

<b>Institution: University of Winchester</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> D33 Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Changing practice and improving wellbeing through immersive vocal art		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> from January 2010 to August 2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Yvon Bonenfant	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor of Artistic Process, Voice and Extended Practices	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> January 2005 – August 2018
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> January 2012 to July 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Through the creation of new kinds of immersive performance, Yvon Bonenfant's research has addressed the exclusion of children's voices, and in particular those with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD). This resulted in transformative experiences for over 700,000 participants across the UK, who acted as co-makers of sophisticated voice art. The artworks provoked changes in attitude in arts programming and innovative uses of the vocal arts in formal and informal educational environments. These changes in practice led to meaningful well-being benefits, with children experiencing brief, and in certain cases, profound and long-lasting changes to behaviour and engagement.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>This body of work was developed by immersive practice researcher Yvon Bonenfant at Winchester University between 2005 and September 2018. It contributes significant practice as research to the emerging field of interdisciplinary voice studies. All the work was premiered between January 2012 and 31 July 2020.</p> <p>The research comprises two multi-component outputs or projects and stems from the article 'Queered Listening to Queered Vocal Timbres' (<i>Performance Research</i> 15:3, 2010). This article postulates a theory of how, through queered voicing, human bodies reach out, call toward, and find, other queered voices, and through so doing, participate in queered vocal relations of inter-corporeal attraction that actively queer and re-shape auditory, haptic and performative space.</p> <p>From this starting point, a significant body of practice-led research funded by the Wellcome Trust and Arts Council England was developed to put these principles into artistic practice and test their ability to realise the goals of celebrating queered vocal relations. The body of work articulates distinct strategies, processes, and analytical frameworks to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop performative artworks through which problematic questions are raised about the social and biological politics of the production and perception of vocal 'difference' – the 'queered' or 'extra-normal' voice;</li> <li>2. Use the resulting artworks to invite different demographics of audience and community to play with, enjoy, and co-create sophisticated artworks that celebrate their own queered, vocal gestures;</li> <li>3. Collaborate with varied artistic, psycholinguistic and biomedical researchers to inform, challenge, and underpin such work with a range of relevant knowledges;</li> <li>4. Discover new things about the production and perception of unusual voicing in culture – by either 'typically' or 'non-normatively' voicing bodies.</li> </ol>		

Three categories of insights evolved from this trajectory of work, linked to the two multi-component outputs that form the thematic portfolios of work. These include:

1. Insights into how to involve children aged 6-11 and their adults in celebrations of queered vocality, and in how to involve them in these celebrations as co-artists (*Your Vivacious Voice*)
2. Insights into how we invite children with complex, mixed disability to become vocal artists, and how we might celebrate their unique improvisatory virtuosity (*Resonant Tails: PMLD Youth as Voice Artists*)
3. Insights into how we might invite audiences understand how they style their vocal selves (*Your Vivacious Voice*)

Transversal sub-categories of insights revealed include:

1. Insights into how audiences constructed as having marginalized voice qualities might be invited inside performative art-making processes and products as co-makers;
2. The rich seams of discovery that can be explored through collaboration with voice and speech scientists, engineers and educationalists within such work;
3. The power dynamics that underpin audience relations in such work;
4. The creative dynamics of inviting general publics to experience their queered voices from within such performative art works;
5. The future of the potential to involve queered vocalities in such work;
6. The aesthetic boundaries that the results of such processes challenge, advance, or problematize.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The research is generated from two multi-component outputs.

#### **3.1 Multi-component output 1: *Your Vivacious Voice: Extra-normal vocalisation, participation, and projects for children and youth.* Premiered January, 2012.:**

Submitted in REF2.

'Queered Listening to Queered Vocal Timbres' *Performance Research* 15:3, 2010. DOI: [10.1080/13528165.2010.527210](https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2010.527210)

'Grappling with the Vivacious Voices: Uluzuzulalia, Somatic Experience, Plundering and the Research Paradigm'. [Keynote Speaker], *Art and Knowledge: Making Sense of the Sensible*, University of Arts Helsinki, Theatre Academy, 2013.

'Vivacious Voice in Action: Problems, Processes and Potentials'. [Invited Seminars/Guest Lectures], *Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Invited Research Seminar*, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow, 2014.

'Extending the Vivacious Voice'. [Invited Seminars/Guest Lecturers], *Impossible Constellation Event*, University of Lincoln, 2014.

