

petelia's totenpass

a study for the augury

for two or more voices

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(paid to the ferryman)

With tense quietness, *petelia's totenpass* is a study of voiceless utterance: a whispered navigation of the mouth, lips, tongue, and breath.

The focus of the performance is on finding the microscopic detail within different hushed phonations; exploring the friction, tremors, turbulence, and the grain of the voice.

[*x*] Each of the following ambit sections describes a root phonation class or mouth shape, along with instructions for actions to explore it.

An ambit is not rigidly defined, but an approximate focal point. You are exploring an insular space: its interior, the periphery of its focus, the penumbra.

Sounds

- Always whispered/unvoiced. Always very quiet.
- All changes and movements are microscopic. The sounds you sculpt should vary subtly and slowly.
- Each sound is long to very long. Breathe as required. Unless otherwise specified, spend as long on each action as you wish.

- Leave space.
- Be aware of your mouth—your body, its energy, its frictions and tensions—as you contour and shape each sound.
- Approach everything slowly and cautiously. The only sudden or severe changes should be those falling out of your control.
- Where possible, find a smooth transition into each new ambit. If you wish to pause to read the instruction, do so.
- From time to time, if you encounter an interesting point of instability (such as a breaking point or liminal space, the limitations of certain mouth shapes, or other areas of friction) pause and explore the surrounding space.

Structure

- Move through ambits randomly in performance, exploring as many or as few as you wish, in any order. (Each ambit section is independent from all others, but all instructions are played in order.)
- Length of the performance is arbitrary.
- Make no attempt to align ambits between players.
- At the end of the performance, everyone performs the final page [sh]. Begin in your own time but aim to finish together.

This booklet should be printed at A6 size.
Alternative accessible formats are available online.

[f]

- from previous ambit, meld slowly into [f], hang on the breaking point for ten seconds
- still with some flickers

[er]

- slowly vary with lips, tongue and mouth, thirty seconds
- reduce to back of the throat
- a distant, hollow gale
- pause, five seconds

[p] *lips a tiny pinpoint aperture*

- some air escaping
- tentatively, start to release teeth for [pf]

[s]


- starting with sibilance, play with tongue in relation to teeth to find a soft hushing [sh], then back to [s]

[t_{p,f,s,k}] *dust*

- tiny microsound plosives and tiny fricatives. mostly [t], but with a few scattered [p, f, s, k] added.
- gradually become sparser, interpolating into short waves of [th]

[O] *hard, as in "not"*

- gradually closing lips, thirty seconds
- lips flicker open then closed, infrequent
- mouth opens out into [or]
- open jaw fully

[] *a loose, airy whistle*

- steady, with some wavering and tremors
- slow waves between more noise/more pitch (losing neither)
- slow glissando downwards, a small distance. more than twenty seconds
- repeat later

[sh] *soft hushing*

- still, with a few small flickers
- softly fluctuate pitch with lips; slow wander between [shi], [shu], [sho]

[th] *weak lisp*

- broken lines
- pause, five seconds
- finding point of sibilance. hold when located.

["sun"]

- whisper ["sun"] as slowly as possible. on the [uh], gradually open mouth fully, then slowly return

["fall"]

- begin with [f], focus on the grain of air, popping on the lips
- whisper ["fall"] as slowly as possible
- at the end of the [ll], slowly curl tongue back along roof of mouth.

[h] *soft breath*

- whisper sound on inhale and exhale
- semi-audible breathing, three breaths

[sib.] *sibilance*

- begin with lips pursed, as for [soo]. lips mostly still, some small wavering, then still, repeating.
- slowly open lips, changing filter towards [si], one minute

[ah] *like a distant wind*

- lean in and out of the [ah] air. breathes fade in and out.
- repeat this ambit later

[k] *lightly growl, roof of mouth, hollow*

- moving from airy sound to a more textured, gravely sound. after each breath, articulate the [k] at the start of a line.
- use bottom jaw to fold into [kr]

[j] *sibilant*

- shorter lines, each articulated. observe the small plosive that escapes on the articulation

[sch] *hushed, gravel*

- finding 'biting point' of gravel at back of tongue, intermittent, maybe with some [schr]
- thin to the smallest possible sound, [sh]
- pause until another player begins a new ambit

[u] *as in "you"*

- soften face and muscles of mouth
- melt from [u] into [oo]
- use lips to slowly raise pitch/filter

["teeth"]

- whisper ["teeth"] in two long breaths (split the [ee]), as slow as possible
- pause, three to six seconds, repeat the short plosive [th] (from the end of "teeth"). repeat this cycle several times.

[w] *low, filtered noise*

- on slow inhale and exhales
- lips tremor, intermittently, for flickers of higher pitch

["light"]

- whisper ["light"] in a single breath, as slow as possible
- pause, three to six seconds, repeat the short plosive [t] (from the end of "light"). repeat this cycle several times.

[q] *almost [ku]*

- shorter breaths, soft articulation of the [k] each time
- meld to [u]

[sh] - ending *soft hush*

- a soft hushing, calm
- then into cupped, closed hands. a long time.
(hands held until end)
- gradually slide from one timbre to another.
ensure your sound contrasts other players.
- end.