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Seminar/Lab: Wednesdays, 10:30 - 12:20 pm, K-7657
Wednesdays, 1:30 - 3:20 pm, K-7657

Soundscape composition, as pioneered by the World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University, has become a relatively well-defined genre, combining the artistic with the social, and often characterized as being intimately located to place. Although that may be true in many instances, it can also be understood as a range of approaches within an even broader concept, namely "context-based composition." One of the aims of this seminar/lab is to provide not only a survey of historical and contemporary examples of this approach and concept, but to think more seriously about how it can be defined, what are its implications and affordances, and what emerging practices seem most fruitful. Special attention will be given to multi-channel reproduction techniques, environmental sound processing and composition.

A key distinguishing feature of context-based composition appears to be that real-world contexts inform the design and composition of aurally based work at every level, that is, in the materials, their organization, and ultimately the work's placement within cultural contexts. Perhaps most significantly, listeners are encouraged to bring their knowledge of real world contexts into their participation with these works. As such they fundamentally differ from an approach that utilizes sounds related only to each other in an apparently autonomous form. Context-based practice can, among other approaches, range from sonifications, phonographic uses of field recordings, to site-specific installations, and abstracted soundscape compositions based in real-world or even virtual, imagined spaces.

Texts:

Soundscape Composition pdfs (<http://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio-webdav/SoundscapeComposition>)

B. Truax (ed.), *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology*. CD-ROM version, Cambridge Street Publishing 1999.
online at <https://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio-webdav/handbook/index.html>

Sound, Media, Ecology, M. Droumeva & R. Jordan (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. (online access)

Routledge Companion to Sounding Art, M. Cobussen, V. Meelberg and B. Truax (eds.), New York: Routledge, 2017. (ML 3800 R625 2017)

Environmental Sound Artists: In Their Own Words, F. Bianchi and V. Manzo (eds.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. (ML 1380 B5 2016)

References:

Organised Sound, vols. 4(1), 7(1), 13(2), 16(3), 17(3), 22(1), 23(1); *Soundscape Journal* (wfae.net) 7

L. Landy, *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization*, MIT Press, 2007. (ML 1380 L28 2007)

K. Norman, *Sounding Art: Eight literary excursions through electronic music*, Ashgate, 2004. (ML 1380 N67 2004)

Contemporary Music Review (ML 197, C752) vol. 15(1-2), A Poetry of Reality, K. Norman, ed.

Grading:

Your grade will be based solely on the studio projects you complete (see page 3). These will consist of:

- (1) An assigned studio exercise (to be completed during the first half of the semester);
 - (2) One major audio project (to be completed during the second half of the semester).
- Alternatively, a research paper (approx. 15 pages) may be proposed.

The Department expects that the grades awarded in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distribution of grades.

Deadlines: Project 1 is due the week of 24-29 February (25%).
Project 2 is due one week after the last class (75%).

SEMINAR TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Note: ESA refers to *Environmental Sound Artists*; RCSA to *Routledge Companion to Sounding Art*; SME refers to *Sound, Media, Ecology*

- Jan. 8 Soundscape as concept and terminology
 Introduction to soundscape composition, acoustic ecology, sustainability, niche hypothesis
 Reading: Wrightson, Ingold, Sterne, Truax-Sustainability, Monacchi-Fragments
- Jan. 15 Introduction to the World Soundscape Project
 Survey of historical documents and approaches to field recording, documentation
 Reading: Truax-CMR, Truax-Soundscape Composition, Gilmurray (in ESA), Truax (in SME)
- Jan. 22 Approaches to soundscape composition (spatial perspectives)
 Found sound (phonography) and abstracted practices and techniques
 Reading: Truax-Genres, Drever-SCethnography, Drever (in RCSA)
- Jan. 29 Historical precedents (Ruttman, Koch, Schwartz, Ferrari, Braun, Orchard)
 Reading: Ruttman, Schwartz, Ferrari, Koch-Orchard, Orchard-Documentaries, Clarkson
- Feb. 5 Hildegard Westerkamp, soundscape works
 Reading: Kolber, McCormac, McCartney-Cricket Voices, Westerkamp-Linking
- Feb. 12 Barry Truax, multi-channel soundscape works
 Reading: Truax-SoundListeningPlace, Truax-AcousticSpace
- Feb. 19 No class
- Feb. 26 Soundscape and Acousmatic approaches mixed
 Body, Ferrari, Risset, Tenney, Lansky, Norman, Andean, Raimondo, Pasoulas
 Reading: Norman-ListeningTogether, Norman-Realworld Music, Pasoulas (in ESA), McCartney (in SME)
- Mar. 4 Narrativity; Text and gender-based approaches
 Derbyshire, Dyson, Young, Rubin, Body, Truax
 Reading: *Organised Sound* 21(3): Andean, Naylor, Amelides;
 Lane, Jack Body, Truax-Electrified Voices, Bosma, Truax-Homoeroticism
- Mar. 11 & 18 Other artists (Feld, Schine, Wagstaff, Burtner, Keller, Proy, Polli)
 Reading: Feld, Burtner & Polli (in ESA), Keller, Burtner-EcoSono, Burtner & Polli (in RCSA),
 Barclay, O'Keefe (in SME)
- Mar. 25 Compositional analysis and mentoring of student projects
April 1 & April 8

EXERCISES AND PROJECTS

Note: Projects should be handed in as stereo audio files, clearly identified in the title, with multi-channel works recorded in a ProTools session.

