

“Caring with, voice and under-represented expressions of love in and through *The Undefined* by She Goat : An artist-researcher’s perspective”

Eugénie Pastor, with input from Shamira Turner

Introduction

I am a researcher and artist, and since 2014, I have been one half of performance company She Goat. In December 2019, we premiered our second theatre piece *The Undefined* at Camden People’s Theatre, in London, UK, which aimed to explore and give a place, sonically and theatrically, to under-represented or misunderstood forms of love and relationship arrangements. The piece, and its process, were born out of mine and my collaborator Shamira Turner’s personal lives as well as of a desire to create a space, for the duration of each performance, where ambivalence, nuance and slippery feelings could co-exist and where audiences could reflect on the under-represented relationships in their lives. One of the stimuli behind the making of the piece was a desire to continue to find ways for Shamira and I to be together at times where we were feeling increased pressure on our relationships, with each other and with others, and a latent expectation that we should categorise and hierarchise them.

The piece takes the form of a dream-like radio show, with a focus on voice, speech, and original music. This radio format, put into a theatre context, was one way we had found in the creative process to incorporate audio-description in our performative language, from the early stages of the show’s development. This choice enabled us to make the piece

inherently accessible to visually-impaired audiences, rather than this aspect of the work being added retroactively. We experimented with audio-description in consultation with Maria Oshodi, artistic director of Extant, 'the UK's leading professional performing arts company of visually impaired artists and theatre practitioners' (Extant 2021) and the piece was awarded Extant Enhance mark.¹ This dimension was essential to Shamira and I, as we felt that, at the time at least, the offer of work accessible to visually-impaired audiences from small-scale experimental companies was sparse. Integrating audio-description also afforded a performative language that echoed the intentions of the work in that it permitted ambiguity, especially in the way our relationship is defined – 'queer platonia' being one possible term for it – and in the way we speak about forms of love and loving that do not have a name, or whose name restricts our understanding of them. On another level, and an acknowledged motivation behind the making of the piece, creating and performing the show together was also a way to explore our love for each other and give it a place on the stage and in a wider societal conversation. We did so through one of the trademarks of our work: the use of singing, especially close harmonies that contribute to blurring the sonic delineation between our two voices. Combined with our use of audio-description, voice is used in *The Undefinable* as a tool that carves out, sonically and thematically, a space for under-represented expressions of love to be felt, crystallizing our exploration of the love that binds us.

In the next few pages, I will draw on my embodied, lived experience of the making and the performing of *The Undefinable* to argue that this physical and vocal co-presence constitutes an act of care towards each other and our audience. It opens up a space for us

to be together, with feelings and ways of describing them that, for once, do not need to be labelled or defined. I am inspired here to use a term introduced by Bojana Kunst that offers a framework within which to hold what is at stake in *The Undefinable*. Kunst calls for a 'dimension of care' which she terms 'the practice of *caring with*'. (Kunst 2020) *Caring with* is defined as 'the attendance to others', which Kunst argues is 'scarce' and is hard to sustain due to the 'accelerated professionalization of the artistic work and the instability of the institutional surroundings in which' it is developed and shared. (Kunst 2020) In this respect, how we worked together was a way of *caring with*: a means of challenging the making and sharing of work that is inherently violent towards artists and audiences in their commodification of time spent together, and to enact this *caring with* through our moving, touching, speaking, singing bodies and through the additional layer of audio-description.

