


Stimmen, dazwischen

Deutscher Abstract: Dieser Aufsatz befasst sich mit einer Reihe von Stäblers und Shims Vokalwerken und zeigt ihre Auffassungen von Stimme mithilfe der Begriffe von Heterotopie und Utopie (nach Michel Foucault und Michel de Certeau) auf. Stimmen markieren in Shims und Stäblers Werken den Übergang vom subjektiven Innen zum natürlichen oder öffentlichen Außen. Stäblers *Winter, Blumen* und *Belfast Breakfast Songs* erkunden die Stimme, veräußern sie völlig und destabilisieren jeden klaren, wiederauffindbaren Sinn des Selbst. Shims *Herbststücke* und *Wald, Inneres* schlagen einen gegensätzlichen Kurs ein – die Stimme stellt hier einen geschützten, privaten Raum her und ist Zeichen widerstandsfähiger Innerlichkeit. Schließlich erweist sich Stäblers *All is to be dared* gleichermaßen als Diagnose der gegenwärtigen Befindlichkeit der Stimme als etwas zu Kontrollierendem (aufgrund einer Rolle bei der Übertragung von Viren) wie auch als mahnende Erinnerung durch Sapphos Dichtung, dass es auch anders sein kann. Diese Andersartigkeit der Stimme – ihr Potenzial, eine Heterotopie intimer Vermittlung zu werden – ist es, was uns die jüngste Vokalmusik von Shim und Stäbler anbietet. Ihre Stimmen rufen uns dazu auf, andere Wege der Beziehung zu imaginieren, andere Wege, das Zusammensein zu wagen, und dies mit Mitgefühl, Verantwortung und Fürsorge zu tun.



I. Heterotopic voices

In the aesthetics of Gerhard Stäbler, music functions in a manner similar to Michel Foucault's "heterotopias". Sound acts a switching point between power relations. In doing so, it produces under-determined zones of possibility. In his elaboration of the concept, Foucault offers the mirror and the cemetery (among others) as examples of heterotopias. Both the mirror and the cemetery mark a passage of the self to the outside—whether that is the unreal utopic space of uncanny reflection in which we see ourself seeing ourself, or the passage from life into death.¹ When we inhabit these zones as they emerge in musical performance, we are similarly drawn out of ourselves into encounters with crisis, deviation, or passage. Stäbler has glossed Foucault to powerful effect, arguing that,

Music could belong to these heterotopias and—like photographs—crystallize moments in order to store them up, 'a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. [...]' Music could thus— as *another place*, as both illusory and disillusory space—initiate a 'playing with fire' that ignites emotional and cognitive discussion of that which is and that which might be. Music could play its way through the question of which doors are closed, in which direction they should be *opened* ² 

Stäbler along with his longtime partner in art and life, Kunsu Shim, have persistently (one might even say obstinately) questioned and experimented with which doors can and should be opened by music. The interpretation and experience of their work in performance depends upon the good faith adoption of this questioning attitude by listeners and performers so that each might be brought out of themselves into the world as Stäbler and Shim reflect (or refuse) to reflect it. With its formulation of heterotopic possibilities, Stäbler and Shim's music functions similarly to the "crisis heterotopia" as Foucault describes it: "privileged or sacred or forbidden places reserved for individuals who are in a state of crisis with respect to society and the human milieu in which they live. Adolescents, menstruating women, women in labor, old people, and so on."³ And to this list I would also add *musician*. What is musical performance but a reconfigured rite in which the individual is transfigured,

1 Michel Foucault, *Andere Räume*. In: *LandMarks/Ear Marks. Gerhard Stäbler und sein Werk*, ed. Bojan Budisavljevic. Duisburg: ConBrio 1999, pp. 13–20.

2 Gerhard Stäbler: *Heterotopias*. In: *live the opposite daring. Gerhard Stäbler. Music · graphic · concept · event*, ed. Paul Attinello. Bidingen: Pfau 2015, pp. 147–151, here p. 148.

