



English Edition



Paul Pörtner & Roy Hart

Die menschliche Stimme
in Kunst und Leben

Eine Recherche von Ralf Peters

stimmfeld

Paul Pörtner & Roy Hart
The Human Voice in Art and Life
A Research by Ralf Peters

Foreword English Edition

Dear reader,

This is an English translation of the original German book I wrote and published about Roy Hart's encounter with Paul Pörtner between 1972 and 1974.

(Paul Pörtner and Roy Hart - *The Human Voice in Art and Life. A Research* by Ralf Peters, Norderstedt 2023)

I am not a professional translator and can only hope that the translation is good enough to be read comfortably by native English speakers. Especially the passages with Pörtner's texts would be a great challenge for any translator. Pörtner loved to play with words and to invent new words. The charm of these texts will probably only be vaguely perceptible in the English version.

Nevertheless, I think the story I am presenting here is interesting enough to make it accessible to people who are interested in questions of the human voice and art but do not speak German. If you have any suggestions for improving the language of this version, I would be very grateful if you would contact me. The PDF can easily be corrected and no printed version is planned at the moment.

Readers who are familiar with the history of the RHT will notice that not all details Pörtner mentions in his writings are correct. I left most of them uncorrected because I am not aiming for a "true" image of the time. I couldn't achieve this anyway and leave this task to those who were present in London in the early 1970ies. I look at this period as a voice artist and teacher of today wondering what we can learn from what happened during these years in the RHT.

Maybe you will find some inspiration for your own artistic work in this book as well!

Köln/Cologne, June 2024

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Foreword

This book is addressed to readers who are interested in theatre, voice and the connection between art and life. For the few people who still know about Paul Pörtner and hold his contributions to the cultural scene of the early Federal German Republic in high esteem, the book provides an in-sight into his world of thought which, as far as I know, has not been available in this form until now. In general, a cultural and literary-historical categorisation of Paul Pörtner's work is missing, not to mention a critical edition of his writings, most of which are no longer available in bookshops. I hope that my research will inspire others to take a closer look at this enigmatic figure of German and European literary and theatre history.

For all those interested in the approach of voice development in the tradition of Alfred Wolfsohn and Roy Hart, the texts and interpretations presented here provide an extraordinary insight into the period of the Roy Hart Theatre shortly before its move from London to the south of France.

In this research, I myself was driven by the question of what can be learned from the encounters and disputes between Roy Hart, his theatre group and Paul Pörtner for the current situation of art in general and vocal and performing arts in particular. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the Roy Hart Theatre, alongside Grotowski, the Living Theatre and several other groups, belonged to that part of the avant-garde that no longer saw theatre as a mere production space for pieces, but as a way of life. Performances in theatres or other venues became a part of artistic practice to which people devoted themselves in all contexts of life. Paul Pörtner was the pioneer of a form of theatre that no longer wanted to regard the audience as largely passive, but instead sought ways to eliminate the separation between artists and spectators and involve everyone in the artistic process. For Roy Hart and Paul Pörtner, the question of the connection between art and life was central to their work in very different ways. Today, the question still arises in a different form, and with this book I hope to provide readers with ideas to inspire their own research in the fields of art and life.

The texts by Paul Pörtner presented here are largely taken from manuscripts that have not yet been published and for the most part were not intended for publication in printed form. This results in a certain freedom in spelling, which I have adapted to today's rules where it serves to make the texts easier to read. In the correspondence in particular, I have made

some of the names mentioned unrecognisable so as not to violate the privacy of some members of the Roy Hart Theatre.

In addition to the many upheavals caused by the Covid19 pandemic, this in many ways empty time offered some artists the opportunity to immerse themselves in topics and questions for which there is hardly any time in the normal course of artistic life. This book is the result of an immersion that I felt called to. Time alone is not enough to carry out such extensive research. It also requires financial resources that made it possible to deal with more than just the existential concerns that were part of the corona years for many people, especially artists. In my case, an artist grant from the state of NRW helped, for which I am very grateful. The report I wrote after the scholarship had ended was the basis for this book.

Further thanks go to the municipal library in Wuppertal, where I was able to consult Pörtner's estate. Thanks also to Pörtner's heirs for allowing me to publish the texts in this form.

Bettina Hesse has critically read and commented on an earlier version of this book. That helped the manuscript a lot! Many thanks for that! Agnes Pollner also provided important advice and comments! Thank you!

The voice artist and companion of Roy Hart, Richard Armstrong, shared his memories of the time he met Paul Pörtner with me and thus helped me to understand Pörtner's texts in a broader context. Thank you!

I would also like to thank the archive of the Roy Hart Voice Centre in Malérargues/Southern France, where I explored Roy Hart's writings and recordings.

First Encounters

Paul Pörtner and Roy Hart were two artists who are very close to me for different reasons. I have been involved with Roy Hart's approach and his work with the human voice since the mid-1990s¹. My artistic work as well as my work as a voice teacher and author in the field of voice are primarily based on the approach associated with the names of Roy Hart and his teacher Alfred Wolfsohn. Roy Hart has further developed Wolfsohn's approach and transferred it to theatre. Together with his Roy Hart Theatre (RHT) and as a solo artist, he has brought the human voice on stage in a completely new way.

For it is the voice that forms the centre of Wolfsohn and Hart's approach. The entire artistic approach is conceived and developed here from the human voice. The attribute human is placed next to the voice, because this approach is about exploring all humanly possible vocal sounds and making them accessible for artistic work. Conventional notions of singing and speech are expanded into spheres that for a long time had little place on European stages. But the idea of the whole voice is so appealing for the theatre in particular, because all these vocal sounds are human. Every vocal sound tells of the person who is performing it and therefore offers itself to be heard in stage situations.

I first heard about Paul Pörtner through my work with RHT member Paul Silber, who was my most important voice teacher for many years and was in charge of the Roy Hart Centre's archive for a long time. In the early 2000s, with my support, he produced a CD entitled "Roy Hart in German". Most of the recordings on this CD had to do with Roy Hart's collaboration with Paul Pörtner.

Until then, I hadn't heard of Pörtner through my work in radio, who was not only very well known in German-speaking countries as a theatre author, but also made an important contribution to making the radio play an art form in its own right. So it would have been obvious to get to know Pörtner through my work as a radio announcer. But by the late 1990s,

¹ I have dealt with Roy Hart and his approach to voice development in detail elsewhere: "Wege zur Stimme. Reisen ins menschliche Stimmfeld". 2nd edition, Norderstedt 2018 (2008), English version: „Ways to the Voice“ pdf by request or online at <https://waystothevoice.blogspot.com/>; "In Gedanken: singen. Überlegungen zur menschlichen Stimme", Hamburg 2020, English version: „Singing in Mind“, pdf by request, or also online at <https://waystothevoice.blogspot.com/>.

his name was already virtually unknown. Today, Pörtner is more or less forgotten. Hardly anyone remembers that he wrote one of the most frequently performed plays in the world, Scherenschnitt or Shear Madness, a play that founded participatory theatre in the 1960s. Today, when the boundaries between theatre actors and audience are being dissolved in various ways, hardly anyone knows the name of the author who started this development (together with the dramaturge Claus Bremer)².

Paul Pörtner met Roy Hart at a psychodrama congress in Vienna in 1967 and was both amazed and surprised by Hart's extraordinary voice and his approach to therapeutic work with the voice. In this context, Pörtner speaks of scream therapy. This is an obvious, but at the same time problematic term for the approach that Roy Hart developed. I will go into this in more detail later. What remains to be said here is that the two were not only united by their passion for theatre, but perhaps even more so by their interest in the entire human voice and the desire to develop theatre from the voice.

It took a few years before Hart and Pörtner began to work together. In 1972, Pörtner produced the radio play "There is no more firmament" based on a libretto of the same name that Antonin Artaud had written for Edgar Varèse, without the opera ever having been composed. As far as I know, Pörtner's radio play was the first artistic production to use this text.

In the German-language radio play, Roy Hart had the task of creating a kind of soundscape with free vocal sounds that were only connected to words in a few short passages. There were also percussive elements, but otherwise no musical instruments or recordings. The use of an "extended voice" - a term that only emerged much later - had never been used in this form before, and you would have to search a long time afterwards to find anything similar. Pörtner describes the recording session at WDR in Cologne as follows:

We had an appointment for 6 p.m. for an evening appointment at WDR's Studio 6. As we entered the main entrance, we heard a strange noise: the stairwell echoed with a deep,

² Wikipedia has an English-language page on "Shear Madness" on which the author's name is not mentioned anywhere https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shear_Madness (accessed Nov. 2023). This is difficult to understand. My guess is along the following lines: Could it be that Pörtner didn't want to be named as the author? He was always interested in a theatre that wanted to break down the hierarchy between the actors, author, director, actress, etc. He may have drawn the conclusion that he didn't want to be the only name above the title of his play.

roaring voice, a buzzing, rattling sound. As we, George Gruntz³ and I, travelled up in the paternoster, this slow vehicle, the sound intensified: eerily high shrill sounds resonated in a vibrato, sounded like sine tones; then loops: the voice took off as it sank, took on fullness, took breath, a splendid baritonal bluster that ended in rattling bass registers. The resonating body of the broadcast centre gave these vocal exercises, with which Roy Hart "sang himself in" in the corridor, something monstrous. A voice wandered through this ghostly, labyrinthine house, which had always seemed to me to be a perimeter of the unreal, of fictions, of seething "brainstorming cells".

Roy Hart sang the non-verbal Artaud part in this opera fragment, which Artaud had written for Edgar Varèse but never completed. What fascinated me about this text was not the doomsday vision of a planetary catastrophe, but the occasions that were given here to realise states of fear: in the context of world events that provided the framework, so to speak, that located unfounded fear in these looming catastrophes.

Fear as an experience of the void, the maelstrom of emptiness, the yawning depth of the abyss. Fear that plunges into the abyss, staggering fear of falling into the bottomless, unstable abyss. Fear of being tossed about, suffocating, drowning. Gagged fear and liberated fear - this range can be measured in the cry that banishes and turns fear, the cry of fear that contains and expels fear, articulates fear.

Artaud takes the cry further, the "cry of armed fear" becomes a "cry of revolt", a cry of claim, challenge and unyielding demand. "To emit this cry," says Artaud, "I empty myself, not of breath, but of the violence of sound. Emptiness expands between two breaths. Emptiness expands like a space. Here is suffocated emptiness. The constricted emptiness of a throat: the violence of the gasping has blocked the breathing. The breath descends the belly and creates its emptiness, from there it rises again to the tops of the lungs. I don't need strength to scream: only weakness. The will comes from the weakness, but it will charge the weakness with all the power of the demand."

Roy Hart sang Artaud's hope: he gave it his voice. A broken voice? No, where other voices break, the range of Roy Hart's vocal register begins: several tones resound simultaneously, from the rattling and rattling and rough vibrato whole clusters of tones sound, which are wafted through by breath, airily differentiated, or clumped together to form clusters of

³ George Gruntz (1932-2013) was a Swiss jazz musician with whom Pörtner has worked several times.

tones, knotty, gaudy pressings. This powerful man stood with both feet firmly on the ground, bent his knees and pulled out what he could from the hollow of his belly: a compact swelling of the voice that, unlike the singing voice, touches the ear. Not only did the oscillators in the studio display a different spectrum, the listener's sensibility was also touched differently: more directly than through speech and singing. The psychic energy is not only communicated to the ear, but also to the diaphragm, moves, stirs up, excites deeper zones of perception than verbal or pure sound qualities. When people talk about a "vocal miracle", they are simply referring to something previously uncategorised and unclassifiable: the expansion of the vocal range from 2-3 to 6-8 octaves. The amazing thing about the voice is its openness to the unconscious and its ability to transport previously unformulated expressions from this underground of the soul.

There is a blockage, which became very clear to some listeners, for example the young cutter resisted this violent shock, saving herself in laughter, which drained the diaphragmatic reaction. The sound engineer also tried to intercept this storm, quite technically at first by limiting the intensity and volume in favour of the normal scale of the level control, but also by isolating this sound expression, limiting it to phonetic measurements, the phenomenon of storing and reproducing this production. Only George and I were affected and first of all received: without directives. Only gradually, in the repetitions, did artistic aspects become recognisable: the crescendos and decrescendos, the glissandos of the powerful voice vibrated freely. There was a joy in these vocal movements, a playful joy of production: moods tinged with the voice. However, this already marks the limits: where the voice unfolds its vocal power in an autocratic manner, where it flaunts its vocal power, so to speak, where it twists and turns, it is in danger of becoming vain.

And where it takes up text, interprets words, expands them, charges them with expression, it is in danger of exaggerating, rounding, reinforcing or entwining them with meanings that do not want to be courted and entwined in this way: either being pasted over and diminished by the sound, or distancing itself, reacting repulsively, rejecting the sound effort, defaming it as an ingredient, tinged with exuberance."

The production of this radio play marked the beginning of a phase in which Pörtner, Hart and the Roy Hart Theatre (RHT) came into closer contact. Pörtner visited the RHT in

London and re-remained in contact by letter, especially with the German or German-speaking members of the ensemble⁴. Pörtner also wrote several, as far as I know unpublished, reports about his time with the RHT. The report on the production of the radio play presented above is part of this collection. The testimonies provide an insight into the life of the theatre group shortly before their emigration from London to the French Cévennes⁵ and they show the motivation with which Pörtner viewed Roy Hart's work.

The two most important results of this collaboration between Pörtner, Roy Hart and the theatre group are a 90-minute radio broadcast by Pörtner entitled "The Human Voice" and the work with Pörtner's scenic poem I AM/ICH BIN.

Pörtner wrote the text for the Roy Hart Theatre, which worked on it extensively and performed it several times, mostly in combination with two other plays the theatre company was working on: *Mariage de Lux* and *Biodrame*, both written by Serge Béhar. This was a common way in which the artistic process took place at the RHT at that time. Under the title "Three moods", the evening was performed twice in London and twice more in Zurich, where Pörtner lived for a time⁶.

In my research, the results of which I present below, I had three guiding questions:

1. how did Paul Pörtner, who experienced the RHT as a social-artistic project and the approach to voice development pursued there not only as a listener but also, so to speak, first-hand, understand the idea of the human voice? What fascinated him about it, where did he have questions and doubts?
2. how did Pörtner and the RHT work together on ICH BIN? Why did it fail in the end? What were the hopes on both sides and how were they disappointed?
3. what sparks can be drawn from this for contemporary work with the voice on stage? Are the questions of identity raised there relevant to today's discussions? However, the answers to the questions posed under this point are only hinted at below. It is possible that some of them are more evident in my artistic projects of recent years⁷.

⁴ At least some of this correspondence can be found in Pörtner's estate, which is held in the Wuppertal City Library. Another part can be viewed in the archives of the Roy Hart Centre in Malérargues, southern France.

⁵ The theatre group moved to the so-called Chateau de Malérargues in the French Cévennes in 1974/75. The Roy Hart Voice Centre is still located there today and can be found online at roy-hart-theatre.com.

