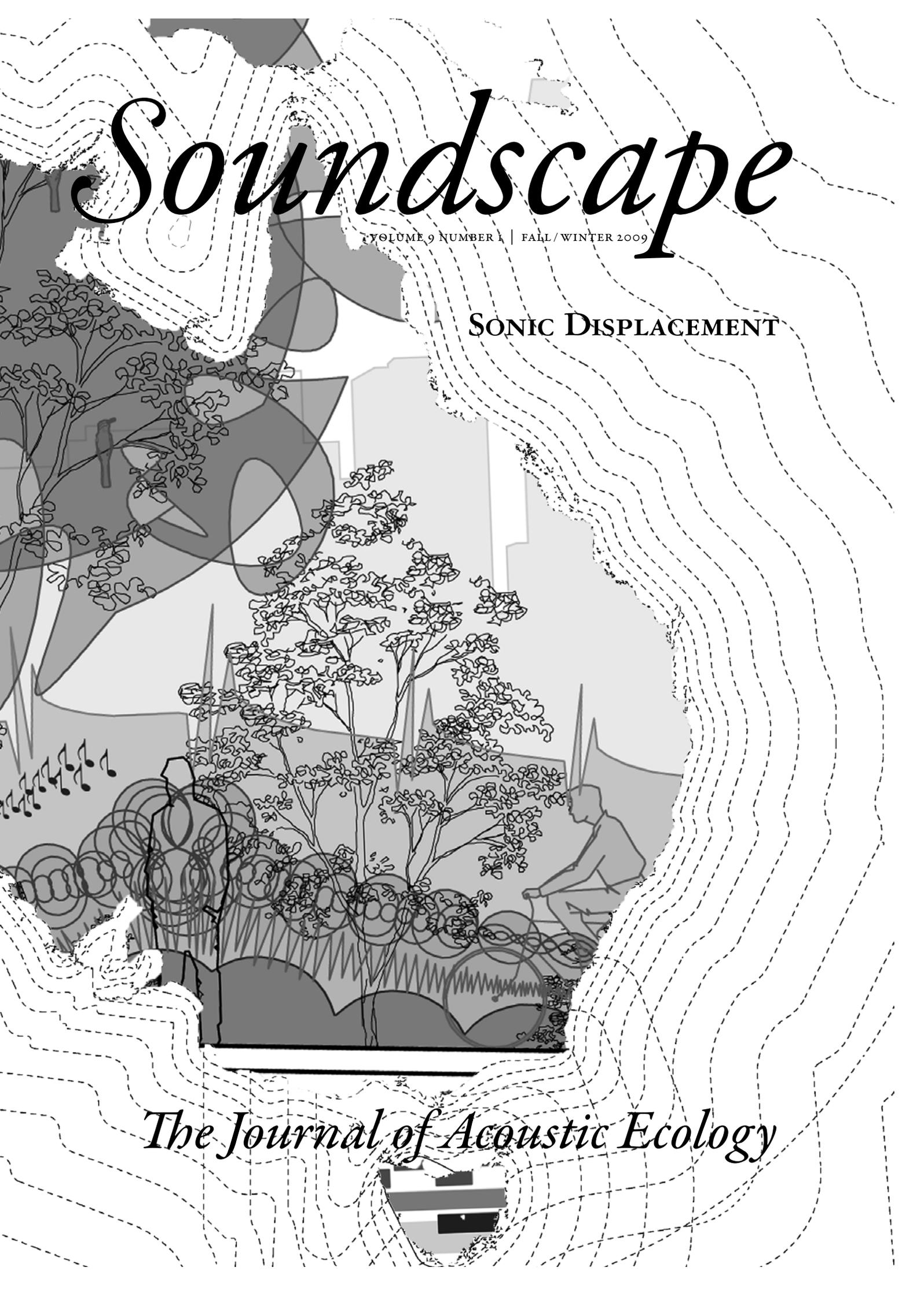


# *Soundscape*

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 1 | FALL / WINTER 2009

SONIC DISPLACEMENT



*The Journal of Acoustic Ecology*

# Soundscape

The Journal of Acoustic Ecology

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 1 | FALL / WINTER 2009

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*Soundscape* is an English language publication of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE). It is conceived as a place of communication and discussion about interdisciplinary research and practice in the field of Acoustic Ecology, focusing on the inter-relationship between sound, nature, and society. The publication seeks to balance its content between scholarly writings, research, and an active engagement in current soundscape issues.

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Ideas for journal themes, proposals for new sections, as well as visual materials, are welcomed. You may submit either a proposal or a complete manuscript of a potential article to *Soundscape*. The Editorial Committee would generally prefer to communicate with you beforehand regarding your idea for an article, or receive a proposal, or an abstract (contact information below). Please also download our Guide to Contributors: Instructions for the Preparation of Materials for Submission to *Soundscape* (PDF) on the WFAE Website at: <http://www.wfae.net>  
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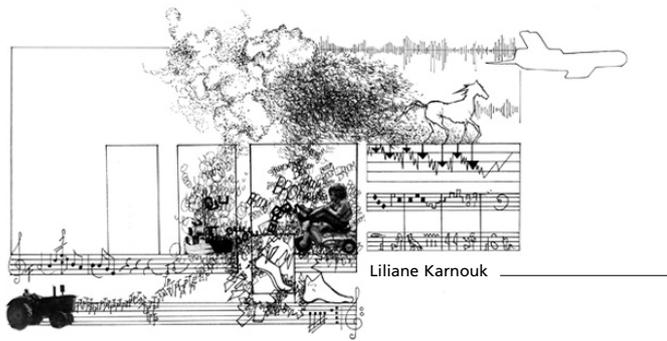
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# Soundscape

## The Journal of Acoustic Ecology

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 1 | FALL / WINTER 2009

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*The cover collage is a graphical sound map of Royal Park, Melbourne produced for the Soniferous City, Landscape Architecture Studio at RMIT University, and is also a reflection on theme of the Journal. See more examples on pages 8–9 and at [www.afae.org.au](http://www.afae.org.au).*

### Editorial

This journal's theme, Sonic Displacement, advances the investigation of changing soundscapes in the Australasian region. Our hypothesis: that exploration of Australian specificities might provide a useful microcosm of global trends; whether through points of similarity, or by way of counterpoint. Within this context, "Displacement" simply refers to the difference between two positions (and in one respect it could be just the consequence of immersion). Thus, although the term has explicit meanings within the fields of Physics, Engineering, Chemistry, Geology, Medicine, Linguistics, as well as Behavioural and Social Sciences, we took our cues as much from a fledgling field like psychogeography, which might be thought to have multiple points of correspondence with acoustic ecology.

Issues around acoustic ecology have long been marginal within Australian culture, but are now beginning to enter the public discourse. Two specific examples: the burgeoning field of acoustic history, and a renewed sensitivity to the problem of language extinction among the nation's indigenous peoples. As Editors, our intention was to promote and enlarge this dialogue. Regrettably some of the content we'd hoped to include was not available in time, but we both feel confident that a wealth of further research remains to be essayed, debated, and elaborated upon.

Australia is a large island continent, with a position on the globe roughly opposite to the European centres of Occidental civilization. Principally composed of the arid centre and desert savannah, fringed by temperate and tropical coastal regions, the sheer physical expanse provides for a tremendous diversity of ecosystems. Relative isolation has supported a process of tandem evolution; most of the world's surviving marsupial species, and the only living monotremes (or egg-laying mammals) are found here. Historically, human populations have arrived in Australia as migratory waves, at points dating back at least several Ice Ages. Until recently, and for many millennia previous, the human population was tribal and nomadic. Colonial settlement, the gold rush, and more recent migrations have

produced one of the most ethnically diverse nations on the planet. The attendant shifts in land-use have been huge, and often threaten the delicate ecological balance.

Western traditions have largely eclipsed indigenous cultural practices but place names provide a resounding echo of the nation's earliest inhabitants. This legacy extends across the continent; many place names are either bastardisations or phonetic transliterations of the original naming. Think of Geelong meaning "tongue", or the Sydney suburb of Woolloomooloo meaning "place of plenty". Kuringgai, the site of the soundwalk discussed in Anthony Magen's article, can be loosely translated as meaning "belonging to the Aborigines". Bermagui, the township setting for Michelle Duffy and Gordon Waitt's paper, possibly means "canoe with paddles". These names are simply taken for granted by most Australians, and the meanings lost, due to our limited engagement with increasingly marginal indigenous cultures. For although Australia is ethnically diverse, it is also essentially monolingual; as a nation we are now prone to see our own vernacular idioms (something championed in the work of Nigel Helyer) overwhelmed by the trends of global culture.

An issue of Soundscape focused almost entirely on one country might be considered chauvinist and parochial, but we have sought to avoid elementary reductivism wherever possible. We note that issues of nationalism provide one theme for the next International Conference of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, in Finland, and wish the organisers the greatest success for this event. The editors also extend their gratitude to the WFAE editorial committee for invaluable assistance, and to previous affiliate editors who have all helped in this issue's production. This issue of Soundscape is somewhat enlarged by supplementary material, including audio and video files, hosted at the website of the Australian Forum for Acoustic Ecology ([www.afae.org.au](http://www.afae.org.au)). We hope these items enhance the journal proper, and would like to express our further thanks to the AFAE's Webmaster, Miyuki Jokiranta.

"Welcome to Country!"

—Jim Knox, Anthony Magen (AFAE)

“The WFAE Conference in Mexico back in March was a wonderful success and created a great deal of interest in acoustic ecology within the local media. A great atmosphere was generated by the presence of attendees from all over the world especially Latin America. Subsequently there has been talk of new organisations forming in that region with a view to affiliating with the WFAE. This would be an excellent outcome and reinforces the importance of our conferences where so many dislocated voices come together as one. As usual the event provided an opportunity for the WFAE Board to meet face to face. Almost all the affiliates were represented enabling us to have some important conversations on the general running of the WFAE. Of particular importance was a decision to find a co-chair to divest me of various duties over the coming year. This process continued during the months following the Mexico meetings and has resulted in the nomination and endorsement of Hill H. Kobayashi as the co-chair of the WFAE. Hill and I are now establishing lines of communication to better manage and share the workload of running the WFAE. The next conference endorsed by the WFAE will be in Finland in June 2010 and we can expect another well-organized and vibrant gathering of our disparate membership.

—Nigel Frayne  
Chair, WFAE Board, [chair@ewfae.net](mailto:chair@ewfae.net)

## Keiko Torigoe

Keiko Torigoe has recently stepped down as the WFAE Board representative for the Japanese Association of Soundscape Ecology (JASE), the international arm of the Soundscape



Association of Japan (SAJ). Keiko remained attentive and committed to this task over more than 10 years dating back to the restructuring of the WFAE into a collection of affiliated organisations in 1997. Keiko's history within acoustic ecology goes back many years earlier and hence her valued judgement on behalf of her membership was based on rich experience. On behalf of the WFAE Board I would like to thank Keiko for many years of dedication and friendship and wish her well in the future.

## Australian Forum for Acoustic Ecology (AFAE)

by Anthony Magen

The current AFAE activity has focused on the production of this Soundscape Journal and the theme of *sonic displacement* has allowed us to explore (as a group) the variety of meanings and the implications it elicits. Thanks to the affiliates for responding to this in their reports!

The AFAE is a slow moving group. A few local (almost entirely Melbourne) members meet fairly regularly but the inability to generate momentum means this does not translate to any particular activities beyond these meetings. Due to Nigel Frayne's position as WFAE chairperson (read: absolute tireless WFAE champion!), these AFAE meets do provide a safe, open forum for some of the WFAE issues to be discussed. This has impressed upon us the importance of an active WFAE board and support role that the affiliate groups can provide to create a sustainable platform for the future.

One of our new members Miyuki Jokiranta, has been plugging away on the AFAE website; revamped after languishing since its inception in 2006 we hope it will encourage a public space for our glacially growing national membership. There are a number of isolated people interested in the issues that acoustic ecology explores and the new website will provide that conduit to the core Melbourne group. An additional section has been dedicated to WFAE content related to the current Journal and we hope you find this useful and engaging.

Anthony Magen continues to use simple Soundwalks as a tool to communicate the importance of Acoustic Ecology to the greater population. The most recent iteration was a feature of the Interventionist Guidelines (<http://www.interventionistguide.org/>). The Interventionist Guide had its HQ in the subterranean Platform Gallery, at Flinders Street Station from where it spread out into far-flung and forgotten corners of the city. 12 cabinets within Platform Gallery provided illustrative mapping devices, and 'user's guides in the form of custom zines' to creatively intervene within a range of urban spaces selected by each of the twelve artists to reveal the unique nature of each location and the creative potential it offers. The Soundwalks were well received and attended forming a bridge to express ideas central to Acoustic Ecology.

Another example of the slowly developing awareness of Acoustic Ecology is that various Melbourne local Councils are requesting soundwalks for their engineering and design teams, as a way of team building and developing a deeper awareness of the locations in which they work. I am delighted by these opportunities to affect change at an important level of Government and hope this develops even further in the future.

## Australian Forum for Acoustic Ecology (AFAE)

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## Correction

Heather Ruth Spence's article in the preceding issue of Soundscape, "Dr. Robert E. Knowlton: Considering the Coastal Acoustic Carpet", was not accompanied by her biographical note. Our apologies to Heather for the oversight, which we now correct accordingly:

HEATHER RUTH SPENCE is a musician and composer who did her undergraduate research under Dr. Knowlton and received her BS in Biology (2005) at The George Washington University where she was also a Presidential Arts Scholar. She has since completed her MS in Marine Biology and is currently playing cello and viola da gamba while collaborating with

the Mexican National Parks on research and outreach in support of MesoAmerican reef conservation. She welcomes comments, suggestions, dialogue and PhD opportunities regarding acoustic ecology and sustainability.

[www.HeatherSpence.net](http://www.HeatherSpence.net)

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## American Society for Acoustic Ecology (ASAE)

by Andrea Polli and Michelle Nagai

For an organization whose “area of service” covers some 3.7 million square miles (9.6 million square kilometers) of audible space, the thematic focus of the current edition of this journal is of great interest to the ASAE. In this brief report, we reflect upon a few aspects of “sonic displacement” that pertain to our activities over the past year, and our plans for the future.

Ours is a geographically vast nation, yet our membership is distributed, for the most part, in major cities of the United States, with only a handful checking in from smaller population centers. Many of our board members and chapter founders have never met in person. Some, having communicated only via email, have never heard the sound of each others’ voices. Although formation of the Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology, ASAE’s newest chapter, was initiated as the result of a face-to-face meeting between two members, the remainder of work done to get that chapter up and running took place over the internet.

This all strikes us as a little odd. So much of what we think, write, create and act upon, as an organization and individually, is informed by sound. Yet the sonic worlds in which we each exist, and the actual human voices with which we communicate, are largely unknown to even our own members and colleagues.

Counter to this, the New York chapter (NYSAE’s Giant Ear))) web radio program has been a model for bringing together the voices and sounds of our disparate communities, inviting other chapters and associated groups to host monthly programs. Skype has also been increasingly used by members for planning meetings at a distance.

Since publication of the last edition of this journal, the ASAE has seen several board members relocated to new regions. Three founding members from the NYSAE, Andrea Polli, Michelle Nagai and Andrea Williams, departed New York City in pursuit of academic and career goals. Former Vice President Steven Miller relocated from New Mexico to Singapore. Each of these goings on resulted in a tangible sense of loss at the local level, yet, at the same time, created a stir of new activity and increased participation among members.

In New York, the core NYSAE membership has redefined and expanded. The group meets regularly to discuss important organizational matters but also takes time each month to attend to some form of group listening activity. Their recent “best of” CD features works from Giant Ear))). In New Mexico, it is hoped that Andrea Polli’s addition to the community will spark renewed involvement from members in the Southwest states. Eric Leonardson and the Midwest chapter have hosted dozens of events, walks and meetings in their first half-year of existence. There is a rumble of serious chapter planning activity from the Northwest, and the Bay Area chapter seems to be taking shape once again after a period of quiet gestation.

Each of these regions has its own ebb and flow of action and inaction. As an organization run by volunteers, with minimal input from “the top”, this is to be expected. What we’re a little more surprised to find is that it’s the relationship among disparate regions, and members therein, that seems to have the most profound impact on the way things develop in the organization as a whole. The recent addition of an online membership form and digital payment option for member dues is one such example of members cross-communicating to effect palpable change on the organization. When members relocate, as several have done this year, the revised inter-connections, disruptions and re-orderings wake us all up to new possibilities.

Looking ahead to the coming year, our most important goal is to bring together the entire ASAE board and chapter leaders, individual ASAE members and the public at large. A face-to-face ASAE meeting is a first for us, inspired in part by the CASE retreats that have been taking place to our north for the past several years. Still in the early planning stages, we hope to organize a series of events aimed at strengthening both our public actions as an organization, and, perhaps most importantly, our personal interactions as individual members of the acoustic ecology community within the United States.

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## Canadian Association for Sound Ecology (CASE)

by Darren Copeland

CASE held its 4th soundscape retreat in June 2009. For the first time it took place outside of Haliburton, Ontario. The location this time was The Haven on Gabriola Island, BC. It provided a restful seaside soundscape for considering the theme of the retreat – the changing Canadian soundscape.

One of the many highlights of the retreat was a keynote lecture by Noora Vikman entitled *European Soundscapes in Change* in order to analyze the soundscapes of European villages that had been studied 25 years earlier. The presentation gave light to the results of the research project *Acoustic Environments in Change*. This presentation complemented a review by Barry Truax of the World Soundscape Project activities in connection to soundscape compositions undertaken at the Sonic Research Studio in Vancouver. It also complemented a personal reflection by Hildegard Westerkamp on how early soundscape research by the WSP inspired and influenced her own compositional activity since the time of the WSP.

Relating to the journal’s theme of Sonic Displacement was Eric Leonardson’s presentation on the World Listening Project, which among other web-oriented projects of the Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology features an around the clock broadcast of Eric Leonardson’s local neighbourhood soundscape in Chicago. This sparked some debate at the retreat on the topic of surveillance in soundscape recordings, particularly when they are broadcast unedited to the world through the internet. However, putting that issue aside, the project does provide long term data that is accessible anytime for studying and recording the changes and evolution of a soundscape. Often studies or sound portraits of soundscapes lack full 24/7 and 360 day coverage. In this sense, Leonardson’s re-contextualization of an unedited soundscape provides a model for analysis and study that can be applied to all kinds of soundscapes.

Other examples of sonic displacement at the retreat included performances of soundscape compositions using 8-channel spatialization. Works by Hildegard Westerkamp, Charlie Fox, Barry Truax, Eric Powell, Darren Copeland/Andreas Kahre and Eric Leonardson/Anna Friz took listeners on a variety of sound journeys based on natural and imaginary soundscapes. A live performance by youth from the Gabriola Island community was presented as a result of a soundscape workshop for youth lead by Kelly Price.

