this project. This reveals the inherent dynamic of 'emergence and complexity' in the methodical process of bringing this project to fruition. As I write this I have still not landed on the final performance form, but the challenge of finding the right dialogical balance of the materials orchestrated is a vital part of the process. This is particularly pertinent to the challenge of bringing wordless knowledge to words, or words to wordless knowledge, and attempting to find synergy between the material produced from the workshops and the performance produced as final 'product'.

Part of the challenge of this process is the attempt to provide dimensional elements in the performance that invite an analogous experience between the viewers of the performance, and the experiences of the participants in the Voice Lab practices. The practices with participants were always inclusive and immersive in terms of the circular dimensions of the practice, that is, the participants were all, at different times, equal parts performer, audience and director. The performance in contrast will have the traditional fourth wall



dimensions and audience performer division, but I will invite an analogous inter-subjective and liminal reading of the performance by carefully orchestrating the elements of the performance toward a synesthetic liminal experiential reading. I deliberately provide space between the simple elements of an audio score, two video projections, and my own presence in a durational piece which has intentional hypnotic qualities, where the audience has time to get comfortable and 'drop- in' to the trance like dimensions of the performance, providing the opportunity for the audience to have their own liminal and imaginative/reflexive reading of the layered material. This alludes again to the notion of everyone as artist and perception as part of creative action.

I have relied on my own expert-intuitive guidance in the on-going decision making processes during the Voice Lab workshops and the creation of the performance. I made decisions on the fly according to what was working.

Thus, fifth, accounts of method will often resound through strategic use of metaphor (*ibid.*).

Resonance is the working metaphor in this research project that best alludes to the multiple dimensions and nuances revolving around wordless voice, which cannot be reduced to representation in words alone. It refers to the felt material qualities of a voice resounding in a lived body, and a confluence with the notion of attunement implied in favourable resonance felt between bodies/beings/ environments/ideas. It also speaks of the kind of harmonic phenomena that occurs through sympathetic resonance such as when singing into a piano, which activates the strings in harmony with the pitch of the voice.

I have applied the image of a flowering iris as a working metaphor in the prelude of the exegesis to convey a sense that although the practices employed in the Voice Lab workshops are multiple and diverse, in practice they have an easy well-formed workable function

and relationship that works in an organic-like pliable fashion. The practice is fully formed yet ever evolving in my living embodied presence and growing experiential knowledge. I use metaphor to allude to something which cannot be fully articulated or described in factual and definitive or deductive terms. The experience of presence in the practice is complete and unambiguous, while writing about it is ridden with ambiguity.

In the sixth instance, methods are governed by variable temporal and situational factors, dynamic and contingent according to time (*ibid*).

As already mentioned the Voice Lab workshops were conducted in two separate groups, one in Adelaide and one in Melbourne. This inevitably meant that although I was basically presenting the same working material to each group, there was a different flavour in what emerged. Part of this can be put down to the differences in the functional activities that were pre-established at each site. I gathered participants through the email list of The Body Voice Centre in Melbourne and The Yoga Cycle in Adelaide. At the beginning of the project the Melbourne group had a little more experience in wordless improvisational voice practice and were more adept in this area. Initially the Adelaide group tended to be more adept at the more meditative harmonic overtone singing derived from Stockhausen's vowel series. I needed to make adjustments according to how well the participants of each group were adapting to the practices. This helped to streamline the overall collection of practices in the manner that I was teaching them. An example of this is my decision to use an accordion as a guide for sustained tone group singing, as a working alternative to sustained singing based around the harmonic series as derived from Stockhausen. Harmonic overtone singing can appear quite alien or unfamiliar to the western ear and vocal faculty, and can take some time to master. Time was something I consistently felt short of considering how much I was trying to bring to the participants in each of the four-hour workshops. I introduced to the Melbourne group a practice of playing a sustained chord on the accordion using notes that emulated the harmonic overtone series to simplify what I was trying to achieve. This gave the participants

the opportunity to continue to explore the overtone series in sustained song if they wanted to, without attempting to reach a specified outcome or attempt to master a technique that can take years of devotion. This then became the practice used in Adelaide.

An example of emergent method specific to place is a situation that emerged late in the year of practice. I was conducting a group improvisational exercise with the Adelaide group that gave each of the participants an opportunity to do a solo practice. One of the participants asked if they could include other members of the group. What transpired was a series of vignettes that the participants had cleverly constructed or thought out in the brief time before it came to their turn. This clarified in my mind specifically what I was inviting the participants toward, and how it could be misconstrued. I was much more interested in what the participants could make available in improvisational practice when they had not thought it out in their heads beforehand. It is an invitation toward intuitive insight and creative impulse arriving from the still to be known. This to me is a much richer terrain that taps in to a much vaster intellectual resource. This helped clarify my methodology and teaching method as well as the intentions and synthesis of the practice for both groups.

Another defining moment occurred early in the year in one of the workshops in Melbourne. I provided the opportunity for a discussion on what the participants were experiencing following a shared improvisation practice. In my view the discussion became a labyrinth-like cerebral discourse far removed from the wordless embodied and immersive practice that I was proposing, and an hour quickly evaporated. From that experience, I was determined not to let it happen again, not only because workshop time with the participants was limited and precious, but also because it took me out of my own body of knowledge, or embodied knowing, and diminished my capacity to facilitate. I was also wanting the participants to immerse themselves as much as they could in the experiences of the practices without getting too didactic about what the practices were doing. I was seeking insights primarily from embodied

experiential cognitions. I still gave participants windows of opportunity to make comments, without letting the time or my focus slip away. In depth discussion would occur later within the time devoted to recorded interviews.

Finally, as is now commonly acknowledged, practice led methods are characterized by their inherent capacity to enable thinking and articulating with the whole body, asserting the primacy of sensory and somatic ways of knowing (*ibid.*)

This is perhaps the most important defining characteristic of this project. Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment affirms "the idea that the body, mind, and world are completely intertwined and not separate as Cartesian thought asserts" (Auslander 2008, p. 138). My earliest investigations of the synergetic ground of improvisation and embodied knowledge was as an Art School student in the 1980's. As already mentioned my artistic practice evolved from primarily working in a two-dimensional drawing medium. While at art school I spent many hours over many years in life drawing classes, and over thirty years since then periodically working as a life model at various art institutions. While initially I had a passion for rendering the model as accurately as possible and had developed fine skill in that regard, toward the end of my schooling this no longer satisfied me. I would begin drawings with an accurate rendering of what I saw, and then allow my imagination to grow the drawing to something else. I would turn the drawing up-side down or on its side and go with what my imagination was inspired to add. The figures would often turn into some kind of animal/human hybrid form with a life of its own. My accurate rendering skill was also informed by a strong internal understanding and reading of the body. Although I had not studied anatomy in the traditional medical understanding of bones and muscles and their function, I had a good understanding of the human form from many hours of observation in drawing. I was also a runner with a good internal understanding and interest in the internal map of the body and its structure. This included its temperature, the heat of the body in motion, its sweat, passion, the movement and vitality of breath, muscles, blood, heart, desire. This is what I brought to these drawings – a rendering not just of a

physical form, but also a mapping of my passion for movement and life. I was beginning to understand this as an improvisational practice, and in it the link to Beuys' creative principles and connection to creativity at its source. This is what the vocal practices have grown from. In some sense, I adapted these early improvisational experiences to voice practice. I use the practices in Qi and yoga and Middendorf Breathwork to bring a strong internal living understanding of the body and its rich and subtle nuances and vitality. I use the theatrical voice practices to embody and extend the internal and external available expressive palette. I use meditative sustained toning to invite direct understanding of consciousness, toward a surrendering experience of the noetic through the pervasive capacity of the voice on the porous body, to soften the grip of habitual perceptions of self and open to an expanded and liberated creative flow. These improvisational practices invite the possibility of renewing and deepening knowledge of self in embodied relational action.

## Voice Lab: An overview; a confluence of contextual influences. Finding connecting threads on the virtual exegetic web

While not personally identifying myself as 'shaman', I draw on Beuys' metaphoric and poetic affiliation with the role of shaman. I use the term as a referential term and means to locate a discourse for an artistic practice, which has a *shamanlike* social function. Denita Benyshek suggests "Shamanlike artists might engage in intense concentration, enter liminal states, explore imaginal reality, utilize alternate states of consciousness" (Benyshek 2012, p. 29). The performative and theatrical umbrella of the research provides a contextual frame for addressing the role of investigating and bringing to tangible view the invisible spectra of experiential resonances at the core of these vocal practices. Beuys adopted the role of shaman as a way of addressing humanity's turn toward rationality, away from the unseen energy and emotion of creativity and spirituality. I'm using the notion of shamanic practice as reflective of the intentions of the project, with a sense of theatrical play, and constructive investigation.

Also parallel with Beuys, and central to the motivation of this work is to ask what the practice can provide in terms of social and embodied insight, by bringing attention back to the source of creativity and existence in a physically engaging sense, in a culture which is constantly seducing us toward the virtual or abstract, away from embodied experiential presence.

"I mean that the idea of art has to be changed. And you have to look for the spring point, where the creative principle begins" (Beuys in Kuoni 1993 pp.31-32).

I draw upon a broad range of improvisational voice and body based practices gathered and adapted from my own investigation of vocal performance practice over the last 25 years. This includes the "Extended Voice" techniques of Alfred Wolfsohn, as introduced to me by Linda Wise, a contemporary of Roy Hart who was a student of Wolfsohn, via my participation in various workshops in Adelaide, Canberra and Melbourne, spanning a period of 21 years.

Wolfsohn proposed voice practice as a means toward human development and according to Paul Newham was influenced by the psychoanalytical writings of Carl Jung (Newham 1997, p. 33). Wolfsohn's experiences during World War 1, hearing the cries and screams of dying soldiers on the battle field, were instrumental motivation for his philosophy toward singing as expression of the whole being (Newham 1997, p.1). For Wolfsohn, voice becomes a means for theatrical/artistic investigation and a therapeutic tool for revealing insights into the human condition. Newham suggests Wolfsohn's focus on non-verbal sound making has created a facility for "personal development and therapeutic recovery with as much success as the endless variations of the 'talking cure'" (Newham 1997, p. 127).

I also draw upon my experience with Voice Movement Therapy as taught by Paul Newham, when he visited Melbourne in 1995. Influenced by Wolfsohn, Newham's methods include the notion of 'spherical space', a means to plot a personal physiological and psychological space in which to stretch body and psyche. He refers to this spherical space that surrounds us as "transensate", as it goes beyond the senses (Newham 1999, p. 94). Additional and integral to Newham's notion of spherical awareness is 'The Animal Matrix'

(Newham 1997, p. 115), a way of integrating a fluid cyclic practice which included physical and vocal posturing moving from Canine-Feline to Primate to Homo Erectus to Bird. This matrix enables a practitioner to break through vocal limitations and to give energy and voice to 'instinctual passions' (Newham 1999, p. 116).

Also influential in the Voice Lab practice is body voice training developed by John Howard and Helen Sharp, which I have actively engaged with from 1995 to the present. This work is primarily derived from *voice and body work* of Zygmunt Molik (Campo & Molik 2010) and *qualities of psycho-physical energy* as cultivated in embodied actor training of Michael Chekhov (Petit 2010, p. 15). I also include influences from Middendorf Breathwork via my engagement with the practice and research of John Howard in "Breathing Embodiment" (Howard 2007) and Helen Sharp in "The Profane Halo: Becoming Breath" (Sharp 2014).

I further include an exploration of the relationship between open sustained vowel sounds and harmonics, and effects/affects, referencing the work of Karlheinz Stockhausen, in particular his mapping of vowels from the international phonetic alphabet as used in his composition 'Stimmung' (Worner 1973, p. 65). This mode of practice not only investigates the link between the physics of sound and the architecture of language, linking vowels and their mathematical relationship with the harmonic overtone series, but also explores gently *altered states of consciousness* linking the practice to an aspect of shamanic function.

I also ask questions about the socio-cultural function of performance practice that considers the recent turn toward participation in the arts/theatre arena, as well as in social networking, and other forms of networked practices, where:



the artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of situations; 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 repositioned as a co-producer or participant. (Bishop 2012, p.2)

Some of the complexities at play here is the ill fit the "Voice Lab" concept has with recent development and thinking in regard to participatory art as epitomized by Nicolas Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* (2002).

A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space. (Bourriaud 2002, p. 113)

Partially aligned with these practices, and also questioning them, wordless, improvisational vocal performance practice can expose the limits of 'presence' and 'agency' within currently accepted and pervasive modes and filters of social production. Voice Lab involves an exploration of experiential perceptual and expressive practices within a socially interactive context, but also within a semi-private space framed nominally as a kind of theatrically ritualized practice. This is an important defining characteristic that sets this work apart from the trend toward anti-autonomous projects and theories, while at the same time finding some alignment with them. I want to reveal the knowing and knowledge which can be acquired through intersubjective exchange in alignment with personal creative agency, within the socially framed space of the practice.

Theoretically the ambitions of this project have many referential similarities with Antonin Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" but without the angst. Artaud attempted to appeal to the subconscious and non-rational aspects of self, not the one conditioned by society. He also de-

emphasized the use of written and spoken text, wanting to create a non-verbal language instigated through improvisation. He tried to break down traditional audience actor relationships and attempted to appeal to and release the emotions of the audience. Within the Voice Lab frame of practice, all the participants at some point take on the role of performer and audience, and in improvisational solos are also the central creator/director. The emphasis on this work toward listening, allowing and empathy lends itself toward being a “Theatre of Kindness” rather than affronting ‘cruelty’. Artaud also tried to create a theatre that wasn’t an imitation of life, but instead a reality not contaminated by culture. This is an invitation which is also central to the Voice Lab practices, the opportunity to dialogue with the as-yet-unknown in creative action which does not attempt to mimic culturally or socially established conventions, actions, or practices.

An applied performance practice, located in wordless voice, can provide insightful and productive alternatives to social production, while also offering a panacea to the established bias toward textual and visual coda and to the current dominating trend towards a flat screen mediated worldview. As Schirmacher as observed:

...how we perceive our world is shaped by the media in such a fundamental way that perception and media become interchangeable (Schirmacher cited in Price 2011, p 228).

This notion finds close affinity with Josephine Machon’s writing on the experiential potential of immersive performance practice:

The alienation from real intimacy in our workaday lives, via such forums as Facebook, can be addressed by immersive practice, which demands bodily engagement, sensually stimulates the imagination, requires tactility. There is a special quality to this work that allows the

intimate to be uncovered in the epic and points out where the epic lies within the intimate in human endeavour. [...] This underlies the unique potential this form of practice holds for *felt*, transformative behavior within, and as a consequence of, the work (Machon 2013, p. 26).

The Voice Lab project also finds resonance in the writing of cultural anthropologist Victor Turner and his characterizations of the functions of ritual. He proposes the possibility of transient lucid inter-subjective illuminations in spontaneous moments defined as 'liminality' and 'communitas' by those jointly undergoing ritual transition. Proposing the momentary possibility for bonds that are "undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct, extant, nonrational, existential, I-Thou relationships" (Turner 1974, p. 274).

I tender the notion that everyone has the potential to be an artist. I am including perception itself as a kind of subjective creative action, interpretation, or production. I suggest that enacted, consciously embodied experience is the primary means by which we acquire knowledge of self and self in the world. Concepts framed in words need to be constantly reviewed to keep up with the fluid 'living' insights of experiential lived conscious enactment. For example, wordless insights that arrive in meditation or artistic practice can be reflected upon with words, but the words can only approximate the scope and detail of the embodied or enacted subjective experience. At the same time I acknowledge the equal value of words in facilitating the detailed development and exchange of concepts and theories as expressed here.

Through the practices, I seek to facilitate the possibility that the individual perceptual and expressive palette can be continually and deliberately developed and expanded with greater perceptual and expressive variance and nuance, beyond the limits of conscious cognition afforded by words, in concert with the constant renewal of presence in improvisational practice. This is obvious when extending the range of vocal expression beyond what is familiar, in pitch, texture, emotional tone and colour. Not so obvious is the subtle

shifts, insights, or opening that can occur perceptually or imaginatively. The spectrum of felt information available in the embodied experience of the voice is also much broader, with much greater available subtlety, than can be conveyed with words.

As Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero has observed:

the sphere of the voice is constitutively broader than that of speech: it exceeds it. To reduce this excess to mere meaninglessness - to whatever remains when the voice is not intentioned toward a meaning, defined as the exclusive purview of speech - is one of the chief vices of logocentrism (Cavarero 2005, p. 13).

Cavarero is critical of the reduction of voice to semantic signifier, which privileges the visual over the acoustic (Cavarero 2005, p. 15) and inherently gives greater credence to the established over the emergent. I agree with Konstantinos Thomaidis when he characterizes Cavarero's position as seeking to "reclaim some breathing space for the contingency, temporality, presence, vulnerability, and relationality of the lived voice" (Thomaidis 2015, p. 18) and a call to dismantle the "presupposed and essentialist hierarchy between thinking, speaking and voicing" (*ibid*).

