

Ecomusicology Newsletter

Discussion: Music in the Anthropocene

by Nathan Currier

Currier responds to an earlier *Ecomusicology Newsletter* article and previews a longer article for our next issue.

“In some cases our work might have direct relevance to environmental problems,” Marc Perlman noted in “Ecology and Ethno/Musicology: The Metaphorical, the Representational, and the Literal” in this *Newsletter* 1, no. 2 (October 2012). “In other cases the relevance could be very indirect, or indeed conjectural; but I suspect that in most cases our ultimate concerns are environmentalist ones.” In my own case, it might be *because* of its direct relevance that my perspective is quite distinct from this literature: I have spent much time in recent years outside of music dealing with fine points of climate science and policy. Climate change is central to the fate of the biosphere, as well as to the economic, political, cultural and moral basis of society. Yet traditional environmentalism (i.e. the social movement emerging from the 1960s) has thus far found it difficult to adequately come to terms with this epic environmental problem. Climate science is itself a discipline full of internal upheaval, controversy, and complexities of communication. In “Music in the Anthropocene” (forthcoming in this *Newsletter*) I consider climate science within Earth System Science (ESS), the ESS relationship with Gaia theory, and these in light of C.P. Snow’s “two cultures” concept of the split between science and the humanities.

Perlman also noted, “Just as ecologists argue that biodiversity increases the robustness of an ecosystem, we have argued that musical diversity will strengthen human culture, rendering it less vulnerable to future threats.” I certainly agree. And just as in climate policy, where it is clear that the Western developed powers will need to lead the way and carry the economic burdens of mitigation, so if we wish to see musical diversity survive, we in the West need to undergo a massive and rapid internal transformation. Western culture’s conception of its own history, therefore, is likely to be vital to the survival of much that surrounds it. Focusing on Western culture, my paper is devoted to issues that could be constructive in working towards a less negative outcome for planetary diversity (biological and cultural). I consider the period when both ecology and musicology were beginning, and when the so-called “common practice period” was ending. I examine the intersections of these,

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connecting Mahler's music and Haeckel's science, in order to explore how these fields might be drawn together around a cohesive philosophical position.

Ecomusicology fuses two well-defined fields: environmentalism and ethno/musicology. I advocate for a further fusion more deeply invested in science as "ecology + musicology." I suspect that, when we get serious about trying to save ourselves from the extraordinary risks ahead, the underlying problems within traditional environmentalism in dealing with climate will become readily apparent, and a large-scale shift will take place. By way of example, I would briefly note some of the following problems: 1) a refusal to recognize that GHG emissions reductions alone are increasingly unlikely to stabilize global mean surface temperature at levels that can dependably preserve the world we are familiar with; 2) the desire to eliminate all aerosol pollution negative forcings as quickly as possible; 3) the desire to decommission nuclear power plants right away; 4) an exaggerated faith, with insufficient quantitative analysis, in the capacity of an intermittent "renewable" energy source like wind power (large-scale harvesting of wind would alter wind patterns); 5) a lack of acknowledgment that near-term radiative forcing declines from non-CO₂ components of the climate system should be separated out and done right away to improve the probability of avoiding near-term tipping points; and 6) an out of hand opposition to all geoengineering.

Such attitudes grow from basic precepts of traditional

environmentalism that have informed much ecocritical thinking, including the field of ecomusicology, and the short list of examples above already constitutes a powerful impediment to ameliorating the climate crisis. To highlight the different thinking in "Music in the Anthropocene," I end by looking at one of these problems, likely to be among the greatest controversies of the century: geoengineering. For Mahler and Haeckel, Goethe's *Faust* was a work that was particularly formative; I interpret its ending as a direct adumbration of geoengineering. Intriguingly, this analysis might provide a good vehicle for a more nuanced discussion of human agency within the biosphere than is now prevalent in geoengineering discourse. All the while, I seek to highlight *Faust's* unique closeness to the evolution of the Western European tradition of classical music, suggestive of a role that this art might yet play. EN



Nathan Currier is an American composer. He studied at Juilliard and Peabody, was the Leonard Bernstein Fellow in composition at Tanglewood, and also holds a Diploma with First Prize from the Royal Conservatory of Belgium.

His compositions have been heard at prestigious venues, from Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center to the Philharmonie in Berlin, and he is a winner of many prizes and awards, such as the Rome Prize, Guggenheim, American Academy of Arts & Letters' Academy Award, National Endowment for the Arts, Fulbright, NYFA, Fromm, Ives, Barlow, and ASCAP awards and prizes.

The topic of Currier's largest musical work is Gaia theory, which views the Earth as a single self-regulating entity. His massive oratorio Gaian Variations was premiered at Avery Fisher Hall by the Brooklyn Philharmonic for Earth Day 2004. Currier has more recently become involved with Gaia theory itself, co-authoring with NASA scientist Paul D. Lowman (the first geologist to join NASA, and later a founder of comparative planetology) a chapter of the book Chimeras and Consciousness (MIT Press, 2011). When NASA celebrated the 50th year of its exobiology program, a passage from their chapter "Life's Tectonics" (concerning the role of life and water on tectonics here on earth) was read in the opening keynote address.

Currier is also active in climate science. He has been a member of Al Gore's Climate Project since 2007 and became Senior Climate Advisor and methane specialist for Public Policy Virginia. He has spoken at Columbia University, New York University, and UNICEF Headquarters at the United Nations, among many others, and has presented to about 1,000 people on climate change. Since last year he has been writing about climate issues for Huffington Post, and recently served as a panelist for a segment of Gore's "24 Hours of Reality" which live-streamed to a viewership of 8.5 million.

The Study of the Music & Culture of the Environmental Crisis

Interview with Aaron S. Allen
by Juha Torvinen & Andreas Engström

JT&AE: *First a personal question: why ecomusicology?*

AA: Because that's how we're going to save the world, right? Ironic hyperbole aside, there are both professional and personal reasons for my engagement with ecomusicology.

Professionally, I do think it's of profound importance that scholars of human culture contribute to understanding, and when possible, alleviating environmental crises. We all have a role to play, and even if the usual approach to environmental concerns is a scientific one, humanists must not step aside entirely. We can help to understand history, to communicate effectively, to empower emotionally, to raise consciousness, to revel in beauty, to give attention to subjects previously ignored, and so on. As I and others have argued, the environmental crisis is fundamentally a crisis of culture; scientific approaches are central to the problems and solutions, but so are humanistic approaches.

On the personal side, I think ecomusicology was a natural progression for me given my background in both environmental studies and music. I was born on a rural farm, and after growing up there, in Key West, Florida (an island that is the southernmost city in the USA), on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, and in New Orleans, I had a first hand knowledge of profoundly beautiful and threatened environments. As an undergraduate student at Tulane, I told my advisor that I wanted to declare a joint BA in music and BS in environmental studies; he responded, "Why? So you can play your flute out in the swamp?" Neither the flute nor swamps were of particular interest to me, but his response of incredulity combined with sarcasm encouraged me to seek out connections that were meaningful and not at all frivolous. When it came time to choose a path after college, I decided that I needed a break from my years of environmental activism, so I followed my interests in musicology.

Combining both the professional and personal elements is what I find to be the intellectual and individual challenges of ecomusicology. In essence, it's difficult to connect these different fields (environmental studies and music) in rigorous, robust, and intellectually sound ways. My Ph.D. studies at Harvard did not allow me to pursue ecomusicology, but after I graduated I was fortunate to get involved with the founding of the Ecocriticism Study Group of the American Musicological Society and the Ecomusicology Special Interest Group of the Society for Ethnomusicology. The professional stimulation combined with my personal background and a desire to do something meaningful, even if only in our relatively obscure world of music studies, meant that I put a lot of time and energy, gladly, into ecomusicology. Honestly, I don't think that it will ever become mainstream, and that's okay (and neither ethnomusicology nor musicology will become mainstream either!). I do think, however, that ecomusicology can be very gratifying for those who engage in it and those who benefit from it.

JT&AE: *Ecomusicology started to gain currency in the decades around 2000. However, explicitly ecocritical music has been composed and performed for about a half of a century. Why didn't music scholars wake up earlier to environmental concerns?*

AA: I'd like to respond to that question in two ways. First, to agree with it and answer directly: There are a variety of reasons that music scholars did not pursue explicitly environmental agendas. One is that the environmental crisis (as, we might say, distinct from an awareness of and/or connection to the environment) has been a subject of concern for only a few decades; there are of course important precedents, but many major upheavals in the way humans relate to the world changed in the second half of the twentieth

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Previews

Ecomusicologies 2013: Ecosystems & Ecocriticism

Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University 22-23 November

by Dan Bendrups

Symposium Theme

The Ecomusicologies 2013 symposium is a featured event within the IMC World Forum, aiming to attract the interest of scholars, musicians, composers and others who may not have yet had an opportunity to engage with this emerging field of critical enquiry. The symposium theme 'Ecosystems and Ecocriticism' is intended as a starting point for discussions about music in the context of different kinds of ecosystems and critical contexts. The theme of the IMC World Forum, 'Sustaining Music, Engaging Communities' aligns with the aims and objectives of many scholars in the field of ecomusicology. For more information about the IMC World Forum, including information about other conferences and events, please see:

worldforumonmusic.org.