As will become clear in the next few pages, the interconnectedness of our relationship is at the heart of She Goat as a company, and of *The Undefinable* as a piece of work. Before I go further however, I would like to pause on the fact that while talking about this interconnectedness, I am authoring this piece alone. The question of unpaid labour is one we constantly come up against, as the necessity of working for free or for low pay is endemic in the sector we work in. Alongside She Goat, Shamira works as a successful actor and as a highly skilled arts producer, I work part-time as a lecturer at a university. This research is part my job and is to an extent supported by the salary I get from the university, which Shamira, as a freelancer, doesn't get. However, it felt important and consistent with our collaboration to offer Shamira a space to voice her views. When I shared a draft with her, Shamira said this: 'I felt compelled to have an interactive experience while reading, as it

felt like a conversation I was present in, so I followed this impulse and added comments for you to read me chipping in or responding'. We have decided to leave these asides and additions in the body of the text, included as text highlighted in bold, a way, as Shamira said, of

bringing multiplicity to this 'academic' context: output harmonises with process.

In this regard, we are enacting a practice of *caring with*, in ways which I hope will become clearer in the next few pages

I will start by presenting *The Undefinable*, and how its creation is mirrored by the way She Goat was formed and operates today. This will lead me to speak briefly about my relationship with Shamira and to reflect on how it is an essential underpinning of both the company and this piece of work. I will then explore how the making and performing of *The Undefinable*, and the logistical and practical decisions that motivated it, feed into an act of gentle resistance to dominant ways of working together: an expression of our desire to *care with*. I then move on to exploring how audio-description first, then sung voice, allow a sharing of what these forms of love are like, or feel like, in a way that is embodied, rather than labelled. In doing so, I will use scholarship on voice and on music as vibrational practice. Finally, I will close with some thoughts on the form that *The Undefinable* took during the Covid-19 lockdown, reimagined and expanded into a new audio-only version, which we released as a 6-part podcast miniseries, and question whether this aural space can

function in a way similar to the physical space of the performance, asking whether our recorded voices can provide a similarly safe exploratory space for audiences. I will suggest how the way the piece was made, centring around care for oneself and for each other, and who for, with accessibility at its heart through audio-description, which also became an artistic language of love in itself, as well as through the fact that the radio format suggests the idea of reaching out to potentially solitary underdogs, contribute to creating ways of *caring with* in the theatre, forming temporary communities brought together in our exploration of all that love is and can be.

The Undefinable as a practice of 'caring with' (Kunst 2020)

1. The birth of She Goat

The Undefinable emerged out of a two-year development period as She Goat's second show. Our first piece, *DoppelDanger* (2015), had come out of a desire to interrogate and playfully further confuse a pattern that had been recurring in our lives ever since the first days we met in the summer of 2009: the fact that many people, in eerily large numbers and on a bemusing number of occasions, would mistake us for one another. This would range from thinking we were siblings or even twins, to believing we were one and the same person, not two distinct beings. At times, when corrected, an interlocutor would then go on to ask if we were lovers. This confusion would happen to acquaintances, close friends, strangers, audience members, collaborators, it would happen while we were on stage, in character, or off, as ourselves. After years of, in turn, finding the confusion amusing or

exasperating, depending on what effect it seemed to have on our sense of self, belonging, adequacy, we decided to lean into the feeling and performatively explore what it could be.

These experiences created unique foundations for our relationship. Others compared or combined us, defined us in relation to each other. How would we respond? Have we re-claimed the narrative placed onto us... now owning, playing with, and even encouraging this 'doppelgänger' mythology within our She Goat identity?

Out of this came *DoppelDänger*, 'an exploration of dangerous doubling' (She Goat) which also marked the start of She Goat as a company in its own right. *The Undefinable* then led us to interrogate our aesthetics and modes of working while developing a company identity beyond the visuals and themes of *DoppelDänger*. As our first piece had directly emerged from real-life experiences, so were the motivations behind *The Undefinable* born out of what we were experiencing in our lives at the time.

Shamira and I met in early 2009, as I started working with the company Little Bulb Theatre which she had co-founded a year earlier.² From our ongoing collaboration in several Little Bulb shows and out of the constant mistaking of one for the other and the strange uncanny solidarity this created, came a strong and layered relationship. She Goat emerged from this relationship and continually invites us to rethink and shift the way we are with each other, which has involved an incredible amount of complex, shifting relational set-ups

that have encompassed devising together, making and playing music, living together, being close friends and feeling like siblings at times.

