



**Towards an Acousmatic
Narratology**
Narrative approaches in
Acousmatic Music

JAMES ANDEAN

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MuTri doctoral school

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James Andean

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral project is an investigation into the narrative aspects of acousmatic music. The goal of the project is, on the one hand, to propose and develop an advanced narrative approach to the acousmatic genre, and on the other to examine, explore, and illustrate this approach through a portfolio of acousmatic compositions.

Acousmatic music is a genre of electroacoustic tape music that has its roots in Pierre Schaeffer's 'musique concrète', the fundamental premise of which is the use of recorded sound from the world around us as primary musical materials. Such sounds, while offering significant musical and sculptural potential, also tend to import images of the possible sources – real or imagined – that might have made these sounds. Despite Schaeffer's insistence on 'reduced listening' as the key to 'musique concrète', experience quickly demonstrated that it is not possible to fully 'turn off' the string of images and associations that accompany such sounds. These tend to build up towards a narrative experience of acousmatic music, which can be proposed as a kind of 'parallel' to the more purely musical experience of the work.

This project therefore proposes a 'musical/narrative dichotomy' that is central to acousmatic music. The written work starts from an overview of existing literature (e.g. Ferrari, Emerson, Smalley, Young, Norman, etc.), with reference to key ideas from narratology, psychology, and the musicology of electroacoustic music, and is examined from perspectives including embodiment, cultural relativism, and approaches to space and place. These provide a foundation for the development of a more substantial and coherent approach to the narrative properties of acousmatic music, culminating in the proposal of a model of eleven 'Narrative Modes' in acousmatic music.

The project includes a portfolio of nine acousmatic compositions, which are examined and discussed through the lens of the proposed 'Narrative Modes' framework.

KEYWORDS: Acousmatic music, electroacoustic music, narrative, narratology, embodiment, space, artistic research.

ABSTRAKTI

Tämä väitöskirjaprojekti tutkii akusmaattisen musiikin narratiivisia näkökohtia. Projektin tavoitteena on yhtäältä ehdottaa ja kehittää pitkälle edistynyt narratiivinen lähestymistapa akusmaattisen musiikin genreen ja toisaalta tutkia, tarkastella ja havainnollistaa tätä lähestymistapaa akusmaattisten sävellysten portfolion kautta.

Akusmaattinen musiikki on elektroakustisen nauhamusiikin genre, jonka juuret ovat Pierre Schaefferin "musique concrète":ssa, jonka peruslähtökohtana on ympärillämme olevan maailman tallennetun äänen käyttö ensisijaisena musiikkimateriaalina. Tällaisilla äänillä on merkittävää musiikillista ja veistoksellista potentiaalia samalla kun niillä on myös taipumus luoda mielikuvia mahdollisista äänen lähteistä – olivat ne todellisia tai kuvitteellisia. Huolimatta Schaefferin "vähennetyn kuuntelun" vaatimuksesta "musique concrète"n avaimena, kokemus osoitti nopeasti, että näihin ääniin liittyvien kuvien ja assosiaatioiden merkkijonoa ei ole mahdollista "sammuttaa". Niillä on taipumus rakentua kohti akusmaattisen musiikin narratiivista kokemusta, jota voidaan ehdottaa eräänlaiseksi paralleeliksi teoksen pelkän musiikillisen kokemuksen kanssa.

Tämä projekti ehdottaakin "musiikin ja narratiivin dikotomiaa", joka on akusmaattisen musiikin keskiössä. Kirjallinen osuus aloitetaan olemassa olevan kirjallisuuden (esim. Ferrari, Emmerson, Smalley, Young, Norman jne.) katsauksella viitaten narratologian, psykologian ja elektroakustisen musiikin musiikkitieteen keskeisiin ideoihin, ja sitä tarkastellaan muun muassa kehollisuuden, kulttuurirelativismien ja tilan ja paikan lähestymistapojen perspektiiveistä. Nämä luovat pohjan akusmaattisen musiikin kerronnallisten ominaisuuksien entistä olennaisemmän ja yhtenäisemmän lähestymistavan kehittämiseksi, mikä kulminoituu ehdotukseen yhdestätoista akusmaattisen musiikin "kerronnan moodit" mallista.

AVAINSANAT: Akusmaattinen musiikki, elektroakustinen musiikki, narratiivi, narratologia, kehollisuus, tila, taiteellinen tutkimus.

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1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Goals & Intentions

This doctoral project proposes an investigation of the narrative aspects of acousmatic music. The goal of the project is, on the one hand, to propose and develop an advanced narrative approach to the acousmatic genre, and on the other to examine, explore, and illustrate this approach through a portfolio of acousmatic compositions.

The written work starts from an overview of existing literature (e.g. Ferrari, Emmerson, Smalley, Young, Norman, etc.), as well as key elements from the field of narrative studies, to provide a foundation for the development of a more substantial and coherent approach to the narrative properties of acousmatic music.

The project therefore consists of two main parts:

- A collection of eight articles; and,
- A portfolio of nine acousmatic compositions.

The articles are followed by a final section that ties the written work and compositional work together, by analysing the narrative properties of the portfolio works primarily through the lens of the framework presented in my 2016 [‘Narrative Modes in Acousmatic Music’](#) article (Andean 2016a).

1.2 Contents & organisation

The eight articles are as follows:

1) [“The Musical/Narrative Dichotomy: *Sweet Anticipation* and some implications for acousmatic music”](#)

Published in the journal *Organised Sound*, vol. 15 #2, pp. 107-115, August 2010.

This article presents the case for a narrative approach to acousmatic music, as one side of a proposed ‘musical/narrative’ dichotomy, and essentially serves to launch the project.

2) [“Sound and Narrative: Acousmatic composition as artistic research”](#)

Published in the *Journal of Sonic Studies*, Vol. 7, 2014.

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/86118/86119>

This article makes the case for using the compositional act as an ideal ground for the examination of and research into the narrative properties of acousmatic music.

3) [“Towards a Narratology of Acousmatic Music”](#)

Published in *Proceedings of the 2014 Electroacoustic Music Studies Network Conference: Electroacoustic Music Beyond Concert Performance*.

<http://www.ems-network.org/spip.php?article365>

This article investigates some of the key areas of narratology and narrative studies as applied to acousmatic music.

4) [“Narrative Modes in Acousmatic Music”](#)

Published in the journal *Organised Sound*, Vol. 21 #3, pp. 192-203, November 2016.

https://www.academia.edu/35306740/Narrative_Modes_in_Acousmatic_Music

This article builds on the work presented in the previous three articles, to propose a framework of ten ‘narrative modes’ that underpin acousmatic music.

5) [“Cultural Relativism in Acousmatic Music”](#)

Published in *Musiikin Suunta: Journal of the Finnish Ethnomusicological Society*, 2/2012, pp. 26-31.

This final article investigates the cultural interpretation of ‘sound symbols’ in acousmatic music, and examines the important question of whether the narrative properties of the genre can successfully translate between cultures.

6) [“An Embodied Approach to Acousmatic Music”](#)

Published in Proceedings of the 16th Annual Symposium for Music Scholars in Finland, Jyväskylä 21-23.3.2012, pp. 80-85.

This article considers the question of embodiment in the listening experience of acousmatic works, which is one of the building blocks of acousmatic narrative and also one of the narrative modes proposed in the [2016 Organised Sound article](#).

7) [“Approaches to Narrative in Acousmatic Music”](#)

Conference presentation: ‘*From Tape to Typedef*’ conference, University of Sheffield, 30.01-02.02.2013.

This article is a further development of the ideas presented in the ‘Musical/Narrative Dichotomy’ article, with more of an emphasis on the composer’s perspective.

8) [“Space and Place in Acousmatic Music”](#)

Book chapter – published in J. Brusila, B. Johnson, & J. Richardson (eds.) *Memory, Space, Sound*, Turku: Intellect Books, 171-186, 2015.

More complete summaries of the articles can be found below in [Section 3](#).

The first four of these articles represent the ‘core’ of the theoretical side of the project, while each of the remaining four articles (e through h above) examines a particular aspect or sub-topic of the project. As a result, rather than presenting the articles in fully chronological order, the four ‘core’ articles are presented first, followed by the four ‘sub-topic’ articles.

Six of these articles have been fully peer reviewed. These include four published journal articles, one published book chapter, and one article published in the Proceedings of the 2014 Electroacoustic Music Studies Network Conference. Note, however, that the EMS conference completes a full peer review process prior to acceptance and publication.

The two remaining articles are conference papers (one of which has been published in the conference proceedings) that have received what is referred to as ‘light touch’ peer review. They are included here because they nevertheless are helpful in fleshing out aspects of the development of my theoretical work.

In addition to the written theoretical work, my doctoral project also includes a portfolio of nine acousmatic compositions, composed between 2011 and 2014 and presented in a series of five solo doctoral concerts. (Seven of these compositions were then released in 2019 on my solo cd [Assemblance\(s\)](#), on the *empreintes DIGITALes* label – available here: <https://empreintesdigitales.bandcamp.com/album/assemblance-s>.)

The composition portfolio has been assessed separately. However, it is included here as it informs the final section of the written work ([Section 4 - Portfolio presentation & analysis](#)).

1.3 Relationship of the portfolio work to the written work

A few words should be said regarding the relationship between the written and portfolio work. Whereas, in many applied composition projects, the text is intended primarily to support the portfolio, in this case to some extent the reverse is true – the portfolio supports the text.

The central argument of my thesis is that acousmatic works are, by nature, fundamentally narrative, and that, as a result, narrative is central to both the composition and reception of acousmatic works. While it is possible to examine the reception of acousmatic narrative through the study of repertoire works alone, this would leave out the compositional side entirely, as well as the key question of the relationship between poietic narrative and aesthetic narrative – i.e. between composed narrative and received narrative. The inclusion of a portfolio of compositions allows me to include both sides of this narrative coin: the process of composition of these portfolio works informs and serves as the key reference for my consideration of composed narrative (for example in the article [‘Sound and Narrative: Acousmatic composition as artistic research’](#)), while my analysis of received narrative is supported both by repertoire works (for example Robert Normandeau's ‘Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck)’, Jonty Harrison's ‘Undertow’, Francis Dhomont's ‘Points de fuite’, and Trevor Wishart’s ‘Red Bird’) and my own portfolio works.

Rather than impose a pre-determined structure for the compositional construction of acousmatic narrative in my portfolio works, I instead allowed myself a ‘free hand’, without any attempt to consciously pre-determine the narrative outcome of the works to match a pre-determined hypothesis. They are therefore representative of my own intuitive approaches to acousmatic composition generally, and to its inherent narrative properties. This allowed me to treat the portfolio works as reasonable ‘case studies’ of acousmatic narrative, both composed and received. For the most part, therefore, the compositions serve largely as a ‘test bed’ for the research material that is examined and explored in the written work, rather than being driven or determined by the theoretical work. The written component and the compositional component of my doctoral project can therefore be considered either independently or in parallel.

2 BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 Context

Acousmatic music is a genre of electroacoustic tape music (or ‘music for fixed media’, i.e. music created in the studio) that is the direct descendent of ‘musique concrète’, which was conceived and developed by Pierre Schaeffer in Paris in the late-1940s and 1950s. As such, the fundamental premise of acousmatic music is the use of recorded sound from the world around us as the primary musical materials. While these may include more traditionally ‘musical’ sound sources such as musical instruments or synthesizers, more often both musique concrète and acousmatic music draw on a vocabulary of sounds taken from the world around us, which are then redeployed for their musical qualities: recordings of footsteps or of a factory environment provide rhythm; recordings of traffic provide texture and phrasing; recordings of birdsong or of scraped metal provide melody; etc.

Such sounds, while offering significant musical and sculptural potential, also tend to import images of the possible sources – real or imagined – that might have made these sounds. Schaeffer insisted upon the experience of ‘reduced listening’ as the key to ‘musique concrète’ – a listening mode in which the possible sources of the sounds we hear are deliberately and explicitly ignored in order to focus solely and entirely on the musical properties of the work; however, experience quickly demonstrated that, although ‘reduced listening’ was useful in establishing the musical properties of ‘musique concrète’, it was not possible to fully ‘turn off’ the string of images and associations that accompany such sounds.

Thus, over time, musique concrète – and to a greater extent, acousmatic music – came to embrace these referential qualities of sound, creating works that offer *both* a fully ‘musical’ experience as well as a sequence of images and ideas that flow from our imaginative experience of what we are hearing. I have termed this the ‘musical/narrative dichotomy’ of acousmatic music, and I have reframed the acousmatic listening experience as fundamentally narrative.

2.2 Precedents

To some extent, this idea starts with the ancient Greeks, with Plato's distinction between 'mimesis' (showing) and 'diegesis' (telling). For Plato, this dichotomy demonstrated the superiority of theatre over literature: it was more powerful to *show* something to an audience (as in theatre) than to simply *tell* them about it, as in literature (see for example [Emmerson 1986](#)).

In music, we can make a clear connection between acousmatic narrative and the symphonic program music of the 19th century, in which orchestral instruments and resources are used to imitate real-world environments and situations: bird song for a pastoral, or bugle calls, horses' hooves and cannon fire to evoke battle scenes. However, I would argue that acousmatic narrative is more than just the tape music equivalent of program music; where program music can only imitate a source, acousmatic music offers *the source itself*. In other words, a recording is not only a 'reference to' the thing that has been recorded; for all intents and purposes, it *is* the thing that has been recorded – ideally, there is no purely sonic distinction between the experience of the 'original' sound and the experience of the recorded sound. (This argument is presented in greater depth in the [2016 "Space and Place in Acousmatic Music" book chapter](#); see also the discussion of mimesis vs. diegesis in the 2014 "[Towards a Narratology of Acousmatic Music](#)" article.) Thus, the difference between program music and acousmatic narrative is significant, and essentially comes back to Plato: where program music can only offer diegesis (i.e. can only 'tell us about' something), acousmatic music can also offer mimesis (i.e. can show us 'the thing itself').

Schaeffer developed *musique concrète* as part of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales at the ORTF in Paris, where he was joined by artists and researchers including Pierre Henry and Luc Ferrari. It was Ferrari who first pushed back against the primacy of 'reduced listening':

As soon as I walked out of the studio with the microphone and the tape recorder, the sounds I would capture came from another reality. [...] I listened to all these elements that I had collected outdoors, and I thought these sounds developed a discourse that had something to do with narration. There was no name for this kind of music in the early 1960s, so I said: that's anecdotal music. ([Caux 2012](#): 129)

However, this did not connote any kind of immediate revolution in ‘musique concrète’. To begin with, in fact, Ferrari was more concerned with ‘the social’ (ibid.) than with narrative more generally. More importantly, these narrative properties remain secondary at best until the early 1980s, when the ‘Cinema for the Ear’ sub-genre begins to dominate acousmatic music, with its much clearer emphasis on sonic imagery (see e.g. [Normandeau 1992](#)). And, despite Ferrari’s early use of the term ‘narrative’, the word is largely absent from the discourse over the decades that follow, despite some theorists developing ideas that would fit well under that umbrella term. Key examples here include Denis Smalley’s ‘source-bonding’ ([Smalley 1994](#)), Trevor Wishart’s ‘landscape’ ([Wishart 1986](#): 43), John Young’s ‘imagery’ ([Young 2007](#): 25), and Simon Emmerson’s use of ‘mimesis’ ([Emmerson 1986](#): 17). However, all of these focus explicitly on the properties of individual sound materials, rather than on the broader sense of narrative evoked across a work – which, while the former do of course play a role in the development of the latter, is nevertheless a distinct and broader concept and process (see [Andean 2010](#) for more on this).

In parallel, Soundscape Composition proposed an approach that prioritises the relationship between sounds and their context or environment ([Truax 2001](#)), which is perhaps the antithesis of Schaeffer’s ‘reduced listening’ and possibly close to Ferrari’s ‘anecdotal listening’. However, here the narrative experience is arguably quite different from acousmatic narrative, in the same way that the latter is different from the narrative experience of listening to a pure field recording (again, see [Andean 2010](#) for more on this).

More recently, Katharine Norman stands out as a key precedent in her consideration of narrative in acousmatic works – including, most simply, the primary use of the term ‘narrative’ since Ferrari ([Norman 1994](#), [2000](#), [2004](#)). However, as with Ferrari, Norman’s use of the term sometimes suggests an emphasis on text.

Thus, as argued in the [2010 ‘Musical/Narrative Dichotomy’ article](#), my proposal that narrative is central to acousmatic music, while it has precedents in the work of Ferrari, Emmerson, Smalley, Young, and Norman, among others, offers a fresh perspective, which has allowed me to construct a meaningful theoretical approach and a useful analytical framework (in the [2016 ‘Narrative Modes’ article](#)).

3 SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLES

3.1 [“The Musical/Narrative Dichotomy: Sweet Anticipation and some implications for acousmatic music”](#)

Published in the journal *Organised Sound*, vol. 15 #2, pp. 107-115, August 2010.

This article offers an initial proposal and discussion of a ‘musical’ vs. ‘narrative’ dichotomy within acousmatic music. The roots of this dichotomy in the initial proposal of, and eventual rejection (or at least reframing) of, ‘*écoute réduite*’ are discussed. The nature of the ‘narrative layer’ is discussed, with roots in the work of Schaeffer, Ferrari, Smalley, Wishart, Emmerson, and Young. It is pointed out, however, that these tend to focus on the qualities of individual sound *materials*, which are therefore isolated and ‘outside of time’, while my proposal of a ‘narrative layer’ heavily emphasises the listening experience *across the work*, and is therefore very much centred in the temporal experience of the work. The ‘narrative layer’ “should not be seen as an implication of the presence of a ‘plot’ or storyline, or to emphasise linearity; rather, it is intended to draw attention to the identity constructed from the evolving stream of local images and identities over the duration of the piece”. The compositional deployment of the dichotomy is examined in works by Smalley, Dhomont, Harrison and Wishart, with François Bayle’s *La langue inconnue* and Luc Ferrari’s *Presque Rien* referenced as ‘polar positions’.

The dichotomy is then examined through the lens of David Huron’s book *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*, in which Huron proposes that our responses to musical stimuli are in fact identical to our responses to real-world stimuli, and follow the same processes. This can be used to either support or contradict the dichotomy of musical and narrative layers. The article suggests that these layers might be a consequence of differences in neurological response times to different stimuli.

3.2 “Sound and Narrative: Acousmatic composition as artistic research”

Published in the *Journal of Sonic Studies*, Vol. 7, 2014.

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/86118/86119>

The article begins with an introduction to acousmatic music, to reduced listening, and to my proposed musical/narrative dichotomy. This is followed by a discussion of the term ‘narrative’ and its general application in music, and some of the ways in which acousmatic narrative is a special case, combining more traditionally ‘musical’ narrative with forms of narrative more commonly associated with film.

A distinction is made between ‘composed narrative’ and ‘received narrative’ – i.e. between the narrative intended by the composer and the narrative experienced or interpreted by the listener. An argument is made, in opposition to models that assume the primacy of the former and the need for its ‘proper’ reception by the listener, that in fact both the ‘composed’ and ‘received’ narrative are of equal importance if one wishes to fully understand the narrative properties of an acousmatic work. However, a case is made that the composer also serves as a work’s ‘first listener’, and that composition-based artistic research is therefore an ideal site for inquiry into narrative processes.

The composition and reception of my work *Déchirure* is used as an illustrative example. Several narrative ‘stages’ are identified: “my narrative intentions, when first approaching the work; in the midst of the composition process; after completing the work; and the narrative reception of the work by listeners”. Each of these is described and discussed in some detail. A comparison is made with the narrative properties of my work *Maledetta*. The concept of ‘Extra-musical Narrative’ is discussed, used here to refer to narrative elements that are imported into the work via the textual properties of its title and programme notes. Two works by Francis Dhomont are considered as examples of this process at work.

Finally, the encounter between the completed work and the listening public is discussed, with observations of the narrative transformations that result. The article ends by once again asserting the essential importance of both composer and listener, narrative creation and narrative reception, in understanding acousmatic narrative.

3.3 [“Towards a Narratology of Acousmatic Music”](#)

Published in Proceedings of the 2014 Electroacoustic Music Studies Network Conference: Electroacoustic Music Beyond Concert Performance.

<http://www.ems-network.org/spip.php?article365>

The article begins by summarising the musical/narrative dichotomy: “a more abstract, musical level of gesture, phrase, colour, texture, and motion; and a narrative level, which references real-world objects, actions, contexts and environments”. Differences when compared with more traditional musical narrative are described: “Where instrumental music, broadly speaking, accesses this narrative level primarily through the use of metaphor, acousmatic music, while maintaining access to the more programmatic elements found in instrumental music, also has the capacity to enact experience much more directly, through the explicit use and application of real-world sound and motion. This ranges from the use of referential sound imagery to a broader use of gesture and action enacted via acousmatic music's phenomenologically-grounded syntax.” The tendency for acousmatic theory to “focus more or less exclusively on the structural and formal elements of the sonic plane, with minimal reference to more overtly narrative aspects” is asserted; the field of narratology is proposed as a likely candidate for expanding the theoretical toolkit to better address the fulness of acousmatic works.

The field of narratology is discussed, including its evolution from a more or less exclusive focus on literary narratives towards a more extended range of media, including film, video games, and hypertext (leaning primarily on the work of Marie-Laure Ryan here, but also David Herman and Monika Fludernik). However, it is pointed out that this broadening of the field has arguably simply added a visual bias to the previous textual bias, and that, as a result, acousmatic music – and, indeed, many other sonic forms – have yet to be properly addressed. It is further proposed that, in fact, not only does acousmatic music have much to gain from an encounter with narratology, but also vice versa: “acousmatic music offers an extremely relevant narratological case study, as the genre's strong narrative elements are for the most part entirely free of both the textual and visual elements upon which so much existing narrative theory is based. Acousmatic music can therefore serve to differentiate core aspects of narratology that hold true across diverse media from those elements which are significantly diminished in relevance once both text and vision are left behind.”

Some of the most fundamental questions of narratology are considered and applied to acousmatic music, beginning with ‘fiction vs. non-fiction’. I claim that sonic experience offers a particularly unique angle on this question, and make the argument that “all recorded sound is fiction; but, all sonic experience is non-fiction” – and that, as acousmatic music is simultaneously both recorded sound and sonic experience, it is therefore simultaneously fiction AND non-fiction. This is tied to the question of mimesis vs. diegesis; I point out that, while acousmatic music is uniquely placed in its capacity for mimesis, it is in no way *limited to* mimesis, and is capable of engaging diegesis at will – and, further, that its flexibility in engaging with these two modes offers the composer the opportunity to playfully move between them, or even to confound or conflate them.

This leads to the consideration of the role of the ‘narrator’ in acousmatic music. This is one of the most central questions of narratology, and one which at first does not seem immediately – or at least, not universally – applicable to acousmatic music. The possibility of an ‘acousmatic narrator’ is discussed, leading to a proposal of a range of ‘narrative relationships’, including for example the possible relationship between the ‘implied narrator’ and the composer, with Jonty Harrison’s *...et ainsi de suite...* taken as a useful example. The idea of an ‘acousmatic protagonist’ is considered.

This leads to a discussion of ‘listener position’. “For example, who is the ‘subject’ of what we hear? Am I, the listener, ‘doing’ this? or is someone else? Or, perhaps it is a *passive* question: Who is the *object* of what we hear? Is this *happening to* me? Are these sonic events ‘happening’ at all? – are they ‘now’ and ‘direct’, or is someone ‘telling me’ about them – which would make them a) temporally mediated, and b) narrated?” The case of ‘motion *towards*’ is taken as an illustrative example, drawing on Eric Clarke’s *Wozzeck* example from *Ways of Listening* (2005). Harrison’s *Undertow* is then examined for subject position, narrator voice, etc., with some indications from his programme notes considered. It is suggested that some of these questions are social, rather than aesthetic or theoretical: where literature is a private, unilinear communicate, the reception of acousmatic music is, or can be, a) communal, and b) a shared experience of author and audience alike, in which the author has become simply another listener. Acousmatic music is much less a question of ‘telling’, and much more a question of ‘experiencing’, and potentially of ‘sharing’ (as per the ‘we’ of Harrison’s programme notes), which represents, potentially at least, a significantly different set of narrative relationships than in literature.

The article concludes with the following summary points regarding the differences between acousmatic narrative and literary narrative:

- i) Acousmatic narrative is wildly flexible;
- ii) Literary or textual narrative can be much more clear, more specific, and more explicit, than acousmatic narrative;
- iii) Literary narrative is much more under the direct control of the author compared to the composer's control of acousmatic narrative;
- iv) Sound cannot lie; words can. "Many of the more sophisticated aspects of contemporary narratology are concerned with the capacity to be indirect; to deceive; to deliberately leave out; or to outright lie – from 'indirect narration', to 'unreliable narration' (Booth 1961; Phelan 2006). Acousmatic music cannot lie; it can only move from truth to truth. At best, acousmatic music can deceive..."

"However, in all of these cases in which literary narrative trumps acousmatic narrative, acousmatic music has an ace up its sleeve: acousmatic music can choose, at any moment, simply to employ speech – and immediately, it has access to any and all of these aspects of narrative that it otherwise finds challenging: suddenly, we can be as explicit as you please; suddenly, we can lie and deceive; suddenly, we can pin down narrative relationships between author, narrator, and listener, in ways that would otherwise be more ambiguous."

However, it is pointed out that this risks stretching beyond the bounds of what is generally considered 'acousmatic music', and moving instead towards genres like text-sound composition or radiophony.

3.4 ["Narrative Modes in Acousmatic Music"](#)

Published in the journal *Organised Sound*, Vol. 21 #3, pp. 192-203, November 2016.

The article begins by making a case for the importance of narrative to acousmatic music. The concept of 'narrative' is defined and discussed, drawing on work by Herman, Abbott, Nattiez, Brunson, and Meelberg. A shift is proposed from definitions such as "the representation of an event or a series of events" (Abbott 2008) to "the representation of

a temporal development” (Meelberg 2006), which builds on the previous by incorporating development over time, to finally incorporate Herman’s definition of narrative as “a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change” by proposing our own definition as “our *experience* of an event or a series of events”, or “our *experience* of a temporal development, and of a succession of events”. Brunson’s proposal of a ‘narrative stance’ is discussed and deemed to be particularly useful in a listening context, and is linked with Harrison’s ‘expanded listening’ and Landy’s ‘heightened listening’.

It is proposed that Brunson’s ‘narrative stance’ contains a broad range of narrative approaches or ‘narrative lenses’ that a listener might move between when listening to an acousmatic work. Ten ‘narrative modes’ for acousmatic music are proposed:

- Material narrative
- Formal narrative
- Structural narrative
- Mimetic narrative
- Embodied narrative
- Parametric narrative
- Spatial narrative
- Studio narrative
- Textual narrative
- Extramusical narrative

It is stressed that this is not intended as a complete or authoritative list, but rather as a starting point; and also that “these are not proposed as discrete identities, but rather as shifts in perspective, between which the listener is likely to move depending on the usefulness of a given mode for the evolving moment of a work; as a result, some of these modes are overlapping. A given piece may emphasise or prioritise a single mode; but, more likely, a work will engage or enact a number of modes, through a range of narrative cues and resources.” Comparisons are made with previous models, from e.g. Smalley, Wishart, and Landy, with a fundamental shift asserted based on a) a focus now on the listener, compared to the more composer-centric earlier models; and b) the fundamentally temporal quality of narrative, as opposed to the tendency of earlier models to focus on isolated sound materials.

Each of the ten proposed ‘narrative modes’ is then described and discussed. Normandeau’s *Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck)* and Harrison’s *Undertow* are repeatedly

used as examples to demonstrate how each of these functions in practice, while other works are taken as examples of individual modes where appropriate. The capacity for these modes to interact with one another is discussed, with the possibility of a resulting ‘supermode’ or ‘supramodal narrative mode’ proposed, of which Dhomont’s *Points de fuite* is taken as an ideal example. Dhomont’s use of ‘intertextual narrative’ in the latter piece is also discussed.

The article closes by considering the role of ‘narrative universals’ and ‘narrative archetypes’ that occur across all ten proposed Narrative Modes, as well as “across genres, across art forms, and outwards into a full range of human thought and activity”.

3.5 “Cultural Relativism in Acousmatic Music”

Published in *Musiikin Suunta: Journal of the Finnish Ethnomusicological Society*, 2/2012, pp. 26-31.

After establishing some of the basic principles – the nature and origins of acousmatic music, the musical/narrative dichotomy, sound as symbol – the article focuses on a consideration of the culturally specific nature of such sound symbols: “The interpretation of sounds as symbols rests to an enormous extent on the chain of associations a given sonic reference might inspire; these, however, far from objective and absolute, involve a great deal of culture-specific coding.” An initial example of the sound of waves on the shore is given, and the potential for extreme contrast in the possible associations with this sound based on cultural background is discussed. This leads to the potential loss of composer control of the possible ‘meanings’ of the work. Cultural relativism is introduced, and used to frame this compositional problem: “Sound symbols are not independent, self-sufficient, absolute entities, but rather derive their meaning from the complex cultural network and context of which they are a part; severed from that context, a given symbol loses its power, or is charged with new and changed meaning due to its altered role in a different cultural web.” Two contrasting conclusions are considered: that acousmatic composers must work to ensure that their sound symbols are universal; or, that acousmatic music cannot, or does not, communicate outside of the specific culture from within which it was conceived and composed. The question is then re-evaluated, with the suggestion that a) sound symbols are deeply personal, rather than reliably universal within a given culture, and that therefore composers cannot rely on a

predictable interpretation even with their own culture; and b) that the variables involved are not only cultural, but also temporal – that a given sound symbol will likely change over time, adding further evidence of the illusory nature of composer control over the interpretation of the narrative aspects of a work. This illusion of composer control is examined and questioned, and acousmatic music’s capacity to access and trigger deeply personal experiences and responses through the use of sound symbols, far from being a shortcoming, is reframed as one of its strengths.

3.6 **“An Embodied Approach to Acousmatic Music”**

Published in Proceedings of the 16th Annual Symposium for Music Scholars in Finland, Jyväskylä 21-23.3.2012, pp. 80-85.

https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/38068/andean_S2012.pdf

The article begins by introducing acousmatic music, through its roots in *musique concrète* and the concept of reduced listening. Schaeffer’s emphasis on phenomenology is discussed, and it is suggested that this leads directly to the deeply embodied qualities of the acousmatic listening experience. The sound of footsteps is considered as an example. The distinction between ‘causation’ and ‘association’ is discussed. The connections between performative aspects of studio composition are considered, wherein the composer’s gestures in the studio – in front of a microphone, at the mixing desk, etc. – communicates a sense of embodied gesture to the listener. Acousmatic embodiment is then summarised as:

- i) Experience of a sound as though it were the result of our own bodily action (‘these are my footsteps, I am walking’);
- ii) Experience of a sound as though it were the result of someone else’s bodily action (‘these are someone’s footsteps, someone is walking’);
- iii) A more abstract sense of sound being created by motion (a ‘swishing’ motion, a ‘bouncing’ sound, etc.);
- iv) The embodied recognition of the in-studio gestures of the composer (the dynamic results of a fader gesture, etc.)

The relationship between acousmatic embodiment and instrumental embodiment is considered. It is argued that the embodied qualities of musical performance – the length of a breath, the length of the arm in a bowing gesture – are the prime determinants of

musical gesture, phrasing, rhythm, etc. This results in a feedback loop, in which physical gesture determines musical gesture, which comes to define our musical thinking, which then determines our physical gestures in music-making... and so on. Although in theory acousmatic music is not restricted to the gestural requirements of acoustic instruments, we nevertheless find the same feedback loop at work; indeed, the claim is made that acousmatic music is even more closely tied to the world of embodied gesture than some contemporary instrumental music, such as some works by Pierre Boulez or Brian Ferneyhough.

Three examples from the acousmatic repertoire are examined for their use of embodiment: John Young's *Pythagoras's Curtain*, Jonty Harrison's *Pair/Impair*, and Adam Basanta's *A glass is not a glass*.

3.7 [“Approaches to Narrative in Acousmatic Music”](#)

Conference presentation: *From Tape to Typedef* conference, University of Sheffield, 30.01-02.02.2013.

This conference presentation begins by attempting a definition of terms, and a definition of the area of acousmatic music and related fields that will be considered. It flags the work of Emerson, Smalley, Wishart, Young, and Landy as relevant predecessors. It offers the central distinction between ‘musical’ and ‘narrative’ qualities in acousmatic music, as well as claiming a fundamental difference between acousmatic narrative and programme music, as a question of metaphor vs. direct experience. The distinction between the ‘musical’ and the ‘narrative’ is problematised, as the listening experience is often more multi-dimensional than this dichotomy suggests; Dhomont's *Points de fuite* is used as an example.

The possibility of any given composer being ‘biased’ towards either the musical or the narrative in their work is considered, taking Ferrari's *Presque rien* and Wishart's *Red Bird* as examples of the latter, and Smalley's *Pentes* as an example of the former. “Thus, what tends to vary from work to work - and, often, from composer to composer - is, firstly, how much time the listener is likely to spend in each of these two modes, and secondly, how closely these two modes engage and interact with each other - whether they work together to build a potentially greater, more powerful artistic experience, or whether they simply remain two discrete aspects of a single work.”

It is suggested that some composers maintain a consistent, and sometimes unique, approach to these questions, with François Bayle taken as an example, while other composers vary wildly from piece to piece, taking the narrative contrast between Normandeau's 'cinema for the ear' works and his 'timbre spatialisation' works as a strong example.

Dhomont's use of Schubert's *Erlkönig* in *Thème de la Fuite* is considered as another problematising example of the musical/narrative relationship, in that it is a musical quotation but is used entirely within the narrative discourse, while remaining outside of the work's musical discourse. This is contrasted with Dhomont's quotation of Vivaldi in *Un autre printemps*, in which the original is central to the musical discourse.

A further, and fairly common, scenario is described as the use of recorded materials for purely musical purposes, while allowing their narrative properties to construct a narrative for the work without deliberate or explicit direction by the composer, potentially resulting in an enigmatic quality that can be quite enticing; Normandeau's *Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck)* is considered as an example of this approach.

The selection of a single or limited sound material for use in a given composition is considered as another interesting narrative case that almost forms its own 'sub-genre' within acousmatic music. Jonty Harrison's *...et ainsi de suite...* is considered as an example: we might reasonably expect the single sound source – in Harrison's case, a glass – to be the narrative core of the piece; however, it is argued that in fact it is the transformations of the single material, rather than the material itself, that develops the narrative of the work, and that as a result the composer himself appears as a 'protagonist' in the work. "Our attention is on the traces of the composer's actions, as meaning is carried now by the discourse these transformations create: a sequence of increasing degrees of transformation, rather than simply supplying sonic imagery, is itself now a form of narrative, interpreted as a playful interaction between composer and listener." It is pointed out that this, too, presents a problematic case for any attempt at a simple musical/narrative dichotomy, as these transformations threaten to collapse the distinction between musical and narrative.

The impact of the musical/narrative dichotomy on the listening process is discussed. Possible neuroscientific approaches are considered, and are themselves problematised. The emotional valencing of musical vs. narrative properties is considered, as is the possible engagement of mirror neurons by each of these.

Finally, it is proposed that narrative properties are potentially pedagogically useful, for example by offering a ‘way in’ to acousmatic music for the uninitiated.

3.8 “Space and Place in Acousmatic Music”

Book chapter – published in J. Brusila, B. Johnson, & J. Richardson (eds.) *Memory, Space, Sound*, Turku: Intellect Books, 171-186, 2015.

The chapter begins by introducing the ways in which the sounds we hear simultaneously bring us information about the sources of those sounds, but also about the space through which they have travelled: “Each and every act of hearing receives these two layers of information, intertwined: information regarding a sounding object, and information about a space.” As a result, recorded sound plays a dual role: “When we record sound, this duality is carried over to the recording: the act of recording transcribes not only the recorded sources, but also the recorded spaces.” The creative use of recorded sound therefore makes the use of space as a compositional parameter possible in ways that had never before been possible. Space becomes a key component of sonic imagery and sonic narrative in electroacoustic art forms, acousmatic music prime among them.

The distinction between ‘space’ and ‘place’ is discussed, beginning with the ‘objective vs. subjective’ dichotomy used in cultural geography: space as an acoustic quantity vs. place as a cultural quality. Perspectives on this dichotomy from the field of narratology (Marie-Laure Ryan and David Herman), sociology (Anthony Giddens), and the sonic arts (Katharine Norman) are discussed and compared. Views that are critical of this dichotomy (Edward Casey and Tim Ingold) are mentioned.

The article moves to a consideration of sound as a symbol for space or place. This begins with an introduction to terms such as ‘symbol’ and ‘signifier’ through the work of Pierce and Saussure, to their application in electroacoustic music by John Young (among others), and Smalley’s ‘source bonding’. The capacity of sound to serve as a symbol for either an individual object or a broader environment is discussed. This leads to an introduction to key terminology from soundscape studies, including ‘keynote sounds’, ‘sound signals’, and ‘soundmarks’, all three of which play a significant role in the establishment of place in electroacoustic works. Differences in this regard between acousmatic works and soundscape composition are considered, including the observation that the former tend to focus on ‘keynote sounds’ and ‘sound signals’, whereas the latter tends to prioritise soundmarks. The consequences for the listener are potentially

significant, pointing to a difference “between a more discursive approach [...] versus a more personal approach, achieved by being sufficiently ambiguous as to allow the listener’s own memories and experience to swell up and create meaning.”

Differences between sound and vision are considered, and the potential of ‘sonic illusion’ is discussed. This leads to the important point that acousmatic music, when presented in a concert or other high-fidelity context, can do more than simply offer a sequence of sound symbols for interpretation; it can offer a sense of direct experience. “For example, an electroacoustic soundscape has the capacity, thanks to the details of our hearing and our psychoacoustic processing of sound, to situate the listener within the presented soundscape: in other words, it is possible for the sonic illusion to be complete and successful, and, in fact, to move beyond illusion, to achieve fully embodied and situated experience – for the electroacoustic soundworld to be, for all intents and purposes, experienced as real.” The implications for the sonic experience of space and place are considered.

Acousmatic space and place are considered in greater detail, with further reference to many of the theorists discussed thus far. Examples from Robert Normandeau’s *Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck)* are considered. It is then proposed that sonic ‘space’ and sonic ‘place’ are compositionally malleable – that, for instance, source bonding can be used to transform space into place: “in the absence of source bond, a spatial image remains ‘space’; but when such a spatial image is recognized and source bonds to a given context or location [...] it is transformed into ‘place’.” The compositional potential that this opens up is discussed.

4 PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION & ANALYSIS

4.1 Portfolio presentation

My doctoral composition portfolio consists of nine compositions, composed between 2011 and 2014. These were presented in a series of five doctoral concerts that took place over this same period, where I performed them using a live acousmonium-style sound diffusion, alongside relevant repertoire works, both recent and historical. The programme notes for these concerts can be found in the appendices. (Note that two works presented in the initial concerts – ‘Pimeydestä Valoon’ (2011) and ‘Ekphrasis’ (2013) – were not retained for the final doctoral portfolio, and were not presented in the final portfolio concert; the former because it was a collaboration with another composer, Visa Kuoppala, and the latter because I was not satisfied with the work.)

In addition, in 2019 seven of these compositions were then released on my solo cd ‘[Assemblance\(s\)](#)’, on the *empreintes DIGITALEs* label (Andean 2019), together with a more recent composition (2018’s ‘Valdrada’). (I chose not to include ‘Radiate’ or ‘Ainnurruvar II’ on the cd, but they remain part of the doctoral portfolio.)

‘[Assemblance\(s\)](#)’ is available online on the *empreintes DIGITALEs* Bandcamp page, here: <https://empreintesdigitaless.bandcamp.com/album/assemblance-s>

4.2 Application of written work to portfolio

4.2.1 Introduction

This section will apply the ‘narrative modes’ model presented in my [2016 Organised Sound article](#) (Andean 2016a) to my portfolio of works. For each composition – presented in the chronological order of their composition – I will discuss which are the main narrative modes enacted in the work, with an approximate weighting of their importance in that composition, rated as either ‘Strong Primary’, ‘Primary’, ‘Secondary’, or ‘Weak Secondary’. This is made clear in Table 1, below. I will discuss the ways in which each composition invokes and deploys the various narrative modes, together with any other relevant questions, such as for example any potential differences between the ‘composed narrative’ and the ‘received narrative’ of a given work (as explained in my [Journal of Sonic Studies article](#) (Andean 2014a)), and the possible ‘subject position’ for each work (as discussed in my [EMS article](#) (Andean 2014b)).

It is important to clarify the relationship between the written/theoretical component of my doctoral project and the creative/compositional component (the portfolio of works). My intention was to explore the natural manifestation of narrative properties in acousmatic composition, both in terms of the compositional process – e.g. what role narrative ideas play in the conception and *creation* of the work – and of the experience of the finished work. By ‘natural manifestation’, I mean that what primarily interested me was how narrative materialises and evolves in the normal course of acousmatic composition and acousmatic listening. I therefore decided against imposing a pre-planned, structured approach to narrative onto the works, and instead approached each composition freely and following my usual creative practice, in an attempt to observe the natural course of the compositional development of narrative properties within each work. In other words, these works were composed without explicit or conscious narrative predisposition in order to get an unfiltered view of the role narrative plays in the compositional process of acousmatic works, as well as in the listening experience of the completed works. As a result, it is important to stress that my analysis of the relative importance of the various narrative modes to each work is a form of retrospective analysis; it does not indicate a set of explicit pre-compositional plans that were to be followed in the creation of the works. The analysis that follows is primarily my own assessment of the narrative properties of each work, from the post-compositional vantage point. Any instances where there is an identifiable distinction between my narrative ideas prior to or early on in the compositional process, and my narrative interpretation of the work after it was complete, will be flagged and discussed.

Essentially, what follows is intended as an illustration of the ideas first set out in my [2010 Organised Sound article](#) (Andean 2010) and ultimately fleshed out in greater depth, to culminate in my 2016 article [‘Narrative Modes in Acousmatic Music’](#) (Andean 2016a). The analysis presented here therefore serves primarily as an illustrative bridge between the theoretical component of my doctoral project and the creative component.

Finally, it should be noted that the following discussion relies heavily on the ideas presented in the preceding collection of articles, especially the 2016 article [‘Narrative Modes in Acousmatic Music’](#) (Andean 2016a). It would therefore be important to have read these articles (again, especially the [2016a article](#)) before proceeding.

Table 1: Portfolio Works - Narrative Modes Evoked

	Material	Formal	Structural	Mimetic	Embodied	Parametric	Spatial	Studio	Textual	Extramusical	Intertextual
Medusan Torso	x			(x)	x		(x)				(x)
Radiate	(x)	x				*x*		(x)		(x)	
Maledetta	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	((x))	*x*	x
Between the Leaves		*x*		*x*		x			((x))	x	((x))
Hyvät Matkustajat	x	(x)			(x)		(x)		(x)	x	
Ainnurruvar II	x	(x)			x			(x)			
Déchirure	x	(x)		x	x			(x)	((x))	x	x
Psygeio		(x)	(x)	(x)		(x)	(x)	(x)		(x)	
Spores	x	x	(x)	(x)	x			(x)			

KEY: Strongest to weakest: *x* = STRONG PRIMARY (particularly strongly evoked); x = PRIMARY (clearly evoked); (x) = SECONDARY (evoked but not central); ((x)) = WEAK SECONDARY (slightly evoked).

4.2.2 Narrative modes across the portfolio

Table 1 provides an overview of the eleven ‘narrative modes’ presented in my [2016 Organised Sound article](#) (Andean 2016a), indicated along the x axis, and the extent to which these are evoked in each of my nine portfolio works, listed along the y axis. The relative weighting of each narrative mode is indicated as follows, from strongest to weakest:

- ‘Strong Primary’ (particularly strongly evoked) – indicated with an *x*
- ‘Primary’ (clearly evoked) – indicated with an x
- ‘Secondary’ (evoked but not central) – indicated with an (x)
- ‘Weak Secondary’ (slightly evoked) – indicated with an ((x))

Note that, while the 2016 article lists ten primary modes, it also mentions an 11th possible mode, described as ‘Intertextual Narrative’ ([Andean 2016a](#): 201); so, although this is not part of the main framework proposed in the 2016 model, I have nevertheless included ‘Intertextual Narrative’ in Table 1 and in the discussion below, primarily because it is of particular significance for one of the portfolio works, ‘Maledetta’.

The implications for each composition are examined individually below, but first we might usefully begin by looking at what information the table offers us regarding the portfolio as a whole, and what this tells us about the narrative modes model.

First, here is a list summarising how many works invoke each of the narrative modes, from most often invoked to least often invoked:

Formal narrative: 1 Strong primary, 3 Primary, 4 Secondary (8 total)

Material narrative: 6 Primary, 1 Secondary (7 total)

Embodied narrative: 5 Primary, 1 Secondary (6 total)

Mimetic narrative: 1 Strong primary, 2 Primary, 3 Secondary (6 total)

Extramusical narrative: 1 Strong primary, 3 Primary, 2 Secondary (6 total)

Studio narrative: 1 Primary, 5 Secondary (6 total)

Intertextual narrative: 2 Primary, 1 Secondary, 1 Weak secondary (4 total)

Spatial narrative: 1 Primary, 3 Secondary (4 total)

Textual narrative: 1 Secondary, 3 Weak secondary (4 total)

Parametric narrative: 1 Strong primary, 1 Primary, 1 Secondary (3 total)

Structural narrative: 1 Primary, 2 Secondary (3 total)

Some initial observations based on this summary:

- All eleven narrative modes are invoked in the portfolio.
- No single narrative mode is invoked by all nine portfolio works.
- The most commonly invoked narrative mode is ‘Formal Narrative’, which is invoked in eight out of the nine portfolio works.
- This is followed closely by ‘Material Narrative’, which is invoked in seven out of the nine portfolio works.
- However, note that, although ‘Formal Narrative’ is invoked slightly more often, ‘Material Narrative’ is much more strongly invoked, with six ‘Primary’ results as opposed to one ‘Strong Primary’ and three ‘Primary’ results for ‘Formal Narrative’.
- ‘Parametric Narrative’ and ‘Structural Narrative’ receive the weakest results, with three indications each.