3 Michel Foucault, *Different Spaces*. In: *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Free Press 1998, p. 179.

made exterior to themselves and brought into fraught relationship with others? This is a modernist conception, no doubt, one that resists the alienation we experience under late capitalism and its culture industry. Yet, such heterotopic possibility—what Stähler calls the ignition of “emotional and cognitive discussion of that which is and that which might be”—is what his and Shim’s music continues to offer up to us. Just how this play of exteriority and interiority transpires between the work of Stähler and Shim is what I explore in what follows. My tack will be to examine how voices are the doors through which the movement betwixt and between inside and outside. What their work reveals, I wager, is there ultimately is no distinction between subjective (personal) inside and objective (natural) outside and that this unity of experience makes specific ethical demands upon us.

II. Stimmen, Vermittler

Approaching voice in Stähler and Shim’s music requires a flexible conception of its affordances. It is no authentic or transparent window into the subject-singer’s inner emotional life. It reveals nothing essential, nothing conventionally expressive, nor even sincere. Voices are material with which to engage the world, to make sense of sound, theater, instruments, text, and other voices. A singer’s voice is a site for the exploration of excesses of timbre, signification, technique, and identification. Shim and Stähler’s music takes a dialectical approach to excess. We can find, for instance, in Stähler’s *... drüber* for 8 active screamers, synthesizer, cello, and tape an excessive transgression of technique and musical aesthetics. On the other hand, we find in Shim’s *Your Face* a excess of reticence, one that produces a particular kind of queer opacity and refusal of access to the subjective-romantic interiority.⁴ Following Adorno, we might take their vocal compositions as an instance of negative dialectics in which the voice—as concept and event—is an objective marker of non-identity, irreducible to any essence. A voice’s mutability is its virtue and indeed marks its heterotopic possibilities—possibilities explored again and again in Shim and Stähler’s works.

Moving from Adorno back to Hegel, we might also conceptualize Shim and Stähler’s voices as mediators. In this sense, voices are sites of world- and place-making in which

4 Ryan Dohoney, *Die alltägliche Queerness von “Your Face”*. In: *leise, frei. der komponist kunsu shim*, eds. Elisabeth von Leliwa/Enno Stahl. Düsseldorf: Edition Virgines 2018, pp. 60–69.

all sorts of meanings and techniques coalesce. This mediating function of voice jibes well with musicologist James Q. Davies, who has conceptualized voice and its mediating possibilities:

[V]oice connects to political ontologies of the here and now, human relations, and our shared materiality today. It relates intimately not only to nature and our bodies but also to the fight over what that nature is. My point is that we build worlds around voices, worlds at once cultural-technological and natural-biological. The good news is that our bodies are not just biological or pre-given. Nature is not just self-evident. Our bodies are there of course, but not just there. It is not enough to say that you get one (biology: there it is!) and then you get the other (voilà: your voice!). Voices do not only come from bodies or nature; bodies—our very natures—also come from voices.⁵

I'll explore the relationship between voices and nature in dialog with Stäbler and Shim's recent works below, but at for now I want to home in on Davies's insight that voices connect us to a plurality of relations: "we build worlds around voices." But the inverse is also true – voices build worlds through their mediating, heterotopic powers. Vocalic action is what the world, what music, passes through in order to be. An example of from Stäbler's oeuvre will illustrate what I mean.

Winter, Blumen (1995) is a work conceived for solo voice (though it can be played in myriad instrumental versions) written for the countertenor Carl Strygg. Its notational form is hybrid—presenting traditional staff notation in alternation with a calligraphic script that requires the imaginative interpretation of the performer. Stäbler notes that:

Winter, Blumen was inspired by Friedrich Hölderlin's poem *Hälfte des Lebens*. At the same time, it includes all the depressing and cheering impressions of the meetings with the people in the Lebanon, who, in spite of the immense devastation, have preserved their spontaneity, openness, their courageous laughter and humour, in short: their zest for life.⁶

What, then, does Stäbler ask of the voices that take up *Winter, Blumen*? What are they to mediate? On the surface level, a singer must negotiate the notational variety

5 James Q. Davies, *Voice Belongs*. In: Journal of the American Musicological Society Vol. 68, Number 3 (2015): pp. 677–681, here p. 681.

