

Application Jelinek Workshop 2026

Noh Seung Ju

Project title	Forms of Affect and the Body of Utterance: A Compositional and Artistic Research Inquiry through the Political Aesthetics of Elfriede Jelinek
Type of project	Artistic research–based composition project (composition / artistic research / performance–oriented inquiry)
Language	English

Abstract

The problem of right–wing populism and extremist politics does not lie only in the content of particular claims or ideologies. More fundamentally, it is a question of how collective affect is organized: how certain sensations, tones, rhythms, modes of utterance, and bodily attitudes are circulated, repeated, and intensified through technical media. Elfriede Jelinek’s texts are especially sensitive to these mechanisms of anti–democratic affective organization. Through propagandistic language, repetition, excess, choral utterance, and the accumulation of violent rhetoric, she reveals that anti–democracy is not merely a political position, but a mode of organizing sensation, embodiment, language, and mediation.

Starting from this problem, the present project investigates, from the perspective of composition and artistic research, how right–wing populism organizes affect within contemporary digital media environments. In particular, it takes as points of departure the recurring political tones, inflections, breathing patterns, speech speeds, rhythms, and bodily implied modes of speaking that emerge in short–form videos, online speech, forum posts, and

comment cultures. The aim is not simply to reproduce or content-wise criticize the speech of particular political actors. Rather, the project focuses on the conditions that make such utterances possible: specific ways of using the body, gestures of speech, and the conceptual and medial systems that support them.

As a composer and artistic researcher, I am less interested in sound as such than in the conditions under which sound emerges. Whether instrumental or vocal, sound is always produced through the body. Yet the body never exists as a purely material basis. It is always already organized by social, conceptual, and technical norms, and these norms shape movement, utterance, and ultimately sound itself. In this sense, the project approaches sound not as a surface result, but as part of a material loop connecting body, concept, medium, and sonic formation. More precisely, the work seeks to compositionally dismantle and reconfigure the body of utterance and the conceptual principles that sustain the affects of right-wing populism.

Methodologically, the project does not aim to imitate political speech directly, but to extract and transform the formal conditions that make it effective. To this end, it takes as analytic material vocal inflection, rhythmic contour, breathing patterns, tension and release, commanding or persuasive tones, and structures of repetition amplified by digital media. These materials are then translated into new compositional structures through instrumental gesture, vocal performance, electronics, processes of repetition and accumulation, and bodily movement. In this process, composition becomes not merely expressive, but a critical practice that exposes and displaces the sensory principles through which political affect is produced.

The project seeks to extend Jelinek's political aesthetics beyond textual interpretation by engaging it through musicality, performativity, and the corporeality of utterance. In doing so, it explores acoustically how anti-democratic language and affect are formed through bodies and media, while also experimenting with other possibilities of listening and other organizations of sensation. As an ongoing artistic research project, it is intended to be further developed through the workshop's mentoring and discussions, especially with regard to the relationship between utterance, body, and sound, and its connection to Jelinek's critical legacy.

Selected Bibliography

- Jelinek, Elfriede. *Am Königsweg*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2017.
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- Cox, Christoph. *Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Short Bio

Noh Seung Ju is a composer and artistic researcher based in Salzburg. He studied Composition and Creative Writing at Chung–Ang University and completed an MA in Composition at the University Mozarteum Salzburg, where he is currently a PhD candidate in the Arts. His work has received the Theodor Körner Prize and the Bernhard Paumgartner Medal, and has been performed by Ensemble Modern and Ensemble Phace.

Optional Media Sample

Body of Utterance (Study I). A 3–minute sonic sketch based on material derived from a YouTube video titled Donald Trump's best lines during his 2016 speech. Rather than foregrounding the semantic message of the source, the work concentrates on the bodily and affective conditions of political utterance—breath, rhythmic pressure, vocal inflection, and structures of repetition. The sketch functions as a preliminary sonic study for the proposed artistic research project.

Benito Mussolini Best Speech 2026

Forms of Affect and the Body of Utterance

1. Introduction

What a populist speech says does not account for its force. A speech produces what affect theory calls a “collective affect,” a “prepersonal intensity” that arises in the body before judgment and passes from one person to the next until a crowd carries it.¹ This runs beneath propositional content. That political speech works through more than its meaning is not a new thought: classical rhetoric already studied the body of delivery, and affect theory returned to the body and to materiality to think the same surplus. The question here is therefore narrower. With content held constant, what organizes the affect? What bodily and formal conditions carry it, and can those conditions be modeled and rebuilt?