We will consider the implications of some of these points, with the first question that presents itself being: to what extent are these observations generalisable as broad priorities across the acousmatic genre, and to what extent are they instead representative of my own personal priorities or characteristics as a composer?

For example, **Structural Narrative** has a weak showing here, indicated for only three out of the nine works, with only one primary and two secondary weightings. Furthermore, the single ‘primary’ weighting is for the work ‘Maledetta’, which invokes all but one of the eleven narrative modes, suggesting that it is something of a special case, as will be discussed below. While Structural Narrative is therefore clearly of limited importance to my own compositional approach, its weak showing here is also indicative of its diminished importance across much of the acousmatic music genre, especially compared to other areas of electroacoustic music. This is part of a broader conflict between ‘sculptural’ approaches to electroacoustic music (of which acousmatic music is perhaps the clearest example), and more ‘structuralist’ approaches, such as for example elektronische Musik and its descendants. See the discussion of Structural Narrative in my [2016 article](#) for further discussion of this point (Andean 2016a: 195-6).

Material Narrative, on the other hand, is very strong across the portfolio, with the highest number of ‘primary’ placements. While this therefore clearly marks out Material Narrative as being amongst my personal priorities, it is again indicative more broadly of the acousmatic genre. For acousmatic music, the sound materials are the heart

of the genre's identity, and have been since Schaeffer's earliest experiments ([Schaeffer 1952](#)); its centrality here demonstrates the importance of Material Narrative both for my own work, and for the genre in general. This is similarly true for both **Mimetic Narrative** and for **Embodied Narrative**, although these are maybe a bit more specific of certain sub-genres or specific territories of acousmatic music that I am drawn towards as a composer (such as for example Montreal's 'Cinema for the Ear' tradition, etc.). Again, these points are discussed at greater length in [the 2016 article](#) (Andean 2016a).

Formal Narrative has the highest number of overall placements – being indicated for all but a single piece ('Medusan Torso') – with an even split between primary and secondary. However, rather than indicating its personal importance to me as a composer or its centrality to the acousmatic genre, I would argue that instead this simply demonstrates that it is a central quality of the musical experience in general, as an art form that is organised in and takes place over time (see [Andean 2016a](#): 194-5). Thus, its omnipresence here speaks less about the works for which it has been indicated than for the work for which it has not: 'Medusan Torso' is alone in the portfolio in demonstrating a slightly more oblique approach to formal organisation, as will be discussed below.

Like Structural Narrative, the results for **Parametric Narrative** are also quite weak – one 'Strong Primary', one 'Primary', and one 'Secondary' – but I would argue that, unlike the modes just discussed, in this case it is more a question of my own compositional priorities than those of the genre in general. What this indicates is that, essentially, I am more drawn to the sound materials themselves as the fundamental building blocks of the work than to my treatment or processing of those materials in the studio – which, although a significant aspect of the *surface* of the work, is less likely to be a key organising principle in my own compositions. At first glance, this may again seem similar to other works associated with the 'Cinema for the Ear' subgenre ([Normandeau 1992](#)); however, closer examination calls this conclusion into question – consider classic subgenre works such as Francis Dhomont's 'Novars' or Denis Smalley's 'Base Metals', in both of which the musical discourse is heavily anchored around Parametric Narrative ([Dhomont 2001](#); [Smalley 2000](#)).

On first revelation, I was surprised to find that **Spatial Narrative** is not more strongly represented in my portfolio works (having received only four indications – one primary and three secondary), considering its compositional importance to the acousmatic genre (see [Andean 2016a](#): 197-8 and [2016b](#)). What this indicates, I think, is that, while space is very important both sculpturally and as an indicator of place, these

are often unconscious (in keeping with how the human brain typically processes spatial information (see [Andean 2016b](#))), and so it takes really quite explicit, possibly even exaggerated, use of space for it to become a dominant element of the narrative, such as for example in Robert Normandeau's 'Mémoires vives' ([Normandeau 1998](#)).

Studio Narrative is a primary narrative element for only one of the portfolio works, but is indicated as a secondary element for five more. The former demonstrates that this is not a personal priority for my own approach to acousmatic composition, while the latter demonstrates that it is nevertheless often present to at least a limited degree throughout the genre, including my own work.

There is also a relatively weak showing for **Textual Narrative** – four total, one secondary and three weak secondary – indicating that it is not a central element of my own work, nor indeed is it typically a central element of much of the genre. Arguably this is because text (or rather, since we are talking about sound, speech) has a tendency to be very explicit in its meaning and its communication of narrative, thereby shutting down a sense of ambiguity that I would personally identify as a key quality of the acousmatic genre. Thus, while there are a certain number of acousmatic composers who regularly use text as part of their works, or who focus on the voice as a key component of their acousmatic storytelling – for example Luc Ferrari or Annette Vande Gorne – this is not typical across the genre. Thus, in my portfolio works, we have one example – 'Hyvät matkustajat' – in which text plays a very minor role (limited primarily to the bit of field recording that contains the title of the work), and several other compositions in which, while occasional snippets of text (usually only a word or two) do appear, these do not have a dominant impact on the overall narrative of the work.

Finally, both **Extramusical Narrative** and **Intertextual Narrative** lie near the middle of the rankings here, with a total of six for the former and four for the latter, spread across the full spectrum from Strong Primary to Weak Secondary. These modes are not universal, in the way that for example Formal Narrative is so common as to be nearly universal; and, unlike a number of the other modes, these two must, most of the time, be deliberately invoked by the composer, for example through direct quotes or references to other artworks in the case of Intertextual Narrative ([Andean 2016a](#): 201), or through for example materials found in the programme notes, or even the title of the work, in the case of Extramusical Narrative ([Andean 2016a](#): 199-200). Thus, although these two modes are not automatic or inevitable aspects of acousmatic narrative, they are tools that are available to the acousmatic composer should they prove to be relevant or

useful to a particular work (as for example in Francis Dhomont's 'Points de fuite' ([Andean 2016a](#): 201) or Jonty Harrison's 'Undertow' ([Andean 2016a](#): 200).

Next, we might usefully consider the implications of works that trigger fewer narrative modes vs. works that trigger many, or most, modes. Here is the list of works with the total number of narrative modes invoked by each, arranged in order of most to least:

Maledetta: 10 modes (1 strong primary, 8 primary, 1 weak secondary)

Déchirure: 8 modes (5 primary, 2 secondary, 1 weak secondary)

Psygeío: 7 modes (7 secondary)

Spores: 6 modes (3 primary, 3 secondary)

Between the Leaves: 6 modes (2 strong primary, 2 primary, 2 weak secondary)

Hyvät Matkustajat: 6 modes (2 primary, 4 secondary)

Radiate: 5 modes (1 strong primary, 1 primary, 3 secondary)

Medusan Torso: 5 modes (2 primary, 3 secondary)

Ainnurruvar II: 4 modes (2 primary, 2 secondary)

Thus, 'Maledetta' invokes the highest number of narrative modes, invoking ten out of eleven modes (the only mode not invoked in this work is 'Parametric Narrative'). 'Déchirure' is next highest, invoking eight modes, with 'Psygeío' next at seven modes – however, it is worth noting that, for 'Psygeío', all seven modes are marked as 'secondary', unlike the remaining works, which, although they have fewer overall totals of modes invoked, have a higher number of 'primary' and 'strong primary' weightings. 'Ainnurruvar II' invokes the lowest number of modes: four overall, with two 'primary' weightings and two 'secondary' weightings.

To examine what this tells us about each work, we will now consider the narrative implications for each composition in greater individual detail.

4.3 Portfolio works

4.3.1 Medusan Torso

PRIMARY: Material narrative; Embodied narrative

SECONDARY: Mimetic narrative; Spatial narrative; Intertextual narrative

Tackling my portfolio works in chronological order is useful in that it provides an overview of how my approach to composed narrative changed over this period, to some extent gaining in clarity and direction. In some ways, therefore, the oldest work in the portfolio, 2011's 'Medusan Torso', is an awkward choice as the first narrative 'test case' from the portfolio, as its 'narrative layer' is arguably less coherent than in some of the later works.

This work is constructed in a somewhat 'classic' 'musique concrète' manner: I recorded a collection of sound materials using objects collected in the kitchen and around the house, upon which a range of clear gestures were performed, such as striking bowls and pots, squeaking and closing doors, and so on. These were then extended with some contrasting materials, include field recordings of birds, frogs, and insects, and some synthesis and feedback; but it is the former collection of household objects and human gestures that dominate, with processing kept to a minimum – primarily a substantial use of reverb.

This has direct consequences on the narrative experience of the work. The materials are not particular clear in their source bonding, so the degree of 'story-telling' is very limited: the sound materials fall into clear spectromorphological categories ([Smalley 1997](#)), such as 'struck', 'resonant', etc., but with limited semiotic association beyond that – so, not as explicitly narratively resonant as, say, a barking dog, or a crying baby, or similar more directly referential sonic imagery. As a result, the mind is drawn to these material qualities in the quest for meaning, hence the dominance of the 'Material Narrative' mode; and, as most of the sound materials are quite evocative of the gesture involved in the making of the sound – from the striking of pot lids, to the slamming of doors, to the fluttering of insect wings – this evokes 'Embodied Narrative' through our embodied recognition of these gestures. However, there is also some playfulness in this work between the gestural action we *think* we are hearing and the actual source of the sound, including for example some gestural treatment of electronic materials, or the use of extreme reverb to extend quite a short, unevocative striking of an object, to give the

impression of some much larger, much more resonant, object and event. I have therefore also indicated ‘Mimetic Narrative’ among the ‘Secondary’ modes here, to illustrate that we are not only focused on the materials and the embodied gestures in constructing our narrative experience of the work, but also on behavioural (or, again, spectromorphological) ‘archetypes’. ‘Spatial Narrative’ has also been included among the ‘Secondary’ modes, largely because the use of reverb is sufficiently substantial in this work that the resulting sense of spaciousness and of ‘broad vistas’ has an inevitable, if not entirely explicit, impact on the experience of the work.

‘Composed narrative’ here is likely to be substantially, or entirely, different from ‘received narrative’, due to the genesis of the work: ‘Medusan Torso’ is based on material originally developed during my work on the audiovisual installation *Re:****Sitruuna ja meduusa*, a collaboration with visual artist Merja Nieminen which first appeared at Helsinki’s Galleria Aarni in February 2011. The work is composed entirely from the sound material from the original installation; but while, for the installation, this sound material was first deconstructed, then re-composed in real time by the governing software, for ‘Medusan Torso’ I have shaped and fixed these same materials to a timeline, producing very different results. Nevertheless, despite my attempts to work freely with the materials for this acousmatic composition, leaving the goals and character of the original installation to one side, perhaps inevitably my experience of the installation determines my narrative interpretation of this later composition. While a listener who had also had the opportunity to view the installation might have a similar experience, the majority of listeners arrive at the work without this prior baggage, and therefore are likely to arrive at a very different interpretation of the work. Thus, for me, this is a particularly strong case of ‘Intertextual Narrative’: I can only interpret ‘Medusan Torso’ through its references to *Re:****Sitruuna ja meduusa*. However, since this is likely only the case for my own experience, I nevertheless have relegated ‘Intertextual Narrative’ to the ‘Secondary’ tier: there is indeed an intertextual reference to another work (*Re:****Sitruuna ja meduusa*), but this is not likely to strongly inform the experience of the average listener, except through indications in programme notes and so on.

Finally, a word about one of the modes that has *not* been indicated for this work: ‘Formal Narrative’. As mentioned above, this is the only work in the portfolio that does not include ‘Formal Narrative’ in any capacity. This, again, is a consequence of the somewhat unique genesis of this particular composition. For most of my works, the question of the formal distribution of materials across the work arises very early in the

process, and I generally opt for formal clarity in my work in order to keep communication with the listener relatively direct and to avoid opacity for opacity's sake. As discussed above, however, 'Medusan Torso' was, in a number of ways, driven in unusual directions due to its origins in the earlier installation work, and its form is another example of this. As the original installation ran in real time, it was in essence formless: it had no beginning and no end, so the compositional process was instead focused on questions of densities and probabilities, as is often the case in installation work. As a result, in attempting to reinterpret these materials for an acousmatic composition, I was not terribly successful in conceptually distancing myself from my original approach to their formal deployment in the original installation, leading to a work that is much more formally opaque than is the case for most of my acousmatic output. Thus, although I myself know and can, in listening, 'seek out' the formal construction and formal cues that I used to organise the work, these are unlikely to be easily recognisable to the average listener, and even for myself form does not play much of a role in constructing a sense of 'meaning' for the work.

Finally, a few words about 'subject position' in the work – i.e., what is the listener's relationship with the work (see [Andean 2014b](#))? In this case, regardless of any intentions during the compositional process, my experience as the work's 'first listener' aligns with informal comments from audiences and other listeners: the listener remains 'outside' the work – i.e., the sounds are neither 'performed by' nor 'happening to' the listener, but rather the listener is an 'observer' of this sonic world, which in this case can be described as a set of shifting environmental 'planes' that slowly cross one another across the stereo space, in a range of near and far distances. So, the listener is not personally implicated in the work, but rather is a 'witness' to the work. The roots of this scenario likely lie in the nature of the sound materials, but also in the ways in which the materials move in the space. To begin with, the use of space in the work does not set up a sense of 'immersion', which would place the listener 'within' the sound world, but rather produces a spatial 'window' in front of the listener (which is common in most stereo image scenarios), thereby emphasising the 'listener as witness' experience. Further, the majority of the movement of the materials in the work is a kind of 'slow drift', which is too slow for an organic sense of embodied recognition, instead registering as perhaps somewhat elemental – the slow movement of water, or the fast movement of clouds, etc. – thereby again de-emphasising the listener as agent, and instead suggesting that the listener is an observer of elemental actions being acted out in front of them.

4.3.2 Radiate

STRONG PRIMARY: Parametric narrative

PRIMARY: Formal narrative

SECONDARY: Material narrative; Studio narrative; Extramusical narrative

Note that this is an 8-channel work, in which the distribution of the timbral elements and their slow rotation are an important part of the composition; for ease of reference I have included a stereo file of the version of this work from its premiere performance (which, as well as the stereo reduction, is slightly longer than the revised, slightly shorter 8-channel version from my final doctoral concert).

This is the most ‘conceptual’ of my portfolio works; or, more accurately, it is in essence a form of acousmatic ‘process music’ ([Nyman 1999](#)). It is a particularly clear example of a specific acousmatic ‘trope’, in which a real-world sound material is introduced in a heavily transformed form, with the original source sound eventually revealed or unmasked to the listener. In this case this process entirely defines the form and the structure of the work: the source sound is a recording of a leaky radiator, with a soundworld full of pitched and timbral metallic bubbling sounds. I put this sound through many layers of spectral filtering, so that, at its most extreme, only a few of the strongest partials appear, as a somewhat pointillistic melody. This is how the work begins – i.e., with the most extreme spectral filtering, which is slowly reduced, such that more and more partials are allowed into the work; this is first experienced as a ‘filling in’ of the pointillistic melody, then as an increasing density of counterpoint, then eventually as a slow build-up of texture and timbre, with the piece eventually ending with the fully revealed, fully exposed source material – the bubbling radiator. This is not necessarily recognised as a ‘radiator’ per se, but the title – ‘Radiate’ – possibly provides an indication of this sound source, although it could equally be a more poetic interpretation of the soundworld of the piece. It is for this reason – the impact of the title on the interpretation of the work – that ‘Extramusical Narrative’ has been indicated in a secondary position.

Because the work is entirely structured around this slow ‘opening up’ of the spectral filtering, this is one of the few works in my portfolio to clearly evoke ‘Parametric Narrative’, which is given a weighting of ‘Strong Primary’: this element of the work completely dominates the listening experience, and not only impacts the narrative but simply *is* itself the narrative for the work – i.e., this slow unveiling is the ‘story’ told by

the piece, together with any interpretation of what the sound materials might be or might indicate (hence the inclusion of ‘Material Narrative’ with a ‘secondary’ weighting). And, because this process entirely determines the form of the work, ‘Formal Narrative’ is also asserted, since the slow change of parameter equally plays out as an experience of formal development and change.

Finally, it is likely that ‘informed listeners’ – so for example the electroacoustic community or others with significant studio experience, as opposed to the general public – will recognise the process at work: i.e., they will recognise that they are hearing a reverse process of spectral filtering. This produces a potential difference in the interpretation of the work, with the attention of the ‘informed listener’ drawn to the process, while an ‘uninformed listener’ is more likely to draw more poetic associations with what they are hearing. Thus, for the ‘informed listener’ the work will invoke ‘Studio Narrative’, which is given a ‘secondary’ weighting since this will not be a factor for other audiences. This also represents the primary difference between ‘composed narrative’ and ‘received narrative’ in this work: what I think of and experience as a ‘slow spectral unveiling’ tends to be interpreted through any of a number of poetic metaphors by those not familiar with this technique.

In terms of subject position, the 8-channel presentation of the work creates a very particular perspective: as described above, the timbral elements are separated out and distributed in a ring of loudspeakers around the listener, and placed into very slow rotation. As a result, the listener feels like they are ‘inside’ the work, both timbrally and spatially; the work is therefore experienced as the listener’s ‘environment’, which slowly builds up and crystallises around them over the course of the piece.

4.3.3 Maledetta

STRONG PRIMARY: Extramusical narrative

PRIMARY: Material narrative; Formal narrative; Structural narrative; Mimetic narrative; Embodied narrative; Spatial narrative; Studio narrative; Intertextual narrative.

WEAK SECONDARY: Textual narrative.

As mentioned above, ‘Maledetta’ invokes the highest number of narrative modes, invoking ten out of eleven modes; the only mode not invoked is ‘Parametric Narrative’. In part this is because ‘Maledetta’ is an example of a particularly clear narrative approach: it draws explicitly upon a pre-existing and fairly well-known story, that of

Euripides's anti-hero Medea, via Cherubini's opera of the same name. Thus, while the work itself does not actually 'tell a story', it clearly references a recognisable story, from which it imports characters, themes, and moments, rather than wholesale plot. This is clearly therefore an example of both 'Extramusical Narrative' and 'Intertextual Narrative', with pointers to Euripides and occasional, very brief quotes from the piano reduction of Cherubini's opera, as well as from Maria Callas's performance of the lead character. Mostly these serve as source materials for heavy timbral and gestural transformations in the work, but occasionally there is a kind of 'parting of the clouds' where the transformations lift very briefly to expose the original piano or vocal materials. As a result, 'Textual Narrative' has been included as a 'Weak Secondary': there are brief snippets of voice, sometimes containing a few words of Italian, but arguably it is more the presence of a speaking or singing voice that is significant, rather than the words sung or spoken themselves.

All of the other Narrative Modes are indicated as 'Primary' here, with the sole exception of 'Parametric Narrative'; while sonic and musical parameters are of course explored and developed, this is insufficiently systematic for 'Parametric Narrative' to be invoked as it was, for example, above in 'Radiate'.

Musical materials have clear identities, some of which are very clear to any listener – for example piano and soprano as above, but also church bells, children's voices, etc. – many of which have immediate narrative implications (such as the church bells), so 'Material Narrative' is certainly at play here. As above, some of the processing used here – especially the spectral and gestural transformations – may be familiar to experienced studio composers, so 'Studio Narrative' is likely to be invoked for such listeners. The strong and clear gestures involved have a strongly embodied character, in part because of the physical actions I used in the studio to create them; this results in qualities of pacing and range that align with our embodied sense of physical gestures, so 'Embodied Narrative' is indeed a part of the listener experience here, and 'Mimetic Narrative', although not quite the same, is similarly invoked by these same materials. There is a clear use of space – for instance a more abstracted range of movements from distant to close, and from near to distant, but also spatial placements connected to some of the specific sound symbols, such as the distant placement of church bells and birds – thus bringing 'Spatial Narrative' into the mix. The piece has a relatively clear formal construction, presented in sections with short interludes, which, especially when

connected to the indication of an underlying ‘story’ (the Medea narrative) suggests this formal organisation as a locus for narrative meaning.

As mentioned above, this is the only work that gives a ‘Primary’ weighting for ‘Structural Narrative’. This is perhaps a bit tentative, but my argument here is that, since the piano reduction of Cherubini’s opera is a kind of ‘ghost’ scaffolding for the work, and as it provides the material for much of the foregrounded timbral gestures, there is a kind of harmonic ‘ghost layer’ buried beneath the work that peeks out just enough to provide a sense of structure to the work that is often absent from my compositions.

‘Composed narrative’ vs. ‘received narrative’ here will depend on the extent to which the Medea source material is recognised and/or understood by the listener: if not, then the gulf between ‘composed’ and ‘received’ narratives will be substantial; if recognised, however, these will be more closely aligned. Further, since the musical and sculptural surface of the work is heavily based around specific forms of spectral and gestural processing, this alignment will be even closer if the listener is equally familiar with the tools involved (hence the ‘Studio Narrative’ discussion above). However, this perhaps places too many limits on the expectations of an ‘informed’ or ‘expert listener’ – i.e., to be sufficiently familiar simultaneously with the Medea story, with Cherubini, with Callas, and with the software processing involved in the work.

Subject placement is arguably somewhat more traditional here than for many of my portfolio works: the listener has the sense that a story is playing out, regardless of whether or not they are able to clearly ‘decode’ the story in question; and so, the listener is placed in the position of a traditional ‘viewer’, listening to someone tell them a story (again, possibly a somewhat opaque story, but a story nevertheless). Therefore, and importantly, I would argue that ‘Maledetta’ is my only portfolio work in which the sense of a ‘narrator’ materialises: much as in fiction, it is not assumed that I, the composer, am telling the story, nor Euripides; and yet, there is a sense that the story is ‘being told’, thereby invoking the sense of a traditional narrator – see [Andean 2014b](#) for a more in-depth discussion of this question.

4.3.4 Between the Leaves

STRONG PRIMARY: Formal narrative; Mimetic narrative.

PRIMARY: Parametric narrative; Extramusical narrative.

WEAK SECONDARY: Textual narrative; Intertextual narrative.

‘Between the Leaves’ is perhaps in some ways similar to ‘Radiate’ above, but at the material rather than the formal level: all of the materials for the piece stem from variations of a single process, the source of which is invisible to the listener (in fact a recording of John Cage’s voice). The process outputs a series of ‘clicks’ in a range of gestures, generally either accelerating or decelerating; however, no two clicks are exactly alike, and equally no two gestures are quite the same. As the clicks are fairly steadfastly uninformative as a material, this is one of only two works in the portfolio that fails to evoke the ‘Material Narrative’ mode; on the other hand, the accelerating/decelerating phrases have a recognisable ‘real-world’ quality to them, despite not having a real-world gestural origin, and so are a very clear evocation of ‘Mimetic Narrative’.

The form of this work is particularly clear and immediately accessible to the listener: the click gestures are layered and sequenced to provide a balance between monotonous repetition and detailed counterpoint – behind which an obscured soundscape layer struggles to be heard, sometimes masked by the mechanical foreground, occasionally spilling forward into the foreground; then, at about the two-thirds mark, the piece slows to a halt and then turns back on itself: the click trajectory changes direction, and we move back through the piece in reverse, gaining speed as we go. The formal narrative, then, is essentially that the piece ‘runs out of steam’, then begins to unravel in reverse and is eventually undone, until it finishes where it began, providing a particularly clear example of a situation in which Form equals Narrative.

I have also indicated ‘Parametric Narrative’ here, due to the focus on the expanding and contracting click gestures, as well as Textual Narrative and Intertextual Narrative, as John Cage’s voice appears at key formal moments in the piece – once with a clear pair of words (“willow tree”), which is thereby the slightest of invocations of Textual Narrative – culled from his spoken work ‘Indeterminacy’ ([Cage 1992](#)); this reference is therefore a ‘weak secondary’ instance of Intertextual Narrative. Finally, the programme notes (as well as the title) draw on the above points to suggest a possible narrative interpretation of the work that might not otherwise have been the listener’s

experience, thereby providing an instance of ‘Extramusical Narrative’. This then represents an interesting example of Composed vs. Received Narrative: the story suggested in the programme notes, as is often the case, contains some fact and some fiction – some of what is presented aligns with my experience of making the work, and some is a fiction that I propose to listeners despite the fact that it is not particularly connected to my own experience when listening to the work.

Finally, in terms of ‘subject position’, this is a work that, somewhat playfully, keeps the listener at arm’s length: there are aspects that are recognisable and understandable, but there are other aspects that are stubbornly unrevealing, perhaps leaving the piece as a kind of ‘aural puzzle’. The listener is not ‘invited in’ to this work; it is a box that is placed before them for them to examine.

4.3.5 Hyvät Matkustajat

PRIMARY: Material narrative; Extramusical narrative.

SECONDARY: Formal narrative; Embodied narrative; Spatial narrative; Textual narrative.

This composition had a first life as a quite different piece: a quite ‘purist’ soundscape composition, stitched together from field recordings from around Finland. For this final version of the piece many of these have been dramatically transformed, primarily using spectral techniques; however, there are some passages of the piece where some of these field recordings remain audible, allowing the soundscape element to remain as a cornerstone of the work. Thus, ‘Material Narrative’ is quite important, as these very recognisable sound materials – cars, birds, fire, children playing, etc. – form clear ‘scenes’ that, taken together, suggest a kind of ‘storyline’ for the work, in a typical ‘Cinema for the Ear’ manner. I have also suggested ‘Extramusical Narrative’ as the other ‘primary’ mode here, as the title and programme notes suggest a coherent interpretation of the work for the listener to engage with (or not).

The form of the work is quite clear: it separates out into two clear sections – the first more soundscape-oriented, the second more timbrally-oriented and more traditionally ‘musical’, complete with melodic and harmonic elements – separated and bridged by a short ‘gossamer’ spectral bridge. However, while the clarity of the form suggests ‘Formal Narrative’, this binary form is not necessarily particularly instructive on its own; unlike the formal ‘story’ suggested by ‘Between the Leaves’ above, this

bridged A/B form does not particularly suggest a specific interpretation, and so we relegate 'Formal Narrative' to the 'secondary' category.

'Embodied Narrative', 'Spatial Narrative', and 'Textual Narrative' are also claimed as 'secondary' modes; the first two as consequences of some of the clear sound materials from the original field recordings, while 'Textual Narrative' is claimed based solely on the appearance of the words found in the title – 'Hyvät matkustajat', or 'Dear travellers', spoke by a train conductor – which, although simple, has an outsized role in suggesting a 'travel' narrative for the work, which in the programme notes I suggest as part of a 'sonic postcard from Finland' narrative. As in the previous work, the title and programme notes thereby cause a potential blurring between 'composed narrative' and 'received narrative'.

Finally, the 'subject position' for this work is, in my view, a bit more sophisticated than in the earlier works, and a bit more successful as a result. The original work is quadrophonic – i.e., four channels, stereo front and stereo rear – offering the opportunity for some control of the spatial relationship with the listener, for both the soundscape materials – for example the cars travelling quickly from in front of the listener to behind the listener – and the spectral materials, some of which are placed to the distant front or rear, some of which rotate around the listener, etc. In all cases, the listener is at the centre of the work, and is directly implicated: this is a work that is 'happening to' the listener; the listener is the protagonist. This is achieved through a combination of the nature of the sound materials and their treatment, placement, and presentation.

4.3.6 Ainnurruvar II

PRIMARY: Material narrative; Embodied narrative.

SECONDARY: Formal narrative; Studio narrative.

As with 'Medusan Torso', the narrative properties of 'Ainnurruvar II' are heavily determined by its predecessor, 'Ainnurruvar I'. The first 'Ainnurruvar', composed for four performers playing an array of toys and objects, was in some ways an attempt to write an acousmatic or musique concrète work for a live ensemble; this then led to the temptation to recast the work as a new studio-composed tape piece, which resulted in 'Ainnurruvar II'. In essence, then, the 'Ainnurruvar' project began as tape music written for ensemble, and ended here with a work for ensemble transformed into tape music. The

acousmatic version uses largely the same (or similar) sound sources as the original live version, and, to hold to the spirit of the original, there is almost no processing of the sound materials in the acousmatic version.

While this was an engaging and successful exercise, it does mean that the second ‘Ainnurruvar’ is largely shackled to the first, in terms of concept, materials, musical discourse, and, most significantly for our purposes here, in terms of narrative. By virtue of the methodology just described, the majority of sound sources remain readily identifiable in the finished work, leaving us with images of whistles, fans, spinning tops, vacuum cleaners, fans, bells, a kettle, duct tape, pouring water... However, the work was conceived primarily with a *musique concrète*-style attitude to sounding objects, essentially via ‘reduced listening’, which is fundamentally anti-narrative, and therefore this varied collection of interesting sound sources, although sonically engaging, does not substantially develop a particularly coherent sense of narrative.

‘Ainnurruvar II’ invokes the lowest number of modes: four overall, with two ‘primary’ weightings and two ‘secondary’ weightings. ‘Material Narrative’ is given priority, as many of the sound materials are either identifiable or more broadly recognisable as an archetype. ‘Embodied Narrative’ is also engaged as a ‘primary’ mode; since everything heard in the work is essentially performed live by hand in front of the microphone, without subsequent processing, perhaps inevitably the embodied qualities of the performance gestures carry over and communicate well in the composition. In addition, these gestures have been extended and sometimes exaggerated using stereo panning that maps the energy trajectories of these gestures, which amplifies the sense of embodied recognition.

‘Secondary’ modes here include ‘Formal Narrative’ and ‘Studio Narrative’. The form of the work is extremely clear and somewhat rigid, falling into four clear sections, each with a distinct set of sound materials, with substantial pauses between the sections. However, as with the binary form in ‘Hyvät Matkustajat’ above, the clarity of the form does not necessarily or automatically mean that this carries much narrative weight; there does not appear to be much of a ‘message’ behind the work’s breakdown into four clear sections, for which reason ‘Formal Narrative’ has been relegated to ‘secondary’ status. ‘Studio Narrative’ is largely invoked by the quite vigorous panning on some of the materials, with something of the effect of being able to hear the composer’s hand on the pan pot, especially in the third section; strong enough that it cannot be ignored in the

interpretation of the work, but not clearly communicative enough to allow it ‘primary’ status.

With this work, the ‘composed narrative’ is potentially quite different from the ‘received narrative’: the ‘composed narrative’ is dominated by the real-world sounding objects and how they can best be deployed and layered, but these are not necessarily informative or fully evocative for the general listener.

Consideration of the ‘subject position’ in this work, I think, helps to highlight its area of weakness: the relationship between the work and the listener really is not very clear. I think this is because of its genesis as a translation of a live performance, leaving the acousmatic work like something of an empty vessel: we hear an engaging and vigorous performance, without the enjoyment or spectacle of ‘being there’, and without anything to fill that gap. The work is not ‘happening to’ the listener; nor is it a story being ‘told to’ the listener; nor is it a ‘window on an environment’, nor any of the other paradigms described for ‘subject position’ in the other portfolio works; this aspect of ‘Ainnurruvar II’ falls flat, and the work is the weaker for it.

4.3.7 Déchirure

PRIMARY: Material narrative; Mimetic narrative; Embodied narrative; Extramusical narrative; Intertextual narrative.

SECONDARY: Formal narrative; Studio narrative.

WEAK SECONDARY: Textual narrative.

One of the interesting points regarding ‘composed narrative’ in ‘Déchirure’, unusually, is not about what dominates the narrative but rather about what does not. This composition was prepared for submission to the biannual ‘Prix Presque Rien’ competition, a project in which composers are invited to work with sound materials from Luc Ferrari’s archive in order to create an original composition. Therefore, unusually for an acousmatic work, I did not record the sound materials myself; these were recorded over the years by Ferrari and his wife, Brunhild Ferrari, providing a collection from which I could select sounds and work with them as I saw fit to create the work.

I would have anticipated that this would make the compositional process feel quite unique and substantially different from my usual work, and that this aspect would dominate my narrative experience of the composition. However, neither of these proved to be the case: the compositional process felt just the same with ‘Déchirure’ as if I had

recorded the sounds myself – i.e., once I began working in the studio, there was no appreciable difference to my process. Interestingly, neither is my experience of the work shaped by the sounds’ origins in Ferrari’s archives: the work feels just as much my own as any of my other works, and my interpretation of the work’s narrative qualities is not through a Ferrari-inflected prism ([Blackburn 2017](#)). (The sole exception to this is the briefest of moments, at 5m15s – a key point in the piece, in the bridge just before the final section – in which both Ferrari and Brunhild appear ever so briefly, to simply each say ‘Fine’ to the other).

On the other hand, the programme notes tell a different story, and suggest a stronger narrative importance for the Ferrari connection, as well as constructing a narrative that ties the title – ‘Déchirure’, or ‘tearing’ – to some of Ferrari’s ideas, specifically that, through the act of recording, the original sounds have been ‘ripped’ from the world and moment which birthed them. As discussed in my [Journal of Sonic Studies article](#) (2014a), and as is often the case, this presentation of the work is a fiction, at least as far as my compositional intentions had been concerned; rather, it presents a (hopefully) coherent narrative around the work that can serve as a ‘hook’ on which the listener can hang their initial encounter with the composition, if they so choose. Thus, ‘Extramusical Narrative’ is included among the ‘primary’ modes for ‘Déchirure’, as the story told by the programme notes has a strong likelihood of playing a defining role in the listener’s narrative experience of the work. This thereby causes a significant rift between the ‘composed narrative’ and ‘received narrative’ – unless we want to extend the compositional process to include the writing of the programme notes, and to claim the latter as the final stage of composition.

‘Déchirure’ is identified as invoking eight ‘narrative modes’ – second only to ‘Maledetta’, which is associated with ten. ‘Déchirure’ is perhaps the most ‘typical’ acousmatic work in the portfolio – or, more specifically, the most easily identifiable with and representative of the ‘Cinema for the Ear’ approach to the genre; as it most cleanly represents the genre and qualities for which the ‘narrative modes’ model was imagined and intended, it is unsurprising that it is one of the work that maps most clearly across the categories. (As discussed above, the higher count for ‘Maledetta’ was rather because of that work’s origins in a pre-existing and recognisable narrative.)

In composing the work, I grouped sound materials in a ‘reduced listening’ manner – i.e., into related spectromorphologies, typologies, etc. – then worked each set of materials into a block. These were then arranged as a series of formal sections, with

lighter, more active gestural interludes between sections. I then identified sounds that had a particularly clear character and that ‘stood out’ from their surroundings, and seeded them both earlier and later in the piece, to serve as either as ‘echoes’ or as ‘pre-echoes’ of significant materials, which thereby gives these sounds significantly greater narrative weight. These sounds thereby play a strong role in creating a narrative interpretation of the work which, while not part of my thought process in creating the work, immediately emerged for me on first listening back to the completed work. Perhaps the clearest examples are the train sounds, especially the plaintive call of the train whistle, suggesting narratives of travel, departure, longing, separation... These are then easily tied to the title, which had initially been chosen for rather more mundane reasons (i.e., the climactic appearance of a sudden tearing sound right at the end of the work). Thus, the narrative that I myself experience when I listen to the work is not related to the ideas that fed the composition of the work.

Thus, the clarity of some of the materials in interpreting the work indicates ‘Material Narrative’ as quite strong here. I have also included ‘Mimetic’ and ‘Embodied Narrative’ among the ‘primary’ modes due to the quick, spectral gestural work in the interludes, for reasons similar to those discussed above under ‘Maledetta’ (equally leading to the inclusion of ‘Studio Narrative’ as a secondary mode here). ‘Intertextual Narrative’ is also included here due to the significance of the connection with Ferrari and his work.

The form of the work is quite clear and, I think, serves the piece well. It falls into four distinct sections, each with its own character and sonic discourse, with a stronger connection between the first and final sections; with, as described above, either pauses or faster, more active interludes between them (in essence, the same formal design used in ‘Ainnurruvar II’, as described above). While this inevitably is one of the elements used to construct interpretative meaning, this organisation does not assert any particularly clear narrative idea, and so ‘Formal Narrative’, while present and relevant, is relegated to ‘secondary’ status.

Finally, ‘Textual Narrative’ is also indicated, with a ‘Weak Secondary’ status, based solely on the ‘Fine; Fine’ snippet described above. This is perhaps a bit of a stretch, since this is hardly terribly evocative; however, listeners tend to ‘lock on’ to even the smallest bit of speech and text in order to deduce meaning, so I think it is justified to include this here.

‘Subject position’ in ‘Déchirure’ is, in my opinion, the most effective of the portfolio. For example, the first section gives the impression of environmental immersion, e.g. through its chirping crickets, before a sense of approaching menace that gives the impression of the work rushing towards the listener with alarming speed. In the *EMS* article I discuss the potential confusion between ‘the work rushing towards the listener’ and ‘the listener rushing towards the work’ ([Andean 2014b](#): 7), inspired by Eric Clarke’s discussion of ‘Wozzeck’ ([Clarke 2005](#)); the end of section one of ‘Déchirure’ provides a good example, in which, because the soundworld includes very clear indications of rushing transport (train, helicopter) there is a definite sense of the work moving towards the listener, rather than the other way around. On the other hand, the strong stereo movement of the third section, as well as the quick gestural passages in the interludes, give the clear impression of the work taking place ‘around’ the listener, with the listener sitting at the centre of fast-moving peripheral action. In both cases, the listener is the anchor and reference point of the work; not the protagonist necessarily, but neither is the listener a ‘passive observer’ (see [Andean 2014b](#)) – rather, the listener has been dropped into a world of movement and action, of masses and events.

‘Déchirure’ was used as the primary ‘case study’ of my article [‘Sound and Narrative: Acousmatic Composition as Artistic Research’](#) in *Journal of Sonic Studies* (Andean 2014a), including a detailed consideration of the work’s narrative process, Extramusical Narrative elements, and the differences between the ‘composed narrative’ and ‘received narrative’ in the work, so for more detail on the above points the reader is referred to that article.

4.3.8 Psygeío

SECONDARY: Formal narrative, Structural narrative, Mimetic narrative, Parametric narrative, Spatial narrative, Studio narrative, Extramusical narrative.

‘Psygeío’ is unique among the portfolio works, in that, despite indicating the third highest total number of modes (seven), all of these are given a ‘secondary’ weighting; i.e., no ‘narrative modes’ are indicated as ‘primary’ for this composition. What this indicates is that narrative is, perhaps, not as central to the listening experience here as it is for many of the other portfolio works.

The work is composed entirely from recordings of an old refrigerator. Using a singular sound source for an acousmatic composition often gives a very likely indicator

of the narrative response to the work; however, this is not so much the case here, because a) it is difficult to specifically identify the sounds we hear with a refrigerator, and b) even if the association were made, a refrigerator is not the most narratively rich symbol or imagery. The work is texturally evocative, and occasionally gesturally evocative, but not narratively evocative. Not only do the materials remain somewhat abstract, but so too does the discourse, with the work proceeding either in very slow waves, as in the first section – which is far too slow for embodied or other mimetic responses – or in very fast, abstract gestures, as in the interlude – or almost a ‘gestural solo’ – before the final section, but again these passages are quite abstract and resist narrative interpretation. The primary exception is the bridge between the first and second sections, which presents a brief soundscape window on the real world, with footsteps approaching from the distance; however, this window is quite brief, and although the situation is recognisable, there is little to connect it with what occurs either before or after, so it remains a slightly puzzling island of imagery in an otherwise opaque work.

Because so little of the sound material is recognisable, this is one of only two portfolio works for which ‘Material Narrative’ has not been indicated. On the other hand, it is one of the only works for which ‘Structural Narrative’ is indicated, albeit weakly; this is because the work is underpinned, somewhat surreptitiously, by a harmonic relationship between a pedal tone ‘tonic’ and a pitch one whole tone lower, essentially a flattened 7th, which gets resolved at the end with a final acousmatic ‘cadence’ of sorts – thereby offering a glimpse of the ‘tension/release’ narrative that is at the heart of tonal musical narratology, in its simplest form. The focus on very slow changes of texture suggests a role for ‘Parametric Narrative’ here – again relatively rare in this portfolio, with only three appearances. Some occasionally clear spatial placements allow for a limited degree of ‘Spatial Narrative’; the quick gestural work – again, as seen above in both ‘Déchirure’ and ‘Maledetta’ – allows for a limited degree of ‘Studio Narrative’; and, here too, the programme notes provide a potential ‘hook’ to grant listeners a ‘way in’ to experiencing and interpreting what is essentially a fairly abstract sound work, leading to a degree of ‘Extramusical Narrative’.

‘Psygeío’ is a clear case in which ‘composed narrative’ and ‘received narrative’ are likely to be significantly different; because neither the materials nor the sonic discourse in the composition impose clear or specific senses of meaning, ‘Psygeío’ remains quite open to interpretation and to unique personal experiences of the work. And, finally, in terms of subject position, much of the work is immersive, with only brief –

and thereby slightly unsettling – moments in which the drones and textures lift to reveal a momentary ‘scene’ with a clearer sense of listener placement, whether concrete (approaching footsteps) or more abstract (rapid spectral gestures moving around the listener).

4.3.9 Spores

PRIMARY: Material narrative, Formal narrative, Embodied narrative.

SECONDARY: Structural narrative, Mimetic narrative, Studio narrative.

Note that the original title for this composition was ‘The Friedman Translations: Translation A’, as part of a project similar to that described in ‘Ainnurruvar II’ above, but in reverse – i.e., where ‘Ainnurruvar’ began as a live work which was then translated into a studio composition, with ‘The Friedman Translations’ a studio work was created that would then be redesigned as a live work (for a duo of piano and percussion). However, especially when taking the acousmatic work on its own, this proved to be rather a clumsy and unevocative title, so I renamed it ‘Spores’ for its publication on the *empreintes DIGITALes* cd. That title is retained in this text, with the exception of the concert programme notes found in the appendices.

This final portfolio work is in some ways quite simple. It falls into two relatively clear sections, the second largely mimicking the first with a certain number of variations. The sound sources are piano and a number of percussion elements, but for the most part these do not communicate particularly clearly to the listener. It has the clearest harmonic structure of any of the portfolio works, albeit an extremely simple one, with a clear tonic, sometimes paired with the major third, with a larger final cadential passage that provides a perfect V-I cadence, thereby, like ‘Psygeío’ but significantly more clearly here, providing an element of the ‘tension/resolution’, or even of the ‘departure/return’ narrative paradigm from tonal musical narratology ([Huron 2006](#)).

However, the narrative ‘heart’ of the work is in the movement in each section from a mimetic ‘heartbeat’ material (in fact a dramatically slowed down version of a small plastic cup teetering back and forth on piano strings), towards more traditionally ‘musical’ materials. I would argue that it is specifically the *movement* from the mimetic material to the musical material that provides the narrative impetus here, rather than the specific materials themselves: the opening material, while referential to a human heartbeat – without actually being a literal recording of a human heartbeat (which, in the

opening of the second section, is intercut with human breathing, thereby extending the image), thereby providing a strong example of ‘Mimetic Narrative’ – is arguably less important than its slow transformation to an eventual emergence as an unabashedly musical theme. This creates a ‘sonic caterpillar into a musical butterfly’ narrative, which I think is the dominant experience with this work. This is shared between both ‘composed narrative’ and ‘received narrative’, with the addition that either of the two titles for the work has a potentially significant impact on the possible narrative interpretations by the public.

With this work, ‘subject position’ is extremely traditional, and essentially aligns with the typical musical experience, rather than with the expanded possibilities of acousmatic subject position discussed for some of the previous portfolio works.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Assessment

Overall, this project was successful and proved effective. To begin with, the focus on the specific term ‘narrative’ appears to have struck a chord in the wider electroacoustic community, and the fields of narratology and narrative studies provided a useful perspective on this aspect of acousmatic music. I was able to bring together strands of theory from a number of different disciplines in order to construct a sensible and coherent approach. The culmination of the project in the ‘narrative modes’ framework is a strong final outcome, in that it is clear, well-structured, and useful beyond the confines of this project.

The proposal to balance the theoretical work with a creative portfolio has also proved effective. My portfolio works and their respective concerts were successful, and received positive responses from audiences; the publication of seven of the portfolio works on a cd on the prestigious *empreintes DIGITALes* label is a further sign of their strength, as is their presentation at festivals around the world and awards from the Prix Presque Rien (for ‘Déchirure’) and the Sonic Arts Awards (for ‘Psygeío’). Importantly, the connection between the written work and the portfolio work proved productive for both, with the creative process providing important material for the written work (for example in the [‘Acousmatic composition as artistic research’](#) article (Andean 2014a)) and offering a useful set of test cases for the ‘narrative modes’ model (as seen above in [section 4](#)).

5.2 Impact

Enough time has passed since the publication of the first article included in this doctoral study that we can begin to observe and assess the impact that some of this work has had on the electroacoustic community.

The primary impact is arguably the simplest: since the 2010 publication of my [‘Musical/Narrative Dichotomy’](#) article, ‘narrative’ has become the key word for discussing this aspect of acousmatic music. While it was previously deployed by Luc Ferrari in the 1960s and by Katharine Norman more recently, this use (especially Ferrari’s) was not systematic, and did not result in a significant turn in the literature. The take-up of ‘narrative’ in acousmatic theory since 2010 includes authors who directly

reference my work (e.g. [Correa 2023](#), [Giannoukakis 2016](#)), as well as those who do not (e.g. [Camci 2021](#), [Roads 2016](#)); however, I would argue that this latter group is in fact a sign of the extent of the impact of the 2010 article, having become ‘seminal’ to an extent that it no longer requires direct referencing. Again, I think this position is justified by the shift in the ubiquity of the term post-2010, compared to its relative rarity prior to 2010.