2. The making of *the Undefinable*

This is how Shamira describes *The Undefinable*, in an interview She Goat conducted with Duška Radosavljevic and Flora Pitrolo:

we're in this interdependent relationship ... sonically, and with the text we're constantly supporting each other, finishing each other's sentences, setting each other up for the next moment in terms of tech, helping with cueing each other up, chipping in. ... [I]t is something quite specific to what we crave in a kind of onstage relationship and the kind of work we want to make. ... [I]t is a two-person experience (Turner, *Auralia*)

The fact it 'is a two-person experience' is linked to the solidarity and complementarity we have developed with each other. The piece, the company and mine and Shamira's relationship intersect in ways that overflow neat or tidy delineations.³ Making and performing the show together was then also a way for us to explore what our love for each other is / was / will be,

and "would" or "could" be, with a sense of responsibility towards the future/fuelling of that love + what this love "does". Love as a verb,

and to give it a place on the stage and in a wider societal conversation. This was born out of a feeling of being erased, or talked over in conversations about what our present and future should be as we were entering our thirties. We would often feel at odds with the ways people around us had decided to live but would find a refuge in conversations we would have with each other, where it was possible to have space and time to voice the feelings of alienation or incomprehension we were experiencing. This feeling of not 'fitting in' was compounded by our working lives as artists, experiencing financial precarity and unusual working schedules at a time when friends or family around us would be moving in a different direction. Deciding to continue being an artist therefore also translated as continuing to have a different lifestyle to most of the people around us, working 'in flexible and instable ways' (Kunst 2020). In this respect, our physical co-presence in the performance space (and as I will show later, our vocal co-presence) constitutes a way of *caring with* towards each other, opening up a space for us to be together.

Working with love, loving our work: risks and precarity

1. *The Undefinable* as an attempt to *care with*

I would like to focus on one aspect of Kunst's definition of *caring with*, and argue that what we do with *The Undefinable* extends this practice into our ways of working and being.

Reflecting on the lockdowns brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic at the end of April 2020, Kunst elaborates on what she terms the *right* care, which she argues was what we were

then collectively performing: 'being *right*, being up to the measure'. (2020)⁴ But as Kunst explains:

while we were performing the skills of the *right* care, we also radically abandoned another dimension of care, the practice of *caring with*. *Caring with* in the attendance to others, ... this kind of caring radically collapsed already some time ago. (Kunst 2020)

Kunst argues that we can see this collapse 'in our exhausted environment, in our political and economic solutions, but also in our precarious micro-relations, where the time for *caring with* is scarce, because we work so relentlessly for our (calcul)able future'. (2020) Kunst emphasises how the *right* care creates some of the imbalances that make the work of artists so difficult: 'many current precarious professions and precarious institutional surroundings in arts originate from this shift in the notion and experience of care'. Kunst explains that this shift 'does not mean that the hierarchies, inequalities, and violent power relationships do not continue in this, more involved, caring and affective way of making art'. In this context, the possibilities of *caring with* seem forever further away from reach, especially since, as Kunst states, 'many of you work in flexible and instable ways, you belong to the precarious forms of life, ... familiar with the hierarchies, exclusions, and power relations, continuing with all their forces inside the call for the imagination', when 'there should really be no obstacles to our imagination, the performance is a space of imagination of a better world and living, an unexpected, rich, and poetic practice of reciprocity and entanglement'. (2020) The final call from

Kunst, then, is for artists to imagine different ways of making performance, without the relentless productivity and professionalisation of our work. What Shamira and I attempted to do when making *The Undefinable*, with gentle timelines to begin with, a commitment to prioritising our wellbeing and our relationship over being productive, in our desire to be transparent and ethical with our collaborators, and to open up this space for audiences at the time of the performance, echoes Kunst's invitation to experiment 'with, and searching for, other modes of working, ... collaborating and building a practice together'. (2020) This feels particularly poignant as the pressures placed on this act of collaboration, and of 'building a practice together', feel sometimes unsurmountable.

