

2 Electroacoustic compositional practice has had a varied  
3 and often troublesome relationship to the 'real world'. A  
4 dominant trend among acousmatic composers has been  
5 to create abstract sound shapes that reveal little about  
6 their real-world sources, whether recorded samples or  
7 synthetic material. Even when a real-world sound is  
8 identifiable, the compositional context usually makes it  
9 clear that the work is not particularly about the social or  
10 environmental emplacement of that sound.

11 Soundscape composition has become a relatively well-  
12 defined genre, often characterised as being intimately  
13 located to place. Although that may be true in many  
14 instances, it can also be understood as a range of  
15 approaches within an even broader concept, namely  
16 what this issue proposes to term 'context-based compo-  
17 sition'. One of the aims of the issue is not only to provide  
18 a survey of contemporary examples of this approach and  
19 concept but also to think more seriously about how it  
20 can be defined, what are its implications and affor-  
21 dances, and what emerging practices seem most fruitful.

22 A key distinguishing feature of context-based compo-  
23 sition is that real-world contexts inform the design  
24 and composition of aurally based work at every  
25 level, that is, in the materials, their organisation, and  
26 ultimately the work's placement within cultural  
27 contexts. Perhaps most significantly, listeners are  
28 encouraged to bring their knowledge of real-world  
29 contexts into their participation with these works. As  
30 such they fundamentally differ from an approach that  
31 utilises sounds related only to each other in an appar-  
32 ently autonomous form. Context-based practice can,  
33 among other approaches, range from sonifications,  
34 phonographic uses of field recordings, to site-specific  
35 installations, and abstracted soundscape compositions  
36 based in real-world or even virtual, imagined spaces.

37 The above paragraphs are taken from the original call  
38 for submissions to this theme issue, intended as a kind of  
39 challenge for authors, particularly a younger generation  
40 of scholars and practitioners, to react to and evaluate  
41 whether this formulation of yet another terminological  
42 phrase (context-based composition) would be embraced  
43 or disputed. At the same time, I taught a graduate course  
44 at the Technical University in Berlin using the same  
45 subject description to test the concept at a practical  
46 pedagogical level, in this case with students many of  
47 whom did not self-identify as composers, but who had  
48 technical, artistic and musical interests of various kinds.

49 The response in both cases has been overwhelmingly  
50 positive, I am pleased to report. We received a substantial

number of submissions for this issue, such that, in  
coordination with *Organised Sound* editor Leigh  
Landy, a second issue in volume 23(1) is already in  
place, and with the Berlin students, we organised a  
final concert of ten works, both stereo and multi-  
channel, plus a project that has been published online  
(Haberl 2016). No doubt there have been many  
reasons for these responses, but I would like to think  
that my intent of being more inclusive to a wider range  
of practices than is typical within a strictly musical or  
concert environment is one contributing factor.  
Another seems to be an implicit desire by individuals to  
integrate their sonic creativity within the broader  
social, cultural and ecological context of today's  
world. Do I dare hope that many of today's practi-  
tioners, both emerging and professional, are not con-  
tent to reside in a musical 'ivory tower', but would like  
to reach a wider audience and feel that their skills have  
some social value both within and outside the purely  
artistic world?

Of course, this publishing project is hardly without  
historic precedents. Twenty years ago, Katharine  
Norman edited an issue of *Contemporary Music  
Review* with the lovely subtitle 'A Poetry of Reality'.  
Its theme was to examine 'the aesthetic implications of  
employing sounds from the real world as musical  
material', resulting in what she called 'real-world  
music' (Norman 1996: 1). One of her most insightful  
contributions was how she presented the relation  
between 'referential', 'reflective' and 'contextual'  
listening, and today we can see both the tensions and  
the opportunities in how composers and sound  
designers exploit this terrain. I am tempted to cate-  
gorise these three aspects conceptually (and less poeti-  
cally) as objective, subjective and communicational  
approaches (Truax 2012b). With today's easy access to  
field recording and online databases of environmental  
samples, it is inevitable that many 'users' will do just  
that, simply use such recordings as raw material with  
little regard for (or knowledge of in some cases) the ori-  
ginal context from which they came. At the other end of  
the continuum is an integration of all three approaches,  
where I understand soundscape composers as wanting to  
involve themselves and their listeners in a deepened  
relationship to some aspect of the real world, with tech-  
niques ranging from sonification and phonography to  
more abstracted approaches (Truax 2012a).

Other historic precedents go even further back. One  
thinks of individual pioneers such as Walter Ruttmann,

Ludwig Koch, Tony Schwartz, Luc Ferrari and various proponents of the aural documentary as precursors to current work, and luckily samples of their work are becoming increasingly available. It has also been gratifying to note, particularly in the contributions to this issue, the recognition of R. Murray Schafer and the World Soundscape Project (WSP) at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in the 1970s, of which I was a member, as being seminal for the emerging practices of both acoustic ecology and soundscape composition (Truax 1996a, 2002, 2008). Perhaps not surprisingly at this remove, concepts that were developed there have received critical re-evaluation, particularly concerning Schafer's prescriptive ideals (Kelman 2010). Ingold's critique of the term 'soundscape' and other linguistic implications of sound-related language has been particularly useful and widely cited (Ingold 2007). In my view, the neologisms introduced and used by Schafer (e.g. soundscape, schizophrenic, soundmark, earwitness, hi-fi/lo-fi) were intended as rhetorical devices to communicate new concepts to a wider audience, not as robust concepts that could withstand scholarly analysis, as useful as that may still be.