Of course, to some extent, this is simply because my initial work on this project happened to catch the zeitgeist: there has been a ‘narrative turn’ in a range of fields (see e.g. [Czarniawska 2004](#)), and I was not alone in doing doctoral work on electroacoustic narrative around that time. However, not all of these studies directly talked about ‘narrative’, but rather about, for example, ‘storytelling’ (see e.g. [Amelides 2015](#)), which is only one end of the narrative spectrum in acousmatic music; and, unfortunately, the most significant of the other doctoral research on electroacoustic narrative was cut short by the sad passing of its author, Bill Brunson. Regardless, my discussion of acousmatic narrative in the [2010 article](#) appears to have been something of a catalyst, around which a certain amount of acousmatic discourse since that time has crystallised.

The [2016 ‘Narrative Modes’ article](#) has also had a measurable impact, seen in the use of the ‘narrative modes’ either as a theoretical framework (e.g. [Boersen 2022](#)) or as a kind of compositional method (e.g. [Naylor 2022](#)). I predict that, over time, this will come to be the primary impact of this project, largely due to the potential usefulness of the model’s clear categorisations.

5.3 Further directions

In my 2010 [‘Musical/Narrative Dichotomy’ article](#), I ended with the following:

Of course, such theorising would benefit enormously from empirical study, testing and experiment; hopefully what we have proposed here might offer fruitful prospects for such research. It can also hope to offer, if not new avenues for acousmatic composition, perhaps possibilities for slight changes in compositional perspective which might prove rewarding. Regardless, these subjects [...] are rich and fascinating topics which warrant further consideration and discussion, and can surely benefit from both speculative conjecture such as that presented here, and more detailed exploration and experiment. (Andean 2010: 115)

Looking back, this seems prescient, as it accurately addresses both the work that has been done since and the potential that remains to be explored. I was able to successfully provide ‘further consideration and discussion’ as well as more ‘speculative conjecture’ across the subsequent articles presented in this project, as have other writers and theorists since; and, these articles have indeed provided potential ‘changes in compositional perspective’, both in my own work and, as seen above under ‘Impact’, that of others in the community.

What remains to be investigated further is primarily the ‘empirical study, testing and experiment’ suggested above. For example, I believe there is much to be learned and gained from the examination of differences in the brain’s responses to musical vs. narrative stimulus, as well as between different forms of narrative stimulus: for example, are the same areas of the brain ‘triggered’ by narrative qualities regardless of medium, or are these substantially different when triggered by sound vs. vision (for example film) vs. text? There are a number of possible answers to such questions, each of which would have substantial implications for these areas of enquiry. I will soon be seeking funding to support a study based on the collection of EEG data to investigate some of these questions.

In terms of the direct extension and continuation of the theory and ideas presented in this project, my position continues to place its emphasis on the primacy of the listening experience, and thus my interests remain focused on questions directly related to that experience, rather than on rabbit-holes of ‘theory for theory’s sake’. An example of the latter would be, in my opinion, the attempt to go more deeply in applying the granular detail of text-centric narratological theory to acousmatic music, any further than I have already done within this doctoral project: while possibly an engaging intellectual exercise, the distance between these two media – text/literature and sound/music – is sufficiently substantial that too much is lost in translation, as it were, marking the results as of questionable usefulness (as discussed in [Andean 2014b](#)). (Although, the incomplete doctoral work by Bill Brunson was in fact moving precisely in this direction, and had he had the chance to complete this work Brunson might well have proved me wrong on this point.) On the other hand, one of the issues discussed in this project (primarily in the *EMS* conference proceedings article ([Andean 2014b](#))) that I think does warrant further exploration is the question of ‘subject position’ (and the related question of the ‘acousmatic narrator’): Does the listener interpret what they hear as something that is

‘happening to’ them, or rather as something that they are being ‘told about’? etc. My instincts tell me that there is more to be uncovered here, which could fruitfully be explored through a substantive qualitative research project addressing these aspects of the acousmatic listening experience directly.

In short, I believe this doctoral project has achieved its aims, and has successfully delineated and explored an important aspect of acousmatic music, which has begun to have a measurable impact on the acousmatic community. In addition, the project has opened up areas that warrant further development and research, some of which I hope to embark upon in the future.

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Appendix A: Articles

- 1) [The Musical/Narrative Dichotomy: *Sweet Anticipation* and some implications for acousmatic music](#)
- 2) [Sound and Narrative: Acousmatic composition as artistic research](#)
- 3) [Towards a Narratology of Acousmatic Music](#)
- 4) [Narrative Modes in Acousmatic Music](#)
- 5) [Cultural Relativism in Acousmatic Music](#)
- 6) [An Embodied Approach to Acousmatic Music](#)
- 7) [Approaches to Narrative in Acousmatic Music](#)
- 8) [Space and Place in Acousmatic Music](#)

Article 1: The Musical/Narrative Dichotomy: Sweet Anticipation and some implications for acousmatic music

Andean, J. (2010) 'The Musical–Narrative Dichotomy: *Sweet Anticipation* and Some Implications for Acousmatic Music'. *Organised Sound* 15(2): 107–15.

The Musical–Narrative Dichotomy: *Sweet Anticipation* and some implications for acousmatic music

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Acousmatic music is heavily informed by a central duality which lies at the heart of the art form, between the musical layer on the one hand, and the narrative layer on the other. Emphasis shifts between these two layers, and they interact to construct further layers of meaning. In his book *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*, David Huron proposes that our responses to musical stimuli are in fact identical to our responses to real-world stimuli, and follow the same processes. This appears to negate somewhat the dichotomy of musical and narrative layers. We propose a shift in perspective away from a vision of parallel musical and narrative layers, and towards a dualism built from staggered response times to different aspects of the same material.

1. INTRODUCTION

Acousmatic music is heavily informed by a central duality which lies at the heart of the art form. It is a duality which plays a significant role in defining how a listener receives a work, and as a result it profoundly informs the manner in which composers approach their work. The relative lack of agreed terminology and definitive literature makes discussion of such issues difficult, but we will attempt a consideration of the current approach to this duality, and then propose some possible shifts in perspective based on recent research and literature, and some possibilities for future directions.

2. ACOUSMATIC MUSIC AND *MUSIQUE CONCRETE*

It is notoriously difficult to provide an adequate, inclusive definition of acousmatic music, and in fact the extent to which composers avoid doing so is sometimes remarkable, though understandable. Acousmatic music is a culture and a practice first, and a theory after; as a result its boundaries, if they exist at all, are fluid and only vaguely discernible at best, making an accurate definition close to impossible. Also, it could be argued that the ‘acousmatic’ is a creative act of *listening* rather than of composing; to some extent, any electroacoustic work – or, indeed, any musical work whatsoever – could in theory be successfully listened to from the

acousmatic perspective, and thereby considered an acousmatic work. However, a body of work and a collection of composers who are identified or self-identify as ‘acousmatic’ do indeed exist, and while the remarkable range of work that can be found therein seems to defy any attempt at definition, there are a certain number of collectively accepted characteristics which can be offered here. This does not imply an intention to limit or confine by determining set boundaries, but rather to simply describe perceivable characteristics of acousmatic culture and practice.

Acousmatic music evolved from the *musique concrète* of the 1950s, and the concerns of *musique concrète* form the heart of acousmatic art. Central among these concerns is Pierre Schaeffer’s notion of ‘reduced listening’ (Schaeffer 1966: 270). This proposes a listening paradigm in which the source of a sound is deliberately ignored, in order to focus on the sonic properties and characteristics inherent to the sound. The argument is that we are blinded to the musical potential of the sounds that surround us by their roles as signifiers for the objects or actions which produced them, and that this potential is revealed once we, through a conscious act, remove their significative identities, redefining a sound according only to its own sonic characteristics.

We already find ourselves embroiled in a central terminological debate – use of the word ‘music’: ‘acousmatic music’, ‘musical potential’. The primary issue here is whether the materials and methods of both *musique concrète* and acousmatic works constitute a sufficient departure from previous musical forms to necessitate a break with the concept of the ‘musical’; it has often been accurately pointed out that much of the genre, in terms of both compositional processes and the completed works, share more in common with non-musical arts – primarily cinema, but also extending to painting, sculpture and literature. Our purpose here, however, is to eventually expose the aforementioned duality inherent in the acousmatic genre in as clear a manner as possible; to this end, we will here accept the idea of the acousmatic as a ‘musical’ art, leaving this aspect of the

debate as an essentially terminological refinement to be discussed elsewhere.

Thus, we can further elaborate our definition of 'reduced listening' with the proposition that reduced listening allows for a musical appreciation of sound, regardless of source; while this includes sources traditionally considered 'musical', it also allows for the appropriation of real-world sounds as *musical* sound, or the redefinition of such sounds solely according to their musical properties. These include, but are not limited to, pitch, timbre, dynamics, and – very significantly – the ways in which these evolve over time;¹ thus, any sound including sounds previously considered non-musical – such as a car or train passing, footsteps or indeed any sound we hear around us – now becomes a musical object, with melodic shape, internal rhythm, colour, texture. While it can be argued that reduced listening's concern with the objective, non-significative properties of a sound is not necessarily inherently 'musical' by definition – that it is possible to consider, and then work with, these qualities of sound without making reference to the 'musical' – it can be countered that, in practice, the connection with the musical is, though perhaps not the *only* perspective in reduced listening, essentially always present – even, perhaps, central.

This is the key concept of *musique concrète*, and later of acousmatic music: the emancipation of sound, such that works can be created which are shaped through the musical deployment of recorded sounds.

2.1. The narrative layer

Initially, this was in essence the end of the definition. However, as *musique concrète* evolved it very quickly became apparent that, while this was indeed a significant revolution in the concept of music and process of composition, the theoretical emphasis on reduced listening was not, in practice, the end of the story on an esthetic² level. There is no doubt that the deliberate erasure of a sound's source in order to objectively apprehend the sound's musical qualities is a critical step in both the creation and appreciation of an acousmatic work. However, as this musical practice developed, it soon became clear that, without such constant, wilful, active denial of the possible sources of the sounds being heard, it is nearly impossible for the human mind *not* to ascribe, even if only unconsciously, a string of causes and sources³ for the sounds. These perceived sources are not necessarily directly linked with the *actual* source of a given recorded sound; the source may be surprising, or the sound may have been generated or altered in

the studio, and may be either entirely synthetically created, or only distantly related to an original source, and may be extremely abstract in nature. The mind, however, will almost always ascribe an active source for the sound, however vague – if not an actual object, then at least a sense of generative motion or activity.⁴ What matters to us here is not the actual source of the sound, but the *perceived* source or cause, or imagined possibilities for such.⁵

As a result, no matter how focused the creative act might be on the purely *musical* qualities of the sound, in practice, the listener – although also fully capable of appreciating this musical level – is almost certain to simultaneously create, perhaps unwittingly, an evolving mental image constructed from the reemergence of the sounds' previously denied role as signifiers. While reduced listening was revolutionary in adding a further dimension to our appreciation of the sounds thus arranged, it did not succeed in erasing or negating our in-built response to sound – the automatic and instinctive linking of a given sound with a source.

2.2. The dual layers of acousmatic music

Far from implying a failing of *musique concrète*, the unique beauty of the genre lies precisely in this duality: the purely musical world on the one hand – in which sound objects become musical objects, grow into phrases, and develop to become the musical flow of the piece as a whole – and on the other hand, the stream of sources and images these sounds evoke. This stream of images and identities has a tendency to coalesce and, over the duration of the work, to create a constructed identity for the piece. However, once again we run into a terminological problem regarding this second layer. A number of possibilities present themselves, and several are in use, each carrying its own perspective – for example, Denis Smalley's 'source-bonding' (Smalley 1994), Luc Ferrari's 'anecdotal music' (Ferrari and Gayou 2007: 29), Trevor Wishart's 'landscape' (Wishart 1986: 43), John Young's 'imagery' (Young 2007: 25), and 'mimesis' (Emmerson 1986: 17).

Several of these, however, refer to a quality of the *material*; the dichotomy we are considering here, however, is not one between referential and abstract

¹Denis Smalley's concept of 'spectromorphology' is critical here – see Smalley 1986.

²See Nattiez 1990.

³See Young 1996: 75.

⁴If we do not know what caused the gesture, at least we can surmise from its energetic profile that it could have been caused, and its spectro-morphology will provide evidence of the nature of such a cause. Causality, actual or surmised, is related not only to the physical intervention of breath, hand, or fingers, but also to natural and engineered events, visual analogues, psychological experiences felt or mediated through language and paralinguage, indeed any occurrence which seems to provoke a consequence, or consequence which seems to have been provoked by an occurrence' (Smalley 1986: 82). See also Wishart 1996.

⁵See Young 1996: 76.

material,⁶ although there is certainly a relationship between these two dichotomies. Rather, we particularly wish to emphasise the evolving experience of a work, as experienced over the duration of the work, resulting in a cumulative impression built from the flow of material – an experience which develops in two parallel and opposing streams. The first of these is musical; the second we will refer to as the ‘narrative layer’. This should not be seen as an implication of the presence of a ‘plot’ or storyline, or to emphasise linearity; rather, it is intended to draw attention to the identity constructed from the evolving stream of local images and identities over the duration of the piece, and hopefully to be an easily understood description of this aspect of the listening process. The possibilities offered by the narrative layer and the many processes and mechanisms by which it operates present a fascinating universe, accessed by composers through the manipulation of material to create symbols, metaphors, and an intricate and powerful network of relationships between these and related identities; indeed, composers such as Trevor Wishart and John Young have made such tools and methods a centrepiece of their compositional style.⁷

This, then, is the duality under consideration, from which acousmatic music draws its identity: the simultaneous and parallel existence of the musical and narrative layers. It should again be stressed that these terms – ‘narrative’ and ‘musical’ – are not here used to distinguish between different kinds or qualities of material; they are not, for example, intended to group real-world sounds on the one hand, and instrumentally related sounds on the other. Rather, they refer here to two distinct but simultaneous qualities of a work, and of the way in which the work is experienced; any and all material will tend to contribute to both of these two streams. It is this duality, essentially unique in the history of music,⁸

which makes acousmatic music a particularly rich listening experience.

2.3. Acousmatic theory

It would perhaps be useful here to consider similar dualisms in acousmatic theory. The first of these is from Schaeffer’s four listening modes; it is perhaps fair to suggest that the first and third of these – listening and hearing – find equivalents in what we have been referring to as the narrative and the musical: ‘Mode one takes the listener outwards from the sound itself, reaching out into wider relationships with the objects, events and experiences beyond. Mode three draws the listener into the sound itself, into a contemplation of its sounding shape’ (Smalley 1992). It could also be argued that two other of Schaeffer’s listening dualisms – ordinary vs. specialised and natural vs. cultural – can similarly be likened to our narrative–musical dichotomy (Schaeffer 1966: 120–2 and Landy 2007: 82).

Smalley extended Schaeffer’s four listening modes with three ‘listening relationships’ – indicative, reflexive and interactive (Smalley 1992); there are similarities in the relationships between the indicative and interactive modes and our narrative–musical duality: ‘Whilst in Smalley’s indicative mode the sounding object acts as message, or as information carrier, pertaining to environmental events or actions, the interactive mode implies ‘an active relationship on the part of the subject in exploring the qualities and structure of the [sound] object’ (Adkins 1999: 57).

Although these refer to qualities of the listening act, whereas our dichotomy is concerned with qualities of the work and the listener’s experience of the work, there are clearly useful similarities between these models.

2.4. Limitations

Any theoretical model is likely to be more readily applicable to some examples of a genre than others; this is unquestionably true of the model under consideration. The proposal of a musical/narrative dichotomy as the central element of acousmatic experience clearly privileges works which include a certain degree of recognisable, real-world sound material – both objects and actions, sources and causes. Works which are largely devoid of such material – whose material involves primarily or exclusively remote surrogacy (Smalley

⁶Adkins has astutely observed that such models develop ‘new aural strategies for listening to acousmatic music as a consequence of compositional theory. Such composer-led models tend to focus on the aural structuring of sonic materials rather than the perception of such structures by a neutral listener’ (Adkins 1999). This identifies the key difference in perspective between our musical–narrative dichotomy and such reality–abstraction models.

⁷See for example Wishart 1986 and 1996, and Young 1996 and 2007.

⁸While, historically, programme music offers a similar narrative element in an otherwise musical context, it is essentially limited to metaphor where acousmatic music also accesses signification and direct experience (Wishart 1986: 42). Soundscape composition shares a number of characteristics with acousmatic art, and indeed there is a certain amount of overlapping repertoire – a number of works commonly identified as acousmatic are also considered key instances of soundscape composition, Luc Ferrari’s *Presque rien* being the obvious example (see Truax 2001). Some of the primary goals and concerns of soundscape composition, however, are somewhat different; it could be argued that where acousmatic music mines the musical–narrative dichotomy for diversity, soundscape composition seeks to forge (or maintain) a conceptual unity of the two. Finally, while, as previously mentioned, it is

(*F note continued*)

possible to consider any electroacoustic work through the acousmatic lens, the elaboration of significative aspects of the material into a narrative stream remains primarily the hallmark of the acousmatic genre. In fact, this statement could be extended to suggest that any electroacoustic work can be considered acousmatic according to the degree to which this elaboration takes place; however, such statements stray dangerously close to areas of prescription and categorisation which are perhaps best avoided here.

1992) – are not as fully or comfortably described by this model. Works which are heavily texture-carried also fall less comfortably inside the proposed model, compared with gesture-carried works, primarily because the latter more easily evoke narrative imagery of action and energy, in contrast with the self-propagating qualities of texture (Smalley 1986). Pieces such as François Bayle's *La langue inconnue*, in which synthesis-derived textures are dominant (Bayle 2000), might be said to fall into such categories. Of course, such works remain ready subjects for acousmatic listening, which can certainly allow for the full experience of our dichotomy despite the apparent lack of significant association; see for example Philippe Mion's analysis of *La langue inconnue* (Mion 2000). Generally speaking, however, in such works the listener's attention is commonly drawn primarily to the musical layer, with the narrative layer often constructed through metaphors gleaned from the musical layer, in a manner not dissimilar to programme music.

Works at the other end of the spectrum also pose a problem for our dichotomy. Works with a strong emphasis on soundscape – Ferrari's *Presque rien* (2004), for instance – heavily prioritise the narrative layer to an extent sufficient to limit the relevance of our model. It could be argued, however, that the identification of such a work as 'acousmatic' amounts to a challenge to the listener to explore and develop the musical layer of such a work through applied listening, in which case our model perhaps remains tenable.

2.5. Musical and narrative in compositional practice

The acousmatic composer accesses an unparalleled range of possibilities in the approach to the musical and narrative layers and their combination. The composer can move freely between layers, with the compositional emphasis shifting between the two layers according to the whim and vision of the composer. In fact, in many ways these layers are self-sustaining, in that, even if completely ignored during the composition process, each will spring up fully formed from the material of the completed work: while a composer may work only according to the musical properties of the sounds, the listener will almost inevitably construct a string of mental imagery – built from imagined possibilities for source objects and causal actions – and thus a narrative layer, from the results; and conversely, should a composer consider only the imagery and storytelling properties of the material, the work that results can still be appreciated as a musical flow through reduced listening. Of course, most acousmatic composers will generally opt for careful crafting and control of both layers; indeed, it is through the subtle interplay and interaction between these two layers that much of the best acousmatic work generates its depth.

It is nevertheless sometimes tempting to propose that a composer's compositional motivations might be weighted towards one or the other of these layers. One might suggest, for example, that composers such as Young and Wishart are compositionally pre-occupied with the narrative layer, seeking structure primarily within this layer, with the musical layer constituted, to some extent, by what might be described as the musical byproducts of their development of imagery, symbols and metaphor within the narrative layer.⁹ Denis Smalley, on the other hand, in works such as *Pentes* (Smalley 2000), clearly prioritises the musical layer, allowing the narrative layer to unfold in a rather vaguer, less direct manner, with occasional windows to more direct use of source-bonded sound. The listener is guided towards the musical layer in the quest for meaning, as opposed to the much more literal use of narrative-based metaphor of Wishart and Young. *Pentes* also offers a clear example of the distinction between our musical/narrative dichotomy and dualisms focusing on the 'reality–abstraction continuum' (Young 2007) of the sound material. The work climaxes with the appearance of a traditional melody on the Northumbrian pipes; in models based on qualities of material, this will tend to fall on the 'reality' end of the spectrum, as the sound's source-bond with the real-world instrument is perfectly clear at this point in the piece. This might seem to imply an identification, in our dual-stream dichotomy, with the narrative layer; on the contrary, however, this melody is obviously far more engaged with the creation of the musical layer, while the appearance of an instrumentalist, though clearly a relevant moment in the narrative layer, quickly gives way to more programmatic scenery as the melody continues, until this is in turn shifted away by a return to more traditionally 'acousmatic' textures and gestures.

There is infinite variety and subtlety in the manners in which the interaction between these layers can be effected; the most obvious, perhaps, is the use of both layers towards a single goal – using the musical and narrative qualities to support each other and thereby create an exponentially stronger image.¹⁰ Francis Dhomont, for example, is a notable master of such procedures; an excellent case in point is his work *Points de fuite* (Dhomont 1996), in which the central themes of escape and flight are supported by both the

⁹See Wishart 1996 and 2006, Young 1996 and 2007. See also Windsor 1995.

¹⁰[W]hen we recognise, say, the sound of water in an electro-acoustic work, we have the capacity to listen not just at a detailed level to the way the liquid is flowing, lapping or otherwise responding to being activated, but also at a higher level in which more generalisable images of water will form. These levels of awareness then have consequences for structure at a purely micro-phonological level as a perceived source of generic gestural pattern, or as a more global expression of environmental setting or specific place, perhaps' (Young 2007: 26–7).

narrative material – planes, gestures which roll away into the far distance – and the musical material – melodic gestures which glide upwards, disappearing into the upper registers, for example.¹¹

These, however, are fairly straightforward descriptions of musical–narrative relationships; the webs woven between these two layers are extremely rich and complex. Material in which the two layers support one another may give way to the surprise of contradiction where the imagery of one layer stands in contrast to the material of the other; the narrative material can be used to add many additional layers, subtleties and possibilities to the themes suggested by the musical material (common in Dhomont’s work and in *Points de fuite* in particular).

Thus, where the combination of two parallel strands running through acousmatic art already seemed a rich extension of the possibilities of previous musical genres by the superposition of a second layer to experience in a work, in fact this expansion of possibility is far greater than one might initially assume; the two layers interact and inform one another to create a multi-dimensional, somewhat holographic experience, in which the whole is significantly greater than the simple sum of its two parts.

2.6. Further examples

To consider a contrasting example, Jonty Harrison’s *et ainsi de suite* (Harrison 2004) suggests an apparent lack of thematic or symbolic agenda; unlike Dhomont’s piece, there is no identifiable theme here to be supported by the appropriate deployment of musical and narrative material. It employs a limited range of source material, dominated by sounds derived from a set of wine glasses, a source which would seem to carry very little symbolic baggage; the original identity of these sounds offers limited potential in and of itself for symbolic or metaphoric elaboration. (The only hint the listener is given regarding any such intentions is the title of the seventh of the work’s eleven sections: ‘souffle d’insectes’ – the breath of insects.) Despite these factors, however, *et ainsi de suite* boasts a vibrant narrative layer. This layer of the piece is less concerned here with identifiable objects, and more concerned with movement, motion and action. The sound material engages in a broad and captivating display of a wide variety of activity; and while at times there is no clear object identified with the performance of a given action, the listener easily draws imagery from these recognisable movements.¹² The narrative

layer in this work is thus driven by questions of both source and cause – by the sounding objects, and the actions, movements and gestures we are hearing, be they embedded in the source recording or crafted in the studio.

Also important to the narrative layer of this piece is what Leigh Landy refers to as the ‘*5ie`me e`coute*’, or fifth listening mode (Landy 2007), which involves what Smalley has termed ‘listening to technology’ (Smalley 1992). Harrison opens the piece by presenting us with a straight rendition of his sound material, in which the source is readily identifiable; he then invites us into the work through a gradual transformation of this material. This process plays a central role in structuring the piece: Harrison regularly returns to the untreated source, develops this material through transformation and chains of transformations, to again return to the untreated source, in a constant flux between the real and the surreal. As a result the listener’s attention is directed towards the process of transformation; the listener becomes aware of the action of the composer’s craft and will upon the material, and follows the transformations of the material with a curiosity regarding the techniques being used, and where the composer might lead the transformation next. This process plays a significant role in the narrative layer of this work; the listener follows the composer’s virtuosity in the same way one might be attentive not just to the musical qualities of a concerto, but also to the physical prowess of the soloist.

Over the course of the work, the listener is welcome to engage with the narrative layer to the degree of their choice. A literal interpretation of events, while perhaps less obvious a choice in this work than in some, is still a valid possibility: what is happening to the glass? Is there one glass, or many? The glass is falling; it moves towards us, away from us. The glass is transformed; movement of this new, more abstract sound is recognised, despite uncertainty as to its identity, and so on. On the other hand, the listener may instead maintain a more abstract sense of the narrative layer, guided instead by shifts in mood across the work: calm, uneasy, tense, worrying, dramatic.

It might be argued, though, that *et ainsi de suite* places greater emphasis on the musical layer, and it is likely that the listener will gravitate towards this layer. Both source material and treatments have clearly been chosen primarily for their beauty, interest and appeal, and the piece is structured with careful attention to the rhythms of the material, as well as its timbres and textures. The listener is free

¹¹See the final section of Ste`phane Roy’s analysis of *Points de fuite* (Roy 1996) for further examples along these lines.

¹²The ease with which we identify and associate with such motion, despite the possible difficulty in defining the imagined actor, is closely linked to concepts such as Smalley’s indicative fields and

(*F`note continued*)

morphology archetypes (Smalley 1986 and 1992). See also Wishart 1996.

at any point to pull away from the narrative layer entirely, to simply enjoy the rich palette of the work's musical layer, and equally free to consider the potential details of the narrative layer, temporarily ignoring the tactile beauty of the piece.

Next we will consider Trevor Wishart's *Red Bird* (Wishart 2000), which stands in fairly stark contrast to *et ainsi de suite* in that it is structured primarily according to an extremely elaborate, explicit sequence of symbols and metaphors, thereby heavily prioritising the narrative layer. Despite this key difference, however, there is a certain degree of similarity in the types of movements and gestures employed. Remarkably, however, where in Harrison's piece the listener is struck by the associative properties of these gestures, thereby placing them within the narrative layer, in *Red Bird* these gestures act as an accompaniment to the stream of semi-linguistic metaphors which dominate the narrative layer of the work, and so this material, which tended towards the narrative in *et ainsi de suite*, here is more strongly associated with the musical layer.

Wishart deploys transformation of his material with primarily narrative intent. Where Harrison's transformations tended to be guided by purely aesthetic concerns, Wishart employs transformation to build explicit links between materials in support of his thematic subtext. For example, the transformation of the human voice into the sound of machinery is clearly intended to deliver a message, rather than based on musical considerations. Thus, as previously suggested, the musical layer of *Red Bird* might be described as, to some extent, the byproduct of such transformations and development within the narrative layer. Wishart focuses on transformation within and between narrative elements as a method to construct meaning; the musical layer results from the beauty and craft with which these transformations are constructed.¹³

Like Dhomont, Wishart is here deploying both the musical and narrative layers in support of his themes; here, however, musical and narrative elements tend to be combined to simultaneously produce a single metaphor,¹⁴ where Dhomont layers them to collectively produce metaphor. *Red Bird* is, as a result, a rather more linear sequence of ideas; it also allows for a much more direct communication of the composer's ideas.

¹³John Young's discussion of *Red Bird* (Young 1996) details some of the ways in which narrative-motivated transformations between source-bonded objects produce the musical layer of the piece.

¹⁴Luke Windsor refers to this same characteristic of the piece: 'The "abstract" and "concrete" aspects of sounds discussed by Smalley (1986), via subtle editing, interpolation and cross-fading, become intertwined. The opening of *Red Bird* is illustrative here. Are the connections between the familiar sounds we hear achieved by skillful timbral connections or by narrative? And does the listener focus upon the unity of timbral relationships or upon the narrative suggested?' (Windsor 1995).

2.7. Phenomenological roots

There is a further point which is important to consider regarding the birth and evolution of *musique concrète* and acousmatic music, which is of some relevance to our discussion here. Of the several revolutionary musical theories and systems invented and developed during the twentieth century, *musique concrète* is (together, perhaps, with soundscape composition) the only one to have based itself entirely on detailed analysis of the ways in which the listener perceives and responds to sound, with the entire theoretical construct not only built upon this premise, but tested at every stage against this principle. This is in stark contrast to other musical systems proposed around the same time, which tend to strictly bend their material to the rigours of a theoretical system imposed from the outside. *Musique concrète* was thus decidedly based in the esthetic act from its very inception. (A happy consequence of this approach is that, again in contrast with other contemporaneously developed musical systems, the central concerns of acousmatic music can be distinguished and understood relatively instinctively by the uninitiated, or with at most a basic introduction to the concept of reduced listening.)

This is a crucial quality of the genre, and is to a significant degree responsible for its success as a new musical form. As a result of this approach, its evolution has often been guided by the discovery of methods, techniques and materials which are effective and successful, with the understanding of the underlying reasons and resulting theory often following behind, and already based on established success in the proving ground of new work. Alternately, when an aspect of theory is proven untenable through further compositional exploration, it is either adapted or dropped – the acceptance of the narrative layer as a valid aspect of composition and listening being a key example of this.

As a result of this insistence on phenomenological study and analysis as the only valid basis for this new art form, acousmatic art is in the rare position of not only being derived from experiential analysis and experiment, but also bearing the capacity to lead such analysis. Acousmatic music is effective precisely because it was founded on careful detailed study of what is and is not effective in the listening experience; consideration of the reasons for the effectiveness of a given technique, material or approach is thus fertile ground for ongoing examination and discovery. It is not only that the study of our listening and cognitive processes can help to develop acousmatic theory; a study of acousmatic work, and the manners in which we respond to it, can help to develop our understanding of our listening and cognitive processes.

3. SWEET EXPECTATION

In 2006, David Huron published his book *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*. In some ways an extension of Leonard B. Meyer’s work in the 1950s into the psychology of music and the musical experience (Meyer 1956), Huron makes many important propositions which, although built primarily around considerations of more traditional instrumental music, could have significant implications for acousmatic music.

Huron’s central thesis is, in essence, that much of our response to music stems directly from our instinctive and reflexive responses to real-world scenarios and situations. Dealing with paradigms such as tension, surprise, prediction and expectation, the originality of Huron’s work lies in the extremely detailed analysis of the ways in which our relationships with the world around us define our musical responses. In contrast, previous work, while also discussing these and similar paradigms, tended to focus on their effects only within the language and closed systems of musical forms.

3.1. Expectation and surprise

For example, much of what we consider to be central to the musical experience is related by Huron to two contrasting experiences of pleasure – the pleasure of confirmed expectation, and the pleasure of surprise. He explains these as biological imperatives: ‘Since accurate predictions are of real benefit to an organism, it would be reasonable for psychological rewards and punishments to arise in response solely to the accuracy of the expectation. When the stimulus is expected, the emotional response is positively valenced; when the stimulus is unexpected, the emotional response is negatively valenced’ (Huron 2006: 12–13). While this explains the pleasure of confirmed expectation – say, for example, the resolution of a perfect cadence – further investigation is required regarding the pleasure of surprise. Huron suggests that surprise inevitably triggers a ‘fight, flight, [or] freeze’ response, but that ‘[m]usical responses are capable of initiating these responses, but [they] are short-lived because an ensuing appraisal ultimately judges the stimuli as nonthreatening’, the biological responses to which he lists as ‘frisson, laughter or awe’ (Huron 2006: 39). He terms such responses ‘contrastive valence’. Pleasure is increased when a positive response follows a negative response’ (2006: 39). Thus, musical stimuli are described as triggering the same responses as real-world events and situations, for the same reasons and in the same manner.

Also of relevance to our discussion here is the detailed description of the paths through the brain that trigger reactions to various stimuli. Huron states

for example that ‘(w)hen a surprising event occurs, two brain processes are initiated: a rapid reaction response and a slower appraisal response’ (Huron 2006: 19). The first of these is in essence a reflexive reaction to a dangerous situation, while the second is a more rational, considered response. Huron tracks the paths each of these takes through the human brain, and discusses the emotional reactions that result from the differences in response times.

3.2. Huron and acousmatic art

There is much detail in *Sweet Anticipation* that will prove of great value to the acousmatic composer, including, for example, detailed analysis of the creation of predictability and surprise, of rhythm and expectation, all of which could provide much insight into the details of acousmatic compositional technique – particularly as Huron’s biological approach speaks in broad terms, which are often easily applicable to acousmatic work. However, we will here focus on extrapolations which admittedly rest on only the broadest interpretation of Huron’s work, and constitute an oversimplification which may at times constitute a slightly questionable departure from his thesis. Hopefully, however, our results will validate any such liberties, and readers are referred directly to *Sweet Anticipation* itself for a more thorough and accurate discussion of the details.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR MUSICAL–NARRATIVE DUALITY

Let us return to the theme of Huron’s work, and consider its impact on the dual streams of acousmatic music. The summary of acousmatic theory above assumes the musical and narrative layers to be distinct, separable, and the results of different responses and processing by the listener. It could be argued, however, based on Huron’s work, that this in fact is not the case: that the listener’s responses to the musical layer, and the listener’s responses to the narrative layer, in fact rely on the same processes, the same reflexes, the same responses – indeed, that there is no identifiable difference in listener response between these two layers, and that, by extension, this duality is therefore, in essence, an illusion – that these are, at most, different perspectives on a single response.

While at first this might not seem to be so great a departure, consideration of the consequences of this argument – albeit taken here to a perhaps questionable extreme – reveals a significant impact on the basic premises of acousmatic art. Reduced listening assumes the ability to ‘turn off’ our real-world responses, in order to respond solely to the musical characteristics of what we are hearing. If we follow our current line of reasoning to its extended conclusion – that musical

response is, in fact, indistinguishable from reflexive real-world response – then the musical and narrative layers collapse, and, in fact, the very possibility of the notion of ‘reduced listening’ appears to be negated.

4.1. A step back

Does this, then, announce the end of reduced listening? Presumably not. Let us fall back on the phenomenological, experientially based premise of the acousmatic genre: we can confidently state that there *is*, in fact, a distinction between the musical layer and the narrative layer – between reduced listening and significant listening – by virtue of the fact that we experience this distinction as listeners. We know from experience that it is, in fact, possible to perform reduced listening, and that we do distinguish a difference of experience between the two layers.

Let us take a step back, then, in our reasoning, and return from this nihilistic extreme to the more moderate suggestion that perhaps the two layers – previously considered distinct and separate – are, in fact, two different perspectives on a single response. Stepping further back still, we can argue that, while the processing of the responses may be the same, and the material we are responding to may be the same, we may in fact be responding to different aspects of this same material – which, perhaps, is not much of a departure from the dual-layer paradigm. For example, recognition of a source action or movement may lead to a particular expectation: when presented with a sound we identify as ‘falling’, we may anticipate an impact. Our musical expectations, however, are based to a significant extent – as discussed by Huron – on learned patterns; thus, our expectation based on the musical interpretation of the phrase derived from the ‘falling’ material may, in fact, lead us to expect something quite different. However, we have seen through our consideration of Huron’s work that musical expectation is generally derived directly from real-world experience; thus, in our example, it is quite probable that the expected resolution of the phrase derived from the ‘falling’ material would, in fact, be a musical impact – which once again seems to argue for a collapsing of the two layers.

We will return to the example, discussed above, of Dhomont’s *Points de fuite*. In fact, in this light, our interpretation of the rising pitch material is based on a response which is indistinguishable from our reaction to the plane and other recognisable images. The difference remains, however, that we continue to identify the source of this pitch material as musical. This distinction, however, is perhaps of limited relevance to our reception and understanding of the work; thus, in this instance, our distinction between musical and narrative material here is largely unimportant – our experience of the work is shaped by

identical methods of processing and response to both the musical and narrative layers.

5. A PROPOSAL

In fact, what might be proposed based on such considerations might be not so much a complete reconsideration of the dual acousmatic layers, but rather a slight reinterpretation. We can continue to assume the coexistence of musical and narrative streams, but reconsider our interpretation of these as distinct and independent qualities. While our mental processing of the two layers operates on the same principles, it could be posited that, where our response to the narrative layer is immediate and reflexive, our response to the musical layer is, in fact, mediated by an additional stage of mental processing, or at least activated less quickly, perhaps, than our more reflexive reactions. Huron describes various consequences of differences in processing times, which result variously from differing paths through the brain, differences between learned and reflexive responses, and degree of familiarity. Is it possible, then, that what we experience as dual layers in acousmatic music is, in fact, the result of different processing times for different aspects of the same stimuli? Our reflexive expectation of an impact after a fall could be assumed to be an extremely rapid process; our musical expectation of an impact after an equivalent musical phrase is more of a culturally learned response, and thus, according to Huron, while still reflexive, might be expected to take longer to process.

Such an interpretation – that the dual quality of acousmatic experience relates rather to differences in processing time of different aspects of the same material, rather than distinct identities of independent streams – is in some ways an attractive one. It points to the possibility of subtle shifts in compositional approach, away from the construction of connections between two distinct streams, and towards the subtle manipulation of the direct experience of the material. For example, interplay between the musical and the narrative through alternately contradicting, contrasting or supporting relationships was a central element of the dual approach; these possibilities remain in this new perspective, but slightly different methodologies present themselves. The former paradigm perhaps privileges symbolic relationships between the musical and narrative materials, which are decoded and cognitively recognised by the listener. Under our proposed paradigm, however, such relationships are secondary, as they at best take significantly longer to process, or can even be considered as existing outside the temporal experience of the piece entirely, to be constructed after the listening experience. Instead, the composer would work with a scale of degrees of familiarity and expectation from the dual musical and narrative perspectives, thereby

playing with processing times of these coexisting qualities – for example withholding simultaneity for climactic moments in a work, in the hopes of creating a cumulative and powerful impression on the listener, or teasing the listener with changing values of disjuncture between the musical and the narrative. Ideas of ‘tension’ and ‘resolution’ would in this manner be linked directly to the relative distance or simultaneity between the listener’s processing, and thereby experience, of the narrative and musical qualities of the material.

5.1. Acousmatic *de’ja`vu*

There is a sense of awed epiphany which results from the multifaceted experience of the peak moments of the finest acousmatic works, in which a listener experiences the conjuncture of these different streams to create an immediate and powerful impression which results from the poetic combination of the musical and narrative qualities to create an impact far beyond the capacities of either of these aspects alone. A further extension of our hypothesis might lead us to suggest that this sense of awe results from the closely spaced arrival of dual processing of the same material or stimuli. The impact of such dual processing or perception is theorised, for example, as a possible cause for the common sensation of *de’ja`vu* (Brown 2004), which can also be described as a sense of awe or epiphany. It is tempting to imagine a similar process at work in this manner in acousmatic music.

6. CONCLUSION

Of course, such theorising would benefit enormously from empirical study, testing and experiment; hopefully what we have proposed here might offer fruitful prospects for such research. It can also hope to offer, if not new avenues for acousmatic composition, perhaps possibilities for slight changes in compositional perspective which might prove rewarding. Regardless, these subjects – David Huron’s propositions regarding our responses to musical stimuli, the qualities at the heart of acousmatic music, and the acousmatic listening experience – are rich and fascinating topics which warrant further consideration and discussion, and can surely benefit from both speculative conjecture such as that presented here, and more detailed exploration and experiment.

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Article 2: Sound and Narrative: Acousmatic composition as artistic research

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Sound and Narrative: Acousmatic composition as artistic research

This article will discuss acousmatic music as a simultaneously musical and narrative art form. Acousmatic narrative will be considered from the dual perspectives of the composer and the listener, and we will investigate some of the differences between these, and some of the mechanisms at play. A case will be made for the act of acousmatic composition as an ideal site for exploration and research into narrative processes. The composition and reception of the author's work *Déchirure* will be used as an illustrative example.

Acousmatic music

We should perhaps begin with a quick description of acousmatic music in general. At its simplest, acousmatic music is a form of electroacoustic tape music that often uses recordings taken from the world around us as a significant source of sound material. It begins in the 1940s and 1950s in Paris, with Pierre Schaeffer and *musique concrète*, before the adoption of the term 'acousmatic' by François Bayle in the 1970s ([Battier 2007](#)). For Schaeffer, the sounds of the world become musical material: any sound that can be recorded, is then edited, treated, and manipulated, until a composition is crafted from these real-world materials.

Central to Schaeffer's conception was his idea of 'reduced listening' ([Schaeffer 1966](#)), a listening paradigm in which the *source* of a sound is deliberately ignored, in order to focus on the sonic properties and characteristics inherent to the sound. We forget about what agent, object, or action made the sound, or what the sound signifies; we focus only on the musical properties of the sound – its internal rhythms, its timbres and textures, possibly some melodic elements. The argument here is that we are blinded to the musical potential of the sounds that surround us by their roles as signifiers for the objects or actions that made the sounds. If it's raining outside, we probably don't hear a beautiful percussive pattern of raindrops on the pavement outside; we only hear a signifier for 'It's raining'. This hidden musical potential is revealed once we, through a conscious act, remove the significative identities of the sounds, redefining a sound according only to its own sonic characteristics.

This, then, is the key concept of *musique concrète*: the emancipation of sound from its source, such that works can be created that are shaped through the musical deployment of recorded sounds. This is reflected in the term 'acousmatic', which originates with Pythagoras, who would lecture his students from behind a screen on the grounds that they would be better able to focus on his words if they were not distracted by the sight of the person speaking. These students were known as the 'akusmatikoi'; hence the term 'acousmatic music', in which the loudspeaker plays a similar role to Pythagoras' screen: we can focus on the sound, without being distracted by the presence of its source.

However, while the emphasis in *musique concrète* was initially entirely on reduced listening and on sounds of the world freed from their sources and causes, over time it became increasingly clear that, in fact, it is nearly impossible for the human mind not to ascribe, even if only unconsciously, a string of causes and sources for the sounds we hear.

Reduced listening is possible, but it requires constant, wilful, active effort on the part of the listener to deliberately ignore the possible sources of the sounds being heard; even then, the extent to which these sources are really being completely ignored is debatable.

So, no matter how focused the creative act of composition might be on the purely musical qualities of the sound, in practice, the listener – although also fully capable of appreciating this musical level – is almost certain to simultaneously create, perhaps unwittingly, an evolving mental image constructed from the reemergence of the role of the sounds as signifiers. While reduced listening was revolutionary in adding a further dimension to our appreciation of the sounds thus arranged, it did not succeed in erasing or negating our in-built response to sound: the automatic and instinctive linking of a given sound with a source ([Atkinson 2007](#)).

The musical/narrative duality

Far from implying a failing of *musique concrète* and acousmatic music, in fact the unique beauty of the genre lies precisely in this duality: the purely musical world on the one hand, where the sounds are composed and appreciated for their musical or sonic properties, and on the other hand, the stream of sources and imagined gestures that these sounds evoke. Any and all sound material used will tend to contribute to both of these two streams: a sound will always have musical properties, and will also always have the capacity to evoke some kind of real-world imagery. Acousmatic culture shifted rapidly,

from the almost unwilling admission of this duality in the early 1970s, to a whole-hearted acceptance, and in fact to making this musical-narrative duality to a significant extent the heart and soul of much acousmatic work.

Of course, these are rarely discrete phenomena. The narrative properties of a work, rather than stalling at the local level as singular symbols, are often used to construct a rhetorical framework for the piece, either supporting, supported by, or occasionally independent of, the musical layer of the work. When Francis Dhomont, in his work *Points de Fuite*, uses sound material such as planes flying overhead, cars passing, objects rolling away into the distance, and so on, these are not simply employed for their sonic and textural properties, although they are certainly admirably constructed from this point of view. Rather, they are simultaneously employed for the symbolism inherent in such imagery, in support of the work's themes of flight and escape.

It is at times tempting, though, to propose that a given composer has a particular bias, emphasizing one over the other of our two elements. A strong case could be made for Luc Ferrari's *Presque Rien* or Trevor Wishart's *Red Bird* as examples of an emphasis on the narrative, with the musical qualities of the work - especially in *Presque Rien* - almost an artefact or byproduct of activity in the narrative layer. On the other hand, there are a great many works - Denis Smalley's *Pentes* for example - whose focus on the musical aspect of the work results in a significant degree of narrative abstraction.

Thus, what tends to vary from work to work - and, often, from composer to composer - is, firstly, how much time the listener is likely to spend in each of these two modes, and secondly, how closely these two modes engage and interact with each other: whether they work together to build a potentially greater, more powerful artistic experience, or whether they simply remain two discrete aspects of a single work. Many composers have their own unique approach to this dichotomy - their own balance, and their own manner of weaving the two together - while some composers shift from work to work between dramatically different approaches to the musical/narrative duality. Consider for instance the contrast between the clear sound imagery of Robert Normandeau's 'cinema for the ear' works ([Dhomont 1995](#)), and the towering narrative monomania of his timbre spatialization pieces ([Normandeau 2009](#)); or the seminal shift in narrative approach between Ferrari's early works and the first *Presque Rien*.

Acousmatic narrativity

It is worth taking a moment here to examine our use of the term 'narrative' more closely, as it is in many ways a rather heavily loaded term. To begin with, it carries with it all the cultural weight of the fields of narratology and narrative studies, which, together with related fields – semiotics, for instance – have led to a number of approaches to musical narrative. Generally speaking, however, acousmatic narrative is either a different animal altogether, or at least a sufficiently unique case study to warrant its own consideration.

Narrative studies of instrumental music tend to focus on structural qualities on the one hand, and programmatic considerations on the other ([Tarasti 1994](#), [Almen 2008](#), [Grabócz 2009](#)). These remain present in acousmatic music, but their narrative power is dwarfed by the presence of recorded referents that tend to be sidelined or dismissed as 'extra-musical' by traditional approaches to musical narrative. These recorded materials have the capacity to strike us more directly, through our embodied experience of the world, than the presence of more culturally mediated symbols ([Camci 2013](#)), be these structural or programmatic. For this reason, in the musical/narrative duality proposed above, structural or programmatic elements tend to be more relevant to the musical experience of the work, rather than its narrative reception ([Andean 2010](#)). This distinction separates the acousmatic listening experience not only from the reception of instrumental music, but also from forms of electroacoustic music in which such real-world referents are either absent, or of reduced significance to the construction of the work (Grabocz 1997). As a result, acousmatic narrative is rather closer to narrative approaches to other art forms – film, for example ([Normandeau 1992](#)) – than to most approaches to musical narrative.

