

World Forum for Acoustic Ecology WFAE Newsletter

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Volume 6, Number 3. May-June, 2009

WFAE Newsletter

WFAE CONFERENCE REPORT: SOUND MEGALOPOLIS



We are pleased to present an overview of the *Sound Megalopolis: Cultural Identity and Sounds in Danger of Extinction* conference held in Mexico City 23-27 March and hosted by the [National Phonoteque](#) and the Mexican Forum for Acoustic Ecology.

This international conference was sponsored by The National Council for the Culture Arts - through the National Phonoteque of Mexico, and supported by the [World Forum for Acoustic Ecology](#). Over 200 hundred participants engaged in five days of soundwalks, workshops, seminars and exhibits related to the broad field of acoustic ecology.

We have included the Opening and Closing remarks by WFAE President [Nigel Frayne](#), and an overview of the opening soundwalk by [Hildigard Westerkamp](#). Also included are observations about the conference by participants [Vivienne Spiteri](#), [Eric Leonardson](#), and [Randolph Jordan](#).



Photos by Nigel Frayne

Observations and Commentary:

- Download all the PDF papers listed below as a [Zip file](#) (5.2 megs) and read later.
- Nigel Frayne: [Opening Remarks](#) (PDF) or ([HTML](#))
- Nigel Frayne: [Concluding Remarks](#) (PDF) or ([HTML](#))
- Hildi Westerkamp: [Soundwalk: Mexico City](#) (PDF) or ([HTML](#))
- Vivienne Spiteri: [Some Impressions of the 2009 wfae conference in mexico city](#) (PDF) or ([HTML](#))
- Randolph Jordan: [Sound Technology, WFAE 2009, and Mexico City](#) (PDF) or ([HTML](#))
- Eric Leonardson: [Personal observations](#) (PDF) or ([HTML](#))
- [Conference overview](#) includes presenter biographies (in Spanish and English)
- [Conclusions](#). Click on *Foro Mundial De Ecologia Acustica* conference web site. A summary of the conference is presented in Spanish only. However, the site also includes audio observations by conference participants.
- The conference site includes a [Slide program](#) that highlights several events.

SOUND BITES:

Report: American Society for Acoustic Ecology. The ASAE continues its strong development of projects and activities as new regional chapters are added. Read the full [ASAE report](#) for details of events in the United States.

Report: Canadian Association for Acoustic Ecology. The CASE is sponsoring The 4th International Soundscape Retreat and Symposium: Negotiating Space/Place In The Changing Soundscape on Garbiola Island, British Columbia, Canada June 12-14, 2009. Speakers include: Helmi Järviuoma (Finland), Keiko Torigoe (Japan), Hildegard Westerkamp (Vancouver), Barry Truax Vancouver) Charlie Fox (Regina) and Eric Powell (Vancouver). [Details online](#).

Deep Ecology's Arne Næss Passes. (The Guardian) Arne Næss, who has died aged 96, was Norway's best-known philosopher, whose concept of deep ecology enriched and divided the environmental movement. A keen mountaineer, for a quarter of his life he lived in an isolated hut high in the Hallingskarvet mountains in southern Norway.

Through his books and lectures in many countries, Næss taught that ecology should not be concerned with man's place in nature but with every part of nature on an equal basis, because the natural order has intrinsic value that transcends human values. Indeed, humans could only attain "realisation of the Self" as part of an entire ecosphere. He urged the green movement to "not only protect the planet for the sake of humans, but also, for the sake of the planet itself, to keep ecosystems healthy for their own sake". [Read Article](#).

The Sonic Traveler: Listening With the Naked Ear (The Daily Traveler). There is a growing community of acoustic ecologists and biophilia theorists who fear we're suffering from a national epidemic of manmade noise on the one hand and "nature-deficit disorder" on the other. [Read Article](#)

The Sound Generated by Mid-Ocean Ridge Black Smoker Hydrothermal Vents (Plos One). Hydrothermal flow through seafloor black smoker vents is typically turbulent and vigorous. Although theory predicts that these flows will generate sound, the prevailing view has been that black smokers are essentially silent. Here is presented the first unambiguous field recordings showing that these vents radiate significant acoustic energy. [Read Article](#)

Law aims to provide safer tyres (BBC). Research done in London found a real link between traffic noise and the risk of a heart attack, and some more research done in Sweden came out recently which again reinforced there is a link between cardiac health effects and traffic noise. [Read Article](#)

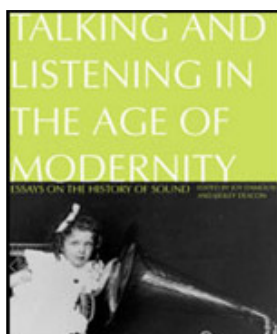
Birds are singing themselves sick (CBBC). Birds living in busy cities are making themselves ill because they are singing louder and louder to make themselves heard above the noise. [Read Article](#)

Baby Birds' Efforts to Outshout City Noise May Take Toll (National Geographic News). Screeching brakes, wailing sirens, blaring music, roaring jets—the constant din of city noise is enough to drive some of us to distraction. But what of the birds that must share our increasingly motorized world? Can they make themselves heard? [Read Article](#)

Audio "Aphrodisiac" Spurs Rare Cheetah Birth--A First (National Geographic News). In a world first, a rare baby cheetah owes its life to a doctored recording of a recently discovered male call that triggers ovulation. [Read Article](#)

Hearing, Noise, and School: Hearing Well in a Good Listening Environment Critical for Success (ASHA). A student's ability to hear and understand verbal information is vital, but often is reduced in schools because poor classroom acoustics allow excessive levels of background noise into the classroom, according to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). [Read Article](#)

RESOURCES:



Talking and Listening in the Age of Modernity: Essays on the history of sound

Edited by Joy Damousi and Desley Deacon

The Australian National University
ISBN 9781921313479

ISBN 9781921313486 (Online)

Published November 2007

Historians have, until recently, been silent about sound. This collection of essays on talking and listening in the age of modernity brings together major Australian scholars who have followed Alain Corbin's injunction that historians 'can no longer afford to neglect materials pertaining to auditory perception'.

Ranging from the sound of gunfire on the Australian gold-fields to Alfred Deakin's virile oratory, these essays argue for the influence of the auditory in forming individual and collective subjectivities; the place of speech in



Musical ritual in Mexico City: from the Aztec to NAFTA

By Mark Pedelty

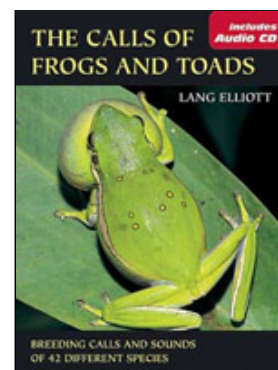
Edition: illustrated

Published by University of Texas Press, 2004

ISBN 0292702310, 9780292702318
340 pages

On the Zócalo, the main square of Mexico City, Mexico's entire musical history is performed every day.

"Mexico" percussionists drum and dance to the music of Aztec rituals on the open plaza. Inside the Metropolitan Cathedral, choristers sing colonial villancicos. Outside the National Palace, the Mexican army marching band plays the "Himno Nacional," a vestige of the nineteenth century. And all around the square, people listen to the contemporary sounds of pop, rock, and música grupera. In all, some



The Calls of Frogs and Toads

Paperback: 80 pages; Dimensions (in inches): 0.28 x 8.02 x 6.03

Publisher: Stackpole Books; Book and CD edition (March 2004)

ISBN: 0811729680

Learn the sounds of 42 species of frogs and toads native to eastern and central North America with this unique 72 page full color book and an accompanying 65-minute audio compact disc.

Part one of the compact disc is a reference guide to the calls of every species. Arranged by taxonomic family and grouped by similarity of sounds, each species is introduced by name followed by a sample of its calls.