⁶ However, these performances in May 1974 do not appear to have been organised by Pörtner, but through the contacts of an RHT member, Enrique Pardo, whose family had contacts in Zurich.

⁷ I discuss this briefly at the end of the book. An overview of my artistic activities can be found at <http://stimmfeld.de/archiv-voice-stimme-stimmfeld.html>.

Biographical sketches

Paul Pörtner was born into a working-class family in Wuppertal⁸ in 1925. He was briefly drafted into the German army in 1944, but was not sent to the front due to a "clubfoot" (a disability he had had since birth). At the age of 20, he founded a group of artists in Wuppertal called "Der Turm (The Tower)". Shortly afterwards, he became acquainted with the theatre as an assistant director in Wuppertal and throughout his life he was involved with art and theatre in various roles and functions - as an author and director in the theatre and for radio, as a poet and as a translator from French. From 1958 he lived near Zurich and from 1976 he was a radio play editor at Norddeutscher Rundfunk. Pörtner died in 1984.

Although Pörtner can be regarded as the founder of participatory theatre and helped to develop radio drama on German radio into a genuine art form, today there is hardly anyone even in these fields who is familiar with his name. He is practically unknown to the wider public⁹.

Roy Hart belongs to the same generation as Pörtner. He was born in South Africa in 1926 to a Jewish family from Lithuania. In 1946, he went to London on an acting scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and shortly afterwards met the German-born emigrant and voice teacher Alfred Wolfsohn. This encounter changed the direction of his life and he devoted the next few years to working with Wolfsohn and his revolutionary approach to voice development. After Wolfsohn's death, Roy Hart continued his work as a teacher and artist. In 1968, he founded the Roy Hart Theatre, which caused a sensation with several productions in London and at various locations in Europe. Shortly after the group moved to France, Roy Hart died in a car accident in 1975. The Roy Hart Theatre continued to work without its director until the early 1990s¹⁰. The Roy Hart Voice Centre was then founded in Malérargues/France, where this work with the human voice is still taught in seminars and

⁸ More precisely in Elberfeld. Wuppertal was only founded in 1929 as a union of several smaller towns along the Wupper.

⁹ Perhaps this publication can help to rediscover his work and influence.

¹⁰ A number of English-language publications on the history and work of the Roy Hart Theatre and its founder have appeared in recent years, which are listed in the bibliography. For an introduction to the approach, I recommend the book by Kevin Crawford/Bernadette Sweeney: *Roy Hart and the Early Roy Hart Theatre*, Routledge, Abingdon/New York 2022

workshops today. Teachers from the Centre work worldwide, mainly in many countries in Europe and North and South America.

Art and Life

The identity of art and life, that is probably the precondition of the new art of expression: life for art, in art, but at the same time achieving communication through art, a lively togetherness in the group: the human relationship is of primary importance for art too.

In this quote, Paul Pörtner formulates his intention, which motivates him as an artist and a person and gives him orientation. At the same time, the "identity of art and life" expresses what fascinated Pörtner about Roy Hart and his theatre group. Here he seemed to have finally found a group that asked the same questions and searched together for ways of life that gave art a central role in every-day life.

After a visit to the RHT in London, Pörtner writes:

On the way back, in the taxi, I spoke to Vladimir¹¹ about this close interrelationship between art and life. He told me about Africa, about tribes who organise and clarify their tribal life through what we would call art - music, poetry, play - not as a celebration or addition to life, but as the art of living itself. And he pointed out that even for the Roy Hart group, the two cannot be separated: they live together, make a living through certain organisations, such as the Abraxas Club, where squash is played, table tennis, bridge, there is a sauna, a bath, a restaurant, a bar, in short a commercial branch that has completely different clients: they pay for and finance the theatre. An autonomous little commune, a micro-society in which human relationships create a supporting network, a fabric that determines the dynamics and work: the art that is created serves both therapy and mental hygiene, it organises the forces, creates discharges of feelings, tensions and clarifications of relationships. It is not an end in itself, but integrated into life. It creates community in joint creation and determines the sympathy and power of participation, which everyone can determine for themselves, in its scope, in its meaning for themselves.

¹¹ This refers to the composer Vladimir Rodzianko, who composed at least one piece for the RHT, a "Kyrie Eleison" that deconstructs itself over time. Little else is known about him. After his contact with the RHT, he apparently offered seminars on "Voice and Movement" himself, including in Berlin.

Pörtner only realised late on that there was a fundamental difference between his and Roy Hart's approach to bringing art and life closer together: Pörtner was mainly interested in bringing life onto the stage and dissolving art as a special sphere or at least transforming it into an art that was close to life¹². Roy Hart, on the other hand, wanted to bring art into life, to create a form of life that was artistic through and through. Pörtner and Roy Hart were therefore moving in opposite directions when it came to bringing art and life together. This need not necessarily lead to the twofold mis-understanding that I believe I recognise here. On the one hand, there is the option of allowing both movements and seeking a mutual interpenetration of art and life. On the other hand, Roy Hart and Pörtner strived for a process of convergence between art and life, through which both fields would change: Life reveals itself through art as much larger than the so-called normal everyday life (of the modernist human being) would suggest. An indicator of this is the size of one's own voice field, which, according to Roy Hart, indicates the breadth of one's own room for action. Art, on the other hand, regains its long-lost directness through a greater closeness to life. Instead of remaining stuck in decoration and entertainment, it begins to have an effect on people and their lives again.

Keeping all these aspects in mind, the process that Hart and Pörtner were working on would be in line with the ideal of Vladimir Rodzianko quoted above, which he had seen in African societies. However, such a merging of the RHT's and Pörtner's ideas was not possible at this stage. At this moment, the RHT was evidently in a hermetic situation in which it seemed inconceivable to question and change its own position by discussing it with other approaches. Pörtner, on the other hand, was too interested in art that met classical quality standards to seek dialogue with the group again after his disappointment with the collaboration with Roy Hart, which was particularly evident in the RHT's interpretation of his text ICH BIN. Both sides had reached their limits.

In the course of 1974, Pörtner withdrew from contact with Roy Hart and the members of the theatre group. In the autumn, RHT member Richard Armstrong wrote him a short letter asking why he and the RHT were no longer hearing from him. The next and, as far as I can see, last con-tact was an exchange of letters shortly after Roy Hart's accidental death. He wrote back sympa-thetically, but apparently made no further attempt to contact the RHT.

¹² In this respect, he is close to the approach of John Cage and his search for closeness to life in music.

Pörtner at the Abraxas Club

Paul Pörtner wrote very detailed texts about his visits to the Abraxas Club, the centre of the RHT in London, which took place in 1972 and '73. These are among the few documents in which guests of the RHT report on their life in the group.

The encounters with the RHT in the Abraxas Club must have moved Pörtner deeply. In his written legacy, there are several texts in which he reflects on his experiences there and at the same time varies them. Three aspects are at the forefront of these reflections: from the outset, Pörtner showed great appreciation for the RHT project, which aimed to try out a way of life that integrated art at all levels of life. He feels immediately addressed by it and repeatedly emphasises the appreciative and respectful way of dealing with each other and with guests like him.

This listening that gives me time to express myself, to search for words, to stop, to think - I still translate verbatim from German, the language I think, into English, the language I speak to my English friends. They politely reply to me in broken German, answering my language difficulties with their own.

At the same time, he soon experiences another side of communication in the RHT, which he shies away from and wants to keep his distance from. Despite all the friendliness, the group soon makes great demands on him and burdens him with explicit and unspoken expectations. For example, on the very first day of his visit to the Abraxas Club, he is invited to take part in a meeting the next day. As no further explanation is given as to what exactly is going to happen there, he assumes it is a casual meeting with other guests and members of the RHT:

I imagine a "meeting" to be one of many people at which I am (supposed to be) introduced, stand around, talk, maybe have a drink, a kind of cocktail reception.

I'm not very careful with the time, I'm still strolling through the neighbourhood, it's 10:30 when I arrive at the club. As I open the door, I hear shouting from upstairs: a rehearsal? I go up the stairs to the studio, open the door quietly and the voices stop. Am I interrupting

something? A woman asks me if I'm the guest and gives my name. I'm too late, would I like to make a state-ment? No. This performance was intended as a gift for guests. I had missed the first part, a play in German that had been rehearsed all night especially for my visit. The group is asked if they want to repeat the beginning. No. I sit down, feeling ashamed, reprimanded and courted at the same time - the only spectator, listener to a group play.

The ambivalence between appreciation and distancing that Pörtner experiences in his communi-cation with the group can also be found in his interpretation of the vocal and artistic performances of the RHT and Roy Hart himself. On the one hand, there is great admiration: for the outstanding vocal abilities of Roy Hart and some of the RHT members and for the use of the "scream", in which Pörtner hears realised what he had in mind as an aesthetic form of non-verbal vocal expression: a direct and immediate type of vocalisation despite the formal framework, a scream that can take on countless nuances of meaning.

At the same time - and this is the third aspect of his reflections on RHT - as a trained theatre man, he immediately recognises the dangers of this aesthetic approach: the slide into "dilettantism" and cliché. And he knows that these dangers are particularly noticeable and audible as long as one remains in the position of a classical understanding of art, which Pörtner actually wants to discard.

In some of the productions that Paul Silber had played to me from the tape on the first day, I saw a danger of artificialisation, of speech-singing (Sprechgesang), a danger of dilettantism. But this boundary to the professional should not be relevant, the pejorative "dilettantism" is always applied where one wants to dismiss a formal effort that cannot be classified or categorised from an official, so to speak, artistic judge's point of view (which is always a presumptuous, unfounded status). In this distinction between dilettantism and professional art-istry, which is decisive, there is a defamation of that which is uncanny, uncomfortable, does not fit into the concept. An exclusivity, a claim to exclusivity on the part of those who have claimed a lease on art, a small elite of professionals who determine what may and may not claim validity. I have always wondered where these people get the cheek to have the audacity to pass some-thing off as art, to describe it as authoritative, worthy of promotion and recognition, while they dismiss and belittle everything that

doesn't fit into this demarcation, ridicule it and make it "im-possible" with scorn and self-confident superiority. Who knows what art is?

In another text, Pörtner describes his visits to the Abraxas Club in great detail and introduces the venue, some members of the Roy Hart Theatre and the approach of working together on art and voice in more detail:

I had made a note of this address: Roy Hart Theatre Group, 81 Belsize Park Gardens, London North West 3, in the Hampstead area, as I saw on the map. The building, a new white building with a colourful façade, was labelled the Abraxas Club in gold lettering. A long corridor led to a reception desk, where a blonde girl called Brita gave me information: Roy Hart was currently in France, but his group was here, so I should come to the club. She led me to a restaurant and introduced me to some members of the group who happened to be there: Dianne, who is on serving duty and offers me a coffee, Monty, Paul. We sit together for a while. My first question is easy and difficult to answer: What does theatre group mean? No, it doesn't mean a troupe of comedians, nor is there a theatre in this house, just a studio under the roof. Monty, who is a builder by profession, offers to show me around the building: Paul explains to me, "The group now consists of forty-five people, some of whom have been together for more than 12 years. No, they don't live together as a commune, but they are a kind of theatre commune, or collective; they chose the name group because it defines this form of living together. How?, I ask, because the term group is quite ambiguous in German and not yet defined by the group-psychological aspects. In England, the group is more precisely localised as a "therapeutic community", "group dynamics" and "group processes" are better known (probably influenced by American models) than in Germany, and the sociological conditions of group formation have been described more precisely. I would like to mention the reservations I had about the theatre group as represented by the Living Theatre, for example: The group tends towards a certain exclusivity, it becomes an in=group, i.e. tensions and relationships prevail within the group that do not exist outside the group: thus the group becomes a "magic circle", a clan, a tribe, a sect. For outsiders - and I came as an outsider - there is something artificial about this self-centred micro-society. You experience a change of

climate, so to speak, when you leave the usual pressures of everyday urban and professional life and enter the relaxed sphere of group ambiance.

Well, first of all, I was warmly welcomed as a guest and given a tour of the hotel. In addition to the restaurant and bar, there are four sports halls, rooms where squash is played. "Squash" is still a little-known sport in Germany. It has a certain resemblance to tennis, the same rackets for example, but the balls are not played over a net to the partner, but hit against a wall, from where they bounce back and are then caught and countered by the partner: there is quite a lot of banging in this rather aggressive-looking game, only on closer inspection do you realise that it is not just about letting off steam, an exercise in strength, but also about quick reactions and, last but not least, teamwork.

The four squash courts form the basis of the Abraxas Club, which has several hundred members who have nothing directly to do with the theatre group. They come to do sport; there are various options for exercise classes, from judo to yoga, there are sauna and massage rooms, even a beauty salon and hairdressing cabins. A kind of fitness centre? The club gives the members of the theatre group opportunities to work and earn money, whether as teachers, trainers, in the kitchen, in service or in the office. The theatre work is partly financed by the club's income. The main room of the house, the studio, is reserved for the theatre group. It is a meeting room (without chairs), a room for singing lessons - a piano and sound recording equipment are available - a bright, whitewashed room with three windows through which a view of the city opens up: a view over chimneys and roofs to the neighbourhoods of Belsize and Camden Town below. Paul played me a tape that was currently playing, a soul-orientated song.

In the meantime, H. had arrived, she had probably been called by Brita. H. speaks German and was able to do some interpreting to answer the more difficult questions that I couldn't clarify with my imperfect English. What does theatre mean for the group? Certainly, there are occasional performances for audiences, there have been individual performances at long intervals in London and Paris - most recently the group was invited by Jean Louis Barrault to the Theatre of Nations - there are always festivals and theatre meetings at which the group performs collective improvisations, but the group's work is not designed as rehearsal work, not directed towards a result: The productions are not theatre performances in the usual sense.

The daily movement and sound exercises are part of the group's training.

I ask H. what brought her to this group, where she comes from, what she did before. Lots of in-discreet questions, which H. answers openly. She comes from K., had an art gallery there. She also studied education and wanted to found a youth centre. In the midst of these activities, she heard Roy Hart sing for the first time at the British Week in Vienna in 1969. The term "singing" still applies to Roy Hart, albeit in a broader sense. He still works from composed musical mod-els, for example he realised a text by Gaston Salvatore "Versuch über Schweine" with Hans Werner Henze and was given a solo part in Stockhausen's composition "Spiral". Peter Maxwell Davies wrote "Eight Songs for a Mad King" for Roy Hart, an opera about the mentally ill Eng-lish King George III.

In the meantime, there was a break between the composer and Roy Hart. In the dispute between these two, a discrepancy emerges between the composer and the performer. The enhancement of the interpreter from the performer of the composition to the actual realiser, i.e. to a creative independence, cancels out the composer's claim to a note-perfect, exactly repeatable rendition of his work: This is where opinions differ. For this reason, improvisation by the group has been the starting point in recent times; the musical-artistic plan should allow for co-creative partici-pation by the group, as in Vladimir Rodchenko's composition Kyrie Eleison, for example. (One could call this composition "destruction of a church hymn" in the subtitle).