In between performances and lectures there was ample opportunity to engage in the soundscape of The Haven’s property on Gabriola Island. This provided an opportunity for those attending

# Regional Activity Reports *(continued)*

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*CASE Report continued from page 3*

the retreat that were new to the Pacific Northwest to experience the unique soundscape characteristics of that region. CASE plans to hold its next retreat on the east coast of Canada with the ambition to cover another distinctive soundscape region of Canada.

For more reflection and documentation of the retreat, I encourage you to read more on the WFAE website at: [http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/WFAE/library/newsarchive/2009/04\\_july\\_august/retreat.htm](http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/WFAE/library/newsarchive/2009/04_july_august/retreat.htm) and please look for updates on the newly renovated CASE website which will soon include MP3s and transcripts from the retreat.

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## **Finnish Society for Acoustic Ecology (FSAE)**

by Noora Vikman

The stereotypical Finn is very curious to hear what other people think about them. They are eager to find out how they are perceived by “outsiders” – or what they sound like. The German, Bertolt Brecht, wrote a famous sentence, that has become a self-reflective, even ironic, portrait of our sound making: “Finnish people are silent in two languages” (both the official ones, Finnish and Swedish). What are they listening to while being silent?

In a performance at Antifestival in Kuopio, Finland, September 2009, I was walking in a supermarket with headphones on. They were connected to a MD that was playing a track designed by a British artist. Her woolly voice suggested a route through the labyrinth of shelves and aisles, and dropped rhetorical questions about the environment into my ears. She pointed out the behavior of my co-shoppers, she described the supermarket as a leisurely place, she tried to tempt me to shoplift. I was listening, amused at how similarly people behave and how consistently organized the world's shopping malls must be. The artist could be confident that her interpretation of the behaviour was correct, albeit in a place where she herself had never been. Still she could amplify her presence.

I feel these examples describe several types of sonic displacements. Interpretations of sounds and listening vary, as well as the ways in which they are mediated. We seek different ways of mediation to deal with the things “glocal”. Dealing with sounds – even with headphones on we DO meet.

In Finland Koli is a place that awakens many nationalistic connotations. The view from the hilltop embodies the image of an ideal national landscape. More than a hundred years ago Koli was a place of romantic nationalism for artists. This history is still used as a resource in negotiating “Finnishness”. I'm writing this while reading through abstracts received for the conference ‘Ideologies and Ethics in the Uses and Abuses of Sound’ (FSAE together with the University of Joensuu cultural studies) in Koli, Finland in June 2010. The conference theme invites a discussion on how all cultural generalizations offer ethical challenges. Both cultural convergence, and

generalizations, can lead to even dangerous cultural territory which again could be a form of displacement.

Cultural analysis of the environment follows both stable conventions, as well as the contingent fluidity of our pasts and presents. In 100 Finnish Soundscapes – and later in a smaller area in Southern Finland, Pirkanmaa asked if we can construct Finnishness through sounds. Listening to the sound(scapes), the individual ‘voices’ reach the collective area and create various “suggested communities”. Individual points of view and points of listening leave enough space for the continuation of the negotiation of selves, local differences and samenessess.

This is an important unresolved issue and challenge for the future of acoustic ecology – respecting and giving voices to the local meanings through ethnographic work.

## **Suomen Akustisen Ekologian Seura r.y. c/o Heikki Uimonen, Musiikintutkimuksen laitos Vuolteenkatu 20 33014, Tampereen yliopisto, Suomi-Finland.**

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## **Japanese Association for Sound Ecology (JASE)**

by Yuki Masami Raker

Among the variety of collaborative activities between JASE and the Soundscape Association in Japan (SAJ), we are excited to announce our October colloquium on listening to recorded sound. This colloquium intends to provide the best possible technical acoustic environment for the enjoyment of recorded sounds.

Studying, examining, and discussing soundscapes, we seldom have an environment in which we can listen to recorded sounds in an acoustic state that is as close as possible to the original environment. This is not a small problem. If our environment determines what we can hear, there might be quite a few sounds which may not be perceived simply due to the limitations of that environment. Hoping that an electroacoustic environment will help us appreciate recorded sounds fully, we've decided to gather at the Pioneer's recording studio in Tokyo, which is acclaimed for its professional acoustic equipment.

Organized by Yoshihiro Kawasaki, the colloquium will have seven sound navigators: Kazuyuki Nakama (msp) who specializes in sound recording and production; Satoru Yamauchi and Masayuki Yamamoto (SC Alliance), professional sound recording specialists; Shinya Akedo who has been recording sounds all over the world; Hideki Suzuki (Keio Kindergarten), a sound educator; Haruo Okada (Pioneer), an award-winning sound recording expert; and sound artist Yoshihiro Kawasaki (Tokyo University of the Arts, J-WAVE, Soundbum) whose numerous works include <http://www.soundbum.org/> and <http://aqua-scape.jp>. They will present recorded soundscapes such as the festival in Kyushu, a water fall and the forest in Okinawa, an undersea coal mine, and what kids heard, to name only a few. With the best possible technical support, we hope that the colloquium will provide us a rare opportunity to fully appreciate the acoustic inspiration of sound.

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# Sound Walking

## A walk on Maria Island: *Ten Days On The Island Festival March 27–April 5 '09*

by Anthony Magen

Musician and composer, Jim Denley, is one of Australia's foremost improvisers of new music. He believes that Australia presents a unique environment for music and through this belief Jim interrogates new forms of expression in a rapidly changing world by challenging how we audition a performance.

When I arrived at Triabunna jetty (famous for being Errol Flynn's home town), for the 45 min ferry trip, I was told by the skipper to state my case to gain my passage. I cheekily informed everyone that, I was there for reasons that included but were not limited to, being very good looking and smart etc, much to the hilarity of the young Germans waiting impatiently to depart to isolated Maria Island, off the east coast of Tasmania.

I remember thinking how laughter always changes a group's mood! The sound is understood by all people of all ages, as the ropes were pulled aboard.

Some of us clamber onto the bow to feel the wind, and sea spray; and for me personally, to find relief from the disturbingly loud engine that had a particularly deep resonance that vibrated my skull.

Exclamations burst forth as a pod of dolphins joined us! They began frolicking under my dangling feet and excitedly the skipper circled 3 times in the old whaling harbour to maximise the dolphin interactions. Sitting there with spray off the dolphin's blow-holes hitting me in the face, I was completely enamoured, in the moment.

This was a good omen of what was to come. Living 'in the moment', with deep interactions, intimacy and intensity allowing complete subjugation to the elements was personally refreshing. Letting go of all preconceptions and mental barriers that are accumulated whilst living an urban existence was all that could be done.

"The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty uses the word "plunge" to describe really being in the world. I believe each space and time is unique, so I try and find an appropriate music for that space-time." Jim Denley (Byrne, 2009, pp. 52–53.)

Maria Island was noted as being home to Indigenous Australian Tyredeme people during visits of Cox in 1789 and Nicholas Baudin in 1802, and as having an abundance of food and water. The Island has a



Wind instruments: Jim Denley

recharger in the Budawang Mountains, a wilderness area in the Morton National Park, on the east coast of Australia. These mountains are full of dramatic and rugged rock formations, caves, crevices and a hidden valley – it's a wonderland of natural acoustics. Presumably people have been making music in these spaces for thousands of years, but it's almost certain, sax hasn't been heard there before. Jim Denley (Byrne, 2009, pp. 52–53.)

Just a Saxophone, recorder and some basic supplies were the only tools used to create album *Through Fire*, *Crevice* and the *Hidden Valley* (splitrec). There are other examples too, that includes the annual *West Head Project*, a gathering of musicians to improvise on a large tessellated rock outcrop in Kur-ring-gai National Park. A place of significance to humans for thousands of years.

Back on Maria Island, I was transformed into a blonde wombat nosing about listening

Walking, is the quintessential speed of the human and this performance was essentially about listening-walking and about physically engagement with the landscape. The bowerbird-esque<sup>1</sup> sounds created by the trio and the environment, coupled with close listening, encouraged a formidable group energy, where human sounds, distinctly non-human sounds and the landscape, were at times singing together, thus educating the listener to the resonance of the space they were presently in and the incidental sounds of humans. In this instance the music allowed those unfamiliar with attentive listening an accessible entry point by making it explicit that each individual is a sound maker. This brought into tight focus the variety of sounds of the landscape including, in this instance, the sounds from traditional instruments.

"I like the other resonances in these spaces and I like the questions they ask of my music." Jim Denley (Byrne, 2009, pp. 52–53.)

A soundwalk is the culmination of so many

# Sound Walking *(continued)*

years of thought and experience, drawing on ancient wisdom yet simultaneously immediate, in its experience. The music produced by these three performers on a Walk on Maria Island was equally a collaboration with their environment, each other and the audience. Transforming time and place with a beguiling simplicity, the audience were integrated, as sound makers intentionally and subtly.

The long distance travelled to participate in this walking performance was slowly comprehended as paramount to the experience. All participants were rewarded with a primitive experience that cut through contrivance, to allow us to hear acoustical phenomenon with a re-found sense of wonder. Listening to their instruments made all the other sounds as important and the ebb and flow of the interaction was as natural as the tide.

Listen online at [www.afaе.org.au](http://www.afaе.org.au).

## Reference

Byrne, Ben. 2009, "A talk with Jim Denley: improvisation, ethics and place" UN magazine issue 3.1 June.

## Endnote

1 The Satin Bowerbird courtship involves males offering the females items from his collection of blue objects in his elaborately designed and decorated bower, while making a series of hissing, chattering and scolding noises.

The male's bower is an avenue of twigs and sticks, which he weaves into walls running in a north-south direction. He usually paints these walls with a mixture of charcoal and saliva. Platforms at both ends of the avenue are decorated with mainly blue-coloured objects – including flowers, feathers, and berries. When there are humans nearby, the birds will also use plastic items such as clothes pegs.



Piano accordion: Monica Brooks



Percussion and modified trumpet: Dale Gorfinkel

# Current Research

## Observations on vocalization of Western Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus fuliginosus*) in a free ranging population on Kangaroo Island, Australia

by Mike McKelvey

We have been studying the life history of free ranging Western Grey Kangaroo (fig. 1) on Kangaroo Island, South Australia since 1993. The primary study group is a female mob with a sixteen year old alpha female. Within the study area are secondary female mobs, each with their own alpha female. Male bachelor mobs are intermingled across the study area of approximately fifteen square kilometres. The study area is a mixture of mallee woodland, acacia shrubland and native grassland in a region receiving a sixteen year mean rainfall of 521.1 mm per annum. This summary will focus on documented vocal behavior recorded at this site.

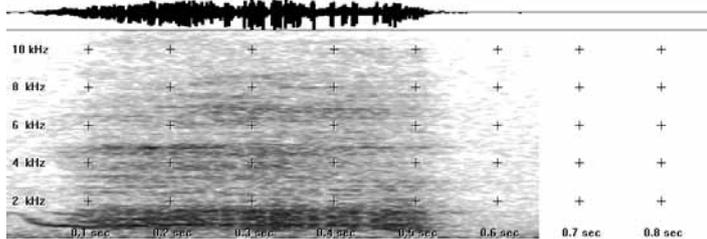


Figure 2

Vocal patterns of the Western Grey fall into two distinct groups; male and female/sub-adult. A dimorphism of calls was initially observed during courtship and breeding. Males produce a distinct 'Cluck'. This sound originates from the head and tongue movement is observed with generation of the sound. Under specific conditions males will combine the cluck with a roar and distinct body language. Female and sub-adult (both genders) vocalization is characterized by guttural squeals or rasps. The female call is



Figure 1

generated in the throat with observable movement of the diaphragm. A range of gender specific variations occur from these two distinct sources. Sub adult calls follow those of the female until the young show their first breeding behavior.

The stereotyped clucking 'Skippy' call is that of a male. This call is easily heard among captive individuals. It is distinct from calls generated by female or young and should not be confused with the call or bark specifically used by females.

Digital video and sound recordings provide the basis for frequency, amplitude and pattern analysis (fig. 2). Further studies involving the synthetic replication of frequency, amplitude, pattern and play back responses are in progress.

## The Acoustic World of the Australian Short-Beaked Echidna

by Dr. Peggy Rismiller

The Echidna is one of the most tactile mammals alive today. Their ancestors roamed the planet with the dinosaurs. They are enigmatic. They live in a world we constantly walk across but seldom listen to. Living and working with echidnas for more than twenty years, I am starting to hear and glean bytes from their soundscape.

The Fall/Winter 2003 issue of Soundscape [Vol 4 # 2, p. 10 – Ed.] carried the short note Communication in Short-Beaked Echidnas?. In the field, we continue to document behaviour and periodically observe spine vibration. Simple test of placing a stem glass of water in front of the vibrating individual results in rings of ripples generated on the waters surface. The ripples coincide with the echidna vibrating.

Engineers and students of Acoustics have tried to measure the source and intensity of these ripples but with little success. They find working in nature challenging to their equipment, the test situations difficult to control and the general environment of the soil surface to be much noisier than expected. At one stage we placed an echidna in an anechoic chambre. In the dark and soundless atmosphere it did nothing. We introduced selected sound stimulus but the echidna slept on. The area of Echidna Acoustics is progressing within what I call Echidna Time.

In the field we continue to record sounds from the world of the echidna. Of particular interest are the low frequencies transmitted through the ground. We record the distant surf crashing on to coastal headlands, the creaking of tree roots in the

*Continued on page 8*

## The Acoustic World *Continued from page 7*

soil, chomping insect larvae devouring plants roots, the thud of a hopping wallaby. The echidna responds to these stimuli using its ears, vibration sensors (mechanoreceptors) in the pads of the front feet and with their tuning fork lower jaw that probes the soil nerve endings in the soil probing beak. We observe them to stop, face an object and vibrate. We haven't yet been able to capture and isolate the frequency signature from this event. We have learned to listen to the soil and hear the vast and complex acoustic ecology beneath our feet. Anyone else with ideas or suggestions for listening in, please contact us. The acoustic world of the echidna and echidna communication still have their mysteries.



Photo by Dr. Peggy Rismiller

The Echidna

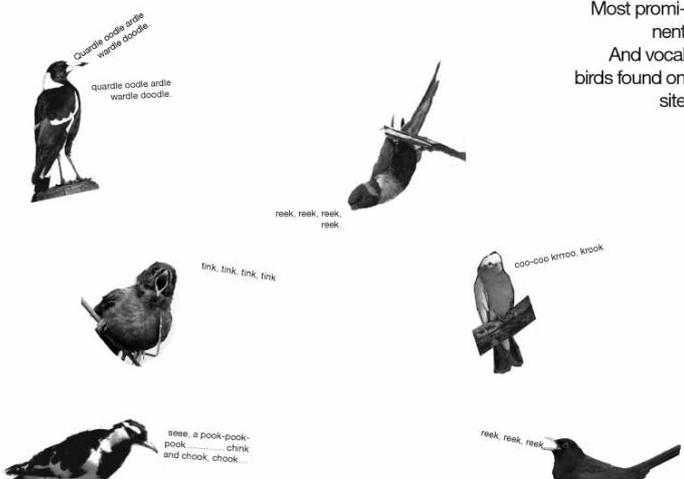
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*(at this location, snail mail and phone are more reliable than email)*

*The work carried out at the Pelican Lagoon Research and Wildlife Centre (<http://www.echidna.edu.au>) run by resident scientists Dr. Peggy Rismiller and partner Mike McKelvey for over a decade has earned Kangaroo Island a worldwide reputation as an unpolluted and virtually pristine place in which to study flora and fauna in its natural environment. Peggy and Mike have published numerous books and scientific papers, in addition to the echidna television documentary which was first screened in April 1995.*

## Soniferous City: auditory awareness in landscape architecture

*Upper Pool Landscape Architecture Design Research Studios 6 7 8 at RMIT, University 2009*



Most prominent  
And vocal  
birds found on  
site

### Studio Lecturers

Anthony Magen + Dr. Michael Fowler

### The Aims of the studio

Auditory awareness in landscape architecture was the main focus of this design studio. We proposed a new evaluation of architectural spaces from the perspective of the auditory, through concentrated listening. Expanding upon critical discussion on urban space within the architecture and urban planning discourse and through the spatial and communicative properties of sound as a design tool.

As 'custodians' of landscape, the decisions Landscape Architects make about orchestrating a landscape/ soundscape will be important to us, and to future generations.

Our testing ground was Royal Park, on the fringes of Melbourne CBD, an area of 170 hectares that comprises a series of dense mixed-use typologies that includes constructed native wetland habitat, State level sporting facilities, a golf course, remnants of the area's indigenous vegetation, Melbourne Zoo, railway and tram access, urban camp facilities and mixed sport playing fields.

The brief from us was to use the newly re-discovered auditory awareness to initiate a self-directed brief but constrained to the design specific of a site of repose (typically a seat).

Acoustic analysis by Louisa King



# *Snap, Crackle & Pop; On Listening, Memory & Amnesia*

By Nigel Helyer

*Your words are preserved in the tin foil and will come back upon the application of the instrument years after you are dead in exactly the same tone of voice you spoke in then. ... This tongueless, toothless instrument, without larynx or pharynx, dumb, voiceless matter, nevertheless mimics your tones, speaks with your voice, speaks with your words, and centuries after you have crumbled into dust will repeat again and again, to a generation that could never know you, every idle thought, every fond fancy, every vain word that you chose to whisper against this thin iron diaphragm. (Edison's Ars Memoria concept for the phonograph.)<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

Broadcast media, recording and communications technologies have developed at an alarming pace since Edison proposed the phonograph as an acoustic *Ars Memoria*. A series of rapid iterations have overlaid and overwritten previous systems and *modus operandi* making it easy to forget the central role that radio has played within Australian communities ~ both rural and urban. The broadcast medium functioned as a form of entertainment, a mechanism for nation building and as a vital link able to transcend the “tyranny of distance”, be it real or imagined. My interest is focussed, not so much upon a technological trajectory but primarily upon the role that *listening* plays in establishing memory, situated within a geophysical site, to form *identity* and *place*. The corollary of this interest also lies in its inverse – the realisation that individual memory, as well as cultural histories, is extremely fragile and fugitive, evaporating under the pressures of technological and social change driven by the massive acceleration and saturation of media information.

Over the past few years I have become increasingly drawn to create a series of audio-portraits, manifest as sound installations, public sound works and radio broadcasts, woven from the patterns of listening and communication. These audio-portraits centre upon the nexus of sound, listening, location and memory, fusing the concept of soundscape with more narrative forms of orality.

This text will concentrate primarily on the recent *Wireless House* project, undertaken as a public-art commission for the City of Sydney, but will be contextualised by two “snapshots” of previous projects, *KelleRadioActive*, commissioned by the International Art Space Kellerberrin (IASKA) in Western Australia and *GhosTrain*, commissioned by ABC Radio National as part of their Radiophonic Residency.

## Project snapshot\_01 ~ KelleRadioActive

The first of these projects, *KelleRadioActive* was the result of a three month Artist in Residence, undertaken in Kellerberrin, a small rural community in the sweltering wheat-belt of Western Australia, a few hours east of Perth.<sup>2</sup>

The project developed an oral history programme that captured community experiences of listening to radio in the form of recorded interviews, discussions and even musical recollections that recalled radiophonic events from the past and the patterns of when, where and how people listened to radio in their homes, or used radio communication in the workplace.