Part two of the disc is a narrated introduction featuring examples of advertisement calls, aggressive calls, release calls, rain calls, distress calls, warning calls, hybrid calls, countersinging, mixed species

understanding individual and collective endeavours; the centrality of speech in marking and negating difference and in struggles for power; and the significance of the technologies of radio and film in forming modern cultural identities. [Learn More.](#)

seven centuries of music maintain a living presence in the modern city.

This book offers an up-to-date, comprehensive history and ethnography of musical rituals in the world's largest city. Mark Pedelty details the dominant musical rites of the Aztec, colonial, national, revolutionary, modern, and contemporary eras, analyzing the role that musical ritual played in governance, resistance, and social change. His approach is twofold. Historical chapters describe the rituals and their functions, while ethnographic chapters explore how these musical forms continue to resonate in contemporary Mexican society. As a whole, the book provides a living record of cultural continuity, change, and vitality.

choruses, and more.

The full color book provides excellent photographs as well as detailed descriptions of the calls of each species along with physical characteristics, life history, and breeding information. [Learn More.](#)

Barry Truax Announces Soundscape Composition Disc. Following the positive response to my Truax's HTML documentation [DVD-ROM](#) he is pleased to announce the availability of a second such disk, this one dealing with soundscape composition. It includes historical documentation of the World Soundscape Project (WSP) and excerpts of all of its audio documents, plus a survey of soundscape composition techniques illustrated by tracks from the WSP, the author and other composers whose work has been featured on Cambridge Street Records. In addition, a presentation on the concept of Acoustic Space draws on examples from acoustics, psychoacoustics, environmental acoustics, acoustic ecology, and multi-channel diffusion systems.

The DVD-ROM also includes a complete documentation of three of my soundscape pieces (Pendlerdrom, Island and Temple) including all of the sources, tracks and processing parameters used in their creation, with numerous sound examples and spectrograms, in a format suitable for classes and advanced study. Further information is available [on line](#) along with ordering information.

Review: One Square Inch of Silence: One Man's Quest for Natural Silence in a Noisy World. Jim Cummings, President of the American Society for Acoustic Ecology, reviews *One Square Inch of Silence: One Man's Quest for Natural Silence in a Noisy World* by Gordon Hempton and John Grossman on the [Acoustic Ecology Institute](#) web site. This is an extensive review of Hempton's new book, which recounts his journey across America, experiencing the soundscape and meeting with a wide range of friends and agency folks to discuss the expansion of human noise into more wild places.

RESEARCH and PROJECTS



Soundwalkers

raquel castro

Director/video editor/sound resarcher, Castro has been working with video since her Pro Memoria project, a series based on the oral memory of Portuguese communities, which required her travelling for years around the country collecting voices, sounds and children's drawings. That project facilitated her thinking about sonic identity and acoustic communities. In her quest, she discovered the WFAE and the important work Murray Schafer and his fellows had already made.

She enjoyed learning that there were other people studying soundscapes and she soon wanted to know more. Her studies lead to writing a thesis about Acoustic Ecology, but her main interest was to express herself on video, her preferred medium for work.

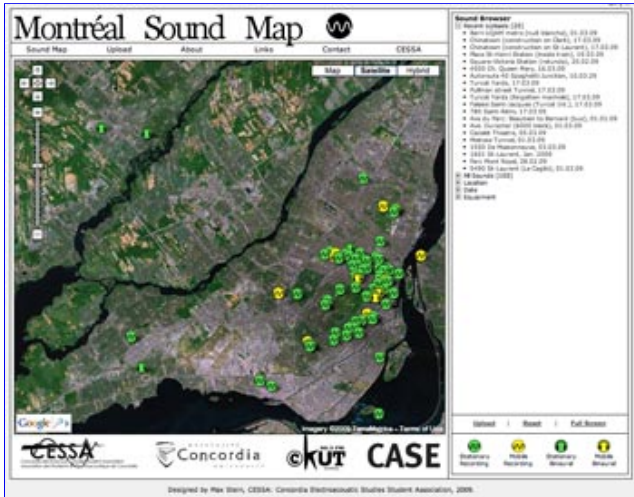
Special Film Screening: Soundwalkers.

We are pleased to link readers to *Soundwalkers* a documentary by Raquel Castro. We recommend viewing

For this film she collected interviews with people from around the world, with different knowledge and opinions, but with the same listening attitude towards sound. This

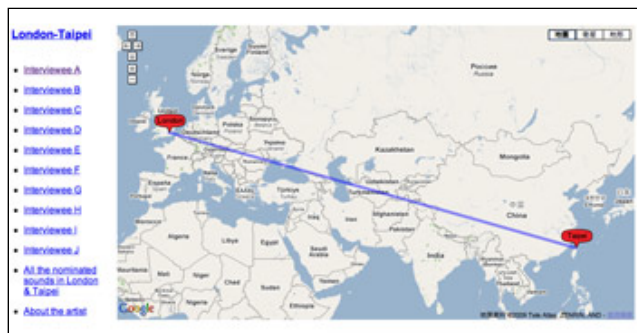
this 30 minute documentary at full-screen. The film is also available at [Vimeo](#) web site.

Raquel Castro, who lives in Portugal, writes about her film: "There are some fundamental principles regarding the construction of an acoustically healthy society, one where we can exist within the sounds of life. Respect towards voice and words, sonic awareness, the awakening of the sense of hearing. To preserve the sounds that tend to fade out, while remaining open to the sounds that spring out of each technological stride. To build an aural idiom that interprets its own symbolism. To accept the silence, enforcing it in the due moments. And, above all else, to listen."



Montreal Sound Map Project (Submitted by Max Stein). Max Stein is an undergraduate student in the Electroacoustic Studies program at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Stein writes that the Concordia Electroacoustic Studies Student Association ([CESSA](#)) started a Google Maps-based [sound map of Montreal](#) project in November, 2008 that over the last several months has received consistent contributions from people of a wide variety of backgrounds and interests.



Researcher Studies Cultural Background and New Listening Experiences. Tsai-wei is a graduate student conducting PhD research in the music department, Goldsmiths College, University of London. The provisional title of her research is 'On the Way Home: Taipei sojourners' sonic constellations in London'.

London is a multi-cultural global city that attracts thousands of temporary residents each year. Taking Taipei

resulted in the documentary, *Soundwalkers*, the first of a series about specific features of the sonic world.

Previous video work embracing global issues include "The Neighborhood" and "Leve Leve non Caba Ué", which received the first prize at the Portuguese Video Festival Ovarvideo 2007.

Although she has been called a video nomad she and her husband live in Lisbon where she continues to research the city soundscape while at the same time teaching about video, new media and image studies.

The project's main goal is for people to put more focus on listening to the soundscape. By listening to these sound recordings on a website, the listener is focused and able to hear sounds that would normally go unnoticed. With the realization that these recordings were taken directly from the soundscape, we are hoping that people will put more concentration on listening to the environments with which they interact.

Other goals include organizing all sounds into a browseable tagging system based date, time, location, and sound characteristics (future). There has also been interest from contributors in documenting changes taking place in different sections of the island (i.e. from urban development).

The Concordia Electroacoustic Studies Student Association was formed to promote and advocate activity and awareness in matters electroacoustic through presentation, promotion, preservation, and communication, with particular concerns being health, environmental, and social issues pertaining to sound through electroacoustic and related forms of media.

Although Taipei sojourners are bodily situated in London's urban environment, the research argues that their listening experiences are more than what they can physically hear in their city of temporal residence. Being influenced by the auditory memories of homeland, their spatial, temporal and cross-cultural movements and interactions are perceived and negotiated through sounds. The sonic constellations that have formed from the past auditory experiences provide the necessary compass for navigating through London's soundscape. Visit [researchers web site](#).