'Votre voix vive: pléthore, plénitude, pouvoir et les enjeux de la recherche-création'. [Invited Lectures (Conference)], *Symposium Le Processus Creatif*, University of Paris 1 Panthéon – Sorbonne, 2014.

'They Make Noise : Plethora, Plenitude, Power and Performance as Research'. [Invited Lectures (Conference)], *International Federation for Theatre Research Main Conference*, Coventry, 2014.

'Contact, Mirrors and Gymnastics: What Science, Art and the Voice Can Do Together'. [Invited Oral Presentation], *11th International Conference on Advances in Quantitative Laryngology, Voice and Speech Research*, University College London, 2015.

'Unruly and Vivacious: Children as Voice Artists and the Celebration of Difference'. [Keynote Speaker], *Imagine Children's Theatre Festival and Showcase*, Edinburgh, 2017.

Touring performance *Uluzuzulalia* at 10 UK venues over two years.

*Voice Bubbles* iPad app

*The Voice Trunk* (public engagement artwork, 2014)

**Grants awarded to support this project:**

Wellcome Trust Small Grants in the Creative and Performing Arts, £29 912, R+D funding for this project, 2010-11

Wellcome Trust Large Arts Award, £ 116 818, 2012-2015

Wellcome Trust Large Arts Follow-On Funding, £30 000, 2012-2015

Arts Council England Grants for the Arts, £51 958, 2012-2015

**3.2 Multi-component output 2: Resonant Tails: PMLD Youth as Voice Artists**

*Resonant Tails: PMLD Youth as Voice Artists* Artwork premiere November 2016.

'PAR Produces Plethora, Extended Voices are Plethoric, and Why Plethora Matters' In: Arlander, A. Barton, B., Dreyer-Lude, M. and Spatz, B. (eds). *Performance as Research: +Knowledge, Methods, Impact*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Wellcome Trust and Arts Council funding helped Bonenfant synthesise methods for enticing children (and their adults) to make non-normative sound within interactive performance, leading to improved participation, enhanced quality of life and changed practitioner attitudes and methods.

**New forms of cultural expression and changes in audience perception and behaviour**

*Your Vivacious Voice (YVV)* comprises three works: 1) *Uluzuzulalia*, a digitally inclusive interactive performance for children aged 6-11 that toured to 29 locations (1038 attendees **(5.9)**) and paved the way for 2) an installation called *The Voice Trunk (VT)* and 3) *Voice Bubbles for iPad*. *The VT* launched in August 2015 at the Winchester Science Centre (WSC) **(5.1, 5.9)**. *Voice Bubbles* was in the app store from February 2014 until late 2015 (4,500 downloads) **(5.1)**. The works were the first of their kind and challenged preconceptions about voice and about working with children, who 'tended to use it... creatively, excitedly, and making increasingly unusual sounds' **(5.2, p. 20)**. The Point noted that 'The way this performance took shape and its results opened up new possibilities and opportunities for us to challenge artists to expand how they considered and developed performance for children' **(5.4)**, while WSC noted that the VT's 'artistic focus and its unusual interactive audiovisual and tactile technology opened up some possibilities for us to think about other ways we could use interactive and performative coding inside the Science Centre' **(5.1)**. Complimentary education packages linked to the National Curriculum are accessed via third party websites. Five venues commented that the packs were crucial for sales, while WSC prints the pack for KS1&2 teachers – about a third of its visitors are from primary schools. It is estimated, based on downloads and average class sizes, that 4000+ students have used the teaching materials **(5.2)**.

At the heart of each of the three artworks is the principle of the 'voice-expanding mirror'. When hearing themselves echoed by a digital array, a person (especially children), will copy their own sound back and modify it. The works used digital technologies and live performance to encourage children to make adventurous sounds – profiting from their neurological tendency (as outlined by collaborating psycholinguist Best) that 'understanding of the phases of phonetic play as infants and children acquire phonemes was absolutely crucial' and allowed the participants to 'see what their voices can do' **(5.2)**. Meanwhile, the schools that participated in the pilot project at The Point reported 'dynamic and enthusiastic responses to the work' **(5.4)**.

*The VT* was hosted by Winchester Science Centre (WSC) between 2015 and 2019 (140,000 annual visitors, 99% visiting all exhibits) **(5.1)**. Evaluations show that users' perception of their voice transforms and that they celebrate non-normative voicing. According to the WSC *the VT* 'is now consistently the favourite exhibit. Users [...] dwell on it for very, very long periods, and create quite sophisticated soundscapes with the Trunk.... [There is a] tendency for 5 or 6 children per

group to stay obsessively [with] the Trunk for up to 45 mins.’ (5.2). WSC have created a ‘sound trail’ around the exhibit for school groups and report that *The VT* encourages teachers to take a more ‘creative’ approach to STEM subjects (5.2). *The VT* radically contrasts with WSC’s more traditional exhibits, transforms the spatial experience and is one of their most accessible activities for disabled youth (5.1). Interestingly, WSC has programmed a follow up exhibition on sound and acoustics using artistic concepts (noted in the Unit’s Research Environment Statement).

### Enhanced wellbeing for children with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD)

Children with PMLD have few chances to be creative with their voices; their complex needs make it difficult for them to visit cultural venues. However, children with PMLD demonstrated enormous enthusiasm for *YVV*, made incredibly sophisticated vocal sounds, and showed very strong interest in improvisation (5.1, 5.2). In response to *YVV*’s success with this under-engaged audience, Bonenfant was invited to work with Rosewood Free School (5.2, 5.7). The resultant *Resonant Tails (RT)* enabled a whole new application of the voice-expanding mirror: a stand-alone ‘art machine’ as a facility with which the children could spend extended time celebrating their unique vocal virtuosity (5.10). A senior representative of the school notes that vocal expression ‘is very significant for our learners, many of whom have restricted opportunities to take power over the world that surrounds them’ (5.7), and that the project helped ‘our teachers and teaching assistants to engage with vocal intensive interaction in new ways’ (5.7).

Benefitting from the experience, and supported by introductions from Rosewood School (5.7), *RT* was rolled out to three more UK schools (in mixed disability groups), where it is used daily and students benefit from sustained educational gains (5.6, 5.10). According to the Independent Evaluation (for the funders), schools feel *RT* is deeply transformative, enhancing pupil engagement, giving students a creative outlet, and improving well-being (5.10). Teachers report that vocalization and communication have improved – students now know that if they say something, they will be listened to (due to the mirroring effect). This was especially compelling for blind students who experienced ‘tactile feedback’ (5.10). Parents relate that young people showed improved mood, wellbeing, and concentration with ongoing use of *RT* (5.10). Representative examples of positive pupil outcomes include: 1) a child making sound for one of the only times in their relationship with their teacher; 2) a child using eye contact for the first time; 3) a tactile defensive student reaching out for a musical instrument; 4) another using *RT*’s orbs, and 5) ‘turn taking, sharing, listening and being comfortable in proximity to each other’ (5.10). In each case, these successes were directly attributed to *RT* (5.6, 5.10).

### New curatorial, artistic and educational practices

*The VT* and *Uluzuzulalia* stretched the aesthetic and participatory boundaries of children in theatrical and museum settings, allowing for new forms of artistic expression. The artworks informed practitioner strategies and innovative venue programming (5.1, 5.4). For the organisations and producers with whom Bonenfant collaborated, it was typically the first time they had developed a project of this nature (5.2), that encouraged children ‘to explore the voice in exciting new directions’ ‘without making them feel they had to “sing” or “sound beautiful’ (5.4).

As concluded in the independent report for funders, *RT*’s project outcomes were strongly met at each school, with ‘teachers and parents eager to tell me about the effectiveness of *RT* (5.10). Staff found it helped with inclusivity, integration, attention and relationships (5.10). As one teacher at Victoria School said to the evaluator, “We [teachers] are the most valuable resource. *Resonant Tails* enhances that value” (5.10). It has provided a whole new model for art-making *with* children in high-needs environments that needs no prior training. Teachers use *RT* at every opportunity, including to complement learning targets, curriculum activities and teaching core skills (turn taking, proximity to others, cause and effect, touching, sensing, listening), and has been included in individual pupil learning targets – becoming completely embedded (5.7, 5.10).

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

## Impact case study (REF3)

- 5.1: Representative of Winchester Science Centre
- 5.2: Wellcome Trust funder report
- 5.3: <http://yourvivaciousvoice.com/learning/>
- 5.4: Senior representative of The Point, Eastleigh
- 5.5: <https://www.tractandtough.com/resonant-tails>
- 5.6: [Redacted] Evaluation report for Resonant Tails.
- 5.7: Letter from senior representative of Rosewood Free School
- 5.8: Headline Findings of Resonant Tails, Report for funders
- 5.9: Audience figures for Uluzuzulalia and Voice Trunk
- 5.10: Independent Report for funders