

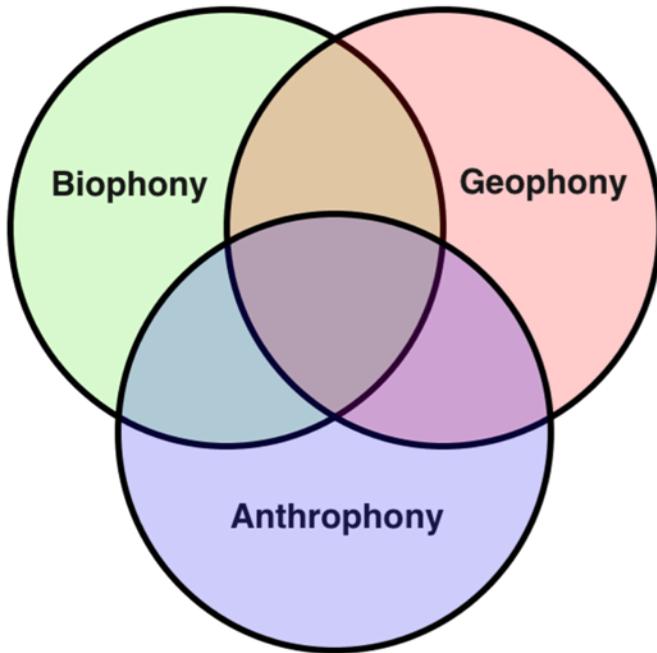
University of Brighton Digital Music and Sound Art MA
AGM95: Final Project Documentation
Module Leader: Holger Zschenderlein
Contributing Tutor: Dr Stephen Mallinder; Dr Kersten
Assessors: Holger Zschenderlein, Dr Stephen Mallinder

Title: *Integrated Soundscapes: Brighton*
Author: Chris Sciacca
July 3rd 2021



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

PREFACE OF DIAGRAM AND QUOTATION:	pp. 3-5
WORK SYNOPSIS:	p. 6
ARTIST STATEMENT:	pp. 7-10
TRACK LISTING AND ARTIST NOTES:	
1. South Downs vs. Seafront Tunnel (Vertical Soundscape)	pp. 11-27
2. Kemptown vs. Church (Covid 19 response)	pp. 28-42
3. Saint Bartholemew's Church Interior/exterior	pp. 43-54
4. Peace Park vs. Pavilion Park	pp.55-76
(Music or Noise / Noise or Music)	
5. A27 vs. Patcham Woodlands (Traffic x2)	pp. 77-98
6. A27 + High and Over Dawn Chorus Integration	pp. 99-113
7. Queens Park Day / Night Part I	pp. 114-147
8. Queens Park Day / Night Part II	pp. 148-150
DEDICATIONS and THANKS:	p. 150



Diagrammatic representation of the soundscape as described by Bernie Krause and Stuart Gage, "comprised of three basic active acoustic sources: biophony, geophony, and anthrophony. These sources are sometimes independent of one another while at other times intrinsically related in various combinations."

Source* B. Krause, Journal of Audio Engineering Soc., Vol. 56, No. 1/2, 2008
January/February

“The desire to transform the world is not uncommon, and there are a number of ways of fulfilling it. One of these is by adopting a certain subjectivity, aggressive or passive, deliberately sought or simply the result of a mood, which alters the experience of the world, and so transforms it.”

-Patrick Keilor

“In Benjamin’s thinking, when space is perceived dialectically it is no longer experienced as a single material point, but as one possibility within a constellation of historical and social options. In this way, the entrance to an arcade could be understood as an architectural structure, the threshold of a dream space...”

-Hannah Arendt

Benjamin, Walter (2007) ‘Theses on the philosophy of history’, in *Illuminations: Essays and reflections*, ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zohn, New York: Schocken Books.

WORK SYNOPSIS:

Integrated Soundscapes: Brighton (2021) is a series of location recordings, highlighting pairs of opposites that exist in the sound environment. The work is inspired by Walter Benjamin's enigmatic concept: the dialectical image, as described in *The Arcades Project* manuscripts (1934). Through the juxtaposition, montage and superimposition of the sound sources, the variations embody a surrealistic perspective of space and place. Additionally, each composition consists of combining multiple points of audition between two or more locations, creating a multivalent image of place in simultaneity. Each piece centers around one or more preconceived oppositional tensions determined by the artist. Examples include temporal categorizations such as day vs. night, conceptual oppositions such as noise vs. music, or in more metaphorical ways, a polarized human response to the Covid 19 pandemic. Within each soundscape additional tensions may be explored within the physicality and spatialization of the sounds themselves. Resulting relationships become inextricably linked into an inseparable whole. These imagined landscapes of sound form a dream image interpretation of the world manifested through the raw materiality of sound. Akin to the art critic John Berger's analysis of landscape as a way of seeing, *Integrated Soundscapes: Brighton* presents soundscape beyond its mechanical representation into a way of hearing.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

My current work involves expanding the practice of location recording into a new expression of “the soundscape” concept. A prior work, *Twin Transects: Parallel Walks in Newhaven and Dieppe* (2016), featured a linear, narrative approach to elucidating space and place through sound. *Integrated Soundscapes: Brighton* seeks a more experimental approach to documenting place through sound. The soundscapes primarily employ a surrealist, montage style that integrate two locations simultaneously while keeping in mind Bernie Krause’s description of biophony, geophony, and anthrophony as encompassing the field of environmental sound. Within these spheres, existing tensions between the categories of sound are highlighted and explored, often creating juxtapositions of sound sources within the natural environment. When the eight pieces are viewed as a whole, a synthesis of the geographic region of Brighton (East Sussex) begins to form. While the pieces adhere to an “observational documentary” style, there is a larger thread of subjectivity that pervades the work. Less of a “journey” through location, the soundscapes can be considered images or ways of hearing – specifically images that evoke an auditory dream state. The multiple audition points, perspectives, spaces and locations can be thought of as a constellation of sounds throughout Brighton that may define it in non-traditional ways. This method is far from new amongst art practitioners, though perhaps it has been less explored in the soundscape concept. In Tom Overton’s preface to *Landscapes: John Berger on Art* he points out a method Berger was previously working out in his groundbreaking TV series *Ways of Seeing*.