Composed narrative / received narrative

There is also a distinction to be made between the acousmatic composer's focus on either musical or narrative properties, and the listener's selection of either a musical or narrative stance. With regards to the latter, the musical/narrative dichotomy is not necessarily a fully 'either/or' proposition; however, there remains at least the potential for the listener to select either of these listening stances individually, or to move back and forth between the two over the course of a work ([Brunson 2012](#), [Andean 2010](#), [Wishart 1996](#)).

To be properly understood, acousmatic narrative must be simultaneously considered from both directions: through its creation, and through its reception; as a poietic act, and as an esthetic act ([Molino 1990](#), [Nattiez 1990](#))¹. To consider either of these alone only tells us one half of the story. The composer's narrative intentions in composing the work provide information about the construction of narrative; the listener's experience of narrative based on their listening of the piece provides information on the reception of narrative. Either one of these, taken alone, is of limited relevance without being coupled with the other for a more complete consideration of the full narrative process of the work.

In fact, to some extent, the composer's experience of the work presents a microcosm of the full process, in that it is possible to distinguish a separation between their narrative intentions in composition, and their own narrative interpretation of the finished product upon completion of the work, and to note that these are sometimes – or, indeed, often – not one and the same, and are in fact often remarkably distanced from one another. This information would be impossible to glean from an analysis based solely on the listener's experience of the work; at the same time, the composer's poietic intentions often blind them to the narrative impact the work will eventually have on a majority of listeners, whose responses in such instances can sometimes take the composer by surprise upon initial public presentations.

Thus, a fuller understanding of the narrative life of a work is only achievable by taking both composer and listener into account. Composition-based artistic research is therefore an ideal forum for this kind of enquiry: a listener can provide one half of the equation, but only a composer can provide both, in that they are capable of interrogating the narrative poiesis of their own works, and the narrative esthesis of the works of other composers.

Narrative process in *Déchirure*

I will offer as an example my own most recently completed work, entitled *Déchirure*. It is possible to distinguish several, completely distinct, narrative approaches to the work:

¹ Molino and Nattiez have described the process of musical communication, from a semiological perspective, as consisting of three dimensions: the poietic process, which is the process of the creation of the work; the esthetic process, concerned with the reception of the work; and the 'neutral' level, or the work itself ([Molino 1990](#), [Nattiez 1990](#)).

my narrative intentions, when first approaching the work; in the midst of the composition process; after completing the work; and the narrative reception of the work by listeners².

It is interesting, and very important, to note that not all of these distinct narrative approaches to the work are of equal importance once the work is complete. Perhaps not very surprisingly, the last two – intentions after completing the work, and the work's narrative reception by the listener – are of much greater relevance than the composer's initial or intermediary intentions.

The work in question was based on an existing archive of sound material³. This archive was examined according to primarily sonic priorities, with sounds selected for use in the work based on their sonic qualities: texture, timbre, interesting morphologies, and so forth. Only a very few sounds were selected primarily for their narrative content, and very significantly, these mainly included language – a word here or there from a passerby, or even from the recordists themselves.

The first formal sketches of the piece were similarly non-narrative, again based entirely on sonic properties, organizing sounds into categories of foreground and background: more ambient 'soundbed' materials vs. more active, or even rhythmic, materials; lower frequency materials vs. higher frequency materials; pitched vs. unpitched materials; and so on, all of which I think is fairly representative of a typical process of acousmatic composition.

However, as the composition of the work unfolds, a narrative begins to take shape, largely of its own accord, while the composer's attention is focused elsewhere, busily organizing and arranging sounds based solely on their sonic qualities. A few of these sounds emerge as noticeably iconic: the familiar toot of a steam engine emerges as perhaps the strongest example. As the composition continues, there are moments of formal significance for which the composer seeks a dominant sound that will stand out or resonate with the listener, and these more narratively-charged materials suggest themselves. These sounds therefore very quickly come to shape and dominate the

² Statements regarding listener and audience reactions and responses are based on largely informal interactions between the composer and audience members, peers, and colleagues, after either concert or academic presentation of the work in question.

³ *Déchirure* was composed as part of the 'Presque Rien' project, which offers materials from Luc Ferrari's sound archives for the use of new compositions; all of the original sound materials for *Déchirure* are from these archives. See <http://www.lucferrari.org/> for more information.

narrative discourse of the piece – not because they meet the pre-determined *narrative* requirements of the composer's intentions, but because on the contrary they initially met the composer's *sonic* interests, but at a later stage of composition stood out from other sonically-inspired choices of materials through their narrative content. It is upon these sounds, therefore, that the composer comes to rely more and more as the composition of the work progresses.

Finally, the work is complete, and the composer may lean back and reflect upon the results of their labours. At this point, one might find that one has succeeded in delivering the narrative arc or imagery one intended; one may find, on the contrary, that an entirely different narrative suddenly becomes apparent, as the work takes on a life of its own. Taking a different personal example, this was very much the case with my work *Maledetta*, which took as its sound materials snippets of Maria Callas singing the title role from Cherubini's opera *Medea*: this work, too, was constructed following purely sonic principles, but the strength of the narrative capacities of the materials themselves was strong enough that the experience of the work is completely dominated by the impression of the piece as a sonic portrait of the character Medea. In some ways not very surprising perhaps; and yet, noteworthy in that the composer in no way set out to paint such a portrait, and yet this interpretation immediately and completely dominated the composer's own experience of his own work, from the moment the work was complete.

Extra-musical narrative

To return to the example of *Déchirure*, we come to perhaps the most significant moment of all in the narrative construction of a work – a moment that is particularly remarkable, in that it is entirely extra-musical. This is the moment in which the composer must, first of all, give the newly-minted work a name; and shortly thereafter, provide some kind of explanatory programme note. These are rather alarming points in the process of a work's creation, as much of the time all future interpretations of the work will be to a very significant degree through the prism of these purely verbal choices.

The final phrase of *Déchirure* contains a brief tearing sound that leads to the final climactic impact that closes the work. This is the only time this tearing material appears, and it has been given a very prominent placement in the phrase. Again, this choice was made for purely sonic reasons: the phrase required a certain quality of material at that point, and the tearing sound used offered the necessary morphology and trajectory.

However, it was perhaps slightly odd, and not entirely satisfactory, that an entirely new category of material suddenly appears in the last phrase of the piece in this manner.

Searching for a name for the completed work, I eventually settled on *Déchirure* – French for 'tearing', or perhaps with more emphasis, for example the English term 'tearing asunder' – for a number of reasons. This choice had the immediate effect of completely reinterpreting and redefining the tearing material of the work's final phrase: originally, the sound had seemed a sudden and slightly unwarranted appearance of new material, coming as it does unannounced and unanticipated in the work's final moments; now that the work is titled *Déchirure*, on the contrary, it acts as a kind of narrative resolution, finally providing a material that has been anticipated by the listener from the very beginning of their listening of the piece. Thus, this entirely extra-musical choice, made after the composition of the work was complete, serves to completely redefine the musical role of the work's final phrase, and thereby the form of the entire work.

Consider once again Francis Dhomont's work *Points de fuite*, or his closely related work *Espace/Escape*. As already discussed, these contain a great deal of material that narratively supports his theme. But, is this a consequence of the essential symbolic nature of the materials used? Or, are these symbols instead conjured up by the titles of the works, which imply a very particular narrative direction? I would propose that, if *Points de fuite* were given a different title, with a similar strength of narrative impetus, the symbolic identities of these same sound materials would shift dramatically, to support this other narrative thematic.

As a composer, I am often in the position of having to choose between several alternative titles for a work; this choice will have an enormous impact on the interpretation of the piece – not just for third-party listeners, but for me myself. Each title results in a complete transformation of the work; and so, in choosing a title, I am not only choosing a handful of words that will go at the top of the page – I am choosing between a number of unique and independent identities for the work, each of which may share the same sonic shape, but present widely different narratives.

Then we come to the writing of the programme notes: again, a verbal and entirely extra-musical act; and again, one which will significantly impact the listener's interpretation of the work. From a multitude of possible approaches to the work, the composer must now choose and recommend one, singling this approach out as somehow more authoritative than others. Some aspects of the works are emphasized, while some

are not mentioned; perhaps some of the strengths of the work are underlined, while perhaps some weaknesses are buttressed, by supporting them with a formal or thematic explanation. What's more, any such text from the composer will be assumed to represent the composer's compositional intentions, whereas, on the contrary, these are generally written after the fact, and therefore more commonly represent the composer's own interpretation of the piece as post facto listener.

Again taking *Déchirure* as an example, the programme notes must necessarily address the thematic of the piece, despite the fact that this thematic only revealed itself as the composition neared completion. This thematic draws the title of the piece together with the more narratively-charged symbols to draft a coherent theme, for example pointing to the train sounds that appear regularly as a symbol of departure and personal separation that might be in keeping with the title. This interpretation of the symbol, however, arose after the fact through a purely interpretative act, and not as a formative compositional intention; yet this is not how a programme text is likely to be understood.

These extra-musical acts of title and programme notes are, in this sense, largely a fiction; or, perhaps more accurately, they are as important a part of the compositional process as any other ([Derrida 1987: 9](#)) – possibly more important, as they will guide and restrict interpretation more than possibly any other compositional decision. What strikes us as strange about this stems from the fact that these are assumed to be neutral elements, simply reflecting an objective truth about compositional intentions, rather than as compositional elements in themselves.

The listener

Finally, we come to the listener's interpretation of the work. In some ways, the composer is the work's first listener, and can therefore serve as test subject for what the future listener might experience; while this can be reasonably effective, there are some serious hindrances, stemming from the composer's intense familiarity with the materials from having been submerged therein for quite some time. The act of reduced listening described above is not only a conscious act; it can also be an unconscious process, as aspects that are immediately apparent on first listening slowly vanish through repeated listening as one is working on the piece, replaced by new aspects that slowly unveil themselves over time, or especially by those aspects that are the focus of the compositional act. This is true not only of individual materials, but also of larger

compositional issues of development and form; and it is particularly true of specifically narrative properties, as these are what tend to strike one immediately upon first listen, to quickly fade into invisibility as the process of composition proceeds.

The encounter of work and independent listener is therefore often an extremely informative moment with regard to the nature of the work, and without this perspective, any consideration of the narrative aspects of a work are severely limited by the composer's narrowed field of focus described above. This can be quite an alarming moment, as the composer witnesses the transformation of the work they intended into a potentially very different artwork. At its best, this moment brings unexpected surprises that make the work that much richer; at its worst, unanticipated responses to the work or its materials contradict other elements of the work such that it is rendered confusing and ineffective.

As an example, an earlier work of my own opened with an elaborate acousmatic phrase of which I was rather proud, composed of a number of different sound materials, the last of which was a recording of scattering geese, honking and splashing into the distance across the water. This material was used, once again, for its sonic properties: it served as the denouement of the phrase. However, reduced listening had blinded me to the fact that this is nevertheless a recording of geese honking and flapping, an image that I quickly discovered listeners found quite amusing. What was intended as a moment of sonic grace and beauty, is instead taken to be openly humorous, and quite frankly I don't think the piece ever recovered.

The construction of narrative is therefore an act that is shared between composer and listener, with each playing a critical role. This involves the composer making a narrative proposition, and the listener reminding the composer of narrative characteristics which have become obscured, or which remained invisible until the listener takes up their role. In *Déchirure's* encounter with the listener, it immediately became a much darker piece than it had been, as narrative connections are made across materials and formal developments are for the first time independently interpreted. It is only here, in this esthetic act, that the work's narrative identity is fully revealed for the first time.

For composers, this is both a brutal and a wonderful aspect of creation. Some resent this as the hijacking of their work by the listener, and work to impose a restricted interpretation; others make the transformative power of this encounter with the listener the centrepiece of their artistic process. Love it or hate it, however, it cannot be entirely

escaped, nor can it be fully anticipated, nor fully understood. This should not, however, prevent us from trying.

Conclusion

The intention here has been, on the one hand, to illustrate key aspects of the construction and reception of acousmatic narrative, and on the other, to demonstrate the capacity of acousmatic composition to serve as a testing ground for these ideas.

In this, however, we must consistently and persistently maintain the dual focus on composer and listener, without which we remain shackled to a perspective whose limits risk invalidating our results. The blinders of either taken alone are too likely to lead us astray, drawing us towards lopsided conclusions, or towards the tempting promise of fields of inquiry whose promises disintegrate when the other party is brought back into the equation. The dialogue between composer and listener, between narrative creation and narrative reception, remains central, essential, and inevitable. As a result, the dual acts of composition and listening, taken together, represent the most powerful site for the investigation and understanding of acousmatic narrative.

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Article 3: Towards a Narratology of Acousmatic Music

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Towards a Narratology of Acousmatic Music

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Abstract

Acousmatic works tend to operate on two simultaneous planes: a more abstract, musical level of gesture, phrase, colour, texture, and motion; and a narrative level, which references real-world objects, actions, contexts and environments. Where instrumental music, broadly speaking, accesses this narrative level primarily through the use of metaphor, acousmatic music, while maintaining access to the more programmatic elements found in instrumental music, also has the capacity to enact experience much more directly, through the explicit use and application of real-world sound and motion. This ranges from the use of referential sound imagery, to a broader use of gesture and action enacted via acousmatic music's phenomenologically-grounded syntax.

Most theoretical approaches to the acousmatic genre tend to focus more or less exclusively on the structural and formal elements of the sonic plane, with minimal reference to more overtly narrative aspects. In the attempt to rectify this imbalance, the field of narratology suggests itself as a likely candidate for expanding our theoretical toolkit.

While narratology was initially focused more or less exclusively on literary narratives, over the past decade, the field of narratology has branched out from these roots to a range of new media and intermedia narratives, including key focuses on film, video games, and hypertext. While this has indeed significantly broadened the field, it could be argued that this expansion has simply added a visual bias to the previous textual bias.

There is therefore much to be gained from a narratological approach to acousmatic music, in both directions. The narratological perspective calls attention to aspects of acousmatic composition and reception which have received too little theoretical attention; in exchange, acousmatic music offers an extremely relevant narratological case study, as the genre's strong narrative elements are for the most part entirely free of both the textual and visual elements upon which so much existing narrative theory is based. Acousmatic music can therefore serve to differentiate core aspects of narratology that hold true across diverse media from those elements which are significantly diminished in relevance once both text and vision are left behind.

This paper will present some of the primary findings of my doctoral investigation of acousmatic narrative. This investigation draws heavily from the field of cognitive narratology, championed by David Herman, and Marie-Laure Ryan's work on narrative across media, while incorporating past and current perspectives on acousmatic narrative. Central issues include the cognitive structuring of narratives; the apparent – though possibly illusory –

absence of narrator in acousmatic music; fiction vs. non-fiction in the acousmatic; mimesis vs. diegesis; the concept of 'spatial narrative'; and narrative intention vs. narrative reception.

Introduction

For me, acousmatic music is a deeply narrative art form. Where instrumental music, broadly speaking, accesses narrative primarily through the use of metaphor, acousmatic music, while maintaining access to the more programmatic elements found in instrumental music, also has the capacity to enact experience much more directly, through the explicit use and application of real-world sound and motion. This ranges from the use of referential sound imagery, to a broader use of gesture and action enacted via acousmatic music's phenomenologically-grounded syntax.

In attempting to come to terms with acousmatic music's narrative properties, the field of narratology suggests itself as a likely candidate, and over the last couple of years a number of theorists have begun to explore the potential of a narratological view on acousmatic music (Andean 2010; Brunson 2012; Çamci 2012; Hoffman 2013; Young 1996, 2007, 2009, 2013). There are some immediate obstacles that present themselves, however; primarily, narratology was founded with an exclusive focus on literary narratives, and as a result there is a great deal of narratology that is so specifically concerned with text that it quickly disintegrates upon translation to other media.

Narrative across media

There has, however, been increasing emphasis in narratology over the past couple of decades on what Marie-Laure Ryan has termed 'narrative across media' (Ryan 2004), leaving behind a purely textual approach to explore aspects of narrative that hold true across various media, or aspects of narrative that are unique to a given non-literary medium, or, more broadly, the human mind's tendency to construct narratives as a key means of organizing and making sense of information, of stimuli, and of the world (Fludernik 2005; Herman 2002 & 2013; Ryan 2004).

However, it is worth noting that many of these other media to which narratology has turned its attention recently are visual, notably film, video games, and comics or graphic novels, and in this sense has simply added a visual bias to the already existing textual bias. There is little, if any, attention paid to forms of sonic narrative, except as the less important sidekick in audiovisual forms.

A narratological perspective on acousmatic music therefore looks promising, in both directions: first, in that it may help us to better understand the narrative experience of acousmatic works, and second, in that it may be expected to help inform the field of narratology, by providing a rare example of an art form which clearly includes narrative properties, but that is neither text-based, nor image-based. Acousmatic music can therefore serve to differentiate core aspects of narratology that hold true across diverse media from those elements that are significantly diminished in relevance once both text and vision are left behind. What's more, I propose that acousmatic music also makes an excellent narratological case study because it offers an unparalleled range from complete abstraction, to straight-up storytelling, and often moves flexibly along this axis, in so doing offering many shifting perspectives on narrativity.

We will begin with some of the absolute basics of narratology, and see how they apply to acousmatic music. Our first basic example: fiction vs. non-fiction.

Fiction vs. non-fiction

One of the many narratological questions is: What is fiction, and what is non-fiction? Are these genuinely meaningful qualifications, or are they largely artificial constructs? What is the distinction? Is there any clear distinction? What is the relationship between the two? And so forth.

How about for acousmatic music? To begin with, I'm going to dismiss the possibility that this would be an objective quality of the work, or indeed the entire notion of the 'neutral layer' of the work – that the work exists, 'out there', with a quantifiable nature independent of any actual engagement. As a result, the question of acousmatic music as fiction or non-fiction is tightly wound up with our experience of sound.

I claim that: all recorded sound is fiction; but, all sonic experience is non-fiction. Now, if we were to attempt to explore this properly it would very quickly lead us down an ontological rabbit hole without an end, so we're going to leave this here. Let us instead simply ask ourselves: if we accept my claim that all recorded sound is fiction while all sonic experience is non-fiction, where does that leave us with acousmatic music? Acousmatic music is *both* recorded sound *and* sonic experience. Does that mean that acousmatic music – or sound generally – can be both fiction and non-fiction simultaneously? My answer is, yes: to the extent that it is simultaneously recorded sound, and experience, acousmatic music is *both* fiction and non-fiction, in a balance that will shift simultaneously with our focus on the work as living experience, or the work as recorded sound.

The relevant distinction here is the act of mediation. Recorded sound is mediated, and it is this mediation that moves it into the realm of the fictional. This shift in its status between fiction or non-fiction is therefore a question of the extent to which our attention is drawn to this mediating act. Note that I am not claiming this as an absolute: I am not saying that 'because all acousmatic music is mediated, all acousmatic music is therefore fiction' – but rather, that it is only fiction to the extent that our attention is drawn to this mediation. This leaves a certain amount of power in the hands of the composer: to hide the act of mediation is to point us in the direction of non-fiction; to highlight the act of mediation is to point us in the direction of fiction.

Our experience of sound is profoundly different in this regard from other forms of experience. The distance between the sonic experience of 'I can hear that it's raining outside' and 'I hear a recording of 'it's raining outside'' is, at least potentially, zero. This is obviously not true of literature, which is mediated via text, leaving an enormous distance between the experience of the thing itself, and the experience of reading an account of that thing. There is already less distance between a visual representation and the thing itself, but this is again a much vaster distance than in aural representation. And, perhaps, haptic art or olfactory art may one day be still more direct.

One of several modes of mediation at play here is temporal. Sound takes place in the 'now'. Text is more clearly a trace of events, as is film; in order for these to exist as traces, the initial events must lie in the past. This can also be true of sound, but I would argue that this is not sound's natural state: to be placed 'in the past', we need cues that encourage us to put sounds

there, and these cues are again largely a question of mediation. In the absence of such cues, I propose that sound remains in the ‘now’.

Another key element here is that, again with both text and film, these are things that have been done to or by *someone else*. There is no real risk of a reader or moviegoer genuinely believing that they are themselves undergoing some moment of the action. With sound, this is a very real possibility, and here perhaps we find the most marked instance of mediation of them all: myself vs. an exportation to ‘some other’.

This is in part a question of differences between our senses, but it is also significantly a question of *degree* of mediation. With text, we cannot possibly ignore the mediation involved; with film, the mediation is a fraction less obvious; but with sound, it is possible – at least some of the time – for the mediation to vanish entirely.

Mimesis vs. diegesis

Here we encounter our next narratological question: mimesis vs. diegesis. This dichotomy stems from Plato, and is in essence a question of presentation vs. representation. For Plato, theatre is mimetic, where literature is diegetic; it is a question of re-enactment vs. recounting, of whether something is being presented directly, or represented. In other words, we again find this question of mediation: direct experience is mimesis; mediation leads to diegesis. This is something that has been discussed by Trevor Wishart (1986; 1996), Simon Emmerson (1986), and more recently by Anil Çamcı (2012).

This distinction is quite central to our main premise. My claim that acousmatic music is narrative in a manner that is unique and distinct from instrumental music, is based here, in acousmatic music’s capacity for mimesis, where instrumental music can only access diegesis. Acousmatic music, however, is in no way *limited* to mimesis; we too can engage diegesis, through a great many possible strategies. One of acousmatic music’s central strengths is its completely flexible access to the full spectrum between mimesis at one end, and diegesis on the other.

To return to our rain example, the difference between the symbol and the original collapses if our experience of them is undifferentiated: this is mimesis. However, this is not the only plane that acousmatic music accesses. We aren’t constantly being tricked into believing that it’s raining. The composer might draw attention to the sound’s mediation, by stressing its nature as a document; or, the composer might draw attention to the sound’s nature as a communicate between composer or listener; or, attention can be drawn to a complex symbolic construction from the image for rain; or the sonic abstraction of ‘rain’ via the triggering of reduced listening... It’s a long list of potential strategies.

To some extent, this is all a question of a communication between author and audience; between composer and listener. Let’s rephrase some of the instances we have just described: The composer can create a situation for ‘direct experience’ for the listener: ‘It’s raining’. The composer vanishes; the listener is getting rained on.

Or, we described many possibilities for mediation: a communicate between composer and listener; a document of rain; etc. So, first of all, the composer has reappeared; and, second of all, there are a number of possible strategies, and a number of possible steps, between composer and listener.

An acousmatic narrator?

This brings us to the concept of the narrator. In literary narratives, the narrator of course is of central importance. In acousmatic music, however, the absence of text makes it impossible to conjure up a personified narrator-figure.

But, how do we define ‘narrator’? And, more importantly, what is the *role* of the narrator? Is the narrator’s role not, first and foremost, to mediate between author and audience? And, going further, possibly to direct or instruct the audience in the stance they might take towards the material with which they are being presented?

And, is that not exactly what we just described in acousmatic music: a mediating presence, between composer and listener, that instructs the listener with regards to their possible or probable position towards the material?

So, is there an acousmatic narrator? Our answer is: yes; maybe; sometimes.

In our direct experience example, I would argue that we have bypassed the narrator altogether, in a manner that is maybe not possible with text. But beyond that, I would argue that we have indeed located an acousmatic narrator: for example, whenever our attention is drawn to the ‘fixed media’ aspect of the work, this is a *narrating act*; whenever our attention is drawn to the ‘hand of the composer’, this is a narrating act; most importantly, whenever it is emphasized that what you are hearing is not actually happening to you – that it is happening *somewhere* else, *sometime* else, *to someone* else – this more than anything else is a narrating act. Now, not all of this is under the conscious control of the composer; acousmatic narration can be deliberately crafted, but I would argue that, unlike literature, acousmatic narration is a creative collaboration between composer and listener. For example, where the composer might intend direct experience, a given listening situation may cause our multimodal perception to too heavily contradict what we’re hearing, leading to a kind of inter-sensory mediation that once again pushes what we are hearing into the territory of narration.

Another distinction with literary narration is that very rarely, if ever, is the acousmatic narrator *personified*, an act which is quite common in literature. In fact, I would propose that those rare instances in which the acousmatic narrator *is* personified, are works that explicitly employ text to perform this task. I’m thinking here of, first and foremost, Luc Ferrari, but also Katharine Norman, Hildgeard Westerkamp, and a number of others.

Narrative relationships

Broadly speaking, one of the most significant aspects of narratology is the establishment of narrative relationships – first and foremost, between author and audience. We have already inserted the narrator in between these two: author - narrator - audience. Next, Wayne C. Booth (1961) coined a very important term: the ‘implied author’: “By the implied author, Booth means the version of himself or herself the author constructs in writing the narrative” (Phelan 2006: 299). This is a very significant construct, and, I would argue, particularly important in acousmatic music. In a great many acousmatic works, the composer is in essence the protagonist of the piece. I am thinking in particular here of virtuosic works, or works which draw attention to the ‘composer’s hand’, to compositional or performance gestures, to a mediatic listening of the composer’s studio performance.

Let's take an example: Jonty Harrison's *...et ainsi de suite...*, a piece which is built around increasingly complex transformations of the sound of a glass. In this piece, I would argue that the glass is the *character*. The work begins: we are immediately introduced to our main character, the glass. Very soon, the glass starts to be submitted to a range of transformations, and so, as the work develops, Harrison the 'implied author' is very present; we aren't listening to 'a glass performing a series of actions' – the glass is not the agent, these are clearly things that are *being done to* the glass. But, no other character or agent has entered the work. I would argue that our attention is drawn to Harrison, and the series of transformations that he is performing upon the glass-character – but not, of course, to the 'real' Jonty Harrison; when I listen to the piece, I don't literally imagine Harrison with a virtual glass in his hand. It is an 'implied' Harrison that we are listening to – a kind of 'virtual' Harrison, who is performing a string of virtual actions upon a virtual glass.

While this appearance of the implied author is far from unusual in acousmatic music, it is rather unique in comparison with the implied author in literature, in that our implied Harrison is clearly the *protagonist* of the work. Our only character – the glass – is definitely NOT the protagonist; the glass is clearly a passive victim of these many transformations. Rather, we are following the trace of the composer's hand: implied Harrison himself is the protagonist, having entered his own story, and now manipulating his character directly, in a manner that very rarely happens in literature, if at all.

In literature, the line between actual author and implied author is sometimes rather fuzzy; in acousmatic music, however, this division is often very clear, in part because the implied author moves in *real-time*, where the real author does not. In works in which the composer has a significant presence, as in *...et ainsi de suite...*, we experience their actions at the rate at which we ourselves move through the piece, not in the segmented, protracted time of the actual creation of the work. When we 'feel' the hand of the composer, it is not a hand that painstakingly places points one by one on an automation line by clicking a mouse; it is a real-time hand gesture that we somehow sense, regardless of whether such a hand gesture might have been involved in creating a given phrase or not. The implied author performs at the same pace as the listener receives, where the real author very clearly does not.

The acousmatic listening experience

Let's zoom out a bit, to ask some of the very basic questions.

How do we experience and interpret an acousmatic work? We hear 'things happening'; how do we experience this?

For example, who is the 'subject' of what we hear? Am I, the listener, 'doing' this? or is someone else? Or, perhaps it is a *passive* question: Who is the *object* of what we hear? Is this *happening to me*? Are these sonic events 'happening' at all? – are they 'now' and 'direct', or is someone 'telling me' about them – which would make them a) temporally mediated, and b) narrated?

A few basic options:

- 1) This is *happening* to me.
- 2) This *happened* to the composer.
- 3) The composer is doing this *to me*.

4) The composer is telling me *about* this happening.

The differences between these are rarely explicit in acousmatic music; it is often fairly subtle cues that direct the listener towards one of these positions, but these are no less real for their subtlety.

Now, consider the relationships these imply between composer and listener:

Number 1: Composer says: "You are sitting in a room". In this way, second person narration is far more common in acousmatic music than in literary narrative, as it is much more natural in sound than in text.

Numbers 2 & 3: The narrator and the 'implied author' are conflated.

Number 2: Composer says: "I sat in a room".

Number 3: Composer says: "I am putting you in a room".

Number 4: Composer says: "Someone was in a room." This is clearly narrated; there is a narrator.

Example: Motion

Eric Clarke, in *Ways of Listening* (2005), uses motion as a very good example of some of these questions, interestingly by using *Wozzeck* as an example. Let's say we hear "Motion 'towards'": something moves from distant, to close. What is moving?

- Is the listener moving forward, towards the object?
- Is the object moving forward, inside the work, towards the listener?
- Or, is the whole 'work' in motion (again, towards the listener)?
- Or, is this a narrated event – are we being told about an object's movement? Is the movement being described, or experienced?

Jonty Harrison: *Undertow*

Let's consider another piece by Jonty Harrison: *Undertow*. This is a great example for our purposes: it is sonically-motivated, but very strongly narratively driven, and the narrative in question is both extremely simple, and extremely clear.

Because I am writing a text, I would like to describe the piece here in words. This should be fairly easy, since, as already mentioned, *Undertow* is narratively an extremely simple piece; however, in order to talk about it, I have to put the work's narrative into words, and this turns out to be almost impossible without choosing a narrative stance on the piece. There are a number of possible listener relationships with the work, but I cannot describe the piece in words without choosing one and thereby dismissing the others. The closest I can come, is to describe it just as a sequence of sounds: the work opens on a beach scene; eventually, there are bubbling sounds; then dripping sounds; then a beach scene again. There is a very clear narrative here, but we are faced with some questions:

- Is this happening to us? Is this an experience that Harrison has crafted for us?
- Is this a *narrative* of something happening to us?
- Is this a narrative of something happening to Harrison?
- Is this the experience of a third party narrator?

All of these are possible, but I propose that, in essence, it is option one: this is happening to us. We are on a beach; we walk towards the water; we slowly walk into the water, until we are eventually submerged; we remain submerged for a while; eventually we return, we come up out of the water, with water dripping off of us, and walk back up onto the beach.

But: is this direct experience? Or first-person narration: “I am walking into the water”, etc.? Except, of course, we are not the authors, Harrison is, which means this would be second-person narration – Harrison saying to us “You are walking into the water”. Now, this is both the wonderful and the terrible thing about pronouns, and a terrific example of the contrasting affordances of text-based narrative and sonic narrative: it is, in essence, impossible to present the narrative of *Undertow* in text without employing a pronoun, which forces a very specific narrative position onto the work, where in sound, this remains much more flexible. This flexibility is an enormous advantage; on the other hand, text allows for the clarity of a very specific statement, which is not generally possible in acousmatic narrative. This represents something of a trade-off.

It is very interesting to note that in his programme notes, Harrison uses the pronoun ‘we’: “Plunging beneath the waves we discover a world teaming with life and pulsing with energy” (Harrison 2007). In a sense, this is almost side-stepping the problem of narration, but it also points to what in my opinion is an extremely significant source of some of the differences between literary narration and acousmatic narration.

How many of these differences are, in fact, social, rather than aesthetic or theoretical? Sound is – or can be – a collective experience: we gather together in the concert hall, and experience the piece together. It is, or can be, to some extent, a communal experience, a collective experience. Literature, on the other hand, is not. It is forever a private, personal transaction: at some point, privately, the author wrote it; at some point, privately, the reader reads it. There are similarities with acousmatic music: certainly the composer generally works in privacy, much like the author; and works are often experienced in private, on headphones at home for example. But, with acousmatic music, there is at least the *capacity* for community experience.

What is possibly far more important, however, is that the author of the work can share in its reception. The composer can sit in the hall, together with everyone who is hearing the work for the first time, and share in its reception with them. This is definitively impossible with literature; the closest one gets is a public reading by the author, but this is a performative situation, a very different relationship, and a very different experience for the person reading aloud than for those listening.

I would like to hypothesize that many – or at least some – of the differences in narrative relationships in literature and in acousmatic music stem from this fact: that literature is a private, unilinear communicate, whereas the reception of acousmatic music is, or can be, a) communal, and b) a shared experience by author and audience alike, in which the author has become simply another listener. Acousmatic music is much less a question of ‘telling’, and much more a question of ‘experiencing’, and potentially of ‘sharing’, which allows for the potentially profound significance of the ‘we’ of Harrison’s programme notes.

Acousmatic narrative vs. Literary narrative

So, in conclusion, a few of the advantages or differences between acousmatic narrative and literary narrative:

i) Acousmatic narrative is wildly flexible. It can slide freely between narrative constellations without making any explicit reference to having done so, and the listener will follow with perfect agility. This allows for a much higher rate of narrative transformation; a greater number of narrative points and options; and far more potential relationships between those points.

ii) Literary or textual narrative can be much more clear, more specific, and more explicit. The audience does not need to simply *experience* the narrative relationships, nor to deduce them or interpret them; they can be *told*. This makes it possible to make explicit, with incredible accuracy, the network of narrative relationships at play. But, it is a direct trade-off for flexibility.

iii) Literary narrative is much more under the direct control of the author. In acousmatic music, narrative is a creative collaboration between composer and listener, to a greater extent than the collaboration between author and reader.

iv) Sound cannot lie; words can. If all sound is non-fiction, then it cannot lie. Many of the more sophisticated aspects of contemporary narratology are concerned with the capacity to be indirect; to deceive; to deliberately leave out; or to outright lie – from ‘indirect narration’, to ‘unreliable narration’ (Booth 1961; Phelan 2006). Acousmatic music cannot lie; it can only move from truth to truth. At best, acousmatic music can deceive: we regularly ‘trick’ the listener, making them think they are listening to a given sound source, and then, haha! we tear back some transformative veil, some trick of processing, to reveal that in fact the source all along had been something quite different. But, as deceptions go, this one is quite innocent; and again, to some extent, it can be argued that we have simply supplanted an initial truth with another.

However, in all of these cases in which literary narrative trumps acousmatic narrative, acousmatic music has an ace up its sleeve: acousmatic music can choose, at any moment, simply to employ speech – and immediately, it has access to any and all of these aspects of narrative that it otherwise finds challenging: suddenly, we can be as explicit as you please; suddenly, we can lie and deceive; suddenly, we can pin down narrative relationships between author, narrator, and listener, in ways that would otherwise be more ambiguous. This risks, however, moving beyond the boundaries of what many consider the confines of the acousmatic genre, moving outwards towards other genres – radiophony, text-sound – that more commonly employ speech and text-based narrative. It risks contradicting many people’s conception of what ‘acousmatic’ means.

We have therefore found, first, reasonable evidence of the existence of acousmatic narrative, and second, a number of key distinctions between acousmatic narrative and literary narrative. This lends weight to our opening hypothesis that, not only does narratology offer a relevant perspective on acousmatic music, but acousmatic music, due to these distinct and unique narrative aspects, also provides an excellent case study for narrative theory, extending beyond the textual and visual biases common in much of the theory to date.

As for acousmatic theory, it is tempting to imagine an analytical scaffolding that might incorporate narratological elements together with structural and morphological concerns to construct a more rounded approach to acousmatic and electroacoustic analysis, an approach that might be expected to offer a better reflection of the complexity of the acousmatic listening experience.

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Article 4: Narrative Modes in Acousmatic Music

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Narrative Modes in Acousmatic Music

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Beginning with a brief overview of acousmatic narrative, this article proposes that in listening to acousmatic music we select and move between distinct narrative modes, according to the requirements and implications of a given work, or shifting between modes as the work progresses. Similarities and differences with existing theory are considered. Ten narrative modes are proposed as relevant for acousmatic music and discussed. Finally, the appearance of narrative archetypes across multiple modes is considered, as well as similarities across other musics and other fields.

1. ACOUSMATIC NARRATIVE

Acousmatic music is an inherently narrative art form. To some extent this is due to the characteristics and genesis of the genre: on the one hand, acousmatic music's deployment of recorded real-world materials tends to carry with it a range of real-world references and associations that almost inevitably evoke a narrative experience of the work (Andean 2010); on the other hand, this narrative aspect results from much deeper features of the principles of the genre, due in no small part to the phenomenological emphasis of Pierre Schaeffer (1952, 1966) in the birth of the art form. Of course, many say the same of music in general – that musical experience is a fundamentally *narrative* experience (among others, Tarasti 1994; Almén 2008; Grabócz 2009). However, acousmatic music is more deeply – or at least more clearly – narrative than can be claimed for music in general, in part due to its prioritising of perceptual response over structural elements, but also of course due to some of the resources at its disposal. Real-world sound sources, though not a 'must' in acousmatic composition, are nevertheless commonly used and often present, carrying with them a strong degree of narrativity due to their associations with the sources, actions and surroundings that gave them form. However, as a result of the phenomenological roots and emphasis on perception that have guided the development of the acousmatic 'language', it could be argued that even those acousmatic works that include no real-world or otherwise clearly referential materials involve a substantially narrative discourse (works such as Åke Parmerud's *Renaissance* (1994), for instance).

1.1. Narrative

'Narrative', however, is a slippery term, ranging from narrower definitions – which, in their precision, tend to limit narrative to a literary and textual phenomenon – to the broadest definitions, which tend to paint narrative in such broad strokes of human experience that its usefulness as a theoretical tool is somewhat reduced. We will primarily be focusing on a 'middle ground' definitional area, which tends to emphasise time and change as marked by a succession of events (Brunson 2012): 'the representation of an event or a series of events' (Abbott 2008); 'the representation of a temporal development, which consists of a succession of events' (Meelberg 2006), although both the broader and the narrower definitions are also, at least occasionally, of relevance to certain areas of acousmatic narrative, as we shall see. An important distinction should be made here, however. Both of the definitions above, by speaking about 'representations', appear to be speaking about narrative as a function of the work itself, and to thereby be operating at Nattiez's 'neutral level' (1990); here, however, we will be emphasising narrative as a function of the act of reception, rather than as some autonomous quantity residing in a 'work' that is somehow independent of human construction or contact. Instead, let us combine these with David Herman's broader definition, which describes narrative as 'a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change' (Herman 2007, quoted in Brunson 2012). Herman's emphasis is different, describing narrative not as a function of a work, but as a function of our *experience* of the work – in our case, as a function of the listening experience. We can therefore adjust the above definitions accordingly: 'our *experience* of an event or a series of events'; 'our *experience* of a temporal development, and of a succession of events'.

Brunson's proposal of a 'narrative stance' is useful here, positing narrative as a conscious attitude taken towards the work (Brunson 2012). By describing narrative as an active position taken by the listener, this position perhaps bears similarities to Harrison's 'expanded listening' (Emmerson 2007:15) and Leigh Landy's 'heightened listening' (Landy 2007: 105), all of which run counter to the deliberate anti-narrativity of Schaeffer's 'écoute réduite' (Chion 1983).

2. NARRATIVE MODES

If we look under the hood of this 'narrative stance', however, we find that beneath what might appear on the surface to be a single listening position is, in fact, a busy multiplicity: a number of angles and perspectives, a number of 'narrative lenses' through which to view the work, from which the listener can choose from work to work, or, more likely, between which they can flip back and forth according to the suggestions and implications of the evolving moment.

This is primarily due to the fact that the 'narrative' of an acousmatic work is not a single identity, but many; stems not from a single parameter, element, or layer, but, potentially at least, is situated simultaneously in many; results not from a single process, but from many, working together to collaboratively construct a sense of narrative. Emphasising once again that these are not 'neutral' elements of the work, but are active engagements by the listener, we can propose a number of narrative 'modes' in acousmatic listening, between which a listener might choose and shift, and that collaborate together to form an overall sense of the narrative of an acousmatic work.

The modes proposed here (Table 1) are:

- Material narrative
- Formal narrative
- Structural narrative
- Mimetic narrative
- Embodied narrative
- Parametric narrative
- Spatial narrative
- Studio narrative
- Textual narrative
- Extramusical narrative.

This is not intended as necessarily a complete or authoritative list, but rather as a starting point, containing some of the more obvious modes of narrative engagement in acousmatic music, as well as a few that may be somewhat more contentious. Also, these are not proposed as discrete identities, but rather as shifts in perspective, between which the listener is likely to move depending on the usefulness of a given mode for the evolving moment of a work; as a result, some of these modes are overlapping. A given piece may emphasise or prioritise a single mode; but, more likely, a work will engage or enact a number of modes, through a range of narrative cues and resources.

While the 'narrative stance' is very much an act of the listener, rather than the composer, a composer might nevertheless, through the discourse of a given work, seem to suggest or recommend that such a stance be taken; for example, Brunson (2012) describes Stockhausen as 'embedding' a narrative stance into *Kontakte*. Similarly, although these narrative modes

are entirely aesthetic, a composer might communicate to the listener the relevance or appropriateness of a particular mode via the particular affordances of that given work.

2.1. 'Universal' modes

Some of these modes are shared with tonal or other instrumental musics, while some are unique to acousmatic music, or at least are much more likely to appear in, or be engaged by, acousmatic music. More 'universal' modes may be enacted similarly across genres and musical forms; or, they may behave quite differently in acousmatic music than in other musics. Formal narrative is an example of a mode common to many (or most) musical genres; however, as we shall see, there are nevertheless some implications and affordances of formal narrative as it appears in acousmatic music that are unique to the genre.

3. EXISTING THEORY

Some of the 'narrative modes' proposed here come very close to earlier theoretical models, for example those of Smalley (1997) and Wishart (1996), among others, as well as touching on very similar territory to Leigh Landy's thoughts on dramaturgy (2007: 36) and his 'something to hold on to' factor (1994) – for is narrative not the ultimate 'something to hold on to'? However, with regard to Wishart and especially Smalley, there are some important distinctions here. Prime among these is the insistence on music as a temporal experience; another is a shift in emphasis from composer to listener. This latter can be reframed as a move away from poetic narrative, towards aesthetic narrative; away from composed narrative, and towards received narrative (Andean 2014a). Interestingly, the assertion that earlier theory was centred on the composer appears to directly contradict explicit claims by some of the theorists in question; for example, Smalley (1997: 107), who states that he is not proposing 'a compositional theory or method, but a descriptive tool based on aural perception ... intended to aid listening'. However, it could be argued that the detailed analytical approach taken by Smalley is far removed from the 'normal' listening condition, and much nearer to the isolation and magnification of materials that is often involved in acousmatic composition.

This, in fact, brings together the two distinctions given above: an emphasis on the work as an experience 'in time', and an insistence on the listener's experience. The experience of listening to the work is fundamentally about time; as a result, when considering works from a narrative perspective, it is pointless to isolate materials, removing them from the temporal flow, in order to examine them more closely,

tending to function in a very similar manner, and serving a very similar purpose, to its role in other musical forms. As a result, to some extent it is the mode that is best covered by existing musical narratological literature. However, the formal narrative mode is an excellent example of one of acousmatic music's unique strengths in narrative delivery: where instrumental music tends to be limited to metaphor in the delivery of narrative themes (Spitzer 2004; Zbikowski 2008), acousmatic music can be explicit and entirely literal. This was mentioned in our discussion of material narrative; it is true again of formal narrative. *Undertow* provides an excellent example of this. The work is a very clear example of ternary form, that is, ABA: materials are introduced in section A; new materials are introduced in section B; followed by the return of the section A materials. In instrumental music this can offer a metaphor of 'coming home', of travelling out and then coming back to where you started. In *Undertow*, however, explicit materials, coupled with an explicit formal narrative, make this entirely literal: the 'subject' of the work (with whom the listener is invited to identify by the extremely close spatial placement of key sound materials) begins on a beach; then walks into the water, until submerged; then finally returns back up onto the beach. What remains a metaphor in instrumental music is here made literal, thanks to the unique affordances of the acousmatic genre: the metaphorical 'return home' of the ternary form is now entirely explicit, as the listener returns back out of the water and back up the beach, to end where (s)he began.

4.3. Structural narrative

The structural narrative mode is a particular challenge for acousmatic music. It is an attempt to address those aspects of narrative that are communicated through 'language' or syntax (Emmerson 1986). In tonal music, for example, narrative elements that are communicated through the use of major or minor keys, perfect or deceptive cadences, delayed resolution and so on would all fall under this mode. Serialism offers another example of narrative meaning being communicated (potentially at least) through syntax and structure (see, e.g., Street 2013). This is more problematic with acousmatic music, however, because, although it does indeed access the structural narrative mode, the genre lacks the kind of clearly defined, unified syntax that makes this mode so effective in tonal music – that is, in which a shared structural signifier (e.g., 'minor key') is immediately associated with a given narrative signified ('sad'). While there are syntactical elements to Schaeffer's initial framework, the genre has evolved and branched out significantly since these early roots – a complex process that has resulted, in fact, not so much in a loss of syntax, but in

its multiplication. This has resulted in quite a number of available syntaxes, between which a composer can pick and choose from work to work, or even within the scope of a single work. This has led to a number of identifiable structural 'currents' within the broader acousmatic stream – a 'gestural school', a 'timbral school', a 'microsound school' – each of which tends to orient towards rather different structuring processes. These can be quite elaborate and sophisticated, but are sometimes shared only within that given 'school', losing relevance as one moves further out into the broader acousmatic field – for example, the detailed granular structuring mechanisms of the 'microsound school'. This is further complicated by acousmatic music's chameleon-esque ability to absorb or reference existing syntaxes, the most obvious being, of course, that of tonal music, whether it forms a central structuring principle, as for example in some of John Young's work, or is simply referenced in passing, via the occasional cadential ending for example. This lack of universalism in acousmatic structural strategies can be of enormous benefit to the genre, as it offers a great richness and flexibility; but it does significantly weaken the communicability of structural narrative. It could be argued, however, that acousmatic music more than compensates for this weakness through the strength and number of the other narrative modes available.

Some of the strongest proposals for acousmatic structure come from Trevor Wishart (1994, 1996), who has detailed his structural strategies in his own compositions in *Sound Composition* (Wishart 2012). While these are extremely strong, they pose a couple of challenges in proposing them as agents of structural narrative. One of these is that such strategies are not always readily discernible to the listener under 'normal' listening conditions, which runs contrary to our emphasis on narrative being linked directly to the listening experience. Some of Wishart's works – for example, *Encounters in the Republic of Heaven* (Wishart 2010) – incorporate quite a number of structuring mechanisms, some of which are readily perceptible to the concert listener – for example, some of the spatial structuring mechanisms – while others are not – for example, some of his structuring work at the microsound level (Wishart 2010).