An exhibition of Tsai-wei's work took place last June at Goldsmiths, University of London, New Cross, London, UK. 'Sonic Constellations' was a sound installation that included 33-channels of sound and two large GIS maps. Participants were invited to discover ten Taipei sojourners' listening experiences in London, which had been transformed into sonic geographies linking homeland and foreign land. [Related link](#).

sojourners as a case study, Tsai-wei's research investigates the sounds that they listen to, recollect and imagine when they are in London.

The research focuses on the emotional and cultural impacts of foreigners' listening experiences and are analysed using methods and techniques from various disciplines.

Researcher Calls For Assistance. Kirsten Reese is conducting research for her PHD at the University of the Arts in Berlin. Her focus is on acoustic land art, which she defines as "... sound art and composition performed or presented in and referring to landscape and nature".

Reese is putting together a list of works dealing with sound and landscape/nature and would greatly appreciate it if artists could send her a list of their respective works. She notes that qualifying works should:

- Have been performed or installed in an open air environmental/natural setting,
- Deal with, or refer to, nature and landscape in some way. (Natural soundscapes produced for indoor presentation or CD would therefore NOT be included).

The following information should be included if possible:

- Name of artist with date of birth;
- Title, year and place of first performance/presentation of work;
- Short description preferably with indication of the kind of sound production and the way nature/landscape is included in the work;
- Notes on existing source material and documentation/publication. (Until now the list contains around 120 works).

Reese plans to publish her thesis as a book and will keep any contributor informed regarding this project. Send you information to: kirsten.reese@gmx.net Web site: <http://www.kirstenreese.de>



Sound mapping Mithi River.

Sound mapping Mithi River is an independent sound installation by Rajivan Ayyappan complimenting the [SOAK](#) discourses: a sound creation as

part of an exhibition SOAK: Mumbai in an Estuary, to be presented at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai in May 2009. It is a sound documentary; a re-interpretation of the acoustic environments of a River, as a sonorous data, perhaps musical in an eclectic sense. [Read more.](#)

Article: Hearing There by David Drury. (Vague Terrian: Digital Art/Culture/Technology). Drury writes, "*Hearing There* is an interactive soundwalk along a stretch of Boulevard St. Laurent in Montréal. The idea is simple: the listener, wearing headphones attached to a small PDA, walks along the street and the sound they are hearing at any given moment is a binaural recording of the interior space closest to where they are standing.

Walking by the grocery store, one hears the electronic beeps and plastic rustles of the checkout counter, moving on past the Portuguese bakery, the hum of the ovens and the animated conversation of the bakers comes to the fore. One's movement along the street is imbued with a sonic projection, as if one were in fact moving through the interior spaces themselves - through the normally sound-isolating walls of the storefronts." [Read full article.](#)

Beam Research Opportunities. Get off-campus and study wild orcas for 10 weeks this fall! Apply now to conduct your own research with the Beam Reach Marine Science and Sustainability School. Beam Reach is for you if you want to:

- study endangered orcas and their prey in the wild
- use advanced bioacoustic tools in your own research project
- network with experts in killer whale conservation
- learn to sail a biodiesel-electric catamaran
- explore the San Juan Islands in the Pacific Northwest
- earn 18 credits from the University of Washington

We are still accepting applications for: Fall 2009 -- August 24 - October 31. To apply you should have completed your first year of college, be interested in the marine environment, and want to spend 10 weeks off-campus in an intensive field research experience. [Learn More.](#)

Sorry

This video does not exist.

TANGAMANGA

Sound Composition by [Iván Sánchez](#).

In the Huachichil culture, the word Tangamanga means land of gold and water. In the past, that was the name of the city of San Luis potosí, México. But today it is the name of a public park in the same city.

The Tangamanga landscape composition was realised with sounds recorded at a native community near the municipality of Aquismón, located at the Huasteca Potosina, with the help of the local inhabitants and the support of the institutions FECA and CANTE from Potosí San Luis.

[TANGAMANGA](#), a work in progress, was based on theories of Eco-Composition and the search of a more personal language, where the original sources and their process directed the composer in the development of the work.

This is the 15 minute stereo version with video by Omar Bernal. There is also a version of 40 min. and a 5.1 mix by the artist Israel M.

Iván Sanchez - composer and guitarist, has composed for bands like RADIO KAOS, EL MONOLITO, and orchestral settings such as the Choir of the Symphony Orchestra of San Luis Potosí.

At the moment Sanchez directs the Laboratorio de Arte Sonoro at [CANTE](#) as part of the Center of Arts in San Luis Potos, teaches classes in arts and culture at the ITESM and undertakes productions in his own sound studio.

At CANTE, he is involved in composition, artistic production and education, and coordinates the sonorous and electronic arts festival: TEMPO.

OPPORTUNITIES: EVENTS

May, 2009

Open Call for Works

Giant Ear))) New York

~~~ Scott Sherk will be hosting the May edition of Giant Ear ))) the two-hour internet radio program sponsored by the New York Society of Acoustic Ecology. The program will be based on recordings of 24-hour periods of specific places. Scott is interested in hearing your recordings and your strategy for making comprehensible the aural soundscape of one place over a 24 hour period. Please send submissions in mp3 format through an upload service (yousendit, etc.) or email me for snail mail. Include in your submissions a statement about how your recordings were made. Send submissions to: [scottsherk27@yahoo.com](mailto:scottsherk27@yahoo.com). Learn more about [Giant Ear online](#).

### May, 1-31, 2009

#### Barry Schrader's *Lost Atlantis*

#### Fonoteca Nacional, Mexico City

~~~ Three movements of *Lost Atlantis* will be presented in their original quadraphonic format on the ElectroVisiones Festival in Mexico City at the [Fonoteca Nacional](#). This is a festival of multichannel electroacoustic music. The three sections of *Lost Atlantis* that will be presented are: Introduction: The Pillars of Hercules - The Great Harbor; The Temple of Poseidon - The Dance of the Gods; The Destruction of Atlantis - Epilogue: "...and Atlantis shall rise." Please see the [ElectroVisiones website](#) for specific information.

May 14-16, 2009

Symposium "Soundscapes & Listening" of the European "Forum Klanglandschaft FKL"

University of Applied Sciences, St. Pölten, Austria

~~~ Conventions of the European "Forum Klanglandschaft FKL" are take place every two years in one of the European member countries these have included: Vienna (2001), Meran (2003), Potsdam (2005) and Basel (2009). This year, the convention is held at the University of Applied Sciences, St. Pölten.

Within this year's convention, current works on the topic of soundscape studies from the fields of science and art respectively - ranging from culture, media or music science, geography and music pedagogy to music therapy, composition, sound and media art as well as broadcast applications - are presented as papers or presentations. [Read more online](#).

Ab sofort ist das Programm der 4. FKL-Tagung "Soundscapes & Listening" verfügbar. Die Tagung findet vom 14.-16. Mai in St. Pölten, Österreich, statt. Ein Anmeldeformular sowie weitere Informationen finden Sie unter <http://soundscapes.fhstp.ac.at/>

**May 28-30, 2009****The 7th Annual Radio Without Boundaries Conference  
Artscape Wychwood Barns, 601 Christie St., Toronto**

~~~ The seventh annual Radio Without Boundaries conference makes Deep Wireless an internationally sought after destination for radio producers, radio and transmission artists and those with a general interest in radio and transmission art.