“Berger was again trying to live up to what he identified in ‘The Moment of Cubism’: a ‘new scientific view of nature which rejected simple causality and the single permanent all-seeing viewpoint’. This struck him as an encouragement to greater self-reflexivity...”¹

¹ J. Berger, T. Overton, *Landscapes: John Berger on Art*, London, Verso 2016 p. viii- ix

Integrated Soundscapes follows a similar goal in that it expands from previous methods of a strict or “pure” location recordings, into sensory ethnography that aims for transparent *subjectivity* within the work. This method has been the hallmark of documentary filmmakers such as Jean Rouch, David MacDougall, or Trinh T. Minh-ha. There are several moments of *Integrated Soundscapes: Brighton* where I have left microphone handling noise in as a reminder of my *hand* being involved in the work, or to support the fact that recordings are not “real” but mediated reality. For instance, wind interference was deliberately left in on track 4. Peace Park vs. Pavilion Park (Music or Noise / Noise or Music). Briefly, my own voice can be heard at times during interviews as well as other markers of my presence.

Apart from any visual interpretation, these landscapes of sound, or *soundscapes* can be taken in an equivalent manner as *ways of hearing*. Each soundscape is a montaged portrait of two realities in various degrees of oppositional tension. The soundscapes play on a juxtaposition of these opposites as defined the artist. More than one pair of opposites may be found within one work. For instance, the Queens Park soundscapes compare recordings during the day and night, as the recordings were taken close to noon and midnight. The sonic relationships may also be interpreted as loud and quiet, active and subdued, dense vs. spacious. Other work such as *Saint Bartholemew’s Church Interior/exterior* lend themselves to more metaphorical oppositions and seek to convey the artist’s psychological state. According to documentary filmmaker and author Patrick Keilor, this is essence of the *flaneur*.² Of the flaneur, Keilor expounds:

“There are different aspects to this: the literature of the wandering daydreamer, whom I perhaps inaccurately term the *flaneur*, the visual arts tradition of reinterpretation of everyday objects and landscapes, which might be termed

² As defined on the Tate Modern’s website: (Flâneur is a French term meaning ‘stroller’ or ‘loafer’ used by nineteenth-century French poet Charles Baudelaire to identify an observer of modern urban life) <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/flaneur>

Surrealist realism, though it has more to do with photography as a way of seeing than any particular mode of thought; and a way of depicting places in literature and film where they are inextricably bound up with the state of mind of the characters who inhabit or observe them.”³

Taking influence from Keilor’s exemplary docufictional masterpiece *London*, I have subscribed to everything expressed by the above sentiment, however my practice attempts to fulfill this using only sound in isolation. I have long abandoned visual accompaniment and believe that the mind is an additional canvas capable of forming mental images, individual to the person experiencing them, and derived from sound as sensory *information*.

The accompanying academic research tied to this project examines the use of sonic ethnography to examine the concept of “the soundscape” as popularized by R Murray Shafer in the late 1960’s. Since the mediated output of technology does not presuppose any claim to truth or reality, the in-situ recordings of *Integrated Soundscapes: Brighton* emphasize a more subjective interpretation of place akin to experimental documentary form. The nature of oppositional tension takes inspiration from the work of visual anthropologist Ben Russell. In *Good Luck* (2017) The sound recorded in both subjects (Suriname and Serbia), express two antipodal soundscapes contextually and acoustically.

In conclusion, *Integrated Soundscapes: Brighton* when taken as a whole, attempts to present a unique picture of space/place and region. Stereo sound is an image as much as it exists in the more established practice of photography. It is this image principle which allows the evocative, visceral elements of sound as physical material and sensory information to bring new perspectives and relationships; to “picture” place in the mind of all who chose to engage with it. In this way we may be more cognizant of the spheres of sound defined by Krause and Gage that are always

³ J. Berger, T. Overton, *Landscapes: John Berger on Art*, London, Verso 2016 p. 11

present in the soundscape, calling us to stop and listen and invite us into a way of hearing.

Track Listing and Artist Notes:

1. **South Downs vs Seafront Tunnel (The Vertical Soundscape)** 6:56

Resolution/Sample Rate: 24 bit/48k

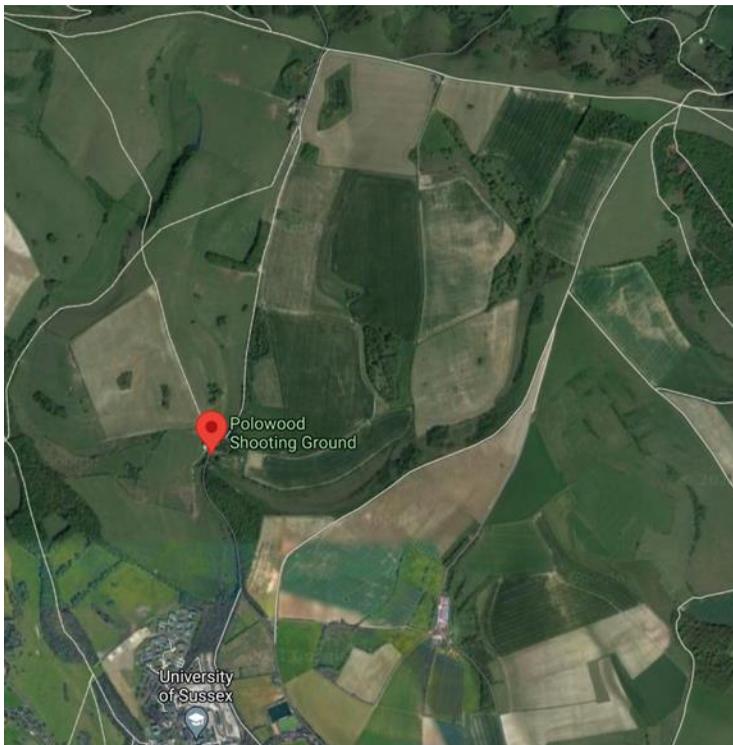
Microphone: Sennheiser AMBEO Smart Headset, Sennheiser MKE 600 Shotgun

Microphone, DPA 4661 Heavy Duty Omnidirectional Lav Mics.