The question that I posed to the community was beguilingly simple, “what did it mean to listen to radio?” My *modus operandi* was equally guileless, I became a collector of old (often defunct) radio-sets and simultaneously a collector of extensive oral histories. Bush communities never fail to surprise and Kellerberrin was no exception. I discovered the man who made all the original radio-sets for the community back in the 1930s. He and his father fabricated the sets from baking trays set with thermionic valves, his father supplying the cabinets and the pair installing the sets in outlying homesteads. Long-line antennae, dry cell battery banks and earphones were the order of the day, the families listening in, one person at a time to scratchy reports of distant cricket matches ~ with listening time strictly rationed to preserve battery power.

Even today radio reception in Kellerberrin is poor to non-existent and so I resolved to establish my own station with a low-power, mini-fm rig. A one Watt stereo mini-Fm local radio station (KRA 88 Fm) was mounted in a bicycle trailer capable of automatically broadcasting content, developed in the community, to the township. My pirate station was complimented by a gallery exhibition of period radios each modified to transmit audio via very low power Fm, and where visitors to the exhibition were given transistor radios as a means to engage with the work.

Isolated communities are generally less media-saturated and still rely upon (and enjoy) the vis-a-vis of oral communication, more recently extended via mobile telephony and VHF radio within work contexts. The KRA.88FM mini-Fm station acted as an acoustic mirror in the community, affording encounters with a wide gamut of voices and narratives; the exuberance of the young coexisting with the recollections of the elderly. For many this was the first time that their stories moved beyond the individual into a form of *public-address* to participate in a *sonic commons*.

## Project snapshot\_02 ~GhosTrain History and Amnesia

I'm very, very concerned about this construction of history as somehow divided from the present; there is a continuity, there always will be. It suits certain interests to construct the past as a foreign country which can then be commodified for exploitation, be it cultural, tourism of some sort, or redevelopment of sites to make them appear unique, however I dispute this 'discontinuity' view of the past. (Lucy Taksa.)<sup>3</sup>

*GhosTrain* focussed upon the Eveleigh Railway Workshops, once the largest employer in New South Wales, and in its day both a centre



photo by Nigel Hejler

“KelleRadioActive” installation detail, Tin Sheds Gallery USYD

of technological innovation and of working class political organisation. The site was closed by the State government some decades ago and has recently been repurposed as a cultural zone, mirroring the redevelopment of its sister site (the Redfern Locomotive Workshops) as a technology park.

The Eveleigh site is impressive on a number of levels; its robust industrial architecture, the simple repurposing of the site as a cultural space; set against the lingering knowledge that this was a site of labour ~ of specialised knowledge and skill and of a lifestyle all but forgotten in Sydney’s upwardly mobile affluent society.

When considering the changing socio-economic landscape of our cities our attention is drawn towards the more obvious physical features of the shifting usage of architectural structures and major environmental infrastructures. However in marked contrast, it is the transient elements that are the soul of living cultures, but these are difficult to seize upon and tend to be overlooked and quickly forgotten; erased under changing patterns of work and social usage. The iconic sounds that characterise a locale are one of the most fragile and difficult of these transient elements to recognise, evaluate and maintain, yet in essence they often hold the key to memory and identity.

As Lucy Taksa indicates, the construction of history is a premeditated political enterprise that creates a sharp divide between the plural voices and narratives of individuals (which generally go unheeded) and the singular, authorised grand narrative that is ‘History’. The *GhosTrain* project was therefore not so much about our experience of listening *per se* but about listening to the stories of a community that has been ignored. A *listening-in* to the silences of a location, not simply to a workplace, but to an entire culture that has been conveniently dismissed and transformed in a manner that erases all traces and renders it palatable and commodifiable. The acoustic ecologies of industrial landscapes are a prime example of our extraordinary collective capacity for amnesia. Closely observed, every location has a characteristic soundscape, in effect a sonic fingerprint, formed from a complex mix of smaller incidental sounds, punctuated by unique, keynote sounds that are site-specific and directly associated with the particular structures and activities found at the location.

*GhosTrain* is designed in three stages and aims to recognise the importance of the soundscape that once characterised the site and endeavours to reinstate specific elements of its acoustic ecology and the memories contained within oral history. The first phase, a series of five short broadcasts produced at ABC Radio National (Sydney), established contact with a range of ex-railway workers and interlaced their oral histories with commentaries from historians, architects and the like. This was in effect the research phase, collecting material and getting under the complex skin of the site.<sup>4</sup>

The second stage, currently under development, seeks to reinstate a soundmark within the main architectural space, in order to re-sound the acoustic ecology of

the site. The intention is to install a speaker rig that will broadcast the one o’clock siren (reputedly used by all the local shops to set their clocks). The siren will be followed by 30 seconds of a steam loco, shunting along the axis of the building ~ a simple sonic event designed to re-ignite people’s memory and associations and to honour those who spent their working lives in the Railyards.

The final stage is a form of mobile acoustic *Ars Memoria*. During my research it became obvious that many previous employees felt cheated of their working history, seeing the physical locus of their labours gentrified and none of the original meaning or heritage retained or represented (save for some well hidden brass plaques on the Redfern site). The mere restoration of bricks and mortar is senseless in this context. What is missing is an acknowledgement of the social and cultural histories told in multiple voices from the community and situated in the appropriate places. It is my intention to develop a location sensitive sonic cartography which will operate on 3G phones delivered as a download via the AudioNomad system. This will provide an open access platform that can be developed and modified over time.<sup>5</sup>

## Re-Sounding the Wireless House.

### An introduction to the Wireless House.

In 1930 Marconi, sitting on his yacht *Electra*, moored off the Italian coast, sent a radio signal to Sydney, Australia that activated a relay, switching on the illuminations of Sydney Town Hall. In 1933 a suggestion was put to the Glebe Council [Glebe is an inner Western suburb of Sydney] to establish a “Wireless House” in the public park on the corner of Glebe Point and Bridge Roads for the purpose of community entertainment. Commissioned in November of 1934, Wireless House was officially opened in February the following year with the installation of a wireless set donated by the local Grace Brothers department store. From then on the Wireless House operated on a daily basis from 10 a.m. until 10.15 p.m., playing a range of commercial radio programmes, musical shows, sports events and radio serials.

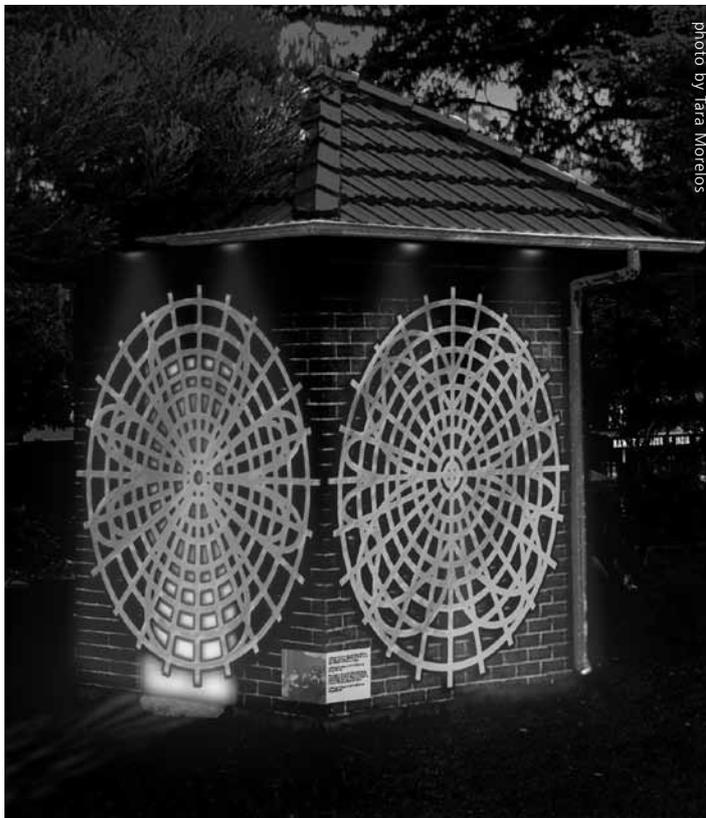


photo by Tara Morelos

Artists visualisation of the Wireless House project, Foley Park, Glebe, external night view

Radio broadcast was making considerable changes to Australian society during this time and as a domestic social event, entire family groups would gather around a radio set for communal listening, even taking turns wearing headphones and narrating the events to the rest of the group. However, during the depression access to radio equipment was restricted to those of comfortable means and the majority of Glebe residents were doing it tough.

The Wireless House was revolutionary in that it catered to large crowds including many unemployed, who congregated in the park to enjoy the daily programmes. The project, although recognised as a municipal innovation, attracted criticism from the church and sporting organisations (aka betting shops) both sharing concerns about a loss of patronage. The Wireless House eventually succumbed to accusations that it encouraged the unemployed to idleness and was ultimately decommissioned. The initial research indicated that the Wireless House ceased to operate in the early 1950s but recent oral histories recorded in the community confirm that it functioned (at a reduced volume) until the early 1970s and its closure was probably more a reflection of the ubiquity of affordable portable radios than any moral argument!

The intervening decades since the establishment of the Wireless House have wrought extraordinary changes in our attitudes to and acceptance of broadcast media and the fact that the Wireless House has survived intact, albeit mute, for over seventy years is equally extraordinary; however, this was all about to change!

In 2006 the City of Sydney ran an open competition for public art proposals along the axis of Glebe Point Road as part of a major upgrade of the suburb's infrastructure ~ I bid on the Wireless House site as a project and won a commission. Once again my approach was simple ~ the Wireless House would be resounded and would once again become *wireless*!

## Re\_Sounding, a strategy.

My approach to resounding the structure was threefold, a physical, sculptural treatment, an operational design and a content development and acquisition strategy.

The physical structure of the Wireless House is (to be polite) uninspiring but it was an unpleasant surprise to discover, upon my first meeting with the city's landscape designers that the house was scheduled for demolition (but I was advised, I could work with the concrete foundation slab!). This *fait accompli* more than rankled and so I set to work to establish if the Wireless House had any cultural significance beyond the local, that could be employed as an argument for its preservation, as it was obvious I could not rely upon its architectural merit! It soon became evident that the Wireless House was an unusual concept. The Sydney Morning Herald archives hold articles from 1935 hailing the structure as unique in Australian municipal history and none of my subsequent research located anything similar in Australia or abroad (save for propaganda kiosks and PA systems). Whilst this evidence still failed to budge the destructive intent of the planning department, a National Trust listing of the structure put the ball in a different court and secured the future of the House.

## Sculptural treatment.

The physical treatment of the house sought to open up the interior of the building by removing the original speaker baffles that closed the two window apertures as well as the heavy steel door, replacing them with clear Lexan. Large web-like laser-cut stainless steel shields based upon the radiation pattern of radio antennae clad each wall, affording visual access to the house (whilst also securing the structure and its technological contents). The interior of the structure has been retained in its original 1930s colours and visitors can view the original wooden radio stand supporting a period cabinet radio, its dial aglow, whilst on the opposite wall a substantial internet router and antennae array declares the contemporary version of *wirelessness*.

## Technical design.

The operational design reestablishes the original function of the Wireless House and its capacity to play audio over a small area of Foley Park, employing motion sensors to trigger the playback of audio content randomly selected from a large data base. The audio database is stored on a small solid-state computer that is programmed to select content for playback, control the hours of operation, monitor the volume level of individual files and so on. The technical system is otherwise conventional except for the audio drivers. Instead of standard speakers, which are prone to mechanical damage and require an aperture in the exterior surface of the built structure, the project employs *Solid-Drive* transducers bolted to the Lexan windows, effectively turning the entire window surface into a speaker diaphragm.

The second layer of public engagement returns the Wireless House to wirelessness by providing the site with a free park-wide internet hotspot, indeed this is the first City sponsored free internet access in an outdoor location and destined to become something of a test-case. The final layer of interactivity is reflected in the development of a comprehensive website sponsored by the City of Sydney as well as a community access content sharing website on POOL.<sup>6</sup>

## Content acquisition and generation.

The most complex, and possibly the most rewarding aspect of the project has been the development of appropriate content and this

has followed two principal routes. Firstly the development of an ongoing partnership with the National Film and Sound Archive who have gone to great lengths to assist with the curation and digitisation of original radio content from the 1930s onwards. The second approach established a community based Oral History programme which not only developed audio and video documents but has proactively developed skills within the community by teaching recording, editing and computer skills and establishing additional content sharing social history websites.

Right from the start of the project it became crystal clear that both individual memory and community recall are fragile and transient. Our task was complicated by the fact that even a child of five attending the opening of the Wireless House was now approaching their mid seventies. The very social and economic conditions that provided the impetus to create the Wireless House also explained why there were virtually no records, textual or photographic, as certainly very few community members could afford a camera! Thus began a long, slow and often frustrating search for long-term residents who could recall the Wireless House and recount their narratives of life in Glebe, gradually revealing a collective memory of prewar politics and culture, narratives full of idiosyncrasies and inflections normally excluded from *official* histories.

Whilst back at City Hall work was apace developing a Wireless House website to function as a portal within the park and to provide a historical context to the project, we soon discovered that community contributions to the City site (as audio and video oral-history uploads) would simply run into a tangle of red-tape. We therefore opted to develop a parallel site housed on POOL, a collaborative open source, creative commons content-sharing site. Posting material as we worked functioned to explain to others in the community (and at City Hall) the benefits and value of this grassroots activity. Further, it demonstrated the need to initiate a deeper level of social engagement that involved empowering individuals with the motivation and the technical skills to make their own recordings and contributions to the web.

Community response to public art is typically conservative in nature and frequently downright hostile, principally due to a perceived lack of ownership and consequent failure to identify with the project. In the initial stages, the responses to Wireless House were no exception, with the community evenly divided over the long-term fate of the structure and the benefit of its revitalisation. Many of the more influential members of the community were happy to see the somewhat 'plain' structure (then used as a gardener's shed) demolished. However these views gradually began to shift after grassroots community research allowed the topic to be circulated, evaluated and eventually honoured as a unique part of an almost forgotten history. It is a commonplace that it often takes an outsider to point out the obvious in a familiar situation ~ and perhaps it is easier to be filled with enthusiasm for something which to others appears mundane. It was the oral history project together with the community training undertaken by my studio assistant Julia Burns that delivered a platform for the community to engage with its history and identity, focussing the content upon the Wireless House, allowing it to act as a conduit.

The morphology of the project therefore developed a central loci, the physical Wireless House structure, visibly transformed (as is the park in which it is situated) but surrounded by an ever growing cloud of content, drawn from the wider psychogeography of Glebe. This admixture of tangible and impalpable content has energised the suburb, providing a platform for celebrating and valuing their (almost) forgotten past ~ the City of Sydney's recent invitation to the launch of Wireless House casually ended with the line ~ "Refreshments available for the first One Thousand visitors".

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## Endnotes

- 1 Edison conceived the phonograph plain and simple as a memorial device, a means to archive the transient voices of relatives as a sonic counterpoint to the family photo album. That the future of the phonograph (and subsequently radio broadcast) was to rapidly evolve into a commercial device driven by musical entertainment is with hindsight an obvious irony, but one that Edison both missed and was resistant to. Naturally we should not overlook the fact that Edison was partially deaf!
- 2 Artist in Residency October ~ December 2005; Exhibition, 3rd December 2005 ~ February 2006 Kellerberrin Western Australia.  
[http://www.sonicobjects.com/index.php/projects/more/kellerradioactive\\_at\\_iaska/](http://www.sonicobjects.com/index.php/projects/more/kellerradioactive_at_iaska/)
- 3 Lucy Taksa is Associate Professor, School of Organisation and Management, University of New South Wales. Excerpted from the broadcast GhosTrain, Station No.1. ~ History and Amnesia.
- 4 ABC Radio National Radiophonic Fellowship 2008; GhosTrain Broadcast as x5 'stations' on ABC Hindsight each week in May 2010.
- 5 Links to GhosTrain MP3 downloads ~ <http://www.pool.org.au/users/ghostrain>  
General description ~ <http://www.sonicobjects.com/index.php/projects/more/ghostrain>  
AudioNomad sampler ~ [http://www.sonicobjects.com/index.php/projects/more/syren\\_for\\_port\\_jackson](http://www.sonicobjects.com/index.php/projects/more/syren_for_port_jackson)
- 6 Pool <http://www.pool.org.au> ~ use Wireless House and/or Glebebytes as a search term. See also <http://www.hamishbeattie.com/WireLessHouse/default.asp>

NIGEL HELYER (a.k.a. *Dr Sonique*) is an independent Anglo-Australian sculptor and sound-artist. He is the director of a small multi-disciplinary team "Sonic Objects; Sonic Architecture" with an international reputation for large scale sound-sculpture installations, environmental public art-works, museum inter-actives and new media projects.

His practice is strongly inter-disciplinary, linking a broad platform of creative practice with scientific Research and Development in both Academic and Industrial contexts, and he maintains an active interest in critical and theoretical debates.

His activities include; the development of a powerful virtual audio reality mapping system, "Sonic Landscapes" in collaboration with *Lake Technology* (now *Dolby Australia*) and he is the Artistic Director of the *AudioNomad Research Group* developing location sensitive environmental audio at the School of Computer Science and Engineering at the University of New South Wales.

Nigel is an honorary faculty member in Architectural Acoustics at the University of Sydney and is a Professorial Visiting Fellow at the school of Computer Science and Engineering at UNSW. He has held positions as Visiting Professor at Stanford University, Artist in Residence at the *Paul Scherrer Institut* in Switzerland, and at the Tropical Marine Science Institute of the National University of Singapore. He was the Radiophonic Fellow for ABC Radio during 2008 and maintains active links with The Exploratorium Museum in San Francisco, and the *SymbioticA* biotechnology lab at the University of Western Australia.

# *Location, Location, Location: Auditioning the vocalizations of the Australian pied butcherbird*

By Dr. Hollis Taylor

A soundscape recordist I am not, although when “ideal” conditions present themselves, I make a stab at it. I am immersed in the sound world of another species, and towards that end I make field recordings. My research celebrates the vocalizations of Australia’s pied butcherbird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*), a mid-sized black and white songbird known for its habit of impaling prey (such as lizards and small birds) on branches or thorns for later consumption.

Other wildlife recordists were generous in sharing their extant recordings with me, but I quickly discovered the advantages of experiencing pied butcherbird vocal behavior firsthand and making my own recordings. “Jazz is like bananas—it must be consumed on the spot,” Sartre recommends (1947, 48). So too, birdsong. Like the town clock, the dawn chorus is a *soundmark* (Truax 2001) for birds and humans, an aural counterpoint of events with a wide range of frequencies, amplitudes, timbres, and sound sources. Unlike the town clock, with birdsong there are dramas. Feathered choirs compete intensively for broadcasting space and time. The acoustic complexity in these crisscross patterns is the ultimate in perceptual surround-sound. When present, pied butcherbirds make a compelling contribution to the dawn (and pre-dawn) chorus.