Virtual Participation

In addition to a number of online presentations, the live paper sessions in the symposium will be streamed online. A URL for access to the live streaming will be circulated via the Ecomusicologies email list a week before the symposium.

Location

The Queensland Conservatorium (140 Grey St, South Brisbane, Queensland, 4101) is located in the lush subtropical parklands of South Bank, adjacent to South Brisbane train station and the Cultural Centre bus station. It is situated in the heart of Brisbane's arts precinct, with theatres, concert halls, libraries and museums all within walking distance. South Bank offers a range of activities and amenities (including a free sand-bottomed swimming pool, rainforest walk, bars, restaurants, cinema) and is easily accessible on public transport from any part of Brisbane. For more information about the location, see: www.visitsouthbank.com.au.

Where to Go on Arrival

The Friday sessions will be held in room 1.39, on the ground floor of the conservatorium building. Ecomusicologies symposium attendees should proceed directly to room 1.39 for registration between 9-9.30am (a short welcoming address will be made at 9.20). The first paper session will commence at 9.30am. The online Saturday session will be held in the Boardroom, room 3.46 on the third floor of the Conservatorium building, overlooking the main foyer.

Performances and Other Activities

Registered delegates will have access to all of the events and performances that have been scheduled as part of the IMC World Forum on Music on the Friday. A detailed schedule of IMC World Forum events can be found at worldforumonmusic.org. Any particular suggestions for performances or other activities will be announced at the commencement of the symposium.

Contact Information

Should you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the symposium convenor, Dan Bendrups, at d.bendrups@griffith.edu.au.

Ecomusicologies 2013: Schedule

Friday 22 November (Queensland Conservatorium, room 1.39)

9.00-9.30: Registration, Welcome

9.30-11.00: **Session 1: Ecology, Expression and Mediation**

1. Jennifer C. Post *Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Mobile Pastoralism and Musical Expression in Mongolia*
2. Raj Shobha Singh *Katajjaq: Between Vocal Games, Place and Identity*
3. Gabriele Hadl *Eco Media Literacy: Sound Recording and Video Production in Media Education for Sustainability*

11.00-11.15: Coffee Break

11.15-12.45: **Session 2: Perspectives on Composition**

1. Robert W B Burrell *Becoming, Interspecies-consciousness-transfer, live performance with electro-acoustics and music composition.*
2. Jane Hammond *A Cuckoo in Tamworth: Eco-composition in Regional Australia*
3. Toby Gifford, Vanessa Tomlinson and Nora Farrell *Sounding the Con*

12.45-2.00: Lunch break (includes time for exploring the *sound garden* installation)

2.00-3.30: **Session 3: Theories and Methodologies**

1. Ely Rosenblum *Music in The Medium: An Ecomusicological Analysis of Field Recordings*
2. Philip van Hout *Uncaging Sonic Rhizomes: Finding a Methodology for Sound Ecology Research*
3. Keith Johnson *'Our climate quickens our sensibility...': Montesquieu's Contribution to a Theory of Listening in Eighteenth-Century England*

4.00-5.00: Coffee break, *Shifting Nature* installation (Leah Barclay)

5.00-6.00: **Session 4: Musicking and Deep Ecology**

1. Michael Golden *The Music In and Of Ecology*
2. Donna Weston *The Deep Ecology of Music Festivals*

Evening: Various activities offered in the wider IMC World Forum program
See worldforumonmusic.org for current program details

Saturday 23 November (Boardroom, room 3.46)

9.30-11.00: **Session 5: Virtual Presentations**

1. Matt DelCiampo *A Place to Call Home: Broad Resonances from Local Places within Contemporary Popular Music*
2. Alex Smith *From the Planet to the Marimba: The Self-sustainability and Artistic Voice of Matt Kazmierski and Planet Marimba*
3. Mark Pedelty *Environmental Music Video and the Thoreauvian Singularity*

11.00-11.15: Coffee break

11.15-12.15: **Session 6: Ecomusicology and Performance**

1. Julie Rickwood *Harmony to the Earth: A critical examination of the repertoire of Ecopella*
2. Kirsty Gillespie *Musical Landscapes of Lihir: Exploring the Relationship of Performance and Place in a Museum Exhibit*

12.15-12.30: Closing, future planning

Music, Nature, Place: A New Book Series

by **Sabine Feisst & Denise Von Glahn**

In fall 2012 Indiana University Press launched the book series *Music, Nature, Place*. The series is a forum for multidisciplinary scholarship that focuses upon the intersections of music, nature, and place. It includes monographs and edited volumes that employ a wide array of methodologies and addresses a broad range of topics, concerns, and traditions. It traverses boundaries between classical, popular, and folk musics and between musicology and other disciplines. *Music, Nature, Place* welcomes studies that treat urban and rural issues and conditions, and crossovers between science and the humanities. It explores different modes of thought that are enabled by music. Books in the series vary in scope, and the volumes will contain a bibliography, music examples, photographs, graphics, companion websites and links that enhance the treatment and reach of the work. Indiana University Press has recruited the two of us as editors, and we are supported by an Editorial Advisory Board, including Aaron Allen, Kevin Dawe, Tracey Laird, Jennifer Post, and Jeff Todd Titon who will use their wide-ranging expertise and experience to help in the evaluation of proposals.

Since the launch of the book series, the first volume has appeared: Denise Von Glahn's *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World*, which showcases three generations of American women composers, from Amy Beach to Emily Doolittle, exploring nature through music. Further volumes include an English adaptation and expansion of musicologist Árni Heimir Ingólfsson's authoritative study of Icelandic composer Jón Leifs whose works are thoroughly inspired by Icelandic folksong, landscapes and other natural phenomena (Reykjavík 2009). Anthropologist Mark Pedelty is preparing a monograph on the role of activist musicians and musical movements in sustaining place. Focusing on musical activists based around the Salish Sea of the USA and Canada, Pedelty is examining environmentalist musicians on both sides of the border, including Dana Lyons, of Bellingham, Washington and the Raging Grannies of Victoria, British Columbia. His perspective from outside the confines of more traditional music scholarship testifies to the spirit of interdisciplinarity that is the essence of this series. We have received almost

twenty proposals for monographs and edited volumes and projects in various stages of completion. They focus on music in Brazil, Canada, Cascadia, Iceland, Mongolia, and North America. They address climate change, environmentalism, ecofeminism, bioacoustics, and animal studies. They also include studies on experimental musical traditions, performance ecology and musicians including Sharon Abreu, Henry Brant, Chalifour, Claude Debussy, Michael Hurwicz, Jón Leifs, and Dana Lyons.

We are pleased to see such a vivid response to *Music, Nature, Place*. This is undoubtedly evidence of the rapidly growing interest in ecomusicology. As the field continues to develop through individual efforts, scholarly conferences, interdisciplinary symposia, workshops, round tables, documentary films, multi-media performances, community initiatives, and university courses, it is our goal that the series will respond and reflect the central position music plays in grounding us within our place, wherever that may be. The editors invite interested scholars to contact them with their ideas for projects.

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Of Ecomusicological Interest at AMS Pittsburgh

by Aaron S. Allen

In addition to a variety of individual papers that hold or hint at ecomusicological interest, there are also five full sessions, one outing, and one business meeting at AMS Pittsburgh 2013.

The Thursday morning outing is actually connected to the Thursday evening session, but both could be enjoyed independently. The AMS Ecocriticism Study Group is sponsoring an outing to tour the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, a large Victorian greenhouse set amidst Schenley Park, one of Pittsburgh's largest greenspaces. All are welcome to attend; meet at the conference hotel just before 9am to take public transit to the conservatory, where we can have lunch at the eco- and health-conscious Café Phipps. We will return to the conference hotel in time for Thursday afternoon sessions. Participants should bring \$40 cash; no advance registration is necessary, but contact Helena Spencer, hkopchic@uoregon.edu, ESG Outings Coordinator, with questions or to just let her know you plan to attend.

The ESG evening session, "From Landscapes to Cityscapes: Shaping the Sonic Geography of Place," will offer some intellectual and sonic reflections on Pittsburgh, and other locales, that should connect nicely with the Thursday morning outing. Through the lense of sonic geography, the session will address the theme of energy to consider how music and communities envision themselves in relation to place through their music. The papers will consider soundscapes, popular music, country music, and sonic representations of Pittsburgh.

On Friday evening, the ESG Business Meeting will include an election for a new chair and planning for future events. After the meeting, many ESG folks will surely stick around for the Ecomusicology Listening Room. This second edition of the ELR will build on the engaging and well-attended session of the same name held in New Orleans (see www.ecosong.org); the 2012 ELR addressed ecomusicological questions in a general manner without a specific approach. This year, in order to

focus the ecomusicological conversation and intersect with other fields, the ELR will examine musical sound as environmental communication, emphasizing popular music, live performance, and visual musics.