In general, however, the acousmatic genre is to some extent predicated on the 'playing down' of these kinds of structures in favour of a more sculptural approach to sound. As a result, depending on the approach taken, the structural narrative mode at times comes close enough to other narrative modes – for example, the material or mimetic modes – as to arguably cease to be a distinct mode in its own right. Thus, while the structural narrative mode is of central importance in many – or possibly most – other musical genres, it is of seriously reduced significance in acousmatic music. As a result of this relative weakness, it often works in

tandem with other modes to produce narrative collaboratively. Consider, for example, the climactic 'closing doors' sequence towards the end of *Rumeurs* (approx. 11'00" to 12'00"), in which a series of opening and closing doors reveal brief 'windows' onto scenes and materials from earlier in the work. Can we claim this to be 'structure'? To some extent, perhaps, in that it establishes a system and a pattern that is recognised as such and that can then be developed or contradicted. However, it could be argued that other narrative modes play a much stronger role here. For example, material narrative is clearly invoked through the easy recognition of the doors; formal narrative through the regular referencing of material from earlier in the work, whose return marks this passage as climactic and points towards the impending end of the piece; and also possibly embodied narrative (which will be discussed below), through the familiar and recognisable pacing of the very 'natural' open/close rhythms of the doors, the turning of knobs and latches, etc. In the resulting network of narrative modes, it could be argued that the role of structural narrative here is not among the strongest.

If we examine *Undertow* for structural narrative, we come up somewhat empty-handed. While it could be argued that there are structural qualities that allow for our recognition of the opening and closing 'beach' soundscapes (Bregman 1990), this is not relevant to the structuring of the work per se. This leaves us with the longer central 'bubbling' section of the work. Here, however, while there may very well be structuring mechanisms at work, they are not perceptible to the casual listener, and the composer has not chosen to reveal any such mechanisms in the work's liner notes (Harrison 2007; see section 4.10 below). As a result, structural narrative plays no appreciable role in the experience of *Undertow*, a situation that is not uncommon in acousmatic music.

4.4. Mimetic narrative

It can be argued, however, that acousmatic music has, in fact, developed a functional syntax that is drawn from our embodied understanding of movement and behaviour in the world around us (Basanta 2010). This allows the acousmatic composer to establish order, expectation and anticipation, and thereby also to thwart expectation and to surprise, delay, or deny resolution (Andean 2010). Consider, for example, the immediately recognised and understood pattern of the bouncing ball – a series of accelerating impacts; or, of a fall – a descending glissando, followed by an impact. These require no explanation; they are patterns – or, indeed, structures – that we immediately recognise, and which can therefore be employed by the composer to shape and deny expectation: delaying the impact after the fall, thereby creating tension and release; reversing

or otherwise transforming the 'bouncing' archetype; etc. These, it could be argued, offer what we might call a genuinely acousmatic syntax, and so it is here, perhaps, that we find the key to acousmatic structure.

However, while it would perhaps be fair to argue that these structures play a role in the development of the structural narrative mode in acousmatic music, this misses the point somewhat, in that this may not be the primary mode of reception for such materials and behaviours. Our recognition of 'bouncing ball' or 'falling object' behaviours may indeed be used by the composer to develop structure (Emmerson 1986; Wishart 1996), but the listener does not respond to these first and foremost as 'structure'. Rather, it is the behavioural source-bond that dominates our reception of such materials, at least initially, while structural roles are perceived in a secondary fashion, if at all.

It is for this reason that this is here proposed as a distinct narrative mode: the mimetic narrative mode, in which the materials behave in a manner that we recognise from our experience of the world. As described above, this mode may be closely linked to the structural mode, if the composer has chosen to use this behaviour as a source of structural elaboration (through repetition, variation, extension, etc.). It is also closely related to the material narrative mode, in that both rely on recognition and familiarity based on real-world objects and behaviours; however, there is an important distinction to be made there – between 'objects' and their 'behaviours'. Material narrative is based on object recognition – for example, 'a ball' – whereas mimetic narrative is based on behaviour recognition – for example, 'bouncing'. While these may be closely linked – as, for example, in 'a bouncing ball' – acousmatic music also allows for them to be entirely distinct, as, for example, in 'a bouncing cat' or a 'mewling ball'. This kind of play and tension between the material and the mimetic has been made a centrepiece of works such as Trevor Wishart's *Red Bird* (1980) – see, for example, Wishart's 'imposed morphology' (1996: 177–89). In other words, while the material and the mimetic may work together to collaboratively construct narrative, they may equally well work separately, providing two distinct or contrasting layers of narrative, and are therefore listed here as independent modes.

Undertow provides another example, although somewhat in contrast with *Red Bird*. As we learn from the liner notes, at least some of what appear to be 'breaking waves' in *Undertow* are, in fact, constructed from recordings of car motors (Harrison 2007). However, in this case, the break between Material and Mimetic is known only to the composer – the mimetic illusion is sufficiently strong that the listener is entirely unaware of 'car' as sound source, as a result of which it has no bearing on the material narrative. Instead, regardless of sound source, the material and

mimetic narrative modes of the work are entirely aligned, both speaking only of 'breaking waves'.

By contrast, on the surface at least, the mimetic narrative mode is minimally engaged in *Rumeurs*. The closest, perhaps, might be the use of disparate materials to create compound objects and textures, for example at 0'24" to approximately 1'00"; the claim here would be that the compound texture displays a collective behaviour that, in its details, is distinct from the recorded behaviour of any of its single recorded materials taken individually.

4.5. Embodied narrative

The real-world recognition that is exploited in mimetic narrative is not limited to the world 'out there', beyond and around us; instead, our experience of the world is firmly rooted in our own selves. The most defining factor of our perceptual experience of the world is the nature of the perceiver (Gibson 1966). Our concepts of action and gesture are not limited to the passive observation of balls bouncing and so forth, but are to a much greater extent determined by having arms that can swing, throw and sweep, and legs that can walk and run; by the rhythms of breath and heartbeat; and so on (Johnson 1987; Godøy 2010). Thus, when acousmatic music makes use of our understanding of the world to generate narrative, much of this ability lies specifically in our embodied experience of the world (Windsor 2000). This carries forward into the work, making acousmatic listening a fundamentally embodied experience (Andean 2012). When we listen to *Rumeurs*, we do not stop at an objective recognition of 'closing doors'; we can imagine, or even *feel*, ourselves opening and closing those doors. When we hear pipes scraping along the ground, it is as though we ourselves were dragging those pipes. And so on. This is even stronger, though somewhat simpler, in *Undertow*: we have a clear sense that it is we ourselves who are descending from or ascending up the beach; that it is we ourselves who become submerged; that it is we ourselves who are underwater. This is not mere mental imagery; it is a very physical reaction that results.

This embodied sense not only of *observed* action, but also of the listener's *own* action is inherently pleasurable and rather thrilling, and has always been a part of the charm of the acousmatic genre. Interestingly, in recent decades cognitive research has caught up with our intuitive awareness of this experience, primarily with the discovery of 'mirror neurons', which are activated not only when we engage in an activity ourselves, but also when we *observe* someone else engaging in that activity (Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004). This explains, for example, some of the visceral pleasure we take in watching sporting events, or action in films; it is also clearly at play in our experience of acousmatic music.

This is not unique to acousmatic music; there is a great deal of theory arguing that embodied narrative is a crucial aspect of the musical experience more generally (Clarke 2005; Lidov 1987; Leman 2010). However, by directly incorporating imagery from a much broader range of activity, it could be argued that acousmatic music expands, or at least relies more heavily upon, this narrative mode.

4.6. Parametric narrative

There are cases in acousmatic music in which a work is largely, or entirely, focused on a single musical/sonic parameter – for example, rhythm or timbre – from which it develops the majority, or entirety, of its discourse (Landy 2007: 29). In some of these cases, the narrative of the work is generated largely from within the development of that single parameter; or, in other words, that parameter *becomes* the narrative of the work. This drifts close to structural narrative, but is sufficiently distinct – though arguably much less common – to deserve its own category here. In part this is because the resulting narrative is constructed or perceived rather differently: structural narrative constructs an argument, whereas parametric narrative is the argument itself – a distinction between the language used to communicate an idea, and the direct assertion of the idea itself, or between signifier and signified.

A primary example of parametric narrative in acousmatic music is Normandeau's 'timbre spatialisation' works (Normandeau 2009) – for example, *StrinGDberg* and *Éden* (Normandeau 2005) – which present large chugging monoliths of timbral slices set into motion. This process is not used to build an argument; instead, this process is set in motion, and simply observed – or rather, experienced – and it is this experience that is the primary narrative of the work. Note that parametric narrative is arguably less collaborative than most of the narrative modes; material, structural, mimetic, and embodied narratives – sometimes even formal narrative – all fall away, leaving the parametric narrative mode dominant.

4.7. Spatial narrative

One of the truly remarkable opportunities offered by acousmatic music is its capacity for spatial narrative. Sound and space share a symbiotic relationship: sound requires space in order to propagate and make itself heard; while it is from sound that we collect much of our information about space – in other words, space communicates with us through sound (Stocker 2013). Every recorded sound tells two stories simultaneously: one about source, and one about space – about a source object or action that might have caused the sound we hear, and, at the same time, about the space that surrounded that object or action. As a result, while an

acousmatic work can be thought of as a series of sound events, with space serving as simply one parameter among many, the reverse can also be true: the acousmatic work as a series of spaces, in which the sound serves only to illuminate or activate those spaces. ‘One piece of music could be a single space, or it could be developed as a succession of spaces, establishing virtual relations between spatial forms, movements, actual relations, potential relations and the interweaving of time and space’ (Marty 2016a). In other words, ‘[s]pace itself can “tell a story”’ (Emmerson 2007: 102).

For many listeners, conscious attention is drawn primarily to sonic actions and objects, while space is relegated to a more subconscious level of reception; this is not always the case, however – such listening priorities are very personal, and can vary significantly between individuals. For example, in describing his electroacoustic listening priorities, Nicolas Marty puts the foremost emphasis on space, with other qualities taking a back seat: ‘I prefer to listen to sound as a kind of anti-matter, with space surrounding it as matter ... The technique, sound materials ... well that’s not important to me, maybe we hear it, maybe not, but it’s not the point, in my opinion’ (Marty 2016b).

In the section on material narrative, *Rumeurs* was described as offering a steady stream of sound objects and events; but, as we have just seen, these could equally well be described as a stream of spaces. In fact, Normandeu here offers some useful examples of the material and spatial modes pulling apart. For example, in the climactic door sequence (described above in section 4.3), this string of doors, considered as material narrative, remains fairly static: a door, another door, and then another – multiple instances of a single identity. Spatially, however, this is quite a virtuoso passage; not static, but quite the opposite, as each of these doors portrays a unique space – some closer, some farther away; some more reverberant, some less; some larger, some smaller; some realistic, some fantastic; and so on. It could be argued that Normandeu’s doors provide a strong example of the case described above, in which sound is used simply in order to trigger space: once we have recognised the first couple of doors, the door no longer provides any new narrative input of its own, but instead serves as an impulse to activate a series of spaces. This plays a critical role in the narrative experience of this section, telling a story of imaginative, constantly shifting spaces.

Part of the importance of spatial narrative in acousmatic music lies in its potential usefulness to the broader field of narratology. ‘Narrative space’, or ‘narrative spatialisation’, has generated significant narratological interest in recent decades (Herman 2002; Ryan 2009); however, it is considered a challenging subject, in that, in literature – which, despite a recent push towards other narrative forms

and media (Ryan 2004), remains the primary focus for much of the field – space and spatialisation are somewhat ephemeral and abstract, difficult to pin down for closer study. With sound, on the other hand, due to its dominant role in our perception and experience of space, space and spatialisation are much clearer, more explicitly crafted and presented, and more explicitly received and understood. This provides yet another example of aspects of narrative that, while left to more distanced or mediated modes in other genres or art forms, become explicit and literal in acousmatic music, which, with its nearly endless capacity for the creative crafting and deployment of space, therefore offers an ideal playground for the study of narrative spatialisation.

4.8. Studio narrative

All the narrative modes discussed to date deal only with ‘listening to the work’; the studio narrative mode, however, deals with ‘listening to the making of the work’ – or rather, ‘listening to the (perceived or imagined) making of the work’. This is the mode in which we listen to (or imagine that we listen to) ‘the hand of the composer’: rather than listening to the materials ‘as’ materials, we listen to their crafting and shaping; rather than engaging the mimetic mode, we listen to the tracks of the composer’s in-studio performance gestures; the embodied mode changes focus, from re-living the encoded ‘virtual’ gesture (a bouncing ball) to re-living the composer’s performative gesture (e.g., hand on a controller, creating the ‘bouncing’ gesture). The description of Harrison’s *...et ainsi de suite...* in Andean (2014b) is a strong example of the studio narrative mode, by which the composer becomes both the ‘implied author’ (Booth 1961) and ‘protagonist’ of the work. This mode is also closely linked with Smalley’s ‘technological listening’ (Smalley 1997) and Landy’s ‘Sième écoute’ (Landy 2007).

Smalley argues that, in fact, studio narrative should be ‘bracketed out’, in a variation on écoute réduite or Schaeffer’s ‘epoché’ (Chion 1983: 31): ‘Technological listening occurs when a listener “perceives” the technology or technique behind the music rather than the music itself, perhaps to such an extent that true musical meaning is blocked.’ ‘[W]e must try to ignore the electroacoustic and computer technology used in the music’s making. Surrendering the natural desire to uncover the mysteries of electroacoustic sound-making is a difficult but necessary and logical sacrifice’ (Smalley 1997: 108–9). While studio narrative does indeed draw attention away from other modes, there is no need to consider the studio narrative mode as somehow inferior; it is as able, and as rewarding, in its narrativity as any other mode. And, once again, it is often engaged simultaneously with other narrative

composer's notes in determining the perceived narrative of a work is almost alarmingly strong – alarming, in part, due to the discrepancy between this strength and the potential unimportance of these materials in the compositional process. Composers often either dread the task of assigning title and programme descriptions to their works, or treat this task with a certain degree of contempt, in part because it lies outside of the task of composition (Andean 2014a). These materials, however, inevitably serve as a powerful prism through which listeners will view the work – see for example Weale's statistics on listeners' use of titles in interpreting a work (Weale 2006: 194).

We will once again take *Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck)* and *Undertow* as examples. The titles of these works are representative of common acousmatic titling strategies: they are brief, and they are simultaneously illustrative enough to be narratively evocative, but vague enough so as to avoid too narrowly restricting audience interpretations. 'All titles "set the scene", conveying the essence of the work through the most minimal of programmatic aids ... They may (and usually do) amount to only one or two words, which permit (through both brevity and strategic word choice...) a degree of ambiguity or "looseness" of interpretation (on the part of both composer and listener) that accommodates (or encourages) the ephemerality of any narrative contained therein' (Batchelor 2014). *Rumeurs*, however, presents an interesting case through its double title: *Rumeurs*, and *Place de Ransbeck*. The former fits Batchelor's description; the latter, however, puts a very particular spin on the work, by tying it to a particular place. The fanciful soundworld of the work, as well as the more dominant *Rumeurs* of the title, ensures that this connection to place is not entirely literal or completely dominant in the narrative experience of the work, but placing *Place de Ransbeck* in the title ensures that the listener is aware of this connection, and potentially changes the tone of the piece significantly, from what could be taken as an entirely fantastical and whimsical piece of worldmaking, to a more grounded and situated work. The programme notes for these works are also relatively representative.⁴ Both are relatively brief; Harrison's extremely so. Both make reference to and support the titles of the works; both again remain vague enough to be evocative without over-determining interpretation. Normandeau's notes are representatively contemplative, and while they may not entirely determine or dominate the narrative experience of the work, they certainly supply a hook on which to 'hang' the work's narrative: 'Elusive ...

Fleeting ... As soon as it materializes, it vanishes, leaving only traces in our memories. Here, nothing is certain ... sounds reach us like faint echoes of the world' (Normandeau 1998). Harrison's notes, however, are an interesting case: 'Plunging beneath the waves we discover a world teeming with life and pulsing with energy. But we cannot hold our breath forever. (And not only that, there seem to be cars down here, masquerading as breaking waves!)' (Harrison 2007). Only a few scant lines, the first two of which are again typically 'evocative but vague'. The last line, however, breaks from this, offering a single very specific fact from the composition of the work: that car sounds were used to generate some of the wave sounds. This may seem innocent enough, but in fact is likely to determine, perhaps not so much the precise listening actions of the listener (was that sound a car? or that one? or how about this one?), but certainly a listening strategy: it draws attention to the alchemical transformation of sound source into sound material, making it very likely that this will guide the listener in their approach to the work. This is perhaps not unwise, in that, as already described, other narrative aspects of the work are extremely strong, clear and communicative; providing this brief pointer in the programme notes helps strengthen an alternative narrative approach to the work.

Normandeau's notes, in fact, end on a similar note, offering a challenge to the listener: 'and if you listen carefully, you may find the key' – certainly very engaging, offering the work as a kind of game or puzzle, to which the listener can hope to find the 'solution'. Again, there is a line that is carefully walked here: trying to add to the listening experience, without thereby dominating or restricting possible interpretations too much; or, in other words, trying to ensure that these extra-musical materials add narrative levels, rather than taking them away.

5. COMPOSITE MODES AND 'SUPRAMODAL NARRATIVE'

As has already been described, in most cases, an acousmatic work will engage a number of these modes simultaneously, either collaborating towards a single narrative, or providing parallel narratives for the listener to shift between. We have considered a number of likely modal partnerships throughout the descriptions of the various modes. It would also be possible to propose a situation in which a single narrative is displayed across multiple modes – not collaboratively but simultaneously, in a manner somewhat reminiscent of the Schenkerian expression of fundamental structure across multiple levels (Schenker 1979). This would result in a new dimension of narrative, which might constitute a

⁴These are available online at www.electrocd.com/en/oeuvres/select/?id=14382 and <http://www.electrocd.com/en/oeuvres/select/?id=20811> (accessed 24 June 2016).

Table 1. Narrative modes in Robert Normandeau's 'Rumeurs' and Jonty Harrison's 'Undertow'.

Narrative mode	Normandeau: <i>Rumeurs</i>	Harrison: <i>Undertow</i>
Material	Numerous: doors; toilet; pipe; etc. but, no clear overall narrative	Beach; underwater sounds. Clear overall material narrative
Formal	Climax: return of the doors	ABA – The Return
Structural	Doors as 'windows' (or: formal; material; embodied)	Unknown (possibly in the 'bubbling' material?)
Mimetic	Minimally engaged; perhaps compound objects/textures	Car recordings as 'breaking waves' (minimal impact)
Embodied	Numerous; e.g. opening and closing of doors	'Being underwater', etc.
Parametric	N/A (see Normandeau <i>StrinGDberg</i>)	N/A (see Normandeau <i>StrinGDberg</i>)
Spatial	Numerous; succession of spaces, e.g. doors – spatial variation	'Outdoor' space vs. 'underwater' space
Studio	Performance with materials ('squeaking'; 'duct tape'; etc.)	Limited
Textual	N/A (see Ferrari <i>Presque rien avec □les</i>)	N/A (see Ferrari <i>Presque rien avec □les</i>)
Extramusical	Notes: the work as 'riddle' Title: tied to 'place'	Notes: Mimetic listening strategy

further narrative mode, or 'supermode' – a hypothetical 'supramodal narrative mode'.

A work such as Francis Dhomont's *Points de fuite* (1996) perhaps draws close to such a condition (Andean 2010), as demonstrated in Stéphane Roy's multi-level analysis (1996). All, or nearly all, of the narrative modes deliver the same theme, re-iterated again and again at every level: the broader themes of light, movement, escape, expressed in the more precise theme of the 'vanishing point'. This can be found:

- at the material level, through the use of planes, trains, balls rolling into the distance, etc.;
- at the formal level, through an overarching formal metaphor that is brilliantly established by Roy, who points out for example that 'the conclusion of the work ... is the true vanishing point for all of the [work's] processes' (Roy 1996: 36);
- at the structural level, for example in the development of 'glides in tessitura, mutations of masses, of densities' (Dhomont 1996) as structural devices;
- at the mimetic level, through the shaping of both the referential and abstract materials such that they 'move away', on a number of levels – timbrally, spatially, etc.;
- at the embodied level, through the consistent insistence on embodied metaphor in the communication of the themes of the work at all levels ('movement away from', etc.);
- at the parametric level, if we can consider Dhomont's spectral drifts as an evocation of the parametric mode;
- at the spatial level, through the almost constant movement of materials from the foreground into the far distance, across the frame, 'upwards', etc.;

- and finally, at the extramusical level, where the themes are carefully expressed through the title of the work and through the programme notes, which provide lists of the multilayered thematic presentation at 'technical', 'impressionistic' and 'symbolic' levels (Dhomont 1996).

What's more, Dhomont also invokes another potential mode that has not yet been discussed: an 'intertextual narrative mode', in which a work incorporates references to or quotes from other works, thereby absorbing or co-opting the narrative themes of those other works, or thematically interacting with them to create a new, expanded, or compounded theme. In *Points de fuite*, this is achieved through brief quotes and transformations of the opening piano theme from Schubert's *Der Erlkönig* – a theme specifically crafted to evoke a sense of 'being on horseback', in support of Goethe's text, thereby providing obvious support for Dhomont's themes.

6. NARRATIVE UNIVERSALS

Interestingly, there are some narrative themes, or 'archetypes', that arise regularly, between works and across modes; some have been mentioned above – for example, Escape, and The Return; others include, for example, The Spiral, The Cloud, The Rebirth and many more. These can all be found in various acousmatic works, activated in most, if not all, of our Narrative Modes: as Material, Form, Structure, Mimesis, Embodied Experience, etc. Moving out, we then find this same archetype expressed in other areas of electroacoustic theory (e.g., Wishart 1996; Smalley 1997), for a broad range of parameters, from gesture, to pitch behaviour, to timbre, to space. In another direction, we find these same archetypes invoked in electroacoustic performance, most notably perhaps in

Vande Gorne's 'Spatial Figures' (Gorne 2002). Similar archetypes arise in musical theory more generally (e.g., Huron 2006, or Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1983), as well as in musical narratology (e.g., Grabócz 2011; Tarasti 1994; Almén 2008), and then in narratology more generally – for example, in the famous 'Seven Basic Plots', albeit in a somewhat more developed form (Booker 2004). Unsurprisingly, we find these same archetypes among the 'embodied gestalts' described for example by Johnson (1987); indeed, it is likely due to their presence as embodied gestalts that we recognise them in so many other contexts, across levels of human activity, culture, consciousness, biology and identity (Jung 1964; Campbell 1972; Mâche 1992).

In other words, these recurring narrative archetypes appear across narrative modes in acousmatic music, but also across genres, across art forms, and outwards into a full range of human thought and activity, and can thereby be proposed to be narrative universals. This brings us back full circle: if narrative is 'a basic human strategy', and a function of human experience, then this persistent reappearance of narrative universals should come as no surprise, for it is simply a reminder that narrative is not a function of the observed, but of the observer. The narrative modes proposed here are thus not a function of interpretation; they do not lie dormant in the acousmatic work, awaiting activation, but rather it is we who carry them with us, to serve as a collection of lenses to be snapped into place, one by one or together, so that we might better come to know these acousmatic objects of perception.

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Article 5: Cultural Relativism in Acousmatic Music

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CULTURAL RELATIVISM IN ACOUSMATIC MUSIC

26

NRO 2 2012

Introduction: Acousmatic music

Acousmatic music is a form of electroacoustic tape music which involves the use of recorded sound as material for composition. It grew out of 'musique concrète', developed by Pierre Schaeffer at the ORTF in Paris in the 1940s and 1950s. Schaeffer based this new genre on the concept of 'reduced listening', in which one listens to sound recorded from the world around us, focusing solely on the sonic characteristics and musical potential of the sounds, deliberately ignoring or effacing the source of the sound, denying the sound's role as signifier for the object, movement or action which produced it.

While the musical deployment of these sounds abstracted from their original contexts remains a critical quality of acousmatic music, over time it became increasingly clear that sounds continue to carry these contexts with them. While it is indeed possible to employ reduced listening to focus only on the sonic aspects of a sound, in the absence of this deliberate act or denial or erasion signification rushes forward once again. Sound continues to carry with it associations and references to the objects and gestures which made, or might have made, a given sound. These associations offer a further field of play for the composer to work in, in which images triggered by the unfolding sequence of sounds create an additional layer of meaning.

Acousmatic composers thus commonly work with their sound material on two levels: mining a given sound for its musical potential on the one hand, while

on the other hand, using the references and signification associated with the sound to generate images, themes, and metaphors, which infuse many acousmatic works with a sense of narrative (Fischman 2008: 118). Such narratives may range from the relatively abstract to the fairly literal; from a vague sense of theme, to more defined story-telling (Norman 1994).

Sound as symbol

Compositional control over the narrative aspects of an acousmatic work relies on the capacity of sound to act as a symbol – for that which produced or might have produced the sound, or as a reference to some category of archetypal actions, movements, or sounding objects. Once again, this can be extremely literal – footsteps on a squeaky floor, the turning of a door handle and clicking of a latch, followed by the squeal of rusty hinges... It is much more common, however, to use sound to open up or point towards areas of thought, feeling, or experience: the use of planes, cars, or running footsteps to indicate flight or escape (Andean 2010: 110); the use of songbirds, a light breeze, waves lapping at the shore to indicate calm or repose; the use of crows, ravens, a harsher wind to indicate desolation or death.

Cultural variables

This seems to ignore, however, the potentially significant degrees of cultural variability such material might possess. Sound symbols – be they literal or thematic – rely extremely

heavily on a web of associations which stem from common knowledge and experience, generally the result of a shared cultural background; as a result, the universality of such symbols varies significantly, and cannot be assumed. The cry of a crow as a symbol for 'bird' might perhaps be a connection which can safely be expected; the same cry as a symbol of death, however, is more culturally charged, and depends on an understanding of codes of folklore which might not translate automatically across significant cultural divides. The interpretation of sounds as symbols rests to an enormous extent on the chain of associations a given sonic reference might inspire; these, however, far from objective and absolute, involve a great deal of culture-specific coding. The sound of waves against the shore might inspire a sense of calm and peace in the average western listener; this same sound, however, might inspire a very different response from a listener in a landlocked country who has never seen the sea, or perhaps more importantly, from a listener whose village is regularly threatened by the sea's rampages. The list of such potential intercultural miscommunications is significant, ranging from cultural mores, to geographical contrasts, technological differences, social, historical, or class issues, and on to more extended levels of association and semiosis.

And yet, the acousmatic composer often relies heavily on such sonic imagery, and the references and symbols such imagery triggers is often a primary tool in establishing not just moment-to-moment narrative meaning, but broader qualities of theme, mood, and tone. Without a common network of symbols and signification, the composer's control over these aspects suffers. The listener fails to recognise the particular references of a given symbol, or fails to recognise it as a symbol in the first place; or, perhaps even more problematically, finds a particular symbol charged with a very different set of cultural baggage than that which the composer intended to reference. To offer a personal example, I recently used a recording of church bells tolling in a sombre manner in an acousmatic work as a symbol for finality, fate and death; eventually, a listener who had lived next to a church growing up pointed out to me that the peal of bells that I had used was, in fact, celebratory, likely for a wedding, and thus had a happy,

positive tone to anyone who recognised this fact. In the work, this sound was used to close the piece, and this difference in interpretation of the significance of the sound symbol at such a critical point in the piece resulted in a radical difference in the reception and interpretation of the meaning of the work.

One therefore sometimes encounters concern within the acousmatic community regarding the problem of acousmatic translation – that the genre, as currently deployed, restricts its audience by the use of culturally-loaded sound symbols to construct meaning within the work.

Cultural relativism

In essence, this is a problem of cultural relativism, although in an extremely prescribed sense. Sound symbols are not independent, self-sufficient, absolute entities, but rather derive their meaning from the complex cultural network and context of which they are a part; severed from that context, a given symbol loses its power, or is charged with new and changed meaning due to its altered role in a different cultural web. As Herskovits famously explains: "Judgements are based on experience, and experience is interpreted by each individual in terms of his own enculturation... Is reality, then, not defined and redefined by the ever-varied symbolisms of the innumerable languages of mankind?" (Herskovits 1948: 64).

We will concern ourselves here only with a relatively narrow view on cultural relativism; not with broader questions of values and moral codes, but only with the encultured vocabulary of symbols, imagery, signs, and meanings which vary and fluctuate between and across cultures. While these exist and take on their full meaning only within the larger cultural framework of values and world-view, we will limit our consideration here to these smaller-scale matters of symbol and signification.

The problem

Thus there is occasional concern within the acousmatic community over this intercultural identity crisis. How can the acousmatic composer respond to the problem of the cultural relativism of sound symbols?

Must acousmatic composers work to ensure that their sound symbols are universal? Or perhaps specifically at points where the correct interpretation of the desired implications of a given symbol is critical? On the other hand, perhaps this is an inevitable but acceptable flaw of acousmatic music? Or must we conclude that acousmatic music simply cannot communicate outside of a specific culture – that its symbolic content presumes a certain ‘western’ background, or at least a common cultural background shared between the listener and the composer of a given work?

A reappraisal

Composers have occasionally done an admirable job of tackling these issues, often with great sophistication (see for example Wishart 2008), as have acousmatic’s close cousins from within the soundscape community (Truax 1996b). Here, however, rather than struggle towards a solution, we will instead focus on a closer examination of the problem.

To what extent is the crisis of culturally relative sound symbols really a relevant issue?

To begin with, the connotations of a given sound symbol are, to some extent, personal, regardless of cultural background, as demonstrated in the church bell example described above. The sound of a car may signify ‘freedom’ or ‘the thrill of speed’ for a teenaged male,



Sound symbols are not independent, self-sufficient, absolute entities, but rather derive their meaning from the complex cultural network and context of which they are a part.”

while signifying horror and pain for a recent crash victim (see also Windsor 1995). Are such potentially significant variations in the individual associations inspired by a given sound symbol (see Ciardi 2008: 125) any less important than possible differences in association between cultural groups? Do we necessarily find greater discrepancies between the associations made by members of different cultural groups than we would find between any two individuals?

Furthermore, we live in an age of globalisation, of encroaching monoculture, of instant communication, with immediate access to ever-increasing amounts of information spreading and connecting us around the globe. In such an age, do these kinds of discrepancies in the cultural reading of symbols still persist to such a degree that they threaten to act as barriers to the communication and appreciation of acousmatic works?

It might also be unrealistic to imagine that a listener sufficiently unfamiliar with the symbolic codes embedded in the work would have, or want, access to acousmatic works in the first place.

Regrettably, awareness of the acousmatic genre is largely limited to fairly particular, and often culturally specific, communities, as is the case with the broader electroacoustic genre. Is it perhaps unrealistic, or at least optimistic, to imagine acousmatic music spreading to listeners sufficiently unfamiliar with the symbols contained in a work that they are unable to accurately interpret or enjoy the piece?

Of course, to some extent it is a question of degree. The disconnect doesn’t need to be huge in order to disrupt the intended reading of embedded symbols. However – as with any artwork – won’t the listener, at least to some extent, interpret the symbols of the work with the composer’s cultural context in mind? The informed listener is likely aware that the composer is of a certain background – indeed, that the entire acousmatic genre is part of a certain cultural tradition – and is likely to interpret the sound symbols through the prism this knowledge provides. An uninformed interpretation upon first encountering any unfamiliar musical work is likely to be significantly altered when a greater sense of context is provided; how are issues of cultural relativism in acousmatic music any different?

Temporal relativism

In fact, the general interpretation of a work varies not only culturally or geographically, but, sometimes more importantly, temporally. Codes and symbols change, and works are constantly being reimagined and reinterpreted according to the code of the day; there is only the historian’s voice, raised from time to time, to

remind us of important differences in the work's original message and context. Much of Satie's piano music was deliberately crafted by the composer to be absurd and occasionally frustrating to the listener (Shauck 1968); developments in tonal language, however, quickly swept past Satie's melodic capriciousness, causing the works to be commonly reinterpreted as pleasant and light. Similarly, certain modes in early music once intended as 'happy' are tonally reinterpreted by listeners in more recent centuries as 'sad' due to the inclusion of the minor 3rd, which has come to be perceived as the very personification of the 'sad' in music (Ball 2010: 275). And so on.

As a result, a more significant cause for alarm regarding acousmatic sound symbols might be their limited shelf life. Sounds we identify today as a 'car' or 'plane', may well bear little resemblance to the sounds of cars or planes twenty years from now; more importantly, there is a strong chance that what these symbolise today may well be very different in the future – today's 'escape' vs. tomorrow's 'charming nostalgia', today's 'casual travel' vs. tomorrow's 'irresponsible environmental destruction', and so on.

The Other

There is also, at times, something vaguely unsettling, possibly patronising, about concern over the intercultural communication of sound symbols. It seems, at times, to envision a romanticised 'Other' (Cipriani & Latini 2008: 90), some abstracted exotic culture – without access to the same technologies perhaps, and therefore unable to identify technological sound sources, while concerns regarding the potential incomprehension of differences in climatic or geographical sound symbols – rain, wind, waves – sometimes seem to drift towards the vague idea of some tropical southern land, where listeners sit beneath coconut trees and wonder at the strange and unfathomable acousmatic sounds emanating from their wireless...

Cultural divides

If one is concerned about the inability of acousmatic music to fully communicate due to cultural differences,

it could be argued that the focus on the cultural relativism of sound symbols is, in fact, something of a case of misdirection. There are far more important issues that will radically prevent the composer's



The cultural divide that we should be concerned about is not that between the composer's and the listener's two cultures: it is between the 'informed' listener, and what we must then presumably call the 'uninformed' listener."

'intended' understanding of the work – with no need to look to an imagined Other for such differences, as they surround us right here at home: Electroacoustic? Acousmatic? What's that? Is this music? Why? How? No, that's not music. Where are the performers? If this is music, what are all those sound effects? I can't follow the story –

what's supposed to be happening? This story makes no sense! And so on.

The cultural divide that we should be concerned about is not that between the composer's and the listener's two cultures: it is between the 'informed' listener, and what we must then presumably call the 'uninformed' listener – i.e., most of the listening public. As already discussed, an appreciation of acousmatic music begins with a familiarity with the practice of reduced listening. Yet this practice is far removed from the listening modes with which the average listener will be familiar (Chion 1994). Without an awareness of this 'missing paradigm', acousmatic works are likely to be met with misapprehension at best, confusion and contempt at worst.

Although resources are of course readily available to any curious listener to help initiate them into the apparent mysteries of reduced listening and acousmatic art, the most common path to acousmatic understanding remains that of academia. Not that this is necessarily a problem; but it results in something of an informed microcommunity. If one is concerned about making acousmatic music cross-culturally communicative, there is more urgent need for a bridge between the acousmatic community and the uninitiated (Landy 1990) than

there is for better translation of culturally-coded sound symbols.

The illusion of composer control

All of this assumes, of course, that the precise communication of the composer's intentions is a key priority to begin with. This is often taken for granted within the contemporary music community; however, it is an assumption which is somewhat at odds with expectations in many other musical genres, and indeed across many of the other art forms. This is the 'illusion of control' of contemporary composition: that mastery of the composer's craft grants the power to directly and precisely communicate with the listener, who is able to read in full the composer's intent; the composer's craft is deployed to precisely control the listener's experience of the work.

Of course, there is a small degree of truth to this: the artist must indeed learn to direct and manipulate the subject's experience. Tonal music was particularly adept in this regard: thanks to the powerful tools offered by a commonly understood musical language and its central rhetorical devices, structural elements could be deployed to manipulate the listener in an admirably precise manner. In the first half of the twentieth century, these characteristics were, to a significant extent, abandoned; in spite of this, a residual assumption that the composer remains in detailed control of the listener's experience and interpretation of the work has been retained.

Thus, in the contemporary music context, it continues to be maintained that a composer precisely directs the listener's experience of a work, through careful control of the parameters of a given composition (Atkinson 2007: 115); in acousmatic music, this is sometimes extended to the narrative aspects of the work as well as the sonic, as these are often equally critical to a listener's appreciation and interpretation of an acousmatic work. Narrative aspects of the acousmatic work are thus too often assumed to be absolute and pre-defined by the composer, who carefully controls the listener's response to the work through subtle and detailed crafting of such material.

The way forward

This is not, of course, a universal preconception; indeed, cracks in the facade of absolute composer control have become increasingly visible in recent decades. A number of more recent acousmatic composers, in fact, can be seen as not only accepting the subjective nature of narrative material, but deliberately seeking out and cultivating the private and the personal as key elements of their work's narratives (see for example Young 2009).

This is a strategy with extremely rich potential; however, we can perhaps go further in reassessing the acousmatic problem of cultural relativism. The use of narrative sound material is an enormous advantage of acousmatic music over many of its more abstract peers



Acousmatic works are vastly enriched by their capacity to directly access private experience and the listener's personal history of engagement with the world."

within the broader scope of contemporary music, as it aids significantly in communicating with the uninitiated (Truax 1996a). While the casual listener is generally unable to read the structural or formal codes of a great deal of contemporary instrumental music, for example, (and, indeed,

may be equally unable to read the equivalent codes of the acousmatic genre,) a degree of connection – on some level – with the narrative qualities of acousmatic works is fairly probable (Weale 2006). Despite the potential inability to recognise structural concerns or aspects of the work dependent on reduced listening, uninitiated listeners are nevertheless able to recognise and relate to acousmatic sound through their mirroring and referencing of our daily, embodied existence.

Is it not, therefore, a mistake to cling misguidedly to the precise communication of the composer's intention in the deployment of a given symbol? Rather than hold with steadfast conviction to earlier tenets of twentieth century musical culture regarding the composer's unquestionable authority, acousmatic music would be better served by celebrating its capacity to tap into the individual listener's private experience, complete

with its own intricate webs of personal association and signification. Rather than working to deploy sound symbols which remain universally accessible and whose decoding by the listener can be predicted with certainty, the acousmatic composer should rather concentrate on creating works which set up a field of maximised *potential* for meaning – creating works which offer the listener rich opportunities to find meaning, to be moved, to experience, as profoundly as possible. It is the access to this kind of experience that is critical, rather than complete control over the precise *content* of such experience. Acousmatic works are vastly enriched by their capacity to directly access private experience and the listener's personal history of engagement with the world. Rather than attempt to curtail this process in the misguided attempt to limit culture-dependent variations in reading sound symbols, the endless variety of individual listening experiences offered by the acousmatic genre should be celebrated as its greatest strength. ●

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Article 6: An Embodied Approach to Acousmatic Music

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AN EMBODIED APPROACH TO ACOUSMATIC MUSIC

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Abstract

Acousmatic music offers a unique laboratory for the consideration of the embodied experience of music. Acousmatic works tend to operate on two simultaneous planes: a more abstract, musical level of gesture, phrase, colour, texture, and motion; and a more literal, narrative level, which references realworld objects, actions, contexts and environments, either more directly – for example through the direct reproduction of such objects and actions – or in a more distanced, mediated manner. These two aspects offer very different perspectives on embodiment, which are enacted simultaneously. On the one hand, the musical aspects of acousmatic music offer an excellent forum for the consideration of more traditionally musical parameters of gesture and phrase as they relate to bodily sensations of movement and motion, in that these parameters, closely linked to the means of sound production in instrumental music, are often divorced from such limiting associations in acousmatic music, and can thus be considered from a broader perspective of embodiment. At the same time, the images and associations embedded in the narrative layer offer the potential for a more direct link to objects, actions and situations recognised from our experience of the world, with all the detail of embodied memory and perception.

Keywords: acousmatic, embodied, electroacoustic

1. Introduction

Acousmatic music is a form of electroacoustic tape music, which developed out of the *musique concrète* of the 1950s. *Musique concrète* was developed by Pierre Schaeffer in the late 1940s and 1950s at the French Radio in Paris. Working first with disc-cutters and eventually with tape, Schaeffer envisioned a new musical language constructed from the sounds of the world around us. Schaeffer imagined this as raw material, which could be musically reinterpreted through what he termed 'reduced listening' (Schaeffer, 1966). This, in essence, is a listening paradigm in which the source of a sound is deliberately ignored, in order to focus on the sonic properties and characteristics inherent to the sound: its internal rhythms, its timbres and textures, maybe some melodic elements... Footsteps become a rhythm; the sound of busy traffic

becomes a texture; a train passing becomes a musical phrase with rhythm, melody, timbre and texture – the rhythm as it rolls across the tracks, the melody of the whistle which drops in pitch as it passes, etc.

2. Acousmatic

The term 'acousmatic' comes from Pythagoras, who would lecture his students from behind a screen, because he thought that his physical presence would distract them from the content of what he was saying. He argued they would be able to focus better on what he was *saying* if they weren't distracted by *seeing* him. The analogy is that in acousmatic music, the loudspeaker acts as the screen: because we can *hear* a given sound even though the source is entirely absent, we are suddenly

able to experience the musical qualities of the sound without being distracted by the sources that they signify – there's a car coming! someone's baby is crying! etc. Pythagoras' students were called 'the acousmatics', and the term was appreciated by Schaeffer and his collaborators as a result of this analogy of 'hearing without seeing the source'. (Schaeffer, 1966)

3. Phenomenological roots

Schaeffer was not simply intuitively sculpting with sound; he was very systematic and extremely analytical, in a very explicit attempt to forge a new musical language, rather than simply seeking out new techniques (Schaeffer, 1952). In this Schaeffer was heavily influenced and guided by phenomenology, although to what extent is open to debate – it might be more a question of recognising certain affinities after the fact (Godøy, 2006).

This phenomenological aspect is relevant here because, unlike most other post-war musical attempts to forge new musical languages, Schaeffer's proposals for new syntax and vocabularies were based entirely on our natural perception of sound. It is largely as a result of this constant empiricism that acousmatic music offers such rich territory for the consideration of musical embodiment.

4. Embodiment in acousmatic music

The experience of listening to acousmatic music is a uniquely physical sensation. This is experienced in a number of ways. Some of these stem from the narrative content of acousmatic music. While reduced listening offers new ways of interpreting sound-as-music, it does not negate or erase sound's capacity to act as a signifier for the object or event that caused the sound (Leman, 2010). In other words, although we may now recognise the sound of footsteps as a musical rhythm, we still simultaneously recognise them as footsteps, triggering all the associations and chains of infinite semiosis that this might entail.

In the case of footsteps, the element of embodiment is quite clear: as people who ourselves walk, we immediately recognise the sensation of walking. Here, I think we might have an excellent testing ground for mirror neuron theories; this sensation is sometimes extremely strong in acousmatic music – the extent to which our own body appears to experience what we hear in the work as though we ourselves were performing that particular action.

However, the sound is not recognised only through our own ability to walk; we also recognise the sound of others walking. We associate the footsteps we hear in the piece not only with our own act of walking, but also with our experience of hearing footsteps in our lives, from our experience of the world around us.

5. Causation vs. association

The example of footsteps is, of course, an extremely literal one. Sound sources in acousmatic music need not be so literal, clear, or obvious. They may be processed beyond recognition; they may be from an unknown or unknowable source – for example an amplification of microscopic sounds which we do not recognise; or they may just as easily be synthetic or computer-generated sounds, with no direct causal link with real-world objects.

However, narrative aspects of acousmatic music are not directly tied to the objects or events that caused the sounds, but rather stem from our associations with a given sound, or possibly from our assumptions about what might have made the sound. This can still be fairly literal; for example, one might use synthesis to quite accurately imitate footsteps, and the listener might be fooled into believing these to be real footsteps.

However, this can also be far more abstract. If, for example, I hear a swishing sound on the tape, I am likely to associate it with categories of motion which might possibly generate such categories of sound: for example, holding something in my hand and moving it rapidly through the air, or even simply moving my arm quickly from side to side in front of me. The same for example

with the recognition of the accelerating rhythm when something is dropped and bounces until it comes to rest, or the doppler effect when the sound drops in pitch as a train or a car passes us; and so on. This doesn't mean we necessarily assume that this is how the composer created the sound in the studio, as this is largely irrelevant to the listening experience; rather, it is the association we make with the sound based on our experience of sound in the world around us. (Clarke, 2005; Windsor, 2000) In essence, what we are responding to here is energy trajectories: we recognise the various ways in which energy is heard and experienced in the world, the ways in which energy is expended as movement and as sound. (Frengel, 2010)

6. Embodied composition as embodied performance

The question of the composer's actions in the studio raises a further aspect of acousmatic embodiment. Acousmatic creators constitute an important percentage of the community of acousmatic listeners; in other words, a certain number of the people listening to acousmatic music are themselves acousmatic composers. This means that a given percentage of listeners will recognise not only sources taken from the real world, but also the traces of the composer's actions in the studio: a particular movement of the tape reels, a given twist of the knob, the manipulation of a given piece of software, etc. This then results in a layer of embodiment which is largely similar to the embodied experience of instrumental music, in which the listener feels a degree of physical pleasure through a bodily experience – a kind of sympathetic resonance – of particular movements involved in instrumental performance.

7. Acousmatic embodiment summarised

We have thus established a number of levels on which acousmatic listening is an embodied experience:

- first, a very strong experience of embodiment where we can recognise a

sound as being the direct consequence of bodily action, for instance associating footsteps on tape with our own footsteps;

- second, where we recognise or associate a given sound with our experience of the world around us and from our daily lives, for instance the footsteps of others;
- third, a more abstract sense of sound being created by motion – the swishing motion, the bouncing sound, the doppler effect, and so on;
- and fourthly, the embodied recognition of the in-studio gestures of the composer.