6 Gerhard Stäbler, *Winter, Blumen* (1995). Duisburg: Edition EarPort.

GERHARD STÄBLER
WINTER, BLUMEN
1995

GEPIFFEN ODER GESUNNT

GEPIFFEN ODER GESUNNT

Gerhard Stäbler, *Winter, Blumen*, p. 1 (1995, edition EarPort)

(staff, calligraphic), the additional demands to supplement and indeed multiply their own voice with multiphonics, or the addition of wind instruments such as a mouth harmonica, lotus flute, jaw ~~harm~~, or another. Even before the matter of poetic interpretation, Stähler asks that a voice become more than one—it is to exceed itself. All of this is to be negotiated without any superficial tension. Even if there is an excess of technique required, Stähler does not want this to spill over into an excess of quasi-theatrical strain or pseudo-drama. In this, the performer is asked to mediate the profound spirit of Hölderlin’s poetic text and to do so in the absence of language. None of Hölderlin’s words are set and the singer vocalizes for the most part on open vowel sounds. What the singer must translate into sound is the “great calm” ~~Stähler calls for and~~ that one can intuit in the poem. But this calm is itself mediated by “all the depressing and cheering impressions of the meetings with the people in the Lebanon”, which invites the singer to translate the “spontaneity, openness, their courageous laughter” Stähler recognized among them.

With *Winter, Blumen*, a voice must build up a world from a collection of fragments—fragments of notation, of timbre, of sound-making tools, of poetic insight, of biographical experience. The crisis-event of the performance, as a heterotopic space, produces nothing definitive but convokes a field of sound and meaning that a voice, in all its fragility, works to hold together.

III. Excess, Glossolalia

“THE MOUTH IS INTERESTING BECAUSE IT IS
ONE OF THOSE PLACES WHERE THE DRY OUTSIDE
MOVES TOWARD THE SLIPPERY INSIDE.”

Jenny Holzer, from *Living* (1980–82)

While *Winter, Blumen* asks a singer to pull together a world from heterogenous materials, Stähler’s *Belfast Breakfast Songs* (1996) estranges the singer’s body from itself, forcing a newly configured voice to emerge from thorough reterritorialization. This voice is a new “vocal utopia” in which singing technique and expression are rebuilt from a novel partitioning of the body’s phonic substance. The effect is diametrically opposed to the calm of *Winter, Blumen*—here excess is demanded:

“The choice of tempi should cover the extremes. The use of the voice as well should explore all the limits. In this, the third song requires nine different levels of speaking, reaching from extremely low till extremely high. These must be adapted to the possibilities of the voice. Every hint of mediocrity is unfavourable to the interpretation of the compositions.”²⁷



BELFAST BREAKFAST SONGS I GERHARD STÄBLER (1996)

Gerhard Stäbler,
Belfast Breakfast Songs I
(1996, edition EarPort)

In my experience learning *Belfast Breakfast Songs*, the corporeal sensation is akin to turning oneself inside out. The mouth is heterotopic pivot point, reversing the movement Holzer reflects upon in this section’s epigraph. While executing *Belfast Breakfast Songs*, my slippery inside is expelled as air, saliva, neologisms, and all sorts of timbres come pouring forth. This excess is directed towards a wanting-to-say-something without saying anything in particular. With this, Stäbler’s songs approach that vocal utopia that Michel de Certeau has recognized in glossolalia—that is a speaking in tongues, the enunciation of a semblance of language, or pure *fabla*.⁸ De Certeau argues that glossolalia is no rare phenomenon—it erupts in the interstices of everyday language, those “cracks of everyday conversation: bodily noises, quotations of delinquent sounds, and fragments of others’ voices.”⁹ These ruptures effect secondary vocalizations that splice or dub the primary voice. In this sense, the vocal doubling effects in *Winter, Blumen* are a species of glossolalia in de Certeau’s schema. The vocal partitioning into extremes as Stäbler achieves in the *Belfast Breakfast Songs*,

7 Gerhard Stäbler, *Belfast Breakfast Songs* (1996). Essen: Edition Aktive Musik.

8 Michel de Certeau, *Vocal Utopias: Glossolalia*, trans. Daniel Rosenberg. In: *Representations* 56 (1996): pp. 29–47, here p. 29.