Two sessions that promise some interesting discussions are on Saturday morning (unfortunately scheduled during the same time). "The Gendered Soundscape" is an alternative-format session that will include Andra McCartney (who is also on the Saturday afternoon "Nightingale" panel) and Deep Listening advocate Pauline Oliveros. "Music in the Age of Animantities" includes two papers that will engage with animal studies.

On Saturday afternoon, "The Nightingale" session will use the voice of the nightingale as the touchstone for a broader discussion about our ways of listening to nature and about the limitations of traditional discourse about human aesthetic identity. The panel will feature three human and one (virtual) avian participants.

Even if you are (or were) not able to attend Ecomusicologies 2013 in Brisbane, Australia (see pp. 4-5 in this issue), the events in Pittsburgh should still stimulate a lot of ecomusicological discussion!

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Ecomusicology Dance Card: AMS Pittsburgh 2013

Thursday, November 7

9am-12:45pm, ESG Outing to Phipps Conservatory & Botanical Gardens
8-11pm, ESG Session, "From Landscapes to Cityscapes"

Friday, November 8

5:30-6:30pm, ESG Business Meeting
8-11pm, Ecomusicology Listening Room

Saturday, November 9

9am-12pm, The Gendered Soundscape
9am-10:30, Music in the Age of Animantities
2-5pm, The Nightingale

Of Ecomusicological Interest at SEM Indianapolis

by Kate Galloway

The 2013 meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology will be held November 14-17 in Indianapolis, and there is an array of scholarly activities and presentations that will be of interest to scholars engaging in ecomusicological inquiry. With presentations ranging from ecotourism, issues of cultural and environmental heritage, environmental trauma, and the return of a new and engaging version of the Ecomusicology Listening Room, this conference is positioned to be a stimulating event. The business meeting for the Ecomusicology Special Interest Group will take place 7:30-8:30pm in evening of Thursday, November 14, in the Marriott Ballroom 1. In this meeting we intend to continue the conversation concerning pedagogy, community outreach and inter-university collaborations, interdisciplinary collaborations, and the future for the field of ecomusicology, including potential future symposia and collaborative publication opportunities.

The second incarnation of the "Ecomusicology Listening Room: Ecocriticism, Popular Music" organized by the audiovisual director: Mark Pedely (University of Minnesota) and chairs Justin Burton (Rider University) and Michael Baumgartner (Cleveland State University), sponsored by Popular Music Section, features contributions by Laurie Allman, Bell (Museum of Natural History of Minnesota), Amanda Belantara (independent artist), Krista Dragomer (independent artist), Craig Eley (Penn State University) and Jared Fowler (Los Angeles Harbor College), Rebekah Farrugia and Kellie Hay (Oakland University), Ali Colleen Neff (University of North Carolina), The Baay Fall Order of Mouride Sufi Islam, and Peter McMurray and Hannah Lewis (Harvard University).

The session "Music and Evolution" chaired by Judith Becker (University of Michigan) and Sponsored by the Cognitive Ethnomusicology Special Interest Group, engages with important issues concerning the convergence of evolutionary thought, expressive culture, and musicality, with

presentations, including, "The Evolutionary History of Human Musicality: Empirical Approaches," Aniruddh Patel (Tufts University); "Mediating Social Uncertainty: Music as Communicative Social Interaction" Ian Cross (University of Cambridge); and "Cultural Evolution of Music" (Patrick Savage, Tokyo University of the Arts).

For those interested in the role of technologies in sonic ecology, the session "Technologies and Remixes" features the presentations "Where Does this Cable Go?: Guitar Amplifiers, Instrumentality, and Sonic Ecology" by David VanderHamm (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) and "Remix<->Culture: A "Fair Trade" Approach to Remixing Field Recording" by Daniel Sharp (Tulane University).

The conference highlights a number of current studies concerning organology and instrument production that deal with issues of environment and sound technologies. Presentations that speak to this work include the session "Seeking the Future in the Past: Vocal and Instrumental Musicians in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia" featuring the presentation by Jennifer Post (University of Western Australia) "Performing the Past, Present, and Future: Contemporary Kazakh and Tuvan End-blown Flute Production and Use in Bayan Ölgii, Mongolia" and the session "Organology and Instrument Specialists" with a presentation by Lauren Flood (Columbia University), "Build Your Own Plague: Biological Modeling, Sound Technologies, and Experimental Musical Instruments."

An ongoing popular theme in ecomusicologically relevant research is the study of soundscapes and sonic geography, and this area of inquiry is well represented at the 2013 SEM meeting. The session "Nature, Ecotourism, and Soundscape," chaired by Jennifer Post (University of Western Australia) features the presentations "Parks as Musical Playgrounds: Co-Performance, Ecotourism, and the Sonic Geographies of National Parks Arts Initiatives" by Kate Galloway (Memorial University

of Newfoundland), “Thoreau's Ear” by Jeff Titon (Brown University), and “Walking to Tsuglagkhang: Exploring the Function of a Tibetan Soundscape in Northern India” by Danielle Adomaitis (independent scholar). The panel “Raising Voices, Reclaiming Spaces: Antinuclear Soundscapes in Contemporary Japan and Korea” chaired by Noriko Manabe (Princeton University) and sponsored by the Popular Music Section, Japanese Music Special Interest Group, and the Society for Asian Music, includes the timely presentations “The Spaces We'll Go: The Evolving Roles of Music in Antinuclear Demonstrations and Concerts in Post-Fukushima Japan” by Noriko Manabe (Princeton University), “Sounding Against Nuclear Power in Post-Tsunami Japan” by Marie Abe (Boston University), “Project Fukushima! Music, Sound, Noise, and the Public Perception of Nuclear Power in Post-3.11 Japan” by David Novak (University of California, Santa Barbara), and “Songs of Complaint and Speeches of Protest in a Grassroots Movement of South Korean Radiation Sufferers” by Joshua Pilzer (University of Toronto), all of which engage with the intersections between environmental violence, trauma, soundscapes, and expressive culture.

I continue to see many potential collaborative methodological moments between the Ecomusicology Special Interest Group and the Sound Studies Special Interest Group. Notably, the panel “Auto Sound in the Urban Space: Taipei, São Paulo, Bangkok” sponsored by Sound Studies Special Interest Group, which engages with issues of urban soundscapes, “noise pollution,” and the acoustic ecologies of everyday urban environments through the presentations “Sound-politics in São Paulo, Brazil: Youth and ‘Pancadões,’” by Leonardo Cardoso (University of Texas at Austin), “Filtered Soundscapes: The Translation of Sound into Urban Noise in Taipei, Taiwan” by Jennifer Chia-Lynn Hsieh (Stanford University), and “Audiophilia, Ideology, and the Automobile: Sound Installation Garages in Bangkok” by Benjamin Tausig (New York University).

Lastly, the conference features a number of presentations that engage with the confluence of ecomusicologically-oriented thought and social justice initiatives. The intersection between ecomusicology and social justice is just one possible way in which our work can look towards potential

engagement with applied ethnomusicological practices. Social advocacy through ecomusicological work is highlighted in the session “Varieties of Popular Music I” in the presentation “Viking Metal and Rainbow Warriors: Faroese Popular Music, Whaling, and Conflicting Epistemologies” by Joshua Green (Memorial University of Newfoundland). The panel “Sustainability, Social Policy, and Local Culture” continues the important discussion regarding forms of sustainability in musicology inquiry, including engaging presentations by Michael Silvers’s (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) “Fortaleza's Two Forrós: Tradition, Capitalism, and Musical Sustainability in Northeastern Brazil”, Sally Treloyn’s (The University of Melbourne) “Repatriation, Cultural Maintenance and Innovation in the Kimberley Region of Northwest Australia”, and Leslie Gay, Jr.’s (University of Tennessee) “Rapping as Social Policy: Danish Immigrants and Århus Rap Akademiet.”

I look forward to the many fruitful discussions that will be fostered during and following this SEM meeting!

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Ecomusicology Dance Card: SEM Indianapolis 2013

Thursday, November 14

8:30-10:30am, Music and Evolution
10:45am-12:15pm, Varieties of Popular Music I
1:45-3:45pm, Ecomusicology Listening Room
1:45-3:45pm, Seeking the Future in the Past
4-5:30pm, Technologies and Remixes
7:30-8:30pm, Ecomusicology SIG meeting

Friday, November 15

8:30-10:30am, Organology and Instrument Specialists
10:45am-12:15pm, Nature, Ecotourism, and Soundscape
1:45-3:45pm, Raising Voices, Reclaiming Spaces
4-5:30pm, Auto Sound in the Urban Space
4-5:30pm, Sustainability, Social Policy, and Local Culture

Reviews

Ecomusicology in the News

by Michael Silvers

Every month or so, I come across an article published in a major American newspaper or magazine of interest to those of us who do work in ecomusicology. These news pieces tend to be of three (or four) types: articles on bioacoustics and animal communication (birdsong is a frequent topic), concert or album reviews of work by composers concerned with or inspired by the natural environment, articles about David Rothenberg, and an array of other related topics, including thought-pieces on music performed outdoors, on the science of sound, and so on. The pieces I have encountered represent a range of genres and styles, from art music to rock music. In this non-exhaustive survey, I highlight some of the more relevant articles from this past summer. (My apologies for the inordinate number of references to *The New York Times*, which seems to feature ecomusicology-related pieces more than other publications.)

