



House of Song and Sound

THE STEM & LUISTER METHOD

CARE HOME ENCOUNTERS BEYOND LANGUAGE

GENETIC CHOIR



www.genetic-choir.org

'The dementing brain processes stimuli much more slowly than we do, and their world is usually somewhat timeless. I think we usually move much too fast for them; we enter the room too fast and often with a plan in our heads.

That is why it is so nice to see you making contact so relatively slowly, and making a gradual transition to sound and music. I find it interesting that the space you create with improvisation is also such a timeless world. You create another space, a space where it is not surprising if you do this with your hands [mimics a gesture which started off a game during the preceding session].

There is room for playfulness, for a different way of interacting with each other.'

- LINA FUHRMANN, DANCE- AND PHYSIOTHERAPIST



Welcome

We are happy that you have found our booklet in your hands. It is a collection of stories, ideas and practical information about the *Stem & Luister* method that we developed during the *House of Song and Sound* project. In this project, Genetic Choir singers make contact with people who have verbal difficulties through listening and improvising with songs and sounds. Since 2020 we have been collaborating intensively with the Flevohuis (ZGAO), a care home for those who suffer from dementia, in Amsterdam.

In this booklet you can discover what the *Stem & Luister* method is all about. The voice (*stem*), tuning in (*afstemmen*), listening (*luisteren*) and luster/brightness (*luister*) are all central to our approach. We wrote this booklet for anyone who is in direct contact with people who have verbal disabilities in their work or private situation, and for anyone else who is curious about the art of making meaningful contact.

Read this book from start to finish, or jump back and forth between the sections that catch your eyes. And if this sounds like music to your ears, you can read how you or your organization can join this project. In that case, we look forward to hearing from you.

We hope you enjoy your reading!

Sincerely,

The singers of the Genetic Choir
info@genetic-choir.org



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That's it

Mrs. Berend was alone in the middle of the room, her head bent. And I thought, well, I'm going to sit next to her and put my hands on the table. Just so she might be able to see them, while we sing. I see her watching my hands, you know. And then at the very end, two minutes before we have to leave, she lifts her finger and she moves towards mine to touch. That's it.

DIARY OF MOIRA, GENETIC CHOIR SINGER

The Spanish lady Lopez walks around a lot. It feels like she's looking for a way out, since she is always forcing locked doors to open. Or maybe she's just curious, or bored? Who knows. It is clear though, that she is usually restless.

Today she was in the corridor again, trying to open a locked door and shouting. I thought her shouting was actually quite rhythmical, so I went to her and started talking and singing. Soon I could feel her trust towards me. She held my hand and we walked around to explore some locked doors and little corners of the living area. Then I could convince her to sit in a comfy chair, near the others in the living-room. We were singing for her and for everyone for a while, and then she fell asleep. That was when our song turned into a lullaby.

DIARY OF YANKI, GENETIC CHOIR SINGER



The House of Song and Sound

In this project we bring the experience of meaningful contact to places where people can no longer use language in the usual way. We apply listening, empathy and playfulness while using the voice to improvise with songs and sounds.

Working in the context of people with verbal difficulties (such as dementia), we look for the person behind the illness, accepting and welcoming their symptoms with attention. We blend with the daily situations we encounter. We create a space where everyone (residents, staff, volunteers, family) can take part, find their own voice, and relate to each other in meaningful contact.

In this way we bring the experience of *autonomy*, *inclusivity* and *connection* to all participants in the healthcare environments that we work in.

'You could see that something happened beyond the tangible, purely because of the atmosphere and the vocals. The resident, who I would otherwise always see huddled and where I have to put in a lot of effort to move her physically into doing something, straightened up from within, as it were – was suddenly awake and present.' – JACQUELINE HIRSCHFELD, PHYSIOTHERAPIST



Making meaningful contact

With people whose verbal abilities are changed or impaired, family and carers often struggle to maintain personal and meaningful contact. The idea of our method is to develop a *playful and open form of listening*, which, together with the *improvising voice*, opens up new possibilities for interaction.