We are very excited to feature three keynote speakers: Gregory Whitehead (USA), Brandon LaBelle (Germany/US), and Hank Bull (Can). Also included are Chris Brookes (Can), Andrea Dancer (Canada), Paul Ingles (USA), Tom Roe (free103point9.org, NY, USA), Anna Friz (Can), Mark Blevis (Can), Emmanuel Madan (Can), Alessandro Bosetti (Italy), Kristen Roos (Can), Andra McCartney (Can) & Neil Sandell (Can) plus many more. Conference workshops include "Oh, Shut Up! Who needs a narrator anyways?" by Chris Brookes, "Build a Micro-Radio Transmitter," "How to Pitch" by Paul Ingles, "Podcasting" by Mark Blevis and "Listening Sessions" with Gregory Whitehead as well as many more break-out sessions during the conference weekend free for those registered for the conference. For conference and registration information go to: <http://www.naisa.ca/RWB/>

Deadline: May 29, 2009**Call For Submissions and Commission Proposals****Expo Leeds 24-29 September 2009****Presented by Sound and Music and MAAP**

~~~Expo is the hub and playground of the experimental music and sound art scene in the UK and beyond. Free and open, the event mobilises a national network of artists and engages with communities from all backgrounds –placing sonic art and the people who make it in direct contact with the public. Expo steps out from traditional venues and into spaces that lie at the heart of the community - inspiring practitioners and the public to reconsider their environments.

Expo will land in Leeds in September 09 for a long weekend of performance, exhibition and presentation which will take place across a variety of physical and virtual spaces.

The weekend aims to highlight the broadest possible range of approaches and thinking that surround the sonic arts. We welcome submissions of all kinds. Alongside international artists, the festival has previously showcased work by young people, disabled adults and those with learning difficulties, students and hundreds of emerging UK artists. We want all work of all kinds that has sound as a central element.

As well as asking for all kinds of submitted work for its programme Expo Leeds is offering £4000 of commission money towards the creation of a new installation work that will sit within the Leeds Arena space at Leeds City Museum during the festival weekend. Please visit [www.expofestival.org](http://www.expofestival.org) for details on how to submit and updates on the programme. The closing date for submissions and commission proposals is 29 May 2009.

**June 12-14, 2009****The 4th International Soundscape Retreat and Symposium: Negotiating Space/Place In The Changing Soundscape****Garbiola Island, British Columbia, Canada**

~~~ The Canadian Association for Sound Ecology (CASE) invites you to participate in its 4th International Soundscape Retreat and Symposium. The weekend long retreat and symposium will take place at the Haven on the weekend of June 12-14, 2009 on Gabriola Island, BC and will include lectures/talks on the theme Negotiating space/place in the changing Soundscape as well as ear-cleaning exercises, soundscape concerts, show-and-tell sessions for participants and outdoor soundwalks. There is no previous experience necessary and all are welcome to attend. Speakers include: Helmi Järviuoma (Finland), Keiko Torigoe (Japan), Hildegard Westerkamp (Vancouver), Barry Truax (Vancouver) Charlie Fox (Regina) and Eric Powell (Vancouver). [Details online.](#)

June 24-28, 2009**Jackson Hole Soundscape Workshop****Jackson Hole, Wyoming, USA**

~~~ This is a preliminary announcement of a 4-day natural soundscape workshop in one of the most beautiful spots in America, Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The program will take place at the [Murie Center](#) -- the folks who established the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Murie Center is located within the boundary of Grand Teton National Park, which has also approved this workshop. View the [Murie Center](#) web site for details.

**September 14-18, 2009****XXII IBAC Conference****Lisbon, Portugal**

~~~ The 22nd International Conference of the International Bioacoustics Council (IBAC) will be held from 14-18 September 2009 at Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Portugal. Following the tradition established over 35 years ago, the IBAC meeting fosters interactions among scientists interested in the factors that regulate sound production in animals. Moreover, IBAC meetings aim to bring together, in informal settings, biologists from different specialists (ethologists, physiologists, taxonomists, etc) with engineers, sound archivists and amateur sound recordists, to foster discussion and exchange of ideas.

The scientific program will be composed of sessions of invited speakers integrated with contributed short talks and

poster presentations. Please visit the conference [website](#). Call for paper submission and early registration deadline: **May, 10th.**

WFAE: INFORMATION

✦ WFAE MEMBERSHIP

Become a member of a WFAE Affiliate organization. Download a [membership](#) form today.

✦ WFAE BOARD AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

- American Society for Acoustic Ecology (ASAE): contact-asae@wfae.net
- Australian Forum for Acoustic Ecology (FAAW): contact-afae@wfae.net
- Canadian Association for Sound Ecology (CASE): contact-case@wfae.net
- Finnish Society for Acoustic Ecology (Suomen Akustisen Ekologian Seura (FSAE): contact-fsae@wfae.net
- Foro Mexicano de Ecología Acústica (MFAE): contact-mfae@wfae.net
- Forum fuer Klanglandschaft (FKL): contact-fkl@wfae.net
- Hellenic Society for Acoustic Ecology (HSAE): contact-hsae@wfae.net
- Japanese Association for Sound Ecology (JASE): contact-jase@wfae.net
- UK and Ireland Soundscape Community (UKISC): contact-ukisc@wfae.net

✦ WFAE AFFILIATE WEB SITES (Current):

- [American Society for Acoustic Ecology](#)
- [Australian Forum for Acoustic Ecology](#)
- [Canadian Association for Sound Ecology](#)
- [Finnish Society for Acoustic Ecology](#)
- [Forum fuer Klanglandschaft](#)
- [Japanese Association for Sound Ecology](#)

Issues of this publication dating back to 2004 are archived [online](#). Back copies of *Soundscape, The Journal of Acoustic Ecology* are also available.

The World Forum For Acoustic Ecology has a MySpace account and welcomes friends from around the world working in the field of acoustic-ecology to join us. If you have a MySpace account sign in and then access [WFAE MYSFACE](#) on line. Click on "Add Friend" and become a partner in creating this network gathering place for ear-minded friends on the Internet.

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World Forum for Acoustic Ecology WFAE Newsletter

Volume 6, Number 3. May-June, 2009
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Welcome Address by Nigel Frayne, WFAE President

On behalf of the board of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, it is both an honour and a pleasure to welcome you to this wonderful location for "Sound Megalopolis", the latest international conference on acoustic ecology.

On Friday, August 13th, 1993, over 100 delegates of the first international conference on acoustic ecology formed a new international organisation, the WORLD FORUM FOR ACOUSTIC ECOLOGY or WFAE.

Since then:

- A resource rich website has been established (the home page has received over 32,000 hits since January 2005.)
- An online Newsletter is published bi-monthly with about 1,000 unique visitors per month. For both of these services we owe a great debt of gratitude to Gary Ferrington.
- 8 Volumes or 13 individual issues of Soundscape: The Journal of Acoustic Ecology have been published (for which I acknowledge Hildegard Westerkamp and the tireless editorial committee)
- 6 international conferences have been fully endorsed by the WFAE in Sweden, France, Australia, Canada, the UK and Japan.

Since our restructure in 1998 the WFAE has grown from 3 affiliates to 9 (Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Greece, Japan, Mexico, The United Kingdom and Ireland and the USA). New organisations are also being planned in Russia, France and Portugal. Our membership base has remained fairly steady at 250 worldwide however our influence reaches far wider as people with a broad range of interests tap into our resources. Since the year 2000 over 600 individuals have passed through the WFAE as members from where they have gone forth into the community with new ears, new ideas and new skills.

Indeed one might say that Acoustic Ecology is bursting out all over!

While it may not be recognized by name as acoustic ecology, none-the-less it is clear that a knowledge or understanding of the relationship between living organisms and the acoustic environment is informing any number of activities and projects around the world. Acoustic ecology can provide a unique perspective - indeed a philosophical framework as we seek to better understand our world.

When I attend a conference of the Audio Engineering Society these days I am not sitting bewildered by a screen filled with someone's latest mathematical algorithm or digital filter co-efficients. The audio industry is talking about creating immersive sound fields with high definition localisation and surround sound. Engineers are testing people's preferences for certain reverberant spaces based on the psychoacoustic characteristics of human hearing.

The rise of the digital audio age is inspiring various universities to develop new tools for analysis of the acoustic environment.

For example, a new audio-visual technique for effectively monitoring the behaviour of nesting birds is being developed by the School of Biological Sciences at Flinders University in South Australia.