After listening to a few tapes, I came back to the story of H., who left her husband and child to live in the group. A complicated story, which at first seemed as if this young woman had sought therapy for her depression in the group, but that was only one aspect. Being affected by these "unimagined possibilities of the voice", as she calls it, was based on the demonstration of an in-ner freedom that represented a new dimension for her.

The art she had known so far was not designed for communication. She had therefore turned to studying education, in particular motivational research and the exploration of learning pro-cesses. In her first encounter with the group, who spent their holidays with her, more precisely in her house on the island of Plavasca in Dalmatia, she recognised the value of practice: she found that what was theoretically required for the education of children was realised in this form of living together. The openness of the individuals to each other, the acceptance of their weaknesses and imperfections, the encouragement to live out and express feelings, the rein-forcement contained in these positive responses, the constant feedback that relates each indi-vidual behaviour to the collective - the basic

features of group life can only be outlined here - this personal experience determined H. to give up her family and her gallery and her studies and move to London. She works in the kitchen and as a waitress in the club; her friend I., formerly a professor at an art academy, cooks. He has a limited field of activity in the kitchen and enjoys this work. It is important that he is present and can take part in group life at any time. This means that, in addition to the daily exercises and (the) training programme, there are always meetings in which experiences are discussed, projects are jointly agreed, personal difficulties are discussed, dreams are told and letters are read out. "Everything is theatre," says H., "whether we're talking, listening, making decisions or training together: it's not theatre in the bad sense, as people say when they say: Don't make a scene. Don't make me a scene. It's theatre in the sense of a communication exercise, of open, reactive behaviour, of creative moments that make the everyday transparent to the astonishing things that lie in every living network of relationships.

When I came to the club for the second time, I met Kozana. She is not yet a member of the group, but has just joined the workshop, a training centre that differs from drama schools in that it does not teach representation techniques, but instead uses communication exercises as the basis for physical training. Kozana comes from Argentina. She is reluctant to talk about her past. One girl, Jennifer, is curious and wants to know more: she has heard that Kozana spent years in prison and was tortured. Kozana says: I don't like talking about it. Jennifer insists. Understand, it's a place without skin, it still hurts when you touch it. Kozana had worked as a teacher on an Indian reservation; she had also endeavoured to educate the Indians about their rights and founded a kind of civil rights initiative. This became too uncomfortable for the government and Kozana, like all those who did not conform to the government, was labelled a "communist", imprisoned and tortured. Thanks to the initiative of a few friends, she got away: she was sent abroad and went to Canada to live with Norman McLaren. Made animated films. Then some happenings. The most famous one took place in Central Park New York in 1969. As it has some didactic effects that the Happening often lacked, I'll mention the intention. Kozana called the event "Stomp on war toys", prepared it with lectures in schools and showed films that explained the significance of war toys. In the central park, war toys were piled up in a large heap, people were asked to break them, the breaking was filmed and then shown to the same people, i.e. those affected: the distorted faces, the

discharge of aggression when the toys were broken became recognisable: aggression is in everyone.

Kozana primarily sees the artistic value of group work. She found the total theatre and multi-media shows with which she went on tour in Europe in 1970/71 too elaborate, too technical, too playful: at best, they could only achieve a sensibilisation of the audience, but not communication. Working with herself, without any external expenditure on technical means, the re-duction to body, voice and movement forms the approach for her to reformulate the means of expression. So: first an exploration of one's own means, then an expansion of potential, such as vocalisation and expressiveness, a release of energies that speak directly to others: Creating relationship, requiring participation. (As I said, the vocal exercises in the workshop are just one example of the possibilities of direct, non-verbal expression).

Maria, the only German in the group, comes from Leipzig. She came to England in 1946 through a job placement as a housemaid and only had the address of an emigrant living in London, that of Alfred Wolfsohn, a singing teacher, as the official job title says. Dissatisfied with the methods of voice training and technique, he had turned to the psychological phenomena of the voice early on. He specialised in teaching singers who had lost their voice. He taught a psycho-physiological self-exploration of inner inconsistencies: Losing one's voice means a failure to express oneself. Alfred Wolfsohn understood the voice as the "muscle of the soul", as the closest link between body and psyche, "the link", "the connection". His school therefore tends not towards laryngeal artistry, not towards the training of an organ, but towards a "total education". Maria told me about her encounter with this man, whose estate she manages. Alfred Wolfsohn died in 1962 and is the actual founder of the group, which now bears the name of Roy Hart, his master student.

Roy Hart comes from a Polish-Lithuanian emigrant family of Jewish origin. He was born in South Africa, first studied psychology in Johannesburg, then went to London in 1946 to attend the Royal School (Academy) of Dramatic Arts. He took singing lessons with Alfred Wolfsohn. Alongside Jenny Johnson, he was one of the first singers to achieve a

vocal range of 8 octaves, while the maximum vocal range of three octaves is already considered phenomenal, such as the voice of the Indian singer Yma Sumac¹³.

Alfred Wolfsohn's aim was not (however) to produce vocal miracles, but to achieve mental hy-giene and a unity of physical and psychological expression through breathing and vocal exer-cises.

In this approach, which is only outlined here and which Alfred Wolfsohn describes in detail in three writings¹⁴, the unity of art and life is also already present, or more precisely, the function that exercises previously considered artistic could have for life, namely the function of releasing energy, of liberating the psyche through breathing, voice and movement training of the body. No, this distinction is not exactly correct either, as I realised in conversations with Maria. The interrelationship between physical and mental behaviour is defined more narrowly than is en-visaged in psychology, and the interrelationships and interactions between the individual and the group are also redefined.

At one of the meetings, the RHT plays Pörtner a version of Rilke's *Weise von Liebe und Tod* by Cornet Christoph Rilke, a piece that harbours the great danger of drifting into cliché that Pörtner talks about below¹⁵. The text has already been used by Alfred Wolfsohn, and there are recordings of his pupils Jill Johnson and Marita Günther declaiming the text. The ambivalence that Pörtner perceived in himself during the performance is only too understandable and at the same time a tes-timony to his serious attempt to listen first, instead of judging with his own, seemingly superior concepts.

My first reaction days ago, when I heard about the setting and dancing of the Cornet, was: oh God, this old-boy poetry (sic! old-boy or old-maid poetry? R.P.) from the day before yesterday! (Indicative of my prejudice.) And now, when Rilke's words had been translated into a group form of speech (not choral, but in an expression that varied from word to

¹³ Yma Sumac (1922-2008), Peruvian singer with a vocal range of at least four octaves.

¹⁴ Wolfsohn's manuscripts have not yet been published, apart from a few excerpts. They can be viewed in the archive of the Jewish Museum Berlin and in the archive of the Roy Hart Centre in the south of France.

¹⁵ Apparently, this was also the text that the RHT wanted to demonstrate for Pörtner at the first meeting when he arrived late.

word and from speaker to speaker), sung, danced, mimed, in short: acted, they came to life: anew. Gained a freshness through the freshness of the youthful and enthusiastic rendition: everyone spoke as they had understood it, also made their relationship to the word known, the word inspired posture, gesture, group movement, sound, singing. Certainly it was conducted, staged, a thoroughly artificial, at times even pretentious structure, but it spoke directly: reproduced what had emanated from Rilke, captured by a reading that traced the movements of sound and meaning, translated into its own form. Here I see a possibility for me as a writer: to make an offer to the group, to give words, perhaps to trigger group processes that lead to a selection, transformation of the word into the group formation of a performance.

Before we turn to the texts that Pörtner wrote for the theatre group based on this and other experiences with the RHT, I will turn to the other thematic focus that fascinated Pörtner in his encounter with Roy Hart and his group. The human voice, especially in the mode of the scream. At least that's how Pörtner puts it in his own words. Strictly speaking, the idea behind this is that a level of meaning can be found in vocal utterances that are not preformed linguistically or musically, which in a sense speaks directly to the listener. In this context, Pörtner is not only concerned with artistic questions, but is also interested in his own voice with its limitations, its history and the hopes associated with it. This becomes particularly clear in his reports from his voice exploration sessions.

The Singing Lessons

Pörtner writes in several occasions about his own voice, which he experiences as weak and inadequate to his relatively imposing physical appearance. In an interview with a laryngologist on the radio programme "The Human Voice", he talks about a slight speech defect that he has had since childhood and which manifests itself as mumbling. The doctor suspects that this articulation weakness is a symptom affecting the whole body, according to which there is an energetic inhibition that manifests itself in various ways. According to Pörtner, this indication encouraged him to take a few individual lessons, so-called singing lessons, with one of the members of the Roy Hart Theatre. His teacher was Richard Armstrong¹⁶, who was 27 years old at the time. Pörtner used excerpts from one of these lessons in the radio programme mentioned above¹⁷.

One of Pörtner's manuscripts contains a text that is a kind of preliminary remark for the description of the Singing Lessons:

Losing (forfeiting) the voice is a failure to express oneself. The voice is the closest link between the body and the psyche. Psychological symptoms obviously manifest themselves in the voice, but it takes an expert to recognise, locate and interpret these symptoms. Through vocal development, feelings can also be unfolded, suppressed and previously unknown feelings can be awakened and previously suppressed feelings can be uncovered. "Freeing the voice means freeing the soul." (Alfred Wolfsohn). Wolfsohn's system is new because it is not limited to voice training, i.e. it is not suitable for training opera singers, but is both art and therapy. It assumes that the forgotten, unused lows and highs of the voice are to be reactivated, the sound barrier of habit is to be broken, this barrier of the anatomically and biologically fixed limit of two octaves.

¹⁶ Richard Armstrong belonged to the core group of the RHT and played a formative role in the further work of the group after the early death of Roy Hart in 1975. He later taught in Canada, where he also became an acclaimed vocal artist. He still teaches in Europe and America and lives in New York City.

¹⁷ More on this below on p. ???ff.! The singing in the name "Singing Lessons" must be understood in a very broad sense. For an attempt to describe this central practice of voice development in the Wolfsohn/Hart approach, I refer you to the chapter "...as listening to the voice of the friend" in my book "In Gedanken: singen/Singing in mind".

Singers who achieved a vocal range of more than two octaves, i.e. three octaves or more, were labelled vocal phenomena. Lucrezia Aguiari in Mozart's time, Mado Robin¹⁸ and Yma Sumac¹⁹.

Alfred Wolfson taught his pupils to sing up to eight octaves. These vocal miracles have also been scientifically analysed. (...)

Roy Hart's voice was analysed at the Institute of Laryngology at the University of Los Angeles in 1957 (by Prof. Yashua Koike). He identified three registers: the low (bass) register, which also includes the middle registers (baritone), the head or falsetto register and the fistular register with extremely high frequencies of 2580 Hz. He calls the mechanism of sound production *inexplicable*. "Normal vibrations of the vocal cords cannot produce these tones."

The explanation: body resonance plays an important role. The voice is not produced by the vo-cal cords alone; the larynx is not the seat of the voice, but the sinuses and the oral cavity. Vocal sounds can be produced and controlled by different parts of the body: the whole body sings, which can already be recognised when an infant cries.

Scientifically and anatomically this explanation is certainly questionable, but for the practice of opening up the whole human voice with all its tonal possibilities, the idea that the voice comes from the whole body or is produced with the use of the whole body plays an important role. The concept of embodiment became central to Roy Hart long before embodiment became a key concept in modern body therapy and work (and brain research). For Roy Hart, embodiment refers to the process by which the voice is brought into the body so that the voice then unfolds from the whole body. The voice with this kind of bodily connection is what gives the spoken or sung words their credibility.

In the lessons that Pörtner took, the question of the connection between voice and body became the leading theme from the very beginning.

¹⁸ Mado Robin (1918-1969), French opera singer who was praised for her wide vocal range (up to a four-note D).

¹⁹ See footnote 13!

The First Voice Lesson

Richard could be my son: he wanted to be a father to me, he said in the singing lesson I took with him: a good father, to me, the father without fatherliness. I entrusted myself to him: followed his instructions, let myself be guided: from note to note, back to my childhood, back to my body. Richard sat at the piano, struck notes, hummed to me: you can sing, trust your voice. It is a plumb line that sounds you out.

Your voice is small, your body is big. Your voice is weak, your body is powerful. Your voice is throttled: it is not your whole voice, but only a section of your vocal range. I myself have limited my voice: I only need it to speak. It is barely enough to reach another person: even a dialogue requires strength of pronunciation. My voice circles in my head, around my head, ends at my larynx, says Richard. I listen to my voice, hear it more sonorous than it sounds through the re-sonance of my head.

My voice is strange to me. I don't recognise it when I hear it from the loudspeaker. This could be explained by the distortion of the electro-acoustic recording, I don't listen to myself: don't I belong to myself?

Do I write for loud or quiet voices?

What tone does my writing have: does the writing breathe more deeply, does it vibrate: does it evoke something, something that sounds: Words that sing and resonate, stirring moving words, poignant words, encompassing words, swirling words, turns of phrase that are not just windy, but gripping. It is said that words are able to shake, are they also able to guide us into gliding and floating? That is stunning, they say: it captivates me, it lifts me up, it strengthens my back, it has gone into my legs, it makes the backs of my knees soft, it goes to my head.

Richard says I shouldn't sing, I should trust my voice: my voice carries me. My voice is not loud: it is absorbed by me. Richard strikes lower notes, bass notes and I hum and roar, but I don't pay attention to how beautiful it sounds, but how low I can lower the plumb line. Up to your feet, Richard says, let your feet sing. I smile, wanting to say: at best my feet can dance, my shoes squeak, but my feet don't sing. Dissonance of the two unequal feet, muteness of the numb foot. Richard insists: I should send my voice into my foot. And I try: my voice becomes hollow, incredibly deep, begins to shake. My mouth widens:

I catch my breath to pass this yawning emptiness, this hole in me that I measure through to feel my fall:

The voice blows down, rhythm of contractions, tightening, widening, pressing, loosening, the twist of a sprout: I push forward to this lump of foot, this knot that binds me, this uncut attachment to the mother's belly. I hollow myself out to correspond to this cavity, bend myself, bend my knees, bend my head into my lap, draw strength from my legs, strength from my belly: breathing force that inflates and opens me up: the bend stretches, the clamp springs open, a spring that springs me up: I push myself out as a scream. What has driven into my bones in incomprehensible times, a pain that hid itself, sat motionless in my stiff foot, is called awake: it howls and bursts out loudly: a firecracker, an agglomeration that dissolves into nothingness. That's how I imagine healing miracles.

Was it my submission that brought this about: I surrendered to the breath, unconscious and without will. Guided by my guide into the unknown, Richard, I let myself fall and lo and behold: I was carried. I carried myself. It didn't last long, just a little infinity. And then I woke up from my absence and saw myself standing in front of a piano with fingers on the keys. I saw the blond mop of hair, blue eyes, a face smiling at me: no, not an angel's face, a face I recognised as Richard's, who said the lesson was over. He made sure he was on time. The next pupil was already waiting.