When someone uses their voice while really being listened to, it is an intimate and empowering experience. Through humming, whispering, imitating sounds and singing songs we love, a special kind of contact emerges between you and the person you are spending time with. Singing releases physical tension, brings peace, or energizes.

We have discovered that beyond the general benefits of making music, we bring the attitude of *making meaningful contact* where others may have partly given up on this contact due to the challenges of an illness like dementia.

As improvisers we accept 'what is' and work with the intention to create beauty and meaning from whatever circumstances we encounter. This could be a sleepy atmosphere, or a tense one,

because when there are several restless residents in a living unit there can be frustration or even aggression in the air. We take the circumstances and existing sounds in a room as our starting point, and sometimes it takes a while before music appears, and our only contribution to the moment is that we *are there* with the residents. That we are present and listening.

At other times we might break the ice by starting a song, or taking a resident's hint about their favourite music to spark a sing-along feast, creating an abundance of joyful activity that envelops the whole room.

Residents are playfully activated in all kinds of ways. Their feet tap along, or they even start dancing. The resident who always walks restlessly up and down the

'I had to get used to it at first, but eventually I noticed that with this method you can get into the perception of the residents. This gives a special effect to yourself because you can really make contact in this way – also with someone very far away, who then comes a little closer. I find the guidance very pleasant and professional.'

– INEKE HOFER, PARTICIPANT VOLUNTEER WORKSHOP / HR ADVISER

hallway will come and sit down for a while, listening attentively. When we look for new lyrics together, based on the names of the streets where they once lived, everybody rhymes out loud. The shouts of construction workers in the street are noticed and give rise to unexpected music. By also singing in other mother tongues, language skills are greatly stimulated. Contact is created between residents who would normally stay more 'in their own bubble', even comforting each other when we touch emotional subjects with the music. Residents also love to see how others are revived by our arrival. Social interaction is stimulated, and residents get to know each other (again). Listening, singing and

being present become a way to challenge, stimulate and calm people with dementia in all kinds of areas.

To all those who are in regular contact with residents (family and carers) we offer our approach of deep *listening* and a *playful voice* as a skill that can be learned.

Our ambition is to transform the atmosphere of long-term care environments into places where listening and being playful is an ordinary activity that offers joy and meaning to all participants in the daily care.



Chaos

Last week I was happy to hear that Thomas managed to build a trust relationship with the Amsterdam ladies, Bea and Lily, and one of them even sang along. A while ago I sang 'Laat me' by Ramses Shaffy for them and it seemed to really break the ice.

But today we were literally sabotaged. The ladies were swearing and even threatening to throw us out of the window. Even though we had a nice conversation with them in the hallway before singing, once we started singing a little, the ladies told us to leave. We tried to keep it light and focused on the other ladies. But when we had to laugh, for example, they immediately reacted: 'Why are you laughing, asshole?' Before we knew it a certain chaos had got into the atmosphere. They even started to take other residents away with their wheelchairs, as if to protect them from our singing! Eventually the nurses took the ladies away to another activity.

The other ladies in the wheelchairs were back at the table, so we took our chance and sang to the Ukrainian lady who was quite reactive, especially when I used Russian words, telling and asking me things, laughing and smiling a bit. Mrs. Lore didn't seem to react to the Surinamese songs this time. By stroking her arm, which Dido had seen a nurse do, she could gently take her out of her cocoon. I started a groove and Dido accompanied it by long, balming tones.

I'm considering looking for other scenarios for this living room. Such as singing to a certain person in the corridor, or maybe in a bedroom one-on-one.

DIARY OF YANKI, GENETIC CHOIR SINGER



STEM & LUISTER TRAINING

Training in the musical and empathic skills used by the singers is based on the general vocal improvisation training the Genetic Choir gives to its members. *Anyone can learn it.* Singing experience is not required, but curiosity is. Through our training you will find that your voice is capable of much more than you thought, and that there are sounds all around you that invite you to play with them.

You develop ears that are empathetically open to others, and decisiveness and pleasure in using your own voice. Our contact with healthcare staff has shown that many employees already unconsciously use voice and sound to make contact. By paying explicit attention to this fact, this skill can be given the appreciation it deserves and can develop even further. This will make it more natural to use this skill in everyday situations.

