

The Everyday Lullaby: Unfurlings and Solidarities

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One part of a two-part intervention

For 4 female vocalists of varying ranges and types

Programme note:

Inspired by the Everyday Sexism Project, my intervention engages with its audience by questioning how female identities respond to prevalent tinges of sexism, both as individuals and within a group. Within one unified being, identities proliferate through the multiple and shared experience(s) of existing in the space.

Written for the *Sick!* Festival brief 'unfolding identities', *The Everyday Lullaby* functions as two interventions that occur simultaneously to fill any given performance space with female voices. Designed with the shared acoustic of the upper and lower foyers of the Contact Theatre in mind, the space lends itself to bleeding between the interventions.

This part of the installation explores how the relationship between group and individual female identity can be represented in space. Moving between two primary physical formations, the performers shift between an acoustically dispersed but shared content identity in their common pitches, gestures and spoken fragments, and a sonically singular but textually and individually diverse identity in their grouped position. In entirely spoken sections, phrase lengths expand and contract to unfold and transform from individual statements to collective declarations. For the listener, this also allows individual identities to develop in relation to their location relative to the speaking cluster: as an audience member approaches the group, the closest individual singer's independent line through her word map becomes audible. In the dispersed position, the audience is engaged to question the identity and character of the singers as their presence in the performance space triggers everyday negative commentary that women often face. The counterpointing of physical positioning and shared versus diverse material allows for continuous unfurling of these representations of female identity.

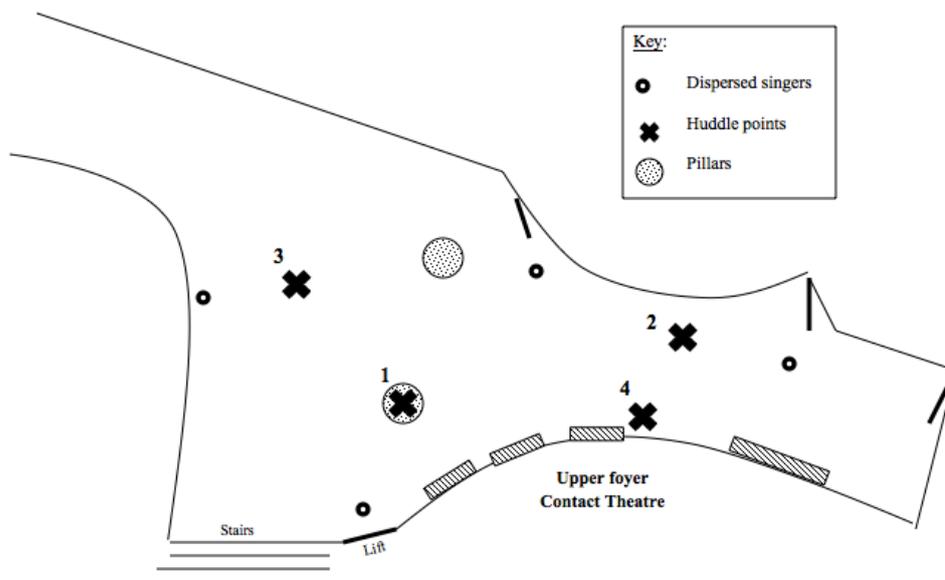
Performance notes:

Performers have two basic physical formations:

1. Dispersed throughout the space in a wide circle, all facing inward. Performers should generally be looking at each other, making regular eye contact between them.
2. Grouped together all back-to-back, so that shoulders are almost touching and all are facing outward.

This installation is essentially open-form/open-duration, so alternation between the formations can occur as many times as appropriate for the specific performers and event. When originally written and first performed, precise huddle points and their ordering were predetermined and plotted on the diagram below for the performance.

[While any future performance should involve positioning planning specific to the event site, these should be tailored to the logistics, acoustics, performance goals, etc. for any given venue or event. The word map part of the score was also originally tailored to the first performances by the quantity of text fragments needed to complete each section, however the intention is that these may be altered according to the performance context and desired intervention duration.]

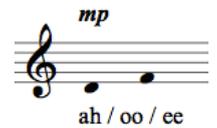


If none of the singers have perfect pitch, a tuning fork may be required to establish and reset pitches at the beginning of each sung section. In either instance, one singer may be responsible for providing a starting D_4 each time the first section is performed for the other singers to pitch against.

It is presumed that all singers will make themselves familiar with the following score before each performance. For practical purposes, a separate performance part is provided to be carried with the singers as they perform the piece for short-form cue instructions. All performers read from the same score, part and word map.