I assert the notion that there is a kind of individual knowledge contained in individual subjective perception and artistic experience, which in the context of this project, is made multiple through the plethora of perceptual and experiential views of participants. I have elaborated on this notion through the gathered recordings of participants in interviews and recordings of improvisational voice-scapes. I ask questions about individual experience, and the value of the practices as a kind of socially/artistic/creative engaging offering. What

can/does it offer or provide, individually and in broader social context? Knowledge and experience of self is made richer through the social interplay of this practice, with emphasis on play.

Play gives people the chance to temporarily experience the taboo, the excessive, and the risky...Ritual and play lead people into a “second reality”, separate from ordinary life (Schechner 2006, p.52).

I place the research in practices that facilitate a deepening of the body mind connection with a sense of 'dropping in' and becoming more fully centred and aware in embodied self and being, in contrast to the general experience of day to day functional activity.

I aim to deconstruct or soften pre-conceived limitations and beliefs in relationship to voice as an integral inter-personal, communicative, expressive, creative medium, and as an extension of being. The project provides experiential insight into what vocal practice can provide, beyond the common everyday experience and function of voice, and beyond commonplace notions of song. The practice has ambitions to collectively celebrate the innate vitality of spirit and diversity of each unique individual expressed through voice, while alluding to an innate experiential creativity and worth or value that can be viscerally felt or perceived and enacted as an integrative broad spectrum of love in action.

While I acknowledge 'love' is an overburdened term in general, I am attempting to approximate the certainty and ineffability of the felt liquid knowing of 'love' as self, experiencing conscious knowledge of self, as a state being in flowing clarity, relieved of conditional burden or constriction. To aid my translation, I referentially reach toward the writing of Sam Harris describing an early adult experience with the drug MDMA:

And then came the insight that irrevocably transformed my sense of how good human life could be. I was feeling *boundless* love for one of my best friends, and suddenly realized that if a stranger had walked through the door at that moment, he or she would have been included in this love. Love was at bottom impersonal- and deeper than any personal history could justify. Indeed, a transactional form of love - I love you because... now made no sense at all (Harris 2014, p. 5).

Harris's experience here is analogous with my own early experience with Nada yoga meditation in terms of the altered perceptual state. Where I differ with Harris is in his notion that these experiences offer transcendence from the illusions of self, while I am suggesting the experiences offer a deepening in to a more expansive experience of self, the possibility of relocating the locus and constituents of identity. A view of self as perceiver, receiver and creator immersed in a resonant field of visible and invisible realities in constant flux and flow. The experience becomes an affecting epiphany which offers broad insight into the human condition and conditioned perception. My experience, like that of Harris, forever altered my view of self and the 'reality' I inhabited. It offered a space to review the contrivances of acquired and habitual social and perceptual conditioning. Of course, my experience was not drug induced, and the experience Harris refers to inspired his own intensive research into meditation and neuroscience.

The Voice Lab practices are also contextually linked with pre-lingual vocal exchange between mother and child as an extension of love and love in action. This is referenced by Cavarero as the site which is ontologically and chronologically prior to the institutions of language and stands in opposition to the reductive logos imposed by the "Law of the Father".

Language imposes a "phonetic austerity" that stands in contrast to "the untamed sounds" that babies make. In other words, language asks the sacrifice of their free vocalization, which is still rooted in the biological (Cavarero 2005, p. 132).

The research provides ground to develop these ideas in a metaphorically poetic, and practically framed experiment, while also providing ground for me to engage my ideas as a kind of self-directed investigative apprenticeship. I have been learning through the experiential engagement with the participants, while they are learning from me. In this creative practice there is much direction and impulse that comes from a combination of my previous experience in the many facets of the practices, and the building and arrival of new hybrid practices and intuitive insights or impulses that arrive while engaged in the action of guiding participants. I have elaborated on this notion of practical knowledge that is built, or arrives through experiential and immersive practice. This is achieved partially by drawing from, and elaborating on, the individual experiences of the participants, and my own experiences in following chapters.

I am in harmony with Murakawa's summation on the value of the favourable shifts that can occur in the experiential engagement of practice incorporating notions of the body and being as energy in flow:

As the Cartesian view of the body is getting more and more dominant, not only in Western cultures but also in many regions of the world, many people are concerned with it as a source of various problems in our contemporary society. For this matter, I assume that exploring how we develop "the body as a flow of *qi*" may have significance in overcoming some of those issues brought on by "the body as biochemical machine" (Murakawa 2002, p. 7).

The explosion of yoga over the last 20 years in the western world and now the growing interest and application of mindfulness meditation, indicates a calling and answering to something that is missing, in a very general sense, in contemporary western culture. It also suggests poetic notions of the broader function of an applied artistic practice, partially as an antidote toward a hard

science/medical view of the body, implying an extension of the role of artist to a more integral social function, a role that has been played or touched upon in an artistic/poetic frame by Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramovic, Marcus Coates, and others, and is more common outside the western frame regarding the cultural function of art and art practice.

The Romanian historian and philosopher Mircea Eliade suggested that the medicine man or shaman is a sick man who has managed to cure himself. Maintaining a so called 'balanced' identity has become the constant feature of our ever-changing contemporary environment. Some contemporary socio-political events, and technological advances have given rise to traumatic emotional feelings of 'thrown-ness' and being in situations beyond one's control. By appropriating and traversing traditional boundaries between contemporary performance art, ancient rites, shamanic action and myths the contemporary performance artists, Yugoslavian Marina Abramović, American Matthew Barney and the South African Steven Cohen face and challenge converging idiosyncrasies... This hermeneutic search for hidden meaning and an interpretation of human existence beyond the superficial has become a resourceful construction for the selected performance artist's millennial mythologies (de Villiers 2014, p.117).

I add myself to this list of artists attempting to find "hidden meaning" and "an interpretation of human existence beyond the superficial" in this relational invitation toward practical applications of an evolving philosophy of resonance. I include the notions of art practice being able to provide or offer some embodied, or awareness centred insights toward personal and cultural wellbeing, providing respite from treadmill 'reality' by offering a space for perspective, as an elixir to common experiences of 'thrown-ness' as expressed by de Villiers in the previous quote.



There is a range of practicing artists that extend the lineage of Beuys and his allusions toward shamanism and the capacity for art to offer transformative experience, adding architectural threads to this exegetic web. Anne Marsh gives a considered account of the complexities at play in the work of Marina Abramovic in her essay “Mindful immateriality” (2015) specifically writing about her encounters with the work of Abramovic.

Her work has started to concentrate more on participatory modes where the audience creates their own experience under the guidance of the artist ... When the artist speaks about the future she embraces the language of Zen Buddhism and Mindfulness, she talks about unconditional love and compassion both for others and for the self. In this respect she is in step with a quiet force that is sweeping the world in the form of Loving Kindness ... As already noted, this is a lot like Zen Buddhism but Phelan reminds us that: “Abramović’s art is fundamentally theatrical”. It is the artist’s presence and her personal encounters with her viewers and participants that encourage such an understanding and/or transformation. For some people this reliance on personal charisma is closely aligned to the notion of the artist as shaman and by association the artist as trickster. Others worry about the artist taking on a quasi-spiritual role and question the authenticity of this amidst the machinery of the art museum and market (Marsh 2015, p.22-25).

An Australian performance artist who has also explored participatory events re-contextualized as immersive experience within an artistic or theatrical frame is Stuart Ringholt with his “Anger Workshops” and “Club Purple”. Of his anger workshops Ringholt says:

If a gallery visitor gets angry or questions a seemingly non-artistic event playing out, I am happy. Many visit a museum expecting to see paintings on the wall and when they come across an Anger Workshop, they have to accept otherness; this is what’s important, because to accept otherness in every moment is to accept compassion and love (Ringholt in Wertheimer 2012, p.5).

Ringholt's Club Purple offered participants an opportunity to dance nude in a nightclub. Of the Club Purple experience Ringholt says: "It's really an opportunity for people to just dance, to feel their whole body, to get the clothes off," he explains. "You can feel air on all your body, air on your ribs. It's electrifying" (Ringholt in Fehily 2014, p.2). Fehily gives an account of "Club Purple" and the evolution of Ringholt's practice from "Anger Workshops":

Club Purple is a fully functioning replica of a nightclub, built inside the museum, at the end of a poster-covered plywood corridor. Inside, there's a disco ball, coloured lights and a touchscreen panel for selecting songs. Anyone up for a dance has to abide by a specific set of rules. One rule says that no one affected by alcohol may enter - hence the lack of drinks at the bar. Another, more glaring rule is that all personal property must be removed. That personal property, the rule spells out, includes clothing (Fehily 2014, p.1) .... He says he won't be doing any more workshops, such as his anger workshop, for which he borrowed elements of self-help seminars to encourage participants to deal with negative feelings. The fact that, for once, Ringholt isn't leading his participatory work, or even participating, in it is telling. "It's quite fitting that I'm not in there [for Club Purple]. It's not a preachy work. Running the workshops could be labelled as quite preachy of me," he says, "because there's a pedagogical function in the work to teach people about anger" (Ringholt in Fehily 2014, p.2).

There are elements of Abramovic's and Ringholt's work that have connecting threads with Beuys and his notion of teaching as an integral aspect of his art and artistic function.

To be a teacher is my greatest work of art. The rest is the waste product, a demonstration. If you want to express yourself you must present something tangible. But after a while this has only the function of a historic document. Objects aren't very important any more. I want to get to the origin of matter, to the thought behind it (Beuys in Sharp 1969).

Beuys' pedagogical methods can be read as provocations that have intent toward creative political or social outcome. His methods can also be re-contextualized in a contemporary setting as participatory art, or as Marsh says of Abramovic's work, servicing the modern phenomena of the "experience economy" (Marsh 2015, p.24) by placing value on immersive experience rather than art objects.

I also find common ground with Australian based artist Domenico de Clario. Duncan (1997) speaks of de Clario's work as being heavily influenced by his personal experience of coming to Australia at the age of nine as a post war migrant from Italy. For de Clario this state of "insecurity and displacement" evoked in him a personal philosophy driven by a conscious pursuit of "enthusiasm for the continuous immersion into the unknown" (de Clario in Duncan 1997, p.3).

So did de Clario, in his recent all-night performance work, blindfolded and playing a piano, pursue a personal reverie, wrapped in a private dream of exploration and contemplation from which other people were excluded, following the dictates of the spirit within. For de Clario, the truth of the inner life is more compelling, more faithful to the Self than the facts of external existence (Duncan 1997, p.3).

This notion of truth found in the inner life links back to the Beuys (see above p.23) and his notion of independent thinking as a sculptural process not indoctrinated by an external authority. It is core to the intentions and philosophy of the Voice Lab practices that have arrived and been formed through my own personal experiences and revelations. I am emphasising each person's capacity to create

from their own position of individual authority and agency, perceptually and creatively. This notion also has some similarity with “Authentic Movement” practice pioneered by Mary Starks Whitehouse. On explaining intricate aspects of authentic movement Whitehouse says:

“To get to this authenticity a sacrifice is involved. At first it is a discovery of all the tricks, needs, and demands that separate you from what would be genuine in yourself. Then, after you have discovered what this trick is and what it prevents, it must be sacrificed, as must each subsequent one as it is discovered. The reality of impulse and movement comes from such a different place in oneself that when it is experienced, the person comes to know when it is there and when it isn’t, and then she can stop cheating” (Whitehouse in Frantz 1999, p.24).

Authentic movement is a practice which shares perceptual ground with Voice Lab practices, facilitating personal and artistic agency. Both are immersive social performative practices contained by the frame of the practice, rather than a public event set in a Gallery where people can come and go. All participants are equal in the execution of practice in terms of direction and action. I become one of the participants in the shared practice. The Voice Lab practice has similarity and difference in the notion that one can experience moving and being moved in authentic movement, and one can experience the phenomena of singing and a sense of a song flowing through you in the Voice Lab improvisational practice.

The core of the movement experience is the sensation of moving and being moved. There are many implications in putting it like this. Ideally, both are present in the same instant, and it may literally be an instant. It is a movement of total awareness, the coming together of what I am doing and what is happening to me. It can not be anticipated, explained, specifically worked for, nor repeated exactly (Whitehouse 1999, p.43).

One of the ways the Voice Lab practice may differ with Authentic Movement is on the grounds of being seen. Authentic movement emphasises the notion of being witnessed, of being seen. In the Voice Lab practice I privilege the felt experience over external observation. The aural experience takes precedence. I emphasise the creative possibilities or 'movements' on the subtle level of perceptual feeling tones that can be sensed or contacted with breath and communicated with voice. I ask participants to follow their own interest, to listen and allow impulses that can reveal new knowing in song and sound. I am placing every individual as director and authority rather than being led by the figurehead of charismatic showmen/shaman that could be attributed to Beuys, Abramovic, Ringholt. These touch stone references that contextually link the Voice Lab practice with a lineage of various artist and practices can be seen more as spiralling threads than direct lines, looping back on each other with similarities and differences, some more significant than others, all sharing common ground on notions of immersive cultural experience.

It goes back to Joseph Beuys's idea that 'everyone is an artist', you just need the vehicle and the space to support and encourage that (Holdworth cited in Machon, p. 209).

## The Performance

There are four complementary components which make up the overall performance. The audio 'score' of participants' voices, a projected oscilloscope image which responds in real time to the audio, a durational video projection displayed on a television which plays with allusion, metaphor, synaesthesia and liminality, and myself in choreographed movement which refers to many of the bodily practices which the participants' engaged with throughout the Voice Lab workshops. I will elaborate on each of these four components, their interrelationship and contextual intent in the following passages.

The Voice Lab project has sequentially evolved from a previous performance studies honours project titled "Triskaideka's Envelope" (Victoria University 2008). The honours project was presented as a one-hour performance consisting of an audio score of pre-recorded and arranged voices, two video projections, two live performers and included contextual notes. In this previous project, interviews on general life questions and significant life events collected from twelve participants, most of whom were fellow performance studies students, were collated and layered with each participant's own voice in improvised song. Simultaneous video projections, consisting of long uncut takes thematically based on hypnotic or fluid movements through time, were designed to be an aid to imaginative listening, and give the audience members subjective/reflective space while aurally immersed in the layered audio score of voices in song and speech constituted as the primary meaningful substance and core of the performance project. This work speculatively investigated the liminal subjective reading available in the perceptual spaces between the layering of vocal interview with vocal improvisation, and the gap or layering that exist between the observation of the videos, the sound score and the performers' presence, and the multiple imaginative subjective responses the audience will or can have while listening and reflecting on the speakers' voice and story.

While I am building on the architecture of the previous honours work, this project is deeply embedded in the voice practice itself, collecting material from participants' with a wide range of previous experience in any form of performance voice practice. The presentation contains orchestrated excerpts of recordings of the participants engaged in the improvisational Voice Lab practice collaged with audio from conversational interviews with the participants, through which I am seeking insight on the effects and affects of the practices. The audio used in the final performance has primarily been extracted from those conversational/interview and improvisational vocal sessions that I conducted at the end of the year-long workshop phase of the project. In addition, there are some examples of recordings from the Voice Lab group workshops interspersed in the final audio. The audio also contains very short excerpts from my own Dictaphone recordings as a window to my own reflections on the ongoing process and challenges of the project and a kind of personal diary of the process. In all there is over fifty hours of recorded material of participants' voices from which the final eighty-minute performance has been chosen and orchestrated.

The primary substantial core of the Voice Lab performance, as answer to the inquiry, is built on the audio score of collated recordings from participants in wordless vocal practice and conversational interview. I presented three preliminary showings of the performance at the Body Voice Centre, the first on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the second on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017, and the third on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2017, to small audiences of invited viewers as an integral part of the evolving process of the project. This process gave me an on-going sense of elements of the project that were working or needed further development. By necessity the development of the final performance came late in the projected timeline because it was built around the audio score, which involved bringing approximately three to five hours of recording with each participant, down to approximately three to five minutes of selected, edited and orchestrated audio time in the final performance.

The audio score sequentially plays out each of the participants' voices in orchestrated excerpts from interview/conversation spliced with edited excerpts of each participant's voice in improvisational voice or song, so that their singing voice provides a backing track to their speaking voice. Occasionally the singing voice comes to the forefront of the audio to provide the listener with a fuller experience of the improvisational vocal practice in action. I have given each of the voices approximately three to five minutes on the score with the intention of clearly delineating each participant's voice. I draw attention to the fact that the practice evokes or stimulates a diversity of responses and insights in relationship with each person's interest and perception, in calibration with the notion of everyone as artist. At the same time, I reveal some consistent threads regarding what the practice does and what it provides in answer to the overall inquiry. I elaborate on the participants' responses in the chapter beginning on page 82.