Towards the end of life our voices can become less suited to 'learned' skills: speaking, hitting the 'right' pitch, remembering lyrics. However, the ability to express oneself and to play is never lost. In order to learn to make contact at this level, our training essentially revolves around three themes: learning to *listen and observe*; *finding meaning*; and learning to *play with your voice*.

LISTENING AND OBSERVING

In our practice as improvisers we try to listen more deeply and to perceive more than our first impressions. *What else is there to hear?* What did we not notice at first? Through our ears we can make a sound map of the room we enter: tick tock, rhythmic clock. 'Hm', Mrs. P hums. 'Wrrrrrch', the refrigerator hums. 'Here's your tea.' Our body can sense the attitude of the people around us: are they turning towards us or away from us? Is everyone keeping a safe distance, or is someone coming (too) close? Our hearts can connect to the feelings of the people in the room. We listen to their stories as friends, whether they are repetitive, grammatically incorrect, or silent. Our hands feel the slightest response to the music in the hands of a silent resident. Our eyes catch details worthy of a song: pink nails, a stack of books, a beautiful moustache.

FINDING MEANING

Sometimes it is easy to find meaning in interaction, for example because our feelings show us the way. If we listen inwardly, we can notice how sounds, things, and the other resonate with us. A chord is struck. At other times it can be more difficult. Then the other person or the things around us don't seem to affect us; we are just doing something (for the other) without really having contact, not even with ourselves. That is why we first train to observe and listen, in order to be able to quietly *discover what touches us, where we are drawn to*. There is always meaning to be found, even in dull or crazy situations. Sometimes our images about making contact stand in our way and prohibit us from having actual contact. So before we sing, we listen. And then we sing for, or about, that which touches us. Then we listen again. And sing. And listen...

PLAYING WITH YOUR VOICE

Babies are excellent vocal improvisers. They imitate the sounds around them; play with vowels, sounds, and melodies. Every day they discover something new, out of curiosity and a desire to understand the sounds



that loved ones are making. *Our voice is a wonderful instrument.* It can sound sharp, warm or soft. It can take on the sound of a language without speaking it. Bring peace or chaos. It can move us to tears, make us anxious or funny, bring joy. With our training you can discover how your voice resonates, vibrates in your body. How melody or rhythm is created by simply singing a few sounds together, and how easy it is to find meaning when the sound you make touches you. The ability to express oneself and play with the voice is never lost. For many people, the fact that it is so easy to use the voice in a playful way to connect with others is a real eye-opener. You can connect by doing the same thing together, but also by answering or countering what the other is doing. Before you realize it, meaning arises in the interaction and you are composing music together.



How can I get involved?

1. I am a volunteer or family member:

We regularly organize introduction workshops in which you can get acquainted with our way of working. After that you can join the singers group that trains, plays and collaborates on a monthly basis. If you are a relative or contact person of a resident, we can match your visit schedule and guide you in contact with your family member. Are you a volunteer who would like to help in one of the nursing homes in which we work? Then you can become part of the group that trains this approach together. We will guide you step by step. You will first observe and collaborate with experienced Genetic Choir singers, eventually working autonomously in small ensembles of volunteers who regularly visit the residents together.

2. I am a care worker or manager:

It does not always have to take extra time to make meaningful contact. It requires a different attitude; a willingness to be playful and to listen with different ears. We can bring this to the residents of your nursing home through

regular visits from Genetic Choir singers, but we also believe in training employees and volunteers to create lasting change. Our approach not only improves the individual well-being of residents and employees but also the overall atmosphere, without having to change daily routines. Everyone can learn to use the voice as a tool to connect through our method. Quietly humming with a restless resident while getting dressed, making up a song about scones and jam while serving coffee. With our method, all kinds of areas in the resident's brain are being positively stimulated, and their motor, cognitive and social skills are addressed, while they stay in charge of the interaction. This increases their sense of autonomy and generates pleasure and mutual respect through all daily circumstances. In addition to these stimulating effects, both carers and residents experience more relaxation and peacefulness in their daily routines through the presence of another mode of being attentive and in contact.

Read more at 'How would it work in our house?', page 35.