A June 10, 2013, piece from *The New York Times* reports on Australian male lyrebirds that sing and dance simultaneously during a mating ritual; according to one study, they have four distinct “songs” with four distinct “dances.”

A June 30, 2013 piece on birdsong, also from *The New York Times*, examines parallels between the acquisition of birdsong and human language, and suggests the two are only marginally related.

The article neglects to discuss any relationship between birdsong and music.

Alex Ross’ review of John Luther Adams’s “Become Ocean” ran in the *New Yorker* on July 8, 2013. It includes a discussion of Adams’s body of work and his environmentalism. Ross also describes the environmental symbolism audible in the music itself: “Like the sea at dawn,” writes Ross, “it presents a gorgeous surface, yet its heaving motion conveys overwhelming force.”

“Finding Nature, Rage, Waves and Mountains in Modern American Symphonies,” an NPR story from August 29, 2013, features works (with streaming audio) like Alan Hovhaness’s Symphony No. 60, “To the Appalachian Mountains,” and Aaron Jay Kernis’s “Symphony in Waves.”

There is an excellent video from June 2, 2013, about David Rothenberg playing the clarinet with cicadas on *The New York Times* website.

A May 17, 2013, songwriting essay in *The New York Times*, written by Rennie Sparks, explores the woodpecker’s acute sense of hearing. Sparks also describes how the woodpecker helped inspire her to craft a new song.

An introduction to a series of reviews of art alfresco, from *The New York Times* on July 18, 2013, asks: “Is art made better by nature? Does it compete with

nature? Is it hopelessly diluted by it?” In his contribution to the series, Anthony Tommasini points out the irony that orchestral music loses its natural acoustic qualities when performed outdoors because of the need for amplification. He also complains that the music “must compete with nearby traffic noise and the loud chirping of the birds that nestle in the courtyard’s tree.”

A *New York Times* review of the children’s book, *Listen to the Birds: An Introduction to Classical Music* (June 5, 2013), teaches about music and composers by examining works that were inspired by birds and birdsong. The book includes facts about Mozart’s pet bird, which liked to sing a motive from the third movement of his Piano Concerto No. 17, and compares a composer’s skills to those of a bird.

If nothing else, these articles suggest broad general interest in and awareness of music’s relationship with nature. On a related note, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra programmed an entire summer series on symphonic works inspired by rivers (covered by the *Chicago Tribune*, among other newspapers). As part of their festival, they held a daylong symposium in May, at which I had the honor to speak, along with Jerome Delli Prisco, senior adviser for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Institute for Water Resources; historian David Blackburn; and John Briscoe,

scholar of water resources and economic development. I was surprised to learn that the CSO Rivers Festival organizers were unaware of ecomusicology or the current academic discourse surrounding music and the

environment. They had chosen the topic because it was relevant to contemporary concerns about the world and because rivers and water are common themes in a great deal of music. Indeed, ecomusicologists are but one part

of a larger discussion, which includes the mainstream media, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and others.

EN

Expanding Ecomusicology: Exploring Sonic Culture & Environmental Change

Memorial University, St John's Newfoundland, Saturday 28 September 2013
by Andrew Mark

Roughly 30 participants gathered in St. John's Newfoundland on the last weekend of September to share papers on ecomusicological possibilities. Instead of running across campus, or even from one room to another, it was a relief to spend the entire day as a collective. All gathered were grateful to Kate Galloway for organizing a symposium which brought together a variety of Canadian musics, presenters, and themes.

Josh Green (Memorial University) put indigenous knowledge into stark contrast with Greenpeace ethics with his paper on Faroese islanders and the expression of their whaling practices through music and musicians. Raj Shobha Singh's paper (York University) contrasted Tanya Tagaq and Evie Mark's differing constructions of identity and place making through Katajjaq throat singing. Ellen Waterman's paper (Memorial University) offered a case study of Gordon Monahan's experimental art piece, *Aqueaolian Harp*, that while seeking to work with nature, failed to account for its unpredictable physical power, and in subjective failure brought into close question the successful purposing of romantic and remote experiences of outdoor sound art. After the morning paper sessions, Andra McCartney (Concordia University) led attendees on a semi-guided soundwalk. Midway through the walk, we broke up into small groups to walk through the local farmers market, reconvening at the end. The post-walk discussion offered the chance to share our observations, including the political nature of our various listening practices. After a complementary lunch, physicist Len Zedel (Memorial University) and his research assistant Richard Alonge discussed the properties of sound

propagation underwater and their work developing a method for recording snow precipitation over ocean waters using hydrophones. Meghan Forsyth's paper (Memorial University) on the Îles-de-la-Madeleine (islands) uncovered the manner in which fisheries, boat motors, and general environmental influences impacted the local music scene and fiddling culture and also how these musical environmental encounters were marketed and consumed locally and abroad. Janice Tulk's paper (Cape Breton University) offered a detailed account of the importance of the company mill whistle for the town of Corner Brook Newfoundland and how understandings of this soundmark brought out issues of class and local identity. Kate Galloway (Memorial University) presented a paper on how bioregions can effect compositions, offering two examples: the first of how interviews with locals about shipwrecks are repurposed in Kati Agócs work, and the second detailing St. John's Harbour Symphony which utilizes coordinated boat horns. Andrew Mark's paper (York University) discussed opportunities for ecomusicology within the growing interest in environmental studies towards issues of melancholy, mourning, memory, and loss. Greg Bruce's (Memorial University) paper explored in detail what would be required of musical instrument industries in order to produce both socially and environmentally ethical woodwind instruments. In closing, Andra McCartney offered an illuminating keynote presentation on how R. Murray Schafer's promotion of an idealized neutral soundscape is in fact a highly subjective and privileged reading of what one ought to enjoy and consume as natural.

EN

Music and Environment Symposium

University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, 26 April 2013

by Hollis Taylor & Andrew Hurley

Music is a broad church, and limiting the topic to *music + environment* scarcely narrows the field. The entanglement of the nature-culture continuum is increasingly recognized, and environmental sounds figure in sound sculptures, installations, and compositions. Academic discourse relating to the ecology of sound, or 'green music' (often in relation to the preservation of an environment's sonority), is on the increase. Music is pertinent to a host of environmental transformations: social, economic, political, cultural, and technological, while environmental changes can be heard in music and soundscapes.

In popular music, the notion of place has been of particular interest. Labels such as the 'Seattle', 'Liverpool', 'Perth', or 'Dunedin' sound have come to function as almost genre-like distinctions relating to place-based music. Factors such as travel, immigration, and the virtual proximity of the Internet can influence music. Musical, social, and technological forms are affected by the economic environment, as evidenced by changes in cultural industries, such as the record industry meltdown, and the current global financial crisis. The political environment can also have an impact on the content and type of musical endeavours: sound is never neutral. Inspired by these themes, the *Music and Environment Symposium* was held at the

University of Technology, Sydney on 26 April 2013.

The keynote address, entitled *The Music of Place*, was delivered by improvising violinist and instrument maker Jon Rose. Rose took us on a tour of his outback performances and installations, including The Great Fences of Australia, The Kite Project, The Ball Project, and Wreck. Sounds and images from his homemade Relative Violins included the Aeolian Double-neck Violin (whose sail catches the wind of the nearby Hawkesbury River), the Tromba Mariner (this one Rose played in the river), and the Double-piston, Wheeling-neck Violin ("As I pushed it along, and depending on the speed, you got the sense of not how long is a piece of music but of how far is a piece of music.").

Music and environmental activism.

Brent Keogh explored the development of the ecology trope, the ways in which it has been utilized in contemporary discourse on musical sustainability, and the limitations of applying naturalistic tropes to support the conservation of human cultural forms. The Australian composer Henry Tate (1873-1926) often concerned himself with how composers could articulate an Australian voice in music. In her paper, Christine Mercer presented Tate's romantic ideas regarding clouds and their colors, discussing what was nationalistic about clouds in the way Tate described and used them in this work. In "Didgeri-doo's and

Didgeri-doo's: Confronting Sustainability Issues," ethnomusicologist Robin Ryan asked what kind of role can the didgeri-doo might play in rethinking our environment. She compared the sustainability of various highly sought-after "didj" trees and questioned whether, should they succumb to global warming, eucalypt sonorities could be satisfactorily replaced by alternative recyclable materials.

Music, landscape, architecture, and design.