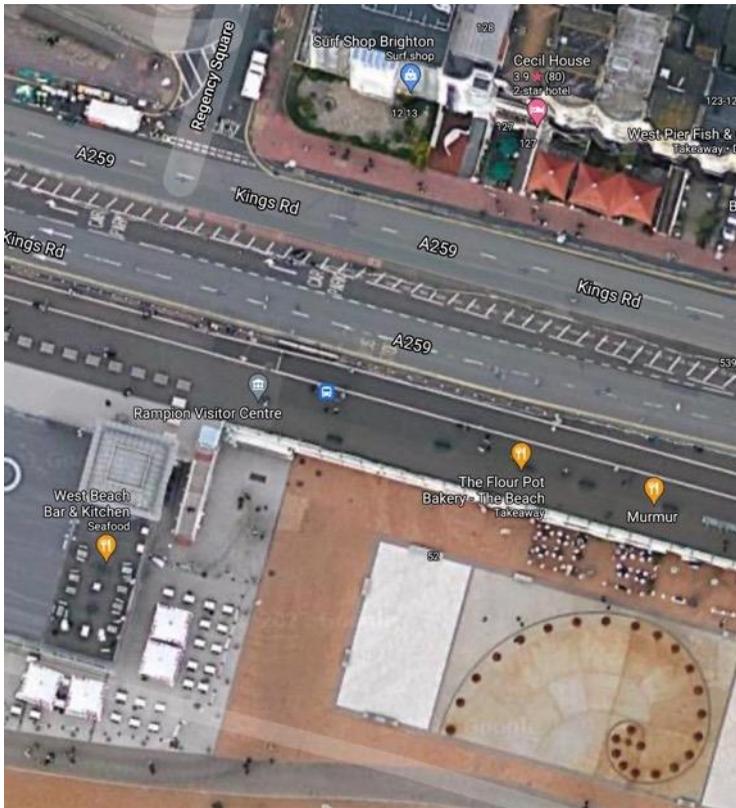
Sound Source Location: South Downs National Park / Regency Square: Tunnel and Beachfront

Keynotes: South Downs National Park sounds consists of sheep enclosure with water trough, geese, cows chewing grass, Spitfire plane performing aerial stunts, starlings in fields, clay pigeon shooters (Polowood Shooting Ground).

Regency Square: Tunnel and Beachfront consists of a restaurant music soundtrack (CeCe Peniston, *Finally*) skateboarders pulling tricks, passing traffic from A259 filtered through the tunnel, a crushed beer can, high heeled plus soft soled footsteps.



South Downs National Park Soundscape Map



Regency Park Tunnel Soundscape map

Artists Notes:

There are several pairs of opposites explored throughout this soundscape based on the sources of sound in their respective locations. Interestingly, one can think of this soundscape as containing a vertical dimension since it features the sounds of the open sky soundscape of the Downs and the semi-enclosed, “underground” space of the foot tunnel connecting Regency Square with the beachfront. Shotgun shots ring out, reverberating across the airy landscape of the Downs from the Polowood

Shooting Ground. They are juxtaposed with the earthbound (though briefly gravity-defying) skater's skateboards slamming on a paved surface along the beachfront. Not only are these two staccato sounds juxtaposed, but their resultant reverbs are contrasted as well. Several feet inside the tunnel yielded different levels of reverb coming from the percussive sounds of the skateboards hitting the concrete. Getting low to the ground and trying various mic placements close to stone walls were tactics used to enhance the tail and nature of the sound. At the end of the recording, the tunnel reverb from skateboards on the concrete plaza is integrated with the echo of shotgun blasts. The footsteps may also symbolize another form of earthbound transportation compared with the miraculous, lofty gift of flight suggested by the airplane.

In other relationships, airborne geese (who can be heard landing in water as well) are recorded along with ground grazing cows, delicately ripping up fresh green shoots of grass (if one listens carefully, the "squeak" of the grass being pulled up from its roots can be heard) under slightly menacing shotgun blasts. The feeding of the cows or the earlier bleat of lambs might suggest their fate as food animals, though the gun enthusiasts are merely shooting fake clay pigeons. These domesticated "penned in" animals are also juxtaposed with the colonies of ground nesting skylarks who live freely and openly on the pastures. The Spitfire plane, reminiscent of times of war is juxtaposed with the frivolous commerciality of pop music aimed to entice the carefree tourists into spending their money. Certainly, we have been enjoying afforded leisure time through the sacrifice of men and women during times of large-scale tragedy and violence.

A far more integrated example of multiple perspectives and locations, South Down vs Seafront Tunnel (The Vertical Soundscape) embodies a surrealistic, otherworldly dimension, one that unifies portions of the sound spheres into uniquely integrated combinations.