## **Pied butcherbird musical culture**

In his survey of musicality in Australian songbirds (with the human animal’s standard as his measuring stick), Hartshorne describes the pied butcherbird as “the true ‘magic flute,’ the perfection of musical tonality coming from a bird” (1953, 118). He continues, “I doubt any European will have heard anything so richly musical from birds” (*ibid.*). In the literature, the metaphor of a piping flute, a cornet, or an organ is often noted (Taylor 2008, 37).

Males sing pre-dawn song in the spring, and on moonlit nights may sing five hours or more. This gives their performance a special focus, as it is bracketed off from their ordinary life. Birds in adjacent territories can hear and adjust their singing to one another. The timing of countersinging can be concurrent, alternating, or overlapping. When type-matching is in place, even if the entrances seem haphazard, a clear canonic treatment is established. The result is a “performance” canon, not a notated one, reminiscent of Thelonius Monk and Charlie Rouse breaking into an improvised canon on a chorus of “Bemsha Swing.” (Monk, 1986) While the function of countersinging could be a vocal contest (a “cutting session” in jazz parlance), a sure ploy for getting attention (playing on a rest beat), or a competitive advertisement (a commercial jingle) (Horn and Falls 1988, 337), the effect is a highly musical one.

Space is an essential aspect in music (Brant 1967, 223–242). Anthropomorphism forbids speculation on the possibility that creating an aesthetic experience is part of the function of countersinging, but almost anyone hearing it would dare to think so. Are

pied butcherbird phrases formed with the instinct that they must work together when more than one singer is broadcasting in the “acoustic horizon” (Blessner and Salter 2007, 22)? Is a bird merely minimizing the competitive background noise through “song asynchrony” or “displacement patterns,” as the biologist might characterize it (Cody and Brown 1969, 778–780), or could these emerging and fading song phrases from the avian song community have a musical purpose?

Female song plays a key role in pied butcherbird duetting and antiphonal song (with up to six, and sometimes even more, participants); unfortunately, since the sexes are indistinguishable, the female contribution can only be speculated upon. Duets often sound as if emitted from a single bird. Since the contributions do not parse easily, they must be noted by the recordist in the field. When singing, pied butcherbirds alternate a standard upright posture with raising the bill high, and then sinking it on the breast, which assists in part identification. Such precision calls to mind the dovetailing of the medieval hocket to create the effect of a single melodic line.

In addition to singing antiphons, pied butcherbirds mimic, appropriating from conspecifics, other bird species, and unexpected sources. Their mimicry cycles are virtuosic and aesthetic extravaganzas. Mimicry’s function is poorly understood, and no single explanation appears to suffice (Chisholm 1946; Marshall 1950; Baylis 1982; Kroodsma 2004: 128–130). What does seem clear is that in mimesis, birds are emancipated from their species-specific templates and able to comment on their landscape.

[ONLINE TRACK:] For example, one bird contributed two notes to antiphonal song that sounded suspiciously like a reversing truck alarm (first heard at 1:27 in). Later that morning, I recorded a truck for comparison: the bird had matched pitch, timbre, and duration.

[ONLINE TRACK:] On Magnetic Island, a resident volunteered to record pied butcherbirds on a cheap cassette recorder perched on her windowsill. A mimicry cycle sees portions of the bird’s own song notes mixed with a mishmash of various other birds and unidentified sounds. Mimicry sets up the potential for narrativity. An animal at play is telling a story about its environment (Lestel 2002, 42). The fragment appears to be bookended by ‘meow’ and ‘woof’, mimicry of her cat and dog.

[ONLINE TRACK:] At 1:50 into this abridged track, our soloist abandons his formal song with a coda of *sotto voce* mimicry and then flies off to continue in the distance. The mimicry suggests that this bird hears similarly to humans, with an appreciation of alien songs and sounds in his environs.

## **Birdsong analysis and the trained ear**

The study of birdsong remains largely unattended by musicians. When recording equipment and sonographic analysis became avail-

able, biologists apprehended the field, although not with a trained ear so much as a trained *eye*. Galison writes about the impact of modern technology on science, including how “the pictorial (image) tradition” influences science’s bottom line (1997, xix). (This is echoed in Western classical music with the score becoming privileged above the sonic experience.) The sonogram does not necessarily represent what the human ear, and likely the bird’s ear, hears.

Another potential shortcoming of visual analysis is that the image in the sonogram window can be altered; we adjust it, imagining the act as an objectification of perception, until we see what we want (Rothenberg 2005, 90). Any thought that a commonality of technological tools has made for an even playing field between scientist and musician ignores at its peril the trained ear.

## Birdsong notation and composition

Although music is an abstract form, it contains within it the sounding and encoding of location. No stereotypical pied butcherbird song exists. I am an avian cartographer searching continent-wide for principles of design in their song. In order to get a handle on their dynamic sonic landscape, in addition to the use of sonograms, my analysis includes repeated listening, music notation, and composition, each complementing the others. Multiple ways of knowing are required for the fullest picture possible.

Music notation implies extensive involvement by the ear. Western music notation crosses borders and languages with ease and is a lingua franca for many musicians who choose to read music. However, Bartók cautions, “The only really true notations are the soundtracks on the record itself” (Bartók and Lord 1951, 3). Even a recording is not a tangible fact (or a firsthand field experience), nor is a sonogram. Technology can help us with things that we grasp intuitively (List 1974, 375). In matters of pitch or rhythm, I trust my ear first, and then the measurements. Of course, notation suffers inadequacies for birdsong, but the same can be said for even Western art music. My solution is to supplement notation with sonograms, verbal descriptions, and a wide variety of analysis (distributional, musicological, and computational).

Pied butcherbird vocalizations are a cultural phenomenon learned from conspecifics and adaptable to circumstance. Components from their rich and nuanced repertoire are subject to recasting, some via elaborate strategies, and many lend themselves to reframing within the human animal’s tradition as fruitful compositional catalysts in matters of melody, rhythm, timbre, form, and wonder. My portfolio of compositions based on their vocalizations commenced as a means of putting birdsong on display but quickly extended its reach: composition informed and became a central part of my analysis. Sonograms, notations, compositions, analyses—all are contingent upon field recordings.



A pied butcherbird at Wogarno Station, Western Australia.

## Recording quality and sonic archiving

Kunst puts the entire field of ethnomusicology in debt to recordings: “Ethnomusicology could never have grown into an independent science if the gramophone had not been invented” (1974, 12). Recordings provide more than just a second check on the ear; they provide an opportunity for the collection of a vast amount of data and potentially for great familiarity with the subject. However, they also allow the researcher to content herself with “homework” rather than “fieldwork.”

As for the artifact itself, whether in the form of cylinder, tape, disc, or file, the recording is now perceived from many, some hostile, viewpoints. For some, the recording tends to be accepted as the music, score, performance, and representation, arriving in a complete bundle, whereas others maintain recordings are not “the real thing”—they are merely a frozen snapshot in time (and thus in terms of a transitory medium like music, a false representation).

It is clear that neither the birdsong notation nor the recording for me is “the real thing.” However, while often I sing the praises of being in situ to record birdsong, I do not romanticize it. Since pied butcherbird territory does not extend to where I live, the most obvious limitation to fieldwork is the cost of travel in terms of both time and money. Another limitation is access to potential recording areas. A road into the site is required, even with a 4-wheel drive vehicle, but a road implies the presence of other people and the attendant noise, private property, and safety issues.

I conduct pre-dawn recording in complete darkness (unless there is some moonlight). Snakes, spiders, ticks, dogs, disease-bearing mosquitoes, and the human animal make up my chief safety concerns. Dingoes, feral camels, and a herd of 27 running cattle have all approached me. A kangaroo bounding towards you in the black of the night is a terrifying sound in headphones, despite the fact that they are relatively harmless (unless you count a heart attack). And although some have, I have never been attacked by a pied butcherbird.

Pied butcherbirds thrive near humans. I discovered some of the most intriguing singers in outback towns and campgrounds, venues traditionally ignored by soundscape recordists who understandably aspire to more pristine conditions. Songbirds have to contend with the full reality of today’s acoustic ecology. When recording their songs, if a car or airplane intrudes, I remind myself that such machines brought me to that location.

Science excels in the telling; music suggests. Field recordings sit somewhere between the two, invaluable tools on the one hand but sonic displacements of the experience of being in the bush on the other. Just as facts can be deficient, so too can recordings. For example, the aural depths of field—the foreground, middleground, and background—and the shifting of perception as sounds unfold

(Vella 2000, 132) are flattened in recordings. And the quality of the experience—the theatrics of the sonic story of birdsong—is not entirely told in a recording. Nevertheless, since field recordings do much of the heavy lifting in my subsequent analysis of birdsong, it is crucial that I have made them myself, allowing the fieldwork to inform and shape the deskwork.

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## International Conference of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, Koli, Finland. June 16–19, 2010.

### "Ideologies and Ethics in the Uses and Abuses of Sound"

The 2010 WFAE conference will be held at Koli in Eastern Finland. Koli is a plausible site for reflecting upon ideologies, ethics and soundscapes, since it was amongst the key places of the national romantic artist pilgrims in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Finland. The Finnish Society for Acoustic Ecology (FSAE) invites researchers and artists from all disciplines to join this forum of discussion.

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# *Two Way Traffic: mediation of identity through sound, and sound through identity\**

By Bruce Johnson

It is by now a truism in popular music studies that one of the primary mediators of individual and collective identity is music (Stokes 1994). And it is equally recognised in acoustic ecology that a major identity marker is the local soundscape (Järviluoma et al 2009). The two converge when a composer or musician seeks to represent that soundscape in musical terms. Vaughan Williams' *Sinfonia Antartica* incorporates literal signifiers of locality through the sound of a polar blizzard, while more oblique representations of a soundscape include the use of reverberation to evoke senses of place, such as the open 'home-on-the-range' (see further Doyle 2005). I want to present some thoughts on the relationship between music, sound and Australian identity from two directions. The first is the more obvious one that I have just sketched; that is, the use of music to mediate national or local identity. Then, however, I want to move in the opposite direction to a connection much more rarely, if ever, made. That is, how place mediates sounds which are categorised as music.

The Australian continent of course has a musical history as old as its indigenous community. The European presence brought a range of music, from folk traditions to high art forms, and from the mid-twentieth century rock became a distinctive presence. All of these at some time have sought to 'musicalise' the Australian soundscape, through sounds of fauna and musical articulations of landscape and place, both rural and urban. The establishment of the political entity called 'Australia' dates from the federation of its various states in 1901. Of all the music genres that have lodged themselves in that entity, the one that is closest to coeval with the history of 'nation' is jazz, first performed under that name in 1918 (Johnson 1987: 3). As such, the history of its relationship with the evolution of national identity and modernity is of special interest.

A great number of jazz musicians have sought to represent the sense of Australian place. From pioneers like Graeme and Roger Bell, to jazz modernists like Bruce Cale and Brian Brown, these attempts have ranged through song titles to attempts to find a musical language that evoked particular individuals, the distinctive flora and fauna, or rural and urban space. Apart from those mentioned, this has been a major and perennial project in the work of Dave Dallwitz and John Sangster. The former devoted himself primarily to the commemoration of historical events, while the latter took a more specifically sonic approach. This was especially prominent in his theme music for the TV series *Harry Butler in the Wild*, and on the recordings *Australia And All That Jazz*, Volume 1 (Cherry Pie CPS 1008, Sydney, 1971) and *Volume 2* (Cherry Pie CPF-1027 L-70198, Sydney, 1976), and less explicitly on the album *Peaceful* (EMI/Rain Forest YPRX 1747, Sydney 1979), which although not directly referencing Australia, includes compositions evocative of the Australian



soundscape, such as "Raindrops" and "Reed-Warbler Song".

The sleeves of both volumes of *Australia And All That Jazz* are replete with vivid full-colour photographs of the Australian landscape, flora and fauna. Apart from the visual elements, Sangster evokes the soundscape both through the music and his own notes on each track, in which he emphasises the instrumental choices he has made, as for example:

From *Volume 1*:

"The Birds" (Features Graeme Lyall's tenor saxophone)

"Forest, with birds" (features John Sangster on vibraphone and Don Burrows' alto flute)

"Rain (Water brings the desert to life.)" Features John Sangster's electric piano improvisation).

And from *Volume 2*:

"Bush Walk, with Curlew" (Two tenors, the marimba and the Bush-Curlew)

There is a sleeve note by F. A. Talbot, Director of the Australian Museum, and the following extracts foreground the convergence of many strands in Australian culture and jazz. He begins, "Would

\* I wish gratefully to acknowledge the resources of Australia's National Film and Sound Archives (NFSA) made available to me through a Scholars and Artists-in-Residence Fellowship in 2008. All audio-visual sources cited here are held by the NFSA.

you believe? A Museum promoting Cool jazz? Why not?" He describes the Australian landscape and jazz as, "a natural combination" explaining that the museum, "exhibits the tangible products of ethnic evolution, while Jazz is the outcome of the more transient aspects of the same evolution ... both comprising complementary forms of human progress – Anthropology" (ellipsis in the original). He refers to the various stakeholders in the project, and these include the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd. who provided generous assistance. This rather unlikely convergence between a wildlife conservation project and a massive mining company may be read as an attempt to reconcile two otherwise contending forces in Australian cultural history. And it is notable that the company brands itself as 'The Big Australian'. All this gives force to Talbot's theme, that the record is "a product of synthesis ... between education, big business, photographic art and musical creativity" (ellipsis in the original). He then addresses the music:

The music is not just cool jazz; it incorporates the sounds and feel of Australia – the differences between the red, dry heartland and the cool, lush valleys of the coastal fringes. Each piece of music depicts different aspects of the films; animals and scene changes are mirrored in changes in rhythm and instrumental combinations, and the music is as varied as the country it depicts. (Talbot, liner notes to Sangster 1971)

Discussing the decision to make a recording based on the films: "Take some of the sounds from nature ... birds, frogs, the rustle of foliage ... and interweave these with the music to make an LP record. This synthesis was a new concept for all concerned." (ibid.; ellipsis in the original).

Sangster also comments on his approach as composer/performer:

It had to incorporate miniature sounds, yet sounds which are warm, full of life and vigour. I wanted to contrast the feeling of life, which thrives in abundance around the water holes, with the great, open, empty, silence of the desert, and to highlight the tiny life-cycles which enliven even the dry heart of this dry continent. (Sangster, op. cit.)

His musical explication incorporates the following comments: "The 'musicians' of the Australian bush – the bell birds, whipbirds, kookaburras and frogs – whose artistry has been employed to heighten the mood of the music, were all recorded by Howard in their vast, open-air 'studio.'" "On 'First Light' and in the opening section of the film *Where Water is plentiful*, the improvisation 'was fed through a repeater system and then mixed with Howard's sounds of the bush at the first light of dawn." (Sangster, ibid.). In this image of the bush as a natural sound studio, and the mixing of bush sounds with Burrows' improvisation, we have as complete a convergence between jazz and the bush mythology as can be imagined, and achieved sonically.

It is important to remember that these bushscapes are unpopulated, except on one track on which man is characterized as potential destroyer. This is significant if we are talking about the bush mythology, in which the adversarial relationship between man and nature is actually the site of potential redemption, as in the film script for *Tall Timber* referred to below. In that mythology, it is precisely the conquest of the land that represents the triumph. The Sangster project is more strictly a harmonization between man (musicians, photographers) and the bush. This may be seen as a development of the bush narratives that bring it into the age of conservation. This project links man and nature not as physical adversaries, but as allies. The adversarial sound that sustained the original heroic bush myth was axes and logging equipment. In *Australia and all that Jazz* the men wield musical instruments and through the improvisational fluidity of jazz, achieve a harmonisation with the bush.

The mention of improvisation parallels one of the keys to the bush myth; that is the ability to improvise, to 'bodge' something together, make something out of the materials that happen to be at hand. There is in this a homology with the centrally distinguishing aspect of jazz (among the other Australian twentieth century musics). It provides a hook on which jazz can hang perhaps more appropriately than any other music.

The *Australia and all that jazz* project emphasizes the novelty of the convergences, and that signals the remarkable evolution in the relationship between jazz and Australia since the arrival of the music in the early twentieth century. Sangster's work is most conspicuously the mediation of Australian locality through jazz. But the negotiation is mutual, and I want to dilate on that other process which is neglected in studies of sonic mediation. That is, rather than the mediation of local identity through sound, the mediation of particular kinds of sound through local identity. I want briefly to summarise a historical process through which jazz passed from being regarded as a depraved modern music antagonistic to the 'Australian identity', to a symbiotic relationship. This was achieved by a merging of the music with the Australian *mythos* through a number of means, including a melding with the soundscapes of two archetypal Australian sites: the bush and the beach. Here I will focus on the former.

An Australian film, now lost, made for a 'Jazz Week' in Sydney in 1919 set the tone for the Australian movies of the 1920s through its title: *Does the Jazz Lead to Destruction?* Its publicity answered with a defiant yes. Throughout the decade jazz was demonised as the music and lifestyle of a degraded modern urban ethos, as illustrated by contrast with the bush, where Australian identity was formed through honest labour, masculine virtues, pioneer enterprise and anglo-saxon traditions of stolid decency. A number of feature films centred precisely on this contrast, as in Charles Chauvel's *Moth of Moombi* (1926) in which a country girl is drawn like a moth to the city where she becomes a victim of its glamour and jazz parties, and returns to the country sadder but wiser.

The reverse process is traced in Chauvel's other film from the same year, *Greenhide*. The central character is Margery, "Spoilt and motherless – living in a dream land" (intertitle). She is a city girl, a 'flapper', whose pointless and trivial lifestyle is summarised in a private garden party at which the all-girl guests project their 'new woman' status through such conduct as smoking prolifically and talking about gambling losses. The only men present are the members of a jazz band playing for their entertainment and, in Margery's case, backing a solo improvised dance. This is also the earliest surviving moving footage of an Australian jazz band. We are told that Margery is becoming bored with "eternal Seaside Sheiks and Hotel Lounge Lizards" (intertitle) and so she determines to visit her father's rural cattle station, where, of course, she discovers the embodiment of true masculine virtue in the form of the station manager, Gavin, aka Greenhide for his toughness. She trades jazz parties for darning his socks.

Similar associations are made in *Tall Timber* (1926). Although there is no surviving copy, the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) holds an early handwritten shooting script which is of great interest, not least because it indicates that the original title was *Wild Oats*, crossed out and replaced by *Tall Timbers*; showing a sense of the two poles of modern urban prodigality and on the other hand, redemptive bush imagery of woodfelling labour. The opening scene is a 'jazz party' at which the hero Jack Maxwell is described as "The most reckless spendthrift among the city's fastest set" (intertitle). Obviously drunk, he delivers a eulogy to 'the widow Cliquot' and describes her "dainty golden head and delicately sloping shoulders. When she kisses your lips dull care flotes [sic] off in amber bubbles

of delight. A sweet adler [sic] of wits ... Behold" (intertitle). And he points at the champagne bottle, from which a girl appears to emerge, and walks off with Jack. Disgraced by his debauched behaviour and disowned by his father, he retreats to a rural timber mill, where through honest labour and the love of a good country woman, he redeems himself. He not only becomes a member of the mill workforce, his now disclosed talents lead him to becoming a partner. This is a tale of the redemption of a prodigal son by becoming reconciled to the collective labour of the Australian bush.