9 Ibid.

is yet another. Joined to the fictive language he creates for the songs, Stäbler's work exemplifies the second of the types of glossolalia ~~that de~~ Certeau defines. The first of these is founded on a belief in saying, that is, an understanding of voice as an oracular, spiritual torrent. This is the religious mode of speaking in tongues that believes in the possibility of excessive revelation. The second mode, one to which Stäbler's work here and in other works subscribes,

deconstructs the articulate speech on which it is founded by playing with phonemes and/or deriding the spoken word. ... Literary, ludic, or infantile, and on occasion pathological, this form of glossolalia crosses through the boundary of statements to test the potentialities of the vocal palette, to fill a space of enunciation with polyphonic chatter before falling into silence.¹⁰

This second type of glossolalia we find throughout the avant-garde, be that in Kurt Schwitter's *Ursonate*, Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III*, or in Giacinto Scelsi's *Wo Ma*. The partitioning of the voice into "polyphonic chatter" has a storied tradition, one that Stäbler continues as he transforms it. Here the extremes of the singer's interiority (lungs, larynx, viscera) meet the extreme exterior demands of Stäbler's glossolalic art. The mouth becomes their heterotopic switching point, or the point at which these two extremes dissolve into one another. Stäbler finds common cause with Jenny Holzer who also writes in her *Survival* series: "WITH ALL THE HOLES IN YOU ALREADY THERE'S NO REASON TO DEFINE THE OUTSIDE ENVIRONMENT AS ALIEN."

IV. Flat Interiors, Excesses of Reticence

Stäbler's vocal works as I have described them function as crisis heterotopias that flatten out distinctions between the subjective inside and objective outside. They do this by courting vocalic and corporeal excesses that ultimately undo any sharp distinctions between the singer and the world. Voices build worlds, certainly, and in doing so they become entangled with them and part of the natural environment. A different, yet complementary form of excess is at work in Shim's vocal music, that is an excess of reticence. While Stäbler's vocal demands become histrionic and

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 32.

superfluous—and in doing so resist the idea that there is any unified expression that a voice is capable of—Shim’s music with its intense quietude and austere focus on poetic words and their intelligibility renders the voice’s supposed expressive authenticity inaccessible to others. I’ve described this in my previous work on Shim as a semblance of opaque interiority and he has written eloquently of his understanding of it:

However, each person must use his own “place” as wellspring for inspiration. For me it is therefore necessary to preserve the private space, as more and more society attempts to intrude with its “external systems”, by x-raying, scanning and dominating everything. I notice that private space, which I find essential, is becoming ever more public, just as it was long ago prophesized in George Orwell’s novel, *1984*. By “private space”, I mean a not yet illuminated room inside.¹¹

To protect this private place—and in contradistinction to Stähler—Shim gives his singers a paucity of material with which to compose their performance. *Herbststücke* (2005) is exemplary in this regard. A cycle of poems by Rilke, *Herbststücke* calls upon the voice to simply recite the poetic texts with a single word on a single pitch. The vocal range lies mainly in a comfortable middle range, allowing the singer to sing the tones “sehr leise (pp)” without much trouble. Shim’s vocal writing does not afford the usual type of vocal expression that we find in more conventional music where arching melodies give singers more opportunities for those markers of traditional expression such as dynamic swells or emotional imitation. Indeed, Shim’s vocal writing in *Herbststücke* merges by and large with the piano part. Frequently, they share pitch material and the voice hovers between its presence as a voice and, at the same time, as ~~sustaining~~ extension of the piano’s sonority. In this, Shim conveys a fundamental paradox of the voice as identified by Adorno:

[T]he voice, as a medium of the human, i.e. of the end, and at the same times the means, the instrument, and this causes it great difficulty for the sake of its corporeal, vital quality. It must be made an instrument *and* preserved in this. If it becomes *purely* an instrument, entirely alienated from itself, then it leads to the phenomenon referred to by Agathe [Cavalli, Adorno’s aunt] as “singing like a singer”.¹²

11 *Trialog. A conversation with Kyungwoo Chun, Kunsu Shim, Gerhard Stähler*. In: *bild.klang.los*. Saarbrücken: Pfau 2009, pp. 57–82, here p. 65.

12 Theodor W. Adorno, *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction. Notes, a Draft and Two Schemata*, ed. Henri Lonitz. Cambridge: Polity 2006, pp. 88–89.