8. Acousmatic vs. instrumental embodiment

Acousmatic music also shares some aspects of musical embodiment with instrumental music. Some of the key examples of embodied aspects of music result from the ways in which we interpret our experience through our experiences of our bodies: what we feel to be a natural, satisfying length and shape for a musical phrase is closely linked for example to the duration of a breath, or the length of an arm gesture; our sense of rhythm and pacing is heavily determined by walking with two feet, the beating of our hearts, and other bodily rhythms; and so on (Emmerson, 2007; Godøy, 2010).

In music, of course, this is a two-way street, determined by a mutual, cycling feedback loop between the creation of music and listening to music, in which the gesture or breath used to create the sound determines the resulting musical phrase, which is then heard and interpreted bodily, which then influences how new gestures are played, and so on. Instrumental music is clearly part of this feedback loop; acousmatic music, on the other hand, is not. Acousmatic music is in this sense considerably abstracted, in that the sound results are not necessarily – of course they can be, but are not necessarily – directly linked with the actual method of sound production. A great deal of acousmatic music is not made in so-called 'real-time', but rather crafted 'outside of time' as it were, at the computer for instance. Human bodily

limitations can be entirely bypassed, if so desired. As a result, the composer is in essence freed to consider questions like phrasing, phrase length, pacing, and so on, without any consideration for the bodily requirements of performance – the limits of a single drawing of the bow, or striking of percussion, or a brass player's breath length, and so on.

For this season, acousmatic music has great potential in the examination of musical embodiment. This is somewhat similar to analysing people's natural sleep rhythms using test subjects who are removed from sunlight and kept inside for a number of weeks, to see what rhythms are maintained, or what changes might develop from this experimental isolation. Just as these subjects are not compelled to go to bed because they recognise that it is dark outside, the acousmatic composer is under no compulsion to reference or acknowledge the physical limitations of bodily sound generation.

It is therefore particularly fascinating to find such a strong degree of embodiment in acousmatic phrasing and pacing; perhaps even more so when compared with certain contemporary instrumental composers – Pierre Boulez for instance, or Brian Ferneyhough – who may deliberately ignore or obliterate such physical associations or limitations in their instrumental compositions. Acousmatic works, on the other hand, despite having no practical compulsion to reference the physical characteristics of bodily sound generation, very often do so, to the extent that this is at risk of becoming a defining characteristic of the genre.

We will now consider the opening passages from several works as examples of acousmatic embodiment in action.

9. Example one: John Young's *Pythagoras's Curtain*

Here we have a fairly literal example of bodily mimesis. We all recognise the sound source (or what we assume to be the sound source): the sound of writing on a blackboard with chalk. Of course each listener will have a slightly different

experience, and a slightly different interpretation, but perhaps it is fair to suggest that many of us will, first, recognise the experience of writing on the chalkboard ourselves; then, we might recognise the experience of hearing someone else write on a chalkboard, which is likely to lead to a chain of associations – perhaps 'sitting in a classroom as a child'; maybe with feelings of boredom, or of authority, and unfolding chains of association from there.

Young then walks us through a process of abstraction. He has made an extremely narrative statement; some very subtle transformations are made; then a clear knocking at a door, and the door itself, followed by a more dramatic transformation, transitioning rapidly to a potentially more musical – or at least more 'sonic' – experience, but one which continues to be governed by physically-rooted rhythms and gestures.

10. Example two: Jonty Harrison's *Pair/Impair*

The opening of Harrison's *Pair/Impair* is, by comparison with Young's chalkboard, fairly abstract in terms of sound production; we are left without a clear idea of what might actually have been used to make these sounds. They might be heavily processed recordings; they might be made via synthesis or programming; or likely a combination of all of the above.

Despite this, the opening of the piece doesn't 'feel' particularly abstract. While we may have no clear vision of what has made these sounds, they respond fairly clearly to energy trajectories that feel familiar from our embodied experience of the world. It is not that we could necessarily name something specific that behaves in this manner; it is simply that we recognise the energy patterns from the piece as being somehow very physical, very real, very much linked with the world and with our sense of movement.

11. Example three: Adam Basanta's *A glass is not a glass*

It is perfectly clear, from both the title and the opening moments of the piece, what Basanta has used as his sound source: it is a glass. What is interesting, however, is that, in terms of the actions, behaviours, energy trajectories, and so on, we clearly perceive two distinct but simultaneous levels. One of these is tightly associated with the image of 'a glass': the glass is being tapped, struck, rubbed, etc. Our experience of these actions is clearly embodied: it is not simply that we recognise and identify 'the sound of a glass being tapped'; we recognise it bodily as 'that is what happens when I tap a glass'.

However, this is only one level of action embedded in these sounds. In fact, this layer of tapping, striking, and so on is to a significant extent subsumed by an additional layer, which is much busier, more artificial, clearly crafted in the studio. Here, the glass we hear behaves in ways we know a glass could never really behave: it skips frantically, it swims, it dances, it flies, it splinters and is recomposed, it turns backwards on itself... These are impossible sounds, in that the source is very familiar, but the behaviour is impossible.

And yet, we simultaneously *recognise* these movements; we make associations with these energy trajectories. It is not that these trajectories are somehow completely outside our experience or understanding; it is simply that they are trajectories that we do not associate with our real-world experience of a glass. While our bodies easily recognise what it feels like to tap a glass, our bodies further, simultaneously, recognise these other gestures, even though we would be hard pressed to state a direct source for such movements. And when these unrelated identities are made one – are heard simultaneously, as the glass is both struck/tapped/rubbed and made to fly/swim/skip – we are able to experience and respond to both, simultaneously, despite the fact that this combination is impossible outside of the virtual world of the acousmatic work.

12. Mediated embodiment

But, how much faith can we put in an intuitive recognition of the familiar physicality of an acousmatic gesture? We live in a mediated world; we are all used to some degree of electroacoustic sound, be it from film, television, radio, recordings, or electroacoustic works. We easily recognise and accept, for example, the reversed glass that acts as the second half of Basanta's opening gesture. To what extent, then, can we confidently say that our recognition of this forward glass-backwards glass gesture is 'embodied'? This is not an experience we have ever had physically.

We do, of course have a physical understanding of the tapped glass, and the compound phrase – forward glass/reversed glass – follows a gesture pattern that feels like a natural and recognisable phrase, despite the fact that the reversed glass is impossible to physically experience. The gesture presents an energy trajectory that is clearly plausible, even though the source it is being associated with now could never make that gesture.

But, at what point does our mediated language overtake our embodied understanding of the world (Truax 2000)? Do we recognise this gesture as a meaningful trajectory of movement and energy from the world around us, or only as a recognisable phrase from the electroacoustic vocabulary? Has our intuitive sense of plausible energy trajectories been corrupted by a long, slow flood of mediated sound?

13. Conclusion

We have described acousmatic listening as taking place on two simultaneous levels: on a musical level, and on a narrative level. We experience an acousmatic work as sound and music, but also as a chain of references and associations. Footsteps heard in an acousmatic work are simultaneously experienced as 'footsteps' and as musical rhythm.

It is interesting to note that embodiment takes place at *both* of these levels, in constant interplay and flux. When we hear a

phrase of a certain length that rolls away into the distance, for example, we may simultaneously recognise and experience this as the energy trajectory of a musical phrase, but also as the physical experience of something moving away from us at a certain speed.

It is even more interesting to find that acousmatic music is thereby the precise representation of the process of musical embodiment itself. If our sense of musical phrasing and gesture have evolved through a complex web of relationships with our bodies and our physical relationship with the world around us, then in acousmatic music this process has come home again, as it were. Our experience of our bodies and the world has shaped and determined our concept of music; but now, in acousmatic works which take the sounds and gestures of our bodies and our surroundings as their material, we are applying our musical understandings back onto the very bodily and worldly movements and energies that shaped our musical conceptions in the first place. In other words: our bodies and the world have shaped our sense of music; and now, we are using that sense of music to shape the sounds of our bodies and our world.

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Article 7: Approaches to Narrative in Acousmatic Music

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Approaches to Narrative in Acousmatic Music

It is notoriously difficult to make generalizations about acousmatic music. Acousmatic music is much less a discrete, delineated genre, and much more a loose collection of practices and tendencies; and while some common historical roots are probable, nevertheless we currently find an astounding variety of approaches under the general heading 'acousmatic'. 'Acousmatic' can only realistically be defined according to the kind of output that composers tend to identify as 'acousmatic' – in other words, acousmatic is as acousmatic does. This sometimes makes it extremely difficult to discuss acousmatic theory. For nearly any statement one might attempt to make about acousmatic music, no matter how general, it is usually extremely easy to pluck any number of pieces from the classic acousmatic repertoire that would immediately be excluded.

Nevertheless, one cannot discuss matters of acousmatic theory without attempting some form of generalization; inevitably, any of these will be more applicable to certain works, composers, and sub-genres than others. This is very much the case with our discussion here today.

When forced to attempt a brief definition of 'acousmatic music', I tend to point to two things: the use of recorded sound as compositional material; and the deployment and interpretation of sound material for both its musical and its narrative properties. It is immediately clear that both of these claims are extremely problematic; however, I nevertheless believe that these points communicate more of what I feel to be central to acousmatic art, than definitions such as 'music for loudspeakers' or 'music for fixed media', both of which – while completely true – do nothing to distinguish acousmatic music from any other form of recorded music, and are of little help in communicating a basic idea of the acousmatic genre to the uninitiated.

Personally, it is these two elements that most strongly draw me to acousmatic music, and it is here that I feel that acousmatic music finds much of its power and strength: in the capacity to use recorded sound for both sonic and narrative properties, and as a direct result, the simultaneously musical and narrative experience of the artform. As mentioned, this is obviously a more useful approach when considering some works, composers, and subgenres than others; for instance, a dual musical/narrative approach is better suited, generally speaking, to the 'cinema for the ear' of the Montreal school than it is to some of Denis Smalley's work, for example. Nevertheless, even for works that are

further removed from such a clear musical/narrative dichotomy, I continue to find it a relevant, if not central, aspect of the acousmatic experience.

Of course, many theorists have commented on this, including Emerson, Smalley, Wishart, Young, Landy, and so on. However, often this discussion focuses somewhat more on the musical and the narrative as distinct properties of the work, whereas here we are interested more in these as distinct listening processes.

Perhaps before going any further I should clarify what I mean here by the 'narrative' properties of acousmatic music. I think there would be little debate regarding the musical properties of the genre: gesture, phrase, colour, texture, motion, and so on. Of course, as we all know, sound also has the capacity to act as a signifier for the object or action which made, or might have made, the sound. As we know for example from Smalley's orders of surrogacy, this can be entirely direct – a recording of footsteps, for instance – or more indirect: a synthesis-based sound pattern that mimics or otherwise points towards the idea of footsteps – or significantly more abstract, either through more complex webs of semiotic association, or through the programmatic interpretation of more abstract sound materials.

While arguably all musical experience involves, or can involve, some degree of such programmatic qualities, acousmatic music's ability, through the explicit use and application of real-world sound and motion, to enact experience much more directly, is rather more unique, though shared by many other genres of electroacoustic music. A romantic symphonic work may have the capacity to inspire pastoral imagery in the listener; acousmatic music, however, can directly represent a pastoral soundscape – and, if listening conditions are of high enough quality, may even be able to move past simple illusion to 'fool' the willing listener's senses.

The nature of acousmatic music may not reside solely in this one aspect, but its ability to enact such direct experience through direct reproduction remains an essential touchstone to which the acousmatic experience consistently returns. As sound's musical and significative capacities are so regularly and directly referenced, this tends to extend outwards to acousmatic works with fewer directly referential elements, and to encourage their interpretation, too, along simultaneously musical and narrative lines. There is thus a tendency to perceive acousmatic narrative, even where more easily identifiable sound symbols are entirely absent. We can thus perhaps draw a continuum, with sound as direct experience at one end, through sound as symbol, to sound as metaphor, to programme music, and possibly onwards to more abstract narrative qualities.

Of course, these are rarely discrete phenomena. Individual sound symbols are juxtaposed, engage with one another, and interact, to form a more multidimensional sense of narrative, generating an imprint of what the piece might be 'about', which further interacts with musical aspects of the work, and so on. The narrative properties of a work, rather than stalling at the local level as singular symbols, are often used to construct a rhetorical framework for the piece, either supporting, supported by, or occasionally independent of, the musical layer of the work. When Francis Dhomont, in his work *Points de Fuite*, uses sound material such as planes flying overhead, cars passing, objects rolling away into the distance, and so on, these are not simply employed for their sonic and textural properties, although they are certainly admirably constructed from this point of view. Rather, they are simultaneously employed for the symbolism inherent in such imagery, in support of the work's themes of flight and escape.

It is at times tempting, though, to propose that a given composer has a particular bias, emphasizing one over the other of our two elements. A strong case could be made for Ferrari's *Presque Rien* or Wishart's *Red Bird* as examples of an emphasis on the narrative, with the musical qualities of the work – especially in *Presque Rien* – almost an artefact or byproduct of activity in the narrative layer, while there are a great many works – Smalley's *Pentes* for example – whose focus on the musical aspect of the work results in a significant degree of narrative abstraction.

Thus, what tends to vary from work to work – and, often, from composer to composer – is, firstly, how much time the listener is likely to spend in each of these two modes, and secondly, how closely these two modes engage and interact with each other – whether they work together to build a potentially greater, more powerful artistic experience, or whether they simply remain two discrete aspects of a single work. Many composers have their own unique approach to this dichotomy – their own balance, and their own manner of weaving the two together – François Bayle comes to mind here – while some composers shift from work to work between dramatically different approaches to the musical/narrative duality. Consider for instance the contrast between the clear sound imagery of Normandean's 'cinema for the ear' works, and the towering narrative monomania of his timbre spatialization pieces; or the seminal shift in narrative approach between Ferrari's early works and the first *Presque Rien*.

The distinction between what is narrative and what is musical, however, is sometimes not so very clear. An interesting example of this is the inclusion in an acousmatic work of musical quotations. When Dhomont quotes Schubert in *Thème de la*

Fuite, this is not so much a musical event in fact, as a narrative event: despite being a musical fragment, the quote plays no part in the musical development of the work; instead, it acts as a symbol for the ideas and themes of *Erlkönig* – fleeing, flight – and, by accessing the mythos of Schubert and Goethe, Dhomont's work absorbs this entire thematic structure.

On the other hand, when he quotes Vivaldi in *Un autre printemps*, this is first and foremost a musical engagement: Vivaldi's *Spring* is thoroughly woven into the musical fabric of Dhomont's piece. The quote continues to act as a narrative reference of course, as a central symbol for 'spring' by referencing Vivaldi; and, interestingly, Dhomont also references and incorporates Vivaldi's original programmatic symbols, primarily the viola imitating a barking dog.

It is not uncommon for acousmatic composers to follow primarily musical concerns, using recorded material that nevertheless carries significant narrative content – either not concerning themselves with the narrative qualities of their materials, or possibly only at the point of choosing the original sources and materials, then disregarding narrative aspects during the composition process. Needless to say, this is a perfectly valid compositional approach, and one which often bears interesting fruit, in that the narrative structure that results is often elusive or enigmatic, constructed as a byproduct of primarily sonic concerns, and thereby not following linear narrative logic, all of which can be quite intriguing for the listener.

Normandeu's *Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck)* is perhaps an excellent example of such an approach. Some elements clearly carry some degree of deliberately constructed narrative content – the humour of the flushing toilet; images of doors possibly 'opening' out onto a series of soundscapes; and so on. However, these are arguably secondary aspects; the flushing toilet provides a momentary image, narratively largely unrelated to the surrounding material, and certainly not part of a larger exploration of a theme. These are primarily included for their sonic properties, and are structured into the work according to musical or sonic criteria. Nevertheless, the listener seeks, and often creates, such narrative associations, but *Rumeurs* is sufficiently insistent in its sonic emphasis as to at times reject such attempts: for example, the final musical gesture of the work – a metallic gesture, perhaps the rolling of a potlid, with a long reverb tail – while musically effective and sensible, is narratively somewhat baffling, coming as it does after a more narratively relevant sequence of opening and closing doors which acts as the climax of the work.

Another interesting narrative case which is not uncommon is the selection of a single or limited sound material for use in a given composition. In such cases, the single sound source is often a primary contributor to the narrative layer only as the piece opens, or only at the point of the piece where the source reveals itself, before retreating to leave the narrative layer to be constructed by other semantic aspects of the work. Consider, for example, Jonty Harrison's *...et ainsi de suite...*, constructed primarily from recordings of a glass. While the glass is identifiable, there are no active storytelling properties here per se: no one drinks from the glass, for instance; no one smashes the glass. There are, however, a number of actions whose sounding results we recognize: the glass is struck; the glass is tapped; and so on. Thus begins the construction of the work's narrative layer: an image of 'glass-ness'; and, a series of recognized physical engagements with our prototypical glass. However, many of the sounds we hear have no correlate with the known world of physical engagement: reversed sounds, stretched sounds, spectrally transformed sounds – sounds that cannot be made solely through physical manipulation of the glass, but only through electroacoustic transformation of the results of such physical manipulations. Despite their unreality such sounds also contribute to the narrative reception of the work, only here, the glass is no longer the narrative focus, but rather the transformations, and through them, the composer himself. Harrison steps forward as protagonist, as narrative focus shifts from the glass, to the composer's virtuosic transformations. Our attention is on the traces of the composer's actions, as meaning is carried now by the discourse these transformations create: a sequence of increasing degrees of transformation, rather than simply supplying sonic imagery, is itself now a form of narrative, interpreted as a playful interaction between composer and listener. But here, our dichotomy hits rocky seas, as it becomes harder to argue that this narrative discourse is substantially different from the musical discourse of the piece.

So far, my primary defense for describing the acousmatic listening experience as a narrative/musical dichotomy has simply been that that's how I hear it: my attention tends to shift back and forth, between experiencing a piece as a *musical* work, and receiving the work from a thematic, narrative point of view. I can sense a shift of focus between these two qualities, and generally speaking, if I am absorbed by the musical qualities, I tend to be missing the narrative aspects, and vice versa. I may spend large sections of a work, or even an entire work, focused on one of the two layers; more often, though, I shift back and forth quite quickly, flexibly, and fluidly. This fluidity, while it might occasionally obscure the shift, does not negate it: I am indeed switching between

distinct listening modes, however rapidly. In listening to *Rumeurs*, I will tend to alternate between a musical/sonic/aesthetic reception of the work as a series of textures, timbres, impacts, evolutions, and so on; and a more cinematic sequence of sound images – footsteps, birds, door, and so on. While I may shift between musical and narrative listening even over the duration of a single sound object, it is nevertheless a noticeable switch.

Of course, justifying the dichotomy I am proposing simply by the statement that 'that's how I personally hear it' doesn't hold much methodological water. However, I would argue that there is much from a number of research perspectives to back up such a proposition.

One of these is cognitive neuroscience. If the reception of 'music' and 'narrative' is indeed as I have described, and involves separate and distinct modes of mental processing, then we might expect to find that they are processed in different parts of the brain. And, lo and behold, that is indeed just what the research tells us.

But, before we congratulate ourselves, pack up and go home, we should take a look at this a bit more closely. Making such a statement, we rely primarily on studies of listening to tonal music; unfortunately, such studies sometimes lose some of their relevance in being carried over to the electroacoustic field. For example, neuroscientific studies of music listening and reception tend to focus on structural elements, presumably at least in part because they offer a structural framework that is more adaptable to quantitative research methodologies. Thus, the focus of such research tends to be on elements such as pitch detection, pitch organization, melody, and rhythm, which are not regularly a part of acousmatic work, or at least not in the casually communicable structured manner of tonal music.

The other primary focus of cognitive neuroscience is 'music & emotion', but here again, this would arguably require a somewhat different approach for acousmatic music than for tonal music. For example, the 'musical valence' of emotional response is easily understandable in the context of tonal music; but, what is the valence of an acousmatic gesture? Does the acousmatic musical layer even have the potential for emotional valence? This is not so clear to me – at least, not if we are focusing on solely musical qualities. Narrative aspects of acousmatic music, on the other hand, clearly DO have such potential. I would argue that emotional response to an acousmatic phrase is almost entirely determined by narrative aspects, whether this is fairly literal imagery – a pastoral

soundscape is calming, the sound of gunfire is frightening – or more general: impacts may be startling, rapid movement may be exhilarating, and so on.

Of course, there are also findings that are remarkably similar for both musical and narrative processing. Potentially interesting examples include mirroring, simulation, and representation. Both music and narrative trigger responses that range from mimicry to self-engagement and association, on a number of levels: when hearing a verbal narrative, neurons fire as though our own mouths were speaking the words, but they also fire as though we were performing the actions described, as though the narrative was happening to us. The same is found when watching someone perform an action – watching sports, for instance; and, it is found when we listen to music.

However, I would argue that, in fact, all of this takes place in the narrative layer. In our dichotomy, remember, an image of 'that which made the sound' tends to remain in the narrative layer, while the musical discourse remains rather less embodied and more abstract. Mirror neurons triggered by musical listening are not inspired by musical material per se; they are triggered by a recognition of the activity that produced the music. An air guitarist enacts the playing of the guitar; it is not a physical recreation of the shift to the dominant, or of the structure of the antecedent phrase. Nevertheless, mirroring and representation are extremely critical aspects of the acousmatic listening experience, due to acousmatic music's phenomenological tendency to structure itself according to energy trajectories which are recognized via our embodied understanding of the world.

Finally, I thought I might say a few words about the pedagogical opportunities offered by a division along musical and narrative lines. These will tend to afford rather different opportunities to a given student, depending primarily on the student's background and level, and it can be extremely useful for the teacher to be able to navigate musical and narrative aspects of sonic composition somewhat distinctly. First of all, an approach focusing on narrative composition may seem less daunting for students from a non-musical background, rather than for example launching into Schaefferian criteria, or into detailed instruction in the use of synthesis or coding tools, and so on. To a significant extent, the narrative aspects of acousmatic works are the beginning listener's first interface with the work; musical appreciation often relies on a greater degree of familiarity with the principles of the genre. Further, narrative is a daily aspect of our cultural lives, and while sonic story-telling may not be the most common form of everyday narrative, it is nevertheless easily recognisable and approachable, and thus potentially offers a nice 'way in' to the acousmatic world. There's nothing new here, of

course; this pedagogical potential of sonic composition has been discussed most recently for example in Leigh Landy's most recent book. It is also unnecessary to limit ourselves to linear storytelling through sound; the beginning student easily adapts to more sophisticated explorations of sonic narrative, for example an essay approach, such as that used by Ferrari in some of his later works, or radiophonic approaches, and so on.

Similarly, narrative-based pedagogy may be practical for students with an instrumental background, who are new to electroacoustic music, and for whom EA might sometimes present a somewhat daunting, impenetrable surface. It might be beneficial to stress these narrative aspects of the work, before returning to musical aspects, which may be simultaneously more familiar to the classical instrumentalist, and more alien, due to a significant distance in construction and aesthetics.

Regardless of acousmatic music's particular dichotomy, narrative has been tagged as generally having broader pedagogical implications. To quote a 1994 study on pedagogy and cognition, "the brain is structured, or "wired," to detect patterns and there is an underlying impulse to take in information in symbolic form. Storytelling and narratives are a good way to encourage new connections and the recognition of new patterns and relationships among objects and ideas." ([Xu et al., 2005](#)) And so on. While this is clearly here intended to address teaching methodologies for subjects that are not otherwise involved with narrative, it seems particularly relevant to acousmatic pedagogy, and acts as a further argument for focusing on narrative properties with beginning students.

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Article 8: Space and Place in Acousmatic Music

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Space and Place in Electroacoustic Music

Sound plays a unique role in the human perception and conception of space and place. This capacity for sound to trigger this crucial dichotomy is carried over to the sonic arts, which are unique in their ability to include space and place in their creative toolkit. This is particularly true of a number of forms of electroacoustic tape music⁴, most notably acousmatic music ([Emmerson & Smalley 2001](#): 61) and soundscape composition ([Truax 2002](#), [2008](#)). With some exceptions (mostly with regards to soundscape composition), however, this capacity has received relatively little theoretical examination, often remaining a largely intuitive negotiation between composer and listener.

This article will examine and contrast some of the thinking around space and place from a number of theoretical perspectives, and their use and elaboration in electroacoustic music, in the hopes that each might perhaps be usefully informative with regards to the other. The creative use of space and place in the sonic arts has been quite fluid – as, indeed, are both our concepts and experiences of space and place, broadly speaking; as a result, rather than prescribe a limited definition of space and place and then examine sonic works through this limited lens, this article will instead consider a number of sometimes contrasting or contradictory perspectives, and some of the shifting ways in which these are enacted in the aesthetic use and experience of sound.

Space and sound

Our sense of hearing is a remarkably rich source of information about the world around us. Each and every sound we hear offers several simultaneous layers of such information – for example, information about a given sounding object from our environment and, at the same time, information about that object's action or movement, or about action or movement that has been applied to that object.

Perhaps most critically of all, each and every sound we hear offers us information not only about the source of that sound, but about the space surrounding that source.

⁴ "Tape music" is used here in its broadest sense, as an umbrella term for electroacoustic compositions created in the studio and existing primarily in recorded form. While the term clearly references the tape medium on which such works would historically have been created, it also includes studio compositions created in the digital age, a discrepancy which has led to the alternative term "music on a fixed medium" (Landy 2007: 152).

Sound waves from a sounding object radiate outwards; some of this sound reaches our ears directly, but much of it moves out into the environment, encountering surfaces, other objects, the ground... Some energy is absorbed or transformed, while some is returned to the environment, to continue its series of environmental encounters, some of which will lead back to our ears, loaded with information about its voyage. We are extremely adept at decoding what sound has to tell us about its path: the size and shape of a room; the placement and characteristics of objects within the room; the materials of surrounding surfaces and objects; even details of temperature and humidity. ([Stocker 2013](#): 2)

Each and every act of hearing receives these two layers of information, intertwined: information regarding a sounding object, and information about a space ([Blessner & Salter 2007](#): 11-26). Neither of these can be avoided: we cannot hear a space without sound, but nor can we hear sound without inferring a space. When we record sound, this duality is carried over to the recording: the act of recording transcribes not only the recorded sources, but also the recorded spaces. We can, of course, attempt to minimize the sense of sonic space surrounding a recorded sound, but we cannot nullify it completely. Recorded sound is therefore simultaneously a recording of a sounding source and a recording of a sounding space.

The dawn of sound recording opened up new possibilities in the creative use of sound. Many of these stemmed directly from the technical opportunities offered by new tools and technologies, beginning with the simple fact of the newly born capacity to store a sonic moment, to later be resurrected at will. From the end of the Second World War onwards, the swirling of all of these possibilities gave rise to an enormous outpouring of sonic creativity, including the birth over the following decades of a number of new compositional forms and genres predicated to varying degrees on the deployment of recorded sound.

One of the key aesthetic revolutions engendered by the creative use of recorded sound centred on the spatial component of our sonic experience. The capacity to record, manipulate, and control space via recorded sound opened up new aesthetic potential, and brought space into the field of creative control of the composer and sound artist to a degree that had never before been possible ([Harrison 1999](#)). As a result, over the second half of the twentieth century, space grew to take a key position in the development and elaboration of an enormous number of modern musical genres ([Zvonar 2004](#)). This list includes all of the many genres of electroacoustic music, and particularly those that are

primarily or entirely devoted to recorded sound, collectively referred to as 'tape music' (or 'music for fixed media').

Electroacoustic tape music uses recorded sound as its primary compositional material. As a result, the creative palette very quickly expanded to incorporate a much broader range of sonic materials: any and all sound sources that can be recorded can now be used as compositional material. This results in materials that not only serve a musical or sonic purpose, but that carry with them sonic imagery from the world in which they were recorded. This opens up a duality in a number of these genres, allowing for the use of sound simultaneously for musical purposes, and for symbolic or narrative purposes, based on our recognition or interpretation of recorded sound from our experience of the world around us ([Andean 2010](#): 107-115).

The spatial component of recorded sound described above is a key element of such sonic imagery. Just as recorded sound is simultaneously a recording of a sound source and of a space, an electroacoustic tape piece offers not only a sequence of sound events, but also a sequence of spaces, whether these were recorded together with the sounds heard, or crafted after the fact in the studio by the composer. Much as a sound can be employed by the composer for either its musical or its narrative properties, or for both simultaneously, sound can equally be used to deliver either an image of the *source* of the sound, or of the *space* in which the sound exists – or, once again, and most likely, both. In this way, in electroacoustic music, sound therefore serves as a double signifier: for both a particular sounding object and a particular space ([Wishart 1996](#): 140-159; [Smalley 2007](#): 38-39).

Space vs. place

Spatial aspects of sonic imagery, however, are intimately bound to another, closely related, construct: place. While this dichotomy is extremely important in electroacoustic tape music, it is hardly unique to the sonic arts; space and place are widely discussed in a number of philosophical and cultural domains, most significantly perhaps in cultural geography. It is worth considering these perspectives on space and place, before considering their sonic applications.

"Space vs. place" is often an attempt to distinguish between the objective and the subjective – between the objective quantity of "space" and the subjective, culturally constructed notion of "place". This perspective is perhaps most closely associated with

cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan: 'What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value' (Tuan 1977: 6). 'Space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning...' (Tuan 1977: 136). 'When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place.' (Tuan 1977: 73)

In other words, in Tuan's view, space becomes place once it has been "lived in", or has otherwise acquired meaning or value. We find this perspective echoed elsewhere; narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan, for example, offers a similar elaboration:

While space is an abstract collection of points separated by certain distances, place is a concrete environment with which people develop emotional bonds; while the points of space are interchangeable, place has its own unique character; while space is an empty container for discrete objects, place is a network of interrelated things; while space is open and infinite, place has boundaries; while space is anonymous, place involves a community and a lived experience; while space is timeless, place is shaped by history. In short, while space is a mathematical concept, place is a social concept. (Ryan 2012: 108)

Space is thus viewed as quantitative, and place as qualitative. This perspective on place can also be found in the sonic arts. Composer Katharine Norman, for example, suggests that 'place – how we sense and make it – is a process', that it 'begins and ends with a relationship between the perceiver and the perceived', and 'requires our lived experience, and so requires a bodily presence "being in" an environment' (Norman 2012: 258).

A number of other theorists have taken the dichotomy of space and place on board, sometimes with their own particular perspective. In the field of narratology, for instance, David Herman proposes that it is narrative that transforms space into place: 'stories can be used to turn *spaces* into *places* – to convert mere geographic locales into inhabited worlds... transforming abstract spaces into lived-in, experienced, and thus meaningful places' (Herman 2013: 283). The place/space dichotomy is also closely related to Herman's contrasting of "narrative simulation of place" vs. "narrative computation of place"; despite the fact that here Herman has labelled both as "place", there is a close kinship between "place" and Herman's "narrative simulation", and between "space" and Herman's "narrative computation" (Herman 2013: 289). Sociologist

Anthony Giddens proposes that this distinction between space and place is not absolute, but is in fact a rather recent phenomenon:

The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place... In conditions of modernity... [w]hat structures the locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the "visible form" of the locale conceals the distanciated relations which determine its nature. ([Giddens 1990](#): 18-19)

Giddens' stress on the role of the "visible" in the creation of place is interesting here, making for a convenient contrast with perspectives that view space as a physical, acoustic construct.

It is worth noting, however, that both of these terms – "space" and "place" – tend to drift somewhat, depending on the theorist and the field in question. For example, the idea of a "geographical region" is sometimes assumed to be endowed with specific cultural values, and therefore posited as "place", while at other times it is considered a neutral quantity, and thereby placed in contradistinction with "place", as "space". The notion of "space" also tends to fluctuate somewhat – sometimes even within the writings of a single theorist – between a primarily geometrical construct and a much more fluid metaphor for psychological terrain. It is also important to note that there are a number of theorists who have objected to the space/place dichotomy, some on the grounds that either or both of these are treated as static entities, and some due to fundamental disagreements about the nature or existence of either (or both) of these concepts ([Casey 1996](#): 13-52; [Ingold 2011](#): 145-49).

Signs and symbols

In the establishment of both place and space, sound has the potential to play a particularly important role. This begins with sound's role as a signifier for, among other things, a given space or place. Here, the term "signifier" comes to us from Saussure, who paired it with the "signified" to form his notion of the "sign" ([Saussure 1959](#)). It is C.S. Peirce, however, who – in contrast to Saussure's more linguistic approach – offers a semiotic theory which better serves an application to sound. Peirce offers several relevant trichotomies, including "icon", "symbol", and "index"; "sign", "object", and

"interpretant"; and his rather more abstract notions of "Firstness", "Secondness", and "Thirdness" ([Peirce 1955](#): 104-115; [Atkinson 2007](#): 115-119; [Monelle 1992](#): 193-200).

Generally speaking, however, the use of the term "symbol" in much writing on electroacoustic music – primarily with regards to the concept of "sound symbol" ([Young 1996](#): 79-83; [Wishart 1986](#): 41-60; [Emmerson 2007](#): 8) – is closer to Peirce's "icon" or "index" than to a strictly Peircean definition of "symbol":

One of the most powerful potentials of recognisable real-world sounds in electroacoustic music lies in the creation of symbols. The concept of the symbol has arisen in humans as a way of imbuing recognisable objects with associations that go beyond the immediate object ... in order to convey ideas or feelings about aspects of our existence that are difficult to express in straightforward terms. Where conventional reasoning may tend to be finite in the way an idea is expressed, symbolic connotations are flexible, less bounded and elude precise definition. Recognisable sounds in electroacoustic music are symbolically potent because of their direct signification of objects and events, without the need for intermediary forms of signification, such as words. ([Young 1996](#): 79-80)

Young's use of the term here is much closer to its use in Ogden and Richards' 'triangle of reference' than to its role in Peirce's triad ([Ogden & Richards 1923](#): 8-14; [Monelle 2000](#): 196).

It is useful here to refer to Denis Smalley's term "source bonding": 'the *natural* tendency to relate sounds to supposed sources and causes, and to relate sounds to each other because they appear to have shared or associated origins' ([Smalley 1997](#): 110). Such references happen on any number of levels. The simplest is the direct use of sound as a signifier for an object: train sound = train. It is also common to use sound as a signifier for a sound-producing movement or action: the sound of something spinning, falling, bouncing, receding into the distance... While such action signifiers may be equally tied to a producing object – it is a car that recedes into the distance; it is a ball that is bouncing – it is perfectly possible to use sound as a signifier for action, without clearly specifying the particular object that may be performing or experiencing such an action.

It is also possible for sound to act as a signifier for broader questions of context, environment, location, and situatedness, and it is here that we find a particular relevance for questions of space and place. Field recordings can be used as signifiers on a number of levels: to signify broad categories of location – inside vs. outside, for instance; or, slightly more focused categories of location – a field, a busy street, the beach, the interior of a church; or, to denote very specific locations – not just any street, but one particular street; not just any church, but one particular church. In electroacoustic music, the composer often makes these choices based on purely musical or sonic criteria, but this becomes arguably less likely as the reference becomes increasingly specific. A chiming clock may be used in a work generically for its musical properties; however, the more precise the symbol for "clock" – the timbre of a specific size, shape, or type of clock; the spatial imprint of the room around the clock – the stronger its impact as a symbol and reference. As the reference becomes more precise – a clock specifically chiming twelve for instance, or the use of a recognizable clock, for example the chimes of Big Ben in London – it becomes increasingly probable that its use is thematically or narratively driven.

Electroacoustic soundmarks

The field of soundscape studies has offered some useful terminology here, including "keynote sounds" – sounds from the sonic background, for example wind in the trees; "sound signals" – sounds in the foreground, or which provide important information, for example footsteps in the grass or snapping twigs; and soundmarks – sounds which signify not just a generic class of sound signal or environment, but a very specific location – such as, in our example above, Big Ben ([Truax 2008](#): 106). The sound of a clock, mentioned above, can play a role in any of these three concepts, depending on the degree of foregrounding and relevance implied by its position in its surrounding sonic context: as a keynote sound, if blended in with a general soundscape of an interior living space; as a sound signal, if attention is particularly being drawn to the sound of a clock within this soundscape; or as a soundmark, if the clock in question is recognizably defined as not just any clock, but one specific clock (i.e. Big Ben).

All three of these levels – keynote sounds, sound signals, and soundmarks – can play strong roles in the establishment of place in a work. There are, however, significant differences in the manner and extent to which each of these is accessed by composers

across various genres of electroacoustic composition. For instance, it is only relatively rarely that composers who identify themselves with the acousmatic genre opt to include soundmarks in their works, while it is rather more common in soundscape composition, in part because recognition of context is often of key importance to soundscape works. Even here, however, such soundmarks are very often supported by extra-musical information – through explanatory programme notes, or even by naming the work after the location in question:

[I]t is always clear what the soundscape composition is ‘about’, although with the absence of visual and other contextual cues, the composer may assist the listener with an explicit title and program notes. With highly clear and vivid sound materials, this information is probably unnecessary, but in other cases, a fair degree of ambiguity may exist in a soundscape recording and the listener may need to be oriented with an appropriate text. ([Truax 2002](#): 6)

To some extent, this reflects a shared challenge in deploying established soundmarks: 'The sound of an important church bell may be a significant "soundmark" for a location ([Schafer 1977](#): 10), but the mental image it generates is more likely to be broadly one of place and purpose...' ([Naylor 2014](#): 112). Soundmarks are heavily dependent upon personal knowledge of the soundmark in question, via familiarity with the location to which the soundmark is tied ([Norman 2012](#): 258; [Andean 2012](#): 26-31); while it is perhaps increasingly possible in our ever more connected mass-media environment to expect certain key locations to be familiar to most, this list is arguably, when it comes to sound, rather short.

The question remains, however: why is it more common for soundscape composers to reference soundmarks, while acousmatic composers often prefer to deploy keynote sounds and sound signals? The answer may lie in the above comment by Truax: if the intention in soundscape composition is for the work to clearly be "about" something, then this surely applies to the specificities of place, considering the genre's emphasis on context. In contrast, consider, for example, acousmatic composer John Young's attitude to place in his work *Five Versions of Reality*, a work that includes sonic references to Paris, Prague, Helsinki, Christchurch, and Corfu, and whose sections are subtitled for the places invoked:

In the piece, sounds are not intended as some essential signifier of their "place", but I mention the places in subtitles simply to connect them with an idea of location – a documented encounter with sound if you like. I could have used some more poetic titles, or perhaps something more literal: e.g. "marina" for Corfu, but I wanted the sound rather than the label to evoke an atmosphere or a sense of the physical provenance. ([Young 2013](#))

In other words, it is more important for Young that sound trigger an idea of "place" as a general category ("marina") than as a specific location ("Corfu"), although locations are nevertheless mentioned in the titles in order to trigger a general sense of "place-ness". When Young uses the recording of a marina in Corfu, he is not necessarily attempting to trigger an image of *that particular marina* in the mind of the listener; he is attempting to elicit the *listener's own*, perhaps remembered, image of *a* marina – or of boats, of water, of the seaside... What is critical here is the personal nature of the image Young is attempting to invoke. It could be argued that there is a significant difference in intention here, between a more discursive approach ("the composer is telling us something about Corfu"), versus a more personal approach, achieved by being sufficiently ambiguous as to allow the listener's own memories and experience to swell up and create meaning. The work is personalized by the listener, and thereby made exponentially more powerful.

Sonic illusion

Sound, however, can do more than simply provide a signifier for a given place; sound also brings the listener into a direct relationship with the sounds heard. Humans use vision primarily in order to observe the world around us; while our hearing, of course, is also used to observe our environment, we also use it to place, situate, and locate ourselves within that environment ([Stocker 2013](#): 2-5). Sound informs us about our own position in the space around us, and about our spatial relation to surrounding objects (including, unlike vision, the space and objects behind us) ([Voegelin 2014](#): 9-10). Sound not only offers an image of a particular space, it also has the capacity to place the listener *within* that space ([Stocker 2013](#): 2-4).

In part for this reason, sonic illusion is, at least potentially, a very different experience from visual illusion. It is unlikely that, while at the cinema, the viewer will be momentarily fooled into believing that the screen in front of them is in fact a window opening out onto whatever landscape or action is being viewed; there is, of course, the entertaining anecdote of alarmed spectators ducking at the approach of the train in the Lumière Brothers' early film, but this may well be apocryphal ([Brownlow 1968](#): 6). On the other hand, this is not an uncommon feature in sound projection, and increasingly so as technology advances – for instance, as loudspeakers become increasingly more accurate. One regularly finds instances at electroacoustic concerts where audiences confuse sounds within the composition for sounds from their surrounding physical environment, and vice versa; common examples include the sound of rain hitting the roof, sounds of traffic outside, distant police or ambulance sirens, and sounds of nearby human movement – shuffling or rustling, footsteps, and so on.

When presenting a sound in an electroacoustic work, this sound can do more than simply act as a signifier for such a sound in the world, or for the thematic references we might connect with such a sound. For example, an electroacoustic soundscape has the capacity, thanks to the details of our hearing and our psychoacoustic processing of sound, to situate the listener within the presented soundscape: in other words, it is possible for the sonic illusion to be complete and successful, and, in fact, to move beyond illusion, to achieve fully embodied and situated experience – for the electroacoustic soundworld to be, for all intents and purposes, experienced as real.

This is true for both space and place: with the full resources of a large-scale electroacoustic concert apparatus, it is often possible to transform the acoustic space of the concert hall in which the listener is situated, into any number of other acoustic spaces. Of course, if one presents the illusion of an outside space, this is easily cognitively recognized by the listener to be false through recourse to their other senses (not to mention their common sense); on the other hand, if one presents the illusion of a space which is for example larger and more reverberant than the hall in which the listener is seated, this may in fact be fully accepted by the listener as simply being their current acoustic reality, not recognizing the presence of a sonic illusion. The same is true of the sounding objects involved: the illusion of a train passing through the middle of the hall is quickly and easily disproved (although potentially providing a pleasing frisson in the process), whereas more innocuous sounds may be readily, even unknowingly, accepted as real ([Andean 2011](#): 130).

Let us consider for a moment the characteristics of an electroacoustic soundscape that allow for this experience. First, we have the sound signal itself – for example, a bird singing. We recognize the source from our past experience of the world; while this is certainly enough for the sound to serve as a signifier, and for it to thereby deliver aspects of theme and narrative, it is not yet enough to enact illusion and direct experience. Next, we have the sound's location: again with the case of birdsong, it is reasonably likely that, given the opportunity, this sound would be presented above the listeners' heads, reinforcing the sense of a believable environment. Consider, on the other hand, a situation in which this birdsong is presented over loudspeakers underneath the audience seating; despite any other appropriate sound cues, the resulting sound image would be unlikely to relate effectively with most people's experience of birdsong, and may therefore be expected to result in a failure to access illusion, leading instead to the interpretation of this source and location according to symbolic, metaphoric, or other culturally-coded criteria.

After sound signal and sound location, we return to the characteristic which has the most power and potential in the creation of sonic illusion: space. We have an accurate recording of birdsong; we have located it above our heads. But so far, this is far from enough to convince our cognitive processing of the presence of this bird. For this, we need the full range of detailed spatial cues, which are our primary auditory tools for understanding the world around us, and our location therein. In this case, we would need more than simply finding the bird above our heads: we need the appropriate sense of distance, the dispersed reflections of the bird's singing off of surrounding trees or across open outdoor spaces, and so on. In other words, we need more than simply the signifier for "a bird": in order to achieve illusion, we need a coherent acoustic context for our bird. (Of course, in our example, this will be complicated in concert presentation by the interaction between the acoustic cues embedded in the work, and those of the concert hall, whose reflections will work to impose a message of "room-ness" onto the composed message of "exterior-ness".)

Electroacoustic space and place

Much as sound is critical to our understanding of space, it is often similarly important to the creation and negotiation of senses of place ([Stocker 2013](#): 28); when sound is used compositionally, this dichotomy of space and place is carried over into the work:

[T]he work produces an affective geography... that maps the place, as a product of emotional bonds between people, between people and animals, between people and things, and between people and the landscape, created and lived, made appreciable in sound... This sonic experience of home, of lived narrative territory, produces neither the analytical clarity of spatial theory nor that of discourses on belonging and identity. Instead, it provides an opaque and sensorial sense of a place that remains invisible and foreign, but in its sonic vicinity reminds us of what belonging is: the plurality of the particular. Images spell out the limits of the portrayed, sound constructs inexhaustibly the experience of the encounter, and that is what we take home. ([Voegelin 2014](#): 34)

In the case of electroacoustic music, a dichotomy very similar to the above descriptions can be proposed. Sonic "space" and sonic "place" might be approached as a differentiation between "acoustic" and "location": sonic space draws up an understanding of a three-dimensional volume with certain parameters and characteristics; sonic place acts as a pointer to a specific locale, or to a slightly broader sense of context. Sonic place is then a culturally coded, loaded, and constructed quality, moving beyond simple location and placement to aspects which carry a relation with the subject and with the listener. Space, on the other hand, is here a collection of acoustic cues which situate the listener in an environment. Birdsong and rustling leaves thereby create an immediate understanding of place, while the collection of acoustic information – reflection of birdsong off of surrounding trees and so on – creates space.

On the surface, the association of "space" with "acoustic" and "place" with "location" seems quite close to the proposals listed above, by Tuan and others; on closer examination, however, there are some key differences. To begin with, both sonic space and sonic place are *perceived* identities; they are both products of perception – neither can claim to be a neutral or objective unit. Both are entirely ecological ([Gibson 1966](#):5; [Clarke 2005](#):17-32); both exist not only *through* perception but *as* perception. Further, if we attempt to follow Tuan's dichotomy, can sonic place claim to be any more "lived in" than sonic space? In fact, to some extent, here we find something of a reversal: where in cultural geography, the distinction is between an abstract phenomenon and a lived, embodied quantity, with sound we find the opposite – we find space to be "lived in and

embodied", and place to be a quasi-objective external unit. Sonic space *includes* the listener; it exists because the listener *experiences* it. Sonic place, on the other hand, points *outwards* and *away*, to *somewhere else*; it is a window or a reference ([Norman 2012: 258](#)). Sonic space is now a *personal* and *internal* quantity, while sonic place is now *impersonal* and *external*. Of course, whether place is experienced as "impersonal" or not depends to a significant extent on whether you are hearing "your" place, or the place of an "other". However, in electroacoustic music, even in the case of a sonic place with which the listener identifies, it remains to some extent "external" – no longer through an act of personal removal, but of temporal removal: it is an act of memory. The listener is not actually currently situated in the place in question; it therefore serves either as an external marker for "an other's place", or as an external marker for "another time" – for place remembered ([Young 2009, 2013](#)).