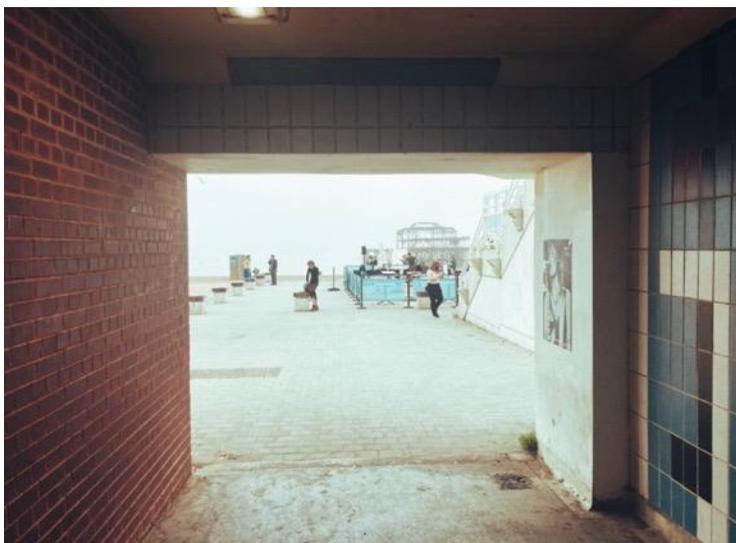




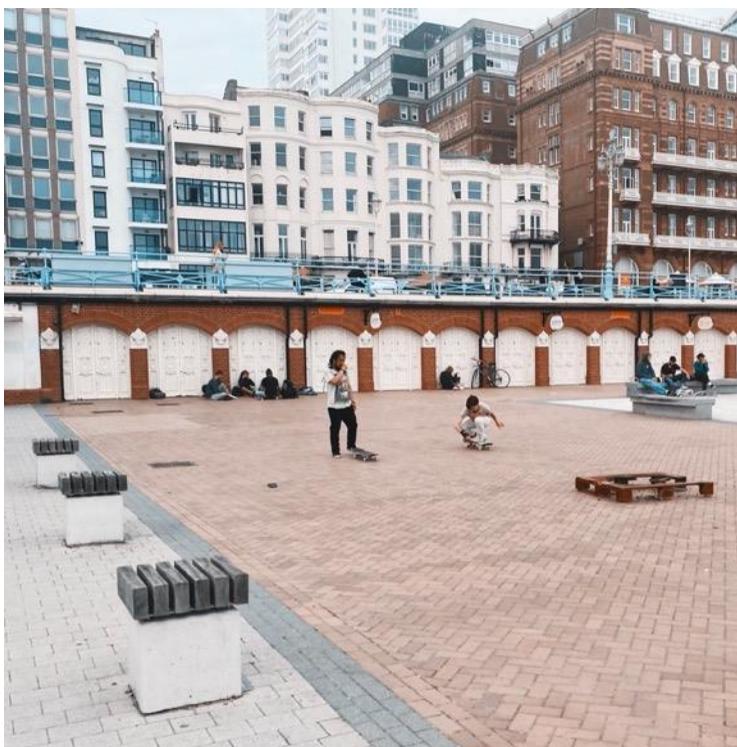
Regency Park foot tunnel and beachfront





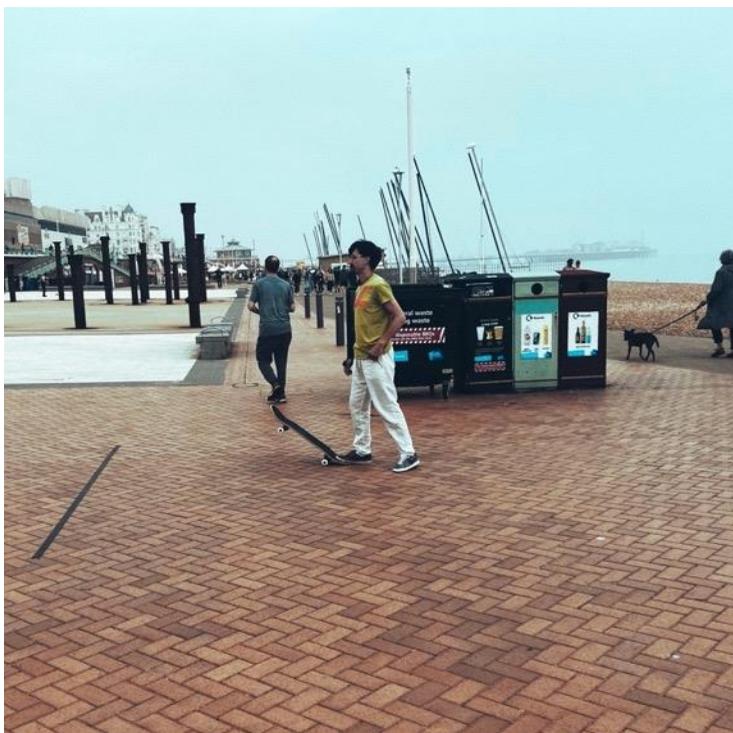












2. Kemptown vs. Church (Covid 19 response)

Resolution/Sample Rate : 24 bit/48k

Microphone: Sennheiser AMBEO Smart Headset, Sennheiser MKE 600 Shotgun

Microphone, DPA 4661 Heavy Duty Omnidirectional Lavaliers

Sound Source Location: St. James Street, Kemptown. Saint Bartholomew's Church, Brighton

Keynotes: Coop Supermarket Kiosk, Brighton and Hove Buses, cars, self-propelled scooter, young drunken pub patrons.

Interior church bells, liturgy readings/homily, pipe organ and vocals, elderly church patron conversation, paper shuffling, chair creaking, breathing, coughing.



Kemptown, Brighton Map



Saint Bartholomew's Church Map

Artist's Notes:

Humans are undeniably social creatures. There is no doubt the Covid 19 Pandemic has had a massive effect on people's ability to cope with various forms of isolation, especially during long periods of lockdown. Everyone handles this stress in different ways. When restrictions eased up, and physical gatherings were permitted up to a point, there was an immediate reaction in my neighborhood of Kemptown, Brighton. During the first week of outdoor permissions at pubs it seemed as though the collective lot popped the cork off a bottle of cheap Prosecco with their bare teeth... not the best situation but vaulted to a level of inflated quality and celebratory stature. The level of celebration, and I use this term far too graciously, could easily be understood due to the nature of the situation. But as anyone who has lived

