

ToDo

Tom Comitta

This little book collects sound poetry scores composed in 2011 and 2012. It's important to note the timing: In February 2011, I co-founded SF Guerrilla Opera. Over the course of a year the group conducted, staged and performed nine operas.

SF Guerrilla Opera was born out of a great interest in Fluxus and sound poetry combined with an excitement over the energies surrounding the Arab Spring, Wikileaks and the hacktivist group Anonymous. We saw Anonymous and Wikileaks as two groups that showed how DIY text and publication could be a force in the world. We wondered how could poetry be a force? Could singing (really we meant sound poetry) transform a particular space and duration? And beyond? How far could it go?

Each opera by SF Guerrilla Opera involved giving voice to a text in some context. Our first opera was originally imagined as a poetry event rather than an opera. We invited 40+ people to read aloud for 40 minutes from books found in Adobe Bookstore. After 15 minutes, some people started to sing. By 30 minutes, the whole room was singing, spectators included, mashing up cook books, comics, Shakespeare, and more. Eventually there was no audience, but a room full of actors. Another opera was staged the first day of Julian Assange's extradition hearing in the UK: We sang Wikileaks cables for 12 hours in front of San Francisco's Philip Burton Federal Building.

One opera took place alongside an Anonymous-led protest of the BART system. On a Friday in August 2011, the BART cut off cell phone access to deter a protest of a cop killing a homeless man. The following Monday we staged our opera inside a protest of the BART's censoring actions: we quickly thought up a score, sent out Facebook invites and, on the Civic Center BART platform, held landline phones (with dangling, cut off wires) to our ears, singing the Verizon commercial slogan "Can you hear me now?" over and over again for an hour. When the opera appeared in USA Today and Associated Press articles and, months after this and subsequent BART protests, BART was pressured to formally reassess their censorship of protests, we wondered if this was the closest SF Guerrilla Opera got to testing poetry's efficacies. Of course, this is still up for debate.

This book collects most of the scores performed by SF Guerrilla Opera (you'll find them toward the end as a series of "Cantatas") along with a number of other scores that I wrote after the project ended in February 2012. Many of the below have yet to be performed.

Office Music

||: m'hm :||

to be hummed
from 9 am to 5 pm

Happy Hour
An Opera in Five Acts

For one week, each day
go to a bar
and laugh for one hour.

Dinner Table 1

Say everything you're thinking.

Dinner Table 2

Appetizer:

Say everything you're thinking

1st Course:

Take it all back

2nd Course:

Say everything you're thinking

Dessert:

Take it all back

Dinner Table 3

Listen to every word spoken.

Wave Music

Go to where land meets sea.

Study the sound of the waves.

Recreate that sound out of phase with the waves.

Outlet

to be read on a loop

I I

O

RESET
RESET

TEST
TEST

I I

O

Duet

Two people check each other's pulse.

Smartphone Poem

Put down your smartphone and tell someone you love them.

Pick up your smartphone and tell someone you don't.

Book Poem

Put down this book and tell someone you love them.

Pick up this book and tell someone you don't.

Critical Poem

Question
the hierarchical relationship
between artist (supposed superior)
and audience (supposed subordinate)
that is reinforced by the imperative mood

while using
the imperative mood.

Poetry Reading

Listen to every pause, breath, tone, phoneme, letter, morpheme, ligature, syllable, iamb, word, foot, cluster, phrase, clause, line, fragment, sentence, stanza, prose block, segment, section, poem, sequence, and serial of the poetry read aloud.

Autotune

With a tuner in hand

make a call

&

keep your pitch at C.

Protest Poem

Write and stage a protest poem that is legible at the protest
and nowhere else.

Lengua

Talk with cow tongue in mouth.

Career Music

1

Become an announcer, call center operator, commencement speaker, emcee, interviewee, interviewer, hip hop artist, lecturer, master of ceremonies, motivational speaker, operator, orator, panelist, performance poet, performing poet, preacher, public speaker, radio personality, rapper, slam poet, sound poet, speech-maker, spoken word artist, speech coach, speech instructor, speech pathologist, speech therapist, talk radio guest, talk radio host, talkshow guest, talkshow host, telemarketer, text sound performer, troubador, visiting lecturer, vocalist, vocal translator or voice actor and talk about it.

2

Become an alto, backup singer, bariton, baritone, baryton-martin, baryton-noble, bass, bass-baritone, basso buffo, basso cantante, basso profondo, beat boxer, castrato, chanter, choir singer, coloratura baritone, coloratura mezzo-soprano, coloratura soprano, comic tenor, contralto, countertenor, dramatic baritone, dramatic bass-baritone, dramatic coloratura soprano, dramatic contralto, dramatic mezzo-soprano, dramatic soprano, dramatic tenor, dugazon, falcon, folk singer, full dramatic soprano, full lyric soprano, gregorian chanter, guerrilla opera singer, haute-contre, heldentenor, hip hop artist, kavalierbariton, lead vocalist, leggiero tenor, low baritone, low contralto, lyric bass-baritone, lyric baritone, lyric comic tenor, lyric coloratura soprano, lyric contralto, lyric dramatic soprano, lyric low baritone, lyric mezzo-soprano, lyric soprano, lyric tenor, member of the chorus, mezzo-soprano, modern castrato, opera singer, pop singer, rapper, r&b singer, singer, soprano, sopranist, soubrette, sound poetry performer, spielalt, spinto, spinto soprano, spinto tenor, talker, tenor, tenor di grazia, treble, verdi baritone, vocalist, wagnerian soprano, whistler or yodeler and sing about it.

Cantata 1

Invite friends and strangers,
go to a bookstore, and read aloud
for 40 minutes.

Cantata 2

Sing leaked documents to the nearest federal building.

Cantata 3

Sing The Wall Street Journal until you can't sing anymore.

Cantata 4

Sing the USA PATRIOT ACT to your nearest surveillance.

Cantata 5

Go on a long walk
and sing the text
found en route.

Before & After Brushing

:: I don't know what I don't know and what I don't know I don't know ::

Blackout

Livestream no audio or video for 24 hours or longer.

Mashinka Firunts & Danny Snelson, eds.
The Block Museum | Northwestern University
Department of Art History | Mellon Dance Studies
The Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities
<http://sites.northwestern.edu/present>