



# *The Voice of the Audience*

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## *Introduction*

"The Voice of the Audience" was the main research project at The Lab Station (Forsøgsstationen) during the theatre season 2016/17. It's focus was to examine the auditory identity of the theatre audience. The project consisted of creating a musical score based on audience sounds, rehearsing and presenting it as a live concert with a choir of people, recruited broadly to represent a demographic diverse audience.

The incitement for the research was partly a professional curiosity towards developing this type of sound score; partly establishing a working collective with people with very diverse backgrounds; and partly the performative doubling of the audience – letting the audience perform in front of its mirror image and examining what potentials for identification and discovery this may uncover.

The investigation was also motivated by an urge to discuss, a term very much in the forefront currently in Denmark and possibly also in other countries, namely "Audience Development" – a contested concept – as one may ask why the audience need to be developed and by whom.

Our claim is that this project did not "develop" anybody. Instead it became a possibility of examining a egalitarian working relation between artists and a group of "everyday" people with their diverse perspectives (on being an audience) and how this relation resulted in an artistic work of sound.

We learned lessons on 'real' exchange between people; we were not going to succeed by imposing our project on the participants; this project demanded an equal exchange of social and artistic values, of a social and artistic nature.

This research project is about relations and artistic work and is very far from the type of "Audience Development" that has to do with educating and growing new audience segments or other consumer centred initiatives (i.e. what does the audience want?). Our audience became part of the artistic process and product by way of half a year of weekly rehearsals and building of a collective (social) relationship. Taking this experience further, we believe it is imperative to begin using another term than "Audience Development" for the work we did. We were developing audience relationships in an artistic context. We hope that this report will give insights into how this came about.

Lotte Faarup and Øyvind Kirchhoff, Vesterbro, May 2018



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## *Background*

### *The idea behind the project*

The idea to create “The Voice of the Audience” emerged in 2013. The artistic leadership of The Lab Station (Lotte Faarup and Øyvind Kirchhoff) found the written records of audience sounds collected in the beginning of the 1920s in Moscow theatres by Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold (see appendix 3). Meyerhold’s thesis was that, by knowing the audial potential of the audience, it was possible to actively provoke certain sounds from the audience at precise points in a performance and thereby give the audience an actual role in the performance.

The absurdity, comic potential and manifold possibilities of this sort of material, sparked our curiosity and made us want to explore creating a “performance-concert” – solely made of the sounds of audiences.

When The Lab Station was invited by Odin Teatret in 2015 to join the EU project CARAVAN NEXT, this idea was given a platform to develop. CARAVAN NEXT is born out of a collaboration between Odin Teatret and The Social and Community Theatre Centre of the University of Turin, and is a large-scale Social Community Theatre collaborative project connecting professional artists with communities and citizens in a network of theatre organisations and cultural institutions all over Europe. “The Voice of the Audience” was thus a reality by way of the network, consultancy and financial support from CARAVAN NEXT. And this is how the project became the main research project at The Lab Station in the theatre season 2016/2017.

### *Research and preparation*

In the fall of 2016 we began the research and creation of the sound score. The research consisted of collecting audience sounds during 5 different theatre performances in Copenhagen and 1 in Holstebro, Denmark (see appendix 3). The process of collecting meant sitting quietly during a performance focusing on listening to the sounds made by fellow audience members and writing them down. The list of the sounds registered became the basis of a small dramaturgical score/structure created by Lotte Faarup inspired by the experiences during the performances. The 20 categories from Moscow registered by Meyerhold were also given a small dramaturgical structure and all this material was handed over to the composer Peter Bruun. He then composed two works of sound. One was based on the sounds registered in Denmark in 2016 (see appendix 4) and the other on the audience sounds from Moscow.

During the same period, Øyvind Kirchhoff organised a crew to recruit 40-50 participants. The crew consisted of Jakob Dahn, Anny Neel Dirchsen and Øyvind Kirchhoff. At the onset, their focus was local organisations and residents of the borough Vesterbro in Copenhagen. Later, the geographical scope was broadened and they recruited participants in other parts of Copenhagen. The final result of the recruitment efforts was a group of around 40 people with very diverse demographics, social background and age.

### *The process*

The rehearsal period for “The Voice of the Audience” was half a year. The choir met almost every Friday between January and June of 2017 for two hours in the late afternoon. There were 15 rehearsals over this period, plus weekend rehearsals in the final weeks before the performances.