The same words carry different force depending on how they are voiced. Shouted, a “we” is one lexeme; spoken low, it is the same lexeme making the same propositional contribution. Yet the affect that reaches the listener differs. Beyond the meaning it conveys, the voice has a material dimension, its “grain,” which comes before signification and outlasts it.² The variable that sets affective force sits outside semantic content, in the physical state of the speaking body at the moment of utterance. That state cannot simply be read off as a substrate. Earth bears world while withdrawing from it, holding something back.³ The body's materiality does the same, bearing meaning and affect while never fully showing itself to measurement. The coordinates this project uses mark where the body withdraws.

The work moves on one premise: that variation in affective force goes together with variation in the state of the voicing body. Under it, the project approaches affect by tracking that state. The object of analysis is a passage of about 48 seconds from a speech Mussolini gave at Bari in 1934. The aim is the “structural depth” of this one utterance, the understanding that comes from describing a single case thickly, down to its microscopic grain. Generality spread across many cases does not reach it.⁴ The work's title borrows the headline format under which clips of populist oratory circulate online, and presents the recording as a speech performed again in 2026. The title signals the real target: populist utterance as such, reassembled into a quasi oration.

This problematic belongs to a Jelinekian lineage. Jelinek's texts show antidemocracy to be, before any political position, a way of organizing sensation, body, and language, and through repetition, excess, and

¹Cf. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), esp. “The Autonomy of Affect,” for the conception of affect as a prepersonal intensity prior to conscious emotion. The thesis of an affect autonomous from cognition is contested; cf. Ruth Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (2011). This project does not require the strong autonomy thesis; it needs only that affective force varies with the bodily state of utterance.

²Cf. Roland Barthes, “The Grain of the Voice,” in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), for “the grain of the voice” (le grain de la voix). That the material singularity of the voice precedes signification accords with the “devocalization of logos” in Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

³Cf. Martin Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes” (1935/36), in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1950). The strife of world (Welt) and earth (Erde), and the withdrawal by which earth conceals itself (sich verschließen), are here applied to the materiality of the speaking body.

⁴Cf. Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), for “thick description” as a mode of understanding that substitutes the depth of a single case for statistical generalization.

“choral speech” they lay that organizing principle bare in the weave of the work itself.⁵ There the individual voice sinks into an anonymous chorus, and the question of who is speaking becomes the political stake. This project pushes the lineage one step on: it tries to perform, in the weave of the voicing body and of sound, what Jelinek performed in the weave of language. Here analysis and composition form a single movement: the discriminations made while composing, what is heard as tension, which transformation lands, are themselves the findings. Such work yields two kinds of knowledge: propositional knowledge about the piece, and a “discriminative knowing” that comes only from passing through it.⁶ The second resists full translation into propositions and still carries epistemic weight; the chapters that follow are its justification.

2. Method: Analyzing by Listening

This project transcribes the tension of the body into three coordinates. The tension of the glottis is estimated, by way of the compression of the vocal folds, as spectral tilt; the tension of the breath, by way of subglottal pressure, as the root mean square value of sound pressure; the tension of pitch, by way of the stretching of the laryngeal muscles, as fundamental frequency.⁷ The three coordinates have different physiological origins and vary independently in the data, and so they are not summed into a single value of tension. Summation would erase the quality of the tension a given moment of utterance possesses and leave only its quantity. Other decompositions are possible; these three are the ones that actually operated, in the course of the work, in discriminating the tension of this utterance. These estimates are drawn from a recording made in 1934, and quantities such as spectral tilt and the root mean square of sound pressure are exposed to the recording's bandwidth, its level, and its noise. For that reason the three coordinates function as markers that fix where the analysis is to listen, and, as the next section sets out, the final application of the predicate is entrusted to listening.

The three coordinates are measured by signal processing, but the final judgment of what is heard as tension is entrusted to listening. Here listening is a “phenomenological listening” that brackets acoustic measurement for the moment and attends to the quality given within the hearing.⁸ The relation between these two procedures is the crux of this chapter. It is a division of distinct labors. Measurement fixes the extension of the analysis, determining reproducibly which stretch of the utterance holds which coordinate

⁵Cf. Evelyn Annuß, *Elfriede Jelinek – Theater des Nachlebens* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2005; 2nd ed. 2007), for Jelinek's citational practice, the political stakes of the question “who speaks?” (Wer spricht?), and the anonymous voices submerged in nominalizing representation. On the linking of “choral speech” (chorisches Sprechen) to totalitarian mass mobilization, cf. the same author's *Volksschule des Theaters: Nationalsozialistische Massenspiele* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2019).