I had undone my belt, my trousers were hanging down, I pulled them up, tightened the waist-band, said thank you and left this room that smelled of sweat, glanced out of the window over the rooftops of Hampstead as I passed and then went through the narrow door, down the stairs, past a waiting woman whom I greeted but didn't know by name. I felt myself stepping out onto the street, my hair for the first time, my hands vibrating, my skull tense. Euphoria: a feeling in my body that kept me going for a few more hours, I walked through the streets with sweeping steps, aimlessly: it was enough for me to walk. I was there: high spirited, cheerful, tuned by my voice to a keynote that continued to resonate within me, that made me elated.

The Second Singing Lesson

I almost missed the second singing lesson, although I had intended to be punctual, I had calculated the wrong time: an oversight that arose from my dependence on mechanical timekeeping: I had calculated according to a railway station clock that was an hour off. My inner clock woke me up, I thought I was early and was late, Richard criticised me. I was annoyed about it. But I couldn't find an explanation for my lateness. Only when I thought about it afterwards did I realise that there were two divergent systems: the data system of time measurement according to the clock and the organic system of life time, which is a time of tension, a time of sensation. The time between the practice sessions had seemed much longer than two days to me: the stretching time of waiting, the time of tension, the restless epochs of impatience. Richard struck high notes, I tried to follow him and found my child's voice calling softly to Daddy - why Daddy - not Mummy? Richard replied, calling me by my name, softly, tenderly. My voice became very squeaky and airy. I had to endure a medium tone: longer than a breath would last. I started and lo and behold: it was my voice that held out, for many breaths without taking a breath, but also without lack of air. I couldn't explain this duration.

Richard pointed out that every singer is familiar with this imperceptible airing of the voice, this enrichment and constant replenishment of the airflow.

My reservoir was not depleted as quickly as I expected based on my chest volume. I tried out how long my voice could hold a note: continuously without effort: vocal exercises for the fun of the carrying power of the vocal chords, which became audio tapes, scale fun. Richard mentioned a word that I didn't understand at first: Revenge. A suggestion, sing "Revenge". I translated: Rache. Immediately thought of throat (Rachen in German). I had never noticed this assonance before, I had only rarely used both words. At first I took the A as a basis: A that swung between ha and ah, narrowed into an and na, wawawas mamamamam - the pure A didn't want to succeed. Only when I started decisively with the pharyngeal R, the rolling R, which rolled forwards, became the reed R and drove the A out into a fierce, rough, hard A, which I cracked into "ch" and pressed into "R-A-A-CH-E". The raven fluttered up, smoke (Rauch), the yardarm and the battering ram, but also Yahweh and Axe became loud. A dry call increased in bursts: for revenge, which

became more demanding, more cheering, more hideous, more spiteful, more frenzied, more insane: An initially still theatrical clamour that had something grotesque in the echo, operatic pathos: revenge, I am the avenger, finale of the third act: stormers and pushers. Flags and barricades.

And then no more scenery, no more circumstances, no bystanders, no more resistance: I throw myself down my throat and I disappear into the maw that is my mouth and spits fire, blows out plumes of smoke, phonetic sulphur, power gas. I crave revenge: I rush forward, ahead of myself, wrathful, foolhardy. There is no more attachment, no consideration, no measure, I am unbound, unchained, unrestrained. I am transformed into power, which is also powerlessness: a thirst for revenge, unquenched. An outbreak of madness that overtakes me like a hurricane, tears me away from myself. Eruptions, arbitrary drives. Revenge for what? Who do I want to take re-venge on? Who do I want to destroy? ME? It screams inside me.

I don't know how long this screaming lasted. I was not in control of myself: it shook me, raged and surged inside me, shot out of my mouth with a fierceness that tore open, widened into a hole, a funnel of sound that turned my face inside out, crumpled it and pushed it away. Murderous, devastating rage: the birth of a scream that bursts the throat cavity, pushes the face away, turns the mouth into a horn, into the bloody edge of an expulsion wound. I give birth to a monster that I have borne since my birth: conceived in the shock of labour and nourished by swallowed tears, thick tears, unhealed wounds oozing pus. A tumour that is a single deformity, but is not simply nothing, but something inside me:

My long-held grief, my terrible secret. Could I ever trust myself: wasn't I always on the verge of committing an act directed against myself, to hit this devastating core, blindly angry? It is the seed of madness, the irrepressible desire to destroy, this criminal violence within me. Now it is out, without me committing an act that only proves my resentment, but does not heal it. Now I have not taken revenge on others for my own misfortune: I have not made those I do not like suffer.

A scream released me from this growing aversion: this eating that was devouring me. I stand on my own two feet, on strong legs, broad: more powerful than I was before I screamed, self-empowered, because I screamed out my powerlessness. I don't go into myself after this outburst. I go out: go to go. Don't look at what there is to see. Don't listen

to what's booming all around me. Don't speak, don't eat, don't drink, don't rest, don't have a destination. I walk to gradually come back to myself. An outflow that slows down the drive. Being driven around by an un-known.

I get to my hotel, go to sleep: I don't wake up until the next evening, I think I've only slept for 2 hours, but it's 26 hours, as I only realise when I call downstairs and order something to eat from reception.

I don't even try to write. Switch on the TV, see colour lines flickering, switch it off, listen to the radio, turn it down, switch it off.

Am I a different person? Can I become someone else? I am changing: my voice has changed, it has become fuller, more sonorous, stronger. I only realise this when I speak to the group the next day.

I talk and the group listens. This listening that lets me be, that gives me time to express myself, to search for words, to stop, to think - I still translate literally from German, which I think, into English, which I speak to my English friends. They politely reply to me in broken German, answering my language difficulties with their own.

I talk about the story I had planned to write: the one I put down on paper. Can I communicate what I have to say in free speech? What do I have to tell the others about myself? I look at N.: I tell her how she looked to me when I came in on the first day. I heard her voice in the chorus of voices, heard it because it sounded purer, sounded stronger, created space that separated her. Among the many faces, I saw only one at first: the face of a girl surrounded by an aura. To me, this completely self-forgetful singing, this absorption in the voice that brought the powerful body into resonance, seemed like a reflection of the healing that defines the dream of identity.

It wasn't a soloist's part, it wasn't outstanding ability that manifested itself, but this devotion to the sound that was right: it went through my marrow and legs, gave me goose bumps that indicated being affected. (...)

I'll talk about the disconcerting moment when I arrived at the meeting and was confronted about my lateness. The tone of the voice asking me reminded me of the tone of my wife's voice asking questions that I don't know the answer to. It irritates me that I make a mistake first, the same mistake that my wife accuses me of:

That I keep others waiting, thereby manifesting a disregard for the time of others.

I was there first as an absentee: I was missing, the performance that was supposed to be offered to me began without me. Why was I unable to accept what was being offered? I reached for the pen to master the rush of emotions, to save myself in the distance: to name the nameless, to lead the unknown back to the known.

I enjoyed the prestige of a poet. Although I don't like this name - I reject the cult of the chosen one like the aristocratic attitude of the artist - I put up with the fact that I am the only one offered an armchair while the others sit on the floor: I am honoured as a guest, heard as a speaker, given more attention than other strangers. I feel the pull that arises in this eavesdropping, to fulfil the expectation that I aroused. When I am outside, sitting alone in my hotel room, trying in vain to write, I long for this community that welcomes me. Never to be alone again, a group member who participates in group life: to be integrated into a commonality that not only erases the everyday, not only intends to exercise and train skills, but also means an exchange of feelings, a play of forces of attraction and repulsion, a dissolution of relationships of two in renewing groupings.

At the same time, I know that I will never belong to this group, although I need their warmth, their affection gives me strength.

In the next singing lesson, Richard teaches me to take up my child's voice again, to try out my female voice, to sing "the bitch" - I have to look up this name first, but I understand what he means - to get to know my old man's voice. Is it possible to die with the dying voice: to practise the death cry? Richard said it would make dying easier if it was already anticipated in the voice: just as the voice reaches from head to toe, it also reaches from birth to death.

Radio Programme: The Human Voice

Paul Pörtner produced two radio programmes for NDR in 1973/74, both entitled "The Human Voice".

The first of the broadcasts has only marginally to do with the human voice and is more concerned with questions of combining psychological group therapies with modern forms of theatre. This is only relevant to my question insofar as it emphasises how interested Pörtner was in therapeutic issues and, like Roy Hart, tried to bring both aspects together: healing and art, albeit in different ways. For Roy Hart, the process of voice liberation was simultaneously a process of healing and artistic development. For Pörtner, it was more about the search for forms that made it possible to express both together. Participatory theatre, which he co-invented and for which he wrote one of the most successful plays in 20th century theatre history, was of particular relevance to him: "Scherenschnitt", or in the English version "Shear Madness"²⁰.

The second programme is more interesting for the specific questions surrounding the role of the voice in art. Pörtner starts with the idea that at the beginning of the 20th century there was a movement in literature and art from the written word to the spoken word. Mallarmé is mentioned here, Gertrude Stein, the Expressionists, then the Dadaists, who made this transition completely to the dominance of speech. The surrealists built the programmatic concept of the unity of art and life.

Quote at the very beginning:

This is the great line in which the human voice takes on a new meaning. It becomes an instrument of poetry, indeed more: poetry now takes place with it and in it.

In terms of the Wolfsohn/Hart approach, this would mean that every vocal sound has poetic potential, before and alongside added word meanings. Every vocal sound is singing! This is a common saying at the Roy Hart Centre.

²⁰ See footnote 2!

For the experimental use of language and language-like sound systems, Pörtlner mentions the example of Else Lasker-Schüler, who wrote poetry in imaginary Asian and Arabic languages and de-claimed these sound poems.

Pörtlner also mentions the Lettrists in France in the 1950s, who added 55 additional vocal sounds to the 25 letters of the alphabet. The movement also led to the scientific study of pre- and extra-linguistic vocal sounds and their use in life and art.

Schwitters is also mentioned. His approach arose from his proximity to the visual arts and at the same time utilised musical formats. The most important example is his "Ursonate", which presents original vocal sounds in sonata form.

For Pörtlner, Antonin Artaud is the most radical artist to explore the intermediate spaces between vocal gesture and word:

Glossopoeia, which is neither an imitative language nor a creation of words, takes us to the edge of the moment where the word is not yet born, where articulation is already no longer a cry but not yet a discourse. This is the eve of the origin of language. It is necessary (...) to form a scene whose clamour has not yet come to rest in the word. The word is the corpse of psychic language and with the language of life itself, that which is before the word must be rediscovered. Here, gesture and language are not yet separated by the logic of representation.

A somewhat different 20th century tradition is represented by New Music and its use of phonetic and glossopoetic expressions.

One of the most important protagonists of this development and the outstanding figure for new vocal music in the German-speaking world is Dieter Schnebel, who began in the 1950s to bring the entire sound spectrum of the voice into musical form. One of his first pieces was called FÜR STIMMEN (...missa est) dt 31,6, in which Schnebel gives the 12 vocal groups the additional designation "Wolfsohn'sche Stimmen". As he told me in a conversation, Schnebel had heard about Alfred Wolfsohn and his voice work in a radio programme and incorporated this knowledge into his piece without seeking contact with Wolfsohn.

In further analysing the use of the voice in new music, Pörtlner comes across the composition "Visage" by Luciano Berio, with Cathy Berberian as the singer. Pörtlner hears this piece as a

testimony to the work with voices that, as he says, are or sound clinically deformed. Voices that are usually heard in pathological aphasia.

In conversation with the laryngologist mentioned above (Prof. Schwarz from Zurich), however, it becomes clear that the sounds are more comparable to psychopathological vocal utterances²¹.

Pörtner gives two sound examples from psychiatric contexts that are in fact almost indistinguishable from the Lettrists' pieces and also from some of Schnebel's compositions.

Pörtner quite rightly sees the big difference in the fact that the vocal sounds are consciously produced and largely controlled by the voice artists. Psychiatric patients, on the other hand, tend to be controlled by their voices. What Pörtner does not yet address here, but which is important for the work of Wolfsohn/Hart, is the question of whether the conscious and controlled production of such ill-sounding voices has a premeditated therapeutic effect for so-called normal people. Does the search for these vocal sounds help to avoid getting into a situation in which a person would be at the mercy of these sounds? Another question: Does the experience of hearing these voices in an artistic context have a preventative effect on the listener? On another level, it would be important to consider that in pre-psychiatric times, people with such psychoses were not excluded from the community and accordingly these voices remained part of the auditory spectrum - and in certain cases were interpreted as special and divine voices. The phenomenon of speaking in tongues comes to mind.

This example again shows the special way in which Roy Hart's voice claims relevance for both art and life. Ill-sounding voices, whether with a psychopathological or other background, lose their pathological connotation when they are consciously produced in an artistic context. To be more precise, the field of meaning of these voices expands in an artistic context. The pathological interpretations are joined by new ones that at least hint at or offer a healing or liberating effect.

Artistically, Roy Hart's portrayal of King George III in "Eight Songs for a Mad King" by Peter Maxwell-Davies has set standards for working with sick-sounding voices.

²¹ This corresponds to my listening experience of the piece. The difference can be explained as follows: Aphasias are somatic disorders of the voice in which the brain's "command" for a vocal utterance cannot be carried out adequately. In the case of psychopathological difficulties, the transmission of the "command" works, but the command itself is problematic.

Incidentally, this raises the question of whether and to what extent voice therapy in psychiatric wards would be appropriate and promising. Roy Hart himself worked with patients in a psychiatric ward for a short time. Unfortunately, there are no records of this.

At the end of the conversation with the medical expert, Pörtner asks in his radio programme about his own minor speech defect. As mentioned above, Prof Schwarz suspects a central nervous at-tenuation of the entire motor system.

Pörtner confirms that he also has deficits in other areas and then turns to Roy Hart's approach.

Before I go into this in more detail, I would like to emphasise an important point: Pörtner's discussion of Roy Hart's approach in the programme does not begin with an art-historical classification in the development of speech and voice art, which Pörtner outlined in the first part of the programme. Such a categorisation does not take place later either. Instead, Pörtner arrives at Roy Hart's voice work via the therapeutic route. After the doctor's findings, he says he tries it out for himself and takes the voice lessons with Richard Armstrong described in detail above.

In preparation, Pörtner reports on a foot condition that he has had since birth and which was brought to his attention during the voice lessons.

Through the voice I touched this first experience of pain and stigmatisation. (...) There is no mysticism, no magic in this practice with the voice. It only requires strong concentration and deep relaxation. (...) (The lesson) began with smiling, breathing, widening. A measurement of the span of a sound that is longer than a breath. I expanded my voice, became lighter, entered a state of suspension from which I fell as soon as my mind took over. Then there was always this burst of laughter that marked the release of tension. In the course of the exercise, I regained my boy's voice and a forgotten, unknown low voice, the basso continuo, so to speak, which I never hear in normal speech - or perhaps I do? In the following example, you will hear notes that sound uncanny to me; something bubbles and rattles above the voice, perhaps the timbre of fear. At the beginning of a tone, you don't know how it will end. It begins softly and becomes sharper. An aggressiveness makes itself known. Aggressiveness that arises from a powerlessness that gradually transforms into energy, an emotional power to express oneself in the wordless meaning of the voice. (Quote from the programme)

After these introductory words, Pörtner plays extracts from the voice lesson. The use of such personal material in a radio programme is unusual both for the 1970s and probably also for today. This shows the seriousness with which Pörtner approached these questions and how much he was concerned with existential issues. He had found the right partner in Roy Hart. For him, working with the voice is always existential and radical.