The musical composition had two parts, namely “Copenhagen 2016” and “Moscow 1922”. The entire concert had a duration of half an hour and consisted of the two pieces of accurately rehearsed and performed audience sounds and actions. The sounds included for example: coughing, sighing, laughter, crying, cell phones ringing. The actions – typically less loud but visually significant – included shifting weight



on chair, crossing of legs, browsing through the program, turning heads etc. In the first part “Copenhagen 2016” there was a section of improvised actions where the performing ‘audience’ would mirror the actions and sounds made by the ‘real’ audience in the first rows.

The rehearsals were lead by conductor Erik Jakobsson, with the consultancy of the composer Peter Bruun. The overall frame was created by director Lotte Faarup. In addition and especially related to the social aspects of the project, project leader Øyvind Kirchhoff, administrator Rikke Jeppesen Rod and assistants Jakob Dahn and Mejse Vedel were part of the planning and flow of the rehearsals. Because the rehearsals were more than the actual time in the studio. The coffee breaks and the communal meals after the rehearsals - later in the process -, were an integral part of the work, where the choir members could talk and relax together. The first time we had dinner together it was on our initiative, but this lead to the choir members taking initiative to organise cooking for the group at selected rehearsals.

Twice before the PREVIEW we had invited a trial audience into the studio; the first time it was a group of students from Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Copenhagen; the second time it was local residents. These experiences were stimulating and an important learning process for the choir. Here the piece finally met a ‘flesh and bone’ audience where the exchange, mirroring and recognition could take place between the two groupings.



## *The presentation*

“The Voice of the Audience” was presented five times: one PREVIEW, two presentations at The Lab Station and two presentations at The Royal Theatre of Denmark, during the theatre festival “Copenhagen Stage 2017”.

The staging of the presentation required a set up with a raked auditorium. At The Lab Station it was made to mirror the set up of chairs for the choir (two levels of rows), allowing for a genuine mirroring of the audience and creating an interesting – and intended - confusion among the ‘real audience’ when they entered the space since both sides were empty when the audience entered; where to sit?

At the Royal Theatre the choir was sitting opposite a genuine audience build up with 12-14 rows auditorium style. In contrast to the staging at The Lab Station, the room was blacked out and with focused stage lighting. The contrast between the two venues created two very different situations and atmospheres; from

a more informal and one-to-one mirroring in a rehearsal space to a theatre performance setting in a black box theatre.

A good part of the audience were friends, family and colleagues of the choir members, but also professionals related to The Lab Station and other theatre colleagues visiting the festival CPH Stage attended the performances. The two presentations at The Lab Station had audience of 50 people per night and at The Royal Theatre the audience count on the two nights were 120 and 140.

### *Project wrap up*

Two months after the last performance the choir and the staff around the project met again to evaluate and have a communal meal together at The Lab Station. The reunion was a joyful one, and both new ideas for projects and good reflections on the work were shared.

The project was filmed from the onset to the final performance and resulted in both a registration of one entire performance, and an 8-minute short film with English subtitles presenting the project and the people behind it (Appendix 1). The short film was presented at a CARAVAN Next exchange seminar at Odin Teatret in June 2017 during a talk given by the artistic management of The Lab Station, Lotte Faarup and Øyvind Kirchhoff.

This presentation sparked interest from several of the other CARAVAN Next partners and it has subsequently led to several inquiries from European universities and theatres interested in this field.

Furthermore, The Lab Station hosted a seminar of sharing and exchanging knowledge in a Danish context, where professionals in this particular field were presented with “The Voice of the Audience” as a point of departure for a critical discussion of the concept of “Audience development”.

This report is the final summary of the project in writing.



Tonny, member of the choir

Photo: Øyvind Kirchhoff

# *Recruitment*

## *Inspiration*

Since it's opening in 2009, it has been an aspiration of The Lab Station to be more visible in the daily life of Vesterbro and in the consciousness of the local community. Over the years children and adults of all ages have been part of the research projects, attended showings or invited in as trial audiences for stageart experiments, but until this project they were never a defining and direct part of an artistic performance. "The Voice of the Audience" gave us the possibility to invite the local community into our space in a new way. The audience would be given ownership and a different relationship to The Lab Station and new ways of experiencing the world of theatre.

In 2014 we (the artistic leadership) visited the theatre 2TG, Theatre de Gennevillier, in a suburb of Paris, France. The visit was motivated by a an interest of getting to know this theatre better, since it - over several decades - has been able to make the borough and its inhabitants come together under the parole "art creates meetings among people". The theatre turned out to be both an artistic and social meetingpoint. There was a café, restaurant and library to make people feel welcome and invited to enter the theatre. And when the people had entered the threshold they were met with invitations for workshops and other activities.

Also the less privileged locals were directly invited into the community around the theatre, for example they offered play writing courses for homeless people on a regular basis. Art was meant to both enrich and offer people possibility to grow, and it was available for everybody to experience.