Tony Mitchell contemplated the articulation between Icelandic music and psychogeographic landscape. Alyssa Critchley illuminated some initial soundings from her PhD project into alternative performance spaces in Sydney. Calling on a theoretical basis including New Materialism, she pondered the effects that physical space might have on the concert-going experience and looked at how performance also impacts on the uses to which these spaces are put, including as domicile.

Music and its technological environment.

Eve Klein gave an elegant inquiry into the ways in which the record medium has been progressively "tidied up" to progress towards a hyperreal sound environment and probed some of the implications for listeners and musicians. Claire Coleman turned her analytic focus to a new model of music production and marketing: crowd-

funding. She presented a case study of one of the most successful proponents of this model and traced some of the controversies.

Music and politics.

In its capacity to transform space, music has the power to induce both mental and physical discomfort. Catherine Hoad explored the manner in which music torture works to recreate and reclassify environments. Dario Martinelli presented a paper on environmentalism and animal rights in The Beatles' repertoire. He detailed songs that manifest love for nature, those that address specific ethical issues, and those that use nature or animals as metaphors for more general concepts. Ian Collinson performed an analysis of Bruce Springsteen's later work and discerned a new politicization within it, which he contrasted with Springsteen's earlier work. He also pondered why Springsteen might be able to "get away with it" in the US environment, where less well-known musicians might meet greater resistance. Two papers contemplated the impact of the political environment on music in Germany during the twentieth century. Peter Tregear turned his attention to the *Zeitoper* genre of the Weimar era and examined some of this music that National Socialist ideologues loved to hate. Andrew Hurley used an analysis of Thomas Brussig's novel *Wie es leuchtet* to explore how some popular music quickened the social movement opposed to the East German communist state, but also how the fall of the Wall meant that such music not only

lost its political value, but became tainted by it.

Music, memory, and place.

John Scannell gave an excellent paper that approached the topic of place from without: how can music be associated with "non-place"? He undertook a contextual reading of the Bacharach/David song, "Do you know the way to San Jose?" to unpack how it was a paean to place written from within a non-place. He also demonstrated the nostalgic value in the song; by the time it was written, San Jose would not have been in the state imagined by Hal David.

Music, acoustic ecology, and soundscape studies.

Bruce Johnson's provocative paper on "Music and Cognitive Ecology" often argued against the grain of the dominant discursive mode. He suggested that English is not the language best equipped to discuss the sonic world, since English thinks best in the visual. Another thoughtful comment from Johnson was, "A jazz solo is not an expression of what I think musically; it is what I think musically." Luke Sharp and Liz Giuffre explored how power is forged in the acoustic environment of the Montreal metro through the "dou dou dou," the signal heard at the moment the train doors close. They argued for it to be understood as both a short musical piece that provides the desired authoritative communication and also as an audio marker that reflects the sonic environment of the metro when the trains are functioning properly.

Ethnography, field recordings, and birdsong.

Ros Dunlop gave an overview of the traditional musical instruments of East Timor and their place in the social and cultural mores of East Timorese society. Hollis Taylor spoke on the politics of dividing the human and nonhuman, demonstrating how the sonic achievements of some songbirds put pressure on the concept and definition of music.

Talking about music never quite suffices. Two concerts illuminated the symposium. Guitarist/composer Le-Tuyen Nguyen gave a lecture/concert entitled "Ambience from the Vietnamese central highlands: Nature, Gong Music and the Gods." The performance included compositions inspired by Vietnam's mystical landscapes, the tone color of gongs, and sacred ceremonies. A highlight was *Farewell to the Mountain Forest*, Nguyen's composition dedicated to the last Javan rhinoceros killed in Nam Cat Tien National Park.

To conclude the event, renowned Australian composer and political activist Martin Wesley-Smith presented three riveting multi-media pieces that focus on human rights issues in East Timor, Iraq, and West Papua. The composer was at the computer (sound and images), with Ros Dunlop on clarinet and bass clarinet. The deeply moving and memorable concert asked fundamental questions about power, privilege, and human rights.

A selection of the symposium papers will be published in the open access *Journal of Music Research Online* (www.jmro.org.au/index.php/mca2).

EN

Teaching Ecomusicology

Active Listening via Soundwalks

by Aaron S. Allen

Composer and soundscape artist/scholar Hildegard Westerkamp (1974/2001) defines a soundwalk as “any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment.” I would add that only slightly secondary purposes are listening to one’s self and one’s fellow humans. Most importantly, however, soundwalks encourage active listening.

This remarkably simple yet potentially profound exercise can be used pedagogically. It’s a great way to get a class outside, in good weather or not, and can be done repeatedly for comparative purposes. Soundwalking encourages group bonding through a shared, active experience, and it can be related to a variety of intellectual pursuits in music study (for majors and non-majors) and in environmental and social studies. This brief essay will provide an overview and outline of soundwalking intended to provide newcomers an initial starting point. Feel free to vary your own efforts based on your needs and desires; certainly consider following up with further readings if you want to expand on it (see the web resources at the end of this article). But even neophytes can engage a class (or any other group, or yourself alone!) with ecomusicological ideas through this interesting and accessible exercise. (For advice here, I’m grateful to my colleagues

Tyler Kinneer and Andra McCartney, two expert soundwalk leaders who have opened my ears to this remarkable exercise.)

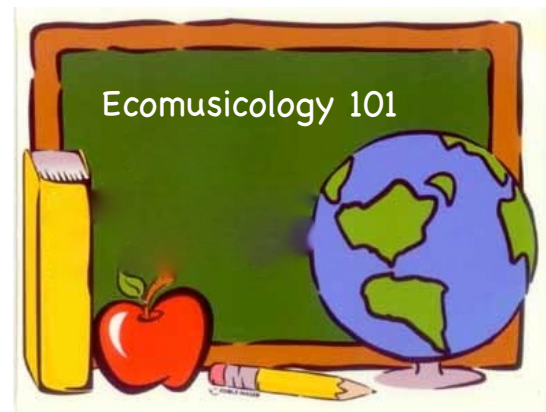
Acoustic ecologists and soundscape artists have long used soundwalks to engage audiences. In essence, as the group leader, or even as a solo participant, you function as a composer, designing a sonic experience for yourself and others. In my opinion, however, what is most important is not the sonic creation, or even the journey, but the ultimate reflections and conversations that result.

A soundwalk exercise itself could take place comfortably in either a 50- or 75-minute class, but 90 minutes is ideal. After some initial planning, a soundwalk can unfold in a three-part structure: introduction, walk, discussion.

Before the actual soundwalk itself, however, the first thing to consider is your planning. It’s a simple point, but: know your environs! Where will you be? On campus, elsewhere? In familiar territory, a new location? Regardless, check out the area in advance. If you cannot physically walk and listen yourself, then do some reconnaissance work via Google Maps or something similar. You can either plan a specific route to follow, have some flexible options within a basic framework, or improvise

completely. Just make sure you don’t end up heading down any potentially dangerous or distracting paths! (Dead ends can be useful, and interesting, but they can also be distracting.) Try to plan for a mix of urbanized and less urbanized places (i.e. “built environment” and “natural environment”), because the contrasts can often be quite interesting.

The introduction of the soundwalk to your group should take just a few minutes. Explain briefly your conception of a soundwalk to the group. You might emphasize that the goal is active listening: both to one’s self and to one’s environment. That environment constitutes everything, not just “nature” but also other people, the built environment, and non-human sounds. Let your group know that an individual’s reactions and feelings to those sounds are as important as any “objective” observations, and that these



subjective, personal emotions will be the subject of discussion at the end of the soundwalk.

The most important thing to do in the introduction, however, is to let your group know that there are two basic ground rules: No talking (unless there's an emergency) and no walking in front of the leader (you). The idea is to proceed in silence; by not talking, either in idle chatter or commenting on sounds heard, one really focuses on listening. Yes, it is sometimes odd to walk in a silent group in a public place, but the rewards of focused listening and the discussion that ensues are worth it. Of course, if someone is in danger or distress, then breaking the silence is certainly warranted. But there's no good reason for group members to dash out in front of you, because you've planned the route and need to set a pace that keeps everyone together. While recording devices can offer an interesting way to preserve, analyze, and document soundwalks, be sure that the technology is not a distraction. Of course, tell your participants to turn off their cell phones!

For the walk itself, make sure not to go too fast. Stop occasionally to just listen. There's no need to keep moving constantly, and occasionally stopping to sit, listen and just be can be focal points of the event. Stopping allows participants to feel comfortable and focus on their listening. Try to find some interesting sounds, be they bird habitats, running water or sonorous trees, or traffic, machinery or other humans. Plan for the walk to be about 30-60 minutes; be sure to consider the

temperature and other climatic conditions that can impact fatigue. Sometimes, less is more; sitting can also lengthen a walk while not making it so strenuous.