The choice of projected imagery has resonance with the previous honours work in that I aim to induce a kind of liminal perceptual state in the audience, which is analogous with the experiences of the participants in the Voice Lab practices. I have been influenced in the choices I have made in this work by the work of Susan Hillier. In particular a work and artist talk that I attended during the 2014 Adelaide Festival Artist week regarding her work titled 'Channels' which was a multi-channel video installation, with over 100 television sets. The television screens were programmed with various shades of blue, echoing the "screen of death" in computer terms and the "stand-by screen" in TV terms, and a multitude of voices belonging to people who have had near-death experiences. The audio of vocals had a corresponding oscilloscope images which followed the rhythm of each voice and also echoed the image of hospital monitors. In Hillier's own words:

Channels is an artwork designed to engage us in a consideration of some of the gaps and contradictions in our modern belief system and collective, cultural life. It is ... a destabilising aesthetic device opening to the un-representable (Hiller 2013).



Some of those voices in “Channels” speak of their near-death experience occurring in the interval between having been physically declared dead, with the ceasing of heart and brain activity, and then being revived. Hillier is fascinated that these stories exist and persist despite the dominant cultural thrust suggesting they are delusion. She is interested in the notion that these incidents contradict the common belief that the brain is a source of consciousness or reality. Hillier is toying with the idea that the brain is not the source of thought, but perhaps more like a television, an instrument that receives and transmits thought.

I am playing on Hillier’s ideas by using the image of a dated analogue television showing a blue screen within the television on display at the beginning of the performance. I then supersede the blue screen image with a shot of moving hands, which mimic the motion of my hands in a chi-breath exercise, in a pace that matches the recorded sound of breath heard at the beginning of the performance, also matched by me physically breathing the bellows of an accordion. This image of moving hands then transitions to an image of Joseph Beuys, from a piece titled “Soziale Plastik” (Mommartz dir. 1969). Fittingly Beuys is playing with the idea of communicating without words in this video, and I am playing with the idea of communicating or inviting Beuys through the medium or mediumship of the screen, looping back to Hillier’s blue screen as representing a means to communicate with the dead. The video transitions to images of me scribing a line on a wall, intimating and alluding to the connection between sound waves and viscerally felt emotional tones or inner sounds, also inviting an imaginative synaesthetic reading of sensed sound. This allusion revolves back to my own artistic lineage (see above p. 16) growing from a connection made between visual art practice and voice. I find sympathetic resonance in these ideas with Hillier’s notions on the body voice connection.

Body is felt from the inside ... body is empathy. Body is communicated through touch and smell as much as sight. Body in art would be traces, stains, smears, sounds, not images. Body is blurry ... Handwriting is body. Voice is body. (Hillier 2008, cited in More Milk Yvette blog at <https://moremilkyvette.blogspot.com.au>).

I aim to convey the complexity of representing the invisible felt and fluid knowledge inscribed in the experiential body. Hillier also addresses the gap in understanding the unseen aspects of body:

The word 'body' makes me very cross when used in connection with contemporary exhibitions, art of the body, the body in art, body art, etc., etc. In my opinion, body can be evoked but not represented. Pictures of bodies I don't think have much to do with 'body' (*ibid*).

I have been influenced by Hillier in my choice of an oscilloscope image that responds in real time to the audio of the Voice Lab score, that also provides or invites a synaesthetic reading of the voice when represented by a dancing two-dimensional line. The oscilloscope also clearly and simply shows the unique 'live' imprint of each individual voice. This tracing of disembodied voices is made bodily present by the projection onto my own body. Merleau-Ponty's discourse on perception promotes and contextualizes the perceptual intertwining offered by synaesthetic experience:

Synaesthetic perception is the rule and, if we do not notice it, this is because scientific knowledge displaces experience and we have unlearned seeing, hearing, and sensing in general in order to deduce what we ought to see, hear, or sense from our bodily organization and from the world as it is conceived by the physicist (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 238).

My solo movement in the performance is representative of the many embodied practices that the participants engaged with. Primarily it is a qi-breath-flowing dance. The intention is to provide another stable and fluid durational layer to the performance that adds to the hypnotic quality of the overall piece, promoting the possibility of multiple readings depending on where the audience places their attention. I am inviting an imaginative liminal reading of the performance derived from the spaces between the separate but complementary components.

An audio document of the “Voice Lab” performance that was held at the Body Voice Centre on Sept 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 is available at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Siy5ozR8aFQsBvh8aIZmX7bN5RVBqNIR/view?usp=sharing>

## Mapping of a 'virtual' Voice Lab workshop: developmental processes, origins & functions

The workshops were in a constant process of evolution and development, reflecting a process of refining, or clarifying an enacted philosophy of practice, bringing greater nuance, form, and detail as the project progressed. As acknowledged this project is a continuation of my own artistic evolution. Haseman's comment (2006, cited above on p. 6) that a creative arts research project can emerge from an already established 'enthusiasm of practice' implies the investigation of practice will continue when the project is complete. I marked the end of the workshops with participants as a culmination point for the mapping of the philosophy in practice with the participants, to select and give definitive explanatory shape to a flexible form which best exemplifies the practices at that marked time. I have added additional insights that occurred beyond the workshops with participants, up to the final draft of the exegesis

As the workshop phase drew toward conclusion, I was more economical in the choices of practices within the workshop, to enable a deepening of selected practices. I arbitrarily split the emphasis of the practices into two basic concepts of focus. The first half of each four-hour workshop had more contained or inward perceptual practices, prior to a tea-break. The second half involved more expressive improvisational practices, always with a flow between the two halves and often concluding with a group improvisational toning. Toning is generally understood as repetitive vocal sounds with elongated or sustained vowel sounds over an extended duration of time, which in these sessions effectively combined elements from the first and second halves. I encouraged playful possibilities and inclusion of rhythm and impulsive wordless utterance, as well as sustained vowels and associated overtone harmonics, all of which easily emerged because of the engagement in prior exercises that familiarize participants with these possibilities.

Following on from the group workshops I conducted individual Voice Labs sessions with each participant as part of the process of preparation for audio recorded solos of improvised voice, and audio recorded conversations about participants' experience of the practice overall. I conducted two two-hour Voice Lab workshops with each participant, and one final three-hour workshop with participants grouped in pairs in a shared practice. The final presentation contains selected and orchestrated excerpts of the audio recordings from the sixteen participants.

### A review of workshop practices; a virtual Voice Lab

The practices applied in the Voice Lab workshops are a synthesis of a broad range of body based or theatrical voice based trainings and philosophies. The diverse practices have become fluidly synthesized to the overall practice to formulate a new approach and new overall methodology of practice and practicing philosophy as a cohesive whole. There are several implied intentions integrated into the choices I have made regarding the methods and functions of practices employed in the Voice Lab practices. I guide participants toward an experience of dropping in more deeply or fully into their own embodied presence, employing exercises which are intended to facilitate ease in the free form vocal improvisations, and making a broad spectrum of vocally expressive language available. The practices have a range of functions which are directed toward personal alignment. By alignment I mean a favourable state of on-going ever evolving felt attunement and broad awareness of embodied presence in dynamic flux and flow. This revolves back to the key generative Beuys propositions at the core of the project in alignment with my own epiphanic insights (see above pp. 16 & 20). I employed methods designed to assist participants in arriving at, or attuning to, their own "spring point" of creativity. I directed participants toward an improvisational wordless vocal practice where they were attentive to and allowing of their own creative impulses. The result was a

simple practice of allowing flow while also being conscious and present with, and directing or allowing that flow. I employed a comprehensive range of techniques to facilitate the possibility of participants arriving at this allowing creative space, free of habitual constriction, and strengthened by easeful embodied awareness. I explicate the detail of the practices in the following passages.

I draw upon an aspect of Middendorf breathwork when ‘inviting’ participants to engage in each of the introduced practices. For example, I may say, “I invite you now to bring focused awareness to the motion of the breath as it passes through the nose and throat”. This notion of invitation is related to the Middendorf philosophy of allowing the breath to come and go on its own in unison with a trilogy of “breathing, focusing, perceiving (Middendorf 1990, p.18). This approach creates a space of generosity, allowing and listening rather than one of imposition. If for example I compare a yoga pranayama breath practice of counting a specific number on the in and out breath while holding between breaths, the yoga practice can be one of shaping or imposing on the body and breath to fit the practice. Ilse Middendorf speaks of three ways of breathing. The unconscious breath where “every emotional stirring and mental agitation ... influence from the outside world is expressed in the breathing pattern” (Middendorf 1990, p. 23). The voluntary or “doing” breath where the breath is employed deliberately to perform a function with focus from the outside in, such as may be employed in sport, or yoga, or formal singing (Middendorf 1990, p.25). The third is the perceptible breath in which the unconscious function of the breath is witnessed without disturbing its course, with ‘letting’ and ‘allowing’ being key illuminating intentions (Middendorf 1990, p. 27). Middendorf’s approach involves listening, softening and alignment with the subtle shifts of the body in unison with the breath, allowing a softening and broadening of conscious awareness. The insights that arrive in this practice can then be applied and integrated to yoga, chi gong, singing, or other practices, providing a deeper listening or more consciously intelligent perceptual awareness of opening and allowing rather than simply imposing the form of the practice on the body. The practice of inner awareness of the breath can inform

these other practices with much greater possibility of felt inner-sense and inner-self, with awareness of subtle shifts, emotional resonances, sensations of vitality, and emergent embodied intelligent insight.

Every Voice Lab workshop was slightly different in its form and delivery, always with a similar or related intended function or purpose. I will give examples of several different versions of the practices employed in the workshops. I deliberately apply the modal verb 'may' in the precursory introduction to the possible variations of exercises, indicating it is one of several possibilities employed. I reference the exercises as being employed in either Part 1 or Part 2, indicating being applied in either the first or second half of the four-hour workshops. I have placed them in an alphabetical order for ease of reference, but note that not all the exercises were employed in every workshop and the order of being applied was variable.

## Voice Lab part 1

Part 1 a. An invitation to soften and receive more fulfilling breath.

Many of the Voice Lab workshops began with participants lying on the floor, on yoga mats and blankets, in a circle formation, with their heads directed toward the centre of the circle, for ease of listening to my instruction, and to be able to hear each other. I 'invite' participants to place one hand on their belly area and one hand on their heart area. This helps bring attention and accentuated awareness to the involuntary oceanic tidal flux, the expansive rise and contracting fall of the breath. I invite participants to deepen the breath, to consciously soften their physical body, to begin to release any tension that may be present on the out breath, and to soften also to be more receptive to the next incoming breath. Breath awareness bridges the divide between unconscious actions of the body

with the conscious deliberations and attentions of thought, perception and deliberated action. It can also be considered a link between the ethereal and unformed dimensions of the creative wellspring, in unison with the material dimensions of the physical body. The notions of inspiration and aspiration have obvious associations with breath.

#### Part 1 b. Breath on the vocal folds.

I may ask participants to bring a tiny amount of friction to the passage of air passing through the throat, creating a resonance that can be felt and is just audible to them. This brings an obvious association with the sound and rhythm of the ocean as the breath passes the throat, and is the beginning of making audible sound that reflects the ineffability of embodied existence, of inhabiting a singing/sounding spirited breathing body, and can be felt in the resonant cavities of the body.

#### Part 1 c. Meditation on primordial tone.

The participants tune in and meditate for several minutes upon an inner sound, to hear what is referred to as primordial tone in nada yoga, listening for a high pitched unstruck inner tone, which is contained and sustained within stillness. I may then ask the participants to attempt to reproduce or mimic this sound vocally. This goes back to one of my earliest experiences of yoga practice and reveals one of the guiding principles in the motivation of this practice. It has come to my attention that not everyone is able to hear or notice this inner sound, so I have adapted this exercise by asking participants to generate a high soft sound and focus on the feeling sensations in the body of this created sound, rather than attempt to mimic something which for them does not exist. It seems to me that there is a strong association between the heightened perception of these (inner unstruck or otherwise generated) sounds, and the receptivity to a flowing visceral resonance, that assists deliberate quietude of habitual thought or easing of any simmering emotional unrest that may be present, and requires softly focused attention to be felt and heard. I am attempting to provide the conditions where the participants can



access their own connection to this inner flow, and enhance it by providing practices that aim to loosen restriction, loosening the grip of habitual energetic holding patterns or thoughts.

#### Part 1 d. Vocal slide to aid the release of tension.

I invite the participants to make a sliding sound from a high pitch to a low breathy sound while having a sense of connection with the resonance the sound creates in their body. Feeling the resonance in the head, nose, jaw at the beginning of a high hum, letting it slide in pitch as the awareness of resonance moves down to the throat, then letting the jaw and mouth relax, letting the mouth open and letting the sound fall out while bringing awareness of resonance and pitch to the chest, then the belly, then the pelvis/hips, then the legs.

Inviting to find a deep connection between self, body and sound, and using the sliding sound like a yawn that facilitates the release of tension, facilitating ease.

#### Part 1 e. Awakening the body breath connection.

From this lying down position I may then ask the participants to roll over and come to their hands and knees. We may then do some yoga style cat/camel back rolls. This motion begins from curling the tail bone under on an out breath, continuing the curl up the spine until reaching the end of an out breath with the head and neck curled under toward the tail bone. I will ask the participants to make a sss sound on the breath to emphasis the emptying of breath, which can be felt right down to the pelvic floor and perineum. Then curling back the other way on the in breath, also beginning the curl from the tail-bone, and extending the motion along the spine until reaching the neck and head. I want to 'wake up' the breath body connection, extending the tidal capacity of the breath while bringing some vigour to body/breath apparatus, bringing focused awareness to the way the breath connects not just with the lungs, chest, ribs, diaphragm, but also with the back, belly, pelvic floor, legs. After doing this motion for several breath cycles we come to a neutral/central position on

the hands and knees. I may then ask participants to pant softly like a dog, emphasizing an ease and responsiveness in the diaphragm in this canine/feline position where the belly becomes an under belly. There is ease in the motion of the breath in this position because there is not the burden of supporting verticality. I then may take this soft panting to a soft bark; again I emphasize an ease in the production of the sound because of a lightness and ease in the diaphragm and belly in this position. I then may bring more intensity or energy to this position by asking the participants to come to their legs more by lifting their knees off the floor and supporting their weight through to their legs and feet, as well as their hands and arms, while bringing the sound to more of a growl and engaging the lower back, belly, pelvic floor, while feeling the connection between the making of the sound and the energy that comes through the legs, still with lightness and responsive ease in the diaphragm. I will then take the sound to more sustained open sounds, with the same sense of support from the legs and pelvic floor to give a sense of support and strength that can be found with awareness of this connection through the legs to the floor and pelvic floor. I may also ask the participants to explore the potential that is available in opening the throat, tuning in to the throat and feeling a sense of opening as if about to yawn, but without stretching the mouth and jaw. Exploring that sense of an open channel down to the belly. Exploring different positions or postures with support from the legs while again making strong sounds. We then may come to a standing position and try to replicate the same sounds and get a sense of the same support that is available from legs and underbelly, in a standing position, making strong sounds while also finding ease or favourable tension.

Part 1 f. Partner work: Sensing resonance in the body with voice and contact.

An alternative beginning has been an exercise of working in duets, sounding with a partner. While one person is sounding the other has their hands placed on the vocaliser's body. This can be done with the vocaliser lying down, seated, or standing. The vocaliser will sound while the other person places their hands on the vocaliser's body. I encourage the vocaliser to either make a sound which creates a felt

resonance in the area contacted, or make a sound inspired by the contact. This area brings heightened sensitivity to the body/breath/voice/resonance awareness and interplay.

Part 1 g. Chi wash. Tuning to subtle awareness and further release of tension.

We then may come to a neutral standing position and begin a chi wash. Gesturing with the hands a movement out and up above the head on an in breath, and then down over/through the body while folding forward toward the feet and floor, on an out breath. While doing this movement, also visualizing an internal, scan through the body, washing through the body with the gesture and imagination, while noticing and facilitating the release of any areas of resistance or tension. Then gesturing with the hands a movement outwards, collecting the next in breath, as we scan up again through the body and up over the head, bringing the hands down to the side of the body on the next out breath. I will ask participants to repeat the cycle several times in their own rhythm, or pace of breath cycle.

Part 1 f. Tuning to subtle awareness of body/breath/energy connection.

Coming back to a neutral position, we may do a short chi meditation of holding the hands in front of the body, as if holding an invisible balloon, and imagine the balloon is gently expanding each time we breath in, and gently contracting each time we breath out. This exercise can give a tangible felt sense that can be felt beyond the boundary of skin. I want to give participants the opportunity to feel this slightly altered state of perception. It brings the opportunity to soften the familiar frame by which we identify body and self, by having a tangibly experience of self as vital energy. When we bring breath and voice to this awareness we can sense voice as a meeting place of creative energy and felt body beyond definitive flesh, emanating an individual resounding signature which can be experienced in a group as interconnected weave or meshing of being, and sound.

Part 1 h. Tuning to dan-tien power centre.

I invite participants to lift this imaginary felt balloon up and let it wash over the body. I ask them to bring their hands near the belly area, holding them slightly away from the body, and imagining the balloon inside the belly and slightly extending beyond the body. I will then invite them to again feel the slight expansion on the in breath, slight contraction on the outbreath, in this belly area known as the "sea of chi". I then may invite participants to generate an open sound on an "or" sound, as in the word "more", while feeling the subtle resonance that can be felt in the hands and body, linking the notion of chi or vital energy with the vibrational resonance of the voice.

