

World Forum for Acoustic Ecology WFAE Newsletter

[AFFILIATE NEWS](#) | [SOUND BITES](#) | [RESOURCES](#) | [RESEARCH-PROJECTS](#) | [OPPORTUNITIES](#) | [WFAE CONTACT](#)

Volume 6, Number 4. July-August, 2009
WFAE Newsletter

WFAE Affiliate News



WFAE Chair Report. By Nigel Frayne. After our meetings during the Mexico conference the various board representatives in attendance flew home to their affiliates with the task of seeking nominations for vice president of the WFAE. The board would then give consideration to the nominations and select a person to work with me over the next 12 months to ease my work load and subsequently take over as president of the WFAE in mid-2010. The job of chairing the WFAE board in effect is not a particularly demanding position since so much of our activities occur at the affiliate level. However there are many other activities that need to be passed over to others such as managing the membership, finances and distribution of the Journal.

Apart from distributing these tasks more widely and easing my work load this kind of renewal is an important phase for the WFAE to undertake. The energy and enthusiasm for acoustic ecology witnessed in Mexico and underlying numerous important planning processes across the globe, particularly in Europe continues to build. The WFAE through its nine affiliates continues to play an important and central role in disseminating information and connecting people whose research and activities are becoming increasingly informed by acoustic ecology.

So now is a perfect time for any person with an interest in actively supporting the Forum to get involved in your local affiliate group and more widely through the world organisation.

Editor's Note: The WFAE encourages you to join an international affiliated organization. As an affiliate member you receive the benefits provided by a regional association and those of the WFAE. An individual WFAE membership is also available when no regional affiliate organization is available to meet your needs. Download a [WFAE Membership Application](#) (PDF). Membership questions should be directed to individual affiliate organizations. Or contact:

Membership Secretary
World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE)
P.O. Box 268, Fairfield
Victoria, 3078
Australia
E-Mail: membership-secretary@wfae.net



Report: Finnish Society for Acoustic Ecology (FSAE). By Noora Vikman

The FSAE announces the next International Conference of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology to be held in [Koli, Finland](#) June 15-19, 2010. The conference theme is '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 19th century Finland.

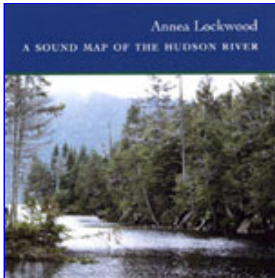
The Finnish Society for Acoustic Ecology (FSAE) invites researchers and artists from all disciplines to join this forum of discussion. Proposals are invited for papers, workshops, roundtable, or artistic contributions relating to, but not limited to the following topics: (See full description at [FSAE web site](#))

- Nations, nationalism and soundscape
- Constructing past and progress in the uses and abuses of sound
- Ethical challenges of working with the sounds
- The commodification of aural space, sound and silence

Please send ABSTRACTS (max. 400 words) to FSAE by October 1, 2009 to the e-mail address koli@akueko.com. A web page will be opened giving more information about the accommodation (will be a broad range from a hostel, cottages to a hotel) and program. After the official program there will be an organised trip across the border to Russia, to the beautiful monastery island Old Valamo with its famous bells. Photo: [Koli, Finland Website](#).

Report: American Society for Acoustic Ecology (ASAE) by Andrea. Submitted by Andrea Polli.

ASAE Chapter: The New York Society for Acoustic Ecology (NYSAE). NYSAE members Todd Shalom, Andrea Williams, Edmund Mooney, Jonny Farrow and ASAE Treasurer Michelle Nagai recently led soundwalks in support of Issue Project Room's first annual Sound Walk-a-Thon. The aim of this project was to raise money for IPR's move to their new long-term home in downtown Brooklyn. More than 300 people participated! Thanks to all who participated and donated!



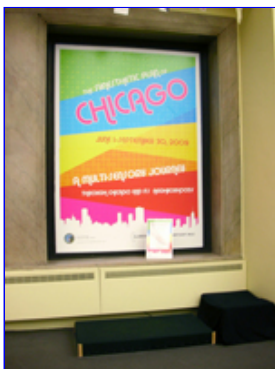
On July 5, NYSAE members Todd Shalom, Andrea Williams, Jonny Farrow, Jamie Davis and Andrea Callard will be performing in Catskill, New York in an event called "[Sound Mapping](#)" featuring our live performance entitled "Moving Water," a conversation between artists Alexis Bhagat and Annea Lockwood, and Annea's canonical work "Sound map of the Hudson River."

