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### The electronic cry: Voice and gender in electroacoustic music

Bosma, H.M.

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In my quest for a picture for the cover of this book, I was confronted with the fact that voice and sound are invisible. Moreover, invisibility is of specific importance to electroacoustic music. Its most radical form is acousmatic music: without any visual component, and best listened to with closed eyes. But even when there are performers or other visual aspects, the essence of electroacoustic music is the loudspeakers – rather neutral entities, that do not look very exciting, and that are to a large extent independent of the sounds being heard. However, in the end I did find a wonderful, meaningful picture: a photograph from the music theatre piece *Lautsprecher Arnolt*. Although my dissertation does not focus on music theatre, and I do not discuss this work, it does relate to my study in several ways.

*Lautsprecher Arnolt* is a co-creation by several authors or creative actors. Huba de Graaff is the composer and the creator of its main concepts, such as the role of the multifaceted loudspeakers, a recurring theme in her oeuvre. Indeed, in a study on gender and music, one might expect a focus on female composers. Nevertheless, I have a different approach. Firstly, gender concerns both femininity and masculinity, female-ness and male-ness. Secondly, I focus more on music and its surroundings than on persons. I also argue that a focus on gender could result in a shift away from or a critical distance to ‘the author’ or ‘the composer’. This is a thread throughout the dissertation and is also specifically discussed in Chapters I and VII. In fact, most compositions discussed in this dissertation are by male composers – but with ‘the Death of the Author’ in mind, this may not matter much, as the focus is on the music and its surroundings, on its voices, and on the listener’s interpretation. However, it is not by accident that I chose a picture of a work by a female composer. The danger of doing away with the Author, is that one repeats the stereotypical disregard for female composers. But to single out female composers is tricky in several respects. The problematic question whether female composers form a group and whether there is a specific feminine musical style, is discussed in Chapter XIII. There, I point out that the electroacoustic work of women is often interdisciplinary and collaborative, mixing and transgressing disciplines, roles or genres. And again this may challenge the notion

of authorship. In this respect, both *Lautsprecher Arnolt* and Huba de Graaff's oeuvre can be considered exemplary.

Loudspeakers are not neutral, quasi-invisible entities in De Graaff's work, but hilarious personae, or otherwise prominently present. Far from hidden or neutral, a demystification and creative (re-)invention of the electroacoustic apparatus is an important thread in her work. In *Lautsprecher Arnolt*, the stage is overcrowded with all kinds of loudspeakers. Some loudspeakers are like singing puppets, which move independently or are manipulated by the only human actor (Marien Jongewaard), seemingly in a dialogue. The loudspeakers are also material entities, funny looking, inventive objects, but also obstacles that stand in the way and are thrown around. The loudspeakers emit a quasi-cacophony of voices, sounds and musical styles, partaking in the performance and evolving along with the dramatic course. While having fun with loudspeakers, *Lautsprecher Arnolt* also has a political focus, dramatizing the role of public address sound technology (amplification, radio, television) in Nazi Germany and other mass movements: loudspeakers as a political medium. It is a show with loudspeakers, about loudspeakers. This emphasis on both playfulness and socio-political meaning of sound technology, instead of the assumption of neutrality, abstraction and perfection of the electroacoustic apparatus, contrasts with the strong tendency towards a formalist-technological discourse in electroacoustic music as discussed in Chapter I.

As I demonstrate in Chapter II, a female vocalist and a male composer are a common combination in electroacoustic music, especially in the traditional concert setting; and this relates to gender patterns in other cultural domains. The performance of male actor Marien Jongewaard is remarkable in this respect. Marien Jongewaard's performance is intense, bodily, emotional, expressive; ranting, singing, screaming and crying like a madman. Such a departure from the stereotypical musical gender patterns goes together with an avoidance of traditional musical-institutional conventions. The diverse field of electroacoustic music harbours both reinforcements of gender conventions and transgressions of such stereotypes.

In *Lautsprecher Arnolt*, the bizarre story of the wandering writer provocateur Arnolt Bronnen becomes a display of excessive masculinity going rampant. This man is a 'loud-speaker' in a world of loudspeakers. Here and there throughout my dissertation, I briefly discuss different forms of masculinity in relation to

electroacoustic music with the idea in mind that this might deserve a separate study at a later stage.

It has been a long way to reach this final dissertation. When I decided that my study of electro-vocal music would focus on gender, I was bringing together two areas of interest that seemed widely separated. But then gender issues were mentioned as a specific area of interest for the International Computer Music Conference 1995 in Banff (Canada). The paper I presented in Banff turned out to be a kind of blueprint for the following study.

