

Art of Immersive Soundscapes.

2013. Ed. Pauline Minevich and Ellen Waterman with DVD ed. by James Harley. Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.

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In the half-century since R. Murray Schafer coined the phrase, “soundscape” studies have become an essential discourse for music’s historians, ethnographers, theorists, and composers. In its amalgam of sound and landscape, the word “soundscape” embraces a fluidity of meaning that has ranged, for different authors, from composed sound art and acoustic ecology (Schafer 1977; Truax 1978; Feld 1982, 2001), to introductory ethnomusicology (Shelemay 2001), to the history of science (Thompson, 2002), and even to popular ornithology (Chu 2008). Broadly speaking, the concept of a soundscape continues to explore “the middle ground between science, society, and the arts” through the contexts, ecologies, memories, and habits that anchor sound in specific places (Schafer 1977; qtd. by Minevich in the introduction of *Art of Immersive Soundscapes*: 2).

The authors of *Art of Immersive Soundscapes* situate the book within Schafer’s Canadian tradition of socially responsible art, with a turn towards a new variation: the “immersive” soundscape. In a series of 14 essays and an accompanying DVD, the book explores soundscape art as a medium that immerses its listeners into the artist’s world through technological and phenomenological mediations of space. Minevich and Waterman bring together an interdis-

iplinary array of authors who create “imaginative worlds that envelop, engage, and entrance us” by means of octophonic speaker setups, crackling Austrian wood fires, the alarms of a hospital’s intensive treatment ward, and other devices (19).

The “immersion” in this book gestures to connections between past and future, and regional and international spaces, in a way that loosely engages a longstanding discourse of Western technological modernity and its seemingly dualistic relationship with nature. “Immersion” in *Art of Immersive Soundscapes* is obliquely haunted by the implied presence of virtual reality, which is the more mainstream context for notions of technological “immersion.” And technological immersion is ever-present in this book’s chapters, which feature technologies of audition, such as carefully curated speaker arrays, and technologies of creation, like the computerized data analytics of sonification in Chapters 4 and 5. Although the book examines works from North America, London, Austria, and even Japan, the editors’ inclusion of essays by composers such as Barry Truax and Hildegard Westerkamp signal a strongly Canadian vector within that space of ecomedia and Western technology. The book’s Canadian space is further defined by the origin of many of the essays in the 2007 conference *Intersections: Soundscapes and Music, Soundscapes and Identity*, held at the University of Regina as the culmination of two summer workshops hosted between 2004 and 2007.

The result is a volume that successfully reflects its stated aims of promoting international interdisciplinary collaborations while recognizing the pioneering

place of Canadians in the field. The book is loosely structured into four sections with interlocking themes, preceded by a short preface by Charlie Fox and an introduction by Pauline Minevich. I cannot do justice to the breadth and scope of each of the essays within the book, but a brief, if incomplete, mention of the structure and content is due.

The first section, "Histories," groups together two chapters with a common interest in tracing the impact of modern urban spaces on musical works from the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Embracing the broader ethos of the book as a whole, these chapters are not so much "histories" in the traditional sense of the word as they are creative inquiries into the way that places act as part of a composer's lineage.

María Andueza Olmedo contextualizes sound installations by Max Neuhaus, Bernhard Leitner, Bill Fontana, and Bruce Nauman by framing urban space as social space. David Ogborn, in turn, offers a creative and thoughtful rereading of Luigi Nono's late works through the filter of the composer's decades-long relationship with the city of Venice.

Part 2, "Environments," embraces a broader scope with four essays by sound artists working with the sounds of satellite data, field recordings, and electroacoustic sources. This section of the book foregrounds the artist's interdisciplinarity and craft, turning towards questions of sonification (Polli, Coburn, and Smith), field recording (Proy), and electroacoustic techniques (Harley). The "environments" of this section play upon familiar if potentially problematic dualities between culture and nature, contrasting star systems and city spaces,

natural sound, and electroacoustic automata. Here, too, one finds the themes of relations and memory that dominate the adjoining sections; as Gabriele Proy explains in Chapter 6, "listening is always a process of remembrance, linking up, and positioning" (96).

Section 3, "Relationships," takes up these intertwined themes of remembrance and connection more explicitly. In this section, John Wynne's account of his time as artist-in-residence at Harefield Hospital outside London is a worthy contribution to sound studies, and the descriptions of his works' polarizing effect on audiences brings a fresh perspective to questions of affect and memory within the intense sonic space of recovering transplant patients' wards (Chapter 9). The section's remaining contributions speak to similarly intriguing topics: the theorization of installation art (Waterman); the meaning of emotional sonic connections to those one has never met (Westerkamp); and the experience of walking as a point of entry to thoughtful and meaningful questions about sound, space, and relationality (Corringham).