"Moving Water" is an interactive performance involving "Ear Cleaning" exercises (with the audience) followed by focused listening and as a warm-up for an interactive, improvised sound-making performance where the audience will be split into groups and instructed to make sounds of varying timbre and texture around the theme of moving water.

Lastly, the June 28th *Giant Ear*))) show curated by Mary Jeys, entitled "Destruction Sounds," featured works that evoke or record destruction, crashes and explosions. [Read More](#).

ASAE Chapter: The Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology (MSAE). Chicago Phonography has been selected to participate in a performance/ installation series happening at the Museum of Contemporary Art. The "Here/Not There" series asks artists to perform multiple times over the course of a week at spaces in and around the museum and to create an installation that will merge the performative and the visual. The first performance will be on Tuesday, July 21 with others following over the course of the week. Tentatively, around 4 to 6 performances will happen with the first being held outdoors on the MCA grounds.

MSAE and Chicago Phonography members Brett BaLogh, Eric Leonardson, and Chad Clark are working on a 4-channel audio-visual installation where field recordings from the Chicago area are diffused into the space in a real-time spatial composition. The visual component is an immersive 3D environment of an abstracted Chicago cityscape 'lit' by the moving sound sources. The installation will be in the MCA's 12 x 12 gallery Tuesday, July 21 - Monday, July 27. [Read More](#).



On August 25th MSAE founder Eric Leonardson will sonically activate the Sonic Playground at [Skinner Park](#) in Chicago making use of the public's interaction.

The World Listening Project's "[Acoustic Mirror of the World](#)" Installation in the Visitors Center of the Chicago Cultural Center continues through September 20. [Read More](#). (Photo: Acoustic Mirror by Eric Leonardson. Click to see additional images).

Eric Leonardson was invited to talk about the World Listening Project at the June 12 - 14, Canadian Association of Sound Ecology (CASE) retreat and symposium on Gabriola Island, BC. Eric Leonardson also presented new work he recorded with Toronto sound artist Anna Friz. [Read More](#).

Report: The Canadian Association for Sound Ecology. Submitted by Nadene Thériault-Copeland

The Canadian Association for Sound Ecology held its fourth soundscape retreat/symposium - Negotiating Space/Place in the Changing Soundscape - on Gabriola Island, British Columbia Canada June 12-14, 2009.



CASE Retreat soundwalk led by Darren Copeland: Photo by Eric Leonardson

Symposium presentations included "European Soundscapes in Change" by Dr. Noora Vikman (Finland), "Creativity and the Sonic Embrace" by Charlie Fox (Saskatchewan, Canada), "The interrelationship between sound, space and place" by Eric Powell (Saskatchewan, Canada), "Bridging, Linking, Connecting. Always Listening" by Hildegard Westerkamp (BC, Canada), "From the World Soundscape Project to Soundscape Composition" by Barry Truax (BC, Canada) and finally "The World Listening Project" by Eric Leonardson (Illinois, USA). An important focus was the World Soundscape Project and its various updates as well as reflections on contemporary approaches to soundscape recording, soundwalking, sound mapping and installation media art practice.

The retreat this year included a new component in the evenings that featured 8-channel presentations of works by Barry Truax, Hildegard Westerkamp, Charlie Fox, Darren Copeland/Andreas Kahre, Eric Powell, and the collaborative duo of Anna Friz and Eric Leonardson. There was also a live structured improv performance created from a score by youth participants in a soundscape workshop led by Kelly Price.

CASE is grateful for the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Media Arts Section and to Lulu Performing Arts Society on Gabriola Island for their collaborative efforts in making this retreat a reality. Recordings of the presentations at the retreat will be available for both listening and reading in the near future on its website at www.acousticology.ca.



