NOWRE China

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1. You have mentioned that a sense of humour is integral to your works, which determines their final presence as musical comedies. Could you please tell us how you came up with such expression? Also did you have any favourite punchlines in the "Zizi & Me: Anything You Can Do (I Can Do Better)"?

Artificial intelligence can be quite a dry and unapproachable topic by nature so by adding a sense of humour and working within drag as a form of performance and entertainment we hope to enliven the subject. The musical theatre influence came from my collaborator "Me the Drag Queen" who often lip-syncs the classics in live shows at cabaret venues. What's great about musical theatre songs is that there are so many duets and they are so narrative led, so we've been digging around to find songs and acts which can say something funny about societies relationship with artificial intelligence. We found a fantastic sense of competition in 'Anything You Can Do (I Can

Do Better)' from 'Annie Get Your Gun', where the deepfake is adamantly claiming that she can out-perform her human counterpart and all the while her deepfake body keeps on glitching. This is a warning against and a satire of the idea that an artificial intelligence is something we might mistake for human intelligence. Perhaps my favourite scene is when Zizi (the deepfake body playing Annie's part) claims she "can hold any note longer than you" and then goes on to hold a note for an unnaturally long time while we zoom in on her slightly disturbing deepfake face with eyes wobbling and her generated wig and pearl necklace disintegrating around her.

2. In the "Zizi Show", you selected 13 real Drag Queens to work with for the collaborative show. During the performance how were their costumes chosen? Were there any funny stories? We are also very curious if all your data sets of Deepfake were collected and evolved from them?

So for the Zizi show the looks were very much brought to us by the artists we chose to collaborate with. The casting was an important part of the process, which my collaborator 'Me the Drag Queen' led, we

wanted to make sure that we had a diversity of performers in terms of race, gender and performance style to represent different aspects of the London drag community. We just asked them to bring their own drag personas and to wear something colourful with a strong silhouette that might be a challenge for the AI to recreate. We wanted to empower these performers to collaborate with the deepfake process choosing which looks and acts they wanted to bring into the project as well as paying them for their data and getting their consent for their bodies to be manipulated by other performers within the community. One of the aspects the artists involved in the project enjoyed the most was watching themselves perform in styles which weren't their own, as well as when the system broke down and failed to create a realistic figure. Cara Melle who performed a Beyonce number dropped into the splits in one of the acts, however as we didn't film all the other performers doing the splits (an example of a bias and limitation in the datasets), this resulted in hilarious moments where bodies dissolve into the floor and wigs fly off like balloons.

3. We have observed that the Zizi Show comprises a total of 8 fixed acts on offer

for the audience, among which are songs by Beyonce, Placebo and other musicians, what made you choose them as the fixed acts?

Well again similar to the outfits which people brought, the song choices were mainly from the performers which we invited to create the reference footage for the movements. We did however encourage them to think about songs which could somehow set up an interesting discourse when being performed by an A.I., such as songs about being misunderstood, empowering ones identity or being different - basically all queer classics.

4. AI has widely permeated our daily life. However, the public has been rarely aware of deviation in the algorithm. As we know, the AI data set is more likely to present the shift from domination by white cis-male to female and be imperceptibly service-oriented. For example, it was 3 years after the launch of the Siri service when male voices were introduced into the service. Until this April, the default female voices faded into our oblivion. In this regard, we would like to know your perception into the possible

appearance of gender opposition in the development and application of the set.

I'm currently quite interested in recent efforts to develop non-binary voices for voice assistant applications. In 2019 Copenhagen pride and Equal AI developed 'Q' the first genderless AI voice which was trained on a dataset of a combination female, male, trans and non binary voices to create a blend, or less fixed gendered voice and negate some of the harmful stereotypes of using a gendered voice for an AI assistant. This shows that we can fight to shift the narrative and influence the development of these systems. On the whole though I think that these systems are built as reflections of society, so if we have a systemically racist, misogynistic, transphobic and homophobic society then we will build systems that inherit these biases. This may result in algorithmic unfairness and discrimination against marginalised communities in ways we may not be aware of. Many modern cultures tend to have quite a binary view of gender and stereotypical views on gender roles, although historically many cultures around the world have embraced and celebrated gender fluidity and not had such patriarchal and fixed views on gender. The result of these systemic prejudices is that apps and

services are built (often unconsciously) with certain gender roles and biases; such as facial recognition incorrectly recognising trans and queer people and translation software reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes. Not to mention hiring software, health services and ad systems de-prioritising and performing less well for women, people of colour and LGBTQ+ people.

5. We admire your works very much. They not only arouse our reflections on the discrimination against artificial intelligence and excessive usage of Deepfake, but also speak up for minority groups. However, LGBTQ+ culture has just appeared on the horizon in China and has a long distance to go and many obstacles to overcome. Just as the previous problem shows, AI is often perceived to amplify prejudice in real life. From a broader grass-roots perspective, is there anything else AI can do to eliminate the prejudice against LGBT community and Asian and African women?

This is a very big question, I think that once thing we can do is try and get more voices

and perspectives involved in the development of these systems to shape a future which can serve and help marginalised communities. I know this is quite a utopic way of thinking, but I'm quite interested in this idea of alternate or queer utopias rather than a more dystopic and defeatist way of viewing technological advances. In terms of critical race theory and artificial intelligence I would suggest looking at researchers and academics such as: Joy Buolamwini who founded the algorithmic justice league and made a film called Coded Bias, Timnit Gebru who researches algorithmic bias and founded Black in AI, Ruha Benjamin who wrote Race after Technology and Wendy Chun, author of Discriminating Data and New Politics of Recognition.

6. Could you please let us know your plans for the future? Will the Zizi series keep going? Is there any possibility to open another Zizi Show or take an alternative interaction form or introduce new drag artists? We're looking forward to it.

Zizi is absolutely still evolving, currently we're working on extending the Zizi & Me

deepfake double act and bringing it to stage and hopefully touring it internationally. I'm also developing a new long form video work for the Victoria and Albert Museum in London which we may well introduce new techniques and performers into.

7. Aiiiii Art Centre is the first artificial intelligence art institution in Chinese mainland. We know that the exhibition here is not your first in China. Over the past few shows, what has captivated you concerning the development of China's new media art? Are there any Chinese new media artists who brought your attention or appealed to you?

Unfortunately due to the situation I havent been able to visit the Aiiiii Art Center but from the plans and installation it looks like the most extraordinary space. There seem to be a much larger number or really incredible and larger museums showing media art in China than there are in Europe. I've had the honour of previously exhibiting in the Today Art Museum and Hyundai Motorstudio in Beijing as well as the TANK Museum, Ming Contemporary Art Museum and Yuz Museum in Shanghai which are such fantastic spaces. Iris Long was the first

curator to exhibit my work and seems to be doing fantastic projects as well as Xi Li who has done an incredible job or putting together Th Book of Sand at the Aiiiii Art Center. Guo Cheng, Liu Xin, Dabeiyuzhou, Yuqian Sun and Sougwen Chung are all Chinese artists who I've previously exhibited with and are doing fascinating things using artificial Intelligence.