In their recently published paper they say: 'Effective monitoring techniques are vital to understanding a range of behaviours and their consequences for evolution of life histories. Video and photographic monitoring is regularly used

but rarely with audio monitoring even though it can identify birds or predators off-camera and detect alarm calls and songs. The authors have developed a 4-channel audio-visual recording system to continuously monitor the nests of Superb Fairy-wrens.

This innovative system worked autonomously for 3 days and identified repeat visits by some predators, detected nest predation by Grey Currawong and two rodents. It provided new insights into nest defence, provisioning rates, vocalisations of parents and nestlings and interactions between them'.

Similar techniques are being used by researchers at Cornell University to better understand elephant societies and their vocalisations and in other places to survey bird and frog populations.

Then there is the ISRIE project (an Instrument for Soundscape Recognition, Identification and Evaluation) that is being developed at the University of Southampton, UK. This project is a derivative of the European Union directive on noise that required all cities beyond a certain size to undertake quantitative mapping of urban sound. We are yet to learn what the EU plans to do with this extensive if not extraordinary data set. In the meantime many communities who carried out the survey, somewhat bemused by the usefulness of such decibel measurement of noise levels have gone on to develop projects which analyse and assess the qualitative features of their soundscapes ñ and hence the relationships of the organisms within it. The ISRIE instrument is designed to facilitate this ongoing research.

These kinds of activities are also springing up outside of the EU. In my own hometown of Melbourne, the City is planning to institute sites of respite where people can spend some down time away from the dominant sounds of the retail industry. Singapore's Orchard Road, spruiked as one of the most vibrant shopping precincts in the world, has just completed construction of a similar set of quiet spaces. This is a precinct where huge LCD screens with accompanying sound broadcast advertisements across the street. And live stages with distorted and impossibly loud amplified music and voice confront both local and tourist pedestrians with some latest product. This kind of stimulation is becoming a feature of many of these 'theme-park-like' streets.

I recently heard Susan Greenfield, the eminent neuroscientist and Oxford scholar, expressing her concern about the effect caused by the bombardment of images and relentless stimulation on cognitive development of the brain. While she was specifically referring to the effect of hours spent in front of computers playing video games none-the-less one can see parallels with the experience of simply walking down the street of many inner city shopping precincts. Professor Greenfield cites a measured rise in autism and Asperger's Syndrome in modern communities. Beyond such extreme effects her concern is for the general health of communities where the lack of ability for individuals to empathise leads to major problems for society. As our cities continue to grow and stimulate it really is just a small step from video games and instant access media to over stimulation in our theme park cities and urban environments.

In all these developments it seems to me that the philosophy of acoustic ecology is not far away, almost bubbling under the surface. There is a growing recognition of the importance for knowledgeable and well-informed acoustic design for our cities and urban habitats. An acoustic design process will be informed by what we know and value.

Institutions such as the Nacional Fonoteca here in Mexico along with other institutions around the world have a very important role to play in both identifying and archiving sounds and soundscapes of importance and making such valuable resources available to researchers, professionals and the general community.

In conjunction with the Ministry for Culture and the Arts, Dr. Camacho has done a wonderful job in establishing the Nacional Fonoteca and introducing acoustic ecology into the realm of it is important functions.

Today we are the beneficiaries as we assemble from all corners of the world to engage in dialogue, cross-pollinate ideas and learn more about the many facets of acoustic ecology and the effect it has on our lives and communities.

On behalf of my fellow Board members I welcome you all and wish you a successful conference.

Photo: Nacional Fonoteca of Mexico

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Concluding Remarks by Nigel Frayne, WFAE President

Following the gracious presence of Dr Migallón and Engineer Ferrar, we began our journey here in Mexico City on foot, walking with rhythm and a sense of purpose. While our minds may have been racing at the start of the soundwalk, inevitably, when we returned, we were relaxed and ready to begin our conference. Hildegard Westerkamp invited us to grasp this opportunity to listen and not speak.

A soundwalk can be a transforming experience and with the assistance of Erika, Samantha and Janet, Hildegard opened our ears and drew us into a listening frame of mind in readiness for our conference to begin.

Our five keynote speakers set our minds alert at the start of each day. The eloquent dissertation of their ideas and theories is testament to their importance to the body of knowledge within the field and hence to the acoustic ecology community. We enjoyed the personal experiences of Derek de Kerkhove, the listening journey and clarity of Barry Blesser, the poetic and engaging presence of Murray Schafer, the intellectual rigour of Sabine Breitsameter and the exciting potential for broad action by Christian Hugonnet. Beyond their addresses we also had the opportunity to engage with each of them personally as they amiably mixed with the delegates throughout the day.

The extended format of the conference allowed for three Tutorials. These four hour sessions enabled Murray Schafer, Benjamin Kanters and Marisa Trench de Oliveira Fonterrada to deeply explore their fields in a setting designed for active engagement and interaction.

The evening performances and installations both entertained and informed us of the important role artists are playing through their unique perspective of the complex relationships within the soundscape.

The paper presentations provided a platform for the expression of the many themes within this complex field of acoustic ecology. The authors are congratulated on the rigour of their work, for their presence and sharing of ideas, practice and processes.

Environment and Soundscape

We learnt about surveys and methodologies for assessing the soundscape as we were transported to exotic locations from Antarctica to Greece, Australia to Mexico. This important documentation focuses attention on individual elements within both the environmental and political landscape, and provides a vehicle for the protection of endangered elements and a framework for building laws and regulations for their protection.

Technology of soundscape construction

A number of different technologies were presented for the recording, preservation and recreation of the soundscape for both personal experience and academic study. Through these enterprises we can better understand human intellectual and emotional capacities as we interact with the soundscape.

Towards a Listening Culture

We have all arrived here with reconnected ears, we have started listening again. When and why did we stop listening and can we arrest this development in our children? These sessions recognised the importance of sound as an

educative tool in all forms of learning. The presentations also identified the need to create materials for sound education programmes that can open the ears of children to the art of listening and its importance to their lives.

Culture and Human Soundscapes

One of the dominant features of the soundscape is the product of human cultural activity. In these sessions we learnt of artists' interpretive and productive processes in the formation of their works. Within these processes artists explore the dynamic between natural and human made sounds which is often a subtle and delicate investigation. Finding a balance in this relationship is fundamentally important for the nourishment of human culture and the continued existence of variety and diversity in the natural world.

The Design of the Sound Environment

The growing awareness and identification of imbalances with the soundscape and the ramifications for all living organisms is leading the call for a better designed soundscape. Acoustic design allows us to go beyond the debate about noise and its detrimental effects. It energises positive action towards the creation of a more healthy and more vibrant listening world. This process will require both regulation for the control of undesirable elements as well as establish guidelines and processes for the remaining sounding elements. Design is inherently an idealistic enterprise.† We must believe the world can be a better place. While the problems may seem insurmountable we can see in the success of this conference and the growing engagement with the field of acoustic ecology that we have begun this process. There is much work to do and this conference has exemplified that there is energy and a will to move ahead and accept the challenge.

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Soundwalk Mexico City At the beginning of *Megalopolis Sonoras/Sound Megalopoli* March 23, 2009

By Hildegard Westerkamp

Introduction addressed to the soundwalk participants

Many heartfelt thanks to Lidia Camacho and Perla Olivia Rodriguez Resendiz for organizing this conference, *Megalopolis Sonoras/Sound Megalopolis*. Many thanks also to everyone else, who assisted them in making such a large event possible. Your hard work allows us all to gather in this gorgeous place, the Fonoteca Nacional, which by the way, was the former residence of Octavio Paz---obviously a place conducive to powerful writing, thought and creative work, a place I am sure, also highly conducive to listening, a quiet oasis in this huge city!