Part 1 i. Tuning to feeling tones of the emotions/body/voice connection, and organic stretching.

Inviting participants again to place one hand on their belly area and one hand on their heart, to enable a tuning in to their own breath, and a sense of connection with their own state of being, or emotional feeling tones. I will invite them to close their eyes and begin a gentle transferring of weight from one foot to the other. I will invite them to sense a deepening of the breath, letting the breath drop in to the body, while doing this gentle comforting sway of the body. I then may ask them to generate a sliding hum, from high sound to low, while swaying. The swaying brings another oceanic rhythm to the body. I then may ask them to hum to themselves, as if singing a comforting lullaby. I will give them some time to explore this, perhaps inviting them to walk around, move around the room and around the other singers. We will then come back to the circle, continuing the sway. Beginning again with a sliding sound from high pitch to low, but now with a little more intensity and deliberation, taking the sound into more open sounds while extending the sway to stretching in to different parts of the body, inviting an 'organic' exploration of the voice, body connection, using the sound and movement to fortify this connection while continuing to release residual or habitual tension and resistance. Making a bodily connection between the sliding releasing sound, and the stretch, inviting yawning to facilitate further release of tension and to aid the body/voice/vitality connection.

Part 1 j. Releasing tension through laughter and systematic full body awareness with voice and vowel shaping.

This exercise is built on the systematic notion that certain vowel shapes can resonate most effectively with certain parts of the body. I am drawing a link between the yogic notions of the body having an energetic field beyond and within the physical, which has seven primary chakras or spinning vortices at its core, that can be a bridge between the ethereal and physical, and certain vowel shapes providing particular overtone possibilities that evoke or resonate most effectively with particular energy 'centres' in the body.

Each chakra is a switch which turns on or opens up specific levels of the mind... That is, the chakras symbolize different levels of awareness in man from the more instinctive realms associated with mooladhara chakra to the more intuitive realms associated with ajna chakra... The chakras are vortices or whirlpools of pranic energy at specific areas in the body which control the circulation of prana permeating the entire human structure. They are beyond the realms of normal perception (Saraswati 1981, p.545).

The act of laughing helps to release held patterns or tensions, and within this exercise can aid ease or flow while bring a connection between the voice and points of focus in the body. I invite the group to begin with an Uu sound, as in the word 'Rule', and bouncing that sound with a deeply felt laugh on the pelvic floor or perineum. We then collectively laugh on the sound for a short time, and then do a deep (in pitch and felt location) sustained note on that vowel shape, moving up to the belly area on a Or sound, as in the word 'More', and do a deep belly laugh on that shape on a slightly higher pitch, followed by a sustained sounding on the same shape. This pattern continues to the solar plexus area with a laugh on an O sound as in the word 'Got', which can be felt bouncing on the diaphragm, followed by a sustained note on a raised pitch. Following this we do a hearty laugh on an Ar sound, as in the word 'Heart,' followed by a sustained note on the same shape. Then comes a throaty laugh on the sound 'Air', followed by a sustained sound on the same shape, raising the pitch as we come up to each different area of focus. We then move to the third eye area between the eye brows on an Ee

sound, as in the word 'See', with a nasally laugh, followed by a sustained sound. Finally bringing attention to the top of the head, or crown, on a high pitch 'hysterical' laugh on an I sound as in the word 'It', followed by a sustained note resonating the crown. Between each of the different shapes I invite the participants to draw in a deep breath and let out a sliding releasing sound from high pitch to low, as in the earlier exercises, continuing to release tension and continuing to facilitate an evolving effective connection between body, breath, voice, vitality and ease.

#### Part 1 k. Sculpting overtones with vowel shapes.

This focused laughing/sounding on specific vowel shapes may then evolve into an exploration of harmonic overtones or partials. Each vowel sound evokes or creates specific overtones in relationship to the fundamental note being sung or sounded. Here I draw on a mapping of the vowels that Karlheinz Stockhausen created for his composition "Stimmung" (Worner 1973, p. 65), where he used notation from the International Phonetic Alphabet to form a circle of vowels. These vowels that can be sounded with a fluid transition between, while evoking or emphasizing the particular overtones associated with each vowel shape. This also draws upon overtone singing techniques from eastern cultures such as Tuva, Mongolia, Tibet, which apply harmonic overtone singing in their various traditional styles of song or chanting.

While not strictly staying with the particular vowels as mapped by Stockhausen, I work the vowels in a circular fashion, beginning on the same shape as used in the laughing exercise of "Uu" as in "Rule", which has a low harmonic or partial, up to "I" as in "Sit", which has a high harmonic, applying the same vowels on the first half of the circle as used in the previous laughing/chakra exercise. These vowels can be sung with an emphasis on the back of the throat, with a sense of a semi-circle moving upward. The emphasis can then be brought

forward with a specific shaping of the tongue, throat, lips, to bring create another semi-circle back down to the "Uu", while creating vowels shapes unfamiliar to the western ear, and emphasizing the descending harmonic from high back down to low.

This circle of vowels can be explored as a meditative group sound, with one breath up and one breath down for each semi-circle, in a repeated pattern, while sustaining a single note which is coloured or overlaid with the ascending and descending harmonics associated with the fluid transition of vowels being sung. This group sound can then become a supporting drone for single singers to take turns freely improvising over and around.

### Tea-Break

The tea-break serves the purpose of giving the participants some easy relaxed social time with others in the group, and some discussion time. I think it is important for the participants to gain more comfort and ease within their contained group, as they get to know each other outside of the formality of the set practices. The practices at times can be a little intense or challenging, so to stop and take a breath, do whatever pleases them, is valuable.

## Voice Lab part 2

### Part 2 a. Small dance with deepening breath.

After the break, I may invite the participants to repeat the beginning of an earlier exercise, again placing one hand on their belly area, one hand on their heart area, bringing their attention back to the tide of the breath in a standing position. I will invite them to gently transfer their weight from one foot to the other, while inviting a deepening of the breath. This becomes a kind of small gentle dance of swaying from side to side. This notion of a small dance has links to Steve Paxton's improvisational dance practice, and is also associated with the subtle embodied cognitions or observations favoured in Middendorf Breathwork practice and free form Chi-gong.

Small dance — a simple standing meditation, a form created by the founder of contact improvisation, Steve Paxton. It is the micro movement of the body's balancing, adjusting, sensing and responding to gravity. Allow the body to become more easily aligned with less unnecessary muscle use (Chen 2016).

### Part 2 b. Aspirational song.

I invite participants to think of an aspiration or a desire, or something that brings satisfaction when they think of it, and to hold it close like a baby to protect and nurture it. I will then invite them to bring voice or song to this emotional connection, beginning with a gentle humming like a lullaby and letting it build if there is the impulse. I will invite them to break out of the circle for a time and walk around the room singing this intimate song out to the space, letting the song grow. I will then invite them to come back in to the circle and



surrender to the flow of the group sound, staying with the sway, finding the pleasure, ease and impulses within this group supported sound, allowing the group song to come to a 'natural' end.

Further to this notion of emotional connection with the sound, a sense that there is a conveying of intimate information in the spectrum of vocal sound that has greater subtle variance and is much broader than is possible to convey with words: the word itself does not define the meaning. It goes to the notion of being enabled to let flow, to broadcast and express, acknowledge, feel, celebrate the many colours of being not generally given the space and time to be acknowledged in the narrow spectrum of general day to day functional 'reality'. It is also an opportunity for everyone within the group to feel a fullness of experience and expression in their unique voice. This situation of a group giving voice to intimate aspirations, or desires, or thoughts that feel good, would otherwise be very clunky if everyone tried to simultaneously speak their feelings or thoughts in words. In this situation aspirations or desires can be celebrated and nurtured, whereas to speak them is to open them to scrutiny, which, when they are still gestating, could be detrimental and could feel overly vulnerable and self-defeating.

#### Part 2 c. Organic rhythm.

The sway from the previous exercise can then be explored further by encouraging an emphasis on the sway, extending the sway from foot to foot until we are lifting one foot at a time off the floor. This can then become a walk that has a swaying, flowing rhythm. The participants may be invited to move out of the circle again to walk around the space with this walk. The participants would then be invited to find a collective group rhythm, to come to a place where we are sharing the same pace, eventually coming back in to a circle. The participants would then be invited to add vocal sounds to the rhythm, trusting their own impulses to bring other sounds to the

collective rhythm. This can become a group song that has its own moments of building up and diminishing, again allowing the song to find its own 'natural' end.

#### Part 2 d. Extended voice work.

In more recent workshops I have included some extended voice work that has its origins in the practices I have experienced in training with Linda Wise, which in turn has its origins in the work of Roy Hart and his predecessor Alfred Wolfsohn. This begins with the participants as a group sounding a note I have played on piano (Melbourne) or keyboard (Adelaide). Going up and down the scales, attempting to find ease and pleasure on each note, while also applying what has been learnt in earlier chi exercises of gaining support for the sound from the ground up, engaging legs, pelvic floor, belly, back in the production of the note, projecting the note out in to the space. I may ask participants to work in pairs facing each other in this group exercise. For people that are unfamiliar with singing or matching particular pitches it can be easier to copy or mimic another voice rather than the piano or keyboard. This can also help reduce anxiety in people that may have had previous negative culturally acquired experiences to do with singing with a piano. I will slowly go down and then up the keys, singing one note at a time, until all the participants have reached their limit on the day. We then may do a sliding sound over an interval of three to five notes, asking the participants to fill in all the gaps in the slide rather than jumping from note to note. I then may work with the pairs individually, so that I can hear clearly each participant's voice, and can make suggestions that are unique to each person, to bring out more possibilities of support, or strength, or colour, or ease and fullness, depending on what I sense is required or would be of benefit for each person. This can be done in a very playful and enjoyable way to assist the release of held tension or resistance in the body/voice connection, and bring greater colour, nuance and expressive potential to each person's voice.

#### Part 2 e. Quality of ease.

A group exercise that I included in most sessions is one built on Chekhov's 'quality of ease'. I begin by inviting the participants to move the fingers of one hand with a 'quality of ease' and slowly, step by step, taking this quality of ease in movement through the entire body, adding momentary pauses of stillness to notice the affect/effect of this movement. This quality of movement can then be taken in to various vocal exercises. One of the tasks that was repeated regularly early in the year of workshops within the quality of ease exercise was the speaking/toning and singing of numbers from 1 to 10 in any random order. While numbers are of course words, and the focus in this project is wordless, singing numbers provides neutral words that can be easily imbued with a broad range of emotional flavours. Part of the intent of the practice is to suggest that there is an emotional spectrum or language in the application of vocal tones and textures that is much broader than words, but this could be applied to words. I suggest the possibility that more meaning, or a greater range of meaning can be imbued through the tone than is implied in the word.

#### Part 2 f. Gibberish Play.

Another exercise along the same lines, which I have included on occasions, is an exploration of gibberish storytelling or song. This may begin with playing with sculpting sounds with the mouth. I invite participants to explore all the different possible sounds available. This includes exploring all the possible vowel shapes, or open mouth sounds, exploring all the variations possible with moving the tongue, lips and throat, exploring all the sounds available when the open sound is interrupted with the momentary closing of the lips, or various interruptions with the tongue and throat. These variations may be done in a playful explorative way as a collective group. This can then be extended in to a kind of gibberish story telling or singing while using all the available shapes and textures available to evoke an emotive song or story; again, exploring the possibility of meaning being playfully conveyed beyond the spectrum of words.

#### Part 2 g. Creating and transforming a song.

An exercise I have added on occasions is the teaching of a simple musical phrase that can be passed around a circle from one person to the next. This begins with one person teaching a simple musical phrase to the next person in the circle, repeating it together until there is a certainty they have it. This next person repeats the phrase, letting it change shape, letting it morph and making it their own until they are happy with it, then they pass it on to the next in the circle. This is repeated until it completes the circle. When it gets back to the last person in the circle they do the same process, but teach their song to the whole group.

#### Part 2 h. Timed solo or group improvisations.

This is the practice which demonstrates most effectively the ambitions of the project, and is the practice that the other practices prepare the participants for. The previous subtle perceptual work broadens the available perceptual palette, the chi work strengthens the body voice connection and gives an embodied understanding of support available from the belly from the ground up, while the more playful or energetically engaging and creative work broadens the available expressive range and palette. The practice starts from a still and internally focused and attentive place. I invite the participants to bring breath on to the vocal folds as a simple way to begin to make sound without getting caught up in thinking too much about the sound they make. It is then a process of allowing or following whatever impulse arrives, with a sense of following your own interest, finding satisfaction or enjoyment and allowing yourself to revel in it, while being witnessed or observed by the group. I am inviting the notion of being the director of feelings and felt meanings invoked by voice, exploring the notion of song as an extension of feeling tones with infinite available colours, textures. When working in pairs or groups I may suggest the possibility of staying focused on their own sound or allowing themselves to be influenced by the sounds around them. This invites the recognition of the creative sparks that can occur when sounding with others, and the dynamic possibilities of deliberately interacting with surrounding sounds or deliberately staying tuned to your own sounds, and shifting between.

## Part 2 i. Group Toning.

This exercise has often been applied at the end of the workshops as a kind of culminating group meditation, a way of bringing the whole group together, and to potentially apply all the different dimensions of the practice, from the subtle to the raw expressive, in a supported group sound. This may begin with a soft group hum and build to more flowing open sounds. The participants are simply following their own impulses, and allowing whatever shape or intensity they are inspired to produce. These songs find their own perfect shape, cadence and end without any specific direction.

## Participants' Experiences and Insights: To find a voice

A full account of the participants answers to a questionnaire that was provided after the workshop phase of the project had been completed can be found in the Appendix (p. 10). This account also includes a very short biography as introduction to each of the participants. The participants have been given pseudonym initials to provide anonymity. I think it is important that the reader has an opportunity to view the full unabridged account of the participants answers as an extension of the project's intention toward promoting individual authorship and authority of experiential knowledge. I provide some contextualization and synthesis between my thinking and the participants' answers in this chapter. Four of the sixteen participants chose not to fill out the questionnaire. Three of those four had very little previous experience in voice practice. It was made clear to the participants at the beginning of the Voice Lab workshop phase of the project that they could withdraw at any stage. While I don't have their written responses, they are included in the audio score. There is one voice missing from the verbal articulations on the audio score because of technical problems with recording, but that voice is included in the final minutes of the audio, in song.

The participants' words and voices collectively exemplify the knowledge, meaning and answers accumulated through the application of the Voice Lab inquiry. When participant O.A. says "There is something very significant about it being vocalizing" and "from silence to find a voice" in the performance audio score, she is speaking very personally, but also very broadly about cultural challenges that she met or acknowledged in the immersive processes of the Voice Lab practices and project. Reflecting on the potential to 're-write' the narrative of her own life story she says:

The beautiful thing about that there is no spoken English word narrative is that, that story can be written at a really deep, visceral, spiritual for me ... at its most profound, it's also got a nice ordinariness about it that is very, very refreshing and I like that, but for my own reflections on what I've gained, there's that sort of deep narrative of... again the story continues type thing. It's like an opening I suppose for living well. It's good for health. Health is not just not having lung cancer; our health is really... complex (Participant O.A.).

While it is beyond the scope of this project to investigate the effects of European colonization on Indigenous Australians, O.A.'s responses provide valuable insight into the potential benefits that can come from a practice that enables a viscerally felt recognition of individual worth regardless of cultural or individual background, and the value of embodied knowledge not filtered by the bounds and binds of logos. The project provided a space for O.A. to re-write and fortify her own story in the felt meanings of wordless song. It specifically reveals a kind of knowledge that arrives through the practice and that resonates beyond familiar or culturally acquired definitions of self. The recordings of O.A.'s voice reveal her heritage in its timbre, in her unique sound and song, wordlessly reflecting the inscriptions of her body, soul and D.N.A. in vocal reclamation.

While I could not have predicted the outcomes of the project, the participants' broad collections of answers and experiences mesh perfectly with my own insights, experiences and hunches in alignment with what my prior practice has provided for me, and adds greater applicable dimension and nuance to the potential of the practices. Although my life story is vastly different from O.A.'s, I find useful analogy in my personal epiphanic experiences from which the practice has evolved. My insightful experiences provided an altered or alternative perspective to the socially conditioned everyday view of self in the world. The practice shifts the locus of identity away from the socially constructed story of one's life toward the more centred ground of one's own ineffably felt embodied cognitions, as is

reflected in O.A.'s quotation above. This is also analogous with many comments by participants in the performance sound score which revolve around authentic experience and vulnerability.

What it is teaching me ... as well is about my vulnerability, like where am I vulnerable ... but also those vulnerable places to be rich places to explore (Participant H.C.).