The detailed sound example with his own voice is followed by a recording with slides, movements of the voice in the pitch column, which Richard Armstrong demonstrates in order to illustrate what is possible through regular work with his own voice. R. Armstrong relies largely on the presentation of his high voice, which is indeed strong. He also shows a few chorded sounds, i.e. vocal sounds in which several voices can be heard at the same time. High registers and chorded sounds are areas of the voice that played a special role in the work of the RHT and were developed there to a quality that did not exist in Europe or the West before and probably not even afterwards as a group competence. Passages from the recordings of ICH BIN give an impression of this. The extent to which the low voice is part of the active vocal field can be experienced in many of Roy Hart's recordings.

This is followed by an interview with Roy Hart, in which it quickly becomes clear why Pörtner does not classify the work of Hart and his theatre group in terms of art history, but rather from the perspective of self-development. The voice artist provides him with the arguments for this by recounting his own development in such a way that, coming from art, he first had to take the diversions via psychotherapeutic self-discovery in a broad sense in order to find himself and his genuine and authentic artistic power. (The role played by Alfred Wolfsohn, Hart's most important teacher, is ignored in this context). After these experiences, Roy Hart, by his own admission, was concerned with building a bridge between art and life. He also no longer accepts the distinction between actors and other people. There is an actor or actress in every human being. Joseph Beuys' dictum is not far off: "Everyone is an artist"²². At this point, Pörtner points out once again that he experienced Hart for the first time at a psychodrama congress, in a setting that builds precisely this bridge between theatre and life, but in order to give the participants life support at the end, not primarily training for theatre.

²² However, Beuys does not mean that everyone should start painting or acting because of this. Being an artist is a way of life that can and should be lived out in all contexts. Roy Hart would have agreed, but he was also interested in awakening artistic potential in the narrower sense in all people. That is why his theatre group was only partly made up of professional actors.

At this congress in Vienna, Roy Hart also got the participants in his seminar to scream. The scream is a concept that has great relevance for Pörtner. However, as explained in more detail above, his characterisation of Hart as a "scream artist" is based on a misunderstanding that was partly caused by a text by Roy Hart himself. Wolfsohn/Hart's work is not a scream therapy such as the primal scream therapy of Janov²³.

Pörtner uses the scream to place Roy Hart for the first time in recent art and theatre history, namely in the tradition of Antonin Artaud and his demand for a "scream theatre".

And when I staged his scream opera " There is no more firmament", I called in Roy Hart.

In his introduction to Roy Hart, Pörtner mentions his collaboration with composers of new music who wrote pieces especially for him, such as Hans Werner Henze and Peter Maxwell-Davies. In this context, Pörtner speaks of "melodramatic speech art (Sprechkunst)" as the form in which Roy Hart appears in new music. This is a very original and at the same time plausible categorisation of Hart's vocal artistry, because in my opinion almost everything that Roy Hart has left behind, at least in terms of recordings, fits into the category of an extended form of melodramatic speaking, which was introduced into new music by Arnold Schoenberg²⁴. One exception is his work for Pörtner's " There is no more firmament", in which he creates pure vocal sound spaces almost without words. The recordings of ICH BIN fit exactly into the category of melodrama, even though there is no instrumental-musical accompaniment. It is one of the specialities of Roy Hart's vocal artistry: he has discovered and developed for himself the solo melodrama as an art form. This can be heard clearly in the recordings of ICH BIN, which are played in the radio programme following the interview and, according to Pörtner, were freely improvised. In the recordings from the piece that the RHT developed from ICH BIN, the choir is given the task of providing musical accompaniment for Roy Hart's melodramatic extended voice in the particularly strong passages of the piece.

²³ Arthur Janov (1924-2017) introduced his primal scream therapy in the 1970s, which was widely used for several decades.

²⁴ Roy Hart gave a performance of Schönberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" in the 1950s. His encounter with this piece was presumably the initial spark for Hart's development of a melodramatic art of speaking with the extended voice. Cf. Krüger, Anne-May: Nicht zum Singen bestimmt. Ansätze zur vokalen Aufführungspraxis von Arnold Schönbergs Pierrot lunaire (1912) und Peter Maxwell Davies' Eight Songs for a Mad King (1969), Augsburg 2020.

For the programme, Pörtner played the recordings of Roy Hart's improvisation to a group of people (judging by their voices, the group that performed a few Gestalt therapy exercises together for the first programme entitled "The Human Voice") and integrated their direct reactions between the interview and the improvisation into the programme. It is remarkable that almost all of the group members' reactions consisted of psychological interpretations. Freedom and spontaneity were admired. The wish was expressed to do something like this one day. Some listeners felt the urge to sing along directly, etc. What was completely missing, however, were comments on the virtuosity of what Roy Hart had performed. Apparently, there was no awareness of how much this vocal freedom is the result of years of work with the voice. Moreover, no one recognised the recording as art. In fact, Roy Hart does not show off his vocal virtuosity in this improvisation. He is intense in his playing and at times in his words.

There is also no reference to the text in the comments of the listeners. Was it not heard? Was the focus on the extraordinary sound of the voice? These are questions that also arise for contemporary vocal art. How can we work with the extended voice and text in such a way that the linguistic message does not remain completely hidden behind the vocal sounds, but on the contrary is emphasised through the voice?

This is a question that arises and is dealt with in the voice lessons offered by teachers in the tradition of Wolfsohn and Hart.

The impulsive reaction of the audience, the majority of whom expressed a desire for similar freedom, is a good starting point for the beginning of a process of voice development. The next steps would then be to provide the freedom to move one's own voice freely, to give guidance on how to listen to one's own voice and to recognise that the freedom potential of the voice must first be discovered and uncovered. And then, one could say somewhat polemically, the real work begins. In other words, the process of liberating the voice begins with freedom as a desire and a foreboding experience. It then requires practice, repetition, training and, above all, intensive practice in listening to one's own and other people's voices. The variations in freedom that accompany this process are a good indicator of the current stage of development²⁵.

²⁵ On the subject of freedom and voice, I refer you to my text "Die freie Stimme" in: In Gedanken: singen, p. 155ff., English: The Free Voice, p.88 (pdf by request).

ICH BIN - The Play

At first, I found it more difficult to approach the play, which Pörtner wrote for the Roy Hart Theatre, than I had expected. The audio recordings with the RHT, in which some scenes, mainly from the first part of the play, can be heard, left me more irritated than fascinated - apart from some choral soundscapes, which are vocally outstanding. A floating vocal soundscape in literally the highest notes. The excerpts show the outstanding level of the voices, which achieved something unique as an ensemble in the RHT. But apart from that, the realisation of the text seemed to me to be surprisingly clichéd.

However, the text itself is not free of clichés, especially psychoanalytical simplifications. On first reading, it seemed to me that ICH BIN was a simplistic, woodcut-like sketch on the subject of self-realisation, a word that sounds much more used up today than it did in the early 1970s. However, this would be a further indication of the time-bound nature of the piece and the question of whether it is worth working on it today then arises with great force. In his manuscripts for ICH BIN, Pörtner himself emphasises in several places that he was not at all concerned with bringing the text to the stage, but that the words were only intended as a suggestion to lead from there into a direct expression of what was said with the voice. Did Pörtner try to convey this idea to the RHT? Judging by the result, one has to doubt it. After the performance of AND, the RHT's piece that also works largely without words, did he think that the group always works like this? That would be an obvious assumption.

The voice can do more than I can: it tunes me, creates correspondences that identify me with figures that I see as distant: apart from me. Richard says: you have Hitler in you and you have the Jew in you. You are the aggressor and you are the victim, the persecutor and the persecuted, the criminal and the judge, the prisoner and the prison. I take this as a lesson, accept it, as an assumption.

I try to translate this concept into a scenario. First of all, I present my self as it appears to me: surrounded by masks, figurations of myself, roles that I take on without filling them, without identifying with them. They protect me and protect me from being me. They allow me to withdraw, to sleep. If I disappear behind the roles, I wither away because I hide myself. Dead-like deep sleep of the ego.

In principle, the structure for ICH BIN is predetermined in this short section. Pörtner was obviously not primarily interested in a purely psychoanalytically coloured examination of the subject of identity, but rather intended to confront his own history and origins from the National Socialist era as an example for society in the 1970s. How do the structures of this period continue to affect people's souls? Inspired by what I see as the extremely problematic question of the "Hitler" or even the "Jew" in me, Pörtner explores these aspects in his own psyche in ICH BIN. Remarkably, this connection no longer appears in the later correspondence on ICH BIN and its performance by the RHT. The subject seems to evaporate in the course of the work for all those involved.

Pörtner's manuscript continues as follows:

Waking up in a dream: I am lying in my mother's womb, a stillborn child being mourned. I open my eyes and transform the lamentation into cries of joy. I animate the scene by fighting with figures that have sprung from my imagination, fictions that cause me trouble, divide me, oppose me, threaten and attack me, want to destroy me. I-weakness that is unable to cope with the onslaught of imagination - fleeing into delusion. Ego strength that turns into frenzy: Lashing out, creating space for myself, expansion that breaks all resistance, crushes, crushes, destroys the opposing. Me: the colossus. Me: the monster. Me: the steamroller.

Could this dream play be performed on stage? This transformation of a feeling into figures that change: fierce and tender, puffed up and thin. In the second act, I conjure up the father in me, the mother in me, the child in me, the artist in me - my double. I expose these figures of my character: I speak to them, try to move them, win their affection, at least attract their attention: I act out my story from memory: the love of the mother, the love of the father, the love of the child, the self-sufficiency in doubling. What is happening to me in this masquerade?

Once again I expose myself to deprivation, once again I suffer the lack of warmth, the hunger for tenderness, the thirst for life. I miss my term again and again, I live and care and vegetate: I cannot live and cannot die.

For better or for worse: I am at the mercy of what gives and takes strength, creates fulfilment or teaching. It is not right with me: I am another. It was me: the child. It was

me: the woman. It was me: the male image, the masculine id. My doppelganger imitates me: as if I were a monkey, a dog, a mouse. Don't I have great abilities in me? What could I have become if I had had the chance to realise my possibilities: I have what it takes to be a master who gives orders; as a commander I have unimagined power by issuing orders: I become autocratic as a ruler, I only obey the inner voice that I give out as the voice of providence: my will is law. My word: slogan. Order. Directive. Words that kill, that wreak havoc: Devastate regions, burn down forests, set cities ablaze.

Can I identify with the victims of this hubris at the same time? No. First I have to play the henchman, the executor, the vassal, the conformist, then only in the direct confrontation with those condemned to death, the hunted and the ostracised, am I able to desert, to pass over to the opponent who does not defend himself, to sacrifice myself in order to erase the dishonour. I hold on to one principle: I cannot stay out of what is happening: I have to choose and I have no choice. I hate the aggressor, so I suppress the aggression within me. I destroy myself by refusing to exercise power. I take refuge in the role of the passive, but in doing so I exercise an unconscious power. I conjure up disaster for which I don't want to be responsible.

"The wheel turns for me
in a helpless whirl.
I am struck
by the powerless blow."

I cannot translate this teaching, which does not come from my thoughts, into action. Doing means making suffering. A simple sentence. It is about me: my actions produce me. My actions are not conclusive, not logical, not continuous. It obeys the inner voice, not a predetermined law. It does not recognise any principles of action, no value system that provides orientation and makes distinctions possible: good and evil, right and wrong, there is no either-or, there is only that which lives from itself and that has grown together, is inseparably connected, fused, interwoven, permeated.

In this section, Pörtner emphasises once again from a psychological perspective the extent to which the social structure that prevailed (almost) everywhere in Germany during the National Socialist era has become embedded as a psychological structure in people, especially

in the following generations²⁶. The father as the energetic, strong person who becomes a perpetrator and murderer, the mother as a submissive follower with no moral core of her own, the child as the victim who is deprived of any freedom of action and the double who is supposed to ensure that the inner distortions of this structure do not reach the innermost core. And the children's inability to penetrate their own lives with this inheritance that has been implanted in them.

The play depicts a constellation in which four other figures appear alongside the ego, which are initially understood as psychological parts of the ego or as factors that simultaneously allow and prevent the ego from coming into its own: the figures of the father, the mother, the child and the double. All the figures in the scenic poem have their own texts.

In addition to the child, the role/figure of the mother, who is characterised in a strangely negative way, seems to me to be particularly difficult to interpret today. Pörtner sees the mother primarily as a prostitute and a "bitch". One wonders what might be behind this strange devaluation of this only female part of the "I". A partial answer can be found in Pörtner's idea of wanting to depict the social structure of National Socialism with the figure of the perpetrator, the follower, the victim of the structure of the nuclear family. The father becomes the perpetrator and murderer, the child the victim and the "Jew", leaving the mother with the role of the follower, who throws herself at the perpetrator out of cowardice or opportunism. (The doppelgänger/double plays a slightly different role.) The identification with the prostitute suddenly takes on a completely different meaning.

There is an interesting parallel to a text by Alfred Wolfsohn, Roy Hart's teacher, who developed this voice work approach. In his manuscript "The Bridge", he talks about the love affair between Germania and Hitler. Germania is reminiscent of the mother from Pörtner's ICH BIN:

Adolf, the simple labourer from abroad, meets his Germania, whom he had been seeking with his soul for so long. How he loves her, this proudest of all, this representative of the chosen "people of poets and thinkers", not to forget music! And which has been raped - like himself - by the evil enemies, the English, the French, the Americans and of course

²⁶ I refer to the research on the psyche of "war children and grandchildren" as conducted by Sabine Bode, for example.

above all by the Jews, who have always violated her. So he approaches Germania, full of admiration and love. On her side, it is not a love that rejoices in heaven. But she senses in a thousand little things how great and deep his love for her is; does he not proclaim that he will go to his death for her, does he not allow himself to be crucified for her and languish in prison for her? (...) And because he repeatedly assures her how much he admires her, the initially brittle and cold woman begins to warm up and basks in his admiration. Gradually, a deep feeling of love grows in her, she breaks with her past and happily accepts all the difficulties that arise from her relationship with him. (...) She was admired and respected, for Adolf always had the wisdom not to speak so much of himself as of his beloved Germania, whom he was allowed to serve as a humble tool, whose situation was considerably improved by him - therein lay the core of her love affair with him. She didn't want to know anything about how he made her feel better; she closed her eyes and covered her ears, and if anything did get through the barrier, it wasn't Adolf, who only thought about her and therefore had no time to worry about certain things, but his subordinates and disobedient friends acting on their own initiative."²⁷

The logic of this text points in a similar direction as Pörtner's characterisation of the mother as a prostitute and follower of the National Socialist fanaticism.

