### Soundscape Composition as Environmental Activism and Awareness: An Ecomusicological Approach

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**Abstract**

Soundscape composition is a musical field that has converged from a diverse array of philosophies and methods of listening. Informed by the common mission of raising awareness towards the current environmental crisis, soundscape composers aim to re-connect audiences to the natural soundscapes their everyday lives. To achieve this mission, soundscape composers interact with soundscape ecology, a scientific field that also addresses environmental issues like global warming and declining biodiversity through the study of sound. In so doing, soundscape composers repurpose scientific technology, transforming it from a tool that extracts quantitative information from an exclusively non-human nature to a tool that challenges the traditional nature/culture dichotomy, integrating listeners to their environments through spiritual, emotional, and sensory-based ways of knowing.

**Objectives**

Browse any of the following topics using Scalar, a multi-media, digital publishing platform that displays my writing alongside videos and recordings of soundscape compositions:

**INTRODUCTION**

**CHAPTER ONE: PHILOSOPHIES OF LISTENING**

- "What Is Music?: The Historical Roots of Soundscape Composition
- New Noise, New Sounds: The Industrial and Electrical Revolutions
- The World Soundscape Project and the Legacy of Schizophonia
- Rejecting the Idealism of the WSP: A Postmodern Approach

**CHAPTER TWO: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY**

- Shared Tools: The Uses of Technology in Soundscape Composition
  1. Field Recording Compositions
  2. Sonification and Audification
  3. Soundwalking
  4. In situ Performance Works

**CHAPTER THREE: BREAKING BOUNDARIES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY**

- Perspectivism: Exploring Nonhuman Spatio-temporal Scales
- Hearing the Unheard: Forgotten Voices
- Familiar and Foreign: Cultivating a “Glocal” Mindset
- From Specialization to Democratization: The Age of the Amateur
- Changing Roles: The Value of the Listener
- Harnessing the Imagination: Between the Real and Abstract
- Open Mind: The Interdisciplinary and Multimodal
- The Search For Definition: Beyond Categorization

**CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A QUALITATIVE KNOWING**

**WORKS CITED**

**DISCOGRAPHY**

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**Uses of Technology in Soundscape Composition: The Means**

How exactly have soundscape composers approached the challenges and opportunities of advocating for more “qualitative” way of environmental knowing? And most importantly, does this alternate perspective have the potential to promote real social, political, and cultural change? My research attempts to answer these questions through a survey and analysis of the works and writings from a range of contemporary artists engaged with the soundscape. I describe how these artists use technology in their work via several methods (see below). I then identify common themes and implications that arise from these strategies (see right).

**Field Recording**

A musical piece intended for playback that incorporates actual recorded sound from human nature to a tool that challenges the traditional nature/culture dichotomy, integrating listeners to their environments through spiritual, emotional, and sensory-based ways of knowing.


**Sonification**

Sonification is a process that maps data into sound. A variety of environmental data can be sonified, from seismographic data to ultrasonic animal vocalizations. Audification, a subset of sonification, is the conversion of a previously inaudible signal into a sound signal whose meaning can be inferred by the listener.


**In situ Performance Works**

In situ compositions are often carried out in non-urban “natural” settings where human-produced noise is not the dominant feature of the soundscape. More performance acts than conventional compositions, in situ works are often centered around the concept of interaction, impacting the features of an environments in ways that alter or reveal reveal aspects of the soundscape.

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**Effects of Technology**

- Perspectivism: Technology makes it possible for a soundscape composer to emulate different sense of time and space through their work, lending listeners an opportunity to develop an expanded perspective and empathy towards other forms of life.
- Revealing the Unheard: Through making the humanly inaudible, auditive, soundscape composers underscore the depth of the unexplored and limitations of the human senses, placing the listener in a position of respect and reverence towards natural soundscapes.
- A “Glocal” Mindset: By using real-world sounds from environments both foreign and familiar to listeners, soundscape composers challenge listeners to actively approach soundscapes through both “global” and “local” perspectives.
- Amateur Impact: Through incorporating interactivity and audience participation in their projects, soundscape composers emphasize the individual agency each listener has in protecting and connecting to natural environments.
- A Bridge Between The Real and Imaginary: By electronically manipulating and taking sounds out of their original contexts, composers require listeners to reconstruct and become more aware of how they relate to the soundscape.
- Interdisciplinary and Multimodal: Soundscape composers often present their work as an infusion of the audio and visual using practices from sound art and soundscape ecology. In so doing, they promote a holistic and embodied experience of the soundscape that emphasizes reconnection between listener and environment.
- Beyond Categorization: By resisting the creation a clear definition for their work as a musical genre, soundscape composers have been able to challenge conventional notions of presentation medium and performance space, reaching out to wider audiences in the process.

**Acknowledgements**

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**Image Sources**

4. McCartney, Paul, Andrew White, Thomas Earl, and Jana Beegle. “Beyond Categorization: By resisting the creation a clear definition for their work as a musical genre, soundscape composers have been able to challenge conventional notions of presentation medium and performance space, reaching out to wider audiences in the process.”

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**Further Reading**


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