HERBSTSTÜCKE (RILKE)

für Klavier und Gesang

Kunsu Shim

1. Ins Herz, leise (abend spät)

• = ca. 5"

2. Einsamkeit

• = ca. 5"

3. Die Stille

• = ca. 5"

- Wenn es nicht anders markiert ist, bleibt das Pedal während eines Stückes durchweg niedergedrückt.
 - Alle Töne sind durchweg sehr leise (pp), jedoch klangvoll und möglichst ohne vibrato bei dem Gesang zu spielen.
 - Alle Töne auf dem Bassschlüssel bei Klavier sind dabei etwas noch leiser zu spielen.
 • = ca. 5"

* (bar) = unhörbar

Kunsu Shim, *Herbststücke 1-3* (2005, edition EarPort)

The paradox, or at least the irony in Shim's work is that by holding back on the means of expression, the voice as an end in itself can opaquely appear. This is what I think Shim means when he speaks of preserving a private space in his music. In its refusal to offer everything up, to project one's innermost feelings outward (a process that Stähler explodes through his glossolalic fictions), the voice as the index of a private self is retained even as the voice communicates Rilke's lyrics of lonely memory.

V. Nature, Voices

It is precisely because we are permeable, vulnerable beings that Shim insists upon a need for some part of ourselves to be held back. Yet, even as his voices do not provide total access to personal interiority, they do go about building worlds of reciprocal communication integrated with nature. To return to the idea of mediation and heterotopia, Shim's recent work *Wald, Inneres* (2019) stages a (negative) dialectical encounter between nature, figured as the *Wald* and subjective interiority that is the *Inneres* of the work's title. In doing so, Shim's music is aligned with a view of voice articulated by James Q. Davies, invoked at the outset of this essay. To reiterate, Davies argues that voice "relates intimately not only to nature and our bodies but also to the fight over what that nature is". And nature, for Shim is paradoxically a space outside ourselves that—in opposition to the administered world—affords us access to the private space of protected, opaque inwardness that works such as *Herbststücke* and *Your Face* are at pains to protect. Shim's instructions for the singers of *Wald, Inneres* captures this duality: "All tones are very soft, mysterious, without vibrato, but can be sung with resonance. They resound and fade away barely noticeably and radiate great tenderness and deep inwardness."¹³ A sense of mystery—*Zärtlichkeit, und tiefe Innerlichkeit*—is projected through the performance, though the music's immanent characteristic prevent this encounter between nature and the self to be entirely appropriated. Voice, through the interaction of its parameters, mediates Shim's complex ideas about nature and subjectivity. Shim, like Holzer, refuses to define the outside world as alien. Nature is a resource for inwardness and both must be protected from incursions of the excesses of human technoculture. Shim's protection extends beyond his directives to the singers to his distribution of the text. From the extensive corpus of nature poems in Dickinson's oeuvre, Shim has chosen fragments whose

13 Kunsu Shim, *Wald, Inneres* für acht Sänger (2019), trans. Ryan Dohoney. Duisburg: edition EarPort.

WALD, INNERES

für acht Sanger

Kunsu Shim (2019)

sehr leise, geheimnisvoll und auerst zart

ca. 90" - 120"

quasi Rezitativ rit....*

S
[... now, difference, celebrates, summer, grace, repose, now, grace, and to [was the air] [this present] 1. dew 2. as [we, in the grass, 1. some
be seen, loneliness, be seen, from, summer, the air] present] 3. child 4. in as a child, for, 2. as 3. our
at noon, difference, now, it becomes ...] 5. saw 6. sign nature's show] 4. as 5. still

quasi Rezitativ rit....* x8 x5

A
[... it becomes, spectral, arise, it becomes, how [to any happy 1. filled present many 1. the [we saw,
now, be seen, birds, that, summer, be seen, it flower the frost 2. air] 2. what and, some]
becomes, now, difference, repose, when ...] beheads it at its play]

quasi Rezitativ rit....* x2 x2 x2 quasi Rezitativ

A
[... loneliness, at noon, repose, that, [how happy is] day [in tinsel] 1. with 2. in [what we 1. we in
from, burning, yet, grace, now, yet, birds, grass, from ...] happy is] 3. air 4. was saw] 2. on 3. some

quasi Rezitativ rit....* x8 x3

A
[... from, birds, it becomes, grace, difference, [casual 1. day [and gone] mean 1. tiny [in the grass, [what we
now, yet, no, furrow, enhances, grace, pensive, simplicity] 2. passes] 2. and many] saw, as,
loneliness, grace, summer, birds, than ...] 3. hills 3. signs some]