At first glance, the concept of "place" as "humanized space" seems reasonable when applied to sound. However, once again, this assumes that we are dealing with the sound in question as a neutral entity. If we imagine a sonic space, and contrast it with an imagined sonic place, the space does indeed seem impersonal, unmarked by life and humanity, while it is precisely life and humanity that define and create place. However, this platonic ideal of a sonic space is a phantom: it does not exist – sonic space comes into being solely through the act of listening. There is no neutral sonic space; sonic space springs into being as an act of experience, and is thereby wholly and utterly human. What we find instead, therefore, is that sonic place is in a sense "pre-humanized"; it comes already loaded with humanity – often with someone else's humanity – whereas space is humanized in the act of its perception, and thus of its creation. Once again, we might propose that this is a vastly more personal engagement than that with a pre-charged, pre-loaded "place". To return to Peirce for a moment, these distinctions might be usefully described as embodying Peirce's trichotomy of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness: the as-yet-unrealized potential of Firstness of an uncharacterized sonic space, that achieves Secondness through the act of perception, while a shared, generalized concept of "place" might be viewed as a Thirdness ([Peirce 1955: 322](#); [Monelle 1992: 194](#)). John Young, in discussing his work *Five Versions of Reality*, offers a personal twist on space and place in acousmatic composition:

A notion of place is used...as a metaphor for a source of sounds outside the work: an invitation to reflect on contact with the physical world.

Space, in the formal sense, I think of as a metaphor for a unity of content that might be regarded as a self-contained "world"... ([Young 2013](#))

Thus, rather than dwell on acoustic space, Young describes a broader, more conceptual notion of "space" that draws close to narrative concepts such as Herman's "storyworld" ([Herman 2002](#): 13), as well as to narratological approaches to space ([Ryan 2012](#): 107).

Something typically common to both space and place in an electroacoustic work is their compositional use as signifiers. A sonic place is, in part, employed by the composer as a sonic signifier for that particular place, or for that category of place, while a sonic space is equally used as a sonic signifier for that category of space – or, on occasion, for a single specific space. However, once again we find that perception steps in and makes a significant distinction: for the most part, space, as described above, is encountered first as direct experience, and only then proceeds outwards, through an interpretative act, to serve as signifier. Place, on the other hand, is often able to trigger direct experience only through its use of space; it is therefore much more likely to serve as signifier from the beginning, without access to the same degree of direct experience upon first encounter.

As a brief illustration, we might contrast two short, somewhat humorous sonic 'interludes' in Robert Normandeau's seminal work *Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck)*. At 4:02, after a door creaks open, we are presented with a very clear sonic "scene": a fly buzzing about, very close and in the foreground, while further away, loud boot-clad footsteps stomp about. While both of these act as clear signifiers for their sources – buzzing for "fly", stomping for "footsteps" – neither of these symbols, taken singly or together, is sufficient to present a clear image of place or space. However, there is a very clear spatial imprint surrounding the footsteps, painting a clear image of an interior space, of a room; this image is further clarified by the contrast in distance between the foregrounded fly and the more reverberant footsteps. (In the absence of this spatial imprint, one might expect a listener to assume an exterior scene, due to the presence of the flying insect.) Here, we clearly first *experience* the space, before interpreting the scene through the incorporation of the sound elements and the signified space. At 8:52, we find another humorous moment in the work: a passage which arguably serves as the climax of the piece is unceremoniously cut off by a flushing toilet. The toilet-as-symbol is undeniable; there can be no uncertainty regarding the "place" in question. However, in

this instance there is little to no spatial information: the flushed toilet is presented "dry", without reverberation, giving us little to no acoustic information regarding the setting in which it is located – a setting which is, in fact, typically quite reverberant, due to the tiling found in most such rooms. As a result, this is clearly an image of "place", not "space". As a result, unlike the previous example, this moment is immediately perceived as signifier; the "direct experience" component is limited, and largely irrelevant. In fact, it is precisely for the reasons described here that these two moments are so effective – the first, because it suddenly situates the listener "within" the work; the second, through its immediacy as a simple, slapstick symbol.

These differences, exploited here by Normandeau, make this duality an extremely rich opportunity for the electroacoustic composer, as space and place are used sometimes singly, sometimes in tandem, and sometimes in contradistinction. Cognitive acoustic processing grants us an experience of space, which situates us as listeners within a context, while place involves a process of cultural decoding, which references existing symbols "out there" in the world, and offers access to a web of thematic and symbolic knowledge. Normandeau's ability to access each of these singly – and, elsewhere in the piece, in combination, and even in transformation – provides him with an effective rhetorical tool.

Space becomes place

It is possible, however, that sonic space and sonic place are more fluid concepts than they at first appear. Consider for example an image of "church". If a composer wishes to reference a church through sound, she or he might present a recording of ringing church bells. This is sufficient to trigger in the listener the recognition of a symbol for "church"; however, it is unlikely that this in itself would achieve the illusion of being in the presence of actual church bells. On the other hand, the composer might present the same church bells in an acoustic context: for example, heard at a distance, with reflections off of surrounding hills. Now, with the appropriate surrounding acoustic information, if we close our eyes, perhaps we do indeed have the illusion of hearing church bells. However, as a symbol, this is now significantly different. In the first case, we recognized a Peircean index for "church", and made our interpretations of the presence of this sound in the work accordingly. In this new case, however, these bells are situated and contextualized, and so now possibly serve less as an immediate symbol for "church", and more as a symbol,

for example, of "a small village or rural landscape". This transition from sound signal to keynote sound is achieved in this case by maintaining the sound source, but changing the spatial cues; the resulting changes to our associations and implications of the original symbol are significant.

On the other hand, space can be used by the composer not only as a set of acoustic markers to place a given sound source within a particular sound environment, but also as a culturally-coded symbol for place. In the symbol for "church" described above, the church emits a sound signal. The composer could instead select a different sound signal, completely unrelated to the symbol of "church", but maintain the symbol for "church" by placing this unrelated signal inside the church space. The heavy reverberance and long reverberation times of many church interiors are sufficiently recognizable that this space, in and of itself, can act as a symbol, and therefore can provide a sense not only of space, but also of place. Consider a recording of a voice speaking, perhaps describing the weather; under normal circumstances, this may serve as a symbol for "a person", or for "a social situation", or for the weather being described. The same recording, once given a reverberation which is recognizably familiar as that of a church interior, may now act as an entirely different symbol: the acoustic symbol for "church" may well replace the symbols for "person speaking", "weather", or "small-talk", which might now be interpreted as serving simply to trigger the symbol "church". In this case, we have achieved a transformation of "space" into "place", a distinction that rests primarily with the capacity of a given sonic space to act as a symbol in its own right.

This, of course, brings us full circle back to Tuan's dichotomy: 'When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place' ([Tuan 1977](#): 73). In other words, it is not the sound materials themselves that determine their role as space or as place; it is the listener's interpretation of those materials – and, most importantly, their familiarity with the materials in question. Acoustic properties are used primarily to define space; but if the listener links those properties to a particular location or context, they become place. In electroacoustic terms, this is in essence a question of source bond ([Smalley 1997](#): 110): source bonding transforms space into place – in the absence of source bond, a spatial image remains "space"; but when such a spatial image is recognized and source bonds to a given context or location, as in the "church" example outlined above, it is transformed into "place".

For the composer, this offers an example of one of the many tantalizing possibilities for space and place in electroacoustic music. Each may be deployed to great

effect, and in a vast number of ways; or, they may be deployed together, in an endless number of combinations; but, what's more, as we have seen here, space and place also offer the potential for transformation – not just from place to place and from space to space, but from space into place, and from place into space. Such transformational possibilities raise the compositional potential of notions of space and place in a manner that is somewhat unique in the history of music. For the listener, this interplay between space and place – both in juxtaposition and in transformation – offers not only an immediate and accessible aesthetic richness, taking full advantage of a side of the musical experience that was previously under-served, but also a fertile ground for us to explore and expand our concepts and notions of what space and place, both separately and together, might mean.

Conclusion

Sound is critical in establishing our senses of space and of place, and for this reason, electroacoustic composers are able to include these as part of their compositional toolkit. This may serve simply to "transport" the listener, but space and place may also act as symbols, opening up endless opportunities for sophisticated thematic development; simultaneously, sound's capacity to enact direct experience allows for a more immediate engagement with the work. Taken together, these possibilities offer a powerful compositional capacity for the aesthetic and conceptual exploration of space and place, which can now, thanks to the unique possibilities of recorded sound, be fully taken up as part of the composer's domain. This capacity is made particularly vital by the flexible, elastic, and mutable properties of our concepts of space and place, as both cultural and sonic constructs. A key example of this mutability, as noted above, is that, while certain instances or aspects of sonic space and place tend to support some of the common threads found in cultural geography, sociology, narratology, and elsewhere, others appear to turn this version of the dichotomy on its head.

The aesthetic use of sound thereby offers a unique window into our cognitive and social expressions of these concepts, in essence providing a laboratory in which to explore space and place through active manipulation, rather than simply through passive response. In this way, not only can our understanding of space and place inform the sonic arts, but we can also hope that the sonic arts might help us to explore and to better understand cultural and cognitive concepts of space and place.

Most of all, the incorporation of space and place within the compositional palette offers a profound and expanded experience for the listener, by directly accessing our embodied, encultured, and resonant experiences and histories of space and place and allowing these to inform and permeate our listening experience, in ways which can significantly strengthen and deepen our aesthetic experience of sonic works.

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Appendix B: Juried artistic components

CD: 'Assemblance(s)'

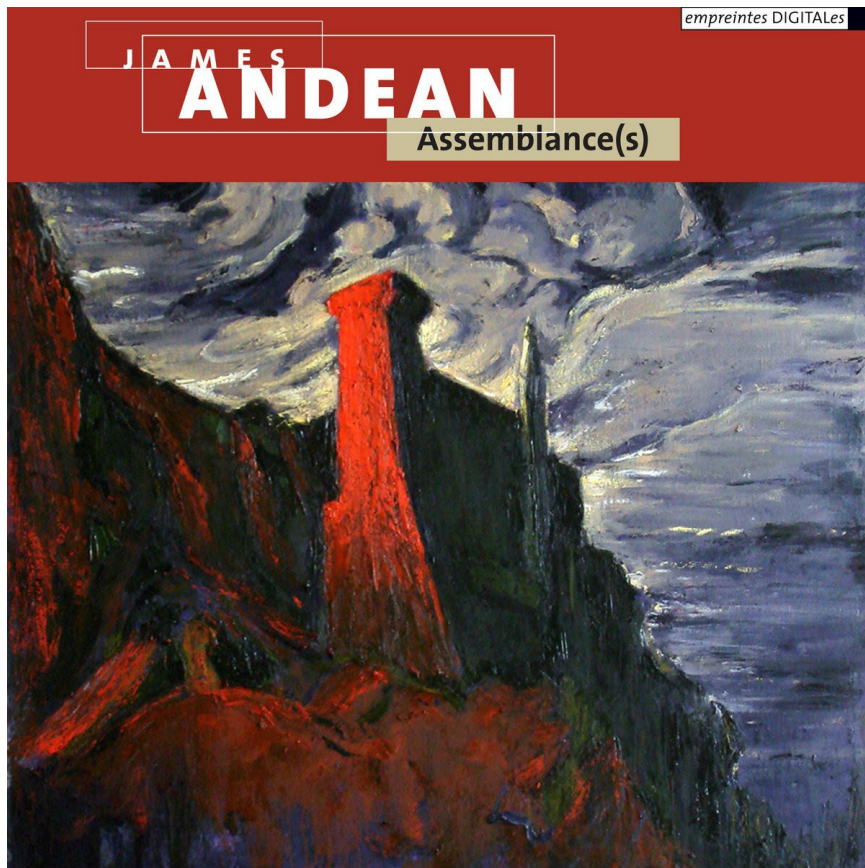


Image: François Xavier Saint-Pierre, "Château rouge" (2015), oil on linen, 122 x 112 cm

1. Déchirure
2. Hyvät matkustajat
3. Valdrada
4. Psygeío
5. Spores
6. Maledetta
7. Medusan Torso
8. Between the Leaves

Released April 26, 2019, IMED 19157_NUM

<https://empreintesdigitales.bandcamp.com/album/assemblance-s>

Concerts

**Musiikkiteknologian aineryhmä
Centre for Music & Technology**

**ACOUSMATICA XV:
Hyvät matkustajat**

**James Andeanin viimeinen
jatkotutkintokonsertti
James Andean's Final Doctoral Concert**

**torstaina 18.12.2014 klo 19
Musiikkitalo, Black Box**

**Thursday, December 18th, 2014 at 7 pm
Helsinki Music Centre, Black Box**

The Friedman Translations: Translation A	2014	7'00"
Radiate	2011	12'32"
Maledetta	2011	6'10"
Between the Leaves	2012	5'14"
Déchirure	2013	7'35"
---Väliaika/Intermission---		
Psygeío	2014	10'00"
Ainnurruvar II	2013	10'14"
Medusan Torso	2011	9'13"
Hyvät matkustajat	2012/2014	9'04"

Lights: Sirja Ruohtula
 Technical assistance: Mikko Ingman

Acousmatica XV: Hyvät matkustajat

Welcome to the last of my doctoral concerts - the fifth over a period of just over three years.

Over the first four concerts - *Acousmatica I: Canada/Finland*; *Acousmatica VI: Convergences*; *Acousmatica VIII: Äänisäteitä*; and *Acousmatica XIII: Liaisons & déchirures* - I have had the opportunity to present my pieces in the context of other works, both new and classic. Tonight, on the other hand, will be a solo concert compiling only my own doctoral compositions, revised and polished for the occasion.

The theme of my doctoral project has been 'acousmatic narrative'. While this has indeed been a part of my process in creating these pieces, there is no special need for the listener to focus on this during the concert; one of the aspects of the acousmatic genre that I particularly cherish is its capacity to generate or inspire a teeming rush of narrative, often with no complicit effort from the listener required.

This has been a long process, and I have enjoyed the process of revisiting and reworking these pieces. I hope that I have been able to bring new light to these works, and that, in tying them together for tonight's concert, they will join together to offer a vision of my compositional world.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Andrew Bentley, for his guidance and support; my kind concert committee members, Patrick Kosk, Jussi Liimatainen, Kalev Tiits, Kai Lassfolk, and Marianne Decoster-Taivalkoski, for their feedback and encouragement; my international advisory board members, Robert Normandeau and John Young, for their generosity and their wisdom; Tuija Ainonen for putting up with me, and my parents for travelling a very long way to attend this concert. It wouldn't have been possible without you all, and I will be forever grateful.

I hope you enjoy the concert!

James Andean

The Friedman Translations: Translation A (2014)

The Friedman Translations is a work in two contrasting forms: *Translation A* is a work for tape, while *Translation B* is a live work for piano and percussion. The tape version, *Translation A*, is composed entirely from a few short passages recorded inside a piano.

The Friedman Translations was commissioned by SPOR Festival, Aarhus, Denmark, where it was premiered on May 9th 2014. *Translation A* was selected for ICEM/CIME 2014, Denton, Texas.

Radiate (2011)

Radiate is composed from a single recording of a leaky radiator. The original material is stripped down to only a few bare partials, forming a simple melody, which builds towards a counterpoint of increasing complexity as more and more partials are added, eventually building up from melodic units back towards the original soundworld of the radiator. The listener is thus taken 'inside' the radiator's soundscape, both through this excavation and exploration of its pitch universe, and more literally, through the spatialisation of the resulting material, which places the audience at the centre of this evolving soundworld.

Radiate was a shortlisted finalist for European Acoustic Heritage's Water Soundscape Composition Competition and was published on the *MUU for Ears 12* compilation. It was premiered October 20th 2011, Black Box, Musiikkitalo, in the concert *Acousmatica I*.

Maledetta (2011)

The idea for this piece began with my work with Panos Balomenos and Gaile Gričiute on a contemporary reimagining of

Cherubini's opera *Medea*, which was presented at the Helsinki Design Museum in August 2011 as part of the Helsinki Night of the Arts. The sound material for *Maledetta* is built primarily from treatments of Callas' performance, and from my recording of Gaile's performance of the piano reduction, as well as additional sound material which had originally been prepared for the Design Museum performance.

Maledetta intends to present a portrait of the title character of Medea, primarily through a portrayal of her psychological state – shifting back and forth between calm and maternal, and vengeful, violent and disturbed. This is most clearly achieved through the processing and treatment of the sound material, but also through the dislocated formal structure: while certain sound materials act as both themes and structural markers, the work proceeds in a series of alternating states, with the sense of formal development regularly frustrated and ruptured, although the work regularly makes reference to the C minor chord of the opening and closing phrases.

Maledetta was selected for performance at Nuit Blanche, Futura Festival 2013, France; SFCMP Festival, San Francisco, USA, April 2014; World Electroacoustic Listening Room Project/12th Annual CSUF New Music Festival, California State University, Fullerton, USA, March 2013; 2012 International Computer Music Conference, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Lightworks new media festival, Grimsby, UK, March 2012; and the Korvat Auki 35th anniversary concert, October 2012, Helsinki. It was premiered October 20th 2011, Black Box, Musiikkitalo, at the concert *Acousmatica I*.

Between the Leaves (2012)

Between the Leaves began when an output error turned a recording of John Cage's voice into a dense tapestry of noise; a fitting tribute, perhaps, for a piece created in the centenary of Cage's birth. The work presents a foreground of clicking gestures – each following the same trajectory, yet every one unique, with subtle differences in timbre, velocity, etc. – layered and sequenced to provide a balance between monotonous repetition and detailed counterpoint. Behind

this foreground layer is a soundscape struggling to be heard, sometimes masked by the mechanical foreground, sometimes spilling forward with a burst, cry, or distant wail.

Formally speaking, the piece slows to a halt at about the two-thirds mark, and then turns back on itself: the click trajectory changes direction, and we move back through the piece in reverse, gaining speed as we go. The work is thereby unravelled and undone, until we finish where we began.

Between the Leaves was published on the *MUU for Ears 12* compilation, and selected for performance at Sonorities 2014 Festival, Belfast; 2013 International Computer Music Conference, Perth, Australia; 2013 Irish Sound, Science and Technology Convocation, Cork, Ireland; *En busca de la miniatura*, CMMAS, Mexico; CICTeM 2013, Buenos Aires, Argentina; *Ljudbio*, Kulturföreningen NEO, Uppsala, Nov. 2014; and the 2014 Uuden Musiikin Lokakuu -festivaali, Oulu, Finland. It was premiered November 12th 2012, Black Box, Musiikkitalo, at the concert *Acousmatica VI: Convergences*.

Déchirure (2013)

Déchirure was composed using sounds originally recorded by Luc Ferrari and his wife, Brunhild Ferrari, which were made available to composers for the composition of new works as part of the *Prix Presque Rien 2013*, in which *Déchirure* received second prize. All sounds used in the piece are sourced from these recordings.

Déchirure: a tearing, a painful separation... The piece involves a number of 'déchirures', both musical as well as figurative (personal separations: the plaintive cry of the distant train, etc...) although the only literal 'tearing' is saved for the final phrase.

It is also a reference to the sound materials: through the act of recording, these have been ripped from the world and moment which birthed them; but, further, they have been torn from the original

contexts and purposes of the artist couple who collected them, to be reappropriated in new works by new composers.

Déchirure received 2nd prize in the 2013 *Presque Rien* competition. It was presented at the Futura14 Festival, France, August 2014; Festival Silence/Stagione Acusmatica 2014, Teatro del Suono e dalla Cittadella Mediterranea della Scienza, Bari Italy, April 2014; Tokyo, Japan, Musashino Art University (Musabi), October 2014; Kyoto, Japan Doshisha Women's University of Liberal Arts, September 2014. It was premiered November 14th 2013, Black Box, Musiikkitalo, at the concert *Presque Rien: The Music of Luc Ferrari*.

---Väliaika/Intermission---

Psygeío (2014)

This piece is composed from a recording of the refrigerator in the Old Jesuit Monastery in Ano Syros, Greece, during a residency at the Syros Sound Meetings in summer 2013.

I spent many long days during this residency recording the windy soundscapes of the island of Syros – blowing across the island's hilly terrain, whistling through the windows and the shutters of the Monastery's guesthouse, etc., with a vision of a large-scale, multichannel piece based on these recordings. One day, passing through the kitchen on my way to recording the wind beating against the windows, I was distracted by the rather pleasant hum of the refrigerator, and paused to take a quick recording before continuing with my obsession with the wind. Some months later, seated in the studio ready to begin work on my wind piece, I was once again distracted by this fridge recording. The result is this piece, while my careful and systematic collection of wind recordings continues to sit on the shelf, waiting patiently for my attention...

Psygeío received an Honorable Mention in the 2014 Sonic Arts Awards, and was selected for the *Transitions* concert series, CCRMA, Stanford University, California. Premiere February 12th 2014, Black Box, Musiikkitalo, in the concert *Acousmatica XIII: Liaisons et Déchirures*.

Ainnurruvar II (2013)

Ainnurruvar I, composed for four performers playing an array of toys and objects, was in some ways an attempt to write an acousmatic or musique concrète work for a live ensemble. However, I could not resist the siren call of my acousmatic roots and the temptation to recast the work as a tape piece. The result is *Ainnurruvar II*, which, ironically perhaps, brings the work full cycle: tape music which had been written for ensemble, is now a work for ensemble made into tape music.

To hold to the spirit of the original, there is almost no processing of the sound materials in *Ainnurruvar II*.

Ainnurruvar II was premiered on April 29th 2013, Black Box, Musiikkitalo, in the concert *Acousmatica VIII: Äänisäteitä*.

Medusan Torso (2011)

Medusan Torso is based on material originally developed during my work on the audiovisual installation *Re:****Sitruuna ja meduusa*, an ongoing collaboration with visual artist Merja Nieminen, which first appeared at Galleria Aarni in February 2011. *Torso* is composed entirely from the sound material from the original installation; but where this material was deconstructed for the installation, then re-composed in real-time by the governing software, here it has been shaped and fixed to a timeline, allowing for a very different exploration of these same materials, and offering very different results. What the piece retains from the original installation is the discrete identities of the sonic materials, which burst forth, travel, cross each other, but never mingle, transform or combine.

These materials are built into moments and phrases, ranging from brief gestures, to long, elaborate phrases.

Medusan Torso was premiered in the concert *Uutta elektroakustista musiikkia* in the Sibelius Academy Chamber Music Hall on March 26th, 2011. The current, revised version was performed at the concert *Acousmatica I* in the Musiikkitalo Black Box concert hall on October 20th, 2011.

Hyvät matkustajat (2012/2014)

Hyvät matkustajat began life as a 'sonic postcard from Finland', using soundscape field recordings from around the country. This turned out to be only the first stop on its journey, however. The original material was later further developed as material for sonic exploration and spectral transformations, with the external spaces of the original version taking a sharp turn inwards, to chart internal spectral landscapes, together with the soundmarks and soundscapes of its first incarnation.

Everything in *Hyvät matkustajat* is made from the original field recordings which first gave birth to the piece.

Hyvät matkustajat was a shortlisted finalist for the sound art miniatures *art! ∞ climate* 2012-2013 contest, Electronic Arts Research Centre (CEIArtE), National University of Tres de Febrero, and was selected for performance at the 2013 New York Electroacoustic Music Festival, USA; Errant Bodies, Berlin & Osso, Lisbon, June 2014; and was exhibited online as part of ORF Musikprotokoll's *Personal Soundscapes* project. It was remiered Nov. 12th 2012, Black Box, Musiikkitalo, in the concert *Acousmatica VI: Convergences*.

James Andean is a musician and sound artist. He is active as both a composer and a performer in a range of fields, including electroacoustic composition and performance, improvisation, sound installation, and sound recording. He is a founding member of

improvisation and new music quartet Rank Ensemble and interdisciplinary improvisation ensemble The Tuesday Group, and one half of audiovisual performance art duo Plució/DesAndes. He has performed throughout Europe and North America, and his works have been performed around the world.

**Musiikkiteknologian aineryhmä
Centre for Music & Technology**

**ACOUSMATICA XIII:
Liaisons & déchirures**

**James Andeanin neljäs
jatkotutkintokonsertti
James Andean's Fourth Doctoral Concert**

**keskiviikona 12.02.2014 klo 19
Musiikkitalo, Black Box**

**Wednesday, February 12th, 2014 at 7 pm
Helsinki Music Centre, Black Box**

Kalev Tiits	Short and Gritty (1995)	3'01"
Visa Kuoppala	Hermit's dream of mountain ash (2014)	9'11"
Nicolas Bernier 10'02"	Liaisons mécaniques (2006-07)	
James Andean	Psygeío (2014)	
Alejandro Olarte 8'56"	Apnea (2014)	

---Väliäika/Intermission---

Yves Daoust 2'59"	<i>Mi bémol</i> (1990)	
John Young 14'08"	Five Versions of Reality (2013)	
Patrick Kosk 10'00"	Uno studio dal Bianco di Luna (2014)	
Juhani Liimatainen 3'03"	...aikana (1998)	
James Andean 7'14"	Déchirure (2013)	

Acousmatica XIII: Liaisons & déchirures

This, my fourth doctoral concert, is the last in which I will be presenting my works together with those of other acousmatic and electroacoustic composers, as the fifth and final concert will present the compilation of all of my own doctoral compositions.

As a result, I wanted to take this opportunity to present works by some of the composers who have helped and inspired me over these past years. These include local composers, including Kalev Tiits, who has been helping keep my ship sailing straight for almost a decade; Jussi Liimatainen, a bright light in the local firmament; and Patrick Kosk, tireless keeper of the acousmatic flame in Finland. It also includes composers from farther afield, including the inimitable John Young, whose theoretical work is an essential foundation stone for my own, and Yves Daoust, founder and director of the now defunct Orford Sound Art Workshop, which had a lasting impact on my musical trajectory. Needless to say, such a list could not possibly be complete without the names of Andrew Bentley and Robert Normandeau near the very top, but as we have had the very great pleasure of presenting their works at very recent concerts, we will allow them both a moment's respite.

Also on tonight's programme are works by two of my companions-in-arms, Alejandro Olarte and Visa Kuoppala – fresh of the grill, as both these works have been completed just these last days. This means we will be offering an impressive number of premieres tonight, notably including a brand new work by Kosk. And finally, we have a work by Montreal composer Nicolas Bernier, with the simple justification that Bernier is one of the more exciting acousmatic voices to have come out this past year.

I hope you enjoy the concert!

James Andean

Thanks to the Arts Promotion Centre Finland for their generous support of the Acousmatica concert series.

Kalev Tiits: Short and Gritty (1995)

This piece experiments with limited space and low sampling rate. As for the rest, the title says it all.

Kalev Tiits – Professional field: Scholar, teacher, musician in electronic music and music technology.

Academic achievement: Ph.D. (University of Helsinki).

Music-oriented work & study history: Sibelius Academy, Helsinki; University of Helsinki; Helsinki University of Technology; Royal Conservatoire of The Netherlands in The Hague (sonology); Oulu Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

Non-music-oriented working history: Not particularly creditable or interesting, with the possible exception of archaeological excavation and industrial espionage.

Artistic ideals: Join intuition to intelligence. Keep things simple. Take yourself lightly.

Visa Kuoppala: Hermit's dream of mountain ash (2014)

a misty rain
falling in withered grass

midnight in the capital
how many men
are growing old in this wind?

evening I get lost
on small trails that twist
through gnarled black oaks

straight overhead the moon
drives shadows back to their trees
whitens the hills with false dawn

(From Li Ho's Meditation)

Visa Kuoppala is a Finnish composer, improviser and field recordist living in London. He is particularly active in the areas of acousmatic composition and electroacoustic improvisation, where he is fascinated with the poetic, emotional and atmospheric qualities of enigmatic or ambiguous sounds. For his improvisation practice he has developed a granular synthesis and feedback -based instrument called Malegra, which he plays both solo and in groups. At present he is working on a PhD in electroacoustic composition at the Music department of University of Birmingham under the supervision of Jonty Harrison, towards which he has received funding from the AHRC and the university. He has performed or his works have been performed in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, USA, China and Italy.

Nicolas Bernier: Liaisons mécaniques (2006-07)

Krrrchstchack.

The event is triggered by a profound attachment to physical matter and nostalgia of an era I did not live through: the era of machines, real ones, set in motion by physical mechanisms.

I proceeded to gather pieces of machines and gears. My collection held reminiscent objects: cameras, 8mm projectors, music boxes and antique toys. I discovered naturally rich materials made of different granular textures and an abundance of micro-articulations. The gears are expressive and precise; they engage a defined process.

I sampled the small objects before deconstructing them, splitting them, dividing them up. From these fragments, I constructed new gears. I wanted to maintain, as much as possible, the essence of the physical characteristics of the sounds. The only thing left to do was to activate the musical mechanics.

In this context, the gears are release mechanisms. They engage a change in space, a material transformation, a stop, a change of

direction or simply another mechanism. They play a double role: sound material and transition between events, just as the ties and slurs of musical writing.

Liaisons mécaniques was realized from December 2006 to April 2007 in the studios of the Université de Montréal (Québec) and Musiques & Recherches (Belgique) and premiered on April 27, 2007 at Petit théâtre Mercelis in Brussels (Belgium). The piece was commissioned by Musiques & Recherches. It was realized with the support of the Conseil des arts des lettres du Québec (CALQ) and the Agence Québec-Wallonie-Bruxelles. Thanks to Robert Normandeau and Annette Vande Gorne. The work was awarded the 2nd prize (ex æquo) at CIMESP 2007 (Brazil) and mentions at Concurso Internacional de Composição Electroacústica Música Viva 2007 (Portugal), Digital Art Awards (Japan, 2007), and 34th Bourges International Electroacoustic Music and Sonic Art Competition (France, 2007).

Nicolas Bernier is joyfully flowing from musique concrète to live electronics, post-rock, ambient, glitch, field recording, improvisation, performance, installation, art video while also working with dance, theatre and cinema. In the midst of this eclecticism, his artistic concerns remain constant: the balance between the cerebral and the sensual, and between organic sound sources and digital processing. The sound of Nicolas Bernier is somewhere between the old and the new. It is electronic music made from objects of the past: typewriters, old machines, tuning forks, soundscape memories, and, yes, musical instruments. It is made with a modern apparatus but feels completely handmade. It is gently articulated textures alongside enormous masses.

His work has been of interest for Prix Ars Electronica (Austria), SONAR (Spain), Mutek (Québec), DotMov Festival (Japan) and Transmediale (Germany) and has been released on lovely labels such as Crónica (Portugal), Ahornfelder (Germany), leerraum (Switzerland), and Home Normal (UK).

He is currently a PhD candidate in sonic arts at the University of Huddersfield (UK) under the direction of Pierre Alexandre Tremblay and Mathew Adkins. He is a member of Perte de signal, a media arts research and development centre based in Montréal.

For his work *frequencies (a)* he was awarded the Golden Nica of Prix Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria, 2013).

James Andean: Psygeío (2014)

This piece is composed from a recording of the refrigerator in the Old Jesuit Monastery in Ano Syros, Greece, during a residency at the Syros Sound Meetings in summer 2013.

I spent many long days during this residency recording the windy soundscapes of the island of Syros – blowing across the island's hilly terrain, whistling through the windows and the shutters of the Monastery's guesthouse, etc., with a vision of a large-scale, multichannel piece based on these recordings. One day, passing through the kitchen on my way to recording the wind beating against the windows, I was distracted by the rather pleasant hum of the refrigerator, and paused to take a quick recording before continuing with my obsession with the wind. Some months later, seated in the studio ready to begin work on my wind piece, I was once again distracted by this fridge recording. The result is this piece, while my careful and systematic collection of wind recordings continues to sit on the shelf, waiting patiently for my attention...

James Andean is a musician and sound artist. He is active as both a composer and a performer in a range of fields, including electroacoustic composition and performance, improvisation, sound installation, and sound recording. He is a founding member of improvisation and new music quartet Rank Ensemble and interdisciplinary improvisation ensemble The Tuesday Group, and one half of audiovisual performance art duo Plucié/DesAndes. He has

performed throughout Europe and North America, and his works have been performed around the world.

Alejandro Olarte: Apnea (2014)

I have always been fascinated with the idea of temporal layers that can coexist and be superimposed in the mind. These perceptual architectures are strongly revealed in moments of deep concentration or when falling asleep, and often when listening to music. Focusing our attention on breathing can also trigger and induce physiological mechanisms that expose different qualities of time. Breathing brings us back to fundamental questions of life and death; it reminds us how fragile and thin are the lines and veils in between, and how easy it is to escape the fatality of a linear unidirectional arrow of time.

Apnea is like the time zero, freezing the internal motion and stopping the mind's monologue to overfly the images and sensations that resonate from different times in our senses.

In this piece I wanted to paint the apnea of a traveller exploring the concept of aural threads and mental sonic resonances, sounds that come from a simple everyday life: voices, trains, stations, steps over a framework of melted synthetic soundscapes.

Luis Alejandro Olarte (Colombia) is an electroacoustic researcher, devoted to pedagogy, live performance and contemporary music. He is carrying out doctoral research in live electronics and pedagogy at the Sibelius Academy, supervised by Dr. Andrew Bentley. He studied guitar and electroacoustic composition in Colombia, Generative Improvisation and Musical Acoustics at the National Conservatory in Paris, and Computer Music at Paris University. Olarte works as a freelance artist, performing, teaching and animating workshops on music, technology and improvisation.

---Väliäika/Intermission---

Yves Daoust: *Mi bémol* (1990)

Around a small tonal object (E flat, *Mi bémol* in French) developed into a drone used as a thread in this piece, I have brought together some of my ‘fetish’ sounds. A stereotypical form emerged, a hyper-condensation of my style, of my articulation and construction processes: confrontation of widely different sound elements, a preference for the anecdotal, the crossfading of textures, oscillation between the musical discourse and the documentary approach. Mixtures of levels, polyphony of sounds and of meanings. A pastiche where I attempt to imitate myself...

Yves Daoust studied classical music (piano and composition) at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, then studied analysis and composition in Paris under Gilbert Amy. Later, he trained from 1973 to '75 at the Groupe de musique expérimentale de Bourges (GMEB). Interested in the artistic process of the Groupe’s composers, and more specifically influenced by the “virtual cinema” concept championed by Alain Savouret, Daoust developed the bases of his own electroacoustic art. His very first two works already pointed at his main directions: *Paris, les Grands-Magasins* (1976) — nature: sounds from our daily environment, life moments captured (phonography) — and, *Quatuor* (1979), his first “concrète” work — culture: musical heritage revisited.

Between 1976 and '79, Daoust worked as a sound designer at the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). Then, in 1980, he started teaching at the music conservatories in Québec City and Montréal, where he would develop a five-year program in electroacoustic composition. He retired from the conservatory in 2011.

Beside his teaching activities, Daoust has contributed to the development of an electroacoustic scene in Québec. He was very active in 1978 in founding and developing the first organization in the

country devoted to the promotion and presentation of electroacoustic music, the ACREQ, which would become a key player in the development of electroacoustic arts in Québec and Canada.

During his training in Bourges, Yves Daoust had been impressed by the Groupe's creation-awareness work with children through the "Gmébogosse," a portable mini-studio created and developed by the IMEB. The memory of this tool informed his design for SMCQ Jeunesse of a sound creation tool called "Musicolateur," made to help awaken a sense of musical creativity among youth. Since 2004, Yves Daoust spends a good amount of his energy and time on developing and presenting this unique instrument.

http://www.smcq.qc.ca/jeunesse/en/education/musicolateur
/

In 2009, Yves Daoust received a lifetime achievement award: the Prix Serge-Garant (Fondation Émile-Nelligan).

John Young: Five Versions of Reality (2013)

1. (... Paris) 0'00" : dur. 2'45"
2. (... Prague) 2'45" : dur. 2'04"
3. (... Helsinki) 4'46" : dur. 3'20"
4. (... Christchurch) 8'00" : dur. 3'17"
5. (... Corfu) 11'18" : dur. 2'49"

To Jonty Harrison

Five Versions of Reality is a cycle of short acousmatic spaces, linked by a similar approach to sound materials. Each space is created around fragments of field recordings that I have made in different parts of the world over many years. They are linked by a similar formal approach to the use of the field recordings—as 'windows' on a lived sonic experience—but also by the presence of a set of gestural figures that take on different musical roles and functions within each.

I was not aiming to present these as programmatic or poetic evocations of each of the locations. Instead, I wanted to frame the recordings as small flickers of memory: to embody the sense of being present in a particular space at a particular time. This expresses my own view of the significance of field recording in electroacoustic music: as aural documents they lay bare the materiality *of* and timescale *in which* sound events unfold, detached from the actual experience of them. Almost always, for me at least, the process of re-hearing a field recording is something quite different to the original multi-sensory experience. This has both positive and negative consequences: things that I had not attended to at the time may surprise, excite or detract from subsequent listening, or I sense a change of experiential understanding, for instance via the microphone's potential for enhanced intimacy or as a result of the absence of other contextual factors ... tactile, olfactory, visual. But for me a strong motivation is the way field recordings can carry strong emotive resonance—blending powerful iconography with the raw physical engagement and presence of sound, along with the inevitable capacity for nostalgia inherent in a sonic reality brought back from time, and the sheer sensuous pleasure in experiencing the many forms and colours of sound.

As a result of this way of finding meaning-through-memory in field recordings, each movement of *Five Versions of Reality* attempts to refabricate something of the involvement and creative shifts in focus and attention that can occur in real-life listening situations, while also celebrating the uniqueness of any one experience of sound and place at any time. I consider each space complete in itself, an *étude* in the compression of form, embracing the challenge of creating quickly a sense of several possible layers of implication and direction within each. Finally, the cycle as a whole attempts to emphasise a consistent view of the possible relationships between sound as we *hear* and sound as we *imagine*.

John Young was born in Christchurch (New Zealand) in 1962 to English (father) and Italian (mother) parents. He studied at the

University of Canterbury, completing a doctorate on the manipulation of environmental sound sources in electroacoustic music. In 1989, with the assistance of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand (now the Creative New Zealand), he travelled to the UK to further his studies of electroacoustic music composition working privately in the studios of the University of East Anglia (Norwich, UK) with Denis Smalley.

He returned to New Zealand in 1990 to take up a position at Victoria University of Wellington where he became a Senior Lecturer and Director of the Electroacoustic Music Studios. In November 2000 he joined the Music, Technology and Innovation Research Centre at De Montfort University in Leicester (UK) where is now Professor of Composition.

His main interest in composition continues to be in acousmatic music, particularly forms based on the interplay between recognizable natural sound sources and computer-based studio transformations, but also combines electroacoustics with instrumental media.

He has received a number of international awards, including First Prize in the 1996 Stockholm Electronic Arts Award (Sweden) (for his work *Inner*), a First Prize in the 34th Bourges International Electroacoustic Music and Sonic Art Competition (France, 2007) (for *Ricordiamo Forlì*) and Second Prize in the 4th Concurso Internacional de Música Eletroacústica de São Paulo (CIMESP '01, Brazil) (for *Liquid Sky*).

Patrick Kosk: Uno studio dal Bianco di Luna (2014)

This study is in a way a side shadow from an earlier piece with the title *MondWeiß*. It includes (mental) areas which in a way are more accidental and "rubatated" than before. The sound materials are mostly identical, therefore a part from one earlier program note is still relevant.

The piece is based on small floating sketches, cells, mental conditions or "stories" which appear and thereafter vanish, reappear in a somewhat different shape, stop and then continue again. The sound material is mainly based on recordings of different sound profiles in an old house; for instance, recordings of an old brush against a wooden wall and a tilestove (kakluuni, kakelugn) and coals from the tilestove against a window. These sounds, as well as other sounds, are sometimes combined with the adapted sound from an angklung (thanks to Alekski Haapaniemi) and even with older materials.

(Technic: Soundman okm II / WaveShell, Waves, GRM-Tools, Soundhack, ProTools LE / iMac 12,1, MacBook, iBook 14 1,42 & Mac G4, 1.25) - Where: Parainen, Helsinki, Berlin, Rome - uno studio dal bianco di luna ≈ a study from moonwhite)

Patrick Kosk (*1951)

Education: Formally an amateur and autodidact, 1975-1979 studies and first compositions for J. Ruohomäki in the Electronic music studio at Helsinki University, studies in musicology 1980 and a seminar for I. Xenakis 1980. Courses in computer music at the Institute of the Finnish radio (A. Bentley) 1982, Institut National d'Audiovisuel-GRM/Paris 1984 (B. Maillard) and Technische Universität in Berlin/Elektronisches Studio 1992 (F. Hein). The roots are in Musique Conrète.

Activity: Freelance composer and sound designer in the Experimental studio of the Finnish radio (Yle) 1981-1991, Elektronisches Studio at TU/Berlin, EMS/Stockholm, studio of the Sibelius-Akademy, IMEB/Bourges (France) and Studio Alpha (Visby). After 2006 in own home studio. Since 1979 his works have been performed at festivals and concerts inside and outside Europe. Also participations in theatre and dance productions (founding member of the dance group Liisa Pentti + Co, about 20 programs), teamworks in radiophony and text/sound compositions and poetry performances, performance (Finland, Germany), short film and participation in the experimental group Kurtz 1982-85 (H. Halme, J.

Liimatainen, M. Sandberg). Performances around Finland, also in Germany, Denmark, Oslo, Reykjavik, Stockholm and Tallin (1979-2009) in over 100 different productions.

Residencies & bursaries at: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD 1992, (1998, 2005, 2008), Institut de Musique Electroacoustique de Bourges (imeb) 1984, 1994, 2004, INA- Groupe Recherche de Musique in Paris 1984, Villa Bergshyddan Stockholm with the poet Agneta Enckell 1994, Visby International Centre for Composers 2004/5 and Circolo Scandinavo in Rome with A. Enckell 2010 and 2013.

Prizes:

Grand Prix de Bourges 1999, Prix Cime 1985 and several (honorable) mentions 1980-2006: Bourges, Luigi Russolo foundation & Prix Italia.

Published works/phonograms:

Mondweiß - Edition RZ 3005 (2009)

Imeb opus 30 ans 1970-2000 / Mnemosyne Musique Media - LDC 2781117 (2000)

Cultures Electroniques/Prix Magisterium et Prix Quadrivium - Imeb/Unesco/Cime LDC 278070/71

50 Jahre Musique Concrète – Inventionen '98 / Edition. RZ 1009/10 (Parallele 9/10) (1999)

Sounds! / P. Kuljuntausta & Charm of Sound CSR-0199 (1999)

Bits and Pieces – EMS 30 years 1964-1994 / Caprice CAP 21471 (1994)

Elektroakustische Musik aus Finnland - Edition RZ 3004 (1989)

Juhani Liimatainen: ...aikana (1998)

Petri Kuljuntausta asked me if I would have time do a three minute piece for the new cd he was producing. I asked when it should be ready, and he replied "syyskuun aikana". So it's all September sounds together with aikana.

Juhani Liimatainen is a sound designer who very often works in the field commonly known as and called 'music'. Between 1977 and 2002 he worked at the Experimental Studio of YLE (Finnish Broadcasting).

Since 2002 Juhani Liimatainen has been professor of sound design at the Theatre Academy of Finland, which is now part of the University of the Arts Helsinki.

He is a longtime member of the Toimii Ensemble and has also worked with the Avanti! orchestra and the Finnish Theater Orchestra, among other ensembles, and performs with the groups Free Okapi, Son Panic and HumppAvanti!.

James Andean: Déchirure (2013)

Déchirure was composed using sounds originally recorded by Luc Ferrari and his wife, Brunhild Ferrari, which were made available to composers for the composition of new works as part of the *Prix Presque Rien 2013*, in which *Déchirure* received second prize. All sounds used in the piece are sourced from these recordings.

Déchirure: a tearing, a painful separation... The piece involves a number of 'déchirures', both musical as well as figurative (personal separations: the plaintive cry of the distant train, etc...) although the only literal 'tearing' is saved for the final phrase.

It is also a reference to the sound materials: through the act of recording, these have been ripped from the world and moment which birthed them; but, further, they have been torn from the original contexts and purposes of the artist couple who collected them, to be reappropriated in new works by new composers.

Appendix C: Previous Concerts – Programme Notes

**Musiikkiteknologian aineryhmä
Centre for Music & Technology**

**ACOUSMATICA VIII:
Äänisäteitä**

**James Andeanin kolmas
jatkotutkintokonsertti
James Andean's Third Doctoral Concert**

**maanantaina 29.04.2013 klo 19
Musiikkitalo, Black Box**

**Monday, April 29th, 2013 at 7 pm
Helsinki Music Centre, Black Box**

James Andean	Ainnurruvar II (2013)	
Benjamin Thigpen	not even the rain (2000)	9'49"
Kees Tazelaar	Rayons de son (2010)	17'15"
Väliaika/Intermission		
James Andean	Ekphrasis (2013)	
Erik Nyström	Multiverse (2008)	11'07"
Jean-François Laporte	Boule qui roule... (1997)	7'23"
Otto Romanowski	Four Spaces (2004)	10'37"

Acousmatica VIII: Äänisäteitä

My ongoing doctoral work explores issues of narrative in acousmatic music, a form of electroacoustic tape music, closely related to *musique concrète*, which uses recorded sound as compositional material.