I am grateful that the organizers decided to open the conference with a soundwalk. What could be more appropriate for a conference on acoustic ecology? Not only is it appropriate for those of us who have just arrived from other places to spend time to listen to this city, to *sense* the new culture, the new language and the totally new environment. It is also appropriate for all of us at this conference to gather as a *listening community* and experience the soundscape around us first, before we launch into presentations and talks. In a conference context it is all too easy to forget to pause and listen in such a way. A soundwalk can settle our nervous system. It can create inner calm, which in turn may open up possibilities for unexpected atmospheres of listening throughout the next few days here.

One type of soundwalk is a silent group walk, led along a pre-planned route in order to experience a location's ambiance and underlying rhythms. All too often the sounds of the environment pass by unnoticed because of our uncanny ability to shut them out. But environmental sound can also be understood as a type of language where each sound and soundscape has its own meanings and expressions. Each environmental sound is like a spoken word: it has something to say to us if we care to listen.

A soundwalk enables its participants to listen actively, to open ears and consciousness to the complex orchestration that the environment is offering to us at all times for our consideration. It is a musical, sonic adventure that reveals the banal to be extraordinary.

The walk will be about one hour long and there will be an opportunity for discussion and exchange when we get back. One important instruction is that we walk in silence and agree not to speak. It is a rare *opportunity* to be in a group and not speak with anyone. The main idea is that we open our ears to all sounds. But I also want to invite you to include your own inner sounds and voices, the mental chatter, in your listening. Paying attention to both outer and inner sound worlds can inform us about how we relate to the environment, *how* we listen, what kind of listeners we are and how we let the soundscape affect us.

We will be a conspicuous group, an unusual social entity. People will notice our large silence. If someone asks what we are doing, just answer that we are on a soundwalk, *caminata sonora*, and walk on. Equally, if you meet any friends and do not want to pass them in silence, tell them about the walk and explain more later.

The Soundwalk

The route was explored and composed by Samanta Cruz, Janet Fernandez, Erika Lopez and myself. It began on the quiet grounds of the Fonoteca Nacional and continued through the gate onto a narrow street, equally quiet, in which one rhythmical hissing sound became surprisingly noticeable. It sounded like an insect.



But it came from the top of an electrical pole and seemed to be electricity escaping from a faulty connection. A gradual crescendo of traffic noise told us that we were approaching a very busy road. The 70-80 soundwalk participants had to cross this road before entering the large park "Viveros de Coyoacán".



Once in the park the sound of our clustered footsteps dominated: multiple crunches when we walked on the wider pathways, covered in red gravel, circumventing the entire park and seemed to be the main jogging trail; softer, whispering steps on more sandy trails inside the park; brittle, dry and crisp sounds when we walked diagonally through forested areas. We could hear the warm dry climate under our feet throughout.



Only once did we hear water sounds: sprinklers watering thousands of flower, bush and tree seedlings in a large area of the park near where we had entered.

As we walked deeper into the park the sound of traffic became quieter, a slow decrescendo into a more distant low frequency ambience. Several times when we stood still, an individual car motor without muffler suddenly stuck out of the general ambience and a snaring, revving motorbike could be traced clearly in its speedy travel around the periphery of the park.

Jet airplanes flew over regularly in their approach to the airport. When I had arrived from Vancouver a few days earlier, I was astounded to see our plane descend lower and lower over the city and still, right up to the final approach, there were houses underneath us! I remembered back to a few years ago when we had flown across the city in the same way, but late at night. I wondered then how many of the 20 million inhabitants we had woken up.



At the centre of the park is a large open plaza, sunny and bright. When we arrived there and stopped in a shadowy spot on the side, listening, a group of young men, who had just finished some sort of sports activity, were changing their clothes, talking loudly and in a lively way. Not knowing the language very well, I could not make out any of their words. Once in a while some of them looked curiously at our silent group. Then they left. Now the plaza was empty except for two men who were rehearsing the movements and interactions of a bullfight. They were far enough away so that we could not hear any sound. One of them played the bull, the other one the bullfighter holding and moving the red cloth. They seemed to be miming a bullfight and doing it especially for us, as if they were presenting an iconic cultural performance. This was a rather surrealistic scene: in its silence it conjured up the soundscape of real bullfights.



Later in the soundwalk, in one of the quietest spots of the park, while we stopped among the trees and listened, Erika Lopez moved through the group, reciting words by Victor Hugo, speaking in Spanish. In counterpoint I spoke English, asking simple questions about the sounds of the environment while also moving among the soundwalkers. Listeners would have heard words and sentences passing by in two languages, fading in and out of earshot, sometimes following their meaning, sometimes hearing nothing but a tone of voice.

At one point we passed a playground. The day before, on Sunday, we had encountered a lively scene of children's voices and movement. On this day it was silent, but if one listened carefully one could hear yesterday's voices echoing in one's mind. A truck was idling nearby in the middle of the park, doing some work. We stopped and listened to its idling rhythm. I wondered whether we could listen so intently that the driver would be impelled to turn off the motor. Just then the motor stopped! And then a loud metallic bang! Resonating, surprising, delighting many of us in its excellent timing. I had no idea what had caused this sound, thinking that it may have had something to do with the idling truck! Later I heard by chance that one soundwalker had 'staged' this event, had thrown a stone against a large metal sheet. Yes, why not? Just as soundwalk participants contribute with the sounds of their footsteps so can they of course contribute with other types of soundmaking activities that suggest themselves during a walk.

On our way back joggers' footsteps passed us on the red gravel, crunching faster rhythms into the ground. Gradually the traffic sounds increased as we approached the busy road again, leaving the park, crossing the road



and moving down the narrow street towards the Fonoteca Nacional, noticing again that same 'insect', the rhythmical hissing sound high up on one of the electrical poles.



An hour had passed and a now much calmer group of soundwalkers returned to the Fonoteca. An interesting exchange ensued in which participants shared their impressions from the walk and highlighted different parts of the walk and their listening experiences.



By the end of it, many of us felt grounded and refreshed, able to listen with open and welcoming ears to the conference speakers.

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some impressions of the 2009 wfae conference in mexico city **by vivienne spiteri**



....where the streets are paved in

mauve....

that tune from the wizard of oz came to mind as the plane pursued its descent into mexico city. on the approach, the intensity of those captivating purple clusters began to bleed and spread over surfaces large and wide. little did i know that before long, violet streets in coyoacán would carpet my footsteps with their trees' fallen petals.

along the mauve lanes then to the gingerbread house of sound, where the good white witch, elves in tow, all smiling like mexico's sunlight, welcomed me.

who are these elves whose black chests boast a white pledge to sound? whose are the disembodied voices that enter our ears for our understanding of the spoken texts? who are the angels in white, standing guard over our bellies' fill? who are the wizards who secretly set spells 'gainst persistent electrical hums? in other words: who were the translators, the drivers, the technicians, the photographer/s, the guides through the fonoteca, the catering company? what are their names? the conference package carried names of about a half dozen organizers, managers of the event, yet the members of the support staff, those who kept the boat afloat, were not mentioned. anywhere. they remain/ed nameless. this is unfortunate. it would make for a more comprehensive document if all players and the functions they perform were identified in the printed material. i would still like to know.

concerning transportation to and from the conferences: since proposed hotels were rather far away from the fonoteca, a scheduled, regular pick-up and drop-off coach/bus/car service to and from all these hotels (not just the plaza hotel), might have been envisaged.

the fonoteca directors ran a tight ship. too tight at times for to cut short conferences and cancel q & a periods defeats the purpose for which participants attended.

the complimentary meal tickets, the participants' package, the tour of the fonoteca, the banquet, the forthcomingness of the staff, the fine papers, the translation services, the generous sunshine, the wondrous locale - all this and more made the well-organized event a memorable experience.

there was one particularly memorable sight/sound experience: on the median of a congested two-way road (three-lanes per direction), car-horns blaring incessantly, a lone organ-grinder ground the handle of his instrument. sight but no sound. at a red light: horns diminuendo, and the organ music soared into space. timbral harmony!