These representations of the antagonism between jazz and a central site of Australian identity, the bush, could not be more extreme. Yet somewhere over the period from the late 1930s to the 1950s, this valency is reversed, a process inviting close investigation. This involved a marriage of jazz to two mythologies: the bush and the beach. One thing the two have in common which is central to Australian identity is outdoor recreation, and one of the features of the transition I am documenting is the shift of jazz activity from enclosed or indoor spaces like smoky, dimly lit clubs, or sybaritic garden parties to the healthy outdoors. It is suggestive that this also corresponded to the shift from silent to sound movies. The soundscape was thus able to be incorporated as a factor in the transition.

As Sangster's project exemplifies, the greatest impetus to the alliance with the bush was from the 1970s. Over the same decade increasing numbers of jazz festivals retreated to rural venues. There have developed annual jazz festivals in, for example, Merimbula, Moruya, Ballarat, Wagga, and today Australia's premier jazz festival is in rural Wangaratta. The world's oldest annual jazz festival, the Australian Jazz Convention, began in 1946 as an urban event, in Melbourne then Sydney and other capitals. Today it is most frequently held away from metropolitan centres. One of these festivals, held in rural Dubbo in 1970, was documented in a film produced by the government body, the Australian Commonwealth Film Unit, in its Australian Colour Diary series No 37, *Country Jazz* (ca. 1971). The title itself is instructive.

Behind the opening titles we hear the sound of a solo jazz trombone mingled with birdcalls, as a continuous aerial tracking shot creates a continuity between the transition from rural landscape to a jazz parade in the town. These choices visually and sonically embed jazz in that rural community. In the main street, the sound of a jazz band beginning "Bill Bailey" on a hotel balcony segues into the local Salvation Army band. These overlapping sounds are characteristic of the way jazz becomes 'naturalised' via the local soundscapes, complementing visual linkages. This is again manifested in the jazz picnic sequence, in which delegates and locals are seen and heard swimming in the river, drinking and picnicking. The underscore is Margret Roadknight singing "Weeping Willow Blues". Again, what we see – a typical Australian rural leisure scene – is directly linked to a jazz/blues standard. Like the song we hear, this *al fresco* jazz convention activity is merged with the bush setting. As the scene concludes the music fades into the soundscape of birdcalls, the jazz is absorbed into the bush noises. (Jazz) culture merges into (Australian) nature, and both emerge as a version of Australian identity.

The film concludes with the dawn after New Year's Eve celebrations. The streets are empty except for what appear to be post-revels stragglers. The trombonist plays, recalling the sound at the opening sequence. As they walk down the middle of the road the impression is that they are entitled to this space, they have a place in this rural township, with their instruments and their jazz. The sound of the solo trombone fades into the Salvation Army band, again establishing continuity with the music of the local community. A slow pan backwards, like the opening scene in reverse, establishes the same sense of continuities, of life continuing, like a fade in and fade

out on a song. The music again segues from the Salvation Army into a jazz underscore: Margret Roadknight is heard singing "Gimme That Old Time Religion", again a direct link with the Salvation Army band. The sounds of brass-band hymns and jazz, sacred and profane, merge into each other, reconciled in this rural space that so centrally stands for Australian tradition: the bush town.

The implications of these developing connections with the natural landscape and soundscape remain to be explored further, ranging from matters I have touched on here – the potential of jazz to map the evolution of the Australian identity – to more specifically sonic questions. Playing outdoors, as opposed to within a highly regulated interior concert space, for example, produces a very different adaptation to the performance space, a different consciousness of sound, different articulation, and audible changes to musical execution. These enquiries go beyond the scope of this discussion. In the meantime, the negotiation between jazz and the distinctively Australian soundscape is a two way process; the music mediates the soundscape, but the soundscape also mediates the music.

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## Discography

- John Sangster. *Australia And All That Jazz*, Volume 1 (Cherry Pie CPS 1008, Sydney, 1971); Volume 2 (Cherry Pie CPF-1027 L-70198, Sydney, 1976).
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## Filmography (chronological)

- Does the Jazz Lead to Destruction?*, dir. unknown, 1919
- Moth of Moombi*, dir. Charles Chauvel, 1926
- Greenhide*, dir. Charles Chauvel, 1925
- Tall Timber*, shooting script by Dunstan Webb, 1926
- Country Jazz*, Australian Colour Diary No. 37. Production Company: Australian Commonwealth Film Unit, 1971

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# *Aural (re)locations: Listening to place*

By Michelle Duffy (Monash University) &  
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In recent research, we have sought to understand the reciprocal relationships between music, sound and place, and what this may mean for notions of belonging and community-making. Yet, to investigate this is difficult, because responses to sound – and sound itself – are personal, embodied, transient and difficult to articulate in words. Furthermore, the processes of hearing and listening are understood differently. How to research the sonic qualities of place? And, in our thinking about the interconnections between bodies, place and sound: what is it about the qualities of sound that enables us to inhabit space, to call a place home?

An opportunity arose to explore how sound promotes such connection, and disconnection, when we were invited to undertake a consultancy by the director of the Four Winds Festival, a classical music festival held biannually in the New South Wales coastal town of Bermagui. The director wanted to find out how people responded emotionally to attending this event. Did the festival sounds sustain or enhance an experience of belonging to Bermagui? How we went about this – and the sorts of methodological challenges we negotiated – is discussed here, where we explore the role of sound in place-making, and the significance this has for notions of place-based belonging.

Much work concentrates on the representational aspects of sound, and this framework understands music in terms of a text that is analysed by deconstructing its constituent elements: the song lyrics, rhythm, instrumentation or melodic structures. This approach can tell us a great deal about place-based belonging – music helps forge place-based identifications – but it doesn't really assist us in understanding and articulating the *experiential* processes involved. That is, a focus on what music may represent doesn't really provide us with an understanding of the very ways that sound becomes embodied in idiosyncratic ways. Moreover, and complicating our analysis, the experiential nature of sound is a paradoxical thing; it is transient and ephemeral yet it can have such a profound quotidian impact.

Many researchers have pointed to the different roles sound has within the social realm. Significant to our project is the work of anthropologists Charles Keil and Steven Feld (1994) who suggested that the sound of music has the ability to forge a sense of community through sustaining a feeling of “being in the groove together”. Music therapist Gary Ansdell (2004) advances this argument; the rhythmic, tonal and tactile qualities of the sound of music allow and enable personal and social things “to happen.” Thinking about the potential euphoria of the sound of music in this way is suggestive of shared, social experience (Fiumara 2006). Yet, the sounds of a festival may equally be construed by some as an intrusion, as a disruptive noise that cannot be screened out by a curtain or blind. Hence, listening always occurs *in situ*. Mindful that listening is always spatially and temporally contingent, how do people use sound as a medium to help create a sense of self and belonging in the wider world? This is what we have sought to address in our listening projects. More specifically, we wished to consider *listening*

as a central process in the reciprocal relationships between bodies, place and sound (Smith 2000).

Hearing and listening are understood as quite distinctive practices. Those who are not hearing-impaired have the ability to hear, even when asleep. Listening, however, is a conscious activity: it requires some level of concentration and engagement; its a process of actively creating and attributing meaning. Hence, the soundscapes of our everyday lives are not passive outcomes of simply hearing sounds. Rather, as Barry Truax (2001) suggested, soundscapes are an outcome of simultaneously encountering, listening, giving meaning to, responding to, and interacting with the silences and rhythmic and tonal qualities of music and sound. Listening operates in emotional, bodily and psychological ways. Yet, these are difficult, slippery things to access. In our project, our focus was on those feelings, sensations and bodily affects that are aroused when engaging with sound, the things actually difficult to articulate in words. (Something that is most often understood as the very function of music, as it enables us to experience emotions precisely because they cannot be expressed by any other medium; Åhlberg 1994; Langer 1942; Wood & Smith 2004). Our specific methodological challenge, then, was to think of sympathetic ways to capture the ephemeral, and make the intangible accessible.

What we decided to use were ‘sound diaries’, a method based on solicited diary methodologies but one that asks participants to explore the more sonic, intuitive and affective aspects of sounds in their social lives (refer also to Duffy & Waitt forthcoming; Waitt & Duffy forthcoming; Wood et al 2007). Each participant was equipped with a digital recorder the size of a mobile telephone, and asked to record those sounds meaningful to them in some way. Our reasoning behind this was that recording such in-the-moment sounds offers a starting point from which to gain insights into how individuals use sonic processes in making corporeal sense of self and place. Moreover, and in light of our research aims, when combined with traditional methods of interview and participant observation, solicited sound dairies offered to help gain access to bodily affects and emotions.

Our request for sound recordings was to be undertaken within two different contexts: that of participants’ everyday lives, and while attending the Four Winds Festival. We then asked participants to take part in a conversation quite soon after the recordings, where we talked about what was recorded and why. In this way, we hoped to explore three broad areas of enquiry: how participants understood and classified sound; how sound mobilized their bodies (what they felt, did the sounds make them want to move in certain ways); and any potential connections or relationships felt between the sounds they recorded and the place of Bermagui. We also found that a number of participant’s recordings included their own spontaneous bodily and emotional reactions to the sounds they heard, and this was very useful when we started to reflect on the *doing* of sound in these instances.



Blair picnic

Bermagui is a small, coastal town on the east coast of Australia, some 400 kilometres south of Sydney. Its population is characterised by socio-economic diversity, brought about by successive waves of in-migration, from the initial European settlers displacing the Aboriginal people of the Yuin Nation in the late nineteenth century, to the arrival of fishers, loggers and farmers in early twentieth century, and later groups characterised as ‘hippies’ in the 1960s. More recently, Bermagui has redefined itself as a ‘sea-change’ town, with an influx of elderly residents from Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney.

In the sound diaries we gathered and the ensuing conversations, many of the participants in our project revealed themselves to be relatively recent arrivals in Bermagui: examples of this sea- and tree-change phenomenon. And perhaps not surprisingly, when they made their sound dairies of everyday Bermagui, most often what was recorded were sounds of the non-human world; in particular sounds suggestive of untouched and unspoiled Nature. The pounding of the surf driven by the change in tidal patterns, frogs heralding rain, wattlebirds amongst the grevillea, lyrebirds and their clever mimicry – each of these sounds aroused pleasure in some listeners. Our methodology also provided the auditors with self-reflexive opportunities. For example, one participant recorded sounds of the surf not far from where she lived, explaining,

When we moved here [then] I realised what a water person I am. And I think it’s the rhythm of that, [you know], because I probably listen to music less now at home and let that sound of the surf be the background. Because it’s got its own pull about it, and its own sort of life force (conversation SB February 2008).

She went on to further describe what these sounds of nature meant to her, saying that,

It’s a very gentle environment and it is very nourishing and I don’t get any of the nourishing unless I’m in it... And I didn’t really understand *being* in nature before (conversation SB February 2008).

SB infers how the sounds of nature immerse her body, operating for her as a source of nourishment. Other participants recorded similar nature sounds, and spoke of the ways in which these reminded them of a benevolent environment, a world apart from the stresses and strains of modern urban life. These sounds provide a vital clue as to how people make sense of Bermagui as home within an apparently pristine nature.

Not surprisingly, noise was associated with human sounds of traffic and construction. Hence, many also revealed their ongoing concern to protect this place, particularly from property developers who, they felt, were attempting to remake Bermagui as a scaled-down form of the city. For instance KW explained,

You’re either coming here because you like the tranquillity and the lifestyle of Bermagui [and] a bit laid back, but beautiful all the same and unspoilt, or you get back into the rat race of the city where there’s all the noise and the pollution and everything else (conversation March 2008).

Upon further contemplation, participants suggested that these sounds also raise much more nuanced and entangled connections between nature and their individual personal lives. One such example is heard in the following exchange between husband and wife, DW and KW, who, when asked to reflect upon the sounds of Bermagui, talked about the sounds of birds;

KW: If you really want to find out what a place is like, get up before the sparrow farts and listen, and you’ll hear it come alive. That bird you usually hear first thing in the morning –

DW: – the wattle bird –

KW: – the wattle bird – and he wakes the forest up. And then after that, then they all start.

DW: The magpies in the area, you know, then usually the other birds don’t come around until the sun’s up –

KW: – no –

DW: – but the wattle bird’s the early bird. And we’ve got possums here. And they travel between Leo – he’s next door – to mine and next door but one, and they go for the birdseed as well. ‘Cos we all feed the birds (conversation, March 2008).

There’s an enchanting rhythm in the way each interjects and reiterates this telling, and within this exchange they both perform the knowing of Bermagui; KW beginning with, ‘if you really want to find out what a place is like ...’ followed by their litany of named birdcalls and the ways these connect to the approach of dawn. In these descriptions of sound and place we begin to discern how people map themselves into this soundscape. In their recounting of these sounds, KW and DW point to their own personal mappings of their neighbourhood within particular networks. For example, their list of birdcalls also maps onto connections with neighbours of ‘like-mindedness’, as in the description of Leo “he’s next door – to mine and next door but one” who also feeds the local birds and possums. Soundscapes are, therefore, mapped into networks of the non-human and human relationships in quite personal ways that then produce a sense of belonging.

These sonic mappings of place and belonging were also more complexly articulated. A first issue raised in analysis of material from the sound diaries and conversations suggests that belonging in Bermagui is not simply *represented* through the sounds of the non-human world. Rather, linked to such initial sound representa-

tions of Bermagui is a connection made to the *experiential* ways of being in place, as we hear in SB's telling of what the sounds of her printer mean to her in her everyday world, saying as she made the recording,

This is my printer, printing out something, and I love this sound because it makes me feel like I'm getting something done. And I can leave my office and go outside and be in the beautiful world...you might be able to hear the pitter patter of rain outside. And I feel like I'd just like to walk around and splash in it really. And this place when it's wet certainly takes on a new life, which I love (sound diary recording February 2008).

SB's discussion around these sounds suggests a more entangled relationship between categories of the non-human and human worlds and the ways in which individuals create relationships of belonging to Bermagui. The printer's sounds prompt her in terms of doing; she's completed work and can go outside. The sounds beyond the threshold of her home office become configured as nature in which to relax and play. Yet, this is not a nature that is experienced as a separate realm. SB goes on to talk about how, since moving there, she wants to be outside. 'I wasn't a nature person,' she explains, "Nature was something you looked at but didn't participate in... it's sort of one dimensional unless you're in the outdoors" (conversation February 2008). Listening to the pitter patter of rain, SB gives us clues to how Bermagui has reconfigured her understanding of nature, and how the sound of rain reconfigures her understanding of Bermagui.

Second, these sonic mappings evoke memories of past times and places. For instance CB talks about the sound of magpies and hints at the sometimes difficult relationship between father and son.

When I hear the magpies here, I automatically think of Binalong and my role as a father ... and things that I could have done better as a father. Young magpies here, those that make such a lot of noise, those raucous young things that are grey and, not quite fully covered up, hanging around with their parents—are a bloody nuisance in the sense that they make a heck of a lot of noise, not very musical, and they dig up your garden—I'm a keen gardener—and they get into your garden and dig around and send things everywhere while they're looking around for things to eat (conversation CB February 2008).

In these sorts of responses, we start to hear how the ways in which people listen and respond to place is intricately woven into their personal geography, history, and social networks that extend beyond the time-space of the here and now.

With some idea of the ways that residents of Bermagui listened to their everyday worlds, we turned to the listening practices of those who attended the festival. The Four Winds Festival began in 1991. Support initially came from a group of residents who had a love of classical and contemporary music and networks to professional classical music circuits. The festival venue itself is significant. Private land was made available for the festival venue in a natural amphitheatre some nine kilometres from Bermagui. Here, the music of the festival can be enhanced by sounds that stabilise understandings of an Australian bushland setting. Since its small beginnings, the festival now draws around 1,000 attendees each day to the ticketed program. A new feature of the 2008 festival, and part of the festival organisers' wishes to promote and celebrate social diversity and inclusivity, was a free opening concert held in a public park within Bermagui. We invited the participants who made the initial recordings of everyday Bermagui, as well as recruiting new participants,



Feast on a brightly-lit evening

to take part in creating festival sound diaries, and recordings were made at both the free opening event and the ticketed festival.

In our follow-up conversations at the festival, we hear a range of responses to the soundscape of the festival that nonetheless connect to the festival director's concerns for enhancing ideas of community. A number of those who took part in creating sound diaries spoke of the music and sounds of the festival site as a backdrop to what they saw primarily as the social space of the festival. This view is something the director readily acknowledges, saying;

The thing is that in feedback there's four reasons people came to Four Winds; and one of them was that they love the sort of social, community feel. And then they like that it's a very nourishing physical environment, and they think the beauty of the place is extraordinary ... And then, the third reason was that you didn't have to love all the music – you could be there and read the paper or do the crossword or go and have some oysters if you got a bit frustrated. And *then*—oh! oh! There's music! (conversation, 4 February 2008)

Yet, we argue this point of view is one more commonly expressed when evaluating music festivals through formal interview structures set apart from the actual sounds of the festival. Using this methodology alone, sound and music are understood primarily as the *context* for the event. In contrast, the conversations that arose with participants while listening to the sound diaries point to a different sensibility of this social space, one that is much more interconnected in and through different sensory modes. Importantly, this method of asking participants to focus on sound led to a different tuning in to the festival's social space, and what arose were thoughts and responses much more focused on how people interrelate. For example, one attendee at the festival described the effects of listening to the music performed in these terms;

R: One of the things that in your experiment, draws my attention to it like in the performance on Friday at the oval and here, getting moved by the music, and then I look around, I think this is my community, you know I look around and I, there is the women in the local corner shop and there is the people I know. And, I just think how lucky are we ... and also this community has drawn this thing [together].

Gordon: You think it enhances that sense of belonging and community that you have just been talking about?

R: And pride in the community,

Gordon: A sense of pride

R: And a touch of awe, something like this happening in your own backyard

(conversation: 22 March 2008).

Our request to focus on the music of the festival gave this participant a renewed means to express her sense of community in emotive, rhythmic and sonorous ways. In this framework, belonging is described in terms that are – both emotionally and bodily – affective qualities in and through which she orients herself within noise, silence, vibrations and music. Music is a uniting force at the festival. In this quotation there are elements of what Maffesoli (1996) terms the 'social divine'. For R, the experience of music is equivalent to religion, when religion is used to denote a unifying force, a 'common

matrix, a foundation of the 'being-together' (Maffesoli, 1996: 38). This attendance to sound also led participants to reiterate connections to the non-human, natural world of Bermagui. Participants spoke in terms of an almost dialogic relationship between music, sound and nature, in which the music performed on stage guided the listener to observe the physical setting of the festival. We hear this connection in one participant's conversation after creating the sound diary, where she explained,

how it [the music] stays in another energy form and later in the performance with the Indian singer my eyes would go to the trees and the slight movement. And, I found that I could hear the music better when I didn't watch the musicians but watched the trees and the plants – it went in through more channels – you know, the emotion, the heart, the body (conversation R 2008).

