

This is a transcript of Crystal VanKooten's webtext "Singer, Writer: A Choric Exploration of Sound and Writing" published in *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*, 21(1), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/21.1/inventio/vankooten/index.html>.

Singer, Writer: A Choric Exploration of Sound and Writing
by Crystal VanKooten
Video transcript

0:00 *Typewriter sound (audio excerpt from Shipka's "Stealing Sounds": loading paper, turning wheel, then typing letters.)*

Music: Brahms Requiem, movement 1 begins, instrumental

0:45 *Narrator:*

Thomas Rickert, Sarah Arroyo, and Jeff Rice all theorize the concept of *chora*. *Brahms lyrics, sung, begin: Selig Sind, die da lied tragen, den sie sollen getröstet werden. [Translation: Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.]*

Narrator:

Chora is place, space, dance, a dancing floor, invention, becoming, gathering, analogy, chance, collaboration. Chora is felt in the body, it's emotion, association, embodiment [...] *[overlapping narration]* Chora is memory, networking, movement. [...] sensation. It's mystical, physical, a beginning.

1. Connection

1:14 *Narrator:* I

sing, I write
Choric, connected
Embodied, Filled with emotion Together,
with others
I sing. I write. I
compose.

1:30 *Narrator:*

Brahms's "A German Requiem," is a large-scale choral and orchestral work. It was composed in the 1860s in German, and it has 7 movements.

Music: Brahms Requiem, movement 3 excerpt, with example of fugue singing. Lyrics: Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand und keine Qual rühret sie an.

[Translation: But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them.]

Narrator:

Brahms employs a fugue in several sections of "A German Requiem." A fugue is a

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a musical composition in which one or two themes are repeated or imitated by successively entering voices. These voices are developed through counterpoint, in a continuous interweaving of the voice parts.

2:00 *Mary Hocks:*

"Sound, unlike other modalities, has such a visceral, embodied quality because it bounces off surfaces and vibrates in our bones!" (Hocks & Shipka, 2013).

Jody Shipka:

"Oh my gosh! I never thought about this kind of juxtaposition before!" (Hocks & Shipka, 2013).

2:15 *Narrator:*

"One of chora's essential properties is its connectivity" (Rice, 2007, p. 35).

"The moods and memories recovered then link elsewhere through an unfolding and rhizomatic network of associations. They become moments, events, celebrations, and collaboration during which inventions then 'catch' and come into appearance" (Arroyo, 2013, p. 66).

2:36 *Narrator:*

We sing in layers, four parts come together to form a whole.
I hear myself: air and voice, vibrato,
And then I dissolve into the whole,
I blend, mesh, listen.

Music: Brahms Requiem, movement 3 excerpt. Narrator's singing voice is prominent.

Lyrics: Herr, lehre doch mich, daß ein Ende mit mir haben muß, und mein Leben ein Ziel hat, und ich davon muß.

[Translation: Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.]

2:54 *Narrator:*

The ability to link information, manipulate information easily,
[second electronic voice joins narrator, low register]
morph information, and so on lends itself to choral practices. Ulmer names this electronic writing practice

[third voice joins, medium register]

'chorography' and offers a set of instructions for how to be a chorographer:

'do not choose between the different meanings of key terms,

[fourth electronic voice joins, high register]

but compose by using all the meanings'" (Rice, 2007, p. 34).

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2. Body

3:20 *Sound: typewriter typing letters*

Narrator:

A *chorus* is the simultaneous utterance in singing, speaking, or shouting.

Mary Hocks and narrator together:

Sound, unlike other modalities, has such a visceral, embodied quality because it bounces off surfaces and vibrates in our bones! (Hocks & Shipka, 2013).

Jody Shipka and narrator together:

"Oh my gosh! I never thought about this kind of juxtaposition before!" (Hocks & Shipka, 2013).

3:39 *Narrator:*

In choir, we throw our hands and arms in the air,

We stand, we sit, we're told to sit up straight.

We make hand motions for vowels—"o" like a circle, "e" like a line.

Music: choir warming up and singing various excerpts from Brahms Requiem.

3:57 *Narrator:*

I write, seated, hands active.

The words scritch and click with keys, quiet

The sounds of my words hitting together, silent.

Sound: hands typing on laptop keyboard

Mary Hocks and electronic voice:

"Sound, unlike other modalities, has such a visceral, embodied quality because it bounces off surfaces and vibrates in our bones!" (Hocks & Shipka, 2013).