In the correspondence between the RHT members and Pörtner, this reading of ICH BIN as a quasi-cathartic text for liberation from the incorporated history of the Third Reich is not mentioned at all. Nor is there any other indication in Pörtner that he had this interpretation in mind with full awareness. This interpretation does not seem to have been a possibility for the RHT either. Superficially, the piece fitted too well into the thematic framework that was being worked on: The development of humans into self-determined beings through the development of their own voice into the human voice. Roy Hart obviously saw himself as an example of a successful development of this kind. And Pörtner also had the need to search for himself, which prevented the historical aspect of coming to terms with the Nazi era from coming to light.

Should the author and ensemble have misunderstood their play in a shared action?

²⁷ Alfred Wolfsohn: ... banishing the stench of the world, p. 134f.

Here we come up against a gap in the RHT's self-image, which has to do with its limited political awareness. Roy Hart has always insisted that efforts for change must begin with the self, and only when self-discovery has taken place here can there be hope of supporting a revolution on the political level that really leads to the better. An anecdote from an RHT tour in Spain is an example of this attitude. At a festival, most of the invited theatre groups and artists supported a boycott that was intended to draw attention to the conditions in fascist Spain under the Franco regime. Roy Hart refused to take part in this boycott, citing the above-mentioned argument. And thus tacitly accepted the political conditions in the country. This is a very problematic attitude, which must also be scrutinised today for other reasons. For example, climate change and the associated need for social change will not wait until individuals, especially in societies with the highest per capita CO2 emissions, have pushed their self-realisation to an acceptable level.

At the same time, with this attitude Roy Hart can refer to a tradition that began in Germany with Friedrich Schiller. In his letters "On the Aesthetic Education of Man", in the face of the horrors of the French Revolution of 1789, he sees the need to use art to educate humans to become real people instead of leading them into a future that overwhelms them through political revolutions.

But doesn't contemporary theatre need to be open to the great historical processes and upheavals that have shaped it? In Roy Hart and the RHT, as already mentioned, we find the idea of finding "Hitler" in oneself in order to integrate these demonic forces into a creative-artistic whole instead of giving free rein to their destructive potential. This also seems to me to be a problematic concept, primarily because "Hitler" cannot and should not be understood as an archetype without further ado, but rather as a historical figure for whose rise social reasons were decisive.

Contemporary theatre work that wants to be politically and socially relevant should not stop at liberating the self, but must also work on the social (and ecological!) conditions that make it possible to embark on the path to any kind of inner self-liberation.

ICH BIN at the Roy Hart Theatre

After Pörtner hands over the text of ICH BIN to the RHT, the members begin an impressive investment of time and energy to take possession of this play and bring it into form. Pörtner summarises this first phase of work with ICH BIN as follows:

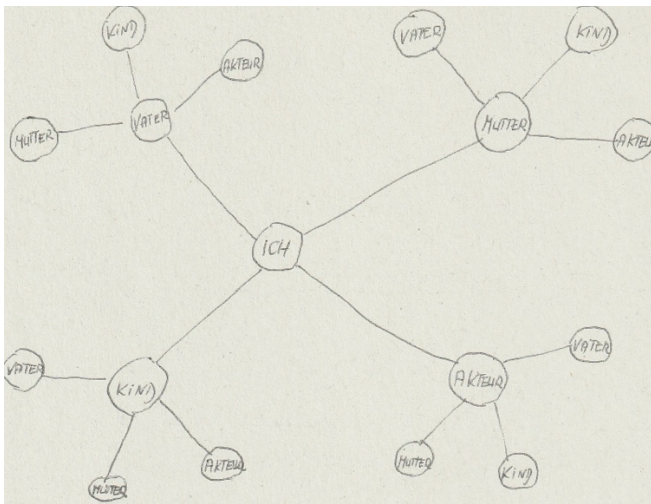
I give my text, which offers words to realise the wordless, to the group to read. I don't see the text as a play that can be performed, the words are not meant to be spoken, but to serve as a guideline: to give direction and colour to the scream that begins where the word ends. The group begins with a reading, which each individual does on their own (this requires translations into foreign languages, Spanish, Italian, French, English). Appropriation of a written text through identification? For two months, the text is discussed, considered, interpreted and related to the experiences and fantasies of the group. Then exercises begin: Improvisation. Anyone can take on any role, as long as it stands out as a role: there are ten mothers and 40 fathers, one child, many children. I don't take part in these rehearsals, I receive letters asking me questions, offering my own versions.

The brief I gave is transformed: it only has to act as an impulse, only provides a framework for the play, only offers role outlines.

During the rehearsals, a vibrant correspondence developed, mainly between two German-speaking women from the RHT and Pörtner. These letters initially express great enthusiasm for the text and the project. Here are a few examples:

"Dear Paul - we've just come back from a rehearsal. ICH BIN. I've never experienced anything like it. And I think the dinner in the various households will have a very quiet atmosphere. Dear Paul - in my speechlessness, I want to tell you, ICH BIN will become something monstrous, something borderless, something bottomless. It will have less free space = room to manoeuvre = room to escape than AND. We have two ICH BIN rehearsals every day. Many of us are very tired. Pauli is sick and we will get more and more tired and ICH BIN will get stronger and stronger. You will have to strengthen yourself to stand up to your own work."

"For me, ICH BIN is our performance AND verbalised. From a choreographic point of view, I see unheard-of possibilities and therefore cannot see it visually as a cast of five, but have a certain idea, namely that each of the four partial aspects of the ego also contains the others, for example in the father there is a child, there is the woman, he also has his double. He is also a lover, see the first scene. He picks up the woman like a lover and so I have set up the following constellation.



Then we worked out the cast together. Not that this is necessarily the final one, but just to have a rough idea: Divided up, it means: the I, four mothers, four fathers, four children and four actors. Not all of them speak German, but they don't all necessarily need to speak. The possibilities of pure sound and movement are so great. Besides, they all work like crazy on it and with their musical ears they learn quickly. I work with most of them privately outside of rehearsals. (...) I've also made several tapes. It's Monday now. We have the first rehearsal behind us. Also my private rehearsal with Roy, which he was very enthusiastic about and which meant a lot to me personally, and the ideas to create it are just flowing. I'm going to see him again right now. We work from 6-8 hours. The manuscript is woven into every singing lesson. (...) Pure music to my ears."

After a while, the RHT sends Pörtner a recording from the rehearsals, to which Pörtner responds with affection and enthusiasm. At the same time, he is not deterred from pointing out certain dangers that he recognises in the direction in which the rehearsals seem to be

moving. At the same time, he manages to capture his idea of theatre in a few memorable formulations:

I was touched by your comment that you had sent the tape with recordings of parts from ICH BIN so that I could come home from Berlin and find something that strengthens me, that gives me joy. I can only reply as simply as you said: yes, it gave me joy, it gives me strength to hear this voice, these strong sounds that strengthen me. My voice is your voice. This circling leitmotif opens up the extended circle of my astonishment: my dreamed ego, formed in the word in status nascendi, is suddenly born: Roy's voice created it in the I - I, an emergence of a new I that is outside of us and with us, a unifying reborn I.

What I see as the miracle of birth: this being-itself, being-outside-of-itself, this being at the mercy of elementary super-personal forces and being intimately referred to oneself (the span of an extreme contradiction, being stretched to the breaking point towards opening, towards becoming, giving and at the same time coming into being in pushing oneself out) is not only the theme of the first phase of ICH BIN, it is accomplished through you, real: it is there now and in the making, our I.

Thank you, Roy for this immense intimacy, this powerful expression of ego strength out of weakness. "I-fish on dry land." I froze with him, shuddered at the truth of the voice, which took the grip of the frost, the pointing and icing to the limit of extreme sensitivity: to where we are already beyond ego fears, already close to returning home to birth, which is death.

The second phase of the invocation of the figures in the second version, the very dense and remote movement, was an evocation of unimagined transparency. I have listened to this passage twice in the last few nights before falling asleep: it penetrated through me into my quietest hour. Thank you for this gift, which is more than a reproduction.

I beg you, Maria, tell Roy how deeply moved I am by his love, his devotion to my word. If this structure, as it is already very clear in the second version, can be maintained, it will be a magnificent work that exceeds all expectations. You have all understood correctly: what I am striving for is not theatre in the sense of theatricality, as it soars to limited effects in declamation and stage singing, but this unity of life and theatre, the living theatre of identification. Not the appearance of representation, of artistic effects, but the presentation, the authenticity of the feelings that are realised in voice - expressions. This

simple, direct kind of claim from the utmost concentration, the concentrated power of inwardness, which does not externalise itself in the utterance, but comes to itself, makes the basic image of birth appear again and again.

I am too moved to write explicitly and discursively. To formulate my impressions, I would have to write poems again and again: the cycle would complete itself. No, today I can only say thank you and save this gift: I will listen to the tape again and again and tell you about the effects it has on me. Jonathan's song²⁸, which can be heard at the end of the tape, is on the one hand folksong-like, simple and catchy (I am already singing it silently), and on the other like a sacred chant. As this music stands on its own, it stands out strongly. Perhaps this makes a danger more apparent than it perhaps is in your overall form: the danger of musicalisation, which forms an over-form and introduces a convention that - however unconventional and fresh and cheerful it may sound - nevertheless imposes something alien on the arrangement, I mean the purist arrangement, the expression of the voice that comes from the word, that can no longer be expressed by words, that speaks as directly as no word can ever be. I am perhaps too obsessed with words here, too obsessed with language? To explain my critical comment, which should be taken as loving criticism, I quote Mallarmé, who exclaimed in astonishment when he heard that Claude Debussy wanted to set his "Après-midi d'un faune" to music: "I thought this work was already music! I wrote music after all." He perceived Debussy's composition as an addition, a duplication of Debussy's friendship and admiration.

Let's consider again at a later stage how far music is necessary?

Please, Maria, don't take this as a devaluation of Jonathan's beautiful composition, which can very well stand on its own and is something created that I respect and appreciate. My concern relates to the basic structure of the "scenic poem", which tends towards a word-sound realisation and should appear as simple, genuine and direct as possible, spurning all artistic, artistic, conventional stage devices. I may be prejudiced here. I'm sure you noticed this back then during our bel canto discussion with Sergei Rodzienko²⁹: I don't consider the impure expressive sounds (declared as such by Sergei) as raw, as impure, but rather the purified, shaped sounds of the music as alien admixtures, as refractions of your

²⁸ Pörtner is talking about Jonathan Hart-Makwaia, who was the youngest member of the RHT at the time and is now one of the influential figures at the Roy Hart Centre as a voice artist and teacher.

²⁹ He is referring here to Vladimir Rodzianko; see footnote 11!

pure form of vocal expression, which realises a human totality beyond the musical conception: exclusively as vocal phenomenology, not as aesthetics. These are just a quick outline of my thoughts, which may not coincide with your considerations and resolutions. Perhaps we should talk about this in detail.

With the danger of musicalisation, Pörtner addresses a tendency which, despite his warning, had prevailed in the rehearsals and led to the original conception being abandoned by the RHT. At least Pörtner's report after seeing a performance in London speaks in this direction:

When I was invited to the first performance in a small London theatre six months later, I was excited: What has emerged from the beginning? A play that no longer had anything to do with me, but also nothing to do with what I had understood as the concept of scream theatre: to offer a direct expression instead of the artificiality of spoken theatre, to bring an unleashed emotional theatre to life: a theatre of the moment, a living theatre and whatever these labels might be called. What I saw was a melodrama, halfway to art, not group theatre, but a solo piece for Roy, who was the only one performing, using the group only as an echo, as a surround: a choir that acted like an amplifier of the only voice of the only one. I was very struck by this spectacle, which was neither art nor life, neither spontaneous nor moulded. There was no place for spectators: Roy was self-sufficient and the group paid homage to their master. Had I made a mistake, had I seen something in this group that I longed for?

Misunderstandings between Pörtner and the RHT can be heard here, which do not concern the actual theme of ICH BIN, but show how much Pörtner's expectations of the RHT failed to fulfil the RHT's general and artistic intentions. These irritations also have to do with the role of the scream in the RHT's work. I will explore this in more detail in the next chapter.

How did ICH BIN come about? I took in what the group offered me. I received impressions, not in the sense of imprints, but of formative moulds of expression, moulds that correspond to what was shaped and vehemently presented, which hit me, kneaded me and made me soft. Correspondences to what the group gave me: I couldn't just accept it, ab-

sorb it, store it, I couldn't keep it to myself. I was in the presence of forty others: a tremendous demand, a challenge. I had to react. Give feedback.

I used my ability as a writer to write something down: directly, as a note. And when I then typed the note, I condensed sentences into word constellations, reduced and clarified. I began to work because it was working inside me. I was an alien, a recipient, an affected person: I recognised myself as if in a dream, a dream of an artistic existence, a purely artificial paradise of an expressive cult of nudity, the exhibition of aesthetic form, the incorporation of feelings in metamorphoses of sound and gesture. I rediscovered the feeling that I had denied myself through constant rationalisation and inner defence (fear of exposure) in this process, which took place during the writing of ICH BIN.

I behaved medially: I wrote down what I received, I - was not my I, but the I of the cult of the I, the I of the player, the role I of the metamorphosis artist, the I of the transferator, transformer. No, I do not want to disqualify this ego when I describe it as a non-ego, as the collective ego of the encounter, as an echo ego, as a mirror ego. Is it not my ability to absorb moisture like a sponge, to condense fluorescence like a reservoir, to retain movements without cancelling them. I absorb, I perceive, I collect myself in this process of realisation of what is not me. I press this deposited mash, which does not have substance in the usual sense of materiality, but represents ethereal fluid mixtures, moving-moving, diffuse, dispersive, colourful-gassy, nebulous-swelling. Substances that are activated in me, dynamic substances, processes that I transfer. Evocations that take me beyond the limits of my self-limitation. Again and again: ecstasy.

Being out of myself: When I am out of myself - in dance, in intoxication, in a dream - I am MYSELF. Happy: I am with myself when I am outside of myself.

Voice and Scream

In his interpretation of Roy Hart's approach to voice development, Pörtner often uses the term scream. He calls Roy Hart a "scream artist" and brings the work of Roy Hart and the RHT close to so-called scream therapies, such as Arthur Janov's primal scream therapy³⁰ and Dan Casriel's approach³¹.

This is a categorisation that would be rejected by Roy Hart and also by the teachers currently working in this tradition. However, Pörtner's assessment was to a certain extent provoked by Roy Hart. In a letter found in Pörtner's estate, which Roy Hart wrote to a producer in France - Philippe Arii-Blachette - the subject is seemingly a radio or television programme on the topic. In it, Roy Hart speaks explicitly of the RHT's work with the scream:

"It is therefore necessary for your programme to consider the way in which the Roy Hart Theatre has worked with the scream and has, as it were, emerged from it to rediscover the word. In the course of this process we have not shed this scream - practised over a period of (25?) years - like a worn-out child's dress, but on the contrary absorbed it with every fibre of our being." (translated by R.P.)