'I think it's so beautiful that you get to know each other differently in this way. You experience each other more as people, you have fun, the contact softens in a good way.'

– CHARISSA VAN KEEKEN, TEAM LEADER NURSING FLEVOHUIS

3. I am a professional in a different field:

Are you interested in the intersection of art, science and healthcare? We are always open to new collaborations.

Musicians / singers:

The *Stem & Luister* method is rooted in the work of the Genetic Choir Ensemble. The ensemble has been making improvised music since 2007, based on the idea of swarm intelligence. The difference between the Genetic Choir in concert and this project is the audience: we listen more personally and more intensely to the residents of the nursing home than we do at a regular concert. We play by ear, perception and intuition. In this way we compose a beautiful moment, a piece of music that can only arise here. It is a challenging role that requires extensive training in the principles of the Genetic Choir. Join a Genetic Choir workshop to

find out if this is something for you.

Researchers / scientists:

We are currently working together with anthropologist Marjolein Gysels (UvA). She shares evaluation methods with the singers and publishes articles about our project and the *Stem & Luister* method. Her expertise lies where art and healthcare for the elderly meet. If you're a researcher from a similar or different discipline (e.g. neurology, musicology), we're always interested in forging new connections to review and strengthen our way of working! We can provide a context for PhD research. In addition, we are open to participate in think tanks, conferences and other collaborations.



A blanket of warm, low tones and overtones

We've known Mrs. Yang for several months. She is often in a good mood and speaks mostly in Chinese (as far as we can tell). She is no longer able to articulate and often expresses herself in a low, rhythmic, repetitive nasal drone or groan: nnnngg, nnnngg, nnnngg... We sometimes try to incorporate this sound into our music, but it's tricky.

Today we're sitting around the coffee table in the living room with six ladies. I'm sitting between Mrs. Yang and Agnes, another resident we've known for some time; there are also some talkative new residents. The room is bustling, quite noisy, and our attempts at switching to music are not very successful. Mrs. Yang watches it all: nnnngg nnnngg nnnngg. Suddenly, through all the noise, I hear in her sounds an echo of Mongolian throat singing and try to produce similar tones, making the sounds longer and more resonant. While the ladies at the table were certainly not accustomed to this kind of music, Agnes catches what I am doing and points to Mrs. Yang and me. Now a few other ladies also understand what is going on and start to listen, enjoying this musical gift that has appeared around and through Mrs. Yang, whom they all like. She is in the spotlight for a few minutes. Choir member Kristien supports the sounds; a blanket of warm, low tones and a play of overtones fill the room. Some close their eyes for a moment; even the chattering ladies fall silent. A nurse who came to listen says: 'Ah, is this what you singers do? You bring peacefulness'.

DIARY OF THOMAS, GENETIC CHOIR SINGER





Nails

The cuddly robot cat sits in front of Mrs. Rebe on the table. We enter with four singers, each singing a different song. It becomes a swinging tune of various voices. Mrs. Rebe is infected by it; her heels move up and down to the music, and her head gently nods to the beat. After some more quiet vocals, a cheerful rhythm comes in again. This time Mrs. Rebe drums along with her palms and fingers on the table. Her nails are bright pink today, and that's worth a song. It makes her curious about the nails of all singers, so we are showing them. While singing, our nails turn into cat nails, lion and tiger nails. When they dare to attack the cuddly cat, the cuddly cat bites back just like that. 'She doesn't do that,' says Mrs. Rebe. Aha, so she's a sweet cat. We end the singing session with a sweet song: 'Ik zou je het liefste in een doosje willen doen' (I'd love to keep you in a little box). 'Beautiful, isn't it?' Mrs. Rebe says to the cuddly cat.

DIARY OF KRISTIEN, GENETIC CHOIR SINGER



How would it work in our house?

In practical terms we offer three ways to ensure a lasting effect of our working method in the institution you work for. Together we make a plan that fits the specific questions and needs of your organization. We can also help you find the right funds to make this possible.

Weekly visits by singers and an introduction workshop for staff:

Our professional group of singers visit the residents weekly. In the meantime we ensure that the staff receives a basic workshop, so that they understand the benefits and support the method.