⁶Cf. Henk Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012), for the claim that artistic practice produces embodied knowledge irreducible to discursive form. Underlying this are the tacit knowledge of Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), and the distinction between knowing how and knowing that in Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949).

⁷Cf., for the correspondence between phonatory physiology and acoustic correlates, the standard accounts of voice science. That subglottal pressure correlates strongly with sound pressure level (SPL) and that the longitudinal tension of the vocal folds (cricothyroid action) raises fundamental frequency are set out in Ingo R. Titze, *Principles of Voice Production* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994). For the systematic description of phonatory settings, including the manifestation of glottal constriction as spectral tilt, cf. John Laver, *The Phonetic Description of Voice Quality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). These correlates are weakened on a low fidelity historical recording, which is the reason listening is made the arbiter of the predicate.

⁸“Phenomenological listening” denotes a mode of listening that brackets the source and cause of sound and attends to what is given within the hearing. This bracketing applies Husserl's epoché to sound; its paradigm is the “reduced listening” (écoute réduite) of Pierre Schaeffer, *Traité des objets musicaux* (Paris: Seuil, 1966). For the phenomenology of sound more generally, cf. Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, 2nd ed. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007; 1st ed. 1976). The premise that what is given within the hearing carries an evidential authority of its own rests on the principles of Husserlian phenomenology.

values. Listening, upon that extension, determines the application of the predicate, judging whether a given combination of coordinate values is heard as tension. The ground of this division is the fact that the coordinate values fixed by measurement do not by themselves determine the application of the predicate “tension.” The same upward movement of fundamental frequency is heard as tension in one context and as relaxation in another. In the course of this work, eight patterns were reclassified, from an initial classification grounded in measurement, on the grounds of listening; these cases, in which listening overturned the hypothesis of measurement, show that listening is a layer of independent judgment irreducible to measurement. That this judgment issues from a single subject's ear is proper to the method. In artistic research the subject of cognition is a trained listener, and that discrimination takes the form of a “connoisseurship” which, though not fully specifiable by rules, is transmitted and corrected through cases.⁹ The discrimination is more than private preference because it is open to correction by further cases. Insofar as it is anchored to coordinate values, is systematic, and is responsive to cases, it holds an epistemic status. The principle that phenomenological listening is the final arbiter thereby ceases to be a mere preference and, on the phenomenological premise that what is given within the hearing carries an evidential authority of its own, attains the status of a grounding of the criterion for predicate application.

From this procedure a finding follows. Dividing each of the three coordinates into high, middle, and low classifies any moment of utterance into one of 27 possible patterns. In this utterance twenty were realized, of which, by listening, sixteen were classified as tension and four as nontension. The four nontension patterns all share a low pitch. This observation suggests that pitch operates as the dominant axis in the perception of tension in this utterance. The possibility that this asymmetry owes something to measurement, fundamental frequency being the most robustly estimated of the three coordinates on a recording of this quality, is not excluded. What pitch does here was discovered through listening, and the cases in which listening overturned the hypothesis of measurement vouch for the synthetic character of that finding. This statement is restricted to this utterance and does not extend to a law of vocalization in general.

3. The Bodies Mussolini Did Not Write

Among the 27 possible patterns defined by the three coordinates, this utterance realized twenty and left seven unrealized. These 27 constitute an “axis of selection” from which the utterance, at each moment, picks one. The seven are body states the coordinate system specifies as possible but that the utterance never once occupied. As much as what appeared, what did not appear carries information about the speaking body. The “value” of an occupied state is determined only through its difference from the states left unoccupied.¹⁰ If the twenty realized patterns are the positive of the speaking body, the seven unrealized ones are its negative. Just as the negative of a photograph defines a figure through the places light did not reach, the unoccupied states define, in reverse, the contour of the occupied ones. The possibility that this void is an accident of the sample's brevity is not excluded, and the few cases involved do not permit a claim of statistical significance. The claim here is limited to this utterance, which did not occupy these states; whether Mussolini could ever

⁹Cf. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), for the characterization of expert discrimination, not fully specifiable by rules yet transmitted and corrected, as “connoisseurship.” The appeal is to the correctability of the judgment through further cases; the view of the cognitive subject as a situated, skilled researcher accords with Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (2012), cited above.