toward the lower end of Kemptown can attest, reasons for drunken, raucous binges need no excuse. They usually end in a chaotic, cacophony, with lovely pub patrons pouring into the streets like spilled cans of Strongbow, always the ever-present threat of police involvement. Amplify this and you have the setting for my decision to take up my microphones and point them in the direction of said masses. Unfortunately, the Sennheiser AMBEO headset, while completely safe for the covert intentions of capturing people's souls into 1's and 0's for nefarious purposes, cannot always be used since they are far too susceptible to wind interference (I am currently at work on custom windscreens). It is a very strange thing to me (I am knowingly biased) that street photography is way more accepted than sound recording... case in point: flash-less photos at Museums may be permitted but sound recorders will get you quickly escorted from the premises. I sometimes struggle to understand the real reason, if it is indeed a question of personal privacy (do any of us even have that in public space at this point?). In my opinion sound recordings are way less personal and identifiable for all but the maniacally paranoid (note the point in the recording where a surly gentleman who stood at 6 ft 5 in can be heard asking me "what the fuck is that?". He did not seem too thrilled, was notably menacing). What we risk for art... I guess it makes sense, given the fact that recording devices, let alone sound, are not a familiar part of the culture in the sense that cameras or visual media is. Luckily for me the AMBEO headset plugs into an iPhone, the most inconspicuous and ubiquitous of accoutrements. Still there is at some point a grappling with the ethical ramifications of taking slice of life recordings and turning them into a possessive form of "art".

Back to recording: Attempts to fashion homemade windscreens on the headset microphones were not the most effective. However, I did perch myself around the corner of St James and Dorset Gardens with my omnidirectional DPA's in a classic A/B setup, (spaced roughly 60-70 centimeters apart along a straight line) where roving bands of drunks poured out from the bars, heading unwarily past me, deeper into the night, like an unholy exodus. This certainly sufficed for some low dynamic bedrock recordings; however, it wasn't long before I needed to get right up in the

thick of it. The reactions were varied and thanks to alcohol's oblivion-inducing effects, I could get up close to capture all the outpourings and exorcisms. Here is where I would like to point out that it is by majority the younger generations that expel this pent-up energy, both demons and angels who simply want to let off some steam or drop the halo. I do not pass judgment, only in the fact that I am too far beyond these days to even have it *look* like a desirable thing. I do understand it, having lived it. It is an *outward* pouring of psyche, self-sequestered and often repressed. Alcohol can be an easily accessible crutch for expression. It can also be at the root of any number of "sinful" actions, whether violent, vampish, or obscene. It's often not a quiet affair, which is why I wanted to juxtapose this "collective" of individuals, the community of youthful Kemptown, with another community that represents its polarity.

The same concerns (or conscience) that plagued me recording on the Kemptown streets gave me trouble when recording a Sunday Mass at Saint Bartholomew's Church, though wind interference was not one of them. Anyone who claims to be a documentarian or ethnographer must engage with issues of ethics, reflexivity and outsider perspectives. There is something about a sacred space that gave me serious pause as to whether I could even allow myself to do this. There is an obvious solution for this, and that is acquiring official permission. Though I did talk to one of the ushers of the Church, it was a split decision to go ahead with it and ask later. While I am no longer a regular churchgoer, I am not unfamiliar with the ritual of the mass. Out of respect for any culture and its mythos, recording surreptitiously did feel like a transgression. I also turned off the recording during the sacred moments of the mass: i.e. the transubstantiation. I was continually uncomfortable, highly self-conscious and anxious during the entire service. Despite this, I am someone who feels that the nature of sound is inherently "spiritual" for lack of a better word, in the sense that its "divinity" would have been easily understood from the beginning of human existence and by no means does the Church claim the rights to it. I can imagine the early rituals, deep within the womb of natural caverns, reverberating sound... perhaps the earliest form of "church" - prayers or songs carried out from

the human voice, resonated and reflected by mysterious physics. Perhaps this is just a rationalization to allow me to shed any guilt for capturing it and sharing it. What is the harm of paying homage to this?

The real issue to me was to make sure that this composition did not come across as cynical, or worse, a mockery of religion. It could have been very easy to milk it for comedic effect. If anything, I think I have sided with the elderly souls who gather for quiet inward reflection and a sense of community. I am far from a saint and have been known to join in with the bacchanalian masses from time to time. What I am sure of is that I was surprisingly transformed by the function of the mass to the point where soon after I found myself soon after, wandering the aisles of the local supermarket wondering at the multitude of strangers faces in passing. Did they not have any idea what had just transpired, or what is freely offered up to them every Sunday? - a potential chance for reinvention, rejuvenation and a clean, renewed look and listen at the world.

The point that could not be captured in sound occurred when the congregation had left, the rows emptied as the service ended. I took it as an opportunity to linger and gravitate toward the center aisle. Here I listened to the closing majestic hymn from the pipe organ. It had been raining all day and as if the almighty had timed it themselves, a break in the clouds came, pouring light into the massive circular stain glass window directly behind the pipe organ right at the crescendo of the closing note. My jaw dropped in awe, and I looked around and realized I was the only one who witnessed it. Afterward it gave me joy to thank the organ player and vocalist. Having left the recorder on, it is these moments that never get used in any composition that I enjoy and value.

To conclude, I have not discussed much about the technical aspects of the composition, how there is a purposeful separation between the two camps on the left and right channels... how sometimes the crowds of people drown out the message of the homily, how the quick montages create a surreal picture of the pairs

of opposites that emerge. As I see it many examples could be drawn such as inner and outer consciousness, debauchery vs. solemnity, youth and old age, commercialism vs. altruism, sinners vs. saints, vernacular speech vs holy speech, day-life vs nightlife, loud vs quiet. There are perhaps more I may not even be aware of. Hopefully this work is worthy of multiple listens that reveal a newness each time, not unlike the purpose of going to a service each week, in hopes something will be revealed, something projected outside of ourselves that we take with us and quietly internalize.

