

TH181 The Synesthetic Voice: Perceptual landscapes of moving and voicing

Seminar Leader: Alessio Castellacci

Times: Thursdays 9:00-12:15, plus 1 special date on Saturday 23 November

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

During this course you will be introduced to the field of vocal-physical performance, which exists in the interstitial space between the traditional definitions of theatre, dance, music.

In each session we will approach this art form introducing different theoretical frames (theory of Cymatics, anatomy and physiology of the vocal/breathing body, theory of Synesthesia, basic elements of Acoustics, Phonetics and Phonology) followed by different somatic practices to experience and enhance the connection between vocal and kinetic expression.

The course follows an experiential approach, the theoretical activities serving as a compendium to integrate the work on cognitive level. In this process-based approach the centre of the learning trajectory will be your subjectivity, and your availability to be present in each session physically, mentally, emotionally.

The overall goal of the practices I will guide you through is to develop an investigative focus towards the subtleties of sound and motion, through practices of deep listening, impulse work, dynamic meditations, improvised circle-singing, vocal instant composition in small ensembles. It is based on connecting with your own primal voice and to be present to the voice of the others, beyond language or verbal interpretations.

Please note: some of the warm up activities include “hands-on” work in partners, which means that you will be invited to connect with different partner also on a sensitive tactile level. This is done in the respect of each student's personal sensitivity and boundaries, however it requires a motivation to experience the ‘touch’ level of the relationship.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to:

- arrive 5-10 minutes before each class starts, to have time to change clothes if needed and settle down.
- wear clean, warm, comfortable training clothes as we will work physically and sometimes use touch contact, so it is essential for everybody to feel safe and have a pleasant time to observe basic hygienic standards for a movement class (clean socks and clothes in general)
- turn off smartphones during classes, so that we provide a space with less EM radiations during the somatic work.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. In case of missing a class, it is appreciated for the student to get in touch via email with the teacher to give a short update. Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment

There will be 3 assignments given throughout the course:

One mid-term assignment in the form of an audio recording of 7 min of the student improvising vocally on a specific score which will be given by the teacher. The recording can be made with any standard recording device (i.e. a smartphone) and will need to be handed to the teacher via email as an audio file attachment (mp3, wav, aiff) by latest 13 October 2019.

A second audio recording assignment (10 min vocal improv audio recording) to be recorded in small ensembles, to be handed in the same modality by the 2nd December 2019)

A final written assignment, in the form of a short self-evaluation essay of the student's personal learning process during the semester. The written assignment will need to be handed via email by Dec 7th, 2019. It will consist in a short essay of max 1500 words (min 500) and will not require research other than a process of self-inquiry regarding the experience done in the course.

Other assignments will be given during each class, in the form of individual and collaborative short performances to be improvised for the group during class time.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Please note that no late essay will be accepted. Please refer to the policy from the Student Handbook on the submission of essays: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

Grade Breakdown

The student's grade will be assigned according to 3 aspects: the level of participation during all classes (intended as an active, focused, cooperative engagement with the activities proposed) (35%), the level of commitment and personal risk-taking during the activities of improvised performance (35%), the 3 assignments (2 audio recordings and 1 written self-evaluation) (30%). Please note that for this class punctuality is of great importance, and being late to more than one class will affect the student's grade.

Schedule Fall 2019

WEEK 37

Sept 12 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Introduction of Alessio Castellacci's work / brief introduction of Sound Physics (propagation of sound in space) and of Cymatics Theory (history and scientific paradigm) with graphics and short videos / vibrational sound massage exercise / group feedback - reflection

WEEK 38

Sept 19 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Introduction of anatomy and physiology of the 3 systems: Moving Body / Breathing Body / Vocal Body and their interconnectedness / body - voice warm up / playful exercises to approach the 'voice in movement'.

WEEK 39

Sept 26 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Warm up / Anatomy of diaphragm / guided imagery based voice/movement exploration #1 “the 7 diaphragms” / group exchange / introduction to Vowels / group feedback

WEEK 41

Oct 10 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Warm up / Anatomy of the “3 tubular structures” (spine / esophagus/ trachea) / guided imagery-based voice&movement exploration #2 “the 3 tubes” / group exchange / Vowels work #2 / group feedback

WEEK 42

Oct 17 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Guest: Deep Listening session with sound artist Krishe

WEEK 43

Oct 24 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Introduction to Osho Dynamic Meditations / warm up with “No Mind Mediation” / introduction to Phonetics and Phonology / showing short videos of “the dance of the articulators” / exploring Consonants production #1 / group feedback

WEEK 45

Nov 7 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Warm up with “No Mind Mediation” / energetic hands-on work in partners / exploring Consonants production #2 / introduction to Percussive Breath technique / improvisation with rhythmical breath loops / conversation on the musicality of Breath and on musical parameters of tempo, accents, groove, pauses, intensity, texture, embodiment / group feedback.

WEEK 46

Nov 14 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Voice and body warm up / from Percussive Breath to Percussive Melodies (hand metronomet method / allowing vocal melodies to emerge in a non-judgmental way / working in partners) / group feedback.

WEEK 47

Nov 21 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Voice and body warm up / Percussive Melodies work #2 (playing with tempo-pulse change / improvising in duet / instant-looping simple melodic phrases) / group feedback

WEEK 47

Nov 23 Sat 11:00 – 14:15

Introduction to Synesthetic Perception / synesthetic experience #1: blindfolded guided sensorial exploration in partners (touch/sound) / group feedback

WEEK 48

Nov 28 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Voice & movement warm up / exercises on vocal and kinetic impulses: “responsive feedback”/ “enhancing the partner’s journey”/ “witness – director verbal inputs” // individual and group mapping on paper of all the topics and approaches covered so far in the Synesthetic Voice classes / group feedback on questions and wishes for specific topics to be deepened in the last 3 sessions

WEEK 49

Dec 5 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Warm up / going through materials and techniques studied so far: vowels, consonants, percussive breath and melodies, impulse work / creating simple simple scores to improvise in small ensembles (solo, duets, trios) / sharing with the group / assignment of written self-evaluation to bring to the following class

WEEK 50

Dec 12 Thu 09:00 – 12:15

Closing session: group reflection on personal development and questions / each student will be invited to bring a short written self-evaluation of their own learning process during the semester / sharing of short improvisations with the group as a way to integrate the semester learning in an experiential, embodied way.