quasi Rezitativ rit....* x2 x3 x3 x3

T
[... from, birds, it becomes, grace, difference, [casual 1. day [and gone] mean 1. tiny [in the grass, [what we
now, yet, no, furrow, enhances, grace, pensive, simplicity] 2. passes] 2. and many] saw, as,
loneliness, grace, summer, birds, than ...] 3. hills 3. signs some]

quasi Rezitativ rit....* x5 x3 x3 x3

T
[... minor, it becomes, now, difference, now, at 1. alone on 1. this [and gone] 1. out- 1. and [the tents to]
noon, summer, birds, minor, celebrates, now, from, difference, remit, at noon, when ...] 2. care 2. in 2. -side 2. on
3. about 3. with 3. - 5. still 3. signs

quasi Rezitativ rit....* x5 x3 x3 x3


B
[... when, grass, be seen, from, summer, [a passing [accidental 1. gone 1. and [as a child] [in the [as a child]
low, spectral, celebrates, birds, be seen, universe put on, and independet as the sun] 2. and 3. air 2. gone [as a child] [in the [as a child]
grace, now, yet, no, yet, customs, pensive, low, now ...] 3. makes 3. makes [as a child] [in the [as a child]
further, now, nature, difference, grace, at noon, be seen ...]

quasi Rezitativ rit....* x3 x3 x3 x3

B
[... difference, it becomes, celebrates, [absolute [to any 1. - 3. air 1. this 1. what [and the [beneath
be seen, grass, it becomes, birds, decree] happy] 2. street 2. we 2. hills] our feet]
further, now, nature, difference, grace, at noon, be seen ...] 3. saw 3. saw

* Diese Pause ist - einzige Ausnahme - fur alle gemeinsam und gleich lang. Die unmittelbar folgenden Aktionen sind jedoch wie alle anderen Aktionen "individuell" einzusetzen.

intelligibility is hindered. While he does not go so far as to transform Dickinson's language into glossolalia (as Stähler might), he does rupture her syntax and sentence structure such that phrases appear as ghostly echoes across the ensemble. The initial text of the second bass part reads: "... difference, it becomes, celebrates, be seen, grass, it becomes, birds, further, now, nature, difference, grace, at noon, be seen ...". We are presented with images, but no commanding narrative. These images saturate the whole ensemble from the outset of the work as each voice has their own fragmentary texts. While some phrases are shared between voice parts, the density of the musical texture and the non-alignment of the individual parts make the words largely unintelligible (I say this as an English speaker—the experience of linguistic estrangement is likely even more pronounced for non-English speakers). Shim's voices, with their opacity and resistance to appropriation by the listener, do the double work of protecting both nature and the private space of each individual singer. Inasmuch as voices participate in the complex debates over what nature is, Shim deploys them in order to show that we are in and of nature. Our inwardness is its inwardness and this resistant space must be protected at all costs.



That we have failed to protect both nature and ourselves ~~has~~ becomes more and more apparent with the slow-motion climate catastrophe and the advent of the "Coronakrise". While Shim has, with *Wald, Inneres*, posited a musical heteropia ~~the~~ realizes a utopic vision of personal and natural inwardness, Stähler's recent work *all is to be dared* (2020) translates the tensions and conflicts of contemporary life into his chaotic musical ideolekt. It is, I think, no coincidence that Stähler depends upon the mediating capacities of the voice to present the current crises in all its visceral vividness.

While Shim seems rather optimistic about the possibility of preserving nature and/as the space of human interiority, Stähler seems less so at first glance. He concedes that nature and human nature are less distinct than we might think. They are united in that they are both beyond our control. To make this point, Stähler places *all is to be dared* under an epigraph from Yuval Noah Harari:

The process of self-exploration begins with very simple things and becomes progressively more difficult. First of all, we find that we cannot control the

The image displays a musical score for a vocal ensemble. The parts are Soprano I, Soprano II, Alto I, Alto II, Tenor I, Tenor II, Bass I, and Bass II. The score includes Greek lyrics and phonetic transcriptions in brackets. Dynamic markings such as \underline{p} , \underline{pp} , and \underline{ppp} are used to indicate volume changes. Dashed lines and arrows connect these markings across different parts, showing how they relate to specific lyrics and musical phrases. For example, Soprano I's \underline{ppp} - \underline{pp} marking corresponds to the lyrics "... zu roter Maske wechseln ...". Tenor II's \underline{p} - \underline{pp} marking corresponds to "ε α γε" [ä] [a] [gä]. Bass I's \underline{p} - \underline{pp} marking corresponds to "λεπ" [läp].

