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Voiced Gender Signifiers Within 'As One' A Chamber Opera Annotated Bibliography

Abstract:

'As One', a popular modern chamber opera by composer Laura Kaminsky, presents the transition of transgender woman, Hannah. Hannah, however, is casted and composed as two separate voices, a baritone and mezzo-soprano, thus creating "Hannah before" and "Hannah after". In doing so, a dichotomy of thought surrounding the attributes of a binary based practice of vocalization and character representation is created. Through the analysis of gender theory, voiced gender theory, and the 'As One' chamber opera, storytelling of complex gender-based characters may be solidified within biased gender compositional and musical tools. In discovering these repetitive actions through socially constructed stereotypes and historical opera practices, recognition of gendered practices of composition, understandings of their usage within given performances, and the adaptation of these patterns may be used to invoke powerful yet inclusive future productions and compositions.

Azul, David. "How Do Voices Become Gendered? A Critical Examination of Everyday and Medical Constructions of the Relationship Between Voice, Sex, and Gender Identity." In *Challenging Popular Myths of Sex, Gender and Biology*, 77–88. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2013.

Speech pathologist and lecturer at La Trobe University, Dr. David Azul, challenges the relationship between voice and genders traditional conceptualization through the means of a medical and theoretical perspective. By moving the understanding of the voice as a sexed organ to a means of gender communication, through complex performed "meaning-making practices", the voice may be understood through a less narrow concept of sex and gender. Transgendered individuals, and their vocal practices, are not directly investigated but are related to voiced gender conforming concepts and practices.

Babajanians, Tina. "Give Voice to Gender Expression." *ASHA leader* 24, no. 2 (2019): 54-63.

Transgender vocal therapy for transgender women is explained as well as pitched by speech-language pathologist, and founder of *The Vocal Stylist*, Tina Babajanians. By understanding "how [the] voice goes beyond mere "sound" and runs deeper into our emotions and identity" transgender women can reach their goal for a feminine voice through "communication feminization therapy". Furthermore, understanding the relationship between pitch, body language, and gendered language presenters, one can obtain their true female voice. However, by exploring these language behaviors, gender may be divided into two factions of male and female speech tendencies thus enforcing the destructive social vocal binary.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1988, p. 519., doi:10.2307/3207893.

Judith Butler, American philosopher and gender theorist, alludes to the acts of socially constructed norms that thereby inhibit human gender practices. In the examination of the ways gender is constructed through specific corporeal acts, performativity proclaims that the act of gender must be a "reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation". While voiced gender is almost disputed by Butler, "individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes" allowing for gender theory to be realized as a presentation of constructed norms and not driven by biological sex.

Cooke, Sasha and Kelley Markgraf, "As One." Produced by The American Opera Project in Brooklyn, NY. The American Opera Project Video. <https://www.aopopera.org/as-one-video>

The American Opera Project's production of "As One" provides an actuality to the living score of Laura Kaminsky's composition. As the premier performance, this production contains the original "Hannah before" and "Hannah after" intended by Laura herself. Additionally, the film was created by co-librettist Kimberly Reed. Thus, the authenticity of the production, as it is the premier, holds great value towards the presentation of this modern story. Analysis is obtained through auditory and visual observations crossed with voiced gender discourse.

Kaminsky, Laura. *As One*, libretto by Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed. Bill Holab Music, Brooklyn, NY, 2014.

The score of "As One" by composer Laura Kaminsky contains the musical story of 'Hannah before' and 'Hannah after'. Within this publication, the two voiced, two bodied, transgender character is described through musical phrases, melodic contours, and the libretto by Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed. The analysis of the score may present gender based musical decisions to coincide with the male and female based character designs. Gendered voice discourse is only obtained through analysis and not directly quoted or prescribed within the piece.

Lagos, Danya. "Hearing Gender: Voice-Based Gender Classification Processes and Transgender Health Inequality." *American sociological review* 84, no. 5 (2019): 801–827.

Gender classification, through the means of voice based factors, directly corresponds to transgender health inequality. Dr. Danya Lagos, assistant professor of sociology at UC Berkeley, defines the role of "[passing] or the successful concealing that one is transgender and appearing to be cisgender" to contribute to the overall health of transgender individuals. By doing so, voice gendered stereotypes are implemented to aid in the solidification of one's identity through performative act. Music, and its involvement with identity, points to the role of sounds and experiences that relate to meaning-making, expressive acts, unreflective processes, and expressive movements. Transgender representation through the means of voice presentation is not spoken to within the article, but transgender voice themes and practices are reenforced.