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Mexico Conference Observations By Eric Leonardson

Attending the Sound Megalopolis conference was an unforgettable experience that marked the end of my sixteen-year hiatus from active involvement with the WFAE. What I learned in the founding conference has infused my art and teaching practices with a broad awareness of sound, its perception, and use in a variety of contexts. My hiatus provides perspective on what has changed in the fields of art, sound, and acoustic ecology, and what hasn't.



One surprising change was apparent on my arrival at the Fonoteca Nacional. The scene was comprised of a large, beautiful garden where more than a dozen TV news cameras and numerous press reporters were massed for the inaugural ceremony. This scene emphasized the important of several things: the role the Fonoteca serves in preserving Mexico's cultural heritage in recorded sound, a role that is highly valued, and that a significant opportunity was upon us in holding the WFAE conference here thanks to the newly founded Mexican Forum for Acoustic Ecology. This level of attention raises hope that acoustic ecology will finally catch on. Personally, the unforgettable scene harkened back to the unforgettable grandeur of the Banff Centre of the Arts, where the WFAE's founding conference took place in 1993.



Concern was expressed about whether acoustic ecology speaks to a younger generation. I observed a significant number of young local people attending from the local area, and chatted some of the young folk in that small contingent of Sabine Breitsameter's students. They were fortunate enough to receive funding to fly over from Germany and seemed fully aware of the significance of technology in affecting how we experience the soundscape. With the newly founded Mexican Forum for Acoustic Ecology I expect a different attitude toward acoustic ecology to emerge: one that can re-energize the established members and affiliates, and draw in a new generation.

E.L. 4/23/09

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Sound Technology, WFAE 2009, and Mexico City By Randolph Jordan

My partner and I arrived in Mexico City on March 20th from Montreal, Canada. Three days early for the conference, we went straight from the airport to Zocalo station, the downtown core of Mexico City, where we would stay for the duration of our trip.

From the perspective of a Canadian, the general bustle of Mexico City is more than what we're used to up North. But aside from the general increase in urban noise that one would expect from a city with the population of our entire country, one feature of the soundscape stood out above all the rest: the proliferation of amplified sound in public spaces, cranked to the point of distortion at decibel levels that regularly prompted me to cover my ears.

I'm a city guy and enjoy urban living, so I'm not one to harp on urban noise pollution too readily. But the attitude towards public address in this particular city gave me some food for thought about the nature of cities much larger than any of the ones I have lived in.

Zocalo Square itself is home to a large variety of vendors and performers. While the sound of acoustic drumming from a circle of Aztec Dancers nicely complemented the activities of the square, the over-amplified musical cues from Friday night's acrobatic comedy troupe were less enjoyable.



You might think that Sunday morning would be quieter than a Friday night. Yet as we strolled through the square on our way to the metro we were greeted by a set of giant crane-mounted speakers blaring sustained test patterns for several minutes at a time.





The square is home to regular organized gatherings, and this speaker array was part of a demonstration by La Revolucion Blanca. Without knowing anything about their cause, it would seem that part of their revolutionary strategy is to blast innocent passers-by with white noise. Kidding aside, this level of sound projection (whether test patterns or the latest in Mexican pop) was found similarly in all the squares and parks we visited, a myriad of stalls blaring their own music forced from sound systems strained to the point of absolute breaking.

The metro provided a similar sound environment with its dozens of vendors wandering through with goods of various kinds. The most prevalent of these were people selling CDs and DVDs, advertising the content of their product by blasting it through speaker systems strapped to their bodies in specialized backpacks and harnesses.



The effect of the music played by these vendors was rather startling: the entire metro car would fill with music so completely that at times it seemed to replace the soundscape entirely rather than simply adding to it. This would often make it very difficult to tell where the sound was emanating from. The first time I heard it I thought it was the official PA system of the transit authority, and was surprised to discover this volume of sound coming from a single point source within the car - a schizophrenic experience *par excellence*.

When we arrived at our Sunday morning destination, the Museum of Anthropology, we were greeted by another brand of hawker, this time using megaphone technology to scream information about museum tours and the like. And as we later discovered, the use of megaphones isn't restricted to the big city. The day after the conference, while riding a chartered bus through a series of small towns on our way to Malinalco, we encountered a "public address mobile," a truck with roof-mounted megaphones that snakes its way slowly through these rural areas making announcements of various kinds.



I'm not an anthropologist or a sociologist and I don't know the history of public address in Mexico. But from the perspective of acoustic ecology, it would be interesting to study the rise of both decibel levels and equipment distortion in the use of sound systems in public spaces around the country.

It would also be interesting to study the effects of this rise on the inhabitants of these soundscapes. I suspect that the levels of both amplitude and distortion that we encountered have reached their current point through the principal of the frog in the saucepan: heat the water up gradually and the frog will acclimatize accordingly, not realizing the

danger until it's already boiling to death. Or perhaps it's simply a matter of cultural difference, with those native to the area experiencing no particularly ill effects from these public address practices.

With three days of such experiences under our belts we set off for the first day of the conference while pondering some of these issues. Here we discovered that the conference venue itself – Fonoteca Nacional – provided a variety of sound experiences that extended quite naturally from the questions I had about Mexico's amplified soundscapes.

Initially beset with a few technical problems, it was not uncommon to hear the PA system in the main lecture room (Hall Murray Schafer) blast out feedback noise at random points before, during and after the lectures. My intention here is in no way to denigrate the conference organizers or technical staff, all of whom did an amazing job and put together one of the best conferences I've yet attended. The truth of the matter is that these kinds of technical difficulties are ubiquitous at such events, a function of the technology itself rather than the competency of its operators. This is one reason why R. Murray Schafer himself has made a career out of avoiding the use of such technology wherever possible (as he demonstrated by refusing the microphone during the discussion session following the opening soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp).

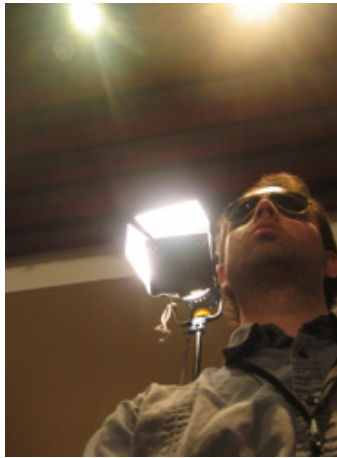
So it was with no small measure of irony that the question period after Schafer's own keynote address on Wednesday morning ended with a particularly nasty burst of electronic buzzing. He chose to take that as a sign that the session had officially come to an end. It was both humorous and telling.



Another unavoidable technological problem that one encounters at international conferences is the sound leakage from the headsets delivering simultaneous translation of the conference proceedings. When there are enough of these receiver units in the room, a surface of unintelligible mid-range babble coats the soundscape in such a way that it becomes hard to focus on the signal of the main speaker. This, along with the sound of the technical crew sorting out various problems from the back of the room, made it difficult to follow Derrick de Kerckhove's opening keynote on Monday morning. However, I stuck out the less than perfect conditions to hear him regale us with tales of going up the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan with only a few words of Spanish under his belt, and coming back down a fluent speaker...if only for a week or so. I tried this myself on Tuesday afternoon, but didn't have the same results...



Interestingly, however, the most difficult environmental quality of Hall Murray Schafer on the first day of the conference didn't have anything to do with sound. The intense frontal lighting that provided fill for the video recording was almost intolerable. The conference organizers apologized for the discomfort they created and assured us that it would only be for the first day. Though I had my sunglasses with me, I was glad that I didn't have to use them the rest of the week.



For the rest of the first day, I opted to take in the proceedings from the lovely overflow room where an audiovisual feed from Hall Murray Schafer was presented through a plasma screen and smaller PA system. The seats were less comfortable, but overall I found the experience to be more enjoyable.