A Personal Response. Canadian composer and educator Hildi Westerkamp provides a personal response to her participation in this year's CASE Retreat on [Gabriola Island](#) in the Strait of Georgia, just West of Vancouver, B.C. Please download and read, "Random Thoughts and Impressions" with photographs by Finnish Society for Acoustic Ecology (FSAE) board member Noora Vikman. ([HTML Version](#)) ([PDF Version 1.7MB](#))

SOUND BITES:

Not in My Back 40. (Chicago Reader) Are wind farms bad for human health? People who say they're suffering physical ailments caused by turbines were able to testify in Wisconsin this week. Cartoonist and turbine opponent Lynda Barry reports the public hearing lasted close to nine hours. [Read More](#)

Arts and Ecology Centre. The RSA Arts and Ecology Centre is an organisation whose role is to catalyse, publicise, challenge and support artists who are responding to the unprecedented environmental challenges of our era. Using their inspirations, RSA Arts and Ecology aims to create a positive discussion about the causes and the human impact of climate change through commissioning, debate, interdisciplinary discourse and a high-profile website. [Visit Site](#).

Sounds of Nature Workshop. Bio-acousticians Bernie Krause, Martyn Stewart, and Kevin Colver, led a 4-day natural soundscape workshop, June 24th - 28th, in one of the most beautiful spots in America, Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

The focus included the biophony — the non-human critter voices in given habitats, geophony — the non-biological sources of sound and what they reveal, and

Ludwig Koch and the Music of Nature. (BBC) Sean Street tells the story of Ludwig Koch, a German refugee from the Nazis who pioneered nature broadcasting in Britain. He became the first person to harness new technologies to record the sounds of birds, mammals and insects and went on to be a household name in Britain after the Second World War through his work for BBC radio.

Featuring Koch's recordings and contributions from those who worked with him, and an attempt to record curlews as he did with such success. Today, sound recordists use tiny digital machines and sophisticated microphones, but they also encounter modern-day problems: traffic, planes and people as well as fewer, shyer, curlews. [Listen to Broadcast](#).

Hush by Mike Seely (KQED) In Mike Seely's Hush, Nature Sounds Society founder Paul Matzner invites the viewer to experience "natural quiet," an environment free from human-made noise. In Mike Seely's Hush, Nature Sounds Society founder Paul Matzner invites the viewer to experience "natural quiet," an environment free from human-made noise. [View Broadcast](#) (Running Time: 4:43)

anthrophony — the noise that humans interject into the world and its direct affect on critter life and human experience. The workshop also explore the enriching benefits of the voice of the natural world as it relates to human health and culture, including creative sound arts.

[Read More](#)

Have You Heard The Hum? (BBC) For decades, hundreds of people worldwide have been plagued by an elusive buzzing noise known as "the Hum". Some have blamed gas pipes or power lines, others think their ears are faulty. A few even think sinister forces could be at work. [Read More.](#)

Music, Sound, and the Moving Image. This is the first international scholarly journal devoted to the study of the interaction between music and sound with the entirety of moving image media – film, television, music video, advertising, computer games, mixed-media installation, digital art, live cinema, et alia. [Read More.](#)

Right ear is 'better for hearing'. (BBC) If you want to get someone to do something, ask them in their right ear, say scientists.

Italian researchers found people were better at processing information when requests were made on that side in three separate tests.

They believe this is because the left side of the brain, which is known to be better at processing requests, deals with information from the right ear.

The findings are reported online in the journal *Naturwissenschaften*. [Read More.](#)

Murmur project. This is a documentary oral history project that records stories and memories told about specific geographic locations. It collects and make accessible people's personal histories and anecdotes about the places in their neighborhoods that are important to them. In each of these locations the project installs a [murmur] sign with a telephone number on it that anyone can call with a mobile phone to listen to that story while standing in that exact spot, and engaging in the physical experience of being right where the story takes place. Some stories suggest that the listener walk around, following a certain path through a place, while others allow a person to wander with both their feet and their gaze.- cell phone - call number on sign - hear story about the building you are standing next to. [Read More](#)

Finland's Muu Project. Artists' Association Muu represents those artists in Finland who use 'non-traditional media', including sound. Muu has recently launched a web radio project called "Audio Autographs", and submissions are most welcome, from anywhere in the world. [Read More.](#)

'Oldest musical instrument' found. (BBC News) A vulture-bone flute carved more than 35,000 years ago has been unearthed in the Hohle Fels cave in southern Germany. Scientists believe it is the world's oldest musical instrument. [Read More.](#)

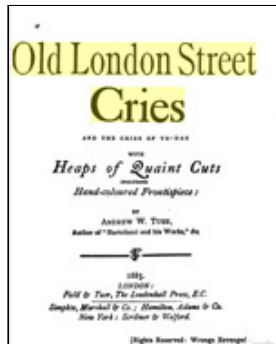
RESOURCES:



SONGS OF THE FROGS OF TAIWAN - VOL.1. By Yannick Dauby.