In such a response we hear how music is central to the ways subjectivities and space are conceptualized as interactive. Consequently, she comes to feel 'in place' in terms of being part of 'her community' through the very physiological responses of bodies. We hear in such responses how sound and music are an integral part of the ways space presses against the bodies of individuals, and of necessity touches at their subjectivities. In the context of this festival, it is an awareness of the non-human world that is re-activated – or perhaps it is that those attending are reminded of this. For example, we hear in this quote how music opens points of connection with the non-human world;

These couple of pieces of music, all of a sudden ... I really became conscious of a bit of wind coming up, and the birds started going a bit mad, and I heard a wedged tail eagle, and then I heard a bloody crow, and then [laughing] because it was about air, all the birds came to life, and I was looking at this brilliant blue sky, and it was just like, I suddenly became really conscious of the birds, but it was just perfect for the location, it was just a beautiful experience and [pause] totally engrossing and riveting for me, it was just transfixing. (conversation R 2008).

Nor were these connections between sound, music and the festival bushland setting merely serendipitous. The portrayal of nature-as-scenic landscape is a significant performed element in this festival. This was clearly demonstrated during the performance of Peter Sculthorpe's *Cello Dreaming* (1998). When the piece was introduced, musicians were scattered around the top edges of the amphitheatre. Accompanied by the birdcalls in the surrounding trees, the piece started with each musician improvising birdcalls as they walked down towards the stage. Included in this performance was musician William Barton, a Kalkadoon man from Mt Isa (Queensland), who as part of this performance also improvised bird calls on a didjeridu. With the exception of Barton, musicians gradually halted their improvisation after moving onto or behind the stage. Barton continued playing as he sat himself near the cello soloist, Emma Jane Murphy. Barton's mother, Delmae, herself an accomplished musician, moved onto the stage and performed a vocal improvisation accompanied by the didjeridu. Upon Barton's signal – blown overtones, a common cadential pattern for some traditional didjeridu performances – all became silent except for the cello, which opened with a slow, minor melody. Yet, in this particular performance, the space was also deeply intersected with a range of criss-crossing rela-

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1 However, his country in Aboriginal terms is not that of Bermagui, which raises complex issues around representation and place-relations in cross-cultural contexts. While members of the Yuin nation were present at the ticketed festival, there was no public acknowledgement of their presence, although a fire had been lit as part of a traditional smoking ceremony of welcome.

tionships between settler, immigrant and indigenous Australians. For example, Barton's Australian Indigenous identity recognises a much older set of connections to place,<sup>4</sup> while his performance on didjeridu reconfigures Sculthop's composition *Cello Dreaming* with a reclaiming of what 'Dreaming' conceptualises and expresses in Indigenous terms.

Conceptualising music as a performative practice in this way (Butler 1990) opens up a line to productively think on the ways in which both expected and unintended outcomes of music festival events can be evaluated. Music as a performative practice is thus conceptualized as involving openness and exchange, where bodies are affected and then affect each other in and through place. Individuals feel these exchanges and articulate them as emotions, but this also makes possible particular connections informed by, but always more than, the social context of 'proper' listening practice.

This focus also elicits ways of knowing through the listening body that cannot be expressed in language, those unspeakable experiences that are significant to place- and community-making (Fiumara 2006; Langer 1942; Wood et al 2007), as expressed by this participant,

the exquisite beauty – um – what is coming into my mind now is like moments of sacredness – where you are moved to that place – by music or a sacred ceremony or a sacred place – it is the same feeling that stays inside. Absolutely beyond words. Yes it is. Yet known to everyone (conversation R 2008).

The benefit of this method meant there was no need for pre-structured interviews, rather what was accommodated were the unpredictable feelings and bodily responses that arise within an event, and encouraged participants to listen self-reflexively. Attendees were given an opportunity to participate directly in the data gathering in ways that gave credence to emotional and difficult to articulate responses. In addition, these sound diaries facilitated access to the ways in which particular sounds became part of collective and individual embodied geographies and histories. Our point is simply that sound diaries and the conversations they generated provided possibilities to articulate the affective responses to sound in an improvised manner, as it happened, providing self-reflexive accounts and experiences of what happens within and between listening bodies. Interpretation required a form of narrative analysis where attention was given to not only what was said, but also verbal expression. The intonation in the participant's voice provides important clues to the bodily effects of listening.

What we have attempted to think through in this paper are ways to address the particularity of sonic processes that recognise that music festival participants have ears (and bodies). Although, as one participant explained, "People come together as a whole instrument – made up of the many human beings and form a new living being – it is just transitory – and then it is gone" (interview R 2008), the sorts

of knowledge about place and community derived from listening – the intuitive responses to rhythmic pulse, the influence of emotions and affect – offer new understandings of the social relationships between sound and music processes, place and bodies.

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# Thinking about Grain of the Voice

By Arthur & Corinne Cantrill

There are many strands in our filmmaking practice, which now spans 50 years [ed. and over 80 films]. Quite early we became interested in the Australian landscape as our subject and inspiration.

In 1973 we became aware (thanks to the film/video maker Joseph El Khourey) of the 1901 film documentation of Arunta ceremonies by Walter Baldwin Spencer, and of his writing in *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*.<sup>1</sup> Intrigued with Baldwin Spencer's writing on the Arunta people, his photographs and film work, we set off to visit Uluru, Katatjuta, Unthurqua, and to travel along the MacDonnell Ranges. We undertook a constant filming practice, and recording of ambient sound.<sup>2</sup>

Before leaving Melbourne on this "expedition" we had obtained permission to visit the Areyonga Community, with a view to recording some tradi-

tional singing, which we might use to accompany the landscape films. It must be stated honestly, that we wished to engage, even at a surface level, with indigenous tribal people – even just to have a clearer understanding of what was taking place, out of sight of the city, with government policies obliging people to live in communities such as Areyonga, far from their tribal lands.

For us, there has always been the understanding that until relatively recently this was an Aboriginal, indigenous landscape – and evidences, traces, clues of this are everywhere.<sup>3</sup>

One aspect we noticed was the appropriation by Arnhem Land singing of local bird song and rhythms, which seemed to correspond to our own use of insect sounds and bird calls as "music" in our other landscape films. Yet our practice has primarily been concerned with the film image, both in the filming and the editing process. As we work on the image, we have several possible ideas for the sound, drawing upon our field recordings of wind, water, birds, insects, etc., and these may be used as unaltered sound, or mixed, slowed or manipulated in other ways. Possible sound ideas are tried out against the edited film; if interesting, the idea will be further developed, otherwise abandoned, and after considering as to why a

sound has not worked, another sound idea is pursued.

Our driving took us through South Australia into the Northern Territory and along the western MacDonnell Ranges. Yet the journey was a disheartening experience! Everywhere, the great

mythical landscapes and sites, described so vividly in anthropological writings had been corralled into cattle stations, tourist developments, and picnic spots. Unthurqua, the sacred place described in such detail by Baldwin Spencer, was especially painful to come upon.

We arrived in Areyonga (360 kilometres west of Alice Springs) at a difficult time. It was in transition from being controlled by the Lutheran Church, as a sub branch of Hermannsburg Mission, to being run by the Federal Government, on the way to being controlled by the people themselves. It was also a time of internal upheaval as there had been some deaths or killings just

before we arrived. It was also a period when young men and women were being initiated, and segregated from wider contact.

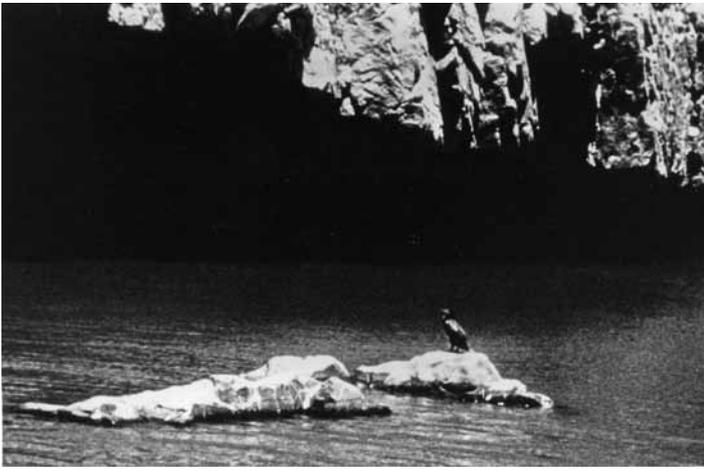
Although we had written ahead to say that we would like to record traditional songs, we were directed towards younger men who were into Country and Western music – a specialty of the community – with which we declined to be involved. We were finally introduced to senior Songmen and Songwomen – tribal elders in the Pitjantjatjara community.

They were quite circumspect, and no definite arrangement was made. A few hours later, a group of women arrived, to say that they were ready for us to record their singing. We went down to a dry riverbed outside Areyonga, and set up our Nagra, our Beyer microphone, and prepared our non-synch, hand wound 16mm Bolex camera, which we intended to use sparingly.

There were three older Songwomen, and behind them a large group of younger women and children who were to listen and to beat a rhythm. The Songwomen did not speak English. They were to sing an important traditional song cycle – "Two Women" – a story of two ancestral beings, travelling across the Central Australian landscape, stopping on the way at special sites: waterholes, gorges, etc.



*Grain of the Voice* with Corinne Cantrill as protagonist; La Mama Theatre, Carlton, Australia, 1980. Born from a dissatisfaction with the ambience of conventional film screening an expanded cinema approach with elaborate set design was utilised to represent aspects of the Central Australian landscape and experience.



Still image from the film, *Grain of the Voice*

The song cycle was in a series of “verses”, with pauses in between, during which there would be whispered discussions, possibly about the development of the narrative, laughter, coughing, mixed with the ambient sounds. There was an interesting arrangement of the three voices – each of the women had a distinctive voice quality that brought a tonal complexity to the sound of the song cycle.

We were very reluctant to film during the singing, suspecting they were more comfortable with sound recording (one young indigenous woman also recorded the songs on an audio cassette recorder). We filmed the group before, as the singing began, and then finally as the song cycle was concluding, all in black and white. Fortunately, our reel of quarter inch audio tape ran long enough not to need changing.

We did not ask for a translation of the words. We had already been told that it was the story of two ancestors travelling through country, stopping, resting, and then continuing their travels.

Everyone’s spirits were lifted by this experience, and it was decided to sing another shorter and well-known popular song cycle – “Seven Sisters” (the Pleiades<sup>4</sup>), to which younger women present joined in.

The women had apparently “tested the waters” with us, as it led to the senior men coming forward the next afternoon for us to record with them. This was a larger group of about six men, with a similar arrangement of different voice qualities among the principal Songmen. The song cycle recorded was “Rock Wallaby and Blackbird” – again the travels of ancestral beings through the landscape. Once again, we did some preliminary filming before and at the beginning of the singing. This time the men progressively decorated their bodies with ochre as they sang.

We left Areyonga the next day, as the weather was worsening, and also knowing that there were serious tensions about the recent deaths in the community.

The experience of being at Areyonga and in touch, however superficially, with these remarkable senior tribal men and women, left us deeply and powerfully moved.

When we returned to Melbourne a few weeks later, we got to see the hours of film we had shot along the MacDonnell Ranges, and to begin thinking about the image and the possible soundtrack. There had been no definite decision to use the recordings we had made at Areyonga with the film, although we realized that we had filmed along the MacDonnell Ranges, travelling east to west, as did the subjects of the songs, and that we had stopped at particular places, waterholes, riverbeds, gorges for more detailed work.

Of course, there was no literal interpretation of the song cycles – we were not stopping at the places described in the songs – any such connection is metaphoric only.

When we tried the song cycles against the film material we found a surprising relationship, a harmony of the two working together – one

seemed to be made for the other. We agreed that this was the way we would proceed. We decided not to edit the sound recordings in any way: the pauses between verses, coughing, laughter, whispering, the dogs barking, a donkey braying, the occasional false start were all a part of the song cycles.

We borrowed the series title for the three films from Roland Barthes’ essay “The Grain of the Voice” (first published in 1972 as “Le grain de la voix”), which we had read earlier.<sup>5,6</sup> We had our own interpretation of the phrase ‘grain of the voice’ – we had an interest in how each society, each culture manifests itself through the voice qualities of language, speech, singing, laughing, music – qualities of softness, harshness, texture, precision, etc. – and that through these, and without the need of translation, we can learn much about the culture. Barthes wrote of “the grain” being “the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue; ... the body in the voice as it sings . . .”, and this also connected with our project.<sup>7</sup>

Just as the song cycles were unedited, there is little editing of the film image. We largely adhered to the travelling from east to west along the MacDonnell Ranges for *Two Women* (1980), with the pauses between verses often coinciding with stopping at particular sites. Our journey corresponds to the songline and perhaps as a result, a serendipitous coming together of image and sound occurred in this project. This was in contrast with our usual approach to film-making, where close editing is often paramount.

There was a sense in the films that the disembodied voices, leaving the confines of Areyonga, were freed to visit the ancestral lands. At the end, when the camera returned to the singers at Areyonga, there was a feeling of sadness and loss.

See *Cantrills Filmmotes*, Double Issue #33/34 (August 1980) for a longer and more detailed account of this work as film, and as a film-theatre-performance work given at La Mama, Melbourne.

## Endnotes

- 1 Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London, 1899 (Reprinted by Dover Publications, New York, 1968)
- 2 Our Baldwin Spencer obsession led us to make *Reflections on Three Images by Baldwin Spencer* (1974), and *Studies in Image (De)Generation* (1975). These are silent, as all efforts to arrive at sound for these films failed – the 1901 silent footage, reworked on an optical printer, had inherent visual rhythms which had no need for audio accompaniment.
- 3 In a quartet of our early films *The Native Trees of Stradbroke Island* (1964), and even in some of the episodes of our 1961 children’s series *Kip and David*, filmed on Stradbroke Island, Queensland, and elsewhere in the Bush. In an episode of *Kip and David*, ‘David’ climbs a huge midden heap on Stradbroke Island and finds stone tools crafted for opening shellfish. (The rows of midden heaps have since been destroyed by sand mining.)
- 4 In 1969, considering the sound for films such as *Bouddi* and *Earth Message*, we asked the Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now AIATSIS) if we could use some of Dr. Alice Moyle’s recordings of non-secret, secular songs from Arnhem Land to accompany the landscape images. We received permission to do this and were provided with tapes of the music. We would not have considered this, even a few years later – we would have made our own recordings, or used ambient landscape sounds as a basis for the work. At the time these films were a means for us to engage with the authentic Australian culture, after four years in Europe.
- 5 Greek mythology associated with the Pleiades open star cluster in the constellation of Taurus. It is among the nearest star clusters to Earth and is the cluster most obvious to the naked eye in the night sky. Pleiades has several meanings in different cultures and traditions.

- 5 Three films with the generic title of *Grain of the Voice* were produced: Two Women (1980), Seven Sisters (1980), and Rock Wallaby and Blackbird (1980).
- 6 Roland Barthes, "Le grain de la voix", *Musique en jeu* 9, 1972 (Published in English as "The Grain of the Voice" in *Image-Music-Text, Roland Barthes, Essays Selected and Translated by Stephen Heath*, Fontana, Glasgow, 1972)
- 7 *Image-Music-Text, Roland Barthes, Essays Selected and Translated by Stephen Heath*, Fontana, Glasgow, 1972, p. 295

ARTHUR & CORINNE CANTRILL have been making films since 1960; at first documentaries on art, then experimental film since 1969; and they edited and published *Cantrills Filmnotes*, a journal on film and video art, from 1971 to 2000.

They have been active in several directions of film research (and have made more than eighty films, many of them quite provocative), such as multi-screen projection, and film-performance; single-frame structuring of film; landscape filmmaking, and all of their work deeply explores the process of filming and the audience perception of visuals with a particular fixation upon the use of landscape in order to create a national identity.

Their filmwork and publishing is well-known internationally; they are represented in several film collections including those of Musée national d'art moderne (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris), New York Museum of Modern Art, The British Council, and the National Library of Australia. Their films have been shown at the Centre Pompidou and The Louvre in Paris, the New York Museum of Modern Art, as well as numerous art museums and film festivals.

In 1996 Arthur Cantrill retired as Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne.

## *Photo Essay: Orthopteroid Insects in the Muller Range, Papua New Guinea*

Photos & Essay by Dave Rentz

In mid September 2009 I had the privilege of accompanying a group from Conservation International into the Muller Range, Western Province, Papua New Guinea. This is located in the "Karst District", a region of karst topography, which of course, would mean a limestone substrate topped with about a foot of topsoil. The

fauna was fantastic but not easy to see. One had to wander about at night with a torch and be very alert. None of these katydids or crickets were heard or recorded in the field. But there are some things we can say about them based on related species and our knowledge of the behaviour of rainforest orthopterans. – *Dave Rentz*



Fig. 1. An important insect component of tropical rainforests, katydids control excess growth of plant life, assist in pollination, and provide food for myriads of other organisms. They have remarkable cryptic adaptations. This one resembles bark with lichens. It sits motionless during the day on appropriate trees where it is usually overlooked by potential predators. Alike to the katydid in figure 4, this specimen can be expected to stridulate at irregular intervals, apparently to avoid tracking by predators.



Fig. 2. A phylloporine, *Phyllophora* sp. The resemblance to leaves by tropical katydids is truly remarkable. This one is complete with “dead patches” you might expect to see on any leaf. The Phylloporinae are known only from Old World rainforest.



Fig. 3. A phylloporine katydid, probably *Sasima* sp. The Phylloporinae all have the peculiarly shaped thorax and all known species are unique for the family Tettigoniidae in that the males have no stridulatory file on the left forewing. However, adults and nymphs alike can “squeak” or “rasp” when annoyed by rubbing the metasterna against a series of minute tubercles on the hind coxae.