2. Generosity and collaboration

Elsewhere, in the book *Artist at Work*,

which I have on my bedside table because you bought it for me,

Kunst quotes choreographer Eleanor Bauer, who explains that 'in a neo-collective or post-collective model, the artists that remain in pro-community engagement must maintain a highly individual-oriented strength and productivity while remaining connected to the world and to each other.' (Kunst 2015: 80) Bauer notes however, as many artists working now in the UK might, that such a definition is 'ambitious considering what it requires in terms of time and energy, and generosity of course'. (Kunst 2015: 80) Generosity is a useful term

here: there is a desire to be generous with our audience in the way we approach our subject matter in *The Undefinable*, and in how much of ourselves and our relationship we give in the process; but being generous in performance has consequences off-stage too, in what it requires in terms of energy and commitment. As Bauer notes, while this generosity is a condition of working collaboratively in the socio-economic contexts within which artists operate today in the UK, and while as Kunst notes, it is expected of the artist, it places us at risk of further exploitation as 'it is precisely [our] extra time and energy that are demanded from [us].' (Kunst 2015: 79)⁵. Underlying these demands is the expectation that artists will not mind gifting time and energy because they *love* their work. There seems to be a commonly accepted idea that a labour of love does not need to also be paid labour.

These points unfortunately resonate greatly. This paradox, and the Sisyphean effort required in order to pursue deep forms of collaborations, some which do not neatly fit expectations or definitions of work, co-creation, relationships and love, are continually felt by Shamira and I, and the immense pressures that our collaborative approach within a system that constantly undermines such practices place on us take their toll. This also has the potential of hurting the very love that is at the heart of our collaborative effort. The constant pressure and demand that we be 'generous' within a system that continually makes such generosity precarious and commodifies it, always runs the risk of destroying the fragile, living equilibrium we are constantly re-imagining in the ways we work together, in the work we make, and how we share it.

Another way in which this risk is real is through what Kunst calls the 'merger' of art and life, which 'underlies the capitalisation of human powers and their exploitation for the

generation of profit' (2015: 176). There is a risk of us capitalising on our lives as a way of making every instant productive, of countering that terrible accusation of 'laziness' which Kunst identifies as being at the core of society's disdain towards artists and the internalised accusations we have learned to pre-empt and work hard to counter – often at the expense of our wellbeing. The risk in this, Kunst suggests, is that the artist 'loses any critical power to hold up a mirror to the true layabouts at the core of the capitalist system' (2015: 187), presumably by partly playing its game. But finding ways out of the game while having to partake in it to ensure one's survival as an artist - Kunst points out, rightly, that in a capitalist society, an artist is only an artist when they produce art, not in and of themselves (2015: 187) - seems, from where I am writing, a fairly impossible task. The irony is not lost here: I am an artist and academic trying to write in a way that *cares with* about a show that *cares with* while feeling how much of my 'generosity' this act demands – due to the fact that a lot of my work continues to be done at the expense of rest, or for free, always at risk of burning out. One of the gentle ways *The Undefinable* resists this is by harnessing our generosity – towards audiences, the work and its subject matter, each other – while finding pockets of resistance. While our relationship in *The Undefinable* blurs the boundary between art and life, some of it remains unsaid, un-shown, disguised, as we decided we would keep some secrets to ourselves but share others, discussing and deciding on these in the quiet of our rehearsal room at the times when it was just the two of us there, playfully weaving truths and half-truths within the script of the work we were making. What this process affords is a way of protecting ourselves and our relationship, as well as resisting the forces that make the making and performing of art an exhausting and all-encompassing activity.

The 'show' as a deadline and paid development time also importantly allows us to *have* our relationship. We create space, context, and commitment (even a schedule!) to work/be together.