It provides me a space, probably more than any other area of my life just to be completely authentic ... I think there's sides, there's bits of me that are ugly, there's bits of me that are angry, stuff that society or other people can't handle or I don't think that they can handle, all that stuff, that territory which is quite vulnerable, I feel like this is a space where I can express that, and especially moving in the realms of non-verbal, I can express that more fully (Participant M.B.).

One of my intentions in the work was to provide a safe space and process that assists in releasing habitual tensions, which can be acquired unconsciously while immersed in everyday functional activity. These practices provide a space for a different perspective on what is currently running in terms of emotional states or conditioned ways of thinking or being in the world that have been socially acquired. The state of love that I talk of on page 49 reveals that my capacity to experience this love is reduced or diminished by social conditioning, so in effect you could say the everyday socially conditioned state is the altered state, while the experience of love is a more authentic or 'true' expression of being. The practice provides the opportunity to get perspective on tensions or habits that may otherwise be unnoticed, even though they could be detrimental to general well-being. Participant P.F.'s observations in the performance audio reflect these experiential insights:



I constantly feel like ... that feeling of relaxed and ease that you have ... when you came back from a holiday when you've been somewhere, that's what I've felt every single time ... by the end of it, just feels like you've been in a different space, you know. You're physically you're relaxed like you've released all this tension, like you know, you tend to do your daily things, every day you go to work, and you know it's all about holding tension, that you are rushing to get somewhere or to complete something or to hold a face or a mask or façade for whatever you're doing. At the end of this it just felt like, you know, you've just released all this tension, there's no more anxiety, you've just let go of things (Participant P.F.).

Some of the common threads in the participants' responses are to do with vitality or energy that arrives or is enabled through the practice. Participant D.V. speaks of this:

Each time in there (referring to her journal) I speak about going from being fatigued to feeling energised ... it seems like such a simple practice to take me from feeling tired into feeling really sort of content in self (Participant D.V.).

This tells me that even though I was combining a complexity of practices sourced from diverse origins and applications, it is experienced as a simple fluid cohesive form which has an overall transformative effect that matches my intent. Many of the participants also speak of the value of shared practice and the witnessing of others in creative play in a space of non-judgement. In the audio, Participant K.J. says:

... you get to experience other people taking risks and trusting you to be vulnerable in front of you and that gives you the courage to ... to take the risks to be vulnerable yourself in front of those people, and yeah, it's very relationship building ... (Participants K.J.)

Participant T.F. wrote of the value of the social aspect of the work in answer to the questionnaire:

The practice provided a beneficial social dynamic for me through the experience of witnessing and being witnessed. Allowing myself to be witnessed when I am exploring new things and not knowing what I'm doing and what will come out in voice and movement. Trusting that whatever happens I won't be judged in this environment so I'm free to explore my self. In everyday life we are never really present enough to witness the other or be witnessed by them (Participant T.F.).

Participant D.M. speaks of the many layered elements she found of value in the practice:

...it's much more than ... finding my authentic voice in some ways ... sometimes it can be a real vehicle to process difficult emotional states or thoughts or feelings I'm currently living, and other times its play, and other times... it's a mixture of that, or other times... it's working in the group, it's more that I'm in the group, and sometimes it's more that I have a group to watch me, sometimes it's me watching them, so it's ... it's not as straight forward or simple as one thing (Participant D.M.).

This speaks of the value of the multiple levels on which the practice operates, and the value of shared experience, contained in a space of non-judgement. Participant U.C. also noticed my growing confidence in the work as the year of workshops progressed, and my ability to improvise was extended to the facilitation process, evidence that the expert/intuitive process and method was deepening in my embodied knowledge, with an advancing capacity to trust it as the year progressed:

The workshop environment was incredibly supportive. The work was structured in such a way that it led from one activity to the next on the most part quite organically. It was very interesting to observe and experience when the preconceived plan was put aside and a subtle shift in

activity occurred because of the group response to a particular activity. It felt at this time that John was more confident in taking the workshop and allowing himself to react and respond to how the work was being received and played with (Participant U.C.).

Three of the participants expressed some frustration at the lack of talking during the Voice Lab workshops within their questionnaire answers. I address my reasons for limiting dialogue during the workshops in methods on page 39. Overwhelmingly most of the participants were able to surrender to the mode and methods of the practice. This desire to talk was the strongest criticism of the practice that I heard or read from the participants, which is understandable considering I am in pursuit of knowledge found in wordless immersive practice. Participant U.C. articulates the preference for more discussion in the following questionnaire answer:

Personally I would have appreciated more discussion and feedback during the months of the project. What was seen and heard by others, how it felt and developed over time, what affected the work, what was being explored not only by John but by participants as well. What was the relationship to the group in Adelaide? How did their exploration affect the work done in Melbourne and vice versa? (Participant U.C.).

With the benefit of hindsight, if I were to facilitate similar shared practice in future, I would include more specified time at the end of workshops to allow space and time for the sharing of conceptual cognitions. Participant D.V. expressed her shift in the acceptance of a more embodied cognition that the practice promotes in her comments in the performance score.

I wanted talking initially, but I felt like the lack of talking and just doing the thing ... there's something about it being task based that I really like ... to keep out of my head, it took me a while to get out of my head, I suppose there is some kind of authentic space where ... it feels like you've been leading us to, to get connected to the breath (Participant D.V.).

When asked in the questionnaire if the practice provided any new insights or experiences that added to their creative process or practice, or their creative palette or range, the participants gave answers that reflect their own interest, perspective and experience. The following is a series of excerpts of the participants broad ranging responses.

The practice developed a vocal range that extends conceptually within and out of my body and finds harmonies with environments, instruments and situations. I have always been more comfortable improvising as a singer and audio artist however when I think about it, the workshop experience has been like a rite of passage. I've developed a lower range that has multiple resonances within it that I can swirl around my mouth, from tail to belly to tip of my nose. I have become more aware of light and shade in my work, and have used this in recordings to a very satisfactory result. I have recently learned some Aboriginal cultural knowledge that speaks about an internal mapping used as part of memorisation and representation of deeper knowledges, think songlines (Participant O.A.).

YES, it added some calmness. Directed but with enough freedom to allow for experimenting. A gradual development of new material to find an edge without being stressful. In movement, voice, and group interactions (Participant N.B.).

This approach to voicing, to me, is very much about extending the vocal palette, and in doing so I feel a shift occurs on other levels of self; emotional, energetic, physical. When in the moment of fully expressing a sensation, or pressing into unfamiliar territory it is with a sense of excitement and, afterwards an increased sense of myself. "Ah, this is where I begin and end. This is who I really am". This level of authenticity - both trueness to myself and authorship of my life is very valuable (Participant M.B.).

In the post group solo sessions I also found great expansion in my range. While working with the piano I found my lower and upper range were extended, which was great. The long solo piece I subsequently recorded felt very solid. I remember a storm raging outside and I was inspired by the power of nature to make powerful sounds. I felt exhilarated during and after the song and it helped me realise how much confidence this voice work has helped me develop (Participant L.B.).

Yes, in particular a lot of insights on my current state and how that would impact me in my being and in my ability of expressing and creating. Is almost like the voice gave me a feedback, a limit/boundary to play with and to get another level of perception. The practice reinforced a pathway I had already embarked and gave it depth and strength and showed me other ways I can extend it (Participant H.C.).

The practice provided the opportunity to engage in an evolving series of workshops that allowed for both an experiential insight and also the privilege to witness and observe the work of others. This in itself was also a learning experience as it allowed for an insight into other possibilities and ways of responding to the various provocations ... The very last workshop working with the drone sound and improvising to that is something that I have not explored before and will definitely be working more with as it appeared to open a response and felt freeing and non-judgemental. There was also a very interesting juxtaposition in that there was a sense of returning to something, like a memory while simultaneously moving in a new direction (Participant U.C.).

The practice gave me so many things, hard to list them all here! But one thing I remember sensing strongly was the way in which the body seemed to adjust, open out, move when someone placed their hands on my body as I was toning. Like an energy animating all by itself. Interesting to observe as I was not 'thinking' about moving, it was just happening (Participant R.H.).

In particular, the internal lullaby practice has become a method of birthing new musical compositions for me. The concept of birthing sound from silence, listening to and giving space to the ever-present internal melody has given rise to some beautiful and authentic musical pieces. This is particularly valuable because it is not always easy to access a source of musical inspiration, especially from an authentic un-contrived place (Participant K.J.).

Having no experience with singing or music I wanted to explore what the sessions could give and if they could improve my understanding of vocal training (Participant B.V.).

## Suppositions and Outcomes

I began this exegesis with three locating citations from Joseph Beuys. I have imbricated Beuys' specific reference (see above p. 11) to the therapeutic nature of shamanism and the notion of transformation because in my view it provides the most corroborative pathway for exegetic contextualisation of my work regarding artistic lineage and the potential function of the practices. On Beuys and shamanism Victoria Walters writes:

Beuys' statement 'Everyone an Artist', which implies the shaping power of everyone, is not merely a general reference to people's creativity, but relates to people's power to perceive and transform substance and the need to further develop this capacity ... (Walters 2012 p. 305).

... in the context of seeking to ascertain what shamanism meant for Beuys in the development of his own project, it must again be reiterated that the artist was pointing to "forces" in shamanism, rather than explicitly seeking to revive this ancient methodology (Walters 2012, p. 327).

Beuys has spoken of substance to include unseen forces when saying, "Sometimes a situation is a substance" (Beuys cited in Walters 2012 p. 305). The audio score at the heart of the performance is primarily the participants' voices speaking and sounding for and with the practice. I want to illuminate the authority and autonomy of each individual voice as part of the overall intersubjective and affecting dance of the resounding score. My desire was to create conditions and practice that can illuminate or invigorate participants' creative authority and agency within an artist practice, as an extension of Beuys' notion of 'everyone an artist'.

As I have already stated on page 42, I do not call myself a shaman and am conscious of the sensitivity around misappropriation of the title, but I do want to address the therapeutic function of the Voice Lab practice. The practices do, by intent and action, provide a space to generate transformative well-being as is indicated by the participants' collective comments. In a personal interview with Linda Wise (transcript of interview available on request) she talks of her interest and acknowledgement of the capacity of voice practice to be transformative and about the mix of therapy and artistic practice in her work with students being approximately 59% to 41% with the higher percentage for her being on the artistic side. If I were to give the Voice Lab practice a percentage it would probably be more of an even split. However, this split is arbitrary and completely dependent on each person's subjective engagement and assessment of their own experience in the practice at any given time. It could indeed be perceived as 100% either way. As I acknowledged in the conversation with Linda this therapeutic aspect emerges from the practice completely without analysis. I am not a therapist and I am not attempting to 'fix' any particular malady. I am promoting perceptual insight via the immersive engagement in a practice which in my view can extend or expand everyone's artistic and perceptual palette, which happens to be good for health.

In answering the quest of the inquiry, the participants provide multiple perspectives on the value of insightful experiences accessed through the practices. In my view the greatest value of the work is in the recognition or acquisition of creative agency, of learning pathways to individual value and authority, which itself promotes wellness, as indicated in participant O.A.'s comment:

The practice complements my life's commitment to living well, with relative peace, safety away from violence. For me to know my sound is taking agency that is not reliant on others approval or engagement. We all need human connection; this is not about that. It's about something more (Participant O.A.)



The research project does not end with the investigation of practice with participants. I also seek creative, engaging and inventive ways to convey knowledge through performative means. I allude to transformative states of perception within the practice with participants and with the audience to the final piece. I suggest a kind of synaesthetic philosophy of practice via the notion we are each a synergetic synthesis of perceptual and experiential, felt and expressed tones of sensations, emotions, evocations, thoughts, imaginings, in concert with our surrounding environment. These multiple perceptual and expressed 'resonances' are experienced as unique and individuated in each of us, but can be collectively shared and celebrated.

Resonance is theoretically and materially consequential. Theoretically, if everything vibrates, then everything—literally every object (animate and inanimate), ecology (“natural” or “constructed”), feeling, idea, ideal, process, experience, event—has the potential to affect and be affected by another aspect of everything ... This is an understanding that is now as common in physics as it is in Buddhism (Gershon 2014, p. 3).

Robin Nelson provides an optimistic and positive perspective on the inclusion of arts based practice as research in the academy when he writes:

The very positive aspect of PaR is that it allows a broader range of people to engage in scholarly activity once the possibility of practical knowing is recognised. It affords arts practitioners the opportunity to undertake study at the highest level and to achieve the award of PhD without abandoning their practice for an entirely logocentric approach. In my view PaR has accordingly enriched ‘the academy’ in the process of embracing an additional range of highly intelligent and creative people whose articulation of their understanding happens to be made manifest better in action rather than words (Nelson 2013, p. 114)

It is ironic then that performance studies was disestablished from Victoria University at the end of the first year of this project. The performance studies staff were made redundant, and I was asked to find another university. While I am very grateful that the academy has been able to support me through to the conclusion of this project, the pathway at times has been deeply disturbing due to the disappearance of a locating department specific to my practice. I mention it here because it is evidence of the tenuous relationship that still exists between artistic practice and academic pursuit despite Nelson's optimism. I am sadly the last performance studies student to be given the opportunity of candidature at Victoria University and it deserves to be stated. I consider my previous degree and honours studies at Victoria University as incredibly rich and valuable pathways for performance practice as knowledge and research. In my view, it makes this current work even more vital and relevant in terms of providing practice or discourse that encourages diversity, agency and self-determination, and offers a place for alternative forms of knowledge found in the doing of creative practice.

I will give the final words to Joseph Beuys:

... language is not to be understood simply in terms of speech and words. That is our current, drastically reduced understanding of language – a parallel to the reduced understanding of politics and economics. Beyond language as verbalisation lies a world of sound and form impulses, a language or primary sound without semantic content, but laden with completely different levels of information (Beuys in Tisdall 1979, p. 210).

## References

- Albinger, D. 2010 'Resisting Romantic Love: Transforming the Wound of Amputation into a Caress', in Milne, G. (ed.) *Australian Drama Studies*, 56, 25-37.
- Auslander, P. 2008. *Theory for Performance Studies: A Student's Guide*. Routledge, New York.
- Barret, E. & Bolt, B. (eds) 2010. *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. Tauris, London and New York.
- Benyshek, D. 2012. 'Artists as Shamans: Historical Review and Recent Theoretical Model'. The 10th international Society for Shamanistic Research Conference, Warsaw, Poland, 29 October 2012.
- <[http://www.academia.edu/2066714/Artists as Shamans Historical Review and Recent Theoretical Model](http://www.academia.edu/2066714/Artists_as_Shamans_Historical_Review_and_Recent_Theoretical_Model)> viewed 2 Oct 2014.
- Biggs, I. 2009, *Art as Research: Creative Practice and Academic Authority*. VDM Verlag, Berlin.
- Bishop, C. 2012, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Verso, London.
- Bourriaud, N. 2002. *Relational Aesthetics*, Les Presses du réel, Dijon, France.
- Brennand, J. 2005, Subjectivity, Presence, and Performance, a discourse. Contemporary Performance Theory Research Essay. Victoria University, Melbourne.

Cameron, M. 2012, 'I Shudder to Think: Performance as Philosophy'. PhD exegesis. Victoria University, Melbourne.

Campo, G. & Molik, Z. 2010, *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work: The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski*. Routledge, New York.

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

Chen, T. 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1641881849408966/> viewed 25 August 2017.

de Villiers, C. 2014, 'Contemporary Performance Art as a Hermeneutic Pathway to Transcendence and Healing', *Art Sensorium*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 117-135.

Duncan, J. 1997, *Domenico de Clario A Survey 1966-1996: the diver's clothes lying empty*, Exhibition catalogue, April 1997, Monash University Gallery.

Ellis, C. Adams T.E. & Bochner A.P. 'Autoethnography: An Overview', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Volume 12, No. 1, Art. 10, pp 1-12.

Fehily, T. 2014. 'Stripping Off for Stuart Ringholt's Kraft at MUMA', *Broadsheet*, < <https://www.broadsheet.com.au/melbourne/art-and-design/article/stripping-stuart-ringholts-kraft-muma> > viewed 21 Oct 2014.

Fingerhut, J. 2011, 'Introduction' in Flach, S. Söffner, J. & Fingerhut, J. 2011, *Habitus in Habitat III – Synaesthesia and Kinaesthetics*, Peter Lang, Bern.

Flach, S. Söffner, J. & Fingerhut, J. 2011, *Habitus in Habitat III – Synaesthesia and Kinaesthetics*, Peter Lang, Bern.

Frantz, G. 1999. "An Approach to the Centre: An Interview with Mary Whitehouse" in Pallaro, P (ed.). *Authentic Movement: Essays by Mary Starks Whitehouse, Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, pp. 17-28.

Friedman N. 2004, 'Eugene Gendlin's Approach to An Awareness of "Experiencing"' viewed 21 August 2017.  
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e355/8dfcd3f51a661fcc3bac8c9d162210c4c479.pdf>.

Gershon, W.S. 2013, 'Vibrational Affect: Sound Theory and Practice' *Qualitative Research, Critical Studies-Critical Methodologies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 257-262.