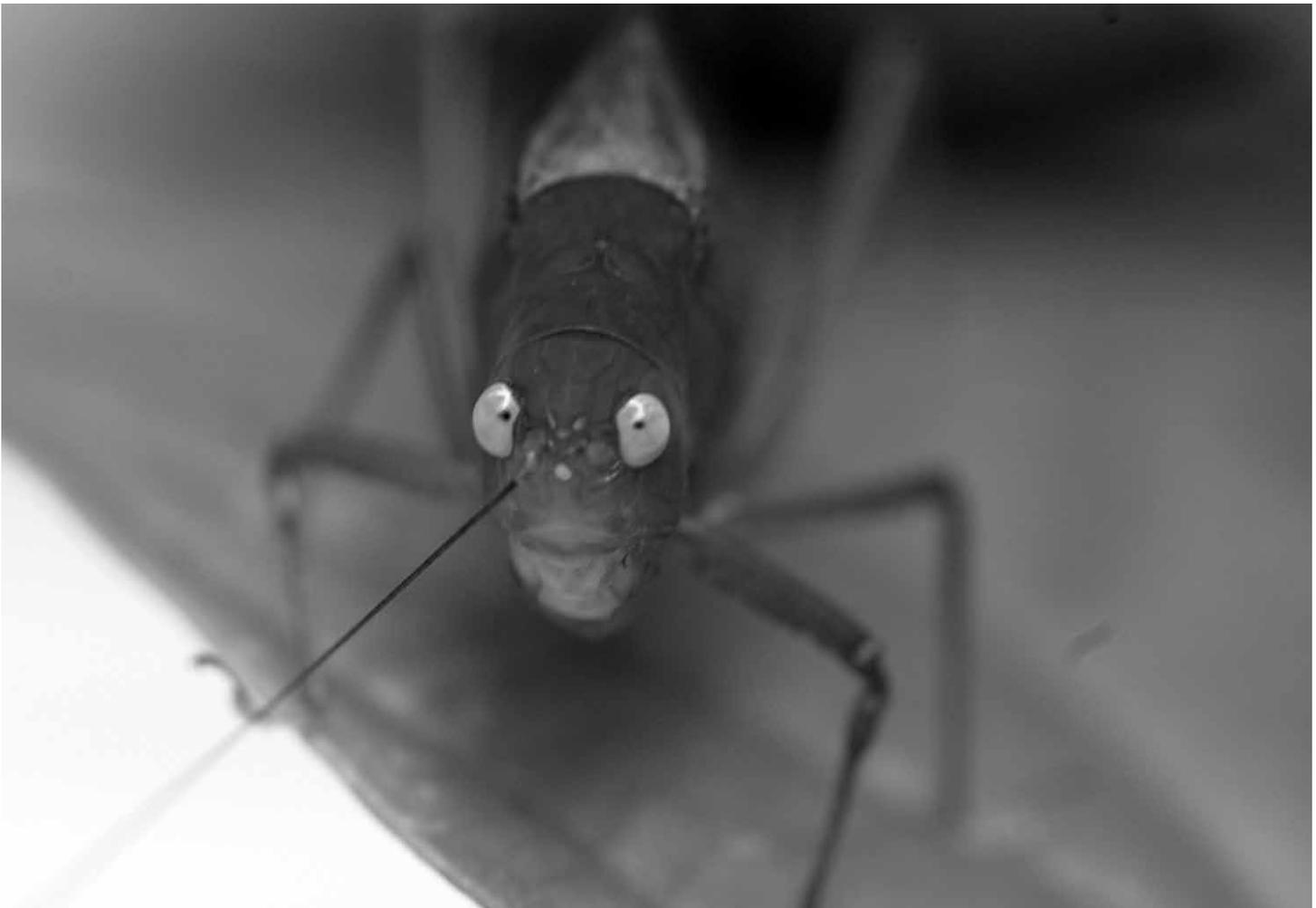


Fig. 4. Purple Eyes! A phaneropterine katydid, probably *Caedicia* sp. Otherwise plain green, the eyes on this species are a real standout. Just why this species should be so adorned, is open for study. High frequency call emitted at irregular intervals.



Fig. 5. A chirping katydid, *Acauloplacella* sp. There are many related species in this group in the New Guinea rainforests. These katydids have a characteristic gestalt. The Australian species sing with an erratic chirping sound very audible to the human ear from a considerable distance.



Fig. 6. A Raspy Cricket, family Gryllacrididae, representing an unknown (but not necessarily undescribed) genus. All known members of this family can produce sound by rubbing a series of tubercles on the inside of the hind femur against ridges on the adjacent portion of the abdomen. Unlike the katydids, the sound seems to be exclusively defensive and may be used to deter predators. All stages, from the tiniest nymphs to the adults, seem to exhibit this behaviour.

DAVID RENTZ received his PhD in Entomology from the University of California, Berkeley and was appointed Curator of Entomology at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. He held that position until 1975 when he took a similar position at the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco. From 1976 to 2001 he was Curator of Orthopteroid Insects in the Australian National Insect Collection, Canberra (CSIRO). His research specialty is the Katydids (Tettigoniidae) and he has produced three volumes of a Monograph on the Australian species. He has written widely on Australian Orthopteroid Insects and has produced a number of CDs and CD-ROMs as well as popular books on Australian fauna. He currently lives in retirement in Kuranda, Queensland.

## Soundscapes Dolmetching: Two scores and a fantasy in between.

By Alessandro Bosetti

[Editor's note: the German word, *dolmetchen*, is almost unknown beyond the professional circles of German translators. It describes the process of simultaneous – or nearly so – translation from one spoken or signed language into another; e.g. at the United Nations General Assembly.]

(8) *Bring recordings of acoustic soundscapes from the occidental and industrialized world to traditional cultures that live in acoustic soundscapes that are almost entirely natural (Amazonian Indians, the Temiar of Malaysia or the Kaluli in PNG for example). Ask these people to recreate the recordings as precisely as possible, using only their voices, or objects that are part of their daily lives. (Bosetti, 2007)*

This text was part of a 'to do' list of mine, written in 2007. That list formed the basis of a graphic score, published under the title *Exposé* as a multiple art edition by the Die Schachtel label in Milano.

As of today (August 2009) these intentions remain unfulfilled. I'm writing this sitting in a propeller plane. It's very noisy. I can barely hear my fingers tapping on the laptop keyboard. Truth is that this plane is flying between San Sebastian-Donostia, in Basque country, to Madrid, Spain. I try to imagine a much smaller plane, flying over the Papua New Guinean Highlands. An endless noisy, shaky ride. Finally we land on a remote airstrip. There's a crowd of people, curious and expectant. Some cargo coming, business to be taken care of. Humid! (I keep imagining since I've never been in that hemisphere). The air smells, probably – hopefully – different. It's fresher than I expected. The forest is less dense than I expected. There is less noise. Fewer birds. I notice some trash, metallic debris in the vicinity of the airstrip. A rusty old van, metal pieces of something in the grass. People appear interesting and boring to me at the same time. The usual shyness of mine, and a feeling of lethargy. Wanting to find my shelter, relax in my room as soon as possible. Wanting to barricade inside. Waiting for motivation, a sense of urgency, to come to the surface again. Somebody will collect me. A guide, a white person, or a local; somebody I made

arrangements with before. Probably (hopefully) I am not alone. My first priority is taking care of the gear. Then to begin documentation: filming, photos, diaries; I do write down my observations as well! I handle recorders. Microphones. MP3 players. I wear headphones. Before I realise it the project has begun. We're out in the field. There's been a hike. We're already recording. I give out headphones with soundscapes of downtown Manhattan. This one makes me think of Starbucks; I can smell the coffee. Other soundscapes of Berlin, Stockholm, recordings of Airports, and restaurant bathrooms (I'm intrigued by the noise of fans in restaurant restrooms). I hand out recordings of the plane I'm flying on right now. The real one. San Sebastian - Madrid. The one I am sitting in right now, writing about this imaginary project in PNG. I'm giving those recordings to local people to listen to. I'm imagining this visit to a village somewhere in the Highlands. I'm passing out recordings of the Trabant I comically drove in Berlin a few months ago. I share recordings of the subway. Stand clear of the closing door! We are listening to it in a circle. Inside a log house. The elders of the village listening to that noise of subway doors closing. I'm asking them to imitate that noise. That *whoosh* of the closing doors in NYC subway. Stand clear! Embarrassment. *Whoosh*, what do you think it is? It's the NYC subway. They know, of course. It's you coming here. You caught the metro here. There's a metro stop of Martin Kippenberger's world Metro-Net. One stop of the Metro-Net is on the Greek island of Syros, another in Canada, in Dawson County. The third is right here on the PNG Highlands. Martin Kippenberger was here and he built it, in the middle of the rain forest. Stand clear! The older people of the village advise me: Watch for those doors. A generator rattles in the dark. I can hear the forest now. It's getting louder and louder.

We listen to something else: recordings of Milano's stock exchange. Time to stage it. What do you think it is? It's the sound of money flowing. I take the money. I place lots and lots of money in the middle of the circle. We are the money, they are the money and we dance a merry-go-round of notes and coins and stocks and futures. The log house people use their voices to depict money. I close my eyes and dream the money. They

sing the money and the stock exchange.

Now we listen to something else: a battery of beeps and peeps and rings and buzzes. They all come from small loudspeakers. We scattered all these little battery-powered loudspeakers around in the forest. Little pointy sounds all over. Lets stage it. Lets imitate them. Everybody runs out. Or, nobody moves. Nobody hears anything. Stand clear of the closing doors! The generator rattles. Can you imitate a generator sound? Maybe just using wood and branches and stones and ground. It wouldn't produce electricity though.

I go on a walk, alone with Number Three. He/She wears headphones. I gave him/her a portable player and a collection of sounds to listen to. Trains, buzzers, Berlin streetcars, pagers, excavators, dental drills, a welding workshop in Stockholm, the subway. Always the subway (how many subway maps do I have in my head?). Number Three walks in front of me. Please let me hear what you hear. Please don't use your voice, I told him/her. Use what you find. Leaves, branches, stones, water, insects, bark, wind. Let me hear. Tell me, where we can find that sound. Tell me, who lives in that sound.

My cousin lives in front of the J-line bridge on Broadway in Brooklyn. That's loud. I live in Berlin. In winter I can hear the footsteps of a single person going down the frozen street. Tell me, where are those steps? Where are they going? Can you feel how hard the ground is? How hard is the something that encloses this walking person? Can you take me there? Do you know a place like that here in the Highlands? Here in the rain-forest?

Now we listen to war sounds. We all recognise these: how? From television? From movies? How many movies have we seen? We listen to the static from radio or television. Tell me where I can hear electricity-free static. This is difficult to translate. Generate electric sounds without electricity. Do it in your home. Do it in your shack. Make those sounds in the woods.

Now we are listening to a collection of air conditioning sounds. Number Four is wearing headphones and guiding me into the forest again. He/she has to show me the different hisses, the different noises that correspond to each one of the air conditioning sounds from my collection. Each

one has a name. Each one has a meaning and a time of the day to be heard.

I am in Madrid now. I have to stop fantasizing and come back to reality. I have to catch my connection! Whatever happens will most likely feel very different from what I've written here.

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ALESSANDRO BOSETTI was born in Milan, Italy in 1973. He is a composer and multidisciplinary artist working on the musicality of spoken words and unusual aspects of spoken communication, producing text-sound compositions featured in live performances, radio broadcastings and published recordings. In his work he moves across the line between sound anthropology and composition, often including translation and misunderstanding in the creative process. Field research and interviews form the basis for abstract compositions, along with electro-acoustic and acoustic collages, relational strategies, trained and untrained instrumental practices, vocal explorations and digital manipulations. Recent projects include *African Feedback* (Errant Bodies press), the interactive speaking machine "MaskMirror" (STEIM, Kunstradio.at a.o.), a project on linguistic enclaves in the Americas, and an ongoing artistic survey of the Italian colonial past in East Africa. Alessandro Bosetti has performed extensively in Europe, America and Asia and his text-sound works have been commissioned and broadcasted by national public radio stations including Deutschland Radio, WDR, RNE, RAI, Chicago Public Radio among many others. Alessandro Bosetti lives between Berlin (Germany) and Baltimore (USA).

## Canine Cacophony and an Outback Ornithologist: Carl Weismann goes down under ...

By Jim Knox

In 1934, Danish State Radio made its first live broadcast of birds in the field. Carl Weismann had engineered the primitive apparatus himself: contact microphones secreted amongst the thatch of their nests, and relay wires trailing into overhead telephone cable. At the end of that line, a radio studio – rechristened *Staerekassen* ("starling nestbox") – where the signals were transcribed onto wax discs. Within a year, Weismann's first commercial birdsong recordings had gone on sale. (Hansen 2001)

Weismann, the son of a forest ranger, was an autodidact and dedicated amateur ornithologist. Initial support from Danish State Radio – who distributed his earliest recordings to the national school system – provided him the modest means of realising his passion for birdsong. On the eve of World War II, he began a subscription series of avian and environmental recordings. Interrupted by austerity years of the occupation, by 1952 he'd released at least 19 records; all but one on his own label.

The exception was *Die Syngende Hunde* (Tono Records, 1949), credited to the Copenhagen dog choir; with soloists Caesar, King, Ajax, Dolly, Perle and Pussi. Begun as a labour of loathing, this cacophonous revision to traditional Danish folksong had been painstakingly cut, pitched, and spliced from the barking of dogs that intruded upon Weismann's field recording. The record became a popular novelty in radio programming for children. The following year Weismann released a sequel, of English seasonal tunes, for the Metronome label.

In an era when consumer goods were much less commonplace, and international telecommunication was itself still a novelty, Weismann's new recording enjoyed something akin to a viral marketing success. In 1954 this record was licensed for release by the Nixa label in the United Kingdom; by Christmas of 1955, *The Singing Dogs* figured in the United States top 10. A further North American 45, *Hot Dog Rock and Roll*, was ostensibly the first rock and roll 45 on the RCA label to be released inside a picture sleeve – and several weeks in advance of Elvis Presley being accorded the same treatment. (Otfinofski 2000)

In consequence, Carl Weismann became a wealthy man. He proposed to a colleague from Danish Radio, and after marrying they embarked on a honeymoon field trip to the far side of the planet. Weismann had discovered that most of the European bird species introduced to Australia and New Zealand had been caught in Stanmer Woods (Sussex, Great Britain). His hope was to record both near and far descendants, with an ear to beginning a comparative analysis of geographic variation in their birdsong, and research into the adaptive qualities of animal communication as a result of migration.

In August 1957 the Weismanns disembarked at Sydney and began a ten month coastal transit that took them as far south as the Bass Strait, before winding their way north and west to the Mitchell River on the Gulf of Carpentaria:

In the field the Weismanns concentrated on remote places where no man-made sounds could interfere with those of nature. From day to day their 'home' varied greatly. They would spend a period by a babbling mountain brook, then retreat to a highland meadow, or descend into an entangled valley-floor. Later, they would be found encamped by the sea and pursuing wading-birds along the shore, or recording sea-birds on the Great Barrier Reef. Much time was spent in the humid rain forests and dry savanna woodlands of Cape York. (Weismann and Keast 1966, 3)



The Weismanns, recording in Australia 1959. By kind permission of John Lilley & Sons, Australia

The pair toured in a van, but made numerous nautical detours to coastal islands. Lise Weismann took photographs and operated a pair of portable tape recorders, while Carl trained his parabolic microphone on the menagerie of Australian wildlife. At the time and for years yet to follow, their recordings surely constituted the nation's most extensive acoustic survey. While they concentrated their attentions on recording birdsong, they documented everything within microphone range: frog chorals, the cries of bats and marsupials, and the noontday stridulations of cicadas. Their only known disappointment contained a small irony. This was their failure to adequately capture the plaintive howl of far-distant dingoes, heard from several mountain vantages; the shy native dog remained beyond practical microphone reach.

The Weismanns' activities shortly brought them in contact with Allen Keast, then Curator of birds, amphibians and reptiles at the Australian Museum in Sydney. Keast was another variety of pioneer; he'd just introduced natural history broadcasting to Australian television through a fortnightly segment on the *Nine-pins* children's program (Veitch 2009). Keast approached local publishing house, Jacaranda Press, with a somewhat revolutionary concept: a book of photographs of Australian birds, accompanied by a vinyl record with the corresponding birdsongs. Jacaranda assented, and in 1964 *Australian Bird Songs* saw its first imprint. The Weismanns provided audio of nineteen native birds, Keast wrote a brief introduction and notes on each species and its companion recording. A modest success, the title enjoyed a reprint and led to a sequel, *Australian Bush Sounds*, in 1966.

By this time, the Weismanns had returned to Europe, where they were to concentrate their activities across the remainder of their professional lives. Ultimately, Weismann never completed the study that was the original premise for the trip, but extensive audio documentation of his and Lise's field recordings is held in the Natural History Collection of the British National Library. *The Singing Dogs* 45 enjoyed a successful revival in 1971; re-issued for the United States market as a seasonal Christmas novelty, the record topped the charts and, cumulatively, became a million-seller.

Notwithstanding *The Singing Dogs*' obliging whimsy, Carl Weismann was effectively the first composer of musique concrete in Denmark. His compatriot, Poul Hansen, from the national Naturhistorisk Museum

in Arhus, celebrated him as an engagingly partisan devotee of European birdsong. These twin poles of his life describe the axis around which all his recordings revolved. If the Weismanns' Australasian field trip is now largely misremembered, rare copies of the books and records that resulted from their visit provide enduring artefacts of their unlikely expedition.

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- JIM KNOX is a Melbourne-based partisan for marginal culture. Manager of the Outlands Ecoplex cinema for the Meredith Music Festival and Golden Plains Festival, he also serves on the short film selection panel for the Melbourne International Film Festival, and has curated screen programs for the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (Melbourne) and numerous Australian festivals. He writes liner notes for the Omni Recording Corporation, Votary Records and Roundtable labels, and the DVD label of the British Film Institute. A freelance Producer for ABC Radio National, his soundworks and short films have been released and exhibited internationally. He works as a Builders Labourer for McCorkell Constructions, which completed major heritage restoration work on the Percy Grainger Museum (Melbourne) in 2009.

## A short report on the Australasian Sound Recordings Association (ASRA) 2009 Conference

By Maryanne Doyle

### Endangered Sounds Conference, 20–21 August, 2009

National Library of Australia, Canberra

ASRA has been active since the mid 1980s and its membership comprises private record collectors, professional sound archivists, radio broadcasters and social historians; individuals with a strong interest in sound recording history, its development, and all related activities. In these respects it is now the premier forum for professionals from a range of Australian and New Zealand institutions, both national and regional, which hold large audiovisual collections. ASRA's annual conference provides a unique opportunity to share information on a variety of issues; ranging from preservation concerns, such as at-risk formats, to the contemporary media practices of sound artists.

Standing under the portico of the National Library between conference sessions I listen to the pouring rain. For an Australian living to the nation's South this sound is no longer a regular occurrence. Anxious thoughts associated with climate change mix with the joy at hearing the gushing water. I return to the conference to consider presentations about disappearing or endangered sounds.

Presenters approached the theme from a number of angles. Some presentations explored the examination or reworking of existing cultural recordings. Marisha Harris and Tasha Lamb from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) spoke about the impact of Indigenous communities rediscovering relatives and culture through recordings from the AIATSIS collection. Robyn Ravelich explored the richness of radiophonic history, and developments in providing interactive access to the Australian Broadcasting Commission's archives through the ABC's collaborative website <http://www.pool.org.au/>. A creative approach to media archives was also the subject of Robert Davidson's paper, "Creating New Music From Old Sounds"; realising new music works from existing audiovisual recordings. Linguists Michael Walsh and Linda Barwick described their work with audiovisual



photo by Greg Simmons

Greg Simmons' portable recording rig.

records of Aboriginal song tradition in their presentation, "Recording Murrinya Patha Song Traditions". Liz McNiven, from the Barnba clan of the Budjiti nation of Paroo river country in northwest Queensland, is the Manager of the National Film and Sound Archive's Indigenous Branch. Her presentation examined the historical portrayal of Australian Indigenous musicians and their recordings by the Australian music industry.