The book's final section, "Possibilities," turns towards the future. The first two contributions to this section ask important questions about how sonic art's venue and context affects an audience's response and engagement (Hatch, Copeland). These chapters also contain the beginnings of a much broader conversation about how music's genres, particularly the "classical" moniker and its social trappings, shape alliances and enmities amongst listeners from different backgrounds, and touch on the changing media market and its implications for the

future. The book closes, as it opened, with a brief reminiscence from a composer, this one from Barry Truax reflecting on performances of his *Spirit Journeys* (2002-2006) at Regina.

The accompanying DVD provides recordings and occasional video for 12 representative works drawn from the book's chapters. Chapters 2 (Olmeda) and 8 (Waterman) are not represented in the tracks, though Waterman's flute is present in track 6. The audio quality is good and the tracks are easy to access, with an attractive graphic design for the video's menu. As these works are central to the book's prose, the DVD provides important context. Though they were not designed with pedagogy in mind, the high quality of the recordings also makes them appealing classroom examples of contemporary soundscape art.

Since its early days, the Canadian soundscape tradition has often been marked by a shared interest in building connections between sonic art and social responsibility. The essays in *Art of Immersive Soundscapes* are an admirable contribution to this tradition in many respects. Human-environmental relationships have inspired most, if not all, of the contributors' works. There are also other pointed gestures towards inclusivity. Darren Copeland asks how to make sound art relevant to culturally diverse audiences, while Hildegard Westerkamp uses her work to highlight the life of another immigrant artist, Roy Kiyooka. Ellen Waterman's essay on installation art is particularly subversive, displacing the theories of great men with Pauline Oliveros's "send and receive" notion of relational listening. The book itself also has a pointed gender balance amongst

its contributors. Perhaps most strikingly, the editors have worked hard to destabilize the tendency still present in some music scholarship to conflate America's two continents with the United States, making the place of Canadian scholarship a refrain within the book's international scope.

In a volume filled with these rich echoes of the University of Regina's conference and workshops, it would be nitpicking to fault it at length for its failure to deal more extensively with issues of race, sexuality, and class. At times, however, these omissions can frame the book's representation of technological modernity as a uniformly white and Western sphere of normativity. Perhaps related to these omissions, the book's historical material is not its strength, and some authors occasionally stumble on source citations or historical details. There are also some pitfalls in the necessary challenges the editors faced in organizing diverse and interdisciplinary material within the bounds of an edited collection. The preface and concluding chapter, for example, would benefit from transitions to carry the reader from these reminiscences into the adjacent chapters, and at such times the interconnection between the book's chapters could get lost. The DVD, though a thoughtful supplement to the book, is an untimely format at a moment when internal optical drives are being phased out of laptop computers. The book's editors could not have foreseen this problem, but it marks a gap between the discursive technology of the text and the rapidly shifting media market of apps, smart phones, and tablets.

Art of Immersive Soundscapes is a worthy contribution to existing soundscape literature. It will appeal to many composers and artists, as well as to interested scholars. The book and its accompanying DVD will also be of interest to teachers and students interested in ongoing conversations about what an immersive soundscape is, and what it will become. 🍀

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La Steppe musicienne. Analyse et modélisation du patrimoine musical turcique. 2014. Frédéric Léotar. Préface de Jean-Jacques Nattiez. Paris : Vrin, « Musicologies ». 303 pp., 92 tableaux, 24 modélisations, 22 illustrations couleur hors-texte, un site dédié <http://lasteppemusicienne.oicrm.org/>

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Frédéric Léotar a soutenu une thèse sur *Les mélodies huchées touvas et ouzbèkes : aspects compositionnels et dimension culturelle* à l'Université de Montréal en 2004. Mais ce livre est bien plus qu'une thèse : cette œuvre magistrale tente une ethnomusicologie complète, au sens défini par Nattiez à propos de Monique Desroches (1996), évitant le « syndrome de McAllester » qui sépare 1) le contexte et 2) la musique. Ici, une relation profonde lie le système musical et le contexte culturel (ch. VIII), montrant l'unité des peuples nomades d'Asie centrale de langues turques à travers un modèle générateur de mélodie commun. Une ethnographie profonde, sensible, impliquée (ch. I « La place de la musique dans la vie quotidienne et rituelle »), se joint avec un bonheur rare à une audace méthodologique qui ne recule pas devant les propositions systémiques et structurales (ch. II « Questions de méthodologie ») dont il serait vain de chercher la trace dans le discours des gens (Léotar renvoie au neuropsychologue la réponse que l'on attendrait pourtant de l'ethnologue, voir p. 96). Des centaines d'heures d'enregistrement audio vocaux fournissent la matière à de très nom-