Project Notes:

- (1) Soundscape exercise. Take one or more recordings from the WSP Tape Collection, use editing, audio processing, and multi-track mixing to create a short (4-5 minute) composition in stereo or 8-channel format.
- (2) Final Project: This is a 6-week project of your own design, and may use field recorded or studio recorded material, or copies of material in the WSP Tape Collection. The piece may be in any of the standard audio medium *genres*: Aural History, Documentary, Text-Sound, Soundscape Composition, or combinations thereof. Most of these will be discussed in class and illustrated. The project should be discussed with the instructor before it is begun in terms of resources needed, format, length, etc. You will use ProTools for this project in either the stereo or 8-channel formats (with or without spatialization with the TiMax2). Duration of the project depends on which genre is chosen, but normally this project will be in the 8 - 12 minute range.

Notes: Projects realized in ProTools need to be bounced to disk as follows:

Stereo pieces: Use the bounce to disk option for output channels Analog 1-2 (not the default!), for '**interleaved stereo**' (not multiple mono). If you ask for the 'offline' option (check box), this will happen quickly; otherwise it plays through the session in real time. Also indicate the file name you want to store it under and the directory folder. Afterwards, open the file in the editor and check for levels, balance between channels, etc. If there was any peak clipping (or near peak levels) you'll see the red mark in the output channels of your PT session, assuming you've included a Master Output fader, which is always a good idea. For Audition sessions, there's a Mixdown Session option, but again, **check your levels**. These should ideally allow between 1 and 3 dB headroom; low levels can be boosted, and if there are any brief peak levels, check them aurally for possible distortion.

Multi-channel pieces: For an 8-channel piece, use the bounce to disk option four times for each pair of your output channels (e.g. Analog 1-2, Output 3-4, Output 5-6, Output 7-8) using the offline option. However, in this case it is better to use the default option of '**multiple mono**' output tracks. That is, you will end up with 8 .aiff files that can later be assigned to any playback system (once you've indicated the speaker configuration, e.g. circular clockwise starting at front middle or front left). ProTools will add a left (.L) and right (.R) indicator to the output files. It is best to remove those and label your files such as Audio 1, Audio 2, etc. These files will appear in a Bounced Files folder that can be added to a new session file. Using a standard 8 to 8 template, you can load these individual files into a new session and check that everything has turned out the way you intended, i.e. that all source files have been combined successfully into their respective output channels with no distortion (as indicated at the end of a bounce by a red mark on the Master fader).

RULES FOR STUDIO USE: THESE MUST BE CONSCIENTIOUSLY FOLLOWED IF YOU ARE TO RETAIN STUDIO PRIVILEGES.

1. NO smoking, eating, or drinking in the Studio; take a break in the hall or outside -- it will clear your head!
2. Your assigned regular studio time will be indicated on the online K-7657 studio calendar. If unable to use your studio time, make every possible effort to trade with someone, or have someone else use the time. If you want additional time, you can sign up for it if the slot is free.
3. Clean up after studio use (also a good precaution against losing things).
4. Use removable USB storage media to back up your computer soundfiles. Keep your files in your own folder in the CMNS 486 folder, and delete unused files or those that have ended up on the desktop.
5. When leaving the studio at the end of your work time, turn off the lights, shut the window and the drapes, and shut the outer door. Regular users gain access to the studio with the punch code for the outer door (the inner door is unlocked).
6. You may use the studio when it is free even if it has been booked. When the person who has booked it is more than one hour late, he/she still has priority for the remaining time but must allow the person using the studio sufficient time to finish (up to 1/2 hour). Please co-operate as much as possible.
7. Studio security is an important issue! Make sure the outer studio door is shut at ALL times when you are temporarily out of the room - the punch code makes it very easy to get back in quickly. If you open the middle window, please ensure it is shut when you leave and draw the curtains shut.
8. **Do NOT** change any of the physical cables on the machines. Consult with the Studio Tech (cmnstech@sfu.ca) if you need to do something different from the standard routing. And if you must change something, **PUT IT BACK** to normal before you leave! This is the single most frustrating part of studio use is when such changes have been made. If you observe unauthorized users in the studio, or find it in a reduced state of operationality, please report it to the Studio Tech as above.