

WFAE 2011 PAPER SESSION (4):

'The Soundwalk as Artistic, Research and Educational tool.

Tuesday, 4/10/2011—12:15-12:45-- Ionian Academy, Corfu

*Session Chair: Panayotis Panopoulos*¹*

Title of Presentation: *“Listening and then doing: sound-making and adaptation.”*

Abstract:

Are soundwalks music? Is soundwalk composition just like music composition? This paper looks at how the soundwalk, as a form, problematizes the concepts of music and composition, especially when a soundwalk has planned sound events in it (for example, musicians playing along the route).

In literature, the relationship between music and the soundscape has been discussed, but an underlying problem remains. In music, what we have come to call composition is an organization within an organization: the composed piece is contained within a larger organization, isolating it from unforeseeable conditions. Music is played in purpose-built spaces, that shelter it physically, or at least according to varying conventions, that shelter it conceptually. Sounds become musical sounds when used in music – when defined as music. Thus, a division is made between music and soundscape. But is such a definition necessary? Could sound-making be practiced without it? The soundwalk has no purpose-built spaces. It is not sheltered from the unforeseeable. Therefore, the conditions for composition and performance are very different from what they are in music. The crucial question becomes: how do the planned events relate to (possible) unplanned events? Defining doesn't work here – the planned must adapt to the unplanned. If soundwalk composition is about adaptation, and music is about definition, should we even discuss soundwalk compositions as music, or even in relation to music? Are we dealing with a whole another paradigm – adapting instead of defining?

The soundwalk, as a form, as a practice, points towards the question: if music is a defined world, what does it mean to practice sound outside such a system? Can we practice sound-making and composition outside music? Video clips from two recent soundwalk and soundscape composition projects are utilized to illustrate these questions: The National Soundscape (Pessi Parviainen, 2010) and The Aura River Symphony (Simo Alitalo and Pessi Parviainen, 2011).

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Pessi Parviainen works in music, sculpture, and performance art. He holds a MFA from Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts (Vancouver, Canada). Currently he is a doctoral student at Theatre Academy Helsinki, where his research deals with the role of the musician in the performing arts. Website: www.pessiparviainen.com

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Title of Presentation: *“The Liked, the Disliked and the Indifferent. Sound Preferences and the Applied Fieldwork Methods in Dollar, Scotland.”*

ABSTRACT

A lot of acoustic information escapes our conscious attention partly for perceptual psychological reasons, partly because of the amount of acoustic information. These ubiquitous but often unnoticed sounds challenge not only the researchers but also the soundscape educators. In order to enhance the effects and meanings connected to everyday sonic environment the soundscape researchers have applied several methods including sound preference tests and listening walks.

The paper introduces the sound preference tests and recorded listening walks applied in Scottish Village of Dollar in May 2011. The pleasant and unpleasant sounds were charted during the fieldwork as a part of Soundscapes and Cultural Sustainability (2010) project, which continues the Five Village Soundscapes (1975) and Acoustic Environments in Change (2000) researches carried out in the same village.

The empirical part of the paper consists of aforementioned tests and walks carried out with different age groups in Strathdevon Primary School. The results are then compared to results of the previous studies of 1975 and 2000. In addition to that, the recorded listening walks carried out by the pupils of Strathdevon Primary School will be presented.

Furthermore, the paper contemplates the possibilities in bringing out the soundscape education and disseminating information concerning the ongoing Soundscapes and Cultural Sustainability research over the Internet during and after the actual fieldwork. This includes the issues of returning not only the previous research results to the members of acoustic community studied, but also bringing back the environmental sounds already extinct to the community where they were recorded almost forty years ago.

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Heikki Uimonen is Adjunct Professor in Acoustic Communication. Has published scientific articles and monographs dealing with different aspects of soundscape and radio music.

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