Harlen, V. 2004, *What is Art: Conversations with Joseph Beuys edited with essays by Volker Harlen*. Clairview Books, Russet, Sandy Lane, West Hoathly.

Harris, S. 2014, *Waking Up: Searching for Spirituality Without Religion*, Simon & Schuster, New York.

Haseman, B. 'A Manifesto for Performative Research Media International Australia', *Incorporating Culture & Policy*, No. 118, Feb 2006: pp. 98-106.

Haseman, B. & Mafe, D. 2009, "Acquiring Know-How: Research Training for Practice-Led Researchers" in Smith, H. & Dean, R.T. (eds.), 2009, *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 211-228.

Holdsworth, S, 2013, "Immersivity and cultural production – "permission to play"" in Machon, J. 2013, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, NY. pp. 204-213.

Howard, J. 2007, *Breathing embodiment: a study of Middendorf breathwork*, PhD thesis, Victoria University, Melbourne.

Hillier, S. 2008, *The Provisional Texture of Reality: Selected Talks and Texts, 1977-2007*, ed. Alexandra M. Kokoli, JRP Ringier, Zurich, & Les Presses du réel, Dijon, France.

Hillier, S. 2013, <http://www.susanhillier.org/installations/channels.html> viewed 25 August 2017

Kershaw, B. 2009, "Practice as Research through Performance" in Smith, H. & Dean, R.T. (eds.), 2009, *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 104-125.

Kuoni, C. 1993, *Joseph Beuys in America: Energy Plan for the Western Man By Joseph Beuys*, Four Walls Eight Windows, New York.

Machon, J. 2013, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, NY.

Marsh, A. 2015, Marina Abramovic: 'Mindful Immateriality' [online]. *Artlink*, Vol. 35, No. 3, Sep 2015: 20-25.

Availability: <[https://search-informit-com.au.wallaby.vu.edu.au:4433/documentSummary;dn=453400220041512;res=IELAPA](https://search.informit-com.au.wallaby.vu.edu.au:4433/documentSummary;dn=453400220041512;res=IELAPA)> ISSN: 0727-1239. [cited 02 Mar 18].

Mercer, L, Robson, J, & Fenton D, 2012, *Live Research: Methods of Practice-Led Inquiry in Performance*. Ladyfinger, Nerang, Qld.

Mercer L, & Robson J. 2012, "The backbone of live research" in Mercer *et al.* 2012, *Live Research: Methods of Practice-Led Inquiry in Performance*. Ladyfinger, Nerang, Qld, pp. 11-19.

Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge, London.

Merleau-Ponty, M. 1968, *The Visible and the Invisible*. Northwest University Press, Evanston.

Mommartz, L. (dir.) 1969, *Soziale Plastik*, Video recording,

[http://mommartzfilm.com/FilmeLutzMommartzEN/socialsculpture\\_e.htm](http://mommartzfilm.com/FilmeLutzMommartzEN/socialsculpture_e.htm) viewed 29 August 2017.

Middendorf, I. 1990, *The Perceptible Breath: A Breathing Science*. Junfermann, Paderborn.

Murakawa, H. 2002, *Phenomenology of the Experience of Qigong: A Preliminary research design for the intentional bodily practices*, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, California.

Nelson, R. 2013, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principals, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Newham, P. 1997, *The Prophet of Song: The Life and Work of Alfred Wolfsohn*. Tigers Eye Press, London.

Newham, P. 1999, *The Healing Voice: How to use the power of your voice to bring harmony into your life*. Element, Melbourne.

Pallaro, P. (ed.) 1995. *Authentic Movement: Essays by Mary Starks Whitehouse, Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.

Petit, L. 2010, *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor*. Routledge, New York.

Price, P. 2011, *Resonance: Philosophy for Sonic Art*, Atropos Press, New York.



Robson, J. 2013, "Artists in Australian Academies: Performance in the Labyrinth of Practice-Led Research" in Nelson, R. 2013, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principals, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 123-141.

Saraswati S. 1981, *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya*, Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India.

Sharp, H. 2014, *The Profane Halo: Becoming Breath*. PhD thesis, Victoria University, Melbourne.

Sharp, W. 1969, 'An Interview with Joseph Beuys', *Artforum*, December 1969.

Schechner, R. 2006, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Routledge, New York.

Schneider, A. & Wright, C. (eds.), 2010, *Between Art and Anthropology: Contemporary Ethnographic Practice*, Berg, New York.

Smith, H. & Dean, R.T. (eds.), 2009, *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Sullivan G. 2010, *Art Practice as Research*, Sage, London.

Thomaidis, K. & Macpherson, B, 2015. *Voice Studies: Critical Approaches to Process, Performance and Experience*, Routledge, New York.

Tisdall, C. & Beuys, J. 1979. *Joseph Beuys*, Thames and Hudson, London.

Walsh, A. 2009, 'The Resonant Body: Preliminary Considerations for Social Work Practice' *Critical Social Work* Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 48-57.

Walter, V. 2012, *Joseph Beuys and the Celtic wor(l)d: A Language of Healing*, Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, Berlin.

Walters, V. 2010, 'The Artist as Shaman: The work of Joseph Beuys and Marcus Coates', in Schneider, A. & Wright, C. (eds.), 2010, *Between Art and Anthropology: Contemporary Ethnographic Practice*, Berg, New York.

Wertheimer, T. 2012, 'Stuart Ringholt: Anger Workshop' [online]. *Performa magazine* < <http://performa-arts.org/magazine/entry/stuart-ringholt-anger-workshops1> > viewed 21 Oct 2014.

Whitehouse, M.S. 1999. "The Tao of the Body" in Pallaro, P (ed.). *Authentic Movement: Essays by Mary Starks Whitehouse, Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, pp. 41-50.

Wörner Karl H. 1973, *Stockhausen: Life and Work*, University of California Press, Los Angeles.

## Appendix

### Voice Lab Participants: a brief biography

O.A. is an audio artist who exhibits and creates work for theatre. O.A. works in Indigenous education and health at a University and is currently a PhD candidate with a Faculty of Education.

N.B. is a Remedial Massage Therapist. She has a background in teaching movement and dance. Her particular interest is in somatic practices that allow for personal development and lasting changes to take place. N.B. was aged 60 years at the commencement of the workshops. Her Ethnic background is white African, born in colonial Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. She has been in Australia 15 years.

M.B. has extensive experience in the performing arts as an actor, vocalist and songwriter. She is an expressive arts therapist and yoga teacher.

L.B. is an architect who runs his own small firm. He is passionate about sustainability in his work and his daily life. He cycles to work each day. He has a semi regular yoga practice. L.B. was 45 years old at the commencement of workshops. Both parents and all of L.B.'s grandparents were born in Australia. L.B.'s ancestral background is Anglo including Manx, Irish, Scottish and English.

H.C. works with movement, dance, play, voice and Qi Gong in various settings and programs: including community oriented, clinical and artistic work, with children and with adults. H.C. was 40 years old when the project began. H.C. identifies as Italian.

U.C. is a performance artist and academic working in an interdisciplinary practice. U.C. was 61 at commencement of workshops and identifies as born in Australia of European heritage (Lithuanian & German).

T.F. is a Middendorf Breath Experience Practitioner who has worked in the Performing Arts for over 30 years. During this time she has continued play with sound through vocal exploration. T.F. was 54 years old at the commencement of workshops and identifies as Australian with a father born in Poland of Jewish descent and a mother of Irish heritage.

R.H. is a multi-dimensional artist working across diverse applications in the performing and healing arts as a vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, sound designer, musical director, sound therapist, and meditation and mindfulness guide. R.H. was 37 years old at the commencement of the workshops. R.H.'s ethnic background is German-English, though identifies as third generations Australian.

K.J. was aged 41 at the commencement of the workshops, and is of Irish/Scottish/German background.

D.M. is a psychotherapist & counsellor with a background in creative arts and performance. She has been in private practice since 2001. She maintains a regular meditation practice. D.M. was 54 at the commencement of workshops. D.M. identifies as Australian with Hungarian & Jewish background.

D.V. is a theatre artist, educator and musician telling stories using hybrid of artforms. She works with professional and community choirs on stagecraft and presence in performance, and has a dance/-vocal improvisation practice.

B.V. is an engineering planner who does no vocal practice or performance, including no shower singing. She attends regular yoga and Pilates sessions and has a large dog who likes walks.

### Participants Questions and answers

**Question 1. Did the practice provide any new insights or experiences that added to your creative process or practice, or your creative palette or range?**

*O.A.'s answer to question 1.*

*The practice developed a vocal range that extends conceptually within and out of my body and finds harmonies with environments, instruments and situations. I have always been more comfortable improvising as a singer and audio artist however when I think about it, the workshop experience has been like a rite of passage. I've developed a lower range that has multiple resonances within it that I can swirl around my mouth, from tail to belly to tip of my nose. I have become more aware of light and shade in my work, and have used this in recordings to a*

*very satisfactory result. I have recently learned some Aboriginal cultural knowledge that speaks about an internal mapping used as part of memorisation and representation of deeper knowledges, think songlines. This is done using internal narrative, mapping with mind and locating that as well in physical place. It's complex and about being an un Industrialised person (as an Aboriginal woman it makes sense to have found this, however other cultures do too, Scottish for example- that's why it's known not solely in Aboriginal knowledge terms). This is what I have been doing to a degree as part of this workshop practice, without knowing it- discovering another part of my un Industrialised authentic self.*

*N.B.'s answer to question 1.*

*YES, It added some calmness. Directed but with enough freedom to allow for experimenting. A gradual development of new material to find an edge without being stressful. In movement, voice, and group interactions.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 1.*

*This approach to voicing, to me, is very much about extending the vocal palette, and in doing so I feel a shift occurs on other levels of self; emotional, energetic, physical. When in the moment of fully expressing a sensation, or pressing into unfamiliar territory it is with a sense of excitement and, afterwards an increased sense of myself. "Ah, this is where I begin and end. This is who I really am." This level of authenticity – both trueness to myself and authorship of my life is very valuable. Even when I struggle with tiredness or negative mental chatter the song which arises is always the very one I need to be singing.*

*L.B.'s answer to question 1*

*Yes. In the last group practice I found a power in my voice that surprised me. I did a solo piece that was explosive. It felt great to express myself in front of the group with so much power. In the post group solo sessions I also found great expansion in my range. While working with the piano I found my lower and upper range were extended, which was great. The long solo piece I subsequently recorded felt very solid. I remember a storm raging outside and I was inspired by the power of nature to make powerful sounds. I felt exhilarated during and after the song and it helped me realise how much confidence this voice work has helped me develop.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 1.*

*Yes, in particular a lot of insights on my current state and how that would impact me in my being and in my ability of expressing and creating. Is almost like the voice gave me a feedback, a limit/boundary to play with and to get another level of perception. The practice reinforced a pathway I had already embarked and gave it depth and strength and showed me other ways I can extend it.*

*U.C.'s answer to question 1.*

*The practice provided the opportunity to engage in an evolving series of workshops that allowed for both an experiential insight and also the privilege to witness and observe the work of others. This in itself was also a learning experience as it allowed for an insight into other possibilities and ways of responding to the various provocations. Some of the material explored was familiar from either previous 'breath' workshops, or vocal work that I had come across in different contexts. There was a resonance to a recent workshop I had undertaken with Linda Wise at the Body Voice Studio and also the Middendorf breathwork. The very last workshop working with the drone sound and improvising to that is something that I have not explored before and will definitely be working more with as it appeared to open a response and felt freeing and non-judgemental. There was also a very interesting juxtaposition in that there was a sense of returning to something, like a memory while simultaneously moving in a new direction.*

*R.H.'s answer to question 1.*

*(a). The practice gave me so many things, hard to list them all here! But one thing I remember sensing strongly was the way in which the body seemed to adjust, open out, move when someone placed their hands on my body as I was toning. Like an energy animating all by itself.*

*Interesting to observe as I was not 'thinking' about moving, it was just happening.*

*(b). I loved the 'quality of ease' exercise. Allowing my body to move with this quality was freeing and very meditative. Also then adding the voice to this exercise was a beautiful layer for me. When both body and voice, with breath combined with the quality of ease, it felt amazingly in the flow... healing, meditative, opening.*

*(c). The jibberish speaking/singing was a good way to stop the thinking mind – like a meditation – having to be in flow with the other person you were "communicating" with – something about not using everyday words, and not having an agenda to tell a story or anything, was freeing I found.*

*K.J.'s answer to question 1.*

*In particular the internal lullaby practice has become a method of birthing new musical compositions for me. The concept of birthing sound from silence, listening to and giving space to the ever present internal melody has given rise to some beautiful and authentic musical pieces. This is particularly valuable because it is not always easy to access a source of musical inspiration, especially from an authentic un- contrived place.*

*D.M.'s answer to question 1.*

*The Chi Wash was a new experience in the way John offered it. I found this to be a particularly simple, enjoyable and refreshing exercise.*

*B.V.'s answer to question 1.*

*Having no experience with singing or music I wanted to explore what the sessions could give and if they could improve my understanding of vocal training.*

**2. Did the practice provide or offer any valuable reflections, insights, practical tools or knowledge that you could integrate to your life in general?**

*O.A.'s answer to question 2.*

*I've noticed I am more relaxed in social settings in general. The group experience for some reason confronted me initially. Sharing the space of my most intimate and private self with others bought up reasoning that I had to talk myself through so I would stop thinking, and judging- to make the most of what I perceived as a special time that I could learn most from if I surrendered to it. I felt judgmental that the head was getting in the way of the body and that all that was needed was to forget the head and follow the breath, or make a sound or something other than rationalise. After a while, I changed and began to like the feeling of free falling.*

*But before that I needed to acknowledge my judgment, fear, insecurity and then commit to the practice, and trust the practice which means trusting the body, the breath the vibration and resonances, and just let it be. I needed to know I was scared, scared was not the problem. Not acknowledging it was. There were some weeks, for whatever reason, I was unable to acknowledge it, and I became stuck, couldn't make sound, wanted to disappear, dissolve completely- like I always did in the past. Old loops surfaced for me to see, and learn. My song was silent, vibrating at the micro level of near invisibility. This new context for noticing my invisibility was a space to see differently. I hate it, feeling mute not by choice, but regardless the realisation here is that no matter what reflections and lessons I learn, I am still in constant repertoire with my old story, and that is what opened in an unexpected way later in the workshops. The practice kept reminding me about wellbeing and identity, and for this reason I remained open to what that might mean or reveal. A big part of that was letting go, to expectations, outcomes, fears and wants. I was happy when I followed my conceptual song-dance of leaving the built-up world to sing in the multidimensional space of dying stars and vibrations, of loved ones dead and not born yet, out beyond the fire and smoke to the silent space where the last echoes out. And I met what was always waiting for me, to welcome me home. I had made the effort to find this opening of more than the heart. I had completely*

*surrendered my body and my will to cry and call so that the hearing of me was out and back. Space whispered me, standing on the crescent rim of worlds, calling and calling by the sparks. Leaving us out, we fell left alone in this. But it's different now. Talking to It more than ever before. I am at the beginning again and again.*

*N.B.'s answer to question 2*

*As a result of attending this practice I am feeling less fearful, less self-conscious and more confident. In the beginning, I noticed my attention span was short. I am now able to focus for longer, and notice without judgement the internal communication I have.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 2*

*I would say that I have this work pretty well integrated into my life, having practiced it for over 20 years. That being said it was good for me to reengage some of the techniques which are less obvious to me (I am drawn towards a different, but overlapping, portion of work). Also fascinating to me working within a group was the huge diversity of experience, and that the work has the capacity to hold all this diversity. I suppose I am in my life working towards more of the qualities of honest, fearless expression and communication which I certainly feel I have accessed at times through this work.*

*L.B.'s answer to question 2.*

*Yes. The sense of confidence I described above has helped me make decisions with confidence in my life. An improved sense of self confidence and self-love that comes from the work helps me speak my truth more clearly in all my relationships both personal and professional.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 2.*

*Yes, many. It gave me lots of insight on my current state of being and the way I perceive the world (internal and external, as voice, I believe, is an incredible bridge connecting these two). In term of tools, Qi Gong practice and energy work, the quality of ease but also the scales and find the continuity through the scales taught me a lot. Also how to engage and tap into effortless qualities, such as leveraging on the architectural component of the mouth and throat, the deep listening. Also listening...I really enjoyed listening to the others play/exploration with voice. I noticed it made me sharper in hearing also the sounds of the words spoken by others.*



*U.C.'s answer to question 2.*

*To breathe, to listen, to wait. Let go expectations, be surprised. Stretch boundaries. Notice what, why, how change occurs. Be open, be daring...*

*R.H.'s answer to question 2.*

*(a). Yes, the quality of ease I recall sometimes during my day, and also when I'm guiding a group meditation, I include this as a short body warm up.*

*(b). The Voice Lab experiences in general gave me even more knowledge and understanding that the voice can really shift energy around the body.*

*(c). The Qi wash with voice I sometimes do at home too with my daily meditation practice, and sometimes with groups. They love it.*