In this way, we perform a state of being that shifts and morphs, not in transit or in flux, not on its way somewhere or towards some definition, but instead, being what it *is*, for us and for the audience, in the time of the performance. In this way, we intend to 'confirm... what Puig de la Bellacasa writes: that the burnout, anxiety, etc., do not have to be the only way to care' (Kunst 2020), instead following Kunst's suggestion that

there is so much joy in experimenting with, and searching for, other modes of working, shifting and distributing the value of [our] work..., collaborating and building a practice together ... ; there is so much joy in writing and thinking in a more *caring with* way. (Kunst 2020)

Audio-description as a way of voicing the undefined

These ways of being and working with each other open up a space for less represented forms of love to be explored. As I will explore in the next few pages, it is through words and sound, especially our voices, that this can happen. It is also fitting to explore what expressing one's voice, in this context, can mean, especially because of the way our work complicates autobiography as I have suggested above. I will start by concentrating on

words, and how these are at the heart of the question of what is or not *un-definable*: what do words say, how, with what terms, and what evades them and remains unsaid?

When we remounted *DoppelDanger* to take it on tour in 2018, we worked on creating an audio-described introduction to the piece, as well as a pre-show touch tour, but with *The Undefinable*, we wanted audio-description to be a creative tool in its own right. Another key element was the music we played, unlikely cover songs and our own compositions, and finding a dramaturgical framework that would support both live music within a theatrical context⁶ and audio description. This led us to explore radio and its tropes. In this context, our use of audio-description became extensive and playful: the two hosts are addressing each other as well as their listeners (real or imagined), and so describe their surroundings as well as their actions as they perform them.

Audio description becomes an act of care to the listener and each other. It feels unnatural at first but has become habitual in how we communicate as a duo off-stage now too. Our first time out 'in public' together this year I noticed we were narrating our actions to each other. Have we always been this way? Or has the performative language we crafted infused our personal interactions?

The need to clearly delineate, in our description, the slippages between the different personae that we adopt on stage meant working with modulating and altering our voices, as well as the difference between speaking 'on mic' and speaking 'off mic'. These changes in

timbre, modulations, intonations, amplification and to an extent, our perceived gender in the way we used voice, allowed subtle changes in our relationship on stage to be heard, whether they were shown or not. It was a way to voice the *undefinable* nature of this relationship, without needing to label it, but on an experiential, phenomenological level. It was also a way for us to explore an autobiographical dimension to the work, while layering and complicating it with personae. In this respect, it is not obvious for anyone outside of the relationship between Shamira and I which parts are autobiographical, and which are not – or not fully. Integrated within the sonic and verbal world of the show are secrets only we know, another way for us to be together in that moment. Like the secrets we opted not to tell, the ways we voice throughout *The Undefinable* is both a way of *caring with* and resisting the demands that we be generous with our lives when making art.

Another function of audio-description in *The Undefinable* is to open up layers of meaning through an interplay between the description and the way we modulate our voices, or the timings of songs or asides. Audio-description becomes what Maria Oshodi and Amelia Carvallo call an important ‘storytelling tool for everyone, sighted or otherwise, as it offers imagery and depth to the performance.’ (Oshodi and Carvallo 2017: 178) This echoes what Electa S. Behrens, in an article on devising a voice practice with drama students, argues ‘can work almost like film’ in that it allows shifts that instead of affecting the ‘physical scenography’ of the piece become ‘the imaginative film in the mind’s eye/ear’. (Behrens 2019: 401) What audio description affords in *The Undefinable* is the opening up of spaces where what remains unsaid or undefined can exist, specifically because it is expressed through the mediums of sound and voice. Audio description requires from