The ensuing discussion is where you, as a leader, will need to both continue being a curator and composer while also taking a back seat to the ideas and opinions of others. This is the challenge for all teachers in leading a discussion, of course, but realize here that the benefits of soundwalking are intensely personal, so participants should have the opportunity to reflect on, and ideally share, their experiences. You might emphasize free speech or brainstorming; don't try to direct the discussion too much, because the important aspect is to allow individual experiences to become meaningful, even if they are different from other experiences. You might start generally: "What did you hear?"—and see what bubbles up. Of course, one potential problem with such an open-ended question is the response that simply tries to recount every place walked and every sound heard! Depending on the group, or just for the sake of making it clear, you might start instead with a variation on that question: "What do you think/feel about something you heard?"

For the discussion, model patient listening yourself, and give your participants an opportunity to collect their thoughts before you contribute your own observations. You might ask about extremes: "What was the [loudest/softest/most unusual/most common] you heard?" These little things could start connections between experiences that could

lead to further discussion. Or you might make (or encourage) some specific connections yourself, for example: "Did you notice how sound X interacted with sound Y?" Or "Why do you think that sound Z stood out / was so hard to notice?" Or "Did you notice any patterns or relationships among sounds on our walk?" Then you might consider some changing dynamics, such as "Did you notice how your own listening changed over time?" And of course, you might build the discussion to discuss bigger ideas: What does that sound mean? What does it indicate about the state of our world / our place in the world / our relationships with each other?

A group soundwalk is not an everyday experience, but it can attune us to pay more attention to our everyday experiences. And eventually, soundwalking can become a regular, personal experience; as Westerkamp notes, "Wherever we go we will give our ears priority." This exercise can be approached quite simply as an introduction for all sorts of listeners with all sorts of backgrounds because, even if you are already an active listener, hearing how others listen can be mind- and ear-opening. And doing that matters for understanding our sonic world—and each other.

Web Resources:

Andra McCartney:
soundwalkinginteractions.wordpress.com
 Hildegard Westerkamp:
www.sfu.ca/~westerka/writings.html
 Ecomusicology Bibliography:
www.ecomusicology.info/resources/bibliography/



Performance & Place

Approaches to Place in Recent Field Recordings

Part 2 (of 3)

by Tyler Kinnear

Documentation and the Artistic Act.

Sculptor and sound artist Scott Sherk claims that the distinction between art and documentation is no longer clear in the context of contemporary field recording.¹ Sherk asserts that the only difference between the two is intention.² A common way for artists to voice their aims is through supplemental materials, such as liner notes and images. Listeners also bring their own ideas and interpretations. At times listener reception and artist intention align; in other instances they are incongruous. What are the repercussions of experiencing a field recording differently than the artist intends? In what ways does documentation serve artistic purposes? How does artistic expression inform documentation? Part 2 of this series turns to Peter Cusack's *Sounds from Dangerous Places* (80-pages, 2xCD, ReR MEGACORP and Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 2012) in order to consider some of the ways in which documentary field recordings position the listener in a real-world context while also inviting them to engage recorded environmental sound on aesthetic terms.

Sounds from Dangerous Places is part of Cusack's ongoing project that explores places facing major environmental damage as a result of human activity.³ CD 1 (37 tracks) investigates the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone and surrounding communities. CD 2 (39 tracks) charts oil fields outside Baku, Azerbaijan, and various locations in the UK, including two nuclear power stations and one of London's largest landfills.⁴ The majority of recordings are stationary; that is, where the recordist is not moving and the microphone is directed towards a particular sound source. On several recordings, Cusack deliberately makes sounds. This includes strumming the strings of a defunct piano and walking on glass bottles and books. There is one instance where he places a

contact microphone against the surface of a Ferris wheel, capturing its self-produced squeaks and groans (see CD 1, Track 2). Overall, these "performative" moments are rare, and stand out as unusual on an album that aims to document locations under the rubric of environmental disrepair.

Reporting from the Soundscape.

"When faced with irresolvable issues on this scale, how can an individual artist, or any concerned citizen, respond? My answer has been to inform myself as far as is possible, but also to listen to the small voices, to the environment itself, to those whose personal knowledge of the area goes back generations, to those on the front line and to those whose lives have been changed forever by events over which they had no control. The Chernobyl recordings represent my aural journey."

Peter Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*⁵

Cusack uses field recording as a methodology for studying place, which he refers to as "sonic journalism."⁶ Sonic journalism is based on the understanding that sound carries information about a specific location. This entails not only the sounds heard in a given space, but also the ways in which inhabitants experience and interpret them.⁷ Cusack augments the recordings with written commentary, research findings, track descriptions, and images.⁸ These supplemental materials offer contextual information that sonic footage alone may not provide. Certain passages of writing help to assure that the field recordings retain the artist's intended meaning when played back in a different setting. For example, the text accompanying "Cuckoo and radiometer" reads: "It is an ironic juxtaposition of sounds as both allude to sudden eviction. Cuckoos pirate other birds' nests, ejecting the eggs and chicks, and radiation forced the evacuation of all Pripyat residents. In Ukrainian folklore the cuckoo's call

counts the years of one's life."⁹ This connection between bird and radiometer would go unnoticed without knowledge of the behavior of an adult cuckoo and Ukrainian folklore. In essence, the text, combined with field recordings, has the potential to reshape the imagination of those with a different mental image of Chernobyl (e.g., an abandoned town no longer sustaining life).

Cusack groups recordings according to location and sound type. For CD 1, these are as follows: Chernobyl's wildlife; Pripyat; Samosel villages; Sounds of work, electricity, and radiometers; and Svatlana Tsalko.¹⁰ CD 2 features similar categories, although this is not explicitly stated: nature (animals, natural phenomena), industry (nuclear power plants, oil derricks), and culture (music making, change ringing). Although these groupings are helpful in explaining the "types" of sounds present, the meaning that we associate with these categories may change in light of the real-world contexts in which sounds are heard. For example, several of the "nature" tracks showcase the resiliency of non-human organisms to nuclear disaster. This is notable in Chernobyl recordings that feature abundant animal activity, such as "Dawn chorus" (Track 15) and "Chernobyl frogs" (Track 37). Other recordings highlight the socio-economic dimensions of sites in disrepair. This includes power demands to maintain operations ("Power cable crackle" CD 1, Track 3), construction ("Sarcophagus work" CD 1, Track 20 and "Oil work tune 1" and "2" CD 2, Tracks 2 and 3), and social establishments ("Bar, Friday night, Chernobyl town," CD 1, Track 13). There are also recordings that capture some of the impacts of catastrophic events on local residents, ranging from expressions of that which is lost ("Oh My Beloved Village, Stovpyagi village" CD 1, Track 20) to the political implications of post-disaster situations ("Official secrets" CD 2, Track 23).¹¹

Cusack compiles recordings in such a way that invites listeners to make connections between locations that may otherwise seem unrelated. In some instances the correlation is one of cause-and-effect, such as the use of radiometers in Chernobyl and Snowdonia, UK, a Chernobyl fallout site in North Wales. In other cases, two or more locations support related markets while their sonic profiles are markedly different. For example, the Caspian oil fields and the Bradwell and Dungeness nuclear power

stations (both in southeast England) center on energy. However, the oil fields feature a rich cacophony of metallic sounds, while the power stations present slightly nuanced, broadband drones. *Sounds from Dangerous Places* also invites listeners to note changes in a particular environment over time (or a lack thereof). Such is the case with the two "oilfield soundwalks" (CD 2, Tracks 4 and 9). Recorded six months apart, the acoustic environment sounds unchanged: both recordings consist entirely of the groans and squeaks of oil derricks.¹²

When a "Dangerous" Place Becomes Appealing.

"The main issue for me after experiencing the oil-fields was the extreme dichotomy between my aesthetic pleasure at seeing and hearing this place and the knowledge that it was extremely polluted, created health problems for the local people, had a major impact on Azerbaijan's social and political system, the structure of its economy and exerted a wider, global, effect in terms of oil supply."

Peter Cusack, interview with Angus Carlyle¹³

Although the locations visited are highly polluted, on-site field recordings do not typically replicate these conditions. For example, the shoreline outside Baku is contaminated with oil, but the track "Caspian sea wash" sounds no less than pristine. (The same could be said for the "nature" recordings made in and around Chernobyl.) Additionally, certain sounds may come across as acoustically interesting while the source itself is controversial. For instance, the four "Methane flow" recordings (CD 2, Tracks 28-31) present a series of quasi-pitched sounds—pressurized gas flowing through pipes. Focusing on pitch relations, rather than on methane as a subject, the listener's thoughts shift away from the environmental complexities of this sound source to its musical qualities. (There is current debate over the possibility of a sudden Arctic methane release as a result of climate change.)¹⁴ The danger here (in a journalistic sense, not an artistic one) is that sonic footage from "dangerous" places may come across as bucolic instead of bringing attention to real-world circumstances.