¹⁰Cf. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959; orig. *Cours de linguistique générale*, 1916), for the structuralist account of value (*valeur*), in which a sign acquires its value through its difference from what it is not. The set of possibilities from which a realized term is selected is formalized as an “axis of selection,” and the unselected terms as conferring value in absentia, in Roman Jakobson, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,” in *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956). The metaphor of the negative points to this account.

occupy them is left open. Still, the void clusters in a particular region of the coordinate space, and this skew can be read as lending the negative a figure. What this negative means, namely with what political choice the act of leaving certain body states empty is bound up, is an interpretation taken up in chapter 6, where the form as a whole acquires political meaning.

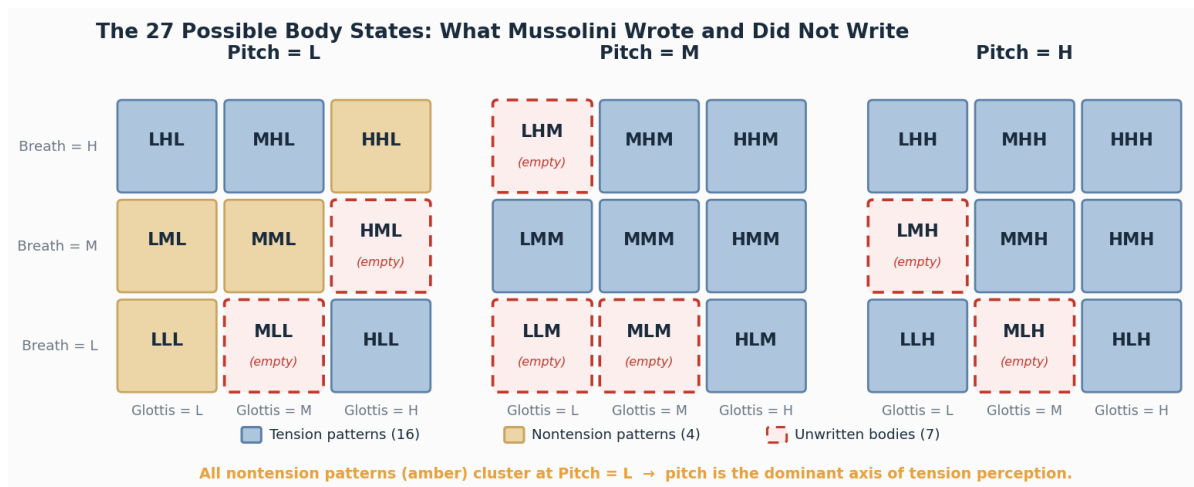


Figure 1. The 27 possible body states. Blue = tension (16), amber = nontension (4), red dashed = unwritten bodies (7).

4. Transformation: Adding a Foreign Materiality

What to take as the aim of transformation is the question of this chapter. The most plausible hypothesis is that transformation amplifies tension. The project set out from this hypothesis but could not sustain it. Transformations that directly amplify tension (those that merely lengthen the utterance, or smoothly raise the curve of tension, or shift the frequency minutely) were consistently heard as weak. These rejected transformations share the feature of manipulating the material along the single axis of tension, and if this shared feature is the cause of their rejection, then the efficacy of transformation does not lie on the axis of tension.

In this project's listening, the transformations that had efficacy showed one common character. They add to the speaking body a materiality the body does not originally possess. The transformation with the strongest efficacy was an upward frequency shift. Shifting all frequency components upward by the same amount breaks the harmonic relations among the components and adds an inharmonic component to the original voice. In listening, this component was heard as adding a kind of windlike materiality to the voice, that is, as a different substance seeping into it. This addition has a condition of degree. When the added materiality was too overt, the efficacy fell off; and what was heard as having the greatest efficacy was a state in which the original voice was still recognized while a faint strangeness was steeped within it.¹¹ It must be made clear here that these judgments are testimony of what was given, as such, to a trained listening, and they claim no more than that. As stated in chapter 2, this project takes that listening discrimination itself as both its data and its criterion, and the judgments concerning the efficacy of transformation stand on the same ground that grounded the predicate of tension. On that ground, the axis along which transformation is assessed turned out to be the manner and degree of the introduction of strangeness. This transformation,

¹¹Cf. Sigmund Freud, "Das Unheimliche" (1919), in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1947); Eng. "The Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition*, vol. 17 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955). The designation "foreign materiality" continues the "grain" of the voice introduced in chapter 1: transformation adds, to the voice's own grain, a grain that does not belong to its body. The state in which a familiar voice is still recognized while a strangeness steeps within it has the structure Freud defined as the uncanny (das Unheimliche), the site where the long familiar becomes strange.

which grafts a foreign materiality onto the speaking body, takes the figure of a sutured body, and this figure of suturing reappears at the level of the form as a whole.