St. James Street, Kemptown



















PARISH CHURCH OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW
DIOCESE OF CHICHESTER

SUNDAY

FAMILY MASS 9.30 am
SOLEMN HIGH MASS 11.00 am

MONDAY - FRIDAY

MASS 12.15 pm
SCHOOL MASS THURS 9.10 am (in term time)

SATURDAY

9.30 am MASS

VICAR FR. [redacted]
PARISH OFFICE 620491 www.stbartholomewsbrighton.org.uk



Facebook icon and text: [redacted]

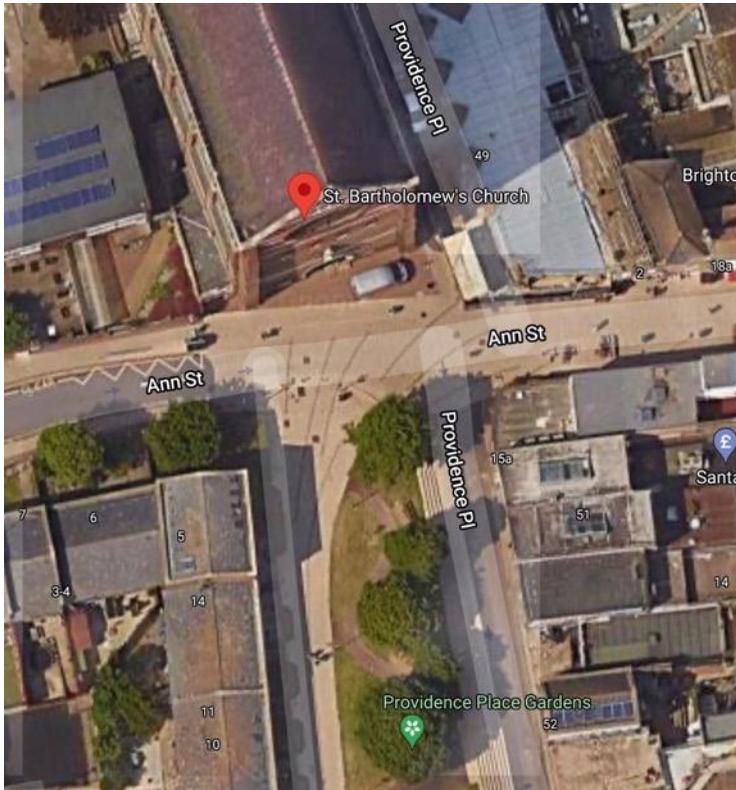
SUNDAY MASS
10.30am
Wednesday Mass
Monday & 3.30pm
Tuesday 12 noon
Wednesday & 4.00pm
Thursday 12 noon
Friday 12 noon
Saturday 9.30am
All are welcome.
[redacted]

CHURCH OPENINGS
Tuesday-Friday
10am-1pm
Saturday
10am-4pm
[redacted]

3. Saint Bartholemew's Church Interior/exterior 6:26

Resolution/Sample Rate: 24 bit/48k

Microphone: Sennheiser AMBEO Smart Headset



Sound Source Location: Interior and exterior surroundings of St Bart's church

Keynotes: Interior sound consists of 1906 Morgan and Smith Pipe organ and vocalist. Ambient noise contains congregation entering and filling the rows; chair creaking, paper shuffling, coughing etc. Exterior sound consists of gull congregation,

passing automobile, ambulance siren, microphone interference (wind and handling).
Pavement freshly wet from rain.

Artist's notes:

St Bart's Church is an iconic landmark of the urban landscape in Brighton. Constructed in 1872 and standing at 44m (144ft) to the top of the gilt cross lays its claim to the tallest parish church in the British Isles. It's inner dimensions of 52m (170ft) long and 18m (59 ft) width, make it one of the most sonorous spaces I have encountered. The pipe organ, dating back to the turn of the 20th Century, fills the space with low-end color. When paired with high register, mellifluous vocals, the sounds reverberate throughout the spacious architecture. It is quite powerful and can facilitate any number of responses, regardless of whether one is of religious or secular persuasion. Adjectives come to mind such as, celestial, divine, ethereal, heavenly, numinous, spiritual, extrasensory or unworldly. This may be experienced at any Sunday Mass at St. Bart's and I cannot recommend it enough.

I am not presenting that version of experience. Before I discuss how the sounds are composed, I want to declare that this work is mainly a juxtaposition of two adulterated soundscapes, although there is brief overlap in the transition between the two locations. The first half features the interior of the church space and the other half its immediate exterior surroundings: the external urban soundscape just a few paces outside its doors. Each section is multilayered and superimposed creating an unsettling cacophony. The artistic interpretation presented in this soundscape is hopefully getting at what filmmaker Patrick Keilor describes in a written account of his documentaries such as *London* and *Robinson in Space*. In the chapter entitled, *The Poetic Experience of Township and Landscape* from *The View from the Train*, he writes:

“... but the myths have a mystery... a reconstruction of a past daydream or the construction of a new one – which links still images or provides a setting for the film, in the same way locations provide a setting for the action in other films. The

aim is to depict the place as some sort of historical palimpsest, and / or the corollary of this, an exposition of a state of mind... There are different aspects to this: the literature of the wandering daydreamer, whom I perhaps inaccurately term the *flaneur*, the visual arts tradition of the reinterpretation of everyday objects and landscapes, which might be termed Surrealist realism, though it probably has more to do with photography as a way of seeing than any particular mode of thought; and a way of depicting places in literature and film where they are inextricably bound up with the state of mind of the characters who inhabit or observe them.”⁴

Here, I am one such character. I am inclined to frame this soundscape around the second half of the piece because it calls to mind a particular poem by Robinson Jeffers that has stayed with me since I encountered it in my youth. Before I get to that I might explain the “event” that unfolded when the mass ended, and the congregation poured out into the freshly wet pavement.

As I exited the church, to my left along Providence Place, atop of a row of houses, a congregation of gulls adorned the rooftops. They seemed to be involved in their own ecclesiastic celebration, squawking and shrieking loudly into the air, though to whom? To many, this is an uneventful, common everyday sound in Brighton that goes ignored. To many listening I am afraid the point will be missed. I must insist that what is presented here adheres to the aesthetics of documentary film in that any meaning generated is dependent on the temporal relationship of the images. Each scene is inextricably and crucially linked to what has come before it and what comes after it. Therefore, the weight of the second half is wholly dependent on the weight of the first half. In short, I would not have experienced the gulls in the same way had I not exited the Church first, with fresh ears and *renewed attentiveness*.