Taiwan, located between Japan and Philippines, possess a precious natural environment. This 68 minutes long Compact-Disc contains the songs of 16 amongst the 32 species of frogs that inhabit the island.

Realized by a sound artist who is also an amphibian enthusiast, these recordings (devoid of vocal or musical accompaniment) are not only audio documents for natural history aficionados, but propose also some



OLD LONDON STREET CRIES. By Andrew White Tuer, Thomas Rowlandson

Long before radio and television advertising, the voice of street criers filled the city landscape with vendors shouting out regarding products and services provided.

Street vendors still call out in some places in the world. Read about "What the Traveling Ear Hears" by Annie Marges in *Soundscape: The Journal of Acoustic Ecology* Volume 3, Number 1, July, 2002.

Old London Street Cries was published in 1885. It provides visual and text



LISTEN TO THE RAINDROPS. By Dr. Arline Bronzaft.

My children's book Listen to the Raindrops, illustrated by Steven Parton has been reprinted by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection and will be distributed to schools in New York City in conjunction with its noise educational curriculum.

The book teaches children about the beauty of the good sounds in our environment and the dangers of the harsh sounds.

The lines of the book rhyme and is told from the perspective of a mouse

listening situation for the pleasure of the ears.

This work is an invitation to the delicacy of the sounds of nature in Taiwan. This CD audio is accompanied by a 28 pages booklet containing illustrations by taiwanese artists, photos and explanations about the species.

Produced by [Kalerne Editions](#)
Published by Atelier Hui-Kan
June 2009, Taiwan

references to many of the criers of the time in urban London.

You can be read this book online from Google Books and other online sources. [Learn More](#).

Old London street cries and the cries of to-day: with heaps of quaint cuts.

By Andrew White Tuer, Thomas Rowlandson
Illustrated by Thomas Rowlandson
Published by Field & Tuer, 1885
Original from Harvard University
Digitized August 1, 2007 137 pages

who is listening to the sounds.

In the foreword to the book, there is a page informing readers of the city's noise code and the right of the city's citizens, including young people, to a quieter environment.

We are trying to introduce the book in other cities as well. The book is directed to children from kindergarten through second grade - you can go to [NYC Department of Environmental Protection](#) for information about the book.

Web Experience: The amazing Slovenian [Perpetuum Jazzile](#) choir use their hands to simulate the sound of falling rain and a rising storm in this video clip.

Since 1983, after almost a quarter of a century of devotion to vocal jazz, Perpetuum Jazzile is still the only Slovenian jazz choir.

The vocal ensemble, led by its conductor and art director Tomaz Kozlevcar (renowned also for his work as a music producer and

singer at The New Swing Quartet), usually performs with a number of singers that ranges to up to 50 and it represents an attractive and unique blend of popular vocal jazz. The repertoire of Perpetuum Jazzile ranges from Brazilian bossa nova, swing and close harmony style, to funk, gospel and R'n'B with original vocal beatbox and vocal effects backgrounds produced by choir.

RESEARCH and PROJECTS

Acoustic ecology course opens students' eyes, ears. (The Saluki Times) A new acoustic-ecology based course was initiated at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale during the Spring of 2008.

"In addition to capturing the sounds of the rainforest, the lesson plan for the new course included riding in a dugout canoe, releasing endangered animals and watching from a limited-access site as construction equipment cleared the way for a deeper, wider Panama Canal. " [Read Full Story](#).

Acoustic Ecology of Pasoh Forest by Brandon Seah. "This project was carried out in Pasoh Forest Reserve, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, from June to July 2008, with funding from the Museum of Comparative Zoology's grants-in-aid for undergraduate research and permission from the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM)."

The aim of the researcher "was to record samples of

All the while, I remain deeply sympathetic to it. Perhaps there is some confusion afoot in the worlds of art and music about what the term means, but there's also a vague intuition of its appropriateness for describing a much more expansive domain of intellectual activity than would have ever been claimed by its original practitioners. This essay is an attempt to put some of these conflicting assumptions into perspective while also clarifying some of my own insights into related issues" [Read Full Paper](#).