5. Form: Deduction from the Peaks

The form of this work sets out from two peaks. The two peaks are the stretches of highest complexity and are bodies the composer produced directly. The remainder of the form is derived by subtracting complexity from these peaks. The points of highest complexity come first, and the simpler phases are derived from them by subtraction. In this structure, which unfolds from subjectively given peaks by a consistent rule, the subjective source is preserved at the system's point of departure while the system grows upon it. Since every phase is a modulation of the same two peaks, the form is a space of states occupied by a single body,¹² and the listener, without knowing as a proposition that the peaks are the source, perceives the “family resemblance” among the phases as the unity of the form.¹³ The order in which the work is heard traces the figure of an arch: from simplicity, through the eruption of the two peaks, to a collapse into a single pulse.

This project decomposes complexity into six dimensions: the density of events, the number of layers, the intensity of transformation, the variety of intervals, the irregularity of rhythm, and the recognizability of the original. These six are a decomposition this project adopted for the sake of discriminating form; other decompositions are possible, and the specific rates by which each dimension falls away are values the composer stipulates. In moving from a peak to the remainder, these six dimensions each diminish at a different rate. If every dimension diminished at the same rate, each phase would be the same thing differing only in volume; differential subtraction confers on each phase its own combination of coordinates. The variety of the form issues from the combinatorial pattern of the dimensions.

¹²Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988), for the conception, formalized in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, of a body as defined by the states and affects it can occupy. In this project “body” denotes, before any bearer of meaning, a material unit defined by the states it can occupy; this stands in the same line as the conception of the body as a generator of affect (Braidotti, Massumi) introduced in chapter 1.

¹³Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (1953), §§66 and 67, for “family resemblance” (Familienähnlichkeit), the binding of a category by a web of overlapping and crisscrossing resemblances without a common essence. The concept is here applied to the unity among the phases of the form.