## *On the hunt for an unusual choir*

With this experience as inspiration we began recruiting participants for our choir project. We were confident it would be a relatively easy task. The choir idea was fresh, funny, weird and different than other choir "offers" out there. Another upside was that it did not require any special skills to participate. Not being able to carry a tune was not an issue – almost to the contrary. A wish to be part of the creation of an original and very different piece of music from ones own sounds and a desire to meet new people, would be a driving force. We also considered it to be attractive for potential participants that the project was a completely new composition by a wellknown Danish composer, had a professional choir conductor and an element of cocreation.

What was unique about this work of sound was that the choir was to be composed of a wide variety of people, mirroring the diverse local population in the borough of Vesterbro. It was not going to be the usual project participants from our own network of performers. The participants were not chosen for their skills as singers or musicians. We were not looking for that special voice and sound quality and this particular acting 'being an audience'. "The Voice of the Audience" was to be a collage of sounds; of whispering, clapping, outbursts, expressions of wild exhilaration, loud noise and humorous disruptions. This audience was not going to be the well behaved audience. This audience would allow its members to overstep the boundaries of what is considered acceptable audience behavior. And we were given a chance to investigate audience identity in the borough of Vesterbro.

## *The borough of Vesterbro*

During the 1980s and 1990s Vesterbro underwent a thorough renovation of the houses mainly apartment complexes built early in the century, leading to gentrification. The Vesterbro housing stock was typically

rented apartments, many in very poor condition and with low rent, due to rent control laws. Therefore this borough was inhabited by 'the poor Copenhageners'. There was high crime rate. Prostitution, violence and drug dealing were part of everyday life. Today Vesterbro is a very different neighbourhood and still changing. Many complexes have changed ownership to either collectively owned neighbourhoods, or developed by large corporations into luxury apartments. The middleclass, mainly families with children, has made its entry. Young students, artists and creative types also live in Vesterbro. Today it is a borough divided between the creative, wealthy part with cafés, fancy shops and art galleries and the part closest to Copenhagen Central Station still worn down. This is where you can encounter porn shops, shelters for users, sex workers and homeless. The contrast and polarisation between the rich and the poor has become increasingly palpable.

Our main focus for recruiting members for the choir was the overlooked. The less fortunate and vulnerable, the invisible and silent voices. The people who would usually sign up for such a project we needed actively pursue. We wanted members recruited from 'the other' Vesterbro, people that would contribute with another type of presence and energy, more anarchist and unpredictable. The crooked and authentic voice of Vesterbro in all its colors and diversity.

## *The work begins*

We had 3 months to find the participants. In the beginning we avoided contacting other choirs in Vesterbro, as well as people from our own network, artists and musicians. We visited shelters for homeless, vulnerable groups and drug addicts. Here we spoke with potential participants, be it the staff or the people using the shelters. The staff was always very helpful with passing on the information. We approached senior housing and assisted living facilities, volunteer groups and churches. We also invited our own "landlord"; a collectively owned apartment complex and the neighbouring complexes. We handed out flyers to people passing on the street, and gave them to the local shops and businesses.

The invitation was for two information meetings at The Lab Station where we presented the choir project. At the Copenhagen Language Learning Center (Københavns sprogcenter) we asked them to consider using this sort of artistic community as part of their curriculum. Many of the students in the school were refugees or other immigrants new to Denmark and this project would create meetings with people of Danish ethnic origine. One teacher at the school was very eager to participate with a group of students from the school. Since the piece was not 'word heavy' it would not pose a problem for those with only a limited Danish vocabulary. People with another mother tongue than Danish would also offer the choir performance another dynamic and tone in the overall expression, in that different languages have different sound qualities. The project offered this particular group of people a possibility of meeting ethnic Danish people in a new and very different way. Unfortunately it did not work out despite several meetings with the management of the school. The teacher with his group could not participate because of the length of the commitment. Therefore the students could only participate on their own outside their school hours. It was obvious that it would demand a great deal of courage to show up on their own and as expected, nobody did.

At "Café Exit", a social project helping ex convicts back into society, we met organ player Louise Adrian who was the founder of the prisoners choir at a Danish correction facility "Vridsløselille". She is in charge of cultural activities once a week at the café and she asked us to come by and present our project there. We were there one evening where there were about 50 people attending a networking event. We (the composer Peter Bruun, Lotte Faarup and Øyvind Kirchhoff) made a tiny part of the choir piece together with the people attending the meeting. It was a very moving experience for everybody – possibly because it was not just explained in words what the project was about, it was told through the communal actions of doing, and through this everybody was invited to check out the project at the coming information meeting.