Other misconceptions about the WSP group itself have occurred. Most frequently we have been referred to as 'students' of Schafer, or less generously as a 'clique' (Demers 2010: 121) or 'acolytes' (Akiyama 2010: 59), instead of what we actually were: paid research assistants, obviously young, rather idealistic and not particularly well trained in environmental research. However, after the group disbanded when Schafer left SFU (1975) and a few years later funding was rather brutally terminated (Truax 1996b: 72), some of us developed the ideas further: Hildegard Westerkamp with soundwalking and composition (Westerkamp 2002), and myself in terms of acoustic communication and also composition. The creation of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology at Banff, Alberta, in 1993, marked a renewal and broadening of the original WSP ideas to a formal international presence that continues to this day. To have this continuing legacy derive from what was a small and rather ad hoc group over 40 years ago seems quite remarkable to me.

To return to the theme of this issue, soundscape composition is generally regarded as place-based, and with this issue I have suggested an extension to all forms of real-world, or context-based, compositional approaches. The history of soundscape work has provided a rich foundation and many suggestive, innovative examples. Therefore, the intent of this issue is to survey a wide range of contemporary (and some historical) approaches and to probe their implications and issues both theoretically and in practice, with the two ideally intertwined as all of our authors have done. Each of the two theme issues will include examples across that spectrum.

Andrew Hill initiates the discussion with key questions about what constitutes real-world sound and how context can be implicated in the listening and compositional process. As all field recordists recognise (Drever 2017), the recorded sound may evoke images of place and context, but they are never a transparent or neutral representation, and they are always dependent on the listener's interpretation and experience. Hill concludes that the resulting 'constructed context' is a dynamic interplay between composer and listener that is in fact liberating for both parties. Charles Underriner takes us even further by proposing the 'audio reality effect' (following Barthes's literary version) where a recording might not only suggest mimesis and evoke a listener's own experience, but also create an 'alternate reality' that seems equally plausible – what he calls a 'sound-poetry of the instability of reality'.

A number of submissions have proceeded from an ecological perspective, perhaps not surprisingly given current concerns about environmental sustainability, and therefore both issues will include articles relevant to this topic. Jonathan Gilmurray provides a comprehensive taxonomy of 'ecological sound art' (which he distinguishes from merely the use of environmental sound), noting that it has not received as much critical discourse as ecological approaches have in other disciplines. His five functional categories provide a useful map to current practices and the ecological issues involved. David Chapman follows with a perception-based approach for both direct and mediated experience of sonic environments. The extent to which listening habits and abilities have been changed by technology (in both more analytic and distracted dimensions) is not often acknowledged, and these affordances (to use the popular term from Gibson) affect both the producer and the receiver. This issue also includes a more personal essay by a representative of the millennial generation, André Pinto, in which he passionately argues for a 'rewilding' of the ear (following George Monbiot's concept) to allow us to reconnect with the (endangered) natural world.

The remaining articles in this issue address various applied topics, often within a strong theoretical framework. Damián Keller and Victor Lazzarini, leaders of the Ubiquitous Music Group, give an extensive outline (and bibliography) of current ecologically grounded creative practices, based on the 'application of embedded-embodied cognition'. Samuel Thulin refers to 'situated composition' in relation to emergent mobile technology, a creative process that is 'inherently distributed and collaborative' and intimately connected to real-world situations. Lauren Hayes documents her own experiences as a performer who has developed a set of practices that are 'site-responsive' as distinct from 'site specific'.

214 Sound installations provide an interdisciplinary  
 215 format for public presentation, increasingly located in  
 216 galleries, and Felipe Otondo describes two pilot  
 217 projects that explore the spatial and temporal aspects  
 218 of rural and urban field recordings in relation to  
 219 soundscape ecology, including listener responses as to  
 220 their effectiveness. Sanne Krogh Groth and Kristine  
 221 Samson analyse two sound art performances in  
 222 Copenhagen from the perspective of how each dealt  
 223 with the complete social and cultural context  
 224 (or 'situation' in the authors' term) with varying  
 225 degrees of success. Research about two historically  
 226 important sound art works by Bill Fontana and David  
 227 Dunn are presented by Robert Stokowy and Edward  
 228 Davis, respectively, with an emphasis on the original  
 229 sound design in relation to its subsequent documenta-  
 230 tion or lack thereof. Finally, in a welcome departure  
 231 from the largely artistic concerns of the previous  
 232 authors, Martin Ljungdahl Eriksson, Lena Pareto  
 233 and Ricardo Atienza present a scientific evaluation  
 234 of the design of a particular workplace application  
 235 that creates a 'sound bubble' around the user. In par-  
 236 ticular, the project utilises electroacoustic sound design  
 237 techniques to create a functional (context-sensitive)  
 238 sonic environment appropriate to the working  
 239 situation.

240 Although these articles, considered together, present  
 241 an impressive array of current thinking on this emer-  
 242 gent field of creative work, they by no means exhaust  
 243 the subject as will be seen in the following issue, as well  
 244 as hopefully in future work. I want to particularly  
 245 thank all of the contributors, and acknowledge the  
 246 work of my reviewers and the journal editor, Leigh  
 247 Landy, in the excellent support of this publication and  
 248 its theme.

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