



# The Soundscape Newsletter

Number One

August 1991

## **DEAR SOUNDSCAPE FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES, ENTHUSIASTS...**

We are excited to send you this first Soundscape Newsletter. It is our first step in attempting to bring together the international, interdisciplinary community of professionals which has evolved over the last twenty years and done much work in connecting Soundscape Studies with other disciplines. This newsletter, then, aims at reaching all those of you who are concerned about the quality of the contemporary soundscape, the quality of listening, and who are actively addressing issues such as acoustic ecology, acoustic design, noise, silence, music in a "muzak-ridden" world, and more.

We also want to establish a forum for information exchange and communication among what--up to now--has been a scattered collection of individuals, groups and institutions in the hope of helping to develop a vibrant and

active community. The spectrum of people and professions is wide and encompasses such differing disciplines as architecture, music, psychology, education, geography, audio art, film sound, soundsculpture, town planning, radio broadcasting, communications and others. In all cases the focus is on sound, on the quality of the acoustic environment and on the creation of ecologically balanced soundscapes.

The publication of this newsletter comes at a time when interest in the soundscape is on the increase, in tandem with a growing concern for the world's ecological balance in general and for the balance of the acoustic environment specifically. It seems appropriate therefore to establish, say, a "Soundscape Community" through which we can get to

**Cont'd on Page 2**

I wish to subscribe to *The World Soundscape Newsletter*. Please find enclosed \$10 (Can.)

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*The World Soundscape Newsletter*  
 and mail to: The World Soundscape Project  
 Department of Communication  
 Simon Fraser University  
 Burnaby, B.C.  
 Canada V5A 1S6

If you know other individuals, groups or institutions who may want to receive The Soundscape Newsletter, please send us their name and address.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Cont'd from Page 1

know each other, combine our varied expertise and knowledge, work more effectively, and articulate more convincingly our concerns, our research and findings about the sonic environment.

In order to do this we need to hear from you and find out what you do, who you are, and where you are. We are asking you therefore to send us information about you and your work which in turn we will publish for everyone's information in the next issues of the newsletter.

*Reading this newsletter is a way of listening.*

*Writing for it is a way of soundmaking.*

#### PLEASE SEND US:

1) *For publication in the next newsletter:* A short paragraph describing your work/activities and how you address issues of acoustic ecology within your discipline or your work.

2) *For the development of a bibliography:* A list of recent publications and work related to issues of soundscape, acoustic ecology, acoustic design within your discipline.

#### PLEASE SEND TO:

The World Soundscape Project  
 Department of Communication  
 Simon Fraser University  
 Burnaby, B.C.  
 Canada V5A 1S6

Fax: (604) 291-4024

**DEADLINE: OCTOBER 15, 1991**

This newsletter has been produced by Hildegard Westerkamp and Emiko Morita. Advisors have been Barry Truax, R. Murray Schafer, Michael Century and Peter Grant. The newsletter logo was designed by Ulliane Karnouk. Thanks to the Department of Communication at Simon Fraser University for its generous support.

The next newsletter will be published. Just send us your written and financial contributions. We hope to publish three to four newsletters a year. Subscription cost is \$10 (Can.).

**PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT**  
**THE TUNING OF THE WORLD**

Banff International Conference on Acoustic Ecology

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August 1993  
The Banff Centre for the Arts

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Acoustic Ecology is concerned with the relationship between sound and the environment. Perhaps the first detailed study of this relationship was that undertaken by The World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University nearly 25 years ago.

We have borrowed the title "The Tuning of the World" for our 1993 conference from the well-known book by R. Murray Schafer, founder of the World Soundscape Project, as a tribute to him on his 60th birthday.

The Banff Centre is proposing a conference devoted to "tuning" the acoustic environment in the complex contemporary world. What is the proper balance between natural, human and technological sounds? In what ways are our attitudes to sound making and listening changing? What effects do the media have in the modern soundscape? What particular role does music play in shaping sensory awareness? How do attitudes and habits toward soundmaking and listening affect our concepts of space and time, of noise and silence, society and communication? Is it possible to develop principles of acoustic design for environments of the future and if so what can we learn from the past, from other cultures, or from technological developments taking place today?