Sounding Dartmoor Paper In WFAE Archive. John Levack Drever's *Sounding Dartmoor: A case study on the soundscapes of rural England at the opening of the 21st Century* is now available in the article section of the [WFAE web site](#).

Spanning January 2000 to November 2002, Sounding Dartmoor was an environmentally orientated public-arts project taking the sounds of Dartmoor as its field of

animal sounds in different tropical habitat types, in order to test the following hypotheses:

1. Acoustic Niche hypothesis: that communities of sound-producing species that call simultaneously show less overlap between their calls in terms of frequency, timing, and duration, compared to a randomly assembled set of species from that same locality (the null model).
2. Acoustic Complexity hypothesis: that structurally complex habitats have more complex and occupied soundscapes than simpler, disturbed habitats.

Read more about the project [online](#).

"Acoustic Ecology and the Experimental Music Tradition." By David Dunn (new music box). "Every so often over the past decade, I have had a recurrent experience where upon being invited to lecture and present this kind of work at an institution, I find myself advertised as an "acoustic ecologist." While I never argue with this characterization—I'm usually unsure of the specific rationale for its use—I have never applied the original meaning of the term Acoustic Ecology to myself, been affiliated with its originators, nor used it to describe what I do (with one notable exception where it was used to highlight some of the issues addressed by this essay).

inquiry – those of its people, places and habitats, in one word, its soundscape.

It was initiated by a grant secured from Arts Council of England by the *Touring Exhibition of Sound Environments* (TESE), and brought together a number of organisations: TESE, the Digital Crowd (University of Plymouth) and Aune Head Arts (based in Princetown in the middle of Dartmoor).

"The Acoustic Ecology of the First-Person Shooter," a PhD thesis (2007) by Mark Nicholas Grimshaw, The University of Waikato. "This thesis contributes to the field of Game Studies by presenting the hypothesis that the player(s) and soundscape(s) in the first-person shooter (FPS) game, and the relationships between them, may be construed as an acoustic ecology. It explores the idea that the single-player FPS game acoustic ecology has the basic components of player and soundscape and that the relationships between these two lead to the creation and perception of a variety of spaces within the game world constituting a significant contributing factor to player immersion in that world. Additionally, in a multiplayer FPS game, these individual acoustic ecologies form part of a larger acoustic ecology which may be explained through autopoietic principles. [Read Thesis](#).

OPPORTUNITIES: EVENTS

July 3-5, 2009

Sound and Architecture

Royal Saltworks of Arc et Senans, France

~~~ Architectones II Round tables, discussions and installations on the theme of sound and architecture. Participants will include Seth Cluett, CRESSON, Raviv Ganchrow, Edwin van der Heide, Rahma Khazam, Claudia Martinho, Colin Ripley, Sam Auinger, Thomas Ankersmit. Royal Saltworks of Arc et Senans, France, 3-5 July. [www.architectones.net](http://www.architectones.net) or contact Rahma

Khazam [rrahmak@wanadoo.fr](mailto:rrahmak@wanadoo.fr)

**July 17, 2009 6:00 - 8:00pm**

**Course: 41987 Rhythms in Nature**

**Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, Douglas Fir Community Room**

**1625 118th Ave. SE, Bellevue, WA.**

**Cost: \$5**

~~~ Discover the soundscapes of nature through percussion interpretation. Explore the sounds of the Mercer Slough with a trained naturalist. Then bring your explorations to life using percussion instruments. Your instructor will lead a percussion session incorporating natural noises, patterns, and objects encountered outside. Instruments provided. Pre-registration is required. To Register: (425) 452-3885 or [www.MyParksAndRecreation.com](http://www.MyParksAndRecreation.com)

Deadline: July 22, 2009

Call for Contributions

eContact! 11.3 -- Open Source for Audio Application

~~~ eContact! wishes to extend an open call for contributions to an upcoming issue focusing on "Open Source for Audio Application." Submission Guidelines: <http://cec.concordia.ca/econtact/submissionguidelines.html>

**August 14-21, 2009 NatureMusicPlay VI International Camp**

**Apuseni-Mountains, Side Valley of Aries River, Romania, Transsilvania**

**Ages: 16 - Adult**