audience members that they listen, an activity which Lynne Kendrick, drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's definition, allows 'an engagement in and with ... substance and depth.' (Kendrick 2017: 122). Kendrick suggests that 'one of the tenets of this is that listening can liberate the subject from understanding the world as it is, instead moving towards new versions of what it might be' (126), taking us 'towards meaning which exists outside of our sphere of knowledge, in relation to other voices yet to be encountered, to sounds hitherto ignored and, arguably, beyond the world we consider to be the same'. (126) Audio-description as we voice it in *The Undefinable* invites the audience to listen to ways of being together, of loving each other and of working together, ways of *caring with*, that are otherwise unimagined. This is made all the more powerful that this layering happened in a state of physical co-presence, where the audience shared a physical space with us. In the following paragraphs, I explore what sharing a physical space in this way allowed our voices, through song, to create, in our attempt to explore experiences of love which do not necessarily have –

have, or want, or need

a name yet.

Singing close harmonies: whose voice is whose?

The Undefinable contains a lot of music, most of it performed live, with some tracks played from recordings.⁷ The audio-description, the text and music almost are almost all mediated

through our voices. A key dimension of our work is the use of close sung harmonies. When working on *DoppelDanger*, we wrote our music in this way to convey a sense of doubling or merging together, a means of echoing sonically the themes we were exploring in the piece. This paralleled the fact that our voices can feel comfortable across a similar range and we share vocal techniques we adopted, hijacked or repurposed to explore gendered or a-gendered vocalisations. In an article on voice training, Konstantinos Thomaidis explores an idea in relation to hearing and monitoring one’s own voice that sheds an illuminating perspective on what I feel is happening when Shamira and I are singing in this way – and I argue that this is another instance where the in-betweenness of certain states of love that we explore on stage can be felt. Thomaidis’ analysis is concerned with the idea of presence, or rather, the fact that this striving for presence in the act of ‘voicing’ is complicated by the acts of ‘voicing’ and hearing: they are ‘potentially ... contradictory ways of thinking about presence’ (2018: 4). This is due to the ‘micro-phenomenal experience of voicing’ which ‘sets into motion a shift in emphasis towards its embodied future and past’ due to the feedback loop that happens between the muscular proprioceptive awareness required to vocalise and the act of hearing oneself once the voice has been uttered. (2018: 4) In Thomaidis’ terms: ‘voicing in front of an audience engages with an understanding of voice as an in-between, as equally pertaining to the moment of production and the moment of reception’. (2018: 6) Thomaidis, quoting laryngologists D. Garfield Davies and Anthony F. Jahn, writes: ‘the voice produced by the singer is constantly being monitored in two ways: by audition and by proprioception’. (2004: 19, in Thomaidis, 2018). This means that ‘the voicer listens to the pitch, volume and timbre of the auditory outcome through acoustic feedback from the space and, further, relies on physical, vibratory sensation engendered by voicing within the

body' (2018: 8). Thomaidis explains later that this 'proprioceptive self-experiencing' of one's own voice happens 'in the moment following phonation', in the question to oneself: '*did this feel right?*', but also in the 'proprioceptive sensation of prephonatory onset', (2018: 8) in the way one activates one's muscles prior to emitting a sound.

This definition of self-listening by Thomaidis finds echoes in the way Shamira and I work: singing close harmonies requires a certain level of self-listening, as well as listening to the other, in order to check that it sounds (and feels) *right*.

We build harmonies through instinct, trial and error, rather than checking what the notes could or should be... to find idiosyncratic "She Goaty" choices.

As Thomaidis suggests, this is not an exact science once the voice has been uttered, and it is further complicated by the fact that should one of us feel like her harmony is not sounding *right*, she might start altering it in a way that leads the other to also alter hers. There is no third ear in the room when we are devising or rehearsing, and by the time we are performing, any changes to the composition or pitching will have to happen while also believing that what comes out of us is how it should sound. In this lies an act of trust and a loving act of care: trusting that we will have each other's vocal back. This act of self-listening and listening to the other simultaneously is further complicated by the closeness of the harmonies we are singing and the timbre we are singing them with: we both experience uncanny moments, which we have learned to feel comfortable in, where we cannot for

certain delineate whose voice is whose. The feedback loop between the muscular proprioception of knowing I am vocalising is complicated by the fact that I am not sure who I am hearing back. This is made even stronger when our voices are amplified through speakers located away from where our voices feel, to us, like they are originating. This leads to an uncanny experience of self-othering, but also of sonically becoming the other person singing with me in the room, and of singing in 'one voice'.