What I am saying is equally true to my own lived experience of this day. Had I not spent an hour in a solemn, yet powerfully stirring, holy mass, the gulls may have just

⁴ J. Berger, T. Overton, *Landscapes: John Berger on Art*, London, Verso 2016 p. 11

been “background” urban noise. Perhaps a good analogy can be made with light. After spending time in a dark cave, daylight can seem overwhelming or take on a heightened character after a period of deprivation. As an artist it is my prerogative to convey the experience in a style that has nothing to do with “reality”, but rather an inner state. I am presenting the interior of the church space but perhaps the treatment reflects my own inner architecture. By stacking the multiple church hymns on top of each other I am presenting my *impression* of the effect of the mass on my psyche— and yes this is strange and discordant, but my point is the uncomfortable *power* of the sounds, the disorientation of having experienced something I had realized I had been sorely lacking. This may also reflect the continual layer of anxiety I felt while recording, perhaps the raised remnants of a Catholic guilt. The music in-situ seemed also to instill in me simultaneous feelings of beauty and awe. The whole reason the music is positioned behind you and above you in a mass is because it signifies that sound is closer to godliness and it is *propelling* you forward, like a wind at your back. After the service I was still trying to process what I had taken part in. One of the last to leave, I exited back into the world... and into the gulls.

Seagulls in large numbers can easily evolve (or devolve depending on one’s perspective) into a wild bacchanalian orgy of sound for their own sake – perhaps as a testament to their own existence, their own sacred declarations of space amongst their own kind. Although not engaging in any feast as depicted in Jeffers’ poem, the mere sound of the flock became almost disconcerting in the way that it highlighted to me a world I can never truly enter or understand. This is not unlike the attempt to have an authentic, transcendent religious experience, trying perhaps in vain to connect to what is ultimately a mystery. What Jeffers is seems to be getting at is an emotionally detached state of nature – these seemingly godless, amoral creatures are acting in accordance with an eternal order, an order *external* to our dwarfed and insignificant human desires or morality. It is this that signifies the god principle – through the pure aesthetic of a beauty (external to us) in action. I might be remiss if I don’t include that our experience of beauty can sometimes bear a menacing and

disquieting edge as well. Perhaps sublime is the truest form of the word. What I am saying is that being present in this wave of gull song was like being witness to a sermon altogether removed from humanity, though sublime in its own right – a testament, similar in spirit, found within the interior confines of Saint Bartholomew’s Church.

Birds and Fishes

Every October millions of little fish come along the shore,
Coasting this granite edge of the continent
On their lawful occasions: but what a festival for the sea-
fowl.

What a witches' sabbath of wings
Hides the dark water. The heavy pelicans shout "Haw!"
like Job's friend's warhorse

And dive from the high air, the cormorants
Slip their long black bodies under the water and hunt
like wolves

Through the green half-light. Screaming, the gulls
watch,

Wild with envy and malice, cursing and snatching. What
hysterical greed!

What a filling of pouches! the mob
Hysteria is nearly human—these decent birds!—as if
they were finding

Gold in the street. It is better than gold,
It can be eaten: and which one in all this fury of wild-
fowl pities the fish?

No one certainly. Justice and mercy
Are human dreams, they do not concern the birds nor the
fish nor eternal God.

However—look again before you go.
The wings and the wild hungers, the wave-worn skerries,
the bright quick minnows

Living in terror to die in torment—
Man's fate and theirs—and the island rocks and immense
ocean beyond, and Lobos

⁵ Robinson Jeffers poem first published in 1963 in *The Beginning and the End* found on archive.org <https://archive.org/details/beginning00jeff/page/n87/mode/2up>

Darkening above the bay: they are beautiful?
(That is their quality: not mercy, not mind, not goodness,
but the beauty of God.)

St. Bartholomew's Church, Brighton



Houses of Providence place where seagulls congregated on the rooftops









4. Peace Park vs. Pavilion Park (Music or Noise / Noise or Music) 13:08

Resolution/Sample Rate : 24 bit/48k

Microphone: Sennheiser AMBEO Smart Headset

Sound Source Location: Dorset Gardens Peace Park and Pavilion Park.

Keynotes: Dorset Gardens Peace Park Construction sounds consists of (bansaw or sander), hammering, car traffic, airplane, ambulance, motorcycles.

Pavilion Park sounds consist of ukulele busker, songbirds, baby stroller, in and out conversation, wind noise.

Intro dialogue between fellow buskers at Pavilion Park:

Busker's friend (left channel): "you alright?"

Featured busker (right channel): "Hey"

Busker's friend: "Have you just started?"

Featured busker: "Uh, I've been here about (pause)... like ten, fifteen minutes"

Busker's friend: "yeah?"

Featured busker: "so, I'll probably be like another half an hour"

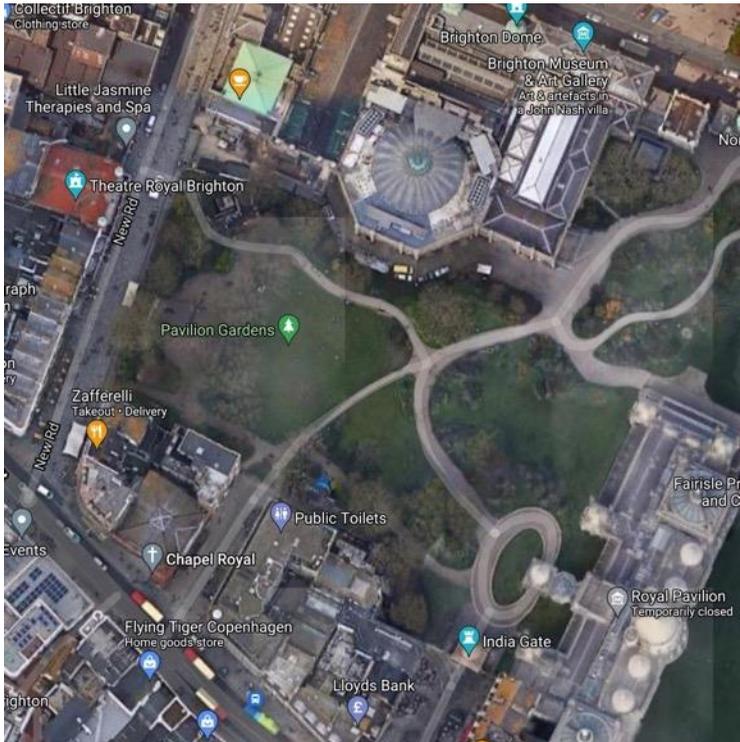
Busker's friend: "yeah"