~~~ NatureMusicPlay the unusual meeting: between people of different cultures among one another and with natural places of special beauty. For more information contact: [KlangHuette@web.de](mailto:KlangHuette@web.de) . Web: <http://www.klanghuette.de/>

Deadline: September 11, 2009**Call for Papers: FILM MUSIC CONFERENCE****School of Music, University of Leeds - Friday 6 November 2009**

~~~ The conference is intended to be wide ranging, and paper proposals dealing with all aspects of film music scholarship will be considered. Proposals with a brief abstracts (c. 150 words) for papers of 20 minutes' duration should be sent by email to Ian Sapiro ([i.p.sapiro@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:i.p.sapiro@leeds.ac.uk)) by Friday 11 September 2009. For further details contact Ian Sapiro ([i.p.sapiro@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:i.p.sapiro@leeds.ac.uk)), or see the Conference website: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/music/filmmusic>

**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 (ethnologists, 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](#).

Deadline: September 30.**International Open Call for Art Projects****Nodar Artist Residency Center, Portugal**

~~~ Binauralmedia and Nodar Artist Residency Center announce: PAIVASCAPES #1 STRUCTURE, PROCESS AND PERCEPTION OF A RIVER, an International Open Call for Art Projects. The process will include the selection of 12 art projects to be developed during several 2-week residency modules to take place between February and October 2010 at the Nodar Artist Residency Center in Portugal. For full details visit the [call online](#).

**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](mailto:contact-asae@wfae.net)
- Australian Forum for Acoustic Ecology (FAEW): [contact-afae@wfae.net](mailto:contact-afae@wfae.net)
- Canadian Association for Sound Ecology (CASE): [contact-case@wfae.net](mailto:contact-case@wfae.net)
- Finnish Society for Acoustic Ecology (Suomen Akustisen Ekologian Seura (FSAE): [contact-fsae@wfae.net](mailto:contact-fsae@wfae.net)
- Foro Mexicano de Ecología Acústica (MFAE): [contact-mfae@wfae.net](mailto:contact-mfae@wfae.net)
- Forum fuer Klanglandschaft (FKL): [contact-fkl@wfae.net](mailto:contact-fkl@wfae.net)
- Hellenic Society for Acoustic Ecology (HSAE): [contact-hsae@wfae.net](mailto:contact-hsae@wfae.net)
- Japanese Association for Sound Ecology (JASE): [contact-jase@wfae.net](mailto:contact-jase@wfae.net)
- UK and Ireland Soundscape Community (UKISC): [contact-ukisc@wfae.net](mailto: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 MYSAPCE](#) on line. Click on "Add Friend" and become a partner in creating this network gathering place for ear-minded friends on the Internet.

[TOP](#)





# World Forum for Acoustic Ecology WFAE Newsletter

[Return: Newsletter](#)

## **Retreat of the Canadian Association for Sound Ecology At *The Haven* on Gabriola Island**

British Columbia, Canada

June 12-14, 2009

**Random thoughts and impressions by Hildegard Westerkamp  
Photos by Noora Vikman**

When I approached this rocky beach shortly after my arrival I was greeted by a strident raven call - and another and another. Okay I thought, I am here now, away from the city, on this island where the ravens live. I have indeed arrived. My ears are now connecting with this place and the raven has made sure of it!



In the mythology of the first nations people on the Canadian Northwest Coast the raven is a central figure and is characterized as a powerful trickster and mischief maker. No wonder, for he is everywhere. His call is letting us hear the spaces of this landscape, the inner resonance of indigenous orests (*Urwälder*), the openness of clear cuts, the echoes along ocean cliffs, the darkness of a small lake surrounded by forest, and so on. It is particularly moving when one can listen in on the dialogue of two ravens as they fly through their territory. It is as if their calls give emphasis to the enormousness of this landscape and its huge silence.



But even though we are at a place called *The Haven*, the soundscape is that of an already cultivated landscape, not so far from civilization and the transportation that brought us here, ferries and seaplanes. The silence here is no longer as enormous as it is in more remote places (that do also still exist). It is the silence of an island community whose inhabitants and holidaymakers are here to be away from the city. Ravens live here as well.