Most speakers focused on sounds or recordings from Australia but several papers addressed other regions. Kumi Kato described the cultural and environmental significance of the *Isobue*, the "sea whistle". This is the sound made by women shellfish divers taking breath; part of a traditional form of ocean harvesting still practiced in coastal regions of Japan and Korea. In his presentation, "There are how many languages?", Noel Batchelor described the activities of the Global Recordings Network, who train Christian missionaries recordists from many countries. Greg Simmons, intrepid traveller and sound recordist provided a practical 'field guide' with "Electrical Autonomy". Simmons has recorded music and sound throughout Asia, and in particular the Himalayas; he provided a detailed description of some options for powering portable recording equipment where mains power is not available. He also offered some useful criteria to consider when making battery choices.

In the keynote address, "Endangered Sounds of the Future", the composer William Duckworth spoke about a global online community of artists collaborating in the creation of sound and music. Duckworth was in Canberra to launch the beta version of a Sound Garden in the grounds of the NFSA. The Garden is still being developed but is a permanent installation created by Sonic Babylon, a partnership between Duckworth and Nora Farrell. It is intended that as

visitors walk through the NFSA courtyard, they will be able both to hear those sounds which are already "planted" in the garden and then "plant" their own, or "prune" existing sounds. The Sound Garden is currently available to Apple MacBook users, and will soon be configured for portable devices.

A number of papers were concerned with wild-life and environmental recording. Neil Boucher

outlined a terabyte sound recorder for wild-life research and a sound recognition system suitable for mass sound collections. Kevin Bradley, on staff at the National Library of Australia, spoke about environmental sounds documented by field recordists while they were collecting oral history recordings.

"Forty Years Experience with Music Technology: Problems of Documentation and Scoring" was Warren Burt's description of the frustrations he experienced in attempting to document, notate and preserve Australian sound works. On a closely related topic, Somaya Langley's paper, "Last Known Location: Somewhere between Zero and One", explored those challenges particular to the preservation of media art. Vincent Plush's "Tribute to Peter Tahourdin" celebrated Tahourdin's work establishing Australia's first practical course in electronic, at the University of Adelaide in 1969.

The annual ASRA conference is a rare occasion to engage in discussion of our national acoustic heritage. Earlier this year (March 2009), ASRA also organised a technical seminar at the NFSA's Canberra headquarters. Practical workshops included lessons in the handling of media, examination and recognition of defects, equipment operation and the ingest of audio files. Demonstrations were held concerning techniques for the preservation of quarter inch reel to reel audio, discs and film sound.

Subject to clearances recordings of these conference presentations will be lodged in the collection of the NFSA and available for audition on site. The next ASRA conference will be held in Melbourne in the second half of 2010. <http://www.asra.asn.au>

MARYANNE DOYLE is a recorded sound archivist for the NFSA based in Melbourne and is a Board member of ASRA.

## Acoustic Environments in Change

Helmi Järviluoma, Meri Kytö, Barry Truax, Heikki Uimonen & Noora Vikman (editors)

## & Five Village Soundscapes (Reprint)

R. Murray Schaefer (editor)



In the beginning there was the "word", says the book of Genesis 1:1. Modern physicists, musicians, sound researchers and ethnomusicologists would say, in the beginning there was the "sound."

The puzzle of words versus sounds continues to haunt the ways in which we depict and evaluate music. So what about acoustic environmental change? This was my continual question in briefly reviewing this substantial two-tiered work of written text and recorded sounds from two complementary and yet diverse studies. The work recently published is from the Tampereen Ammattikorkeakoulu University of Applied Sciences, Finland, cooperating with the Canadian Simon Fraser University, School of Communication, in British Columbia. (Five Village Soundscapes, a reprint)

This compendium of text, charts and graphics spans 430 pages. (281 of which are from the more recent Finnish studies.) The book is also host to four well-recorded compact discs of the village soundscapes, 2 CDs with 18 tracks of the original Five Villages, From the Canadian World Soundscape Project in 1975, and 2 CDs with 31 tracks of recorded soundscapes from

## Reviews (continued)

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re-visiting the original Five Villages, plus an additional village (Nauvo), by the Finnish research team.

When one picks up this weighty book, opens it and begins to look inside, the questions are: 'should I read the book or listen to the compact discs first?' How should one begin evaluating *Acoustic Environments in Change – Five Village Soundscapes*? Do the academic thesis and book references justify sounds we listen to from the discs or do the discs affirm the written stories from the text materials?

Village life is examined amidst 6 European soundscapes, documented by a group of Finnish university researchers from diverse disciplines such as ethnomusicology, art, literature, history, most working (from or towards PhD – level projects) between 1998 and 2007. This group effort resulted in creating a theoretical "framework" treatise and updated recordings, Comparing the Canadian World Soundscape Project's five villages Study (made 25 years earlier) to explore how the village soundscapes were doing. How were elements of socially cohesive village cultures displaced both physically and of the retained human inhabitant's memories to the sonic/environmental contexts over Time?

The following villages were examined, all Located in Western Europe: Skruv, Sweden; Dollar, Scotland; Lesconil, France; Bissingen, Germany; Cembra, Italy, and the sixth: Nauvo, Finland.

My first listening, followed by reading was focused on the Swedish village of Skruv, since this is a language I understand (even though the southern dialect from Småland is a challenge). While I do not have space in this introduction to review the details, what was clear to me was a necessity of combining the fieldwork guides in the text with the actual sounds. Acoustical images from the Canadian WSP study were fewer but also longer, providing somewhat more of an audible context. The Finnish sound images were cleaner, more dynamic and enabled direct contrasts with the earlier time period examples. Added tracks provided some new materials.

What I found most interesting about the Finnish CD tracks were the villager's group interviews and exchanges related to their sonic memories versus present day qualities. These were also represented in the text of Helmi's study.

Although it was necessary to compare repeated listening to both the Canadian and Finnish recordings of Skruv, two things

became apparent to me: 1) it was absolutely necessary to relate text and sounds together; 2) digital technology available today could have been used for direct comparisons with electronic overlays and real-time graphics on household computers which could allow verification comparisons from both time periods. (The O.E.C.D. might even be able to use such comparative studies to rate such sonic quality-of-life issues between various regional populations.)

Helmi Järviuoma's introduction indicates the apparent Finnish academic tilt was contrarily influenced by others working outside academia, from architecture, geography, and directly from the multi-disciplinary mentorship of R. Murray Schafer himself, in calming the purely theoretical biasing of the methods deployed.

Strict conceptual oppositions began dissolving while the concept of "soundscape" encompassed the relevance of space, place and human behaviour as much as the purely sonic aspects perceived in a given environment. A wide use of charts and graphics to depict environmental data about each village, and comparative charts to demonstrate geographic and social diversity, provided a helpful project overview.

What emerges from this Finnish compendium is a solid array of **tools**, which any researcher may apply to the explorations of particular environmental acoustic ecologies. I believe the Finnish *framework* toolbox is complimentary to a much looser and less academically centred Canadian methodology, which R. Murray Schafer and his World Soundscape Project colleagues evolved 25 years earlier. The Finnish model may also be interpreted as *multidisciplinary* in establishing a working acoustic ecology model that extends beyond merely physical measurement and analysis of "noise" data, to examine multiple aspects of sonic influences on human habitation under the dynamics of radical or subtle environmental change.

One example is increased tourism, which is common to most of the villages examined in these studies. Another is the dynamically shifting sonic effect on village residents from industry and of motorized transportation. Stories which emerge out of the written interviews in each of the villages, from both Canadian and Finnish ethnologies, makes for fascinating contrasts between harmonious human and nature sonic balances versus the human and mechanistic auditory imbalances with their negative effects. One soon experiences the "dirt" of annoying, tension-inducing sounds versus life-

affirming, cyclic sound complexes.

This brief overview cannot do justice to any single village report. That is why you will have to read this book and listen to the companion CDs to derive the authentic meaning of these studies and stories of the villagers, or perhaps in a future book review, this **Journal** can bring more in-depth evaluations to some of these examples.

Recently, world populations have been exposed to numerous pressing, serious environmental issues such as economic disruption and global climate change through the medium of the documentary film. Michael Moore and Al Gore have produced filmographies that tell potent stories, utilizing graphic evidence and sonic depictions of various states of havoc in human culture and natural environments. Their intentions have been to illuminate human minds into positive action. The film medium has augmented written words, work groups and theoretical frameworks in which often too few activists have time to engage. Perhaps film may be the next step of illumination for activist-orientated acoustic ecologists. My critical point is: *Acoustic Environments in Change* may offer substantial help for those already exposed to the practice of acoustic ecology, especially in the West, but in a *global* sense, the layperson or teacher willing to engage in acoustic ecology must be very selective in what is read and taken from this text, in that Theory and Stories must augment meticulous listening from the CD examples. I would recommend selecting the *stories* of the village inhabitants rather than the theoretical "framework" presented in the first portion of this book.

While villages were not explored from Asia, Africa, the Native Americas, or aboriginal Australia by either the Finnish or Canadian research studies, it may be important to evolve a methodology which will work ever more inter-culturally in motivating activity from communities affected by sonic depreciation. Theoretical frameworks may negatively act as impediments to engagement, especially in non-Western contexts, where the intellectual "power" of theory is often misinterpreted as having superior value in order to justify funding practical programs, for example, rather than a more holistic, Grass Roots approach arrived at From the bottom up.

For me, *Acoustic Environments in Change* raises many questions; not only about our evolving acoustic ecology, but also about the current state of the human sensibility of the ear and ways people perceive the auditory

versus the written word.

One of these pressing issues is the enormous process of acoustical atomization, which has recently taken the world by storm through the distribution of the MP-3 audio player with its ear buds. How these activities have re-shaped even remote villages throughout the world, not to mention the human sense of hearing and social auditory sharing, is yet to be studied.

Of course the other element, which is currently depreciating the practice of in-depth literacy/cognition, is that of the mobile phone/texting apparatus, which is having an altering, powerful impact on the use/mis-use and displaced meanings of the word.

And so we're back to the question of the word and the sound. Which is first? Which is under our control to help summon people and policies that may lead to restoring healthier environments, which both the Finns and Canadians had in mind? I believe all of these revealing examples and comparisons from the villages are immensely useful as a *handbook* to the acoustic ecologist.

Acoustic ecology as portrayed in *Acoustic Environments in Change – Five Village Soundscapes*, is an important achievement in bridging the multiple disciplines and institutions that value scientific scholarship, artistic creativity, public/private sponsorship, and community activism as part of a culturally inclusive whole. Such an approach is the gift, which both the Canadian and the Finnish research groups have brought to the wider world of environmental understanding.

HAROLD CLARK co-founded the Norwegian Studio for Electronic Music, former lecturer at the University of Oslo Institute for Music Research, former Norwegian representative to the Nordic Council for Electro-Acoustic Music, is a composer and currently a sound designer in Vancouver, Canada.



### **Karin Bijsterveld, *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century*, The MIT Press, 2008 (350p)**

By Barry Truax

I have personally been looking forward to the appearance of two books on the subject of noise for some time, including one being written by Hillel Schwartz (the encyclopedic raconteur and author of *The Culture of the Copy*), but so far only one rather facetious chapter has appeared in *The Auditory Culture Reader*. The other is the new book by Karin Bijsterveld from Maastricht University in The Netherlands, *Mechanical Sound*, which is based in the Science and Technology Studies (STS) field and probably the first to deal extensively with the subject of noise and noise abatement from a social studies perspective. The book nicely complements Emily Thompson's *The Soundscape of Modernity*, published a few years ago by MIT Press in a similar format. Where the Thompson book integrates what she describes as the failure of noise abatement campaigns in North America in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of the audio industry and the development of acoustical engineering practice in designing indoor spaces, Bijsterveld provides a largely European perspective with additional American examples of four major areas of noise problems: industrial, traffic, neighbourhood and aircraft, in roughly chronological order from 1875 to 1975. Interestingly enough, both authors include a significant discussion of noise in the contemporary music of the early 20th century, as an indication of how avant-garde composers reacted to the changing soundscape and brought noise into an artistic milieu.

The technical literature on noise is vast and intimidating, and accounts in popular literature including the press are anecdotal and usually pessimistic. Bijsterveld charts a middle course between these two poles, motivated as she states in her Preface by personal annoyance from noise experienced in her garden. This sense of personal involvement, as with many previous authors and advocates, means that underlying her research is a focus on listening, or in many cases, non-listening. She identifies many of the perennial issues of dealing with noise, such as its subjectivity, the problem of the locus of control (public or private), economic

factors, and speculations about social bias (a visually oriented culture that fears silence). She makes useful historical connections to the problems of controlling stench based on arguments about hygiene, and finds inspiration in Joseph Gusfield's *The Culture of Public Problems*, for analyzing the dynamics of similar issues (drinking and driving in Gusfield's work). She also acknowledges the work of R. Murray Schafer and the World Soundscape Project (WSP), but strangely enough misrepresents the basic notion of the soundscape concept, stating that Schafer maintains that "the character of the sonic environment is what changes, not the ways in which people listen to it" (p. 23). In fact, every WSP-related document defines soundscape on the basis of how the sonic environment is perceived, including all of the basic classifications of soundmark, keynote sound and sound signal (Truax, 1999).

On the other hand, in her second chapter, dealing with the cultural symbolism and rhetoric about noise (what the author refers to as its "dramatization"), Bijsterveld makes an interesting use of the WSP's database of Sound References in Literature to identify four "auditory topoi of technology" (p. 44) in the evaluation of sound. These are classified as negative evaluations (characterized as intrusive and sinister) and positive associations (sensational and comforting). Each of these evaluations is described according to the typical quantity, distance, direction and rhythm of the sounds involved. Although not noted in the book, this database is available online (<http://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio/srs>). These examples drawn from literature, which are eloquent descriptions of subjective experience, serve as reference points for the various kinds of dramatization employed by anti-noise advocates and others in the historical episodes that follow.

The four major chapters dealing with the specific noise issues outlined above are detailed, carefully researched and extensively documented. They often include original insights, such as the main conclusion of the industrial noise section, which describes cases where the dramatization of noise problems by experts and regulators either clashed

with the experience of the public and industrial workers (personal annoyance versus physical damage, and the use of earplugs to preserve hearing versus the “comforting” sound of machines, respectively), thus perpetuating the problems of noise, or at least in one case suited both parties (background music in factories). The chapter on traffic noise documents the critical period of the 1920s and 30s where urban noise was tackled by a growing number of anti-noise organizations, and began to be quantified with the newly developed sound level meter and the decibel standard. Among the consequences, silencing car horns, for instance, increased the use of visual cues (signage, and the use of headlights, at least in Europe), but the noise abatement arguments about “noise etiquette” and equating silence with order and refined sensibilities prevented alliances with unions. With increased quantities of vehicles, traffic noise became a collective and constant source, hence easier to ignore but easier to measure.

Class distinctions were equally at play in the growing problems associated with neighbourhood noise during this period, partly as a result of the radio and gramophone (and later, television) being regarded as inexpensive entertainment for the working classes. Bijsterveld documents the attempts of many Dutch cities to regulate such noise (which given the density of the country serves as a prime example of the problem), including a fascinating but failed attempt to regulate noise by the police equipped with a portable meter called the *Silenta*. The subjectivity of aural experience, as documented in the emerging psychoacoustic research of the day, complicated the problem further. The failure to achieve a legislated solution to the problem left it to individual communication between neighbours to solve disputes, an awkward situation that is often ineffectual.

Arguably the most complicated area of noise research is that associated with aircraft noise, but here Bijsterveld provides a concise narrative about the transitional period of the 1950s and 1960s when noisier jet aircraft replaced propeller models. Despite the desire for a supranational set of standards, each of the major European nations, plus the U.S., developed their own systems. The author documents the history of the development of the PNdB measurement system in the U.S. (to take into consideration the high frequency components of jet aircraft noise) and its use by the Wilson Committee in the UK in its study of Heathrow airport that resulted in the NNI system. This history includes the fascinating use of “jury tests” by groups of listeners, subjectively judging

aircraft and traffic noise on site, including the Farnborough tests during an aircraft show in 1961 (with the polite British adjectives of “noticeable”, “annoying” and “unbearable” being used). The German, Dutch and American systems are also discussed, with the American system being motivated by threats of litigation that was eventually successful in Los Angeles. The narrative also includes the dispute between the use of dBA or PNdB measurements (but not the more advanced EPNdB system, or California’s dBA-based CNEL index; for summaries of all of these systems, see Truax, 1999).

In the final chapter, “A Sound History of Technological Culture”, Bijsterveld revisits many of the common arguments about noise, and refutes the claim that noise is a necessary by-product of “progress”. In terms of solutions, she analyzes the various approaches that individualize, objectify (through measurement), and materialize (through engineering) the problem, and surveys the state of European legislation in the 1970s. She presents an overview of the changing definitions of noise problems in the four areas covered by the book in terms of problem owners, causes, consequences and victims, solutions and responsibility, along with some of the theoretical issues involved in each case. Two consequences of the tensions involved are discussed under the headings of the “paradox of control” and the spatial focus of noise abatement, the history of which extends back to early recognition of the need for “islands of silence” around hospitals, schools and churches. She ends the book with three intriguing concepts that are described as alternative approaches. First is the concept of “ecological modernization” which sees technology as not only the cause but as providing solutions to environmental problems within the constraints of market dynamics. Second is a desire to introduce “sensitivity” into legislation, which seems to refer to integrating standards with the actual effects on people (with presumably a great deal of educational effort involved). And finally, a suggestion to “complain in style”, including humour and irony, adapted to the context in question in order to enable “discourse coalitions” with others. Whether these strategies will be effective is open to debate, but it is clear that anyone wishing to deal effectively with any noise issue would be well advised to read this book for its cogent analysis of the historical record that has shaped the current situation.

My own approach, articulated in a chapter of *Acoustic Communication*, is to treat noise as part of our information processing abilities involving sound, either obscuring the

information we can glean from the environment, or weakening the mediating ties that sound creates in orienting us to our surroundings. The gaps it creates allow other forms of communication (e.g. media) to take their place. I suggested listening and critical evaluation, preservation and protection, and the design of alternatives as possible strategies for action. This very general approach is well served by Karin Bijsterveld’s careful documentation of the historical evolution of noise and noise abatement practices over the last century and a half.

Given the many valuable lessons provided by the book, it is unfortunately marred by inadequate copy editing that occasionally leaves the author’s meaning obscure. This lack of attention seems to be increasingly common, even with major publishers. Numerous typos and stylistic problems can be found: “breaks” instead of (car) “brakes” in one instance, “strife” instead of “striving” in another; Don Ihde’s name is consistently misspelled, and so on. Hopefully these flaws will be corrected in subsequent editions. In the meantime, the book should occupy a significant spot in the ongoing documentation of aural culture and communication in one of its trickiest and most controversial aspects.

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