As mentioned earlier, we also approached our 'landlord' – a collectively owned apartment complex. What if we could create a closer relationship with them, and be more than anonymous tenants? Through then we got in contact with other neighbouring collectively owned complexes.

## *Experiences*

Despite our ambitions and great effort we had to deviate from the initial plans. As we came closer to the date of the first rehearsal, it became obvious that we had to broaden our search. We still needed more participants. We didn't succeed in recruiting ex convicts from Café Exit, refugees from The Language Center or people using the local based shelters. We knew from the beginning that it would be difficult to recruit from these specific groups and in hindsight it may seem naïve to think we could recruit so diverse groups of people to the choir without knowing both them and their background well. It would have taken much more time and knowledge of the community, and thus more time and resources than we had at our disposal. People in vulnerable positions often have a difficult time with social situations. It is one thing to meet with peers who have similar backgrounds and history in a safe environment, a scenario we witnessed when we visited Café Exit. It is a total different matter to embark with a completely new and unfamiliar group of people with very diverse backgrounds in a project like ours. It would be "unheard of" if they actually came, as one of the staff at one of the shelters put it. We made an attempt to recruit without the necessary insight, experience and knowledge.

Our quest for a diverse group of participants was fortunately not in vain. We had mistakenly thought that we would be able to control the recruitment process, but it turned out that the project became a study of luck and the unexpected, which became part of the DNA and strength of the choir. We were not alone in recruiting, since we quickly realized that the choir members themselves brought in their own network and thereby new people – people we would probably never have found on our own.

The group became a different Vesterbro than we had expected. Instead of the people using the shelters, we were joined by staff and volunteers and people they brought along, or friends and family of the people already started in the choir. We let the recruitment period overlap with the actual rehearsal – and only closed for new members after 1 month of rehearsals which allowed for members to promote in their networks. This meant that our participants came from the whole of Copenhagen.

Despite the change in recruitment strategy and target groups, the choir did become a very diverse group after all, with very different sociodemographic backgrounds, many nationalities, and of all ages.

And thereby it became – imperative from the onset – a choir of a huge variety of personalities. A beautiful and diverse flock, whose members persisted because they chose to be together and were inspired by each other. The members of the choir had also been invited to (and succeeded in) recruiting participants themselves and were therefore not 'alone' but with familiar people. Slowly this varied group became one big family where each member could feel safe and comfortable. This was without any doubt contributing to the fact that almost all members of the choir stayed in the project the whole way through.



## *The project from the perspective of the participants*

Below you find an excerpt of reflections written by the participants based on their own experience in relation to the recruitment, process and the performance itself.

*Dear "Voice of the Audience"*

*It is a pleasure and a privilege to be part of the performance of the play. In part because of the deeply, deeply original starting point and partly because it is not a common occurrence that you - as a coincidental amateur - gets to perform at the Danish Royal Theatre.*

*But how did it come to this, to become an active part in the project? By complete coincidence, my friend and I passed The Lab Station on our way home from visiting Absalon Church (a local church turned community center / editor) and were wondering out loud, what sort of place this 'station' was. Two angles in the doorway answered and simultaneously invited us to become part of "the Voice of the Audience". We were taken on the spot, and with a mix of curiosity and rashness we accept the invitation without knowing the consequences.*

*We have not regretted it. The togetherness with the group is something else. Since serving my duty in the army I have never been part of a group this colourful – this diverse in every possible way. With the common goal, a cohesion develops that are invaluablely helpful during rehearsals.*

*And with such a skillful and competent leadership, the results can be nothing but great.*

*Henrik*

*In March 2017 I was at a social event in Café Exit in Vesterbro, Copenhagen. Here I saw a performance by the Prisoners Choir led by conductor Louise Adrian. At some point staff from the nearby "The Lab Station" presented their coming project and that they sought volunteers.*

*The piece "the Voice of the Audience" written for choir, was to be performed during the big theatre festival 'CPH Stage' in June 2017 / both at The Lab Station and at the Royal Theatre.*

*I grabbed that chance; this was something I hadn't tried in my entire life. And it is one of the wildest, funiest and most genius experience I have ever been part of.*

*Everybody who has a set concept of what performing arts can be are challenged in a big way. I got an experience for life! I will miss it greatly once the performances are done.*

*The leadership and participants have in their own ways given their very best at the rehearsals and has kept a very good atmosphere. Also the social hour with the other participants at the communal dinners after rehearsals contributed to making the weekly rehearsal the best day of the week! To feel the sense of common identity, belonging and a community feeling; "That is HUGE!"*

*Thank you for this beautiful experience!*

*Mai*

*Why are Agnes and Morten part of "the Voice of the Audience?"*

*We have been lovers now for a couple of years, and at a stage where it is nice to find common activities. And also things apart from traveling, going to the movies, the theatre or cooking. Morten is part of a choir, together with Jytte actually. And maybe this was a thing for Agnes too? But no, Agnes thinks she is not a good enough singer (which is wrong of course)*