One of the few sound types on *Sounds from Dangerous Places* that directly communicates danger is the radiometer (i.e. Geiger counter). The device functions as a tool for measuring an otherwise

invisible threat. In the opening recording on the album, “Radiometer, Kopachi,” we hear the quivering beeps of a radiometer, the wind in the distance, and Cusack reading aloud radiation levels. The level gradually rises and then falls, creating a sense of intensification, followed by relief (i.e. the higher the number the greater the threat). However, not all of the “radiometer” recordings portray a sense of danger. Several tracks de-emphasize the meaning associated with the device, namely those that feature the radiometer in the foreground with another sound. These range from birdsong to a window hinge squeaking in the wind. In my own experience, these recordings take on musical qualities, primarily in terms of rhythmic interplay between sources. For example, with “Radiometer squeaky hinge, Opachichi village” (CD 1, Track 33) the sounds are at a similar volume and are perceived as spatially proximate—both are heard in the front left-center channel. This interaction between two inanimate objects falls short of synergy when I remind myself that Cusack intends them to be heard as information. In this sense, the squeaky window hinge and radiometer are both reactive to outside stimuli.

The former is set in motion by the bulk movement of air; the latter creates an electronic pulse when an ionizing event is detected.

Conclusion.

Sounds from Dangerous Places is a personal compendium of sounds gathered from locations that have faced major environmental damage (with the exceptions of the Bradwell and Dungeness nuclear power stations, which are currently stable but have the potential to inflict catastrophic damage). Simultaneously, it is a conversation piece about global issues concerning energy sourcing and resource extraction, and their impacts on local communities and ecosystems. With the album, potentially unforeseen connections between distant places emerge. Also noted is the seeming fixity of certain acoustic locales. However, more often, sound challenges the typical envisioning of places in environmental disrepair, from Chernobyl as a haven for wildlife to the Caspian oil fields as an ongoing performance of percussive machinery. From the perspective of journalism, a challenge is that field recordings from “dangerous” places may be



Bibi-Heybat oil field, Azerbaijan. Image reproduced by kind permission of Peter Cusack.

misinterpreted (such as methane sounding aesthetically interesting or a bird and mechanical device interacting in a musical way), or suggest environmental, economic, and/or political conditions that are not true to fact. Artistically, some of Cusack's recordings immerse us in a real-world context; others take us to a space of imaginative listening. Although intention and reception do not always align in field recording, the so-called "collapse" between documentation and art may in fact be an opening whereby artists at once share personal experience through sound but also stimulate public discourse around particular locations. For Cusack, this entails inviting us to revisit our impressions of "dangerous" places, while thinking about the connections (including our own) to energy demands and contaminated environments.

Notes.

1. Scott Sherk, "Phonography: Art or Documentation," *Field Notes* 3 (2012); 15. Available at www.gruenrekorder.de/fieldnotes (accessed August 12, 2013).

2. Sherk arrives at this by comparing recent developments in phonography to the history of photography.

3. Cusack is among several artists that have explored the abandoned buildings of Chernobyl and the oil fields in Azerbaijan. For example, Jacob Kirkegaard's *Lucier-esque Four Rooms* (2008, Touch) presents the formant frequencies captured by recording ambience in a former public venue in Chernobyl, playing it back while re-recording, and repeating the process multiple times. Photographer Edward Burtynsky's multi-part series *Oil* investigates the global market of oil, from extraction (oil fields), to production (refineries), to consumption (highways). Burtynsky's series features images of the same oil fields in Azerbaijan as documented by Cusack.

4. Track listings and audio excerpts are available at www.sounds-from-dangerous-places.org/book.html (accessed August 16, 2013). The majority of tracks are between one and two minutes in duration. However, some are as brief as 0'16" ("Methane flow 1"), while others exceed 8'00" ("Oilfield soundwalk 2"). The recordings span multiple trips to certain locations; Cusack visited Azerbaijan in March and October 2004, and Ukraine in May 2006 and July 2007. Several recordings on CD 2 were made in the 1990s. These include "Plane deer" (Track 15) and "Bradwell nuclear power station" (Track 37).

5. Peter Cusack, *Sounds from Dangerous Places*, ReR MEGACORP and Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, ReR 3&4 and LC-02677 (Book and CD) 2012, 18.

6. For more information, see: www.sounds-from-dangerous-places.org/sonic_journalism.html (accessed August 16, 2013).

7. In this line of thought, Cusack's work is not dissimilar from the World Soundscape Project (WSP), a multidisciplinary team of soundscape researchers based at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia in the 1970s. Cusack applies some of the same tools as those used by the WSP for collecting data, namely soundwalks, field recordings, and interviews. However, where the WSP projects focus on soundscapes in change (as a result of growing noise pollution, among other factors), Cusack explores soundscapes already redefined by human action.

8. In a recent interview with Cathy Lane, Cusack explains: "I do a lot of research and the only way to get that across is to talk or write about it. I want to be able to communicate the research because the projects are not about sound, sound is a way to illustrate and to give insight into what's happening in a place like Chernobyl. Sound will tell you quite a lot, but it won't give you radiation statistics, or other factual information, so you need to give that verbally. Images also help, sometimes the sound and the images give you a total different message, which in itself is interesting. So I like using all those media because when they act together they give you a fuller picture."

Cathy Lane and Angus Carlyle eds., "Peter Cusack," in *In the Field, The Art of Field Recording*, Axminster, UK: CRiSAP, 2013, 195.

9. Cusack, 27.

10. *Ibid.*, 18–19. Samosel villages comprise of the current inhabitants of the Chernobyl area, many of whom were residents prior to the disaster. Svatlana Tsalko is a poet and folklorist living near Chernobyl.

11. The concepts of "apocalypse" and "nostalgia" surface in Cusack's work. The former resonates with the overall theme of the album, and the latter with recordings of local residents. Readers interested in "apocalypse" and "nostalgia" as they pertain to ecocritical topics may wish to consult Alexander Rehding's article "Ecomusicology between Apocalypse and Nostalgia," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64/2 (2011): 409–414.

12. Both tracks consist of excerpts from longer walks, with the original order of sound events preserved. Cusack, 58.

13. Angus Carlyle ed., "An Interview with Peter Cusack," in *Autumn Leaves: Sound and the Environment in Artistic Practice*, Paris: Double-Entendre, 2007, 81.

14. Nafeez Ahmed, "Why the jury's still out on the risk of Arctic methane catastrophe," *The Guardian*, September 5, 2013. www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2013/sep/05/jury-out-arctic-methane-catastrophe-risk-real (accessed September 7, 2013).

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... *Continued from p. 3*, **Interview with Allen, by Torvinen & Engström**

century. It's taken, perhaps, some time for those changes and the resulting concerns to filter into the relatively isolated world of music scholarship. Another reason might be institutional, in that universities have long struggled to reward and encourage inter-, cross- and trans- disciplinary work. Although I don't have the data to substantiate the following claim, I might hypothesize that a significant reason music scholars didn't wake up to environmental issues is the perception of politics. Musicology in Europe and the United States in the early part of the twentieth century was conservative and tried to develop its status as a legitimate scientific pursuit worthy of status as an academic discipline (and hence as a university department or faculty). As a result, change has been slow. The split (in the United States at least) between historical musicology and ethnomusicology—which I think is tremendously unfortunate and counterproductive—shows some of that conservatism, as does the history of the “new musicology” in the past few decades. But I think many music scholars have been concerned not to represent themselves too politically. Environmental issues are nothing if not political—and here we see the cultural status of environmental issues as well. The openness of ethnomusicology and the groundwork laid by the “new musicology” have both contributed to clearing the ground for ecomusicology.

Second, I'd like to disagree, if I may, with the premise of the question and say that thinkers have long made connections between music (or sound), the environment (or nature, however its construed), and human society/culture—even if not as an explicit ecomusicology. Consider, for example, in Western culture, the ancient Greek “Harmony of the Spheres,” or medieval treatises on the status of bird song and musicians who imitate it, or 18th-century engagements with the natural, or Romantic fascination with nature, etc. This is to say nothing of the rest of the world, where in some cases, as in Asia, there is a long written tradition of such connections, while in other cases there may be oral traditions and present understandings (rather than “scholarship” per se) and musicking (rather than “compositions”). So while I do see some barriers to the contemporary development of ecomusicology, I also understand it as a longer, if not explicitly named, tradition.

JT&AE: *It seems to me that always when a new branch of research emerges it appears first as a unified, even harmonious field with a common goal. However, soon the branch starts dispersing into different competing schools. Environmentally oriented music scholars have already used at least two seemingly parallel terms “environmental ethnomusicology” and “ecomusicology,” and for example Professor Mark Pedelty has stated that ecomusicology has so far been concerned mostly with classical music (which is actually not quite true in a European context). Do you think there is (or will be) some kind of fractioning in ecomusicology? What would it be like? Or have the environmental crises become so ubiquitous that they will unite music scholars in a common cause?*

AA: I have a dual hope for ecomusicology: first that it does not fracture, but second that it fuses with many other realms of scholarly inquiry so that it doesn't become stale, isolated, or irrelevant. Those two hopes are apparently contradictory, and achieving them will be a challenge. And even if the name “ecomusicology” is not used, the approaches are what matter, be they of soundscape studies and/or environmental ethnomusicology and/or anything else related but with a different name.