A deep rumble from the ferry pervades *The Haven* space as it passes by at a distance. This new and larger one has extremely powerful low frequencies, which are said to crack foundations of houses in the harbour where it arrives and departs numerous times every day.

The seaplanes taking off and landing in the same harbour frequently pass overhead near the coastline, especially on sunny days. Their motor sounds, even though strident, do not linger as long. They tend to disappear quickly behind the island's coves and cliffs. Heard from a distance their drone-like sounds belong

to summer here, outlining the large space of a blue clear sky.

The ocean is very calm and still on this sunny day, but water is suddenly lapping more actively against the shore a few minutes after a ferry has passed. Then it is quiet again. For a moment there seems to be a pause in the soundscape until I hear crunchy, crisp, high frequency sounds. I look up and see two people walking on the rocks a distance away. The clarity of the sound surprises me. Later during one of our soundwalks I see what causes that quality of sound: the small snails and barnacles stuck to the rocks.





The bark of a dog reverberates in the small near-by cove, where one can see a number of houses behind the trees. Two shore birds are calling while running busily along the sand. A cormorant takes off from the still water, his wings beating strongly as he lifts up into the air. After quite some time an accordion starts playing in the distance, intermittently, hesitant. Suddenly the atmosphere changes. I feel a strange longing, a melancholy from these accordion snippets carried across the water and I think I am in a Fellini movie. Suddenly it is gone again. I wonder about the person who made those sounds. Was he or she aware of the changed mood in the cove's soundscape?

When we talk about this sound later during the retreat, Noora says that the accordion transported her back to Scandinavia. She had just arrived from Finland where she lives and has been involved with the research project *Acoustic Environments in Change*. Indeed she was the first person to present at the retreat: "to put a long story short – an analysis of European village soundscapes that had also been studied and listened to 25 years earlier by the World Soundscape Project." Years of listening to these villages created an ear for subtleties and deciphering meanings from their soundscapes. For her the accordion was associated with a familiar place and culture.



During one of the soundwalk we came upon a group of trees that invited us into their circle. It felt like an intimate place, their home, or a place that would attract children for play.

Its strangely curved trunks and branches invited us to sit down and listen. And like children we began to play with the materials of this place, bringing the sounds of dry and crisp leaves, sticks and bark close to our ears. Suddenly our ears seemed like microphones enlarging and amplifying the tiny sounds of this landscape.

When Eric Leonardson introduced us to the World Listening Project which he co-founded in 2008, he told us - among many other things which can be found on the [WLP website](#) - of a live online microphone installed at a window of his own home. During the discussion a retreat participant asked him to let us hear his home soundscape. He connected to the website and suddenly we were listening live to his home environment, his immediate urban neighbourhood in Chicago. A multitude of sensations suddenly occupied the room. Anything could happen there, a sound, an occurrence, while he was here with us.

Excitement mixed with alarm, suspense with astonishment, a sense of strange displacement with wonderment at live schizophonia at its best. An intense discussion ensued that took us into issues of public and private boundaries, into questions of security, voyeuristic behaviour on the internet and the microphone as a tool of surveillance. Listening to his own neighbourhood from this distant location completely altered Eric's perception of this online microphone. I think he turned it off now!

There were other wonderful presentations such as those of Charlie Fox, Eric Powell and Barry Truax, as well as two evening concerts of soundscape work. Every speaker and composer and most importantly, the spirited and interested presence of all participants created this positive, strong retreat weekend.



The programme of the retreat (see details below) was well prepared by Nadene Thériault-Copeland, current president of CASE. Unfortunately she had to cancel her own participation, because of a family emergency. Her husband composer Darren Copeland filled in strongly and sensitively for her, aside from initiating ear cleaning activities throughout the retreat and assisting in all technical matters. Two of the original invited speakers—Helmi Järviluoma from Finland and Keiko Torigoe from Japan—had to cancel as well for a variety of reasons and were replaced by Noora Vikman and Eric Leonardson respectively. Leah Hokanson, the symposium coordinator and co-

founder of the Lulu Performing Arts Society on Gabriola Island, took care that the retreat ran smoothly, that we got our meals and were generally feeling comfortable at *The Haven*, this most beautiful retreat centre right on the water. Hector Centeno, the Technical Co-ordinator and Darren Copeland did their utmost to make sure that all events ran without technical glitches! A big thanks goes to all!