Position 1 – begin with all performers dispersed across the room. When in this formation, perform the following:

1. Sing one of these pitches (D₄ or F₄) to any of the syllables ‘ah’, ‘oo’, or ‘ee’ at ***mp*** relative to the other sounds in the space. All performers should be able to just barely hear each other over their own voice and the ambient sound in the room. Breathe when you need to but return to singing again immediately after. You may alternate which pitch you sing each time you breathe, or remain on the same pitch.



2. When an audience member walks past or stands in front of you, choose one of the following fragments to speak at a ***mf*** to ***f*** dynamic in any one of the suggested deliveries:

curtly:
‘man up’

kindly:
‘take it easy’

enticingly / expectantly / curtly:
‘give us a smile’

defensively:
‘it was only a joke’

teasing / angrily:
‘just being friendly’

annoyed / aloof / condescending:
‘calm down dear’

knowingly:
‘where are you going’

teasing / annoyed:
‘well if you’re gonna wear that’

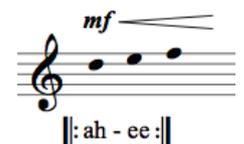
confused / annoyed:
‘what’s the big deal?’

Avoid exaggerating any particular facial expression, but make brief and confident eye contact with the passer-by if possible. Listening out for the other performers, try not to repeat the last fragment that was spoken. If several audience members are standing near you at once, pick one fragment to respond with for each passer-by, returning to quiet singing for a few seconds between each fragment. Any audience member can trigger any number of responses from the performers (e.g. if one person walks all the way through the foyer they should hear four different fragments from the performers).

3. If you hear another performer speak one of the phrases, sing either of these rhythmic fragments at ***mf*** at any tempo. When you have finished, return to one of the lower pitches at the original softer dynamic (maintaining the original volume balance with the other performers). This step should always be secondary to Step 2: if an audience member walks past you at any point while you are singing this, you should still be triggered to speak one of the above fragments. If this happens, once you have spoken the text above, return to the lower, softer pitches from Step 1.



4. Once you have been triggered to say 4 fragments, sing any one of these pitches (D₅, E₅, F₅) and raise your volume to ***mf***. When an audience member walks by, begin repeatedly singing ‘I’ at a very slow pulse of your choosing and with a separation between each repetition, gradually increasing in dynamic as you do so. Once you have begun saying ‘I’, continue to sing this regardless of audience movements. As you hear other ‘I’s from the other performers, accelerate your ‘I’s until you are eventually saying it so quickly that it becomes continuous alternation between ‘ah’ and ‘ee’ with no break in between, by which point you should also be singing ***f***.



5. When you feel you are singing the syllables of ‘I’ as fast as you possibly can, take a step forward. As soon as each performer has taken their initial step forward, all performers should simultaneously begin walking to the next huddle ‘station’, slowly but purposefully. Continue to sing at the same dynamic as you walk towards each other. Once close enough, immediately form the back-to-back stance and begin the staggered entries into the word chart.

Position 2 – when in the huddled formation at any location in the space, perform the following:

Using the word chart, make your way across the pages from left to right by randomly picking the indicated number of phrases from each column to speak deliberately and declaratively in any order. Begin with all performers declaring the repeated '**I am**' together 5 times before staggering entries into the first column. When you reach the repeated '**We are**' at the end, continue repeating until all performers have naturally re-synchronized on this phrase. After about 10 synchronized repetitions, all performers should gradually leave the huddle to return to their dispersed positions, continuing to speak '**We are**' as you walk.

Delivery guidance:

There should be gaps of between half and one second between each of the phrases within a column, but when moving between columns start your next phrase as quickly as possible. The result should be fairly constant speaking. Emboldened phrases should be spoken slightly louder, while normal font still implies confident, declarative delivery. The general tone of voice used should be empowered and confident, but not theatrical. Use single emboldened words within a phrase as a guide for cadence and accentuation of that phrase. Varying the speed of your speaking within and between individual fragments is encouraged. Empty boxes should be filled by a spoken text description of your choosing, between one and three words long. Throughout all of this text, performers should add any of their own interpretations and nuances of delivery and cadence that feel applicable or relevant to any individual phrase.

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Ending

For the original intervention performance, the piece ended after singers completed the word chart material at the 4th huddle position, near the balcony looking down onto the lower foyer of the Contact Theatre. In that instance, there were multiple performances over the course of a larger event, but performers re-set the piece and started anew at the beginning of the score (in their dispersed positions) for each performance.