Leading experts will be invited from many disciplines and many countries to pool their ideas and knowledge in an interdisciplinary quest to understand the principles of acoustic ecology and reveal the elusive Tuning of the World. The conference will be specific, but will be addressed to the widest possible audience in order that the principles of soundscape awareness may be understood by people of all ages and cultures.

The background setting for the conference is Banff National Park designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, and Canada's first National Park. The host is The Banff Centre for Continuing Education, a centre for advanced study and conferences in the arts and management. 1993 has been designated as a year for environmental projects at the Banff Centre, including a wide range of other performances, exhibitions, screenings and special events.

If you are interested in receiving further information, please write to or contact:

c/o The Director of Program Development  
The Banff Centre for the Arts  
P.O. Box 1020  
Banff, Alberta  
Canada T0L 0C0  
Phone: 403-762-6290 Fax: 403-762-6699



# URBAN ECOLOGY

7e Printemps Electroacoustique 1992

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Claude Schryer, Artistic Director  
June 1-21 1992 Montreal

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Based on the theme of acoustic ecology within an urban environment, the 7e Printemps Electroacoustique proposes a series of electroacoustic events celebrating the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montreal, the 500th anniversary of the "discovery" of America and the 25th anniversary of the 1967 Montreal World Exposition.

In response to its call-for-works for the festival, ACREQ has received over 100 proposals from composers and sound artists from around the world.

The five principal directions of the festival are: 1. Performances/urban animation (concert/performance in exceptional public spaces) including a large scale outdoor electroacoustic/radio/band concert, Solar synthesis concerts, and a bicycle orchestra. 2. Guided Sonic Tours (sonic tours of the city featuring special events in interesting sonic spaces), including a mobile recycled instrument work shop for families and guided soundwalks. 3. Sonorisation of Public Spaces (installations and sound projections in various public spaces) including interactive and site specific installations through the city. 4. Conferences (a series of conferences on the theme of sound ecology) including a series of Sunday morning Brunch/Concerts with special guests focussing on specific issues of sound ecology and the audition of a masterpiece of ecologically inspired electroacoustic music. 5. Radio (radiophonic creation on the theme of sound ecology) including live soundscape broadcasts on network programmes of Radio-Canada FM and a 24 hour live portrait of the urban soundscape of the city of Montreal.

Stay tuned!

**For more information contact:** 7e Printemps Electroacoustique - ACREQ,  
CP 416, Succursale Outremont, Outremont, Quebec, Canada H2V 4N3

Telephone (514) 849-9534 Fax (514) 289-9680

## **HANDBOOK FOR ACOUSTIC ECOLOGY**

The World Soundscape Project's Handbook for Acoustic Ecology, edited by Barry Truax, Associate Professor in Communication and the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University, is available from Cambridge Street Publishing, 4346 Cambridge Street, Burnaby, B.C. V5C 1H4.

This 160 page reference work compiles all major terminology from the fields of acoustics, psychoacoustics, environmental acoustics and noise measurement, electroacoustics, music, linguistics, and soundscape studies, with extensive cross-references and straightforward explanations. Numerous diagrams, charts and tables provide additional reference information. The book is an ideal reference text for students of acoustic communication, electroacoustic music, and any other field where a knowledge of sound is needed.

A limited number of hardcover copies are available postpaid at Can \$20.00/ US \$18.00; outside North America add Can \$9./US \$8. for airmail. Canadian residents please add 7% GST.

The author's book Acoustic Communication is available from the publisher, Ablex Publishing, 355 Chestnut Street, Norwood, NJ 07648 USA (Tel: 201-767-8450)

# The World Soundscape Project

## Update on the Project

The World Soundscape Project (WSP) was founded by R. Murray Schafer in the late 1960's to study the acoustic environment and the impact of technology on it. The WSP established an international reputation through its innovative approach to sound, as well as its numerous research publications and tape documents. Through systematic and critical study the project has endeavoured to contribute to and co-ordinate research on the scientific, aesthetic, philosophical, architectural, and sociological aspects of soundscape ecology. The project's focus is to find solutions for an ecologically balanced soundscape where the relationship between the human community and its sonic environment is balanced.

Following the departure of Schafer from Simon Fraser University in 1975 after the publication of his book "The Tuning of the World", the project essentially wound down and completed the publication of its works through ARC Publications: *The Vancouver Soundscape*, *Five Village Soundscapes*, *European Sound Diary* and the *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology*. The project also left an impressive archive of 300 audio tapes of sound environments throughout B.C., Canada and Europe, plus numerous written documents.