Training in the *Stem & Luister* method at all job levels:

We offer regular training courses for all employees. This can be done in teams per job speciality, as well as in mixed groups, such as nurses and doctors/therapists together. It is especially this inclusive way of training with all those involved in caring for the residents that ensures support and fun and an open atmosphere in the residential wards while our working method gradually becomes established. This trajectory includes coaching sessions by Genetic Choir singers in the living quarters of the residents while the employees actively try out the method in their work.

Build a lasting volunteer group:

Using both existing volunteers and our own network of voice and improvisation enthusiasts, we are creating a group that is committed to this method in the long term. The volunteer group receives monthly workshops and goes into the residential wards together with Genetic Choir singers. Through regular coaching, this group can take over the work of the professional singers over time, so that the *Stem & Luister* approach remains permanently present in your house.



Je naam lijkt op maan

Today I found myself singing much less. Other modalities offered the possibility of connection...

I started with Mr. Rani. I tried to remind him about our meeting last time. Initially he kept responding very coldly to my proposals (questions) seeking contact. Intuitively I felt: let's connect through India, as I remembered he resonates a lot with the country. From there we went into Bollywood songs, his favourite singers, songs he knows. Many songs I proposed he also didn't know... still lukewarm.

Then I asked if he could speak Hindi, and I suddenly got his full attention. He said he could speak and also write Hindi. Then he asked me, and I could as well. We switched language, started speaking in Hindi. He shared his childhood, when he learnt Hindi. Then we started playing a word game. He asked me to give a word, and he would write it in Hindi. We did names, revised alphabets. Now and then I kept singing Hindi songs starting with words we were writing, such as his wife's name Rose. A song with 'rose', a song about names, a song with my name. This made him become a bit poetic, as my name resembles moon and moonlight. He explained to me 'moon' and 'sun' and 'god', from Hindi to Dutch. Then we both sang from the Bhagavad Gita, 'Om bhur bhuva swaha', a mantra. A conversation about God followed. He shared stories of his school, learning Hindi, he was so happy that he remembered everything, he could still write and read Hindi, proud of himself. There was genuine connection and happiness to read and write together, refreshing memories.

DIARY OF CHANDANA, GENETIC CHOIR SINGER



SPEECHLESS ENCOUNTERS

In the following sessions with the residents the singers were soon confronted with situations where the usual speech or song – in their socially approved form – no longer functioned as they were supposed to. The living room in its daily routine showed again a clearer picture of the people and the challenges they have to cope with because of dementia. Speech is not a given when living with dementia, and there is a range of ways in which normal communication can be compromised.

It is here that the singers had to resort to the skills they have been able to hone in their careers, mostly for artistic purposes. They use the voice along the whole continuum – from speech, the crossover into sound, and into song. It is in that middle space of sound where the singers became the most active as this seemed to have the most potential in terms of creating openings to reach people.

One such moment was through a play of sound with Rachel, who was wandering in the corridor just outside the living room. Her mobility was poor, so she was closely followed by a carer. She was usually quite absent, staring at a point in the distance. When you addressed her, it took a while before her eyes met yours, and even then, she gave the impression she was not always completely there.

The singers encountered Rachel as they were about to enter the living room. They approached her playfully, in the process of tuning in, getting ready to start their work for the afternoon. She reacted so responsively that three of the singers stayed a little longer with her. They started a rhythm with gently rocking tunes and swing-along bodies. Rachel pitched in with single affirmative words when the sounds came to a breathing pause, saying *ja* (yes) and *fijn* (nice) while she intensely looked into the singers' eyes. The rhythm intensified, and the carer who was still there started dancing along to the tune. It was a concurrence of impulses that set off new actions, adding to the excitement.