Penzell, Sarah L. "Gender-Affirming Voice." In *Multidisciplinary Management of Pediatric Voice and Swallowing Disorders*, 477–484. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019.

"Gender-Affirming Voice" by Sarah Penzell, an assistant clinical professor at Northwestern University, explains the expanding field of transgender healthcare including the work of speech-language pathologists (SPLs). Within their roles as healthcare providers, SPLs provide support for transgender, transexual, and gender non-conforming individuals. Through this support they have been able to focus on the transgender woman's vocal therapy and the achievement of "female" qualifying attributes such as: "feminine intonation (greater pitch contours, forward-focused resonance, relaxed and aligned posture, and...abdominal-diaphragmatic breathing)". Additionally, adolescent study is addressed as a growing field with the increase in need for SLP services for transgender and gender-expansive children.

Schlichter, Annette. "Do Voices Matter? Vocality, Materiality, Gender Performativity." *Body & Society* 17, no. 1 (2011): 31–52.

The importance of voice within the theory of performative gender is proclaimed by associate professor of comparative literature Dr. Annette Schlichter. In doing so, Dr. Schlichter disputes Judith Butler's understanding of the performative body as she "denaturalizes gender identity [with] her thinking of the gendered body remains bound to a 'natural' body". Therefore "gender differences in the use of the voice, such as pitch and timber" additionally believed to affect the performativity of gender through the actualization of vocalization. The understanding and definition of vocal gender is defended but not directly defined through examples of vocal performance. For instance, the use of feminized linguistic techniques or masculine vocal processes.

Sherman, Samuel. "The Voice of Androgyny: A Gender Analysis of the Countertenor Within Opera". Undergraduate Thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2021.

Voiced gender and its relation to voice classification, opera, and gender theory is explored through the modern countertenor. Samuel Sherman, a countertenor and student at the Lamont School of Music, presents that the definition of the countertenor may be adjusted to provide inclusivity within the vocal arts through the means of non-gender conforming practices of the countertenor voice type. Transgender individuals are not directly referenced within the definition proposition but are included within individuals whose voice types may not be represented by their physical gender presentation.

Steven, Mark. "'As One' Opera Explores Transgender Experience." *Knight-Ridder/Tribune Business News*. Chicago: Tribune Content Agency LLC, 2018.

Mark Steven, journalist for the Tribune Content Agency in Chicago, captures the importance of Opera Hawaii's performance of 'As One'. Husband and wife, Kelly Markgraf and Sasha Cooke, who premiered 'As One' in 2014, appear for the second time as "Hannah before" and "Hannah after" at HOT in 2018. Mark emphasizes the importance of sharing transgender

stories and how these stories have a universal effect on people “no matter their interest or knowledge of the issues”. Additionally, ‘As One’ is marked as a “revelation into gender behavior”. With that being said, gender based performative acts are rarely described within this review. Allowing for the understanding of “gender behavior” to be linked with the understanding of male, female, and the battle for accepting oneself.

Terry, Blain. “Two Voices, One Trans Character; Two Singers -- One Male, One Female -- Share the Role at the Heart of Skylark Opera’s ‘As One.’” *Star Tribune*. Minneapolis, Min: Star Tribune Media Company LLC, 2018.

Blain Terry, a freelance classical music critic for the Star Tribune, evaluates the reception of ‘As One’ as a transgender chamber opera. Public perspectives are heavily evaluated as the “not black or white” representation of society’s transgender understanding is explored upon stage. In doing so, Terry explains the premise of ‘As One’, why ‘As One’ was created, what ‘As One’ hopes to represent, as well as how ‘As One’ may change the understanding of transgender issues within the public eye. Unfortunately, gender confirmation through voiced gender is not presented as a limitation of current societal definitions but as a mean of positive self-identification.

Zimman, Lal. “Transgender Voices: Insights on Identity, Embodiment, and the Gender of the Voice: Transgender Voices.” *Language and Linguistics Compass* 12, no. 8 (2018): 1-16. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.du.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1111/lnc3.12284>

Transgender voices push the concept of gendered voice by revealing how assumptions upon women’s and men’s voices are understood within normative populations. Lal Zimman, from the linguistics department at the University of California, Santa Barbara, speaks on how vocal and social stereotypes are shaping gender differences such as the commonly understood “wider pitch range or more distinctive vowels” that are more commonly utilized by women’s voices. Additionally, what does a “female voice” or a “male voice” mean within determining gendered based characteristics of performative individuals. Unfortunately, gendered voice and its relation to musical practices are not expanded upon within this article.