Roy Hart tells the story of the RHT here as a development that, starting from a confrontation with the pure scream, over time ended up back at work with language and words, bringing the experience of the scream into this new theatrical art of words.

Pörtner left behind a manuscript entitled "Scream" (from which some of the texts presented here are taken), in which there is a touching and impressive excerpt. In it, he writes about the significance of the scream for his life and in his voice:

I wake up in the night: I was screaming in my dream. The scream echoes. The horror is in my limbs. Only one scream broke out, unable to break the grip, the rigidity. If I could scream, openly, with all my might, I would break free. But what the dream allows me to do, the waking state denies me. I think I'm disturbing the neighbours. I imagine people coming, alerted by the screams, finding a locked door, the screamer behind it, breaking

³⁰ Cf. footnote 23!

³¹ Dan Casriel (1924-1983), an American psychoanalyst, developed the Bonding Therapy, which involves, among other things, the vocal expression of old feelings.

the door open, looking for a cause: what makes me scream? If I was burnt, trapped, injured, that could be fixed, but screaming for no apparent reason means being insane. I would be silenced by force: a raving addict. I am no longer a child. As a child, I was allowed to scream: from joy, from pain, from anger, from fear. It got on the adults' nerves, they tried to calm me down, the screams were to be silenced, suffocated, strangled. It was naughty to scream, nasty, bad. It had to stop, the screaming, it drives you mad. Possessed by the devil: a screamer. Abandoned by all good spirits: a screamer. Screaming while running after you, just before you get caught. Grabbing the back of the neck: scream! Screaming while chasing after: scream of encouragement, scream of alarm, howling siren. Screaming in the water, splashing and splashing about, frolicking in the water: scream lust. Screams in the forest, playing with Indians: wild screams as signals, hallmarks of savages. Screams from trees, screams in the dance around the torture stake. Cries of pain when you burn your fingers or a gaping wound spits blood. Screams as you fall, rattling on impact. Screams when the sledge plummets, screams of the bound man left alone in the forest. Scream when the boat is caught by the current and shoots away, scream when a car shoots towards you, a jump saves your life. Scream in the crowd that squeezes and oppresses you. Scream under the fluttering flag in the battle of children. Scream into the four winds, on the pinnacle of the tower you have climbed. Scream in the mountains: to attract the echo - scream that multiplies and takes on a life of its own. Scream: in the face of the mangled corpses, the burnt children, the firestorms.

The scream silences.

When did you stop screaming? Let me think!

It was a long time ago. Did I scream during operations? I was anaesthetised. Anaesthesia. No longer feeling the pain, numbing the fear, suppressing the anger, dampening the joy, making the laughter mannerly, learning to silently endure what comes to you. Screaming is frowned upon. Anyone who shouts is wrong. Children scream and drunks scream. People shout in arguments: marital quarrels, men's quarrels, women's quarrels, children's quarrels. But that is crude: screaming, shouting at each other. It is a sign of licentiousness, naughty, ill-bred, indelicate. Anyone who is reasonably civilised does not shout, but speaks calmly and reasonably. What about your voice? You have a big strong body, but a small weak voice. A head voice. No body voice, no resonance from the belly, no strength

from the legs, the arms, the chest. The voice does not resonate with you. It is only available to a limited extent: a speaking voice, an organ of communication.

There is something wrong with your voice, which no longer expresses any mood, only serves the purpose of speaking, calm, level-headed. When you are out of tune, you are silent. High moods are rare, they seize you, but not your voice. You dance, you stir, you rage and are drunk: speechless, voiceless.

Screaming against the storm: running through the dunes, to the beach, storming into the sea: sea screams.

The screams of lust: in sudden exuberance, in outpouring.

Biting your hand to keep from screaming.

The scream of the victim: a foot cut off by a bomb splinter. The screams of the buried man in the air shaft, trapped between the dead.

The scream of impotent rage: the trapped man. The scream-collapse, the destructive rage, the beating against the wall. The cries for help of the assaulted.

Screams when a child is on fire.

Screams when night falls and the shadows rule. Screams in sleep, overcome by the unexpected.

At one of Pörtner's meetings with the RHT in London, at which Roy Hart himself was not present, there was a presentation of excerpts from the play "AND", which for long parts was without words and must have seemed like a "scream play" to Pörtner. During the performance, he put his impressions into words, which he presented to the group immediately afterwards:

Lure cry, shock cry. Cry for help. Warning cry. Scream of agitation. Cry of pain.

Scream of invocation. Scream of self-affirmation. Scream of encouragement. The scream of release. Rocking in the cradle of breath. Nestled back into childhood. The scream of awakening. Growing up scream of power: scream of outrage. Suffering cries out to the heavens. But the scream does not fade away. The scream of misery circles overhead. Scream to signal and break through the loneliness. Scream for the other. Scream of gathering: gathered scream of gathering: tuning in, agreeing, voices. Whistling happy

screams, singing screams, dancing screams, screams to make the voice vibrate: screaming lanes, screaming fires. Yelps and screams in the face of death. First scream of the child - last scream of the dying: the winds germinate in the breath: the slumbering forces awaken in the scream.

Scream free: scream free.

There is truth in the scream.

Later, a larger text emerged from this sketch and, in a way, the idea of the scream also found its way into the version of ICH BIN that Pörtner dedicated to the RHT. Here is the text "Screams" by Paul Pörtner:

SCREAMS

dedicated to the Roy Hart Theatre Group
as thanks for the
performance of 19.11.72

Scream of astonishment

Scream of surprise

Scream of discovery

Scream of triumph

Scream of wonder

Cry of wonder

Wounded scream

Stunned silence

Lure cry

Cry of joy

Scream of pleasure

Cry of shock

Scream of invocation

Scream of self-affirmation

Scream of encouragement

Scream of release

Cry for help

Cry of warning

Cry of agitation

Cry of pain

Evocation

Breathing out
Breathing in
Rocking in the cradle of breath
Snuggled back into childhood
The scream of awakening
The scream of fear
The scream of silence

The growing cry of strength
The scream of alienation
Scream of surrender
Scream of loneliness
to signalise and
to break through:
Scream for the other
Scream of collection
Gathered scream
The gathering
The attunement
Over-attunement
Security
Relaxation
Joy of playing
Smart happy screams
Screams that make the voice vibrate
Singing cries
Yelps that leap out
Cheering screams
Revenge screams
Screams of deterrence
Screams of outrage
Screams of rage

Screams of cursing
Screams of desecration
Screams of defence
Screams of powerlessness
Screams to banish the disaster.
Screams of shame
Screams of disgust
Screams of aggression
Screams of persecution
Screams of despair
Screams in the face of hopelessness
Screams in the face of death

Suffering cries out to heaven.
But the scream does not fade away.
The scream of misery circles above us.
The inextinguishable scream of misery.

First scream of the child:
Last scream of the dying,
who breathes his last:
in the breath the winds germinate,
the storm of emotions,
the slumbering forces,
awaken in the scream.
Scream freely:
To express oneself, to externalise
There is truth in the scream.

From the very beginning, Pörtner was particularly interested in the scream aspect of vocal work on stage and in the studio. His first collaboration with Roy Hart was accordingly designed in such a way that Hart was assigned a purely vocal part - apart from a few words. In the radio play based on Artaud's "There is no more firmament", Roy Hart creates the soundscapes against which the story is told in words by other voices.

In the text-heavy draft of ICH BIN, which Pörtner also dedicated to the RHT, Pörtner basically had the idea that the words would not sound directly in the performance, but would be expressed through an alphabet of screams. Apparently he had not realised that Roy Hart was actually on the way back from the scream to the word at this time and therefore took ICH BIN literally, contrary to Pörtner's intention.

Pörtner's Hopes and Disappointment with ICH BIN

Pörtner saw a performance of parts of his play at the Open Space Theatre in London in spring 1974 and expressed his disappointment in writing several times. In addition to the passage quoted above, there is a letter to his friend and colleague Claus Bremer (a dramaturge who developed the participatory theatre together with Pörtner) in which he sums up his threefold disappointment:

The first was having to see the RHT perform only some parts of the play and combine them with two other plays (by Serge Béhar). This made it impossible to show the developmental story that Pörtner was aiming for. He had to realise that his dramatic poem had only been used as material for a performance that had little to do with his intentions.

According to Pörtner, the other two disappointments are based on major misunderstandings. For ICH BIN, Pörtner had an ensemble in mind in which at least five actors would appear as equal characters at the end. What he had to see was a performance in which only Roy Hart himself acted individually. All the other players were part of a chorus and did not appear as individuals at all. This went against the grain of Pörtner's efforts to create an emancipated theatre in which all participants act alongside each other on an equal footing.

My theme was: to integrate the roles, which initially represent my ego like masks, into the ego and to present them as forms of the ego - free-standing and independent: the father in me, the mother in me, the child in me, the artist (actor) in me are brought forth from me. Detach themselves from me. Now, this process would require at least five equal players at the end of the game, but there was only one protagonist: Roy Hart, who played with words.

And elsewhere:

Roy Hart, whom I had never seen on stage, gave a performance in the Open Space Theatre, and there he was the only protagonist, the group functioned as a chorus, as an echo, as a feed group, not as an ensemble of free players. This leader-centred form of the group seems to me to cause an incapacitation, a depersonalisation of the individual group members: they seemed rigid, puppet-like, trained.

The last misunderstanding is even more serious:

I had conceived my words as the starting point for a non-verbal play. The feelings that cannot be expressed with words were to be realised purely vocally, the intrapersonal conflicts were to be transported scenically, but under no circumstances were the words to be interpreted with sounds or the meanings of the words to be underlined or doubled with gestures. But that's exactly what was done: signs on top of signs. Three signs instead of one, but that does not mean an amplification, but a mockery of the word that speaks for itself. What it says does not have to be said again in a different sign language. It then appears illustrative, outré: Onomatopoeia, melodrama instead of direct identification, deaf-mute language as a lesson.

With this misunderstanding, Pörtner poses a central question to the aesthetic development of the RHT. As mentioned above, during the time of the encounter with Pörtner, Roy Hart pursued the idea of moving from working with the non-verbal voice and the "scream" back to the word. The experiences that the voices had made in the non-verbal phase, which were reflected in the piece AND, for example, were to flow into the examination of word and text. Pörtner was well aware of this movement.

But apparently Pörtner and Roy Hart understood this development to mean completely different things. In the letter to Cremer, Pörtner talks about the AND performance he had seen in London. In addition, Paul Silber, an RHT member, had given him a recording with excerpts from "AND", which Pörtner describes almost enthusiastically:

I interrupted my writing here and played a tape that Paul Silver ("Silber") had made for me: excerpts from AND. The first thing that moves me, touches me: the surf of the voices, sounding out waves, different from my electronically filtered waves, different from the synthetic waves set to the modulator. The swelling and subsiding of the voices (not only crescendo-decrescendo-glissandi), also the collected power of the emotional surges in the voice suggest this movement, which, like every natural movement, also finds a counterpart in the human body (soul, emotions, organ). Animal sounds, bird cries mingle with the howling of the wind, the writhing, heaving of the screaming phase, which gathers in singing cries, calms, smoothes, levels out in song. Rattling reverberating screams indicate a new movement, a new swirling of voices, again and again these spiralling screams, in-

termittent screams, shouts, whining, agonising, writhing up to very high shrill overtones, brain tones, crazy, barely comprehensible whirring of voices to relaxed, melodious bass sounds, the modulation of depth, of calm, of the ground, exhalation - inhalation as the ground of the movement of life, a steady rocking and swaying. Fluttering echo.

Pure song, shot through with sudden laughter. Disturbing cries, wild warning cries surprising the singing, catastrophe signals. Listening into the open mouth: again this scream-distress, scream-bid, scream-command, scream-arrows, scream-rays, ray-screams, sea-screams. The fact that the scream penetrates me means: I surrender, I allow myself to be penetrated by the scream, I behave in a feminine way: receptively open.

"AND" must also have made a great impression on him in formal and aesthetic terms and he hoped or assumed that his text template for ICH BIN could inspire a similar result. But this was clearly not the intention of the RHT or Roy Hart himself.

In an extended description of the private performance of "AND" organised for him, after describing his ambivalent impressions, he comes to the question of whether the RHT is the group that will be able to realise theatrically what Pörtner has in mind:

When I arrived at the Roy Hart Theatre at 11.40am, the session was already in full swing. I was asked if I was Mr P. I apologised for being late, I thought it was just a casual meeting, not arranged especially for me, rehearsed, a "bouquet" as Maria said, for me: a present the group wanted to give me, they had rehearsed the night before and now I was late, had missed the Cornet (by Rilke, R.P.), the only German piece. Marita Günther, an older woman, was obviously angry and didn't want to repeat what had already been played. So they continued. Laughter. Voiceless screams, with very few high-pitched sounds, extorted screams, very quiet, dogged, resistance-filtered squeezing screams. Counter-screams. A man breaks away from the group, strokes his shirt with a paper fan, over his hips, rustling very softly, there is a tender sound of intimacy, of rustling and fleeting (rapid) caresses (self-caressing). The flapping of the fan creates a fluttering, a bird association that is taken up by the group: only hectic, quiet breathing creates an excited rustling of feathers and a cheeping and clucking, the helpless cries of fear of the trapped birds. A man's fan dance, breaking the light fans, deliberate destruction as an accent. Another exercise: tensing and relaxing. Rhythmically. R., one of the protagonists, choir leader, has a baby cry as a solo

that seems very real: he crouches down on the floor, mewls, completely surrendered, completely nestled in an early stage that expresses itself in screaming: Screams for his mother, screams of being left alone, screams of being cold, exposed, afraid, defiant, demanding, angry. Quickly growing up to standing, to youthful power-exercise screaming. And then a short love scene, an older woman, I met her on the first day, comes into the arms of the young man as someone in need of love, in need of protection, this scene of a sad embrace seeking warmth and tenderness is realised with just a few sounds, very carefully, very sparingly (these are always the best moments: the non-excessive, non-exaggerated ones). And then the woman breaks away and becomes abusive, abrupt and surprisingly aggressive towards the group, which backs away, irritated, embarrassed, does not understand the woman's charged, hectic (demanding) approach, cannot and does not want to reciprocate, playing on deflection, aversion, rejection or embarrassment.

A girl who was sitting at my feet, a young girl, N., joins the group, shouts very powerfully, very loudly, very purely. She is the leader of the group. Screaming mouth to mouth, mouth against mouth, with another girl, shouting at each other in the literal sense. Attacking, challenging, disturbing, meeting, sensitive in screaming. A chasing, hunting, driving, cheering and resisting is carried out: as a group game that escalates into a very hectic, impressionant confusion, a chaotic irritation: this jumble of running, irregular, quite panicky, quite frightened and fast, each in a different way: from leaps to hooks, from leaping upwards to weaving past, spinning, wiping, changing, turning, twisting, turning, there is a very dense game of movement and sound. Aren't these concentrated group excesses the best moments after all?

As soon as a rhythm is prescribed (by the tam-tam, for example, which is now struck), something gymnastic and artistic comes into play. Even later in the Kyrie Eleison, the singing is not actually the specific thing, but the destruction of the singing by the disturbing cry, which is, however, superficially concealed: the young girl is made to play the role of a madwoman, a childish, incomprehensible disturber. That is literature. Or bad theatre. Also later in the finale: simply by crossing the arms, only clasping and clinging together the group creates a vivid situation that can mean many things. The sinking of a ship, death, the end of the world, a concentration camp situation, or simply the desire not to be torn apart, the desire to hold on to a community that perhaps only exists as a hope, as a longing. This choral group scream contains the most diverse stages of screaming,

from fear to euphoria, from protest and cries of anger to cries of suffering and cries for help, which vibrates, swings, shrills, oscillates fortissimo in an ambiguous way, like a blinding, shrill brightness that makes outlines disappear, creating a flickering and shimmering of meanings that is unheard of.

Fortissimo. Forced final screaming. Until the gradual congealing of the sound, the extinction of the overvoltage, the collapse and falling together of the screaming vault, pointed tower of screams, which was marked by outstretched hands (bundle of rays of sounds). A woman is lifted up, carried like a corpse on the outstretched hands of the group and enclosed again, sunk into the depths of the group. At the end: lying down as desired: in the random overlapping of the bodies, the momentary sudden solidification of the rays of death. In the silence (dead silence), only the natural involuntary breathing of the exhausted can be heard, signalling another level.

At the end, I am asked about my impressions. I can't formulate it that quickly. A writer writes, he formulates indirectly, mediates. He cannot express his feelings directly. Neither can I, burdened by apologies and the foreign language, which doesn't allow spontaneous expression. As far as I am concerned, and not in terms of interpretation: what can be described is the penetration of the voice in the stage of the wordless scream through the eardrum to the diaphragm: the rousing, and the stirring power of the scream, which is at its strongest in the quiet, almost voiceless outburst of sound.

For strength will emerge from weakness, but will be charged with all the tension of the monstrous, (roughly, not quoted verbatim) said Artaud. What he understood as the vitalisation, the potentiation of art (pushing forward through art in order to touch life) becomes possible in the pure expression of the scream. What I strive for, by means of the word and beyond the literal, to transmit life in a living form, in a form that is becoming, a form that is first forming as a form, an open form, is also laid out here. Can something be made of this specific characteristic of the scream, both the individual and the group scream, that surpasses what has been done so far (in the theatre) and adds a dimension to what can be said in words? The composer Vladimir Rodchenko, who wrote *Kyrie eleison*, wants more *bel canto*, more purified, moulded sounds. Maria resists this, as something that does not fully correspond to the previous work, because the very distinction between beautiful sound and purified sound devalues the actual screaming element as impure, mixed, unfamiliar, chaotic, etc. Many artistic and strictly formed groupings and attitudes

also seem alien to me: as soon as it becomes music, it loses its actual character of the powerful, elemental, immediate expression of naked feelings, exceptional human states, emotional events that cannot be captured in music, art, words, can only be framed. So I could only give words, suggestions, make an offer, draw lines, outlines that are to be filled with life, with the group's own. What touched me most deeply? The couple scene, the baby crying, the group's catastrophe scene. Won't these elements keep coming back? Can I communicate my own to the group in such a way that they understand it, accept it, realise it: appropriate it in order to make it happen? I will start from the figurations and send texts.

In this section of text, which is one of the rare, detailed descriptions of a group performance of the RHT, it is clear, as in other quotes, that Pörtner was very impressed by what he saw and heard in the RHT, but recognised weaknesses in this approach to artistic voice work from the very beginning. I believe that this provides a strong starting point for the discussion about how the extended voice can be dealt with on stage today. What artistic potential lies in the whole voice with all its possibilities? The question is all the more pertinent as the extended voice is now used in various performing arts.

From a historical perspective, it has to be said that Pörtner's idea would have been more promising than what ended up happening with ICH BIN. At least from the footage that exists of it - and the visual part is missing! - it is easy to understand Pörtner's great disappointment. Artistically, the interpretation is not convincing in my opinion either. One reason for this lies in the text, which is not suitable for direct translation to the stage, as Pörtner himself knows. As a psychoanalytical text, it is too clichéd, without "flesh", without a concrete story. However, the question remains as to whether there could have been another form of presenting the text in a vocally alienated way - a form that focuses less on illustrating what the text already says and more on inserting an extended level with which something additional can be expressed. This is an approach that could be tried out in a re-enactment.

Here is the entire letter from Pörtner to Claus Bremer, dated 22 April 1974, quoted above

Dear Claus,

A year ago, I once gave you a text ICH BIN, which I had begun in 1960 (the beginnings are in "Wurzelwerk") and which had developed into a "scenic poem", but without being considered a "stage text" in the dramaturgical sense. It couldn't really be classified in the series of my plays either: not a play, not a variable piece of poetic theatre? A return to my beginnings? Why did I write this configuration at all: ICH BIN?

The Roy Hart theatre group in London offered me a performance of "AND" on my first visit - I was the only audience member in the studio of the Abraxas Club in Hampstead. As a gesture of thanks, I formulated my impressions in a protocol poem "Screams", which I gave to the group. We worked with this poem in the workshop, and during rehearsals I saw the possibility of translating words into purely vocal expression or gestural form. This embodiment and enunciation brought the writing to life: the text was not spoken or staged, but taken as the basis of a game that emerged from improvisation. The poem was "put into use": for weeks, conversations over tea or at meetings centred on these words, which were then related to the lives of the individual participants. The theatre concept of the Roy Hart Theatre Group is based on life, not limited to the stage and performances, which are an exception. The discussions in the group or in pairs, the meals together, the meetings in the studio are "theatre", as are the daily training sessions in the "movement classes" or the "singing lessons". There are no rehearsals, just exercises. We once talked, dear Claus, about how theatre should be understood as a process, not as a form of business that is geared towards production: I thought I had found a group here that practised this. A mistake, as it turned out. I only saw what I wanted to see: the integration of the art form of creativity into life.

I didn't see: the artificialisation and formalisation of the way of life under the primacy of the artistic. I only realised this now, a few days ago at a new meeting with this group, which actually rejects the term "group" and sees itself as a "tribe". Roy Hart, whom I had never seen on stage, gave a performance in the Open Space Theatre, and he was the only protagonist; the group functioned as a chorus, as an echo, as a playback group, not as an ensemble of independent players. This leader-centred form of the group seems to me to result in an incapacitation, a depersonalisation of the individual group members: they seemed rigid, puppet-like, trained. That was my impression of the audience in the theatre. ICH BIN was on the programme, but there were only a few excerpts in the mixture with

other plays ("Mariage de Lux" and "Biodrame" by Serge Béhar), which showed no connection, no development. My theme was: to integrate the roles, which initially represent my ego like masks, into the ego and to present them as forms of the ego - free-standing and independent: the father in me, the mother in me, the child in me, the artist (actor) in me are brought forth from me. Detach themselves from me. Now, this process would require at least five equal players at the end of the game, but there was only one protagonist: Roy Hart, who played with words.

There was a second misunderstanding: I had conceived my words as the starting point for a non-verbal play. The feelings that could not be expressed with words were to be realised purely vocally, the intrapersonal conflicts were to be transported scenically, but under no circumstances were the words to be interpreted with sounds or the meanings of the words to be underlined or doubled with gestures. But that's exactly what was done: signs on top of signs. Three signs instead of one, however, does not mean an amplification, but a mockery of the word that speaks for itself. What it says does not have to be said again in a different sign language. It then appears illustrative, outré: Onomatopoeia, melodrama instead of direct identification, deaf-mute language as a lesson. When I dared to voice my objections to this interpretation, I was dismissed as an ignoramus: no poet understands his own work. It used to be the case that the writer demanded the realisation of his imagination, with them it is the other way round: they know more about me and my words than I do. They appropriate my work, identify with it, implement it, live it: and so it is their ICH BIN, which no longer has anything to do with me, at least not my imagination, but that of the Roy Hart theatre group. Then my name should also be removed if my authorship has been so largely worked over by the group's adaptation. Now that's an ambivalent thing. On the one hand, I think the role of the author is overrated in conventional theatre. Yes, I agree when it is said that the performers - i.e. all those involved in the stage performance - make the play and are therefore equal to the author. Yes, I go so far as to extend the authorial position by asking my fellow players to be creative themselves, not in writing, but in realising their own experiences, self-expression and spontaneous play. I learnt this just last year in various experiments (in Baden-Baden, Hamburg, Cologne) with free group improvisations: the author only makes the start, sets the process in motion - the play results from the group dynamics. And now I am confronted with a distortion of my concept, which, however, has arisen through identification: Roy Hart and his group

feel entitled to this transformation of my specification, which was also a gift, a present. All the members of the group learnt all the words of this poem in German by heart and worked with it for a year, in ever new conversations and exercises with this text. I was moved by this taking of a poem seriously, relating it to the lives of the individual performers. More than 40 letters testify to the care and love devoted to this poem. And yet: the result shows that we misunderstood each other. Was this perhaps also due to the openness of my text, which allowed too many interpretations? You read it at the time and you couldn't quite imagine the realisation. What do you think an author can do: an author who sees himself primarily as a designer, a stimulus and who defines his work as preparatory work and collaboration? Wouldn't anonymity be best in this case? Many questions, dear Claus, but you are currently the only person I can correspond with about this.

No Conclusion

Roy Hart died in a car accident soon after this episode of collaboration and meeting with Paul Pörtner. He no longer had the chance to develop his ideas of a theatre that emerges from the voice. Perhaps over time he would have come to the conclusion that the path he had taken with ICH BIN was not leading in the right direction. That must remain speculation. What is certain is that he would not have stopped at this point.

The Roy Hart Theatre existed for a further 15 years and developed and showed a whole series of productions during this time. The story of the answers that were found to the question of contemporary voice theatre must be told by someone else.

Part of my artistic work over the past 15 years can be understood as an exploration of the question of what form the whole voice can take on stage. Two major productions are worth mentioning in this context, both of which were created in collaboration with the voice performance ensemble KörperSchafftKlang. In the stage play "Muttersprachen", which was first shown in 2009, the proximity of life and theatre came about in the spirit of Pörtner in that all the scenes were created from the material of the ensemble members' memories. A sentence, a gesture, the sound of a voice. The collage around the themes of motherhood and language was designed in such a way that the voices had space to resound individually and in harmony with the other voices. With simply spoken words, in song and in the free movement of the entire vocal field. As we saw it, the theatre evening was in the tradition of the RHT. Our aim was to create theatre from the voice.

With the performance „Totenklage/death chant", which was performed in various versions from 2015 to 2019, KörperSchafftKlang moved from the theatre into completely different public spaces. Based on the sound poem of the same title by Hugo Ball, a voice and word performance lasting several hours was created that brings together the verbal and non-verbal expressive possibilities of the human voice in a new way and combines them into a moving vocal sound sculpture. Less narrative in approach than in " Muttersprachen", the work with "Totenklage" led us into new spaces of vocal action. Since then, performance art has proved to be a promising place for ensemble work and also for my solo search for contemporary vocal art. In my opinion, the connection between art and life can be explored particularly impressively with the means of the human voice.

After the episode with Roy Hart and the RHT, Paul Pörtner no longer focused his creative work on theatre, but worked mainly for the radio. In 1976 he became an editor at Norddeutscher Rundfunk. In the last letter he wrote to a member of the RHT' after learning of Roy Hart's death, he indicated that he was seriously ill. This illness, from which he had already died in 1984, probably also prevented him from doing any further work for the stage.

Pörtner would probably have had some objections to my interpretation of his co-operation with the RHT. In my research, I was less interested in doing justice to all those involved at the time than in finding out whether there was anything to be learnt from the encounter for contemporary vocal art. I hope that my great respect for the two main protagonists and for all the members of the RHT', for their courage, their consistency and their search for new forms of vocal art and theatre shines through in this book, despite all criticism. Perhaps the best way for me to honour these pioneers of the art of the extended voice is to continue to ask their questions and to seek only provisional answers that are appropriate to the situation 50 years after the exchange between Roy Hart and Paul Pörtner. If this little book were to encourage its readers to join in the search, its purpose would be most beautifully fulfilled!

Literature

As far as I know there are no translations of Pörtner's work into English. Even in German none of his works are available in bookshops today. Some of his books are occasionally offered in second-hand bookshops. To my knowledge, his radio plays are also not publicly accessible. With the exception of one essay on Pörtner, the list of literature must therefore be limited to publications on Roy Hart and his approach to the voice.

- Sheila Braggins: *The Mystery Behind the Voice, A Biography of Alfred Wolfsohn*, Matador, Leicestershire 2012
- Orlanda Cook: *Singing with your Own Voice*, Nick Hern Books, London 2008
- Kevin Crawford/Bernadette Sweeney: *Roy Hart and the Early Roy Hart Theatre*, Routledge, Abingdon/New York 2022
- Bettina Hesse (ed.): *Die Philosophie des Singens*, mairisch Verlag, Hamburg 2019
- Krüger, Anne-May: *Nicht zum Singen bestimmt. Approaches to the vocal performance practice of Arnold Schönberg's Pierrot Lunaire (1912) and Peter Maxwell Davies' Eight Songs for a Mad King (1969)*, in: *Das Melodram in Geschichte und Aufführungspraxis*, Michaelsteiner Konferenzberichte Vol. 87, edited by Christian Philipsen in conjunction with Ute Omonsky, Augsburg 2020
- Ian Magilton: *Roy Hart Theatre at Malérargues*, Mondial livre 2016
- Ralf Peters: *Singing in mind. Reflections on the human voice*, stimmfeld, Hamburg 2020, English version as pdf by request
- *Little voice book for everyone*, Unverzagt Verlag, Cologne 2014
- *Being an artist in capitalism. On the self-positioning of artists in an economised world*, Book in German: Athena Verlag, Oberhausen 2018, online at: <http://artistincapitalism.blogspot.com/>
- *Eine Stimme meiner Kindheit*, in: Mühleis/Sternagel (eds.): *Die Gegenstände unserer Kindheit*, Wilhelm Fink, Paderborn 2019, pp.111-120.
- *Die transkulturelle Stimme - Alfred Wolfsohn und Roy Hart*, in: *Stimmkulturen/3rd Stuttgarter Stimmtage 2000*, Röhrig Universitätsverlag, St. Ingbert 2002
- *Ders: Wege zur Stimme, Reisen ins menschliche Stimmfeld*, stimmfeld, new edition Norderstedt 2018, English version as pdf by request

- Ralf Peters (ed.): Alfred Wolfsohn: ...banishing the Stench of the World. Records of a contemporary witness to world wars, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, bilingual English/German, stimmfeld, Hamburg 2022
- Margaret Pikes & Patrick Campbell: Owning our Voices, Vocal Discovery in the Wolfsohn-Hart Tradition, Routledge, Abingdon/New York 2021
- Pikes, Noah: Dark Voices. The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre, Vol. 1, New Orleans 2004, 2nd edition
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