For this, my third doctoral concert, we are straying a bit further afield, with works by composers less commonly associated with the acousmatic canon – although perhaps the connections are closer than they might at first appear. Though Kees Tazelaar hails from the Institute of Sonology in The Hague, more commonly associated with electronic and computer music, the version of his work *Rayons de Son* ("äänisäteitä" in Finnish) that we will be hearing tonight was prepared for use with the Acousmonium of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales, the very heart of acousmatic culture. Benjamin Thigpen is perhaps more often associated with computer and noise-based works, but is certainly no stranger to the GRM, and regularly teaches for 'Musiques & recherches' in Belgium, another acousmatic stronghold. While Jean-François Laporte is increasingly known for his innovative musical instrument design, he has also composed a number of award-winning acousmatic works. Helsinki-based composer Otto Romanowski, one of the pioneers of electroacoustic music in Finland, has ever forged his own path, never hewing too closely to any one school or tradition. Erik Nyström, on the other hand, is viewed as a clearly acousmatic composer, and yet his works, composed entirely in the Supercollider programming language, rarely use recorded sound elements.

There is a degree of abstraction, of introspection perhaps, to tonight's works that strikes a different tone than that of the previous two concerts. The clear sound imagery found in many of the works in those previous concerts is largely absent here; instead, we find more of a focus on space, on texture, on timbre, perhaps leaving the listener's imagination freer to wander wherever it might wish...

Enjoy the concert!

James Andean

James Andean: Ainnurruvar II (2013)

Ainnurruvar I, composed for four performers playing an array of toys and objects, was in some ways an attempt to write an acousmatic or *musique concrète* work for a live ensemble. However, I could not resist the siren call of my acousmatic roots and the temptation to recast the work as a tape piece. The result is *Ainnurruvar II*, which, ironically perhaps, brings the work full cycle: tape music which had been written for ensemble, is now a work for ensemble made into tape music.

To hold to the spirit of the original, there is very limited processing of the sound materials in *Ainnurruvar II*, with only a couple of brief – and very obvious – exceptions.

James Andean is a musician and sound artist. He is active as both a performer and a composer in a range of fields, including electroacoustic composition and performance, improvisation, sound installation, and sound recording. He is a founding member of improvisation and new music quartet Rank Ensemble, and one half of audiovisual performance art duo Plucié/DesAndes. He has performed throughout Europe and North America, and his works have been performed across Europe, North America and Asia. He is currently completing a doctorate in acousmatic composition at the Centre for Music & Technology of the Sibelius Academy, in Helsinki, Finland.

Benjamin Thigpen: not even the rain (2000)

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture
compels me with the colour of its countries,
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes
and opens; only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

– e. e. cummings

When I was maybe 12 or 13 years old, I read a short story about a man who was to be hanged. He mounted the scaffold; the noose was placed around his neck; the flooring dropped out from under him; he fell, and . . . the rope broke. Since he had survived his own execution, he was instantly set free. His wife ran up and hugged him, and they walked away from the scaffold together. The man went on to lead a long and happy life, prospering and fathering a family. When, an old man, he lay upon his deathbed at last, he was surrounded by family and friends. . . And then the noose broke his neck and he died.

I have since been fascinated with this sort of temporal pocket, in which years of experience can be folded into a fraction of a second. The temporality of *not even the rain* is based on this model.

All the sound events of the piece evolve out of two groups of percussive attacks – one at the very beginning, the other about a third of the way through. As the resonance of the initial attack-group slowly fades away, the music sinks into it, tracing something like a descent into its tiniest elements. These then become increasingly animated, shifting and evolving in sometimes unpredictable ways. The two halves of the piece (following the two attack-groups) sketch similar gestures – descending through layers of soundspace – the second moving more quickly, speaking more emphatically, falling more drastically. And arriving, in the final section of the piece, at something like the “heart of mystery.”

What it's about: The vast energy concealed within any object, the infinite mystery beyond every surface. Perceiving this energy, piercing through the world-as-surface, plunging through mysterious layers. Falling. Exploring this endless, ungraspable energy.

not even the rain is entirely dependent on “the speaking of the object”: objects speaking unknown languages. The experience of composing it was not one of imposing my will upon the sounds to make them express something I feel, but rather one of getting out of the way. Of allowing something to come into being through me. Of being surpassed.

All the sounds were generated by sound processing programs I wrote in Max/MSP. The music was composed and spatialized in 8 channels using Pro Tools at the studio Musiques et Recherches [Ohain, Belgium].

not even the rain was a finalist in the contest Città di Udine 2002.

Benjamin Thigpen, nomad, born in the United States, with degrees in English Literature, Comparative Literature and “Esthetics, Technologies and Artistic Creations”, immigrated to Paris at the age of 31. Since then, he has composed at GRM (Paris), at Musiques et Recherches (Belgium), at SCRIME (Bordeaux), at EMS (Stockholm), at the Visby International Centre for Composers (Sweden), at STEIM (Amsterdam), at Djerassi (California), at l'Espace Totem (Montreal), in his bedroom and in the train.

After 6 years at Ircam (Paris) and 7 at the Conservatory of Cuneo (Italy), he currently teaches computer music and (psycho)acoustics at Arts2 (Mons, Belgium), while also working as a free-lance programmer and musician.

He makes music for loudspeakers: electroacoustic works (composed on electromagnetic support); pieces for live computer performance; interactive music for computer and acoustic instrument(s); computer improvisation. His music is concerned with issues of energy, density, complexity, movement, simultaneity and violence, and he often works extensively with space as a primary compositional parameter. He thinks that music does not exist in time but rather creates it, and considers that music is not the art of sound but the art of the transcendence of sound.

Kees Tazelaar: Rayons de son (2010)

In an interview on French radio in 1955, Edgard Varèse recalled how he had become aware of a fourth dimension in music during a performance of the Seventh Symphony of Ludwig van Beethoven in the Salle Pleyel in Paris. Because the Salle Pleyel was “rich in acoustic surprises”, and because Varèse was seated in a place in the hall that

was “over-resonant”, he suddenly imagined the prolongation of the sound caused by the reverberation as a projection of sound in space, just as a strong spotlight can project a light beam. According to Varèse, sound, just like light, should be able to make a journey through space.

In *Rayons de son*, the idea of a prolongation of sound is understood both literally and metaphorically. Metaphorically, meaning that the prolongation is an “extension” of the sound, caused by transforming it electronically, and then again transforming the result of that transformation, etc. In this way, a series of sounds is created in which every subsequent sound loses more of its original features, and receives more and more new features in return. The starting material for these series of sound transformations consisted of eleven processed phrases of the text by Varèse, and an equal number of short phrases from the trio of the third part of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony.

Literally, meaning that the sound is lengthened through electronic reverberation, while at the same time I was always looking for ways in which the reverberation was not heard as such. Reverberation was deliberately not used to simulate an acoustic property of a given space, but as a sound transformation with a compositional purpose. Each reverb sound comes from only one speaker, and always from a different speaker, as if it “shines” from a certain direction.

Rayons de son was dedicated to Dick Raaijmakers at the occasion of his eightieth birthday on September 1, 2010. The work was premiered on September 10, 2010 in the former buildings of the Philips Research Laboratories in Eindhoven.

Kees Tazelaar (July 27, 1962) was taught at the Institute of Sonology from 1981 to 1983 (Utrecht) and from 1987 to 1989 (The Hague). He subsequently studied composition with Jan Boerman at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague, graduating in 1993. Since then Tazelaar has been teaching at the Institute of Sonology. He has been head of Sonology since June 2006.

In addition to his own autonomous works, he has contributed to music theatre projects by Dick Raaijmakers (*Die glückliche Hand geöffnet, Scheuer im Haag*) and Theatergroep Hollandia (*Perzen, Varkensstal*).

In recent years he has also been occupied intensively in the restoration and reconstruction of major electronic works from the past. In his specially equipped studio, new versions have been made of compositions by Gottfried Michael Koenig (*Klangfiguren II, Essay, Terminus*), Jan Boerman (Kompositie 1972, Ruïne), Edgard Varèse (*Poème Électronique*), Iannis Xenakis (*Concret P-H*), György Ligeti (*Pièce Électronique no.3, Artikulation*), Luctor Ponse (*Concerto voor Piano en Band*).

Since June 2005, Tazelaar has been a visiting research fellow of the University of Bath, UK, and as such participated in the VEP (Virtual Electronic Poem) project.

During the winter semester of 2005-2006, Kees Tazelaar filled the Edgard Varèse Guest Professorship at the Technical University of Berlin.

James Andean: Ekphrasis (2013)

Ekphrasis: A rhetorical and poetic device in which a work of art is vividly described in words; the detailed description or incorporation of an artwork from one medium within another medium.

This work is an extreme exercise in acousmatic narrative. It is also a metaphor for the 'acousmatic veil': in acousmatic works, the loudspeaker is a metaphor for Pythagoras' veil, 'obscuring' the sources of the sounds heard, which must be imagined or reconstructed based on sound alone; in *Ekphrasis*, the acousmatic work is obscured behind a veil of words, and the work itself must be reconstructed based on words alone...

Erik Nyström: Multiverse (2008)

Discontinuous connections and connected discontinuities lie at the heart of this piece. These aspects are reflected both in the choice

of sound material and the way the piece is structured. Percussive singularities are presented and approached on several parallel strata, from "big" obvious gestural events, across rhythmic pulsations, towards more abstract textures and drones. The boundaries are blurred as a synthesis takes place within the network of connections that constitute the composition, weaving an irregular fabric of space and time – full of knots and holes – where music emerges in a gravitational flux.

The term ‘multiverse’ is used in cosmological science and describes a constellation of universes, where phase transitions such as chaotic inflations and big bangs spawn new regions in space and time.

The piece was premiered at the ElectriCity festival in London in April 2008 and was shortlisted for the Residence prize in the 35th Bourges International Competition in 2008.

Erik Nyström is a London-based composer working in the acousmatic medium. His current music and research explores the aesthetic potentials of transformative spatial structures, and the role of textural processes in sonic formations. With emphasis on complex and detailed evolving textured spaces, the music seeks to engage listeners’ physical and visual listening imagination. Aside from concert music, Nyström has also composed music for contemporary dance. His PhD at City University London – supervised by Denis Smalley – is entitled *Topology of Spatial Texture in the Acousmatic Medium*, and develops a new integrated approach to space and time in acousmatic music, presenting a series of works exemplifying an aesthetic oriented towards spatial texture where the potentials of multi-channel composition are explored extensively. The approach draws from research on the cross-modality of texture perception, philosophical discourse on embodied meaning, physics, psychology of visual art, and discourse on space in acousmatic music. Emphasis is put on visual and physical connections with spatiality in the acousmatic experience, and concepts discussed include ‘visual listening’, microscopic textons in the textural experience, entropic

processes, the global terrain of a work, and perceived bodily orientation in space and time.

Erik Nyström's educational background includes studies in recording arts at SAE London, computer music composition at CCMIX (Centre de Creation Iannis Xenakis), Paris, with Gerard Pape (2006-7), and Electroacoustic Composition at City University, London (MA with distinction in 2007-8 and PhD in 2008-13), with Denis Smalley. Other important educational experiences include courses with Jean-Claude Risset, Trevor Wishart, Curtis Roads, and Agostino Di Scipio,

attended during the time at CCMIX.

Erik Nyström's music is performed internationally, and has been awarded prizes and honorary mentions. He teaches modern music history, electroacoustic composition and SuperCollider at the media college SAE London, and works as freelance sound engineer specialised in contemporary music. His PhD research was supported by funds from the Newby Trust (UK) and the Helge Ax:son Johnsonson Foundation (Swe).

Jean-François Laporte: Boule qui roule... (1997)

Boule qui roule... puts the listener at the heart of a continuous sonic evolutive process, designating him as witness to the becoming of the piece. This foreseeable character, born from the natural character of the transformations, is colored by the opposition of the ranges and directions of the sound movements which, stretched over very long sequences, constantly give a feeling of stability. This piece was composed solely using a shelving filter with the Cecilia software running on a Silicon Graphic computer. A single 10-minute recording of a machine sound was fed through the filter a couple of hundred times, following the subtle adjustments carefully made to the filter by the composer each time.

Premiere: February 8th 1997, Kingston Electroacoustic Music Symposium (Ontario, Canada). The piece won a Prize at the 1997 Socan Contest (Canada).

Canadian artist **Jean-François Laporte** has been an active member of the contemporary art's scene since the mid-1990's. He pursues a hybrid approach integrating visual arts and sound exploration. Since 1993, Laporte has written some 70 works that have been performed in Montreal, across Canada and Europe, Japan and the United States. A number of his pieces have been commissioned by Montreal-based and international ensembles and organizations, and he has won several awards and grants from such institutions as the Canada Council and the Québec Council for the Arts. The composer has also won several awards including, in 2002, "Composer Of The Year," "Creation Of The Year," (for his work *Tribal*, for orchestra of invented instruments) and "Discovery Of The Year" as part of the Opus awards (from the Conseil québécois de la musique). In 2003, his work *Prana* received first prize in the mixed music category of the 23rd International Luigi Russolo electroacoustic music competition (Italy) and, in 2004, he won the first prize in electroacoustic music for the international competition Citta' di Udine' with his work *Dans le ventre du dragon*. In 2006 Laporte won again the "Creation Of The Year" award, for his work *Plénitude du vide*, for Quasar sax quartet and invented instruments.

For the past ten years, along with his activities as a composer, Jean-François has been developing and making new musical instruments (Tu-Yo, Bowl, FlyingCan, Sax-trunk and Siren Organ,) which he integrates in his works and, since 2002, to visual & sound installations using computerized and robotic controls.

Otto Romanowski: Four Spaces (2004)

In the past years my focus has shifted away from my classical compositional processes, and more towards a timbral/ambient way of thinking and structuring my world of hearing and creating.

I tried to make four separate movements, each of which should represent some kind of situation, state, and process in a specific acoustic space. The word "Space" should be understood more like "State", which better describes the basic idea of the metastructure.

The story in the piece:

In the beginning we are going up. We reach a place, a situation, where we are in a melodic (with broad ambitus) structure. The situation stabilizes into a state that focuses on rhythm. These three states open the fourth state, which is a combination of previous sound material (concrete and synthesized) and musical structures (glissandos, melody, rhythm). Finally this state freezes, and the door closes (leaving us in the room in which we are listening).

Structure and materials:

Part 1. Glissando:

Continuous upwards movements (Shepard Tones), triggered live on a keyboard. The background is made from processed concrete engine sounds. Transition to...

Part 2. Melody:

The solo sound is based on car brakes; the background is a processed male voice drone with percussion samples. Which leads to...

Part 3. Rhythmic section (concrete percussion samples):

The harmonic sounds are the inverse of the first part's pseudo-glissandos. The rhythm sounds static, but has confusing accents (actually not a stable meter, more like Knowlton's pulse). This transforms to...

Part 4. Nature:

Processed concrete sounds (nature, human, mechanical) with synthesized nature-like sounds. Melodic components with harmony-like backgrounds.

Finale:

Stable resonance and frozen sounds. The door closes.

Otto Romanowski (1952) is one of the pioneers of computer music in Finland. Romanowski became interested in electronic music in 1972 while studying musicology at the University of Helsinki; he studied composition, theory, and electronic music at the Sibelius Academy with teachers including Einojuhani Rautavaara, Jouko Tolonen and Osmo Lindeman, and from 1976 to 1978 he studied

computer music at the EMS studio in Stockholm with Jon Appleton and Lars-Gunnar Bodin.

Romanowski was a founding member of Korvat Auki, of live electronic group NEUM, and of TOIMII! together with Magnus Lindberg and Esa-Pekka Salonen. He was one of the founders of CARTES Centre of Art and Science, of which he was the director from 1991 to 2000; served as artistic director of the YLE experimental studio; and is an active innovator in the commercial sector (Nokia, Siemens, MuzaKit), with a number of mobile technology patents.

Romanowski's works are essentially interdisciplinary and inter-artistic. In recent years he has also focused on creating computer graphics and multimedia. Romanowski is a renowned lecturer in music technology, and is currently a researcher in the Department of Music Technology at the Sibelius Academy.

<http://www.siba.fi/~oromanow>

**Musiikkiteknologian aineryhmä
Centre for Music & Technology**

**ACOUSMATICA VI:
Convergences**

**James Andeanin toinen
jatkotutkintokonsertti
James Andean's Second Doctoral Concert**

**maanantaina 12.11.2012 klo 19
Musiikkitalo, Black Box**

**Monday, November 12th, 2012 at 7 pm
Helsinki Music Centre, Black Box**

Robert Normandeau 12'18"	Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck) (1987)
Manuella Blackburn 7'58"	Switched on (2011)
James Andean	Between the Leaves (2012)
Adam Basanta 17'37"	three myths of liberalism (2012)
Väliaika/Intermission	
Peiman Khosravi 11'43"	Convergences (2010)
Timothy Cooper 14'51"	The Sound of the Letters, the Voice of the Page (2012)
Visa Kuoppala 6'50"	Nocturnal Debris (2012)
James Andean	Hyvät matkustajat (2012)

I have taken as the title of my second doctoral concert "Convergences". This is the name of composer Peiman Khosravi's piece in tonight's programme; but it is also an apt description of many of the works presented tonight, and indeed, of the acousmatic genre in general.

My doctoral work is focused on the balance and interaction between musical and narrative properties in acousmatic music. For me, it is this convergence of musical and narrative qualities which makes the art form a rich and often exhilarating listening experience.

The works on tonight's programme represent a wide variety of approaches to this balance, from works in which sound symbols and sonic imagery are prevalent, to works which are almost entirely abstract, lacking all but the most programmatic of external references.

The concert is comprised primarily of new and recent works by young and upcoming acousmatic composers. It also includes Robert Normandeau's classic work *Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck)*, which, as one of the landmark works of the acousmatic sub-genre 'cinéma pour l'oreille' ('cinema for the ear'), stakes out an important position in this symbiotic embrace between the musical and the narrative.

I hope you will enjoy the concert!

James Andean

Robert Normandeau: Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck) (1987)

Rumeurs (Rumors): A rumor is a sound in the air. Elusive, we seek to capture it, fearing that it may concern us, that it may hold a part of shameful truth. Fleeting, it cannot be caught. As soon as it materializes, it vanishes, leaving only traces in our memories. Here, nothing is certain. Where does this sound come from? What is it made of? The piece endlessly oscillates between pure sound and meaning, without ever resolving to one or the other. The piece is at the limit between texture and image, between material and anecdote. And rumors go by, always surrounding us. Here and there, sounds reach us like faint echoes of the world. If you believe hearing things about you, why worry? After all they're only rumors - and if you listen carefully, you may find the key.

(Place de Ransbeck): A small square in Ohain (Belgium), home of the studio Métamorphoses d'Orphée where the piece was produced in June, 1987.

Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck) was premiered on September 24th, 1987 at Concordia University, Montréal. The residency in Belgium was the outcome of the prize received at the 1st Phonurgia-Nova International Competition in Arles (France, 1986) the previous year and was made possible by a grant from the ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec.

Rumeurs (Place de Ransbeck) was awarded the 2nd Prize of the Electroacoustic Category of the 16th Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Competition (France, 1988).

After a BMus in Composition (Electroacoustics) from the Université Laval (Québec City, 1984) **Robert Normandeau** moved to Montréal and completed an MMus in Composition (1988) and the first PhDMus in Electroacoustic Composition (1992), under Marcelle Deschênes and Francis Dhomont.

After a certain interest in instrumental and mixed works, his current endeavours are focused on acousmatic music. More specifically, his compositions employ esthetical criteria whereby he

creates a “cinema for the ear” in which “meaning” as well as “sound” become the elements that elaborate his works. Along with concert music he now writes incidental music, especially for the theatre. He is Professor in electroacoustic music composition at Université de Montréal since 1999.

Robert Normandeau is an award winner of numerous international competitions, including Ars Electronica, Linz (Austria, 1993, Golden Nica in '96), Bourges (France, 1986, '88, '93), Fribourg (Switzerland, 2002), Luigi Russolo, Varese (Italy, 1989, '90), Métamorphoses, Bruxelles (Belgium, 2002, '04), Musica Nova, Prague (Czech Republic, 1994, '95, '98), Noroit-Léonce Petitot, Arras (France, 1991, '94), Phonurgia-Nova, Arles (France, 1987, '88), and Stockholm (Sweden, 1992).

Manuella Blackburn: Switched on (2011)

This piece began by exploring the sounds of switches, dials and buttons collected from my home and place of work. A particularly interesting sound was sourced from turning on an old TV, which ignited a series of high frequency pitches and crackling static flutters before eventually powering on. Lower transpositions of this sound revealed a usually inaudible collection of electronic-like frequencies that feature throughout the work. Together with this the switch sounds, being very short in duration, are clustered into intricate groupings, cascades and explosive flourishes. In addition to these aspects, I was particularly drawn to the concepts of inanimate object powering up from moments of inactivity, and surging electricity running and humming through circuitry.

Switched on was realized in 2011 at Liverpool Hope University (England, UK) and completed at the EMS (Stockholm, Sweden) and premiered on June 10, 2011 during the MANTIS “Sonic Meta-Ontology 2” Festival at The University of Manchester (England, UK). Thanks to Lynn Holland and David Lewis for their help and extensive switch hunting in the Art Department of Liverpool Hope University (England, UK), and Andrew Hall for his valued sound contribution. *Switched on* was finalist for the Gaudeamus Prize 2012 and winner of

the first prize of the 7th acousmatic composition competition *Métamorphoses* 2012.

Manuella Blackburn is an electroacoustic music composer who specializes in acousmatic music creation. However, she also has composed for instruments and electronics, laptop ensemble improvisations, and music for dance.

She studied music at The University of Manchester (England, UK), followed by a Masters in Electroacoustic Composition with David Berezan. She became a member of Manchester Theatre in Sound (MANTIS) in 2006 and completed a PhD at The University of Manchester with Ricardo Climent in 2010.

Manuella Blackburn has worked in residence in the studios of Miso Music (Lisbon, Portugal), EMS (Stockholm, Sweden), Atlantic Centre for the Arts (Florida, USA), and Kunitachi College of Music (Tokyo, Japan).

Her music has been performed at concerts, festivals, conferences and gallery exhibitions in Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the USA.

Manuella Blackburn has received a number of international awards and prizes for her acousmatic music including: Grand Prize in the Digital Art Awards (Fujisawa, Japan, 2007), First Prize in the 7th and 10th Concurso Internacional de Composição Electroacústica Música Viva (Lisbon, Portugal, 2006, '09), 3rd Prize in the Diffusion Competition (Ireland, 2008), Public Prize in the Concurso Internacional de Composição Eletroacústica (CEMJKO, Brazil, 2007) and Honorary Mentions in the Centro Mexicano para la Música y las Artes Sonoras (CMMAS) competition (Morelia, Mexico, 2008) and in the Concurso Internacional de Música Eletroacústica de São Paulo (CIMESP '07, Brazil).

She is currently a lecturer in Music at Liverpool Hope University (England, UK).

James Andean: Between the Leaves (2012)

This piece began when an output error turned John Cage reciting a series of small stories into a dense tapestry of noise; fitting, perhaps, in this year of events marking the centenary of Cage's birth.

Adam Basanta: three myths of liberalism (2012)

Commissioned by Codes d'accès (Montréal, QC), with financial assistance from PRIM artist centre.

Despite the numerous political, socio-economical and technological changes that have taken place since the 19th century, classical liberal ideology still provides a foundation for our conception of modern life and our place within it.

I wanted to interrogate and complicate three interrelated aspects of this ideology – the relationship between the individual and the collective, the relation of work to monetary gain, and the search for individual self-fulfillment – through both a sonic and metaphoric lens. Each of the three aforementioned topics is explored sequentially throughout three intertwined movements.

While interrogating liberal ideology, the piece does not propose a simple diametrically opposite philosophy; rather, it aims to reveal the complex ambiguities of modern life and the inadequacies of singular ideological dogmas. In this sense, the piece suggests a multiplicity of interweaving narratives, which are revealed and re-structured through the listener's imaginative engagement.

Winner of John Weinzweig grand prize for best composition, as well 1st prize in the Hugh le Caine category, SOCAN Foundation Awards for Young Composers, July 2012, Ottawa, Canada.

Adam Basanta (b. 1985) is a multiple award-winning composer and media artist, whose work traverses electroacoustic, acoustic and mixed composition, audiovisual installations, interactive laptop performance, and innovative light design. His work often explores various modes of listening, cross-modal perception, the re-animation of quotidian objects, and the articulation of site and space.

His music has been described as “frantic, noisy and gutsy” (Words and Music), “an electrochemistry of the new and old” (Boston Musical Intelligencer), while “the richness and dynamism of colour in his pieces stirs questions” (Musicworks).

His concert works have been presented throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia and the UK, and have been awarded national and international prizes. In 2012, his work “Three myths of Liberalism” was awarded the John Weinzweig Grand Prize for best composition in the SOCAN Foundation Awards for Young Composers. His audiovisual installations have been presented in Canada, the USA, and Spain.

He holds a BFA from Simon Fraser University (Vancouver, BC), where he studied extensively with Barry Truax, and is currently completing an interdisciplinary MA at Concordia University (Montreal, QC), supervised by Sandeep Bhagwati and Chris Salter.

Peiman Khosravi: Convergences (2010)

On rare occasions I have found myself on dance floors of London’s Brick Lane bars, mesmerised by the spectromorphological detail of the often banal, regulated pulses – no doubt encouraged by the combination of alcohol and boredom! For me the most interesting parts are the short-lived transitory moments in-between tracks where one song seamlessly, and sometimes dramatically, converges with another. The tricks utilised by the DJ are instinctively familiar to an electroacoustic composer – e.g. the introduction of high frequency noise that functions as a kind of ‘spectral wiping’, the use of filters to reduce the track to higher frequency components (typically the high-hat) followed by the gradual introduction of the bass (textural ground) from another track (metrically synchronised of course). Also fascinating is the use of internal pulses within a more textural setting.

Despite my interest I remain a stranger to the club sound-world, always observing it from a distance. This dichotomy, the tearing between two worlds, becomes apparent by the end of the piece. There are internal pulses waiting to explode and chaotic

textures converging to move towards metric regulation, as if caused by a magnetic field.

I would like to thank Audrey Milheres (Flute) and Joe Browning (Shakuhachi) for allowing me to sample their instruments.

I am extremely grateful to Paul Davis and his team of developers for giving to the world the wonderful, free and open-source DAW, Ardour. This piece was entirely mixed in Ardour2.

Peiman Khosravi was born in 1982 in Iran, Tehran. After attending the Tehran music conservatoire where he continued his Violin training, and private composition classes with Alireza Mashayekhi, Peiman moved to the UK at the age of 15 where he is now working towards completing a PhD at City University London in electroacoustic music composition (supported by the AHRC) under the supervision of Prof. Denis Smalley.

In 2003 his piece Night-Streams received a prize in the Residency II category of the Bourges International Competition of Electroacoustic Music, which led to a three-week residency at IMEB. Since then Peiman's music has been internationally presented and recognised - in addition to radio broadcasts, performances include SPNM's The Sound Source: Electromania at the London ICA (2007), Bourges Synthèse festival (France 2005), Belfast's Sonorities festival, EMS2011 (NYC), ICMC2011 (Huddersfield) and Fylkingen (Stockholm 2011). In 2011 his work Convergences was nominated by the Grand Jury of the Destellos competition.

Peiman is currently lecturing on music technology and electroacoustic composition at the Royal Academy of Music (London).

Timothy Cooper: The Sound of the Letters, the Voice of the Page (2012)

“...thus it is that the writer of today is no longer scribe but wordsmith, an author whose verbal assemblies are committed to paper by way of mechanical processes that bypass the work of the hand. In typing and printing, the intimate link between manual

gesture and the inscriptive trace is broken. The author conveys feeling by his choice of words, not by the expressiveness of his lines.
”

[Timothy Ingold, Lines]

Reading this passage it struck me immediately that I wanted to reinvigorate the link between gesture and writing. From the outset there is a physicality in the sounds of writing in the piece.

The writer is exploring his past. He is listening to the sound his quills and pencils make: the immediate, physical noise of the quill scratching, the pencil sliding across the surface. He begins to write about other things, including sounds and memories from his past. These are sounds he knows well; but he attends to them in new and different ways. Some he visits so briefly that what he hears is almost an illusion. Other sounds he settles on, and takes time to explore: isolating and amplifying. Through these and other repercussions there is a shift in what we hear or sense as real: the separation between action and meaning tends to dissolve, letters gather to form words, and gradually the sound of the letters becomes the voice of the page.

Timothy Cooper (b. 1987) is a composer who has studied with Alistair MacDonald, Rory Boyle and Peter Meechan.

In 2010 he co-founded Edit-Point, a group dedicated to the performance of electroacoustic music. Since then they have presented several ambitious programmes featuring major works like George Crumb's *Black Angels*.

His compositions have been performed at various conferences and festivals including: The Australasian Computer Music Conference; Sound Sight Space and Play; Noisefloor; Plug and Sound.

He currently teaches Composition and Creative Music Technology at Stevenson College in Edinburgh.

Tim was generously supported in the pursuit of his Masters by a Dewar Arts Award, the EMI Sound Foundation via the RSAMD trust, the Ropner Trust and Ms Christian Duff.

Visa Kuoppala : Nocturnal Debris (2012)

My main concerns with *Nocturnal Debris* were atmosphere and pacing. I was attempting to create a subtle and sensitive rhythm that, combined with the materials and their development, creates a gentle, impressionistic mood. The piece strives to be inconspicuous and enigmatic, but with a sense of meaningfulness that leaves something lingering in the air after it's gone.

Visa Kuoppala is a Finnish composer and free-improviser living in London, UK. He is particularly active in the areas of electroacoustic music and electroacoustic improvisation, in which he is exploring the poetry and expressiveness achievable with subtle, enigmatic and inconspicuous handling of sound. At present he is working on a PhD in electroacoustic composition at the Music department of University of Birmingham under the supervision of Jonty Harrison, towards which he has received funding from the AHRC and the university. Previously he has studied at the Music Technology department of Sibelius Academy, Finland (2005-2012) and at the Music, Technology and Innovation department at De Montfort University, UK (2009-2010). Prior to Jonty Harrison, his composition supervisors have been John Young, Patrick Kosk, Andrew Bentley, Otto Romanowski and Tapio Nevanlinna. He has performed or his works have been performed in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, England, Northern Ireland, USA and China.

James Andean: Hyvät matkustajat (2012)

Hyvät matkustajat began life as a somewhat unambitious soundscape piece, of the 'sonic postcard from Finland' variety. This turned out to be only the first stop on its journey, however. Here, the original material is reworked and reinterpreted as material for sonic exploration and spectral transformations, with the external spaces of the original version taking a sharp turn inwards, to chart internal spectral landscapes instead. And, like the travellers of the title, it is likely that the work will continue on, before eventually reaching its final destination.

James Andean is a musician and sound artist. He is active as both a performer and a composer in a range of fields, including electroacoustic composition and performance, improvisation, sound installation, and sound recording. He is a founding member of improvisation and new music quartet Rank Ensemble, and one half of audiovisual performance art duo Plucié/DesAndes. He has performed throughout Europe and North America, and his works have been performed across Europe, North America and Asia. He is currently completing a doctorate in acousmatic composition at the Centre for Music & Technology of the Sibelius Academy, in Helsinki, Finland.

**Musiikkiteknologian aineryhmä
Centre for Music & Technology**

**ACOUSMATICA I:
Canada – Finland**

**James Andeanin jatkotutkintokonsertti
James Andean's Doctoral Concert**

**torstaina 20.10.2011 klo 19
Musiikkitalo, Black Box**

**Thursday, October 20th, 2011 at 7 pm
Helsinki Music Centre, Black Box**

Martin Bédard	Topographie de la noirceur (2005)
James Andean & Visa Kuoppala	Pimeydestä Valoon (2011)
Dominic Thibault	L'instant en vain (2008)
Visa Kuoppala	Outspread (2010)
Sami Järvinen & Sami Klemola (2004)	Kamppi Variations II - Balustrade
James Andean	Radiate (2011)

Väliaika/Intermission

James Andean	Medusan Torso (2011)
Adam Basanta (2010)	a glass is not a glass (mov I to VI)
Andrew Bentley	Carillon (1977)
Charles Quevillon	Frette (2009)
James Andean	Maledetta (2011)

Thanks to Taiteen keskustoiminta for their support.

For my first doctoral concert, I have chosen to present, together with several of my own pieces, works by current Canadian and Finnish composers. Since for my final Master's concert I had the opportunity to present diffusions of a number of classic Canadian acousmatic works by established and eminent composers, for this concert I chose instead to present recent works by the younger generation of Canadian acousmaticians, who are doing exceptional and exciting work in the genre.

Together with these, I have selected several recent works by young Finnish composers, as well as a classic work by Andrew Bentley. Concerts such as this one, as well as the Finnish works presented here, and indeed Finnish electroacoustic culture generally over the last several decades, have only been possible thanks to Andrew's efforts as a teacher, promoter, performer, and concert producer in Finland for the last 35 years. It is thus appropriate, perhaps, to include here the first of his works to have been created in Finland, 34 years ago.

While my doctoral research – exploring the relationships between the musical and narrative aspects of acousmatic music – has of course helped to shape both my own compositions presented here, as well as the programme in general, I think it is perhaps unnecessary to labour this point here. Rather, I hope that these works will stand firmly on their own, without any additional pontification on my part.

I hope you will enjoy the concert!

James Andean

P.S. Please join us also on Saturday night, October 22nd, at 19:00, again in the Black Box of the Helsinki Music Centre, for a second concert of acousmatic works, this time from Mexico, Colombia, and Finland, hosted by Alejandro Olarte and Alejandro Montes de Oca Torres.

Martin Bédard: Topographie de la noirceur (2005)

"Inspired by the main character of Alexander Zinoviev's *Notes of the Nightwatchman*, I imagined myself as the nightwatchman in an unreal round in the heart of darkness, where, guided by a dark light and the echo of his footsteps, all is lived from the inside in each of these transfigured places."

Martin Bédard graduated in instrumental composition from the University of Laval (Québec, Canada). Following a five-year course with composers Yves Daoust and André Fecteau, he graduated with high distinction from the Conservatory of Music of Montreal in electroacoustic composition. He is currently completing a PhD in electroacoustic composition at the University of Montreal with the composer Robert Normandeau.

Bédard's works have been presented in more than 50 national and international events and festivals. He is the winner or finalist of eleven international competitions, including an "Award of distinctions" at the 2010 Ars Electronica competition, and first prize for his piece "Fields of excavations (Excavations)" at Computer Space in 2010 in Bulgaria and the latest edition of the International Electroacoustic Music Contest 2009 in Brazil.

Bédard is a founding member and artistic director of the group Point d'écoute, and a member of the artistic committee of RÉSEAUX. He teaches aural perception, composition and analysis of electroacoustic music at the Music Conservatory of Montreal, and electroacoustic composition at the University of Montreal.

James Andean & Visa Kuoppala: Pimeydestä Valoon (2011)

Pimeydestä Valoon was composed to represent the Music Technology department of the Sibelius Academy at the Fall 2011 opening celebrations of the new Helsinki Music Centre. Part of a larger program of Academy musicians and composers, the work was designed to flow out of the piece before it and into the piece that followed. Thus, it takes the final note of the preceding piano

performance as its starting point, and builds towards material from the instrumentalists of jazz trio Herd, which followed directly from *Pimeydestä Valoon*. It was difficult to resist the temptation to present the work here, standing on its own, in a less heterogeneous context.

Dominic Thibault: L'instant en vain (2008)

"Time is dust. A handful of sand that runs out of my grip. That grain that falls is already part of our memory. The present moment instantly becoming past. Why are we obsessed with time?"

L'instant en vain was composed between January and April 2008 in Dominic Thibault's personal studio.

Mostly known for his work in the field of acousmatic music, **Dominic Thibault** likes to explore a musical world without any stylistic border. His growing interest in mixed music and multimedia inspires him to develop projects close to electronic music, pop culture and the collective imagination. Recently, he has been composing music for Daniel Danis theatre. His work as a programmer contributed to the newest version of Cecilia, a graphical interface for sound generation and processing. Being a founding member of the collective Point d'écoute, Dominic is actively organizing electroacoustic music concerts.

After studying jazz guitar in college, Dominic Thibault completed Bachelor's and Master's degrees in composition (University of Montreal) under the supervision of Jean Piché and Robert Normandeau. He recently moved to Huddersfield (UK) in order to undertake a Ph.D. with Pierre Alexandre Tremblay, researching the tailoring process required for an electroacoustic music to exist both in a live context and on fixed media.

Thibault's works have been played internationally. His development has been supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Fonds de recherche sur la société et la culture du Québec (FQRSC) the Canada Council for the Arts (CAC) and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ). His piece *Nuit noire, Nuit grise* was the winning entry in both the V Concurso Internacional De Miniaturas

Electroacústicas competition organized by the Cultural Ministry of Andalusia and JTTP 2007 (*Jeu de Temps / Time Play*) organized by the Canadian Electroacoustic Community. He was recently awarded the Smalley Scholarship in Sonic Arts, allowing him to realize his Ph.D.

www.dominic-thibault.com

Visa Kuoppala: Outspread (2010)

Outspread sets out to explore two continuums during its course: the continuum from pitch to noise and the reality-abstraction – continuum. In the piece pitch is a subset of timbre and pitched material is used simply as one timbre among others – by making the chords static, discourse based on pitches or harmonies is not formed, but the pitches serve as a timbral counterweight to sharper granular material. The reality-abstraction –continuum is explored by juxtaposing and mediating between situations of different apparent realism. The material evolves from immersive real situations to entirely abstract sound masses and vice versa, with wave-like swells frequently acting as catalysts. However, more than a technical discourse, the piece attempts to provide an impressionistic voyage.

Visa Kuoppala is a Finnish composer of electroacoustic music. One foot in academia, another in non-academic avant-garde, he is particularly interested in acousmatic music, free improvisation, sound installations and sound design. He is currently a postgraduate student at the Music department of University of Birmingham, studying under Jonty Harrison. He has graduated from the Music Technology department of Sibelius Academy, Finland and has studied composition under John Young, Patrick Kosk, Andrew Bentley, Otto Romanowski and Tapio Nevanlinna.

Sami Järvinen & Sami Klemola: Kamppi Variations II - Balustrade (2004)

Kamppi Variations takes as its starting point the construction site of what would eventually become the Kamppi shopping centre,

exploring the musical potential of the construction soundscape to create a tape piece in four movements. The work creates a counterpoint between the original recordings from the site, and their electronically manipulated doppelgangers.

Sami Järvinen was born in 1977. He studied at the Sibelius Academy, and is a sound engineer and sound designer.

Helsinki-based composer **Sami Klemola** studied composition and electronic music at the Sibelius Academy, the Amsterdam Conservatory, and IRCAM in Paris. Klemola's output includes orchestral music, chamber music, solo works, sound installations and electroacoustic works. He is active as improviser with acoustic and electronic media, and also works as coordinator of the Finnish electroacoustic group *defunensemble*.

James Andean: Radiate (2011)

Radiate is composed from a single recording of a leaky radiator. The original material is stripped down to only a few bare partials, forming a simple melody, which builds towards a counterpoint of increasing complexity as more and more partials are added, eventually building up from melodic units back towards the original soundworld of the radiator. The listener is thus taken 'inside' the radiator's soundscape, both through this excavation and exploration of its pitch universe, and more literally, through the spatialisation of the resulting material, which places the audience at the centre of this evolving soundworld.

James Andean: Medusan Torso (2011)

Medusan Torso is based on my work on the audiovisual installation "Re:****Sitruuna ja meduusa", an ongoing collaboration with visual artist Merja Nieminen, which first appeared at Galleria Aarni in February 2010. *Torso* is composed entirely from the sound material from the original installation; but where this material was

deconstructed for the installation, then re-composed in real-time by the governing software, here it has been shaped and fixed to a timeline, allowing for a very different exploration of these same materials, and offering very different results.

Adam Basanta: a glass is not a glass (mov I to VI) (2010)

“a glass is a glass is a glass” – adapted from Gertrude Stein

“Ceci n'est pas une verre” – adapted from René Magritte

The sound of a common wine glass encapsulates both its banal everyday use as well as the inherent musicality of everyday objects. This ordinary sound, excited by various means, is treated with a metaphoric sonic magnifying lens, highlighting its various characteristics: attack and resonance, harmonicity and inharmonicity, rhythm and texture.

The untreated sound functions as both departure and arrival points, allowing elastic musical elaborations between each concrète bookend. This interplay, between the recognizable quotidian sound and its more abstract modulations, acts as the main developmental motif in the piece, and is explored through various intertwined movements.

This concert version contains movements I to VI out of the eleven movements which comprise the full piece.

a glass is not a glass (mov I to VI) was awarded 1st prize in the student category of Musiques et Recherche's Metamorphoses 2010 competition (Ohain, Belgium).

Adam Basanta is a composer and media artist living in Montréal. He holds a BFA in composition from Simon Fraser University (Vancouver), and is currently an MA candidate at Concordia University, supervised by Sandeep Bhagwati and Chris Salter.

His work transverses electroacoustic, acoustic and mixed composition, light and sound installations, and interactive laptop performance. He is particularly invested in issues related to

perception, unorthodox performance practices, and the use of compositional forms in the articulation of space and site.

Adam's work has been presented at concerts, conferences and festivals throughout North and South America, Europe, Asia and the UK. His compositions have been awarded national (SOCAN Foundation Awards for Young Composers 2008, 2010, 2011; Jeu de Temps 2010) and international prizes (Metamorphoses Acousmatic Biennale 2010, Belgium; VII International Contest of Electroacoustic Miniatures 2009, Spain; Musica Viva 2010, Portugal).

He has previously collaborated with choreographers Henry Daniel (Vancouver), Troika Ranch (NY/Berlin), and Kinesis Dance (Vancouver) as a composer, sound and interaction designer. His recent audiovisual installations have been presented at Eastern Bloc (Montréal) and the Vancouver New Music Festival (Vancouver).

Andrew Bentley: Carillon (1977)

"*Carillon* (1977) was the first piece of mine to be made in Finland, after arriving from the UK in August 1976, and after first having to build a studio here in which to work. It was composed primarily using material brought from the York University studio, as well as some bells from the Yle archive. The name of the piece refers to a church instrument comprising a set of bells operated from a keyboard. I was fascinated by the possibility of "interfering" with a sound which is normally fixed and immutable, overcoming its utilitarian aspects and making it more virtuosic and ornamental through the use of technology. The bells are transformed at the beginning of the piece by the Springer machine (Tempophon) and layered with delays. Other sounds are synthesized with the EMS VCS3 Putney, using amplitude modulation amongst other techniques. I think I might also have used a Walsh function sequencer for some of the repetitive patterns. Some distortion is used in the synthesis to bring attack noise close to the sound of the bell attacks. I was already deeply into my foray into tape music at the time I made this piece, but it nevertheless suffers from several technical and formal limitations, some of which were my fault and some just the

limitations of the era and having a rather primitive studio to work in. It received an honorable mention in the Russolo competition in 1979, and was programmed by François Bayle, together with Bowling, in the Cycle Acousmatique concert series in 1980."

Andrew Bentley (b. 1952, Fleetwood, UK) studied at York University 1970-76, completing a doctorate in music in 1981. He has taught electroacoustic music and music technology for 35 years at universities in Finland and England and participated in developing studios at Finnish Radio, Helsinki University and the Sibelius Academy. He was a founder director of the Composers Desktop Project in York 1985 and was involved in establishing the first degree programme in pop music in the UK. He is currently teacher at the Centre for Music & Technology of the Sibelius Academy. He performs electroacoustic music with many well known Finnish musicians and electroacoustic performance art as a duo called Son Panic with Juhani Liimatainen.

Charles Quevillon: Frette (2009)

It is by falling sick that my body forced me to take a break from braving the slopes and winter storms every day on my bike. I tried to make this experience musical. There are two levels to the piece. First, the play of attacks and resonances inspired by my acupuncture sessions. The attacks sting violently and surprise the body, while the resonances express the prolonged thin, sharp pain. Secondly, the physical effort and winded body are symbolised by the enormous mass of plowed ice and breath sounds.

Charles Quevillon completed his studies in classical guitar and composition at Cégep de St-Laurent in 2008. Since then, he has concentrated on electroacoustic and instrumental composition under the guidance of Yves Daoust and Serge Provost at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal. He participated twice in the Sound Creation Program of the Orford Arts Centre to perfect his work with masters such as Gilles Gobeil, Natasha Barrett, Jean-François Laporte, Lori Freedman, Hans Tutschku and Véronique Lacroix.

In addition to his interest in the sonic exploration of the guitar through different mediums such as improvisation and performance, he has also worked in multiple projects in collaboration with directors and choreographers. He recently took part in the creation of a new stringed instrument (called Cluster #70) that he ordered from Thierry André, a luthier from Montreal. This instrument features in the three compositions he did for Tedd Robinson's choreographies, including *Sticks*, nominated at the Dora Awards 2011 in the Outstanding Sound Design/Composition category.

His work *Frette* appears on the Cache 2009 compilation, and was presented in France the same year. In 2010, he won the first prize of the *Jeux de Temps/Time's Play* (JTTP) Competition, organized by the Canadian Electroacoustic Community (CEC), as well as the third prize (Hugh-Le Caine) of the SOCAN Foundation with his piece *Au Boute*. Thanks to these prizes, this same work was broadcast on radio numerous times, and presented in Mexico in May 2011.

James Andean: Maledetta (2011)

This piece is composed from material prepared for a contemporary reimagining of Cherubini's opera *Medea*, in collaboration with Panos Balomenos and Gaile Gričiute, which was presented at the Helsinki Design Museum in August, 2011 as part of the Helsinki Night of the Arts. This performance staged a selection of the opera in a version for three vocalists, piano, and electronics. *Maledetta* takes as its starting point material prepared for the electronics part for this performance.

James Andean is a musician and sound artist. He is active as both a performer and a composer in a range of fields, including electroacoustic composition and performance, improvisation, sound installation, and sound recording. He is a founding member of improvisation and new music quartet The Rank Ensemble and of the sound collective Resonator Helsinki, and one half of the audiovisual performance art duo Plucié/DesAndes. He has performed in Finland, Sweden, Russia, Germany, Italy and Canada, and his works have been performed in Finland, Norway, Russia, Portugal, Canada and China.

He teaches Sound Production at the North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, and is completing a doctorate at the Centre for Music & Technology of the Sibelius Academy, in Helsinki, Finland.