The light attendance made for a nice break from the capacity crowds in the big room, and this made for less disturbance from the headsets. The down side was the room's disconnection from the live speakers in the main hall, providing its own set of drawbacks.

The first panel I listened to here started with Andrea Polli's talk on "Antarctica: soundscape, geosonification and the social geography of global climate change."

Her presentation included excerpts of audio works containing interviews in which her own voice was present alongside those of her interview subjects, and she would sometimes speak live while playing soundscape recordings in the background. Because the screen presented a direct feed of her PowerPoint presentation with no visualization of the panelists on the stage, Polli's strategy made for an interestingly disorienting experience. While clearly schizophrenic, here I actually found the experience intriguing instead of alienating. From this room Polli's talk was turned into a kind of sound composition in its own right instead of a lecture with supporting audio materials. Interesting content, combined with the less oppressive audiovisual environment of the overflow room, allowed me to enjoy this panel very much. This was an important reminder that the environmental setting for conference presentations is often as important as the content of the presentations themselves, an ecological message if ever there was one.



A less enjoyable technological reality in the overflow room was that clean reception on the wireless translation units was sometimes difficult to establish, and I would occasionally find myself wandering the courtyard just outside trying to get a better feed.



On a more positive technological note, the crowning achievement of the conference was certainly the lovely sound garden of the Fonoteca. The garden itself provides an oasis of gentleness just one block from two major traffic thoroughfares. With its high walls and ample tree coverage, the garden provides a measure of quietude as well as a zone of temperate respite from the blazing afternoon sun.



Furthermore, the entire compound of the Fonoteca is wired for sound with speakers positioned strategically throughout the garden areas.



Each evening the conference featured concert presentations in the garden, and for these the main grass area was equipped with a multi-channel array. The opening concert summed up the facilities perfectly. As we sat listening to Antonio Russek's 8-channel electroacoustic piece *Music of the desert*, created from sound recordings made in the desert of Chihuahua, the highly immersive piece melded with the ambient soundscape of the outdoor venue to wonderful effect.

The technology for the presentation of the piece was impressive and the concert was carried off without any obvious hitches. Here was an example of how electroacoustic transmission worked in tasteful co-operation with its surrounding environment, a welcome contrast from the less ecologically balanced onslaught found on the streets of Mexico City. All in all the Fonoteca proved to be a jewel of sonic exploration in a sea of aural competition driven by the commerce of the streets. A better environment for the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology I could scarcely imagine.

Finally, my most personal engagement with work presented at the conference came from Eric Powell's interactive installation *Sound.garden.scape: Gastown*.

In the René Villaneuva gallery space upstairs at the Fonoteca, the installation consisted of a series of headphone listening stations equipped with interactive objects that trigger various different sonic perspectives on the historic Gastown neighbourhood in my hometown of Vancouver, BC, Canada.

The use of headphones well suited the compartmentalized nature of the sound environments, each listening station providing an all-encompassing immersion into a small portion of the Gastown soundscape.

For me, the presentation of this piece here in Mexico City highlighted the distance between my place of birth and where I stood now, calling attention to the road I've traveled in between. This isn't the first time I've encountered

representations of Vancouver whilst traveling abroad, and it is always an interesting experience: finding one's home anew as a result of leaving it far behind. Here the schizophrenic properties of sound reproduction technology work in a positive way, re-engaging me with an environment I have become disconnected from. It reminded me of a crucial turning point in my graduate studies in Montreal: I had never heard of acoustic ecology until I discovered the original World Soundscape Project recordings of Vancouver – AFTER I had left home and moved to Montreal at the age of 26. Those original recordings made in 1973 (the year of my birth), along with the updates made in 1996 (shortly before my departure), encapsulated my quarter-century out West. Hearing them from a perspective outside of the soundscape they represented made me think about the life I had in Vancouver in a whole new way. It was this experience, in part, that prompted me to dive into the world of acoustic ecology as part of my graduate research, and I've never looked back.



Whatever problems arise with the increasing use of sound technologies, and however schizophrenic an experience they might create, the reality is that I would never have begun to engage in soundscape research if it weren't for my geographical separation from the place of my birth, and my reconnection to it through technologies of sound representation. And on this trip I was able to bring that experience full circle: on the last session of the last day of the conference I presented my soundscape composition *Winlaw Watersheds*, recorded in BC and then transplanted here to Mexcio City. So my reconnection to BC through the WSP recordings I heard abroad has allowed for a new level of engagement on my part, and I now share my own recordings of BC with the world beyond.



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REPORT: American Society for Acoustic Ecology
Submitted by: Andrea Polli

NYSAE CHAPTER

The New York area ASAE chapter NYSAE has had an exciting first 4 months of 2009. Edmund Mooney is our new co-chair replacing Andrea Polli who has sadly left NYC, but happily moved to New Mexico to assume directorship of the University of New Mexico's Interdisciplinary Film and Digital Media department. NYSAE had a major reinvestment meeting in March that has led to a renewed interest in its web presence, fund raising and outreach and general group philosophy.

The monthly radio show Giant Ear))) has had a number of memorable installments including a wonderfully curated show from the Bay Area Sound Ecology group (a.k.a. BASE). Edmund Mooney and Andrea Williams created "Fantastic Places" a journey into imagined soundscapes and Jonny Farrow created MCDOSBEV_Parts. 1 and 2 that contains an Andrea Polli recording and dispatch from the Mexico City WFAE conference, owl sounds and an interview with artist Rob Peterson concerning his "birds ear view" project. All are archived at free103point9. Scott Sherk is curating and hosting the May Giant Ear))) show on the theme "24-hour recordings."

Edmund Mooney, Jonny Farrow, Andrea Polli and their recordings were featured in SEEDMAGAZINE.com's "Ear to the Ground" earth day segment.

In early June, NYSAE members will be leading soundwalks to help Issue Project Room raise money to move into their new home in downtown Brooklyn. And NYSAE members will be leading an audience-participation, listening performance in Catskill, New York on July 5th with Annea Lockwood and Alexis Bhagat also on the bill.

MWSAE CHAPTER

Since the announcement of its founding in February, The newest ASAE chapter, the Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology's website is up at <http://mwsae.org>. Visitors in the Midwestern US are encouraged to download the [membership form](#) from its website and join.

At this time the MSAE has five members with more expected to join in the coming weeks and is proud to report that its World Listening Project has successfully participated in two events at Columbia College Chicago, connected with its Earth Week events. Brett Balogh, Chad Clark, Dan Godston, Eric Leonardson, and Jesse Seay held its panel discussion in the A + D Lecture Series on April 15. Listening to Our Planet took place all day on April 20 to tie with Columbia College's Critical Encounters program. It included the participations of local artists, students, teachers, and the renowned nature sound recordist and author, Bernie Krause.

Current WLP efforts include its collaboration with Locus Sonus in France, specifically in populating the Locustream Map with openweb-mikes. Locus Sonus and the WLP encourage all to take part in Locustream and join the current (Locus) streamers. To participate visit the Locus Sonus. More info about Locus Sonus is available at <http://locusonus.org>.

The next Locustream realization will take place at Hong-Kong in the frameworks of the "Around - Listening Places" festival. The Locustream Audio Tardis project (a automatic listening sequencer of all the open mics) will be shown during the festival, from the 27th of April. The next date will be the presentation of the Tardis at the big art exhibition "La Force de l'Art" that will take place at "Le Grand Palais" in downtown Paris, on May 17th and 18th.

More presentations will be shown in various festivals and events in the coming months. Many additional projects and proposals are under discussion on the WLP listserv.

All persons interested in Acoustic Ecology and a global understanding of the social, cultural, and environmental value in various listening practices can visit the [World Listening Project](#) web site. The WLP welcomes new subscribers to its [listserv](#).

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