Sop. I
 κομ — μεν —
 [kam] [män]
 ... zu roter Maske wechseln ...

Sop. II
 γλωσ — σα —
 [glo:s] [sa]
 ... zu roter Maske wechseln ...

Ten. II
 ε — α — γε
 [ä] [a] [gä]
 ... zu roter Maske wechseln ...

Bass I
 λεπ —
 [läp]
 zu Gesichtsvier wechseln ...

Gerhard Stäbler, *all is to be dared*, part II "LAUSCHEN", p. 62 (2020, edition EarPort)

world outside of us. I don't decide when it rains. Then we realize that we cannot control what is happening in our own body. I have no control over my blood pressure. Next, we understand that we don't even have control of our brains. I don't tell the neurons when to fire. Finally, we should realize that we are also out of control over our desires, or even our reactions to our desires. Understanding this can help us be less obsessive about our opinions and feelings—and more attentive to other people. It can also help to explore the truth about ourselves.¹⁴

Both our external and internal worlds are beyond our conscious control. This lack of control breaks down the distinction between objective exteriority and subjective interiority. Our perforated bodies—taking in air and food and viruses, giving back sound, phlegm, and shit—are entangled such that no hard and fast distinction can be made. Passed from person to person, the virus has shown that any sense of a protected interior is a luxurious idea that we cannot afford. Yet, like Shim, Stäbler insists upon an ethical response to these conditions and does so by formalizing the reciprocal exchange of voices across space (that of the ensemble) and time (reaching back to the time of the Greek poetess Sappho). Stäbler writes:

It reflects thoughts on the nature and future of humans in a rapidly changing time that is increasingly shaped by big data, biochemical manipulations and artificial intelligence. But where is what is unmistakable in humans? Since this will probably focus in the future on the physical sensation and cognition, on the mind and consciousness of the human being, exactly what Sappho describes in her poem fragment # 31 comes back into focus: Paying attention to the other, feeling and perceiving the other, including them
Empathy, suffering with him.¹⁵

What sort of invitation to the other does *all is to be dared* offer to us? How are our empathy and compassion engaged by the performance? Again, the mouth is the terrain upon which Stäbler stages this particular human-natural drama. As he had with *Belfast Breakfast Songs*, Stäbler focuses on the mouth as a site of exchange between the subjective inside and the objective outside. Yet, the 25 years between the pieces have wrought drastic changes in how we understand the voice in relation to a body

14 Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lektionen für das 21. Jahrhundert*, trans. Ryan Dohoney. München: C. H. Beck 2018, pp. 458–459.

15 Gerhard Stäbler, *all is to be dared* (2020). Duisburg: edition EarPort.

turned inside out. This relationship is particularly fraught in the second movement of the work, *Lauschen*. Herein, Stäbler takes up those all too familiar accessories from 2020—masks and visors. He instructs the singers:

All parts with the Greek Sappho text are to be sung with a transparent visor, the harmonious layer, however, with red masks. The change from visor to mask and vice versa should take place very calmly. The harmonious layer must therefore be faded out or faded in individually in ample time.¹⁶

In earlier works like *Winter, Blumen* and the *Belfast Breakfast Songs*, Stäbler's compositions freely reterritorialized the mouth as a site of exuberant exchange between inside and outside, yet here, the mouth as a site of emission is blocked. The porous holes that link us up to the world are covered over, the sounds muffled by cloth or diffracted by plastic. That the music is among Stäbler's most beautiful makes this vocal estrangement all the more poignant and, indeed, harrowing. We watch the singers block their own voices, limit their own ability to communicate sonorously with the audience and one another.¹⁷ *All is to be dared* is both a diagnosis of the voice's present condition as a something to be controlled because of its role in viral transmission and a stark reminder, via Sappho's poetry, that it can be otherwise. This otherwise of the voice—its potential to become a heterotopia of intimate mediation—is what the recent vocal music of both Stäbler and Shim offer up to us. Their voices call out to us to imagine other ways of relating, other ways to dare to be together, and to do so with compassion, responsibility, and care.

16 Ibid. II. 1.

17 Video production of Stäbler's *all is to be dared* with AuditivVokal Dresden on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBJKm49RrMU (accessed 28. Feb. 2022)