Jody Shipka and electronic voice:

"Oh my gosh! I never thought about this kind of juxtaposition before!"

(Hocks & Shipka, 2013).

4:26 *Narrator:*

"In the space of chora, the inventor will experience punctums of recognition, third meanings" (Arroyo, 2013, p. 66).

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3. Emotion

4:31 *Sound: typewriter typing letters*

Narrator, overlapping:

Chora is place, space, dance, a dancing floor, invention, becoming, gathering, analogy, chance, collaboration, felt in the body, emotion, association, embodiment, sensation, mystical, physical, a beginning, memory, networking, movement ...

Narrator:

I sing with tears, moved, expressive.

Listening to melodies, harmonies in combination.

Even in German, I feel; the music speaks.

Music: Brahms Requiem, movement 4 excerpt.

Lyrics: Meine seele verlanget und sehnet sich nach den Vorh fen des Herrn.

[Translation: My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord.]

Narrator:

I write with smiles and tears, moved

Fascinated by connection.

Even through sentences, I feel; words speak.

Mary Hocks, narrator, and electronic voice:

"Because it bounces off surfaces and vibrates in our bones!" (Hocks & Shipka, 2013).

Jody Shipka, narrator, and electronic voice:

"Oh my gosh! I never thought about this kind of juxtaposition before!"

(Hocks & Shipka, 2013).

4. Collaboration

5:18 *Sound: typewriter typing letters*

Narrator, overlapping:

A chord is the simultaneous sounding of a group of musical notes, usually three notes or more. So for example, [*sings 3 notes*], but they would all be sounded together to form a chord. A chord is also the line segment between two points in math. And finally, a chord can also be a feeling or emotion, as in "to strike a chord."

Narrator, overlapping:

Chora is place, space, dance, a dancing floor, invention, becoming, gathering, analogy, chance, collaboration, felt in the body, emotion, association, embodiment, sensation, mystical, physical, a beginning, memory, networking, movement ...

Narrator, overlapping:

A *chorus* is the simultaneous utterance in singing, speaking, or shouting.

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5:43 *Narrator*:

In choir, I can't sing alone – *we sing, we work, we tell the story.*

I hope for times when I forget about myself,

Clinging to, combining, joining.

Music (through ending): Brahms Requiem, movement I excerpt.

Lyrics: Selig Sind, die da lied tragen, den sie sollen getröstet werden.

[Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.]

I write, too, with others.

We write, we work, we tell the story.

I sing, I write

Choric, connected

Embodied, filled with emotion

Together, with others.

I sing. I write.

I compose.

Audio excerpt from Shipka's "Stealing Sounds" (student's voice):

It's all supposed to kind of connect to each other.

Audio excerpt from Shipka's "Stealing Sounds" (Jody Shipka's voice):

But how did you feel making these things or experiencing these things today?

Narrator, overlapping:

Chora is place, space, dance, a dancing floor, invention, becoming, gathering, analogy, chance, collaboration, felt in the body, emotion, association, embodiment, sensation, mystical, physical, a beginning.

Narrator, overlapping:

"In the space of chora, the inventor will experience punctums of recognition, third meanings" (Arroyo, 2013, p.66).

Narrator, overlapping:

"Things are messier" (Rickert, 2007, p. 263).

Jody Shipka, overlapping:

"Oh my gosh! I never thought about this kind of juxtaposition before!" (Hocks & Shipka, 2013).

Narrator, overlapping:

Chora is memory, networking, movement.

Narrator, overlapping:

"But compose by using all the meanings" (Rice, 2007, p. 34).

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Sound: pen writing "juxtaposition!" and underlining it twice, dropping the pen.

Narrator, overlapping:

Brahms employs a fugue in several sections of *A German Requiem*. A fugue is a musical composition in which one or two themes are repeated or imitated by successively entering voices. These voices are developed through counterpoint, in a continuous interweaving of the voice parts.

Narrator, overlapping:

Jody Shipka.

Mary Hocks.

Thomas Rickert, Sarah Arroyo, and Jeff Rice.

[Written Credits]

7:24 *Narrator:*

"There is movement to invention, a going beyond boundaries and returning, that precludes its being fixed in place, even though it simultaneously emerges in and through place. It turns back around on itself, ensuring that what remains at the heart of invention is invention itself" (Rickert, 2007, p. 270).