*But then Jytte was talking about “the Voice of the Audience” where not being able to sing is one of the ‘requirements’. Therefore it was the obvious choice to join.*

*And then it turned out to be both a learning experience, fun and also demanding commitment - and by the way not that easy.*

*Agnes og Morten*

*Malene saw your poster in the library and told me to come. I have great confidence in Malenes criteria. I like taking part in fun things and the poster said that you didn’t have to be able to carry a tune. This is my exact problem. I love to sing, but cannot find a place to sing, because I cannot sing. The man I am sitting next to in the choir is a real singer. He has a strong and vibrant voice and it rubs off on me, I think. I try to mimic him. When I see somebody mastering something I make myself believe that I can too. A little bit.*

*Where I live (among 104 old women) none of the others wanted to join. But they ask me a lot of questions about what we do, and now they are even supplying me with clothes and a handbag for the opening night. It is me on the post card and those who see it are laughing at me. I thought it was fun to fight. An angry audience. It is my wish that a lot more people could be part in this sort of theatre. Also those who do not dare.*

*Anne*

*What “the Voice of the Audience” has meant for me.*

*For many years I have dreamt of being part of something like this. I have been watching these TV programs called “Voices from the stairwell” where tenants in Urbanplanen (a Danish social housing complex / editor) were to rehearse and perform a piece of choir music lead by the conductor Frans Rasmussen. When The Lab Station advertised for participants in my apartment complex I registered straight away.*

*I like the clear and professional frame around the project. That you did not have to make a lot of decisions and collectively choose a direction to follow through long discussions. Here the sounds to perform were already collected and chosen, a composer had written a score, a conductor and a director had decided how the presentation would be. And all I had to do was to relax into the collective and move within the frame, feel the pulse and be part of an organism. I felt embraced by the collective, for the bare ‘act’ of being there, not because I have a certain profession or have achieved something special.*

*It has been very pleasant not to be expected to present myself and perform individually, not having to defend a certain position or having to promote myself to get heard.*

*On the other hand, it was not that I felt an urge to hide in the collective, rather I felt protected and looked after in the group. And I felt that my own presence and participation meant something for the whole. When I was putting my full energy in the work and making an effort to be sharp and precise, it actually came through and we all became better.*

*I have laughed a great deal - and been moved to tears. To think that I became part of this. To think – Friday after Friday – to be surrounded by the most delightful and diverse group of ‘faces’, now living inside me, as wonderful pictures, popping up in my inner eye when called upon.*

*I am grateful.*

*Kirsten*

*“The Voice of the Audience” has been the most fun project to take part in. The theme is crazy and it has been a riot to rehearse the composition.*

*I have never been part of a choir before, and it was very educational and fascinating to watch the conductor work with us. It has been difficult to learn the composition by heart, and now, right before the PREVIEW, I still do not feel completely ready and confident. It is a good thing that I am in the back row and am able to ‘lip sing’ if I loose track. Fortunately we are not pressured for perfection, it is quite OK to make mistakes. That feels good. My*

*social network has been expanded with a lot of sweet and fun people from very different realms than my usual circles. This has been highly enriching. I experience an atmosphere where people are very open and truly interested in hearing each others (life) stories. I have had many good and interesting conversations in the breaks and at the dinner. Sometimes the conversations even continued after rehearsal. I have enjoyed being together with people of all ages around a common project. It gives a very special and lovely dynamic. I am looking forward to be sitting in my evening dress next week, performing the composition. It is going to be GRAND!*

*Lise*

*I became aware of the choir project through a posting on the email platform at work. When I read the description and saw the teaser I instantly felt interested and curious. Also because the project took place at The Lab Station, a building I often had passed on my bike and often wondered what kind of a place it was.*

*When I came for the first rehearsal I was surprised to learn what the project really was about – I am used to sing in a choir and play music, but I have not acted before or felt any desire to do so, and now I was suddenly challenged on my old shyness and had to get out of my comfort zone in that sense. But, when I then biked home after this first Friday, I had had a new, different sound experience and my senses were sharpened by the work process itself and the seriousness surrounding it.*

*At the same time, it was nice to be welcomed at The Lab Station and exciting to become part of a large group of new people – there is an openness.*

*As it has developed over time I have been very taken by it. Especially how a large group of people working together with a common energy and dynamic. There is something about making these sounds together like a larger organism that is fascinating and it inhabits me in another way than when I sing in a regular choir. It also has a brutality to it, and that is new to me. It is a feeling of us being the text/the composition and creating it anew every time. It is extremely interesting and fun to be a part of that.*