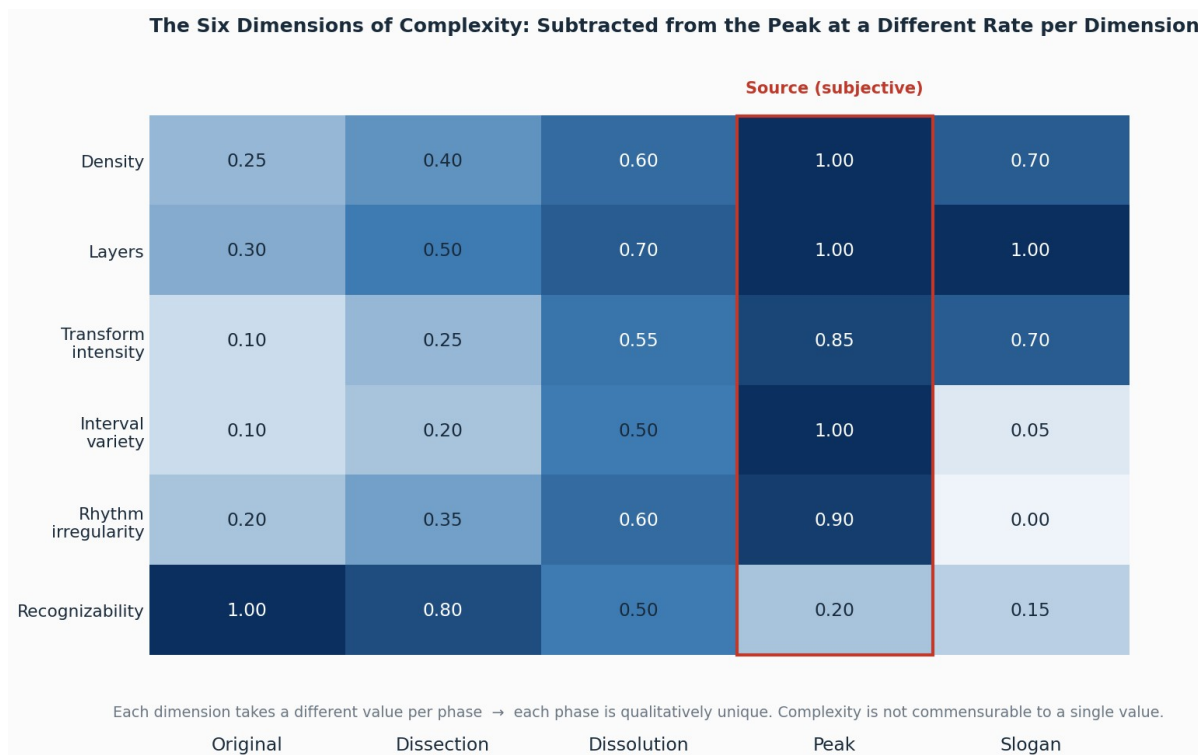


Figure 2. The six dimensions of complexity, subtracted from the peak at a different rate per dimension. The values shown are stipulated rates of subtraction and serve to make the relative differences among the dimensions legible.

The order in which the work is heard and the order in which it was generated do not run along the same line. Listening moves from the simple original toward the peaks, but generation set out from the peaks and ran back toward the simple phases. What is placed later in chronology comes first in the order of grounding. This divergence realizes, in the very generation of the work, the nonlinear temporality the project treats. The term nonlinear is equivocal, and the sense at issue here is restricted to two things: on one side, the divergence between the order of generation and the order of hearing; on the other, the retroactive constitution of the earlier phases by the peaks that were made first. The mathematical sense, the violation of superposition, is not what is meant. The image of history as a “spiral,” and the image of the past being ceaselessly reconstituted by the present while plural strata of time coexist within “duration,” flow beneath this work.¹⁴ The procedure of deriving past phases from the peaks inscribes this temporality into the causal structure of the form, and the work performs nonlinear time in the way its form is made. It is hard to assert that theory unilaterally determined the order of the work. More precisely, the frame of nonlinear temporality and the mode of generation that sets out from the peaks mirror one another and share the same image of time.

6. Convergence into a Single Pulse

Before interpretation, the event of the slogan phase needs to be described at the level of form. Up to this phase the several layers of the work were independent voices, each with its own temporal scale and logic of

¹⁴Cf. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), for the image of history flowing as a spiral; and Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), for the image of duration (*durée*), in which the past is preserved within the present and plural strata of time interpenetrate. For musical precedents, cf. Ligeti's polymetric structures and the way independent voices in Furrer's *nuun* are overlaid across distinct temporal axes. The claim that the work performs this temporality in its making, and does not merely represent it, follows the view that artistic research operates through enactment (Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, cited above).

events, and this independence constituted the work's polyphony. In the slogan phase this independence is systematically eliminated. The events of the layers are progressively quantized to a single period and aligned to one pulse, while the number of layers converges from four to three, to two, and finally to one. The polyphonic weave of several voices collapses into a single pulse. This much is what takes place at the level of form; the interpretation of what it means is deferred for a moment.