When the moment had passed the carer became self-conscious, and it was visible from her body language that she wanted to return to her routine tasks. Rachel, however, was still sending out signals and her affirmations persisted. She continued the same intense focus on the eyes, nodding rhythmically and smiling broadly, so the singers stayed with her. When she went to sit down in the two-seater couch in the corridor, Geeske sat with her. Moira and Yinske sat on the ground looking up at her, singing, humming, playing with tones while she received their undivided attention. Visually, it looked like a 16th century Madonna-with-angels portrait; the line going upwards, the movement musical. She repeated *ja* and *fijn*, which the singers wove into their tonal composition, and the words Rachel interjected became a more aspirated and emphatic *hhhjahhh* and *fffijn* as the interaction went on, adding to the delight Rachel showed. She acknowledged our togetherness by moving herself to each of us, starting to count and setting off a counting game between us, pointing at each other in turns. We laughed and became absorbed by the total trust and peace among us, which led Yinske to begin the song *Zo heerlijk rustig* (So nice and quiet) by Wim Sonneveld.

Moira wrote in her diary afterwards:

"We stayed a long time with Rachel and had a session that was very moving. What contact, what profundity! The emotion was totally mutual."

Here, and in the following examples, it was the voice that connected. The words that were uttered came secondary to everything else the voice communicated – at least, their semantic content. The whole event was only possible through wordless sound. Instead of having first asked Rachel: "Shall I sing a song for you?", Moira had approached Rachel through singing, and Rachel and the others had gone along. The single words Rachel had uttered were indeed affirmative, but it was as much their persistence as the way they were pronounced that led to the building up of the intimacy of this gathering and to the feeling of peace and quiet the four of us shared at that moment.

From the article 'Making Dementia Matter Through Sound' (Gysels, Johannsen, Tonelli) that resulted from a half year of research by Marjolein Gysels within the project.

'That meaningful contact that you stand for is also caused by the fact that it does not start with a lot of stuff, decor, instruments, speakers, but is just simple – you come in as yourself, it starts from the silence, from what's there. You pick up the residents where they are.'

– LINA FUHRMANN, DANCE THERAPIST AND PHYSIOTHERAPIST



Er was iets ontknoopt

We had a wonderfully intimate moment with Mrs. Berend. She suddenly told us this afternoon that she had had breast cancer and was now missing a breast. She's terribly ashamed of it. She thinks she's not a woman any more. Marjolijn sang soft, warm sounds, while I listened and held Mrs. Berend's hand. Everyone in the living room listened with loving attention. After she told her story twice, it was over. It felt like a kind of healing process. A tangle had been unravelled. When we later left the living room, everyone was in a happy mood.

DIARY OF ESMERELDA, GENETIC CHOIR



Who and what is the Genetic Choir Ensemble?

We are a pool of about 16 professional singers from everywhere. Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Bosch, Turkey, India, Japan, you name it. Every singer has their own particular background. Some have studied classical singing, others have studied music technology, or dance, or theatre. Most of us have trained and worked together for many years as improvisers. The Genetic Choir was formed in 2007.

We make music from basically everything and everyone we encounter. The Genetic Choir has no conductor and no repertoire. Why? Just as birds decide where to go as a swarm in the sky, we believe that we can make decisions in the moment – together. We don't have to agree beforehand on what kind of music we are going to sing. We just listen to each other and act. Which is not always easy, of course. That is why we are constantly training and developing new ways of getting better in what we do: vocal improvisation.

What do you sing?

We improvise with the sounds we hear around us and the songs that play in our head. Every sound is interesting to us, from the beep of a microwave to the *Ave Maria* on the radio.

Or, as in the case of House of Song and Sound, a recurring story someone tells about a son who has passed away or the repeated humming that has replaced the words someone once knew.

And then what?

The idea is that when curiously listening to any sound with your full attention, it always becomes interesting, becomes music. And before you know it, that beep might take you into a funky rhythm. Multiply that by a number of singers each listening with their own musical interest and you can imagine a whole microwave beep composition. Oh, and we do work hard to make each instant composition a 'piece', with progressions, chapters, and a clear end. To avoid the endless bling-beep-ouch-a-doodle which sometimes

happens when having fun improvising.

How do you rehearse?

Since there is no set list of songs to learn by heart, we can focus on other things. We learn to listen, to the details of sounds, to each other, to the silence in between our singing. That last thing is the most difficult, but so good for the music! We learn to be 'ready for it' as performers. Ready for what? To jump in. To copy, loop, mutate sounds... To feel where this piece of music wants to go - and then go there!

Where do you sing?