I rethought the topic again and again in various papers and articles, and finally reworked it for this dissertation. (In the process I also made several detours and headed in other directions.) Appropriately, the internal structure of this book is more like a network, a web, or a spiral, than a linear discourse. Some chapters are revised versions of articles published in academic journals or books. Each chapter can be read independently. A short overview of the chapters can be found at the end of Chapter I or, more extensively, in the Summary. To clarify the line of the argument and the connection to the other chapters, I have sometimes repeated summaries of discussions in other chapters and referred to other parts of the book. To add more context, I have made extensive use of footnotes. I hope this helps, rather than annoys, the reader.

Each chapter that has already been published, stands for a larger experience. I was asked to be a guest editor for an issue of *Organised Sound: A Journal on Music and Technology* (2003) on gender and music technology; an exciting and challenging experience, because at that time, there were only a few publications in this field. My article in this issue forms the basis for Chapter II and III. In 2005, I was invited to give a keynote lecture at the conference In and Out of the Sound Studio at Concordia University in Montreal. The lecture grew into an article for *Intersections: Canadian Journal of Music* (2006), of which Chapter VIII is a revised version. As a participant of the Sound Reading Group of the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA), I contributed an article to the book *Sonic Mediations* (2008); Chapter VI is a revised and extended version of this article. In 2006, a small, unusual group of people, of which I was one, organized the conference Cathy Berberian: Pioneer of Contemporary Vocality and Performance at the University of Amsterdam. This conference resulted in the forthcoming book *Cathy Berberian: Pioneer of*

*Contemporary Vocality*. My contribution to this book is a revised version of Chapter V.

A long journey means many passersby and fellow travellers; some of which I encountered again in different places, phases and trajectories. They constitute a network that embedded and fed my research.

I wish to thank Leigh Landy for the important opportunities he gave me. As associate professor of musicology, he invited me to submit a PhD proposal at the University of Amsterdam. Soon after, he left the UvA for better positions at British universities. I met him again as organizer of international conferences and meetings. As the editor of *Organised Sound*, he asked me to serve as guest editor for the issue on gender and gave me ample room for this uncommon theme.

I am very grateful to my supervisor Remko Scha for adopting my PhD project from the start. Although he is professor in another discipline (*alfa-informatica* or computational linguistics), he impressed me with his knowledge of and interest in my field of research. His encouragement, trust, support and critical remarks were of invaluable importance throughout.

I am grateful to research institute ISELK for granting my application and to the University of Amsterdam and the musicology department for providing this position and an academic home. My fellow PhD candidates at musicology were good company, especially my office roommate Jette Straub. Joke Dame introduced the new, exciting approaches of feminist musicology into the Netherlands; without this, my research would probably have taken a different direction. I owe much to her own groundbreaking work on voice, gender and psychoanalysis in Western classical music – I hope this becomes clear in the following pages.

Various research institutes generously allowed me to join their seminars. In his course on the semiotics of concrete/sound poetry and experimental literature, Eric Vos introduced me to Derek Attridge's chapter on onomatopoeia and Joyce's *Ulysses*, which was crucial for my account of *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* in Chapter V. I wish to thank Ruth Oldenziel for her inspiring seminars on Gender and Technology Studies at the Belle van Zuylen Instituut (UvA) and her encouragement to an interdisciplinary application of its concepts in my musicological work: the actor-network theory provided an extra dimension to the critical distantiation of the author/composer (as

discussed in Chapter VII). And I wish to thank Rosi Braidotti and her team for the PhD seminars of Womens' and Gender Studies at Utrecht University.

ISELK became ASCA, which provided an inspiring interdisciplinary academic environment and offered seminars and conferences, with Mieke Bal as its driving force; I wish to thank managing director Eloe Kingma for her continuing, friendly presence and support. ASCA became especially interesting when the initial focus on philosophy, literature and visual arts was later complemented with studies of music and sound; I wish to thank the members of the ASCA Sound Reading Group; especially Carolyn Birdsall and Anthony Enns who organized and edited the book project *Sonic Mediations*; and Pieter Verstraete who joined the organizational committee of the ASCA conference on Cathy Berberian and contemporary vocality. Largely external to the academic world, but always enthusiastically involved in feminism and music(ology), Carla Brünott was a driving force behind this conference and the forthcoming book. Her encouragement and interest in my work helped me persevere.

A nice digression was the book on Madonna (1999) that I wrote together with film scholar Patricia Pisters, and so were the preceding course and the following media attention and lectures. (But notwithstanding the difference in musical genre, writing style and intended readership, there are some theoretical links with my dissertation.) I experienced how gratifying collaboration and interdisciplinarity can be; and I also learned about film studies. I was a paranymp at her doctoral defence a long time ago. I am happy that I meet Patricia again as an esteemed member of the doctoral committee.