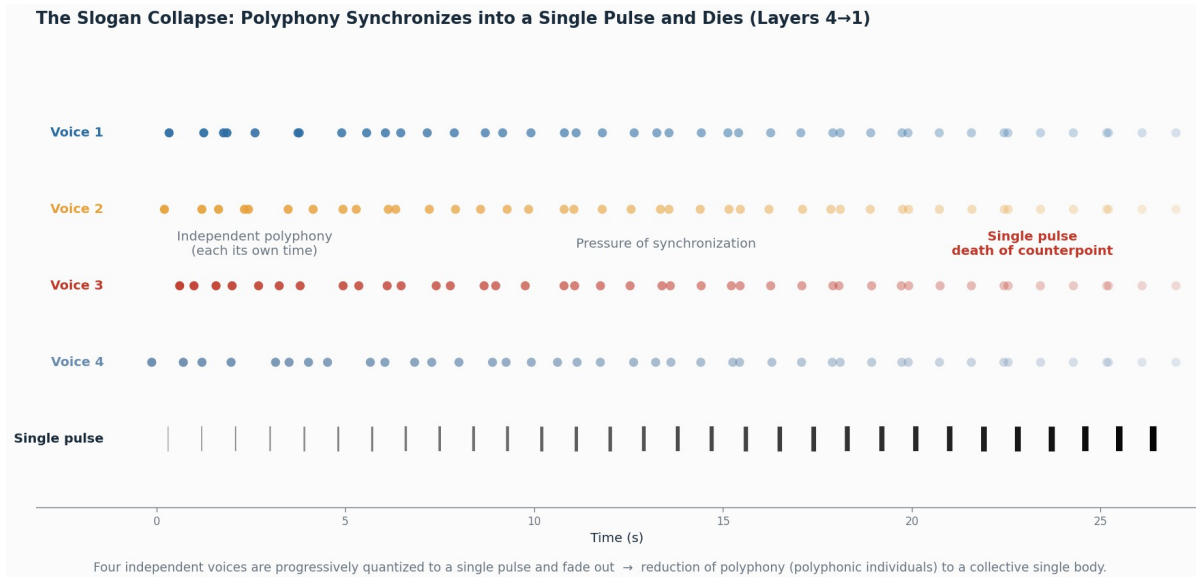


Figure 3. The slogan collapse: four independent voices synchronized and eliminated into a single pulse (layers 4 → 1).

This formal event can be read as having the same shape as a political structure. The mobilization of totalitarian affect consists in integrating a plurality of independent subjects into a single rhythm. The synchronized cheering of a crowd, the unison chanting of slogans, the absorption of the individual voice into a collective singularity: these are its modes, and they follow the logic of the “mass ornament,” the organizing of scattered fragments into a single homogeneous mass.¹⁵ The formal event described in the slogan phase has this same shape. Two things must be made clear about this overlap. The overlap is offered as a reading sensed within listening; the project does not assert it as an objectively established isomorphism. And this project leaves open, without specifying, whether the link joining form to politics is causal, analogical, or metaphorical. What the project intends is to let the overlap be sensed within listening.

Synchronization into a single pulse can serve many ends. The same formal operation belongs to ritual, to solidarity, and to collective joy, where it sounds as a binding. What makes this work's convergence audible as a loss is this work's temporal arrangement. Before the convergence, the work let a genuine polyphony be heard at sufficient length, and so the single pulse arrives against the memory of that polyphony. In the collapsed place the resonance of the preceding peak remains as a drone, so that the traces of the vanished voices still sound within the single pulse. This is also what answers an objection that can be raised here, namely that a work setting totalitarian affect in motion might reproduce the very affect it means

¹⁵Cf. Siegfried Kracauer, “The Mass Ornament” (1927), in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), for the “mass ornament” (das Ornament der Masse), the form that organizes scattered fragments into a single homogeneous mass; and Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), for the analysis of fascism's aestheticization of politics. On the way choral speech (Sprechchor) operated as a form of mass mobilization in National Socialist mass theater, cf. Evelyn Annuß, *Volksschule des Theaters: Nationalsozialistische Massenspiele* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2019). The value this work attaches to polyphony and to its collapse belongs to the European art music tradition within which the work operates and is not put forward as a universal correspondence between musical and political form.

to criticize. The singularization can be heard as a loss only because there was, before it, something genuinely worth losing. No listener is guaranteed to hear it so. What the work does is leave the memory of polyphony within the single pulse, building the form so that the pulse can also be heard as a loss.

The form of this work goes beyond showing a political structure in the same shape. Within the terms of artistic research this is where its strongest claim lies: the work assembles mobilization's formal operation in sound, performing the same convergence again at a reduced scale, so that the structure can be undergone. That a single, periodically recurring pulse offers itself to the body before it offers itself to judgment is a property of the form, and building that property is something the work can do with confidence. What the work cannot do with the same confidence is reach inside the listener. To fix what this pulse sets in motion as totalitarian affect, and to fix that a given listener undergoes it, would be to convert a claim about the work into a claim about minds the work cannot verify. The measured statement is that the convergence calls up the structure of such affect and builds a place where that affect may take hold, while whether a particular listener is drawn in remains beyond what the work can guarantee. This is the asymmetry the project keeps throughout: bold about what the form is made to do, reticent about the facts of reception it cannot establish.