I'm recalling this uncanny sensation and blurring happening in the spoken text too.

Sometimes we end up swapping lines, discovering ourselves saying the other's lines in the relentless back and forth 'score' of the co-created script, before getting back onto the *right* track. ... We share custody of the sound and text.

This experience of self-othering and other-othering, instead of being distressing, is actually comforting: it offers an audible representation of the solidarity, the love, and the complicity that unite Shamira and I, in the moment of performance and beyond it as well, in a way that cannot be fully discerned by the audience – I am not sure they always know who is singing which part either, or that they are fully distinguishing the two voices from one another at times – and, importantly, in ways that cannot be dismissed or taken away: they are a way for us to *care with* each other in a violent neo-liberal context that makes the conjoining of two artistic entities in deep and sustainable ways extremely difficult or impossible. There is something, in the moment where our voices merge, that belongs solely to Shamira and I; it

is a way of being physically intimate with each other, in a way that could be described as 'queerplatonic'.⁸

Music as vibration

In her book *Sensing Sound*, Nina Sun Eidsheim proposes that 'not only aurality but also tactile, spatial, physical, material, and vibrational sensations are at the core of all music'. (Eidsheim 2015: 8) Eidsheim suggests we can understand music as 'nonstatic, not limited to the aural sense and dimension', concluding that 'music is the practice of vibration' (155). Eidsheim also specifies that music understood this way is 'relational' (6), coming 'into being through an unfolding and dynamic material set of relations'. (10) This claim feels particularly relevant here to exploring the ripples that sound in *The Undefinable* makes, in carving a space for Shamira and mine's togetherness to be heard, and for slippery unnamed feelings to be voiced, especially so because sound is uttered and heard in a space of co-presence. Thinking of the performative event through this lens is meaningful: if as Eidsheim writes 'vibrations that enter my body are transmitted by and through the body at the very point in time that I sense it' (155) then there is something inherently unique to each performance. There is also the suggestion that, through our collective presence in the room, there is the emergence of a vibrational community: if sound is relational, then the sounds created on a specific night are unique to the collection of people through whom it vibrated. In this respect, there is a physical, vibrational dimension through which the intention of the show is realised and activated. Each iteration of the show carves out a unique space where we, as

a collective of people in a room, can spend time with feelings, thoughts, ideas, vibrations that resist meanings and labels.

Eidsheim also suggests that because we understand music as strongly linked to ‘the figure of sound’, it ‘pulls us towards certain ways of experiencing and naming sounds and limits our access to other ways’ (2015: 7). The consequence of this is that ‘we are not entirely free to experience sound idiosyncratically or to experiment unrestrictedly with that experience beyond agreed-on names and meanings’. (2015: 7) This latter idea resonates with both the intention and the hoped-for outcome of *The Undefinable*: that by questioning the way we use our voices that are simultaneously our own,

(and with this: I notice that my “own” voice isn’t even a fixed point. It shifts and slides in pitch, timbre, (age?) and vocal quality responding to my internal and external world – sometimes revealing or betraying my feelings before my ‘brain’ seeks to interpret them. This is further complicated by putting myself on stage. My voice is ‘employed’ to work; it is sometimes overworked),

simultaneously our character voices, singing voices, audio-describers, and a complement to each other, we allow such an experience of sound in the show to uncover a shared experience ‘beyond agreed-on names and meanings’ (Eidsheim 2015: 7). It allows a way of voicing the undefined.