*Thank you for having me!*

*Ninna*





## *Conclusion*

“The Voice of the Audience” did, without doubt, become a very special project for all the people involved. The artistic leadership was, together with the composer and the conductor, particularly interested in mixing professional artists and amateurs and understanding how this mix influenced both the artistic work and the social relationships. The most important experiences and learning points concerning that focus were:

The choir participants were (for the most part) amateurs when it came to performance experience, but in the audience role they were ‘professionals’. The artistic work used this professionalism as its starting point. That meant that the participants were acknowledged for their skills from the beginning, giving them a sense of pride, ownership and responsibility for achieving the highest artistic level possible.

The currency for finding participants for the choir was relationship. In other words; it was not the amount of information through mail and social media that made people sign up; instead it was the efforts of physically showing up at various organisations, which lead to conversations, eye contact and face-to-face interaction that made people join. Furthermore, already established relationships also worked out as a way to attract new participants. And above all, the time and dedication spent in the social interaction became a factor in maintaining this social connection.

This project would not have succeeded had it not been for the explicit goal of the work, and that all the participants in the choir had the same prerequisites to meet it. Thereby everybody were each others equals, regardless of social differences for example. On the other hand, the choir would not have been able to remain focused if the social activities (coffee breaks, common dinner etc.) had not been there. The work tied the project together and the social element filled it with substance.

The project duration was rather long (6 months) and culminated in 5 public performances. This meant that it was possible to build group identity and that the participants at the end could be witnessed in this collective image by their individual networks (families, friends and colleagues). For this reason the performances, also the ones at The Royal Theatre, were more than a fun culmination. It was as much a question of becoming identified with and recognised for the enormous work and the togetherness it had created.

The composer Peter Bruun, who also was present at the majority of the rehearsals, would say again and again how fascinated he was by how the conductor Erik Jakobsson was embodying the role of facilitator, instigator and motivator and how the choir would be part of the creative process as a generator of meaning and focus. In the broader sense he experienced that the generation of joy was the driving force in the process.

At a more specific and detailed level, he noticed that the rehearsal of the composition was done without the choir reading from the music score, they simply did not get the sheets before late in the rehearsal process and were dependent on working with auditory and bodily memory and the cues from the conductor. This probably also added to the speed of developing a common collective identity of the choir both anchored in body and mind.

The conductor Erik Jakobsson noticed how important it was to work with the right balance between a demand for disciplined work and ‘catching’ and utilizing what the participants offered. This wide variety in personality and skills was a gift if it was utilized and integrated; at the same time, it was also as obvious for

the conductor that high demands on the participants had a positive effect. The overt ambitions of the conductor also made the participants ambitious.

During the presentation at The Lab Station and the Royal Theatre several 'real' audience members felt very drawn in by the first 5 minutes of the composition, where the choir mirrored the audience physically and where the audience only found out little by little. This open space of unpredictability and spontaneous interaction between the two groups, creating both confusion and recognition, was mentioned by many as a particular interesting element. One audience member even suggested letting the conductor turn to the 'real' audience and improvise with conducting the sounds they would make spontaneously.

In the invitation to join the choir, it said that there were no prerequisites to join, that it was fine to not be able to carry a tone, and that they would work with their own sounds. The purpose of this was to release the pressure from the participants and create a space that was inviting to sounds and outbursts normally not understood as music, i.e. perceived as non-sounds or even mistakes, and change it into something valuable.

It spoke to the participants, that the composition was relying on their personalities and on the common and collective effort. And it spoke in favour of artistic expression based on an artificial magnifying of these rich, diverse, anarchistic human voices.

The composition had become original, and the choir members unique.





## *The broader picture*

As mentioned already The Lab Station has hosted several events in order to share the knowledge we gained through the experiences from “the Voice of the Audience”. In March of 2018 The Lab Station organised a dissemination seminar with the title “Audience development in an artistic context” where “the Voice of the Audience” was presented to professionals in the theatre field. The day generated many qualified considerations especially around the concept of “Audience Development”. In a general sense all participants were more inclined to talk about ‘relations’ and not ‘development’ when it comes to audience discussion. The term ‘Development’ was often associated with commercial aspects such as ticket sales, “giving the audience what they want to pay for”, whereas ‘relation’ more would speak of building connections between people.

The concept of ‘relevance for the citizen’, which has been very alive in the public discussions of the funding of the arts in Denmark lately, was challenged. Who is to decide what is of relevance? And on what grounds? Art is working under different criteria than being ‘relevant’ and therefore the starting point is the opposite; it is challenging, playful, questioning, provoking, transforming, expanding...