The ensemble has a lengthy CV of concerts and art projects. These often have a social element, connecting people of different religions or different cultures, for example. One fun project was a tour through Japan with a Japanese puppeteer, where we were once asked to sing the difference between the light in the morning and the afternoon. With (*Non*) *Corpus: God* we created a

concert in a gigantic, dimly-lit church in which we had people from different religions (and none) speak and sing. We have also been asked to make soundtracks for film (e.g. IDFA) and theatre.

It is never just us who create the music - the things around us and the audience play an equal role in the creation. In *Loop-Copy-Mutate*, a concert created in collaboration with the Bimhuis underneath Amsterdam Central Station, we made this very concrete by singing the sounds of the train station and inviting the audience to move us into different musical directions by using hand signs. A year later, we applied the same principle to basketball players and their sounds and game dynamics when we were invited by the November Music international music festival in Den Bosch.

Visit our website to listen, watch, and read about things we did so far, and more:

www.genetic-choir.org



Zzzzzzzjjjjj-Hhhhoeoeoeoeoeo wwwoommmmmmm

Triggered by talking about beards (one of the residents had a beautiful moustache), the traditional Dutch sailor song *Al die willen te Kaap'ren varen* was started and everyone present, Genetic Choir singers and residents, joined in heartily. But the end of the song was not the end of the musical encounter. The transition to the next phase was set by Thomas' dark exclamation: *Hooooo!!!!* Yanki laughed. Thomas mimicked the waves: *Sssshhhhh, psssssjhhhhhh*. And the wind: *ffffffwwweeeeee*. The sounds of the ship's wooden structure, creaking in the restless conditions: *Ngeeeeeeee-eeeeeeeeooooouu- weeeeeeh-hmmmmmm*. Yanki added some forceful waves to the picture: *Zzzzzzzshshshshsh-Hhhhooooo wommmmmmm*. Kristien: *Tssssssffffssssshhhhhhh*. While producing the sounds, their upper bodies made circling movements following the rhythmic movements of the sea. Then Kristien cupped her hand at her mouth and dramatically called out: *Watch out, or we'll capsize! Hoist the sails, men!* Thomas and Yanki continued to support her with the surround sound: *Pssssshh, sssshhh, fffffshhhssssshhhwwsssss*. Elsa, one of the residents: *'Nooo-oooo.'* Then, leaning toward Nelleke: *'We're leaving now, are you coming?'* Then beckoned with her head: *'Are you sailing with us?'* Kristien: *Step on boaoaoaoaoaord!* Yanki created an ominous *Eeeeeeeee-eeeeeee-eeeeeeee-eeeeeee*. Kristine hoarsely chanted: *On to the ferocious, and wild sea.. Thomas acted out the lapping waves onto the ship's hull: Oooo-waaaaah, shh, ppppssshhhssss, fffffpppphhhhoooo-wwoooo*. Marjolijn meanwhile sang to Nelleke in a melodic way: *Where are you going, where are you going...* Kristien shouted: *In - the - dis - tance - an - islaaaaaand! In - the - dis - tance - a - palm - tree - and - a - beach. In - the - dis - tance - a coco - nut - on - a - tree. Chop - it - DOWN - and drink it whole. The brown broth - goooooo. If you want to die, watch out - Sssssshhhhhhh!* Frank, another resident, opened the door from the garden and entered the living room. Arnold joyfully shouted to him: *They're just as well letting you drown in here!*

TRANSCRIPT OF A SESSION OBSERVED BY MAROLEIN GYSELS



CONTACT / COLOFON

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IMAGES: p4: Hilma af Klint 'Svanen, no 17, grupp IX/SUW, series SUW/UW', 1915. Stiftelsen Hilma af Klints Verk. Photo: Moderna Museet/Albin Dahlström. / p10: Mark Rothko, Green over Blue, 1956 / p24: Allegory of the Five Senses, Horen, Jan Brueghel the Elder, 1617-18 / p38: The Adoration of the Lamb of God; Music-making angels (detail), Jan van Eijk, 1432 / The photos in this book were taken after observing corona test and vaccination protocols approved by the institution so that singers could be photographed without masks.

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