What takes place in the slogan phase performs in sound what Jelinek treated in "choral speech."¹⁶ Just as in Jelinek's theater the individual voice melts into an anonymous chorus and repetition and excess paralyze meaning, leaving only affect, the single pulse of this work absorbs the polyphonic individual into a collective single body. Singularization through the elimination of independence is precisely the formal logic of choral speech. That this logic operated in the chorus of the stage and equally in the chorus of totalitarian mass theater lets one gauge the political depth this acoustic convergence reaches. The title of the work, too, recovers its weight at this point. The title sets a speech into the headline format under which clips circulate on the internet as "great speeches." In the moment of that setting, the listener is placed in the position of one who receives the clip, and from that position undergoes, with their own ears, what the form calls up. Just as Jelinek's writing cites and amplifies the language of populism while at the same time criticizing it, this work reconstructs populist utterance while placing the one who hears it in the position of suspicion. The joke of anachronism thereby loses its lightness and takes on the implication that populism returns, as form, across the ages.

What this project offers concerning democracy is something audible: the difference between the sound while a plurality of independent voices is sustained and the sound when those voices collapse into one. The difference between democratic plurality and its extinction is here discerned within listening.¹⁷ If Jelinek disclosed the form of antidemocratic affect in the weave of language, this project seeks to disclose the same form in the weave of the voicing body and of sound.

7. Conclusion

At the outset of this project stood a premise: that the organization of affect is inscribed more deeply in the formal state of the speaking body than in the propositional content of the utterance. Following that

¹⁶Cf. Evelyn Annuß, *Elfriede Jelinek – Theater des Nachlebens* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2005; 2nd ed. 2007), for "choral speech" (chorisches Sprechen), the formal logic of Jelinek's dramaturgy in which the individual voice is reduced to an anonymous chorus. The same author's *Volksschule des Theaters* (2019) traces this choral logic into totalitarian mass theater.

¹⁷Cf. Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), for the view, resting on a critique of technical rationality, of practice itself as a site of the production of knowledge, in which the cognitive subject is a practitioner reflecting on their own practice. The premise that all knowing is situated and produced from a partial perspective accords with Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988); the situatedness Haraway describes is bound to responsibility and to others, and is not a license for the privacy of a single ear.

premise, the project passed through the following path. The speaking body was analyzed into three coordinates (ch. 2); the region the utterance left empty was read as the negative of that body (ch. 3); transformation was defined as the addition of a foreign materiality (ch. 4); form was derived by subtraction from the peaks and thereby performed a nonlinear time (ch. 5); and at the peak of that form, the event of polyphony collapsing into a single pulse acquired political meaning (ch. 6). At the place this path arrives, one statement becomes possible: the organization of affect is a formal state of the speaking body, and insofar as it is, it can be heard.

It is worth making clear what this project claims and what it does not. The statements produced rest on a single sample of utterance, and so they are restricted to this utterance and do not extend to a law of vocalization in general. The judgments grounded in listening issued from the discrimination of a single subject, and although in principle they are open to the ears of others, their intersubjective verification was not in fact carried out. One could read this as a lack of intersubjective verification; but such a reading presupposes a frame that takes a verified, universal observer as the standard of cognition. Artistic research operates outside that frame. Here knowledge is formed as something bound to a situation and passing through a single body, and the subject of cognition is a “reflective practitioner” who discriminates by reflecting on their own practice.¹⁸ The ear of the single subject is the very place where this kind of knowledge is produced. The statement concerning the overlap of form and politics, too, was presented as a reading sensed within listening. This work also carries the risk of reproducing the very aestheticization of politics it would expose; it sought to hold that risk in check formally, through the memory of polyphony left within the single pulse, but it does not claim to have removed it. The particular occasion of the Bari speech, including what its words were addressed against, falls outside what an analysis built to bracket content was made to register, so that the bracketing which lets the form speak is also a deliberate forgetting. Delimiting the scope of the claim in this way is a source of strength: from a narrowly delimited place, the work can say something more distinct.

¹⁸This way of locating the political in what is made audible runs parallel to Jacques Rancière's account of the “distribution of the sensible” (*le partage du sensible*) and to Chantal Mouffe's “agonistic pluralism,” in which democracy is the ongoing, unresolved contest of plural voices. This project marks these frameworks as the theoretical neighborhood in which the audible difference between plurality and its collapse would have to be argued, without taking them up directly.

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2025 TIMF Academy (commission)

Shards of Song for ensemble — Ensemble Modern &
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2024 Lucerne Festival Composer Seminar

Hwik for ensemble — IEMA Ensemble

2024 Ensemble Modern Happy New Ears

Hwik for ensemble — Frankfurt