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**Auditory Presence and Intelligibility: Training to hear differently**

This conference prompts two question for me: Who is speaking on stage? Who is given the space to speak? In this paper, I would like to unpack the dynamics in contemporary European theatre between auditory *presence* and auditory *intelligibility*, the state or quality of being intelligible. By investigating these, I am interested in thinking about the way conservatoire training serves actors who are entering an industry that is in radical flux and how audiences lean into new forms of listening that might destabilise intelligibility as a primary concern. While we have seen crucial attempts to decolonise training, from changes to reading lists and shifts in the theatrical canon to making space for those who have been historically marginalised in conservatoires, there continues to be problematic vocal standards in the professional field that reaffirm the status quo. I want to note a number of scholars who have offered theoretical models and concrete strategies to decolonise and decentre training methodologies that impact on the actor’s voice (Cutler 2010, Espinosa and Ocampo-Guzman 2010, 2011, Ginther 2015, Oram 2020, Stamatiou 2022). Attempting to make a link between training and industry, I will briefly probe how voices ‘take stage’ in nineteenth and twentieth century British, German and Polish theatre history before moving to training practices in my own institution (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama) and finally to contemporary European case studies that open up new potentials for auditory presence: Oliver Frjlić’s *Gorki – Alternative für Deutschland?* and Katie Mitchell’s *A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction* at Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne. I will argue that when we abandon the stage as the platform for a national voice, adjust our training habits and change our casting policies, we have to learn how to hear differently.