After the original research group - with Howard Broomfield, Bruce Davis, Peter Huse, Barry Truax, Hildegard Westerkamp, and Adam Woog - was dissolved, distribution of the WSP's publications as well as maintenance and expansion of its archives were continued by Barry Truax and Hildegard Westerkamp. Both have since disseminated and developed the project's legacy through publications and recordings of their own work as well as through courses in Acoustic Communication at the Communications Department at Simon Fraser University. Gradually, and also as a result of Schafer's

continued lecture and workshop tours to many parts of the world, the WSP's work has taken root internationally among a variety of groups and individuals of many different professions.

## Thoughts, Ideas and visions

The WSP has taken the position that listening and soundmaking stand in a delicate relationship to each other. This relationship becomes unbalanced if, for example, what we hear is louder than our own sounds, or if the atmosphere of an environment allows us only to hear or to listen, but not to speak or express. A noisy environment and an authoritarian environment can both have this effect: a noisy environment drowns out our footsteps, our breathing, and our normal speaking voice; an authoritarian environment does not have to be loud for us to lower our voices or not to talk at all.

The soundscape or sonic environment is an intimate reflection of the social, technological, and natural conditions of its area. One of the main tasks of soundscape ecology is to maintain an acoustic balance in the environment and ideally to determine how its quality may be improved.

The WSP's most important strategy towards balancing and improving the quality of the sonic environment is educational. Raising awareness of the present state of the soundscape through active listening and "ear-cleaning" exercises is one of the group's major strengths. Such "soundscape" listening encourages questioning and evaluation, and ideally listeners are provoked to act upon their perceptions. As a consequence they also become aware of their role as soundmakers and their responsibility towards the soundscape.

Our listening capacity always becomes refined in an acoustically clear environment, such as a hi-fi soundscape, and we often

Cont'd from Page 3

experience a desire to listen as well as to make sounds. Under those conditions we can find a balance between listening and soundmaking and this balance gives inner vitality. All too often, however, the modern soundscape is "lo-fi"—too much urban noise thus creates loss of energy. Both voice and ear are neglected and stress is a common experience for the urban person.

Music in our sound environment has always played a special role. Soundscape ideology recognizes this and the irony of musicians, who are all too often concerned with the details of their art only, deaf to a world out of tune, and ignoring the social, political and environmental context and the implication of their work. The WSP actively counters this situation by connecting diverse and disconnected disciplines dealing with sound, and thus placing music within the larger context of the sound environment.

Soundscape ideology recognizes that when humans enter an environment, they have an immediate effect on the sounds; the soundscape is human-made and in that sense, composed. Soundscape is the acoustic manifestation of "place", where the sounds give the inhabitants a "sense of place" and the place's acoustic quality is shaped by the inhabitants' activities and behaviour. The



from "Gegen den Lärm", Zurich, 1989.

meanings of a place and its sounds are created precisely because of this interaction between soundscape and people.

Beyond fighting sound pollution, the task of sound ecologists is to design healthy and attractive sonic environments, sonic places. Continual sensitization of the ear, creative town planning, legislative action (noise abatement regulations), the design of acoustic parks and playgrounds, and the innovative preservation of worthwhile sounds of past and present may be among the means to achieve such ends. This turning of the negative spectre of a polluted sound world into a vision where the sonic environment becomes a place for renewal and creativity has been the genius of the World Soundscape Project.

*Hildegard Westerkamp*

(an expanded and slightly altered version of this text will be published shortly in the Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, Second Edition)

*Sound is the voice of a society, of a landscape, of an environment.*

*If we understand the meanings of sound we understand what a society is saying about itself.*

*If we understand the behaviour of sound we can hear how a society behaves towards its environment.*

**A REMINDER TO MARK THESE  
EVENTS IN YOUR CALENDAR:**

- 1) *7e Printemps electroacoustic 1992: URBAN SOUND ECOLOGY*  
Montreal, June 1-21.
- 2) *THE TUNING OF THE WORLD:*  
Banff International Conference on Acoustic Ecology, August 1993.

Details of these events can be found on the inserted page.