We had discussions on how and when relations between the theatre and the audience can emerge. What if all the parts in the artistic work (ideas, methods, rehearsals, performances, meetings etc) were understood as equal and cohesive? In other words: what if the whole work is considered the composition? What consequences does this point to in the work itself and what space does this create for the audience?

The concept of “Audience development” is a social construct dependent on for example social and economical conditions. What aesthetic choices does the theatre make in order to investigate and develop new relations to the audience? What type of ‘invitation’ is offered by the theatre? What possibilities does the audience get to speak out loud? To show who they are? What if the audience-theatre relationship is regarded as a room for conversation, where it is possible with time to process and develop ones experiences? Continuing an ongoing conversation? The relation is also echoes.

The seminar became a relevant and important reflection with the research project “The Voice of the Audience” as its backdrop. It brought to light the problematic aspects with seeking to create audience involvement if there is no truly artistic aesthetic purpose behind it. The performing arts must never be instrumentalised for political, educative or pedagogical purposes and it should never proselytise. Free and wild art does not thrive under the concepts of ‘relevance’ and ‘measurable results’. The theatre should be reclaimed as a place of sensuous experience, a place where the world is not understood rationally, but sets the space and framework for aesthetic encounters with the audience, both before, during, and after the actual performance.

# *Appendixes*

## *Appendix 1 – Video documentation*

The project was documented by video artist Helle Lyshøj, and the footage was edited together with director Lotte Faarup. Several short 'teasers' and an 8 minute film was made to promote the project in order to share the process and product with a broader audience.

The video links are available through The Lab Station website at:

<https://www.forsoegsstationen.dk/referencerlap/>

The 8-minute film with English subtitles can also be viewed directly here:

[vimeo.com/221658363](https://vimeo.com/221658363)

Access to watch a recording of the entire concert at the Royal Theatre in June of 2017 can be acquired by contacting The Lab Station via email.

## *Appendix 2 – Additional references*

The overall EU project CARAVAN NEXT site with information in English:

[www.caravanext.eu](http://www.caravanext.eu)

The Caravan Next site with information about "The Voice of the Audience" in English:

[www.caravanext.eu/events/91](http://www.caravanext.eu/events/91)

A short English presentation summarising the project in 2017:

<https://www.forsoegsstationen.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/THE-VOICE-OF-THE-AUDIENCE.pdf>

The webpage for the research project "the Voice of the Audience" (in Danish):

[www.forsoegsstationen.dk/forsoeg/hovedforsoeg-lyden-af-publikum/](http://www.forsoegsstationen.dk/forsoeg/hovedforsoeg-lyden-af-publikum/)



### *Appendix 3 - Registrations of audience sounds*

The 20 sound categories of Vsevolod Meyerholds deducted from audience actions/sounds in theatres in 1922 in Moscow:

Silence	Noise
Loud noise	Collective reading
Singing	Coughing
Knocking or pushing	Physical fighting
Shouting	Crying
Laughing	Sighing
Commotion, liveliness	Clapping
Whistling	Whistle concert and hissing
People leaving	People leaving their seat
Throwing things	Walking onto the stage

Material collected by Lotte Faarup and Øyvind Kirchhoff:

Registrations made in September 2016:

- Sept. 16 at 10 AM in "rød sal" at Odin Teatret: "Træet" by Odin Teatret.
- Sept. 17 at 5 PM at Teatret ved Sorte Hest, Copenhagen: "Godnat Albert" by Sorte Hest.
- Sept. 18 at 2 PM at Teater ZeBU, Copenhagen: guest performance "Miras verdener" by Teater Fair Play.
- Sept. 19 at 8 PM at Husets Teater, Copenhagen: "Skabelsen" by Husets Teater.
- Sept. 28 at 10 AM, in Børnekulturhus Amar', Copenhagen: "Domino Effekten" by Rapid Eye.
- Sept. 30 at 8 PM at Teater V, Copenhagen: guest play "Petruska" by Granhøj Dans.

Sounds and actions registered:

Browsing through the (written) program	Yarning
Laughing, ha-ha-ha-ha 4 beats	Laughing in groups, in waves
Laughing mouth closed	Laughing - sighing
Leaving the theatre and slamming door	Coughing
Whispering	Looking to the side
Clapping in unison	Commenting to person next to one self
Laughting	Sneezing
Putting sweater in bag	Putting scarf in plastic bag
Stomach sounds	Move around on mat
Moving around on chair	Clearing voice
Shifting legs (crossed)	Turning off cell phone
Quietly talking before the performance begins	Talking
Snuffle	Silence
Putting the program in pocket	Rubbing shoes against floor
Sighing	Dropping the program on the floor
Dropping a piece of jewelry on chair	Taking off jacket
Taking candy out of its bag	Breathing
Hushing	Tipping over a glassbottle

Dramaturgical score for “The Voice of the Audience” by Lotte Faarup October 2016

Moscow – 1923

- There we have Emile!
- What the hell is this about..
- It is going to be GRAND!...
- I know that one!
- Shut up!!!
- I am not going to take this!
- I hope I am not coming down with something...
- Superb...

