

Soundscape Composition as Context-Based Creation**Instructor:**

Barry Truax, Professor Emeritus, email: truax@sfu.ca
 websites: www.sfu.ca/~truax www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio/

Seminar:

Wednesdays, 10:30 – 1:00 pm PST

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 pdf’s

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> (older version; newer one in the WSP Database)

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

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)

WSP Database (with guest password)

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.

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. 10 Soundscape as concept and terminology
 Introduction to soundscape composition, acoustic ecology, sustainability, niche hypothesis
 Reading: Wrightson, Ingold, Sterne, Kelman-Rethinking Soundscape, Gilmurray-Introduction (also in ESA),
 Truax-Sustainability, Monacchi-Fragments (also in ESA)
 Octophonic: Truax: Penderdrom

- Jan. 17 Introduction to the World Soundscape Project
 Survey of historical documents and approaches to field recording, documentation
 Reading: Truax-CMR, Truax-Soundscape Composition, Truax-AcousticEcology (also in SME)
 Octophonic: Truax: Pacific Fanfare, Basilica
- Jan. 24 Approaches to soundscape composition (spatial perspectives)
 Found sound (phonography) and abstracted practices and techniques
 Reading: Truax-Genres, Drever-SCethnography, Drever-FieldRecording (full chapter in RCSA), Gilmurray-
 Ecological Sound Art
 Octophonic: Truax: Island, Aeolian Voices
- Jan. 31 Historical precedents (Ruttmann, Koch, Schwartz, Ferrari, Braun, Orchard, WSP)
 Reading: Ruttmann, Schwartz, Ferrari, Koch-Orchard, Orchard-Documentaries, Clarkson-Memory
 Octophonic: Darren Copeland: Memory; Sabine Breitsameter: The Hidden Tune
- Feb. 7 Hildegard Westerkamp, soundscape works
 Reading: Kolber, macCormac, McCartney-Cricket Voices, Westerkamp-Linking, Westerkamp-Disruptive
 Listening (also in SME), Duhautpas-Westerkamp, Kinnear-Soundwalking
 Octophonic: Westerkamp: Talking Rain, Into the Labyrinth
- Feb. 14 & 21 No class
- Feb. 28 Barry Truax, multi-channel soundscape works
 Reading: Truax-SoundListeningPlace, Truax-AcousticSpace
 Octophonic: Truax: Chalice Well, Earth & Steel, Garden of Sonic Delights, Rainforest Raven
- Mar. 6 Soundscape and Acousmatic approaches mixed
 Body, Risset, Tenney, Lansky, Andean, Raimondo
 Reading: Norman-ListeningTogether, Norman-Realworld Music, McCartney-Traffic (also in SME)
 Quadraphonic: Risset: Sud
- Mar. 13 Narrativity; Text and gender-based approaches
 Derbyshire, Dyson, Body, Truax, Willson
 Reading: Bosma-Gender Issues, Body-notes, Truax-Homoeroticism
 Octophonic: Ben Wilson: Googolplex
- Mar. 20 Voice and Text-based approaches, continued
 Rubin, Young, Lane, Norman
 Reading: Lane-Voices, Truax-Electrified Voices, *Organised Sound* 21(3): Andean, Naylor, Amelides;
 Octophonic: Truax: The Shaman Ascending
- Mar. 27 Other artists (Monacchi, Wagstaff, Burtner, Leonard, Barclay, Proy, Polli, DeLaurenti)
 Reading: Feld-Echo, Burtner & Polli (in ESA & RCSA), Keller-EcoComposition, Burtner-EcoSono,
 Barclay, O'Keefe (in SME)
 Octophonic: Ronald Boersen: Silence is Immanent
- Apr. 3 Other artists (Claudio de Pina, Peter Manning, Chris Rolfe, Jacek Smolicki)
 Octophonic: de Pina: Boriska Bell; Manning: In Memoriam CPR; Rolfe: Bronze Wound; Truax: What the
 Waters Told Me