Sharing a space through audio only

At the heart of *The Undefinable* is a desire to provide a space and a time for a group of people to let themselves feel ways of doing love differently that many of us will have experienced at times, without having a name for them. In doing so, it incorporated the bond Shamira and I share, and placed our desire to *care with* at the core of our process by looking for ways of being and making work together at a time where the very existence of that endeavour was antithetical to the pressures placed on us. In doing so, we have hoped to extend this act of *caring with* to the audiences sharing a time and a space with us, and we have been thinking in performance through ways of working and community-building in order to afford care, love and representation in contexts where these are hard to access. Using voice and audio-description enabled a phenomenological understanding of what alternative ways of doing love could be, by becoming the place where what Thomaidis has called 'logos-as-language' and vocalization as meaning-making (2015: 18) are joined. I have argued how this act of meaning-making through words, as well as through voice and the self-othering it invites, are further helped when we think of voice in *The Undefinable* as a way of creating a vibrational community through whom unnamed forms of love can be felt and explored. In so doing, the piece gives aural and physical space for the forms of love that elude definition. To conclude, I would like to think about how these aspects are differently complicated when in an audio-only set up, as is the case for *The Undefinable* as a 6-part audio art series. The appeal of the radio format was also to reach out to potentially solitary underdogs, creating communities of listeners across the airwaves and enabling anyone to

tune in without having to reveal anything about themselves. We liked the idea of transposing this into theatres and creating similar communities of care there, centred around the idea of love. The audio-only version of the show has the potential of reaching far beyond the confines of a theatre building and including anyone for whom accessing a theatre space is complicated. This was also echoed in the partner project to *The Undefinable: the Curious Hearts Song Club*, where communities of care were created around the sharing of songs and personal histories in carefully curated Zoom 'listening parties' (She Goat, website). Through these endeavours, She Goat hopes to continue to *care with*, in spite of all the ways this is made near impossible, to open up

liminal and interactive spaces

about 'the unknown future and forgotten past of doing love differently' (She Goat, website).

¹ On Extant’s website, the Enhance process is explained as a ‘bespoke consultation on the best creative ways to integrate appropriate aesthetic audio description in [a] production’. (Extant)

² With Alexander Scott, Clare Beresford and Dominic Conway, later joined by Miriam Gould and Tom Penn.

³ It is evident that our work within Little Bulb, and the ‘collective intimacy’ I have argued elsewhere this produced for members of the company (Pastor 2019: 206), played a part in the shared intimacy between Shamira and I.

⁴ Which Kunst suggests still came with the need ‘to give at least a feeling of relentless productivity (in work and in leisure)’ (2020)

⁵ Time and energy that, as Bauer notes, are not always paid for, thus perpetuating unsustainable patterns of work and art-making (Kunst 2015: 80).

⁶ This is a recurring concern of our work and can be traced to pieces with Little Bulb, where live music in a show is always justified by a fictional framework that explains why the performers or the characters are playing music, i.e.: a gig (*Operation Greenfield*), a cabaret-opera (*Orpheus*), a TED talk that is a performance art experiment (*The Future*), for example.

⁷ Launched from the stage by Shamira or I: almost all sounds are launched from an Ableton PUSH, a black pizza box-shaped machine with squares that flash when they are played.

⁸ The term ‘queerplatonic’ was first brought to my attention by Shamira when we were making *The Undefinable*, in Summer 2019.

I first encountered it through the “Multiamory Podcast” and that ‘it seems the term was first coined in 2010. I remember using Urban Dictionary to check on the definition. Urban dictionary can be a strong indicator of emerging terminology being shaped by the people who seek terms that don’t ‘exist’ yet:

<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=queerplatonic>.

In *the Undefinable*, we borrow the Urban Dictionary's definition and refer to it as describing 'a relationship which is more intense and intimate than is considered common or normal for a "friendship", but doesn't fit the traditional sexual-romantic couple model' (*Urban Dictionary*).