I have derived a lot of inspiration and encouragement from contacts abroad. I can not mention all the different people who reacted to my papers at conferences or via email, but their interest motivated me. Of specific importance were the International Computer Music Conference 1995 in Banff (Canada), the Feminist Music and Theory conferences at the University of Virginia (1997) and in London (1999) (visits funded by UvA and NWO) and several Electroacoustic Music Studies network conferences (visits funded by Donemus/MGN/MCN). A great thank you goes to all the composers who (often for free) sent me their scores, CDs, documentation and answers to my questions. I didn't include everything in my dissertation; but some of it may pop up in future research.

Andra McCartney's work on gender and music technology preceded mine, and was an important example and source of inspiration to me. I first met her in Banff and her sophisticated approach impressed me. I was happy that she submitted an article to the *Organised Sound* issue on gender. I wish to thank her for inviting me to give a keynote lecture at her inspiring In and Out of the Sound Studio conference and for publishing a revised version in *Intersections*.

I wish to thank Anne Sivuoja for inviting me to give some lectures and seminars at the University of Turku (Finland) – an inspiring week. I met Anne Sivuoja again as a contributor to the *Organised Sound* issue on gender, when she presented a paper at the Cathy Berberian conference, and as one of the editors of the proceeding book.

Barry Truax' interest in gender issues was also of specific importance. Since I met him in Banff, he encouraged me with his positive attitude towards my research. Just recently, as co-editor, he invited me to write a chapter on gender for *The Routledge Companion to Sound Art* – thus allowing me to extend my research in the future.

An important sideline was my work as specialist electroacoustic music (NEAR) and project manager contemporary music at the institute for Dutch music Stichting Donemus / MuziekGroep Nederland / Muziek Centrum Nederland from 1998 to 2012. This gave me the opportunity to experience Dutch musical life from a practical and organizational point of view and to meet many interesting Dutch and international composers, musicians and other music experts. With this part-time job I could earn a living, and have some time for my doctoral research and other projects. Sadly, Music Center the Netherlands had to close down at the end of 2012. I wish to thank the former colleagues and directors.

The rich Dutch music scene was an invaluable part of my daily life. I was lucky to be able to attend many concerts, festivals, workshops, broadcasts and so on. Many music experts were good and interesting company. I wish to thank Stichting Gaudeamus for the use of its documentation centre and for generously lending me many CDs. I wish to thank Armeno Alberts for inviting me in one of his last shows of his weekly national radio programme Café Sonore (VPRO), just before my defence. I also wish to thank the fellow old and new board members and associates of Stichting

Vrouw en Muziek. Further, it is a pleasure to share an interest in music, sound and voice, and other good things in life, with my dear friend Nanny Roed Lauridsen.

Against this bewildering background of influences and distractions, it was Rokus de Groot as professor of musicology and my second supervisor, who guarded me to finish my dissertation. I wish to thank him very much for his encouragement, patience, sensitive and critical remarks and quiet, friendly attitude; and for leading me gently through the last stages of its completion.

At times, writing a doctoral dissertation can be a lonely adventure, but one certainly does not do the work alone. I had the luxury of having two dear supervisors, Remko Scha and Rokus de Groot, who complemented each other and were both of great value to me. I am very happy with the interesting and outstanding group of scholars that form the doctoral committee; I wish to thank them for their contribution at the final stage. Two paranymphs will accompany me at the defence; both of them were of specific importance for this dissertation.

It was standing in front of the vast CD collection of Patrick Follon that I first developed my preliminary ideas on the different roles of male and female voices in electroacoustic music, which led to the first paper I presented in Banff and which formed the basis of this dissertation. His radio programme 220 Volt, broadcast by the Concertzender, was a great resource for electroacoustic music and gave me the opportunity to interview Laurie Anderson (see Chapter VII). Patrick was my partner during the first years of this research. I am grateful to him for standing by me at the defence.

My dear friend Erna Rijdsdijk has shown me that fun and serious academic work can go together very well. Although we work in different disciplines, we shared our struggle to finish our seemingly never-ending dissertations, while being taken up by other work and a child. I admire her courage, her commitment to work, family and friends, and her great sense of humour. Her defence was almost a year ago and her support is of great help for me at this last stage.

I wish to thank Christiane de Waele, Hilary Staples, Carolyn Muntz, Jeannette van der Kruijff and Chris Bragg for helping me to correct my English at short notice. While under time pressure, their attitude was pleasant, flexible and committed. Any remaining mistakes and clumsy language are my responsibility.

My thanks also go to my family. My parents Nomdo and Corlies Bosma-van het Kaar and my brother Maarten were always there for me, supportive, patient and accepting.

Last but not least, my thanks go to Hendrik te Winkel and our son Nino for their great patience and support. I wish to thank Hendrik for his loving care for both Nino and me, generously looking after Nino when I could not get away from my dissertation. Hendrik also helped me with much more, related to this dissertation. And I wish to thank Nino – “mamma wanneer is je boek nou af?” – for his patience. I hope I have been able to show him that, after all, I enjoy this work.

Hannah Bosma, October 2013