I've been attending environmental conferences since the mid 1990s and music conferences since the late 1990s. At most environmental conferences I get a sense of sharing ideas, dialogue, and pursuing common goals; at most music conferences I get a sense of privacy, monologue, and independence. Both cultures are admirable and have their places and benefits and failings. Balancing the two would be tricky, but I do think that the common cause will be enough to unite ecomusicology scholars to a significant degree.

I might also add that before there was an explicitly named ecomusicology (be that a recent affair, as in the past few years, or one that dates back to the first reference to the word that I've found, from the 1970s), we had soundscape studies. Ecomusicology is both an umbrella term that could encompass soundscape studies and it's also a tributary, or descendent, of it. (Of course, these are just names, methodologies, and the people associated

with them, for as I mentioned previously, I think that something like ecomusicology, or soundscape studies if you want, has been going on for a long time.) That's when we consider ecomusicology holistically, as any study of sound/music and nature/environment and culture/society. But when an element of the environmental or ecological activist is combined, I think that's where there is something clearly ecomusicological, something that clearly identifies ecomusicology as something contemporary and different.

Literary ecocritics and environmental historians still, after decades of their fields being well established (if not mainstreamed), are still having arguments about defining their fields. (The same goes for ethnomusicology, at least in the United States.) I think it's a natural evolution in any field to argue about it and push at its boundaries. If not, then the field becomes moribund. We can think of it in the same way we might think about ecological stasis: it doesn't exist, as nature is always changing. There's a constant struggle in nature, and the only constant is change. So I hope there will be arguments about streams and branches in ecomusicology as much as I also hope there will be a way for it to become another tool in not just the music scholar's toolbox but also part of the more general study of the cultural crisis of the environment.

JT&AE: One interesting aspect of ecomusicology derives from its relevance for music history. As I see it, ecomusicology is not only an approach for finding out some ecocritical things hiding in music. Ecomusicology is also, even mainly, a new way to hear music, any music, as the context of environmental crises justifies ecocritical listening of any music and justifies negotiation of ecocritical messages even in music that is not ecocritical as such or even in cases where composer's/performer's intentions are not ecocritical as such. You are yourself also a Beethoven scholar. How do you see the relevance of ecomusicology to music of previous centuries, as e.g. with Beethoven's Pastoral symphony?

Indeed, the ecocritical approach has relevance for both current and historical musics, and explicitly and otherwise unacknowledged environmental works and contexts. On the one hand, the historical ecomusicological approach can provide different

understandings and new perspectives on material that has both been well cultivated and may not otherwise be well known. Here, we can find the wonder, allure, and need for not just ecomusicology but all scholarly inquiry in general: as understanding the past through the continual reflections of our own time. On the other hand, that could lend to the perception that ecomusicology is just a way to reinterpret, yet again, the same old material; as such, ecomusicology could be seen as a fad. I hope not! It's up to all of us to produce rigorous and meaningful work that works against such criticism.

Regarding Beethoven: I wrote an article entitled "Symphonic Pastorals" [*Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 15 (2011): 22-42] that considered various symphonies from the long nineteenth century, and Beethoven's Sixth was central to it. I took an ecocritical approach, drawing on the pastoral (a favorite topic among ecocritics), to argue that even an apparently "mute" or "textless" genre like the symphony can express conceptions of nature. Furthermore, those conceptions changed between composers and throughout time. The ecomusicological approach here is not one concerned so much with activism or environmental crisis; rather, it is one concerned with historical conceptions of nature—and that approach contributes to the understanding function that cultural scholars can contribute to confronting the environmental crisis.

JT&AE: Ecomusicologists often emphasize the activist nature of their field. What forms could this type of activism take in contemporary Western society? Isn't ecomusicology a close relative or even a branch of cultural musicology since it emphasizes the cultural conditions of musicking and political consequences of any music scholarly work?

AA: Absolutely, I see ecomusicology as resulting from cultural musicology and its willingness to engage with difficult subjects, such as race, politics, gender, sexuality, and power. As for the forms of activism, consider the perhaps trite saying: knowledge is power. Understanding is certainly a fundamental type of activism, and closely related to it is empowerment. Consider a parallel with feminism: scholarly research, teaching, and dissemination on feminism can empower

participants, readers, and especially students. They can learn about past injustices, discover role models, and realize that each of us could participate in the cultural change afoot. The same could be said for ecomusicological work in research, teaching, and dissemination. There are a number of scholars (e.g. Mark Pedelty, Andrew Mark, Catherine Botrill) whose work is either explicitly or tangentially ecomusicological, and whose ideas connect not only with scholars and students but also with practicing musicians (of modestly local and profoundly global reach) and music venues, all of whom could make a difference and spread the word to make issues of environmentalism and sustainability more mainstream, understood, accessible, and accepted. Mark Pedelty in particular has thought long and hard about the potentials and pitfalls of such efforts. Part of the challenge is to maintain the beauty, inspiration, fascination, and emotion of music while not weighing it down with too much gloom and doom and, at the same time, connecting music and musicking to issues much bigger than ourselves.

JT&AE: *How could we make ecomusicology more common in the field of music research? Would it be a desirable goal if we could some day talk about "an ecological turn" of music research?*

AA: I do think it would be a good thing to some day refer to the ecological turn. But my hope is that such a turn would become just another aspect of cultural research and thinking. I also hope that ecomusicology does not become another academic silo in which its practitioners talk only with each other. And of course to make ecomusicology another tool in the toolbox and to prevent such isolation, ecomusicology must become more common. Apart from launching an ad campaign (which I actually do not think would work, nor do I think it would be an appropriate thing to do), I think that the best ways to make ecomusicology more common are to be patient, to do good work, and to keep publishing, teaching, talking, and sharing ideas.

JT&AE: *You are presently doing research on the violin, and the material for its bow is usually taken from the pernambuco tree. The situation for this tree is, from an environmental perspective, deeply troubled. Are there any*

alternative materials for making a violin bow that are more environmental friendly? And how is the violin "community" reacting to this? Is there any awareness at all about the serious situation or the alternatives?

AA: The use of wood for musical instruments is potentially sustainable and environmentally responsible. For example, some of the best spruce used to make violin soundboards is grown in a sustainable, culturally specific, and historically rich way, and so there are models for responsible and renewable materials use. [See my "Fatto di Fiemme": Stradivari's Violins and the Musical Trees of the Paneveggio," in *Invaluable Trees: Cultures of Nature, 1660-1830*, eds. Laura Auricchio, Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, and Giulia Pacini, 301-315 (Oxford: SVEC, 2012).] There are alternatives for bows, such as graphite and carbon fiber, but neither are renewable (being made from minerals and/or petroleum). Wood is an ideal medium, but the violin community—performers, teachers, luthiers, and archetiers—must decide to do the right thing, because pernambuco is currently not a sustainable choice for professional quality bows. The International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative, an organization comprised primarily of archetiers and luthiers, is indeed searching for responsible and sustainable solutions. But by and large, the concern remains (as far as I understand it) absent from the performance community. Performers are aware of alternatives, but almost in the same breath those alternatives are refuted as not good enough. Players, especially professionals, want the best tool for the job, and to them, pernambuco makes for the best tool. As awareness increases, and as a younger, more sustainability-minded generation comes of age, my hope is that the situation will change. And of course, I hope that ecomusicological work can help understand the situation, disseminate ideas and stories about it, and aid in ameliorating it.

JT&AE: *In terms of material for instruments and equipment, the environmental impact could be significant: what about hardware like electrical instruments, amplifiers, speakers, and more specialized tools and equipment, is there any awareness from the music and art world? In the more commercial field, like mobile phones, companies are constantly being watched, by*

media at least, for filling the requirements of being environmental friendly as well as providing decent working conditions. But what about this art equipment, which in its totality may not be of such minor concern?

AA: Well, in this question and in the previous, I have to say: make sure you check out the book that I'm co-writing with Kevin Dawe and Jennifer Post! We're going to be addressing these very issues. You're absolutely correct that there are significant impacts from the technology that's used to support all sorts of musical endeavors, from performing and recording to listening and distributing. Music is perhaps perceived as an unambiguous good: making and appreciating music is part of what makes us human, and while it may or may not be uniquely human, it sure feels good. So finding faults with the infrastructure of music is a difficult pill to swallow. I cannot speak authoritatively about the general perceptions in the arts world about these material environmental concerns with regard to music instruments and technologies, but I can say that anecdotally they are of no significant concern to musicians and listeners. And that's something that bothers me greatly. We do need to raise awareness of these issues, be they our gadgets' energy use (which contributes to global warming) or the source of the materials (e.g. endangered trees or rare earth minerals obtained through exploitative child labor). The social and environmental movements that have brought attention to the materials in our phones and other technology are slowly gaining ground, and some corporations are starting to take notice and make changes. We need to do the same with musical instruments and technologies.

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