*Aligning breath, movement and voice together, it's a winning combination, and when in flow, I believe helps provide good health on all levels.*

*(d). The health and well- being benefits of John's work in general had an immense affect on me in my daily life. I always felt good for days in a row after his sessions. His work could easily become a daily practice of exercises that people could do for health and wellbeing, as well as creativity and meditative performance.*

*K.J.'s answer to question 2.*

*The Voicelab work has opened up the exploration of the voice for me in a more uninhibited way. Often in the car on my way to and from work I explore the many facets of my voice in a way I had not previously known possible, nor indeed would have been comfortable to pursue.*

*Discovering that the range of ones vocal ability is seemingly limitless – limited only by exploration, discovery and practice – is exciting. I think it reflects the way we view ourselves - as being a certain way, or having a certain range of expression. It demonstrates that this self perception can be limiting, and with a little effort can it be expanded beyond expectations.*

*D.M.'s answer to question 2.*

*Same as question 1. The Chi Wash was a new experience in the way John offered it. I found this to be a particularly simple, enjoyable and refreshing exercise.*

*B.V.'s answer to question 2.*

*I feel the sessions gave me a bit more confidence and courage to attempt some new sounds. I learnt that posture and position has an impact on how sound can be suppressed or released/made stronger. Also that there are no wrong noises/sounds, they all have their place/voice*

### **3. Did the practice provide a safe place to explore vulnerable personal dynamics?**

*O.A.'s answer to question 3.*

*Yes and no but ultimately yes. I'm inspired by Margaret Cameron, Art is a verb. It's the doing that is where the Art is. I've always thought the 'thing', the product people see etc, is the artefact of the process. Process that holds knowledges and it's in this space of doing that is the Explore, it happens and we are vulnerable, but only to stopping the process through thought. Being vulnerable is not the real heart of vulnerability, it's editing myself in the moment to suit others as I perceive them.*

*N.B.'s answer to question 3.*

*YES. I observed others in their vulnerability, and was able to embrace my own. Fully exploring the range of my voice. Allowing myself to be adventurous, and sometimes being surprised but not judgemental of the results.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 3.*

*For me that depended on the day. Vulnerability is something which is a challenge. Probably if I had attended sessions with more consistency I could have experienced this more easily. At times I wanted to jump in to facilitation (as I have facilitated similar vocal explorations in the past). At times I wanted clearer instructions for an exercise, but also I recognise that leaving things open can accommodate a wider breadth of experience. I tried to just listen to the description and respond to that, whether or not that exercise was similar to one I already knew. So this kept it fresh. The actual studio space was perfect and comfortable. The people welcoming and accepting.*

*L.B.'s answer to question 3.*

*Yes. Although I didn't find myself exploring vulnerability much in this particular group. I think this exploration is a real potential of groups like this and I have explored this with John in the past and would like to do so again in future.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 3.*

*If we are talking about the group practice, not particularly...there were times where I was dealing with really stressful and deep emotional unrest and that brought me to feel particularly exposed at certain point of the session (especially when we had to do solos) and I really had to push myself to be seen and heard. I did it mostly to comply, didn't want to upset the group but I was really happy to retreat in my own little space.*

*If we are talking about the Voice practice, then yes. I had my own way of working through stuff with the voice, but was more an individual process.*

*U.C.'s answer to question 3.*

*The workshop environment was incredibly supportive. The work was structured in such a way that it led from one activity to the next on the most part quite organically. It was very interesting to observe and experience when the preconceived plan was put aside and a subtle shift in activity occurred because of the group response to a particular activity. It felt at this time that John was more confident in taking the workshop and allowing himself to react and respond to how the work was being received and played with.*

*R.H.'s answer to question 3.*

*(a). I think so, but I'm used to being part of theatre/drama creative processes where explorations in the work can become intimate quite early in the piece. If I wasn't as experienced with this, maybe there may be a couple of things that would be confronting, but the way that John works and guides people through all the exercises, he makes everyone feel so comfortable – there was never an issue with this.*

*(b). I think that John's way of working with the group, was beautifully facilitated and led. Such a strong, knowledgeable and yet gentle leader.*

*(d). I enjoyed challenging myself in the "solo" voice sharing's, where I had the opportunity to just make sound and move, totally intuitively, and yet have all of this being observed by others. To let go of any ego or shyness, and to just go for it was liberating and strengthening of all the parts of me that were not ego based.*

*(d). I think the group of people involved in the workshops were all so open minded that it helped me to feel comfortable with strangers. There was a kind of 'collective caring' that each person seemed to have for each other during the exercises. The present moment awareness that John's work brings about in people, helped a sense of connection and humanity arise within the group. No ego's.*

*K.J.'s answer to question 3.*

*The Voicelab workshops provided a safe place to explore vulnerable personal dynamics, although I believe it is the self who truly provides the safety to express one's self in any social situation. The fact that others in the circle are allowing make this grant of personal permission a little easier.*

*D.M.'s answer to question 3.*

*Yes. Especially because of the primarily non-verbal bias I felt safe to remain with my own personal emotional explorations without fear of being judged or questioned or having to contextualise or explain myself or my experience to another person.*

*B.V.'s answer to question 3.*

*While initially I felt self conscious the non judgmental and encouragement from the other participants made me feel more confident. The sessions never felt unsafe and I never felt vulnerable. Did I open up my emotions? A little but I am quite reserved.*

#### **4. Did the practice provide any beneficial social or personal dynamics not readily available in your regular life without the practice?**

*O.A.'s answer to question 4.*

*Yes, absolutely. And I believe this carving out of time and space was vital for me. I've got young children, I can be a little bit lazy, there's the travel and commitment to time, however breaking through this allowed for a longitudinal understanding. And I pat myself on the back for doing it. Each workshop was different, kind of like a yoga practice. It's not a quick fix thing, and it's not just about learning how to make nasal sounds. The practice is so multi- dimensional, there's nowhere in my life I can see something like that happening with the same depth. I feel there is the social benefits of being more relaxed and deeply confident in a calm way and like I can speak with some authority on the experience of body sound work because of my commitment. This means when I make audio art I stay with what makes me happy, and not erase or be embarrassed by it. (I had a dialogue loop that was 'it's not very good'). I now show people my work whereas in the past I made work for the love of it and never or very rarely showed, or made the space to show, my work. I feel more professional. I now know my sound, from me, is mine.*

*N.B.'s answer to question 4.*

*I have a lot of respect for the participants that do not hold back, the ones that have courage. I have more respect for myself when I try something new. Using my body is familiar, using my voice was not. This new creative medium was an adventure and the connection to the group and within the group was so profound. I remember at the end of one practice we were all so in the moment with each other that no one wanted to move or make a sound. I could have stayed in that moment for a long time.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 4.*

*Not social, but perhaps personal as I have described above regarding the capacity for the practice to evoke satisfying authenticity, and also a flow of what I would call creativity (the act of making something out of nothing).*

*L.B.'s answer to question 4.*

*Yes. I find this work great for connecting with people heart to heart. There is a sense of open hearted connection with others that is close and loving without being sexual. I find this heart opening helps me connect with others in my life in a space of unconditional love. I find many aspects of modern life close down this open heartedness and make it hard to connect deeply with partners, children and friends. This voice work is a great antidote to this closed heart conditioning.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 4.*

*Well yes, the group improvisations is a good example as each of us were bringing such a unique component that we were able to create something totally unexpected.*

*R.H.'s answer to question 4.*

*(a). Yes, it gave me the opportunity to connect with people of a similar way of being and understanding about the power of voice/body/breath work. I enjoyed feeling part of a group who were exploring these themes, and being led through it all so expertly. Usually I am a facilitator of these things, and I really enjoyed being led and guided by John, to allow myself to fully immerse in the practices without needing to think!*  
*(b). I enjoyed the group vocal toning improvisation circles. Everyone singing in so close together. I've worked with a lot of choirs and music projects, and not many of them allow for this beautiful and intimate way of singing, vocalising, toning, and... connecting through 'unspoken' words. It was beautiful.*

*(c). Also, the part where someone touched my body and we toned into this part of the body – this exercise was quite intimate, and yet I felt totally safe in it. It was very interesting how the presence of another’s hands on your knees for example, can induce inspiration for vocal sounds!*

*(d). Generally, the whole Voice Lab work shop series was quite spiritual. For me anyway. Unless you go to church you don’t get to experience the kinds of inner peaceful feelings I felt at the Voice Lab sessions. I enjoyed being with others who were also feeling similar things.*

*(e). Being vulnerable in the workshops was a pretty big thing—and allowing others to see this vulnerability... I don’t usually get to experience this in my life because I’m responsible for many projects and things! Was good to be “held” in that vulnerability by the John and the group, and the practices we shared.*

*K.J.’s answer to question 4.*

*The voicelab workshops placed participants in a uniquely vulnerable and expressive environment. Exploration into safe, supported expression lead to personal challenges and experiences that bond the group to each other.*

*D.M.’s answer to question 4.*

*The practice John offered dovetails nicely into and expands practices I already have like breath meditation, vocal explorations and authentic movement-style exercises. The luxury of John offering the practice on a monthly basis meant I could simply engage in the practices lead by John without having to create it for myself. I do not know where else to go to get this particular mix of practices in one place.*

*B.V.’s answer to question 4.*

*The sessions did expose me to some new people, however I didn’t extend that contact outside of the sessions. I did feel that it was easier to work with some participants with vocal experience over some with less.*

**5. Do you have any thoughts on the capacity of the practice to provide or enable a place of reflection or revelation regarding what is presently running in terms of emotions, or thoughts, or way of being in the world?**

*O.A.'s answer to question 5.*

*Just picking up from the last sentence in the previous question. It may seem egotistical however, my story loop is one of silencing, invisibility or speaking and being ignored, of other's lives more important than mine- to hear or ask questions. Never asked if I was alright, or what I am doing at school, or am I safe or let's talk. It goes on and this is deep, because I never saw myself reflected, to grow into a confident young woman. The practice compliments my life's commitment to living well, with relative peace, safety away from violence. For me to know my sound is taking agency that is not reliant on others approval or engagement. We all need human connection; this is not about that. It's about something more.*

*I believe this work works on a few levels for me. Firstly, unconsciously. Do the practice and the body will do what it needs to. Such as the idea of shaking it out, a powerful device for completing the emotional feeling, unconscious usually. Who wants to be stuck? But we get stuck because we try to think our way out, wine works better. Do the practice and the body has a much better chance to move through whatever's stuck. Secondly, with conscious relationship with one's own practice. Being aware of what might be residing inside, and where. Of facilitating the exercise to notice and to notice changes. To sound into places, to sound away from places, whatever is needed, with some thought as to the direction of intent. I reckon you must tune into it, be ready for it, be open. The voice is the most difficult and most profound instrument I have ever played.*

*N.B.'s answer to question 5*

*I would like to see this practice being taken to more people, it has the ability to break down barriers, ethnic, personal, political. Valuable as a form of community building in the work place. I am not sure the general public are ready. It would be a better place if there was more of this practice around.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 5.*

*Absolutely! There is a beautiful aspect to improvised streaming which enables whatever is present to be expressed. You actually can't plan it! And, in fact, if you try to it usually falls short of its potential. It is a very mindful, present experience to just be with yourself wherever you are emotionally, physically or mentally. Even if it begins in a place of boredom, or annoyance, or deadendness, something emerges! Isn't that wonderful. It reminds me of watching a small child get really frustrated with something; scream and cry and throw the toy across the room,*

*and then just drop it and go and do something else. Very liberating. Of course we can't behave like that in our day to day adult world. We have to be more emotionally responsible and mature. But it is incredible liberating to be able to express fully whatever is present, and then wait for the next impulse- which always happens! So it is an endless procession of reflecting and revealing; reflecting and revealing, except there is flow to it rather than defined, ordered process.*

*L.B.'s answer to question 5.*

*I realised this morning that I am suffering from decision fatigue. It leaves me feeling exhausted when it happens, which is on a semi-regular basis. Thinking about it I reckon the voicework practice helps reduce the stress of making decisions because it is about allowing things to flow.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 5.*

*I think the practice has a huge potential for this, especially because we were given time to journal and document our experiences. There was definitely space to have more guidance to delve deeper and find those meaningful connections, or how to bring these to surface so that could be dealt with.*

*R.H.'s answer to question 5.*

*The practice helps to connect one to their body, their breath, and their energy (subtle energy). Essentially, the Voice Lab practice offers a mindfulness experience and training, but via use of wordless vocal sound and the branches and connections off into other aspects of our experience (emotions, body, thoughts). The insights one can gain from the practice about themselves, their thinking, emotions, physical body, are on offer – if you are aware, open and present. For me a lot of the time, I wasn't "thinking" as much as usual. I think that the present moment awareness and present moment creative flow with the voice/body/breath can help create 'inner stillness' and this in turn can create clarity. With clarity comes insight and wisdom that can highlight and expose mental>emotional>physical links, cycles, or connections. This clarity essentially can give choice, instead of a (usually unhelpful) habitual stream of thinking or doing. I think that John's work allows the experienter to open-up to these possibilities. Voice Lab was like a meditation through voice, body and breath.*

*U.C.'s answer to question 5.*

*There were times when it was difficult to know whether an emotion or thought pre-existed and was reflected in the practice or creating sounds in a particular way triggered a chain reaction that took it to a place that was emotionally very charged, yet may have nothing to do with how one was feeling. Diving in and out of possible worlds through sound, exposing imagined realities, fictional personas from another time.*



*K.J.'s answer to question 5.*

*Voicelab provides an environment of safety and acceptance which encourages participants to explore and express themselves in new and exciting ways. As individuals we have the ability to express ourselves more freely at any time, being in the world. I believe the voicelab experience empowers one to be able to express more freely outside the voicelab class, because of the experiences in the class.*

*D.M.'s answer to question 5.*

*Yes, this in some ways for me was the most significant part of the practice.*

*B.V.'s answer to question 5.*

*My mood had an influence on how I responded to some of the activities. I also noticed how some participants were very good at conveying a mood or atmosphere through their voices and tones. It was interesting to hear that even without a recognisable word a sense of the emotion was still felt.*

**6. Given that the practices were primarily based in wordless voice, was it helpful or insightful to have the opportunity and more time to talk about your experiences in the final solo and shared experiences in comparison to the group workshops?**

*O.A.'s answer to question 6.*

*Yes, talking felt like it bonded the group a bit. Also it was a chance to get an outer representation of the inner experience. That was always an interesting comparison, and added some meaning about external perceptions.*

*N.B.'s answer to question 6.*

*Not necessarily. I think the benefits of the practice would stand without the discussions after.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 6.*

*Yes, although I wouldn't have wanted to be weighted like that every time. Sometimes words can reduce an experience, sometimes expand an experience. It is good to just do, and then let that settle in your body and integrate without words, which tend to bring the experience into the cognitive realm. I love this dissemination also, but it is a different process with different outcomes.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 6.*

*I would say they were different experiences. There were things that only the group enables that I missed in the solo or shared practice, but yes was definitely nice to have time to expand and explore (with and without words) by myself or just with someone else. I guess it is natural to me to talk more in a solo or shared situation rather than being in a group. Nonetheless, I felt the group had a really beautiful connection, and we were not afraid to share, maybe in different ways. To be honest I find it very very insightful to hear other's experiences too, as through others I can also better understand mine, so any opportunities we had either in the groups or in the duos.*

*U.C.'s answer to question 6.*

*It was actually quite difficult to talk immediately after the long solo and to recall the detail of what had occurred. I often felt that it may have been beneficial to include observations and feedback from witnessing others into the regular practice so more could be claimed or shared. The time for writing in the diary during the workshop also diminished over the months of the practice.*

*R.H.'s answer to question 6.*

*(a). I sometimes found my experiences hard to put in to words. They were profound and of a type which is hard to explain. Words limit the experience down, whereas the experience is vast.*

*(b). I did enjoy hearing about the insights and experiences others were having. Some were similar to mine. Others were different. It was an eclectic rainbow that revealed the layers of meaning there.*

*(c). I loved that the practices with the workshops were wordless vocal exercises. Loved this! Not using words really helps people to get out of their heads, and into their bodies, hearts, connecting with their breath and subtle energy – and each other. It's such a gift to be in a space where exploring sound without words is one of the main components.*

*K.J.'s answer to question 6.*

*The sharing is – for me – an important part of the process. Sometimes an experience during the session may take on more meaning after discussion.*

*D.M.'s answer to question 6.*

*Yes, it was always good & interesting to be able to share ones experience with others in a verbal way especially after the generous amount of time allowed for personal & individual work.*

*B.V.'s answer to question 6.*

*I found the solo sessions more challenging being less experienced in creative voice activities. I had few examples from which to adapt / mimic. My daily routine is very directed to be set.*

## **7. Were there aspects of the practice that surprised you? If so what were they.**

*O.A.'s answer to question 7.*

*Not sure. Maybe because I had decided to let the process in a lot, I found myself quite vulnerable on the outer (in this instance vulnerable like shame). Having said that I think I also simplified expectations and so found more useful worlds, so I was deeply engaged inside. Different worlds. Being like this has allowed me to grow some confidence, it is so nuanced and hard to explain. I truly feel that this practice will never leave me even if it doesn't always seem apparent.*

*N.B.'s answer to question 7.*

*How the voice can be felt, changed, experienced in the body.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 7.*

*I was surprised and enlivened by fellow participant's discoveries.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 7.*

*The drone... the power of the drone.. especially when held by the accordion and the group to support individual improv. It reminds me of the cellular drone, the baseline we all have inside us. I loved that. Also the harmonics...I would I would love one day to be able to achieve.*

*U.C.'s answer to question 7.*

*Having a particular reaction to the introduction of working with the piano. It appeared to be a move away from a spontaneous response to various provocations to something that was more specific with a sense of right and wrong being implied. Obviously these thoughts are coming from my head and it is difficult to know the felt triggers to this observation. The experience of this aspect of the work was different to when I repeated some of the process with a piano at home and I remain curious about my own reaction and think it may have to do with the specificity and being heard and singled out.*

*R.H.'s answer to question 7.*

*(a). Just how quiet my mind became at times during the practice*

*(b). How my body opened up 'on its own' energetically with certain vowel and body movements, and a couple of them seemed to happen consistently each time I did it even though it may have been weeks apart. My mind was not manipulating the body, but yet with the voice and intention work it shifted, opened and changed as I went through the exercises.*

*(c). How many of the people's experiences had similar discoveries.*

*(d). It didn't surprise me as I've seen this many times before, but I do love how when there's a group intuitive vocalising circle, somehow everyone knows when to stop and complete the exercise. Even though everyone has their eyes closed, and no words are spoken, or cues given what so ever.*

*K.J.'s answer to question 7.*

*I was surprised by the incredible diversity and range of the voice. This surprise occurred both in personal exploration and when listening to others – particularly the experienced voicelabers.*

*B.V.'s answer to question 7.*

*An outstanding part of the practise was probably feeling the resonance and vibrations. Either myself (laying down on the floor or holding a hand on various body areas and with the partner work).*

**8. Were there particular aspects of the practice that you enjoyed or found most meaningful or gained most benefit from?**

*O.A.'s answer to question 8..*

*Really liked the sound washes and growling sound, as well as the tiny silent songs. Also loved the headphone tones and singing we did at the end. Oh, and the extended solos we did right at the end of the practice. I gained access to a space that resounds within and without- sort of like what I imagine prayer might feel like for a religious person.*

*N.B.'s answer to question 8.*

*All, however the dynamics in the group work comes to mind as something that brings up the greatest challenges for me. Noticing my tendencies to enjoy the safety of the edges. How I use space and feel about others in the space. Who I am drawn to or avoid. I take this experience into my workplace.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 8.*

*Solos and duets; witnessed. Performative but also ritualistic in nature. I find that this is challenging and rewarding, which is probably what has drawn me towards performing in my life. There is an edginess and an opportunity for riding that edge...but also a comfort in knowing the witnesses were not holding judgement as they watched and listened, or if they were they were not critical in their comments, while still able to share their personal reflections on the interaction.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 8.*

*Loved the hands on moments and learning about resonance through the body. The playful call and response, the exploration of connections body-breath and voice. Finding that moment where breath becomes voice. Having such a big space (like the yoga cycle studio) to fill in with my voice and the voice of the group. The cups of teas in between.*

*U.C.'s answer to question 8.*

*Returning each month to a consistent practice and having the time, space and support of colleagues mutually engaged in a particular exploration. Although this is a brief response to this question the benefit was quite wonderful to experience.*

*R.H.'s answer to question 8.*

*(a) Wordless vocalising and toning*

*(b). Combining movement and voice together. This was incredibly freeing for me. I have been working with voice and music for over 20 years, and I have rarely felt this type of freedom in my being than what I had when I was able to move and vocalise intuitively, opening up the body, flowing with an idea but not thinking about it, and allowing the creative flow of the present moment to express itself with the body and voice as the inspiration itself*

*(c). Using intention with sound*

*(d). Loved the intuitive toning circle with everyone offering sound, rhythms, harmonics, harmonies, dissonance.*

*(e). The vowel explorations I enjoyed, toning the chakras in the body, exploring harmonic and harmony combinations with the group.*

*(f). Really loved the Qi element to the workshops... bringing breath, qi movements and vocalising together was very powerful for me.*

*K.J.'s answer to question 8.*

*I loved all aspects of the classes. The internal lullaby has become a regular part of my practice and has born many a song that endure.*

*B.V.'s answer to question 8.*

*Listening and responding was fun, attempting to match a sound or pitch and feeling the vibrations. There were quite a few exercises that I enjoyed which I wrote in my diary notes but can't currently recall.*

## **9. Did the practice provide a space to deepen or expand or bring new knowing to your experiential sense of self?**

*O.A.'s answer to question 9.*

*Yes. And I am not sure exactly what that is. But it has a lot to do with now noticing how I notice sound. It's easier to hear tones I make in the world I live in, as I walk around etc. For example I made an Eel Trap audio piece recently, and after making it noticed that I was hearing certain tones in unrelated places. I'd hear a tone (say from the fridge) and then the whole violin line or vocal would come to me. I am weaving these worlds more and more. And I feel that is the beginning of honing into something that is mapped for me by my ancestors. See when I was in my early 20's I was bush and heard whisperings. I cannot go into the whole story, but just to say that my mind back then had to shift from rational (understanding) to just being, in order to experience what was happening. I rationalised the impossible (voices in the bush) cause I judged the*

*experience, (how can those voices all that way away come bouncing off the bush here and be right in my ear??- that's really what I made myself think) but I needed to let go. And when I did it was better. Then my belly said go, and I left cause there was power and pull. Days later I had a deep feeling that I had become a woman, and I can't explain that. Cause I was fearful that I'd witnessed something negative and so personal, but it ended up good for me. I'm telling that because this workshop (20years later) let's me back to whatever that world is. Writing this, and making these connections, I will begin to listen to the resonating silences that come after the sound I make. I will weave this way, wrapping strings of tones around silent forms that sit in the landscape and sound again, upside down and in all directions.*

*N.B.'s answer to question 9.*

*Yes, a greater awareness of where my comfort zones are, as a result of the practice I believe these have expanded. I use my breath in a fuller refreshing way, noticing how a fuller use of my breath makes me feel positive, strong, yet vulnerable. Breath is now my way in and my way out.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 9.*

*Yes.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 9.*

*Yes. It was an experience where I was asked to reflect on it so yes it did. I don't have my diary with me to be able to take from but definitely lots.*

*U.C.'s answer to question 9.*

*The practice did become known and had an element of repetition to the cycle through various elements. As in all creative endeavours the act of engaging, the combination of individuals including what else had occurred in one's life in the lead up to the workshop, all contributed to that particular moment of resonance. It provided information that at times felt like revealing, sharing, exorcising, imagining, playing and practicing.*

*R.H.'s answer to question 9.*

*(a). Made me feel more connected and aware of my subtle energy body... observing where my body was naturally opening up – like it was expanding me and healing me. I always felt good after the workshops, like I had deeply rested, even though I had participated a lot!*

*(b). The sessions definitely provided a space for me to deepen. Life is busy, and it was such a treat to be able to drop into the Voice Lab world for 3 hours, and allow myself to be “held and guided” by John, through nurturing exercises.*

*(c). If John's work was practiced every day, I believe you would feel really great, in balance, in flow, centred, connected!*

*K.J.'s answer to question 9.*

*Yes. To know ones self is powerful, and the voice is such an integral part of ones self. To find new range, new expression in the voice is empowering beyond the voicelab classes.*

*B.V.'s answer to question 9.*

*I was surprised that I could achieve some of the pitches and ranges of sound. Missed a few too!*

**Question 10. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of taking part in the Voice Lab project?**

*O.A.'s answer to question 10.*

*Thank you for the experience. I feel so privileged to be able to have participated. I worked through a lot of personal stuff - thinking back my baby was 9months old when it began and I struggled a lot being 'alone' with bub. I am now studying again, working and making audio art. The workshop was a great conduit for taking some significant steps into the world*

*N.B.'s answer to question 10.*

*Deep gratitude.*

*M.B.'s answer to question 10*

*It's been a great thing to be a part of! I love that this work is getting acknowledged and supported and that John's lifework is being formed into something which can be recognised externally as a cohesive body of enquiry. This whole business is strange and wonderful and precious.*

*H.C.'s answer to question 10.*

*I really hope it will become an on going practice. I loved the consistency and dedication that the Adelaide group had. I had been wondering what it would have been like to keep our own folders and what if there would have been like to meet more frequently. I didn't really take time to listen to recordings much and I have also been wondering if that would have changed if we had spent some time to listen to those recordings*



*on some of the sessions and explore that aspect of hearing our voices recorded, as a separate experience of course as these are becoming something different.*

*U.C.'s answer to question 10.*

*Personally I would have appreciated more discussion and feedback during the months of the project. What was seen and heard by others, how it felt and developed over time, what affected the work, what was being explored not only by John but by participants as well. What was the relationship to the group in Adelaide? How did their exploration affect the work done in Melbourne and vice versa? I was also quite aware that for me being involved in a project under the umbrella of Victoria University was initially quite difficult and had a strange affect even causing me to lose my voice a couple of times during that period. The joy returned with a refocus on the work and the dedicated line of inquiry being investigated. There is more to say here but just now cannot put it into words...*

*R.H.'s answer to question 10.*

*It was an honour to be part of. I learnt allot, and 'remembered' allot of things that perhaps were always there, but John's work helped open a doorway to reconnect with the centring and meaningful ancient wisdoms that humans hold in the body, voice, breath and spirit. Thank you John.*

*K.J.'s answer to question 10.*

*A life enhancing experience that I whole heartedly recommend to others.*

*D.M.s answer to question 10.*

*Thank you.*

*B.V.'s answer to question 10.*

*I am very glad I took part in the project. It was something new for me.*

## Participant summary reports

Two of the participants chose to give an overall summary report of their experiences in the Voice Lab project as answer to the questionnaire.

*T.F's summary report of the Voice Lab experience.*

*The Voice Lab was an interesting, enjoyable and at times frustrating experience. Time was the challenge, meeting only once a month and sometimes exploring too many things in the four hours. The once a month meeting made it a slow journey into really entering the practice. It was towards the end of the year of workshops that I felt I had a clearer sense of the practice so could easily re enter it and became more open to exploring in a deeper and more honest way for myself.*

*The experiences I had reinforced insights I already had but in a new and perhaps deeper way, as if something was becoming clearer and more conscious through the exercises that were being offered to me to explore.*

*By having a safe environment in which to be able to be as loud and to move around as freely as I wanted was great. I was able, because of this, to push myself beyond what I would normally do especially with my voice. I enjoyed very much the simple exercise of sounding to a note on the piano, ascending and descending as far as possible. In this work I discovered, especially going into a new low range, the relationship of the breath and the production of sound. I was amazed by how much resonance and vibration the body contains and can be experienced.*

*The safe space did allow the exploration of personal dynamics especially when working in pairs or when meeting the other during the exercise. During one form when working in pairs these words came to me, "if someone doesn't want to play with me this is OK". In this moment there was no need to analysis as my whole self received this and understood it. Another time I recall coming into some duet work where there had been no preparation or previous connection with the person beforehand and at this time I noticed I fell into very patterned, mechanical movements and sounds. I wasn't ready to show myself to this other person. These sounds and movements were defensive.*

*The practice provided a beneficial social dynamic for me through the experience of witnessing and being witnessed. Allowing myself to be witnessed when I am exploring new things and not knowing what I'm doing and what will come out in voice and movement. Trusting that whatever happens I won't be judged in this environment so I'm free to explore my self. In everyday life we are never really present enough to witness the other or be witnessed by them.*

*The practice can provide a place where reflection or clarity in relation to ones emotions, thoughts and ways of being in the world can be valuable. To work with sound, movement and the body in a way that is so different to how we mostly engage with these things in our lives, can certainly reveal new ways of being and responding to ourselves, others and the world. Something I really enjoyed and found freedom in was speaking gibberish. It allowed a playful ease to come and with this a freedom to listen in a different way, in a more perceptive way and not just with my ears. I sense that less defence was required, as I wasn't trying to understand the meaning in the words. "No meaning is OK".*

*The opportunity to have a solo workshop was interesting but I enjoyed the workshop where there was only two of us very much. I found it beneficial to share experiences between myself and the other participant. In the group workshops it would have been good to have had more time to talk about what we were experiencing during the session. For me it is very easy to be alone but showing myself around others is the challenge so a group or duet workshop is where I receive the most benefit. The dynamic of my self in relationship to one other and then to the group is more interesting.*

*In the later part of a session where we often did a solo improvisation for the rest of the group was a good experience in trusting. Trusting and not planning, trusting that something would come and then allow myself to simply follow it, trusting time and that I wouldn't become boring. Sensing when something in the piece, that was being created, wanted to change and to allow it even if I wanted to keep following what was already happening. When to follow and when to let go? What presented its self to me was the question of performance and non performance. Questions?*

*A really interesting new experience was, putting no meaning onto the movement or sound, allowing them to be and so being open to the unknown. I enjoyed the time we played with our own names. I like my name because it has lots of vowels in it. It was also interesting hearing and sensing my own name being said from the inside out. We only really hear it coming at us from the outside. Doing it as a duet was fun and playful.*

*The time in the Voice Lab allowed me to really sense in my self that sound is within me and it is unique to me because of my body. This inner sound though also connects me to my whole being and Self. I can manipulate this sound so I feel that I have produced or created it but I'm really only working with what already exists.*

*D.V.'s summary report of the Voice Lab experience.*

*The practice gave me a chance to slow down and connect with my body and breathing mechanism. A chance to feel myself and reflect upon my internal and external sensations – a chance to yield to the floor (earth) as gravity worked upon me. Releasing into the floor enabled a sense of space within me – a sensation of expansion into my full body and the rhythms of my breath.*

*The standing exercise of beginning with movement and ease was always revealing. By slowly engaging limb by limb in slow easeful movement my body responded with a feeling of connectedness...integration that I was constantly surprised by. The beginning with no expectation other than to breath and move with ease one small body part at a time adding together led to a feeling of vitality which I never expected or believed was there at the beginning of a session. Often I arrived in the room rather tired with the demands of the outside world professional and domestic having created tension in different parts of my body and a speed and sometimes brittle relationship with myself. The moving with ease exercise was a very efficient way for me to come into presence and a mind subtle for creative flow. Keeping the mouth open and breath flowing through the system was important in this process. When I closed my mouth or clenched my jaw immediately a tension grew and took me away from the experience of ease of movement and ease.*

*Sounding at the end of this process felt effortless.....sound felt like another aspect of movement in and out of my body and most often I experienced a desire to play with sound at this end of the score. Playing without any desire to achieve. I did engage with a responsive dramaturgy to the sounds I made but never felt stuck or the need to be or make something (or someone.) The sense of expansion the score gave I have already used in my creative practice to create the conditions for discovering new material, and also as a facilitator I have offered this exercise to groups as a way to come into relationship to the individual body-mind self. It is gentle and accessible.*

*There was a joy I experienced in the practice between myself and others.....a time for playfulness without the need for outcomes ....and also a sense of play I had with my own utterings and soundings sometimes musical sometimes noise. The untapped potential of humans always interests me.....the room was full of offerings that in pedestrian environments do seem to be missing or at least frowned upon. To express with sound, connected to body, without formal language ... (and not spontaneously for example in response to violence or abrupt happenings) ... was liberating. There was often so much to say without the contraction of it needing to make sense with the signs and symbols we know so well.*

*Grunting, huffing, laa.laa..ing , cooing - in different ways at different tempos, creating so many textures – felt like being in the fullness of possibility and potential. Letting out all or at least some of the responses that are sometimes stuck within. And then moulding them, shaping them, trying them out with change in rhythm , pitch or tempo ... like a potter with a lump of clay ... anything possible. The silence I feel I am forced to inhabit as a woman, as sensate outsider, a body centred artist in the mundane world ... the room felt like a place to express without having to explain or engage in a psychological response to one's own outpourings. The creative frame of the work was useful for me in that I never felt I had to explain my reasons for making particular sounds.*

*I think the practice is a grounding score which creates the conditions for people at any level of voice experience to come into presence with their somatic experience and through this allow changes in states of emotion and fatigue to take place. The possibility of finding vitality through beginning at centre with the breath, releasing tension .... I think of it as part of the slow movement ... exercises to slow down and take notice, attune to self, discover sensation, discover self at this time, and have license to express with movement and sound the body- mind-spirit self.*

*Being in a group with the level of attunement that occurs from the practice means that people are generally in a state of deep listenning..so their creative responses unconsciously and consciously are responsive to the collective information being expressed. The meditation is one in which one has time to 'see' or "listen" to one's reactions to the external world, and at times play with how much or how little to react. It is a way of learning about one's responses and reactions in a led environment where no one is telling you how to behave. One can experiment.*