Copenhagen – 2016

- When is it over?
- What is he doing?
- Is this funny?
- I can't see a thing...
- They are sweating...
- She has talent...
- I'm tired

Appendix 4 – Example of music scores

**Sound of the Audience!**  
Copenhagen 2016

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a grand staff. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 60. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 5, 9, 13, 19, and 23 indicated at the start of their respective lines. The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamic markings such as *f*, *dim.*, *p*, and *ff* are used throughout. Performance instructions like 'clap' and 'clink' are placed below the staff. Several instances of the phrase 'When is it over??' are enclosed in boxes above the staff. The score concludes with a final measure marked with a double bar line.

♩=60

clap  
*f*

*dim.*

5

When is it over??

*p* *ff* *p* *ff*

9

When is it over??

*p* *ff* *p* *ff* *ff*

clink a-hem what's he doing?  
*p*

13

clink a-hem what's he doing?  
*p*

clink a-hem what.. clap  
*p*

klir a-hem  
*p*

19

a-hem-hem

23

A-hem-hem a-hem- hem..  
*f*

Copenhagen 2016

Gr I	Gr II	Gr III
1	Clapping 7-6-5-4-3 times Increasing intensity clapping 4 times w/ "When is it over?". High clapping.	
	Bottlesound-cough-"what is he doing?" x 2 Bottlesound-cough-"what" 7 x clapping Bottlesound-cough- 6 x clapping Cough- 5 x clap Cough- 4 x clap Cough- 3 x clap Cough- 2 x clap	
	Cough+clap	
	Cough	
	"Is this fun?" – "Is it?" – "Is?".	
	Cough -> + Stand -> Grin -> Shout -> Laugh -> +Sit down -> Cough	
2	Sigh + arms crossed -> arms dropping	Sigh + arms crossed -> arms dropping
	Sigh + arms crossed -> arms dropping + legs crossed	Sigh + arms crossed -> arms dropping + legs crossed
3	Inhale-Cough-inhale-Cough-inhale-"hahahaha!"	inhale-"aiij!"x3 + pause
		Increase tempo
	inhale-"hahahaha!" + stomp	Pause from "aiij" + bag of candy
	Increase tempo	+ "aiij" + bag of candy + Increase tempo
	"THEY ARE SWEATING"	"THEY ARE SWEATING"
	Rubbing shoes against floor	bag of candy
4	Giggle	bag of candy
	Giggle + Rub shoes against floor - Increase tempo	bag of candy + stomp Increase tempo
	"I AM"	"I AM"
	inhale + arms crossed	inhale + arms crossed
	"tired"	
	sigh + arms dropping	sigh + arms dropping

Credits:

Composer Peter Bruun  
Conductor Erik Jakobsson  
Director Lotte Faarup  
Production manager Øyvind Kirchhoff  
Administration Rikke Jeppesen Rod  
PR, recruitment Jakob Dahn & Anny Neel Dirchsen  
Production assistant Mejse Vedel  
Video Helle Lyshøj  
Photo Øyvind Kirchhoff

The Choir:

Agnes Lis Pedersen  
Alice Bogoni  
Alma Kirstine Jeppesen Rod  
Anne Hansen  
Anne Karina Nikolajsen  
Cecilia Sleimann  
Charlotte Rindom  
Charlotte Thon  
Edmund Jacobsen  
Fanny Thorngaard  
Gerd Schottländer  
Gordana Krstanovska  
Grete Enggaard  
Hanne Løvendahl

Helle Bjørn  
Henrik Bencke  
Jakob Dahn  
Jytte Kristensen  
Kasper Mechlenburg  
Kent Højholdt  
Kirsten Sjøstrøm  
Knud Wohlmuthk  
Lars H. Poulsen  
Lise Rask  
Mai Sung  
Malene Skjold  
Malene Thorborg  
Malene Meyer

Maria Sabino  
Marie T Strande  
Morten Wiese  
Nina Garst Jensen  
Ole Svendsen  
Rikke Jeppesen Rod  
Thomas Reinholtz  
Tine Hammerbo  
Tove Johansen  
Troels Laurell  
Viola Dasseville  
Tonny Bluecat  
Øyvind Kirchhoff

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THE DANISH ARTS FOUNDATION





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