Featured busker: "unintelligible"

Busker's friend: "Find somewhere shady for a while"

Featured busker: "Yeah definitely"

Busker's friend: "Cheers"



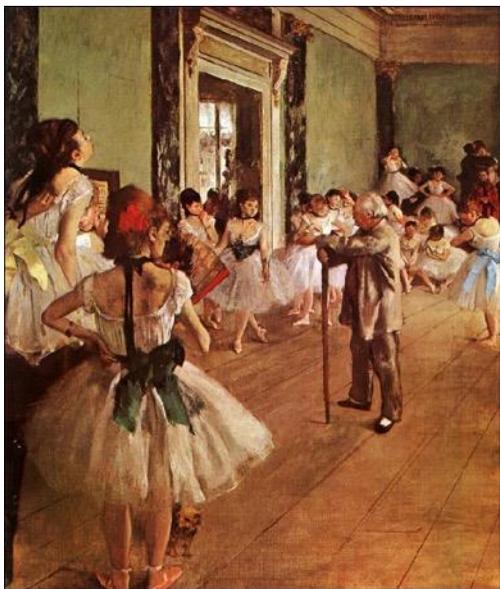
Pavilion Park Map



Dorset Gardens Peace Park Map

Artist's notes:

If one glances at Degas' *The Dance Class* and sees the unformed, rug-rat ballerinas, and registers this as a representation of beguiling grace, innocence, or "cuteness",



they have stopped and not looked. I'm afraid the case may be similar with *Peace Park* vs. *Pavilion Park (Music or Noise, Noise or Music)* due to the nature of the sounds. As we are wont to do with the intrusive sounds of the urban soundscape, one may be naturally conditioned to not listen to them, block them out. Of course, just having compared

my work to Degas in this fashion could be misinterpreted as grossly egotistical, perhaps similar again to Degas spirit imbued in his painting. Unfortunately, as an artist one must surrender work and statements about work. I am certainly not comparing myself to the immortal painter or anything of greatness. I am not sure that would necessarily be a good thing, as the late art critic, Sister Wendy Beckett, so keenly dissects him and his painting to the point of declaring:

"He doesn't look with sympathy; he sees just the bodies. And I say to myself, I don't know that I really like you Degas. You have a cold heart Degas...and then I look again."⁶

⁶ Sister Wendy Becket *Story of Painting* excerpt <https://youtu.be/UTBJcDPHmBo>

Remarkably in stepping back and looking again she can admire the light - the beauty of the artist's treatment of paint on canvas. She is unquestionably one of my idols, with such a keen insight in communicating her passion for it.

After this recording, I am unsure if I like myself. Degas and I, however, may share a cup of tea. I too have a cold heart, posing as an interested audience member while surreptitiously recording, knowing full well how terrible this musical style is to me – a ukulele of all instruments! Sometimes, the universe presents you with perfect counterpoint. In fact, I could snootily consider his “music” and the majority of street music as noise. Is it cruel of me to insert the more conventionally recognized “noise” of a ban-saw over this soppy heart-on-a-sleeve caterwauling? Do I consider that very ban-saw more “musical”, its harmonic vacillations, its sing-song-y nature? Could I forcefully insert it every time he opens his mouth to sing? Yes, and I could do it for 13 plus painful minutes. In my mind, it is not unlike a dog that can't help but howl out of tune to its master's singing. Lest one grow weary of either of these two sound sources, the length of this piece is itself asking the questions: Is not noise in the environment foisted upon us? Is not terrible ukulele music foisted upon us? Of course, one can simply walk away in “real life”. I must remind the reader I am the artist now and this is not reality. Of course, you do not have to listen. You can simply turn it off, but I invite you into an integrated soundscape as I hear it, much like Sister Wendy's appreciation of the pure aesthetic of paint. The soundscapes are filled not with unwavering, static sources of music or noise, but with the nuanced, shifting physicality of sound. I would like to invite you to listen to the expression of sound in space not only as physical material but more importantly as a way of hearing - to appreciate the nature of sound, the nature of space and reverb for itself, the interplay between foreground and background, sound in proximity and sound in the distance. What do you focus on? Do you hear the airplane overhead or was there a helicopter at one point? Do you hear a pram's wheels over the gravelly pavement, or how the reflection of a hammer bounces back off the far wall of houses across the park? Can you pick out the strange fragments of conversation from passersby? Can you make out lyrically what the busker is so earnestly trying to make us realize?

Perhaps I am not so cruel, or conversely too weak (perspective) having not completely drowned him out. I grant him his windows. His message may get to you yet. Is it tragedy or comedy? It's all perspective. I say this knowing full well I cannot throw stones, since I have left in unprofessional wind interference in the soundscape -another form of noise and my own declaration of complicit mediocrity. Some ethnographers call this "reflexivity". I might call it unavoidable. It didn't register with me at the time of the recording. I wasn't listening or perhaps I was. Like the busker pleading his case, I am now the one asking you to listen to my work. Like the coin dropped into the Busker's case prompting a terse "thank you", I tip my hat expectantly... I ask again, did you hear it? I invite you to stay and listen.

Pavilion Park

















Dorset Gardens Peace Park

















5. A27 vs. Patcham Woodlands (Traffic x2) 13:08

Resolution/Sample Rate: 24 bit/48k

Microphone: Sennheiser AMBEO Smart Headset, Zoom H6 XY attachment (120 degrees)

Sound Source Location: A27 Underpass, highway overpass footbridge and surrounding Patcham landscape.

Keynotes: Vehicular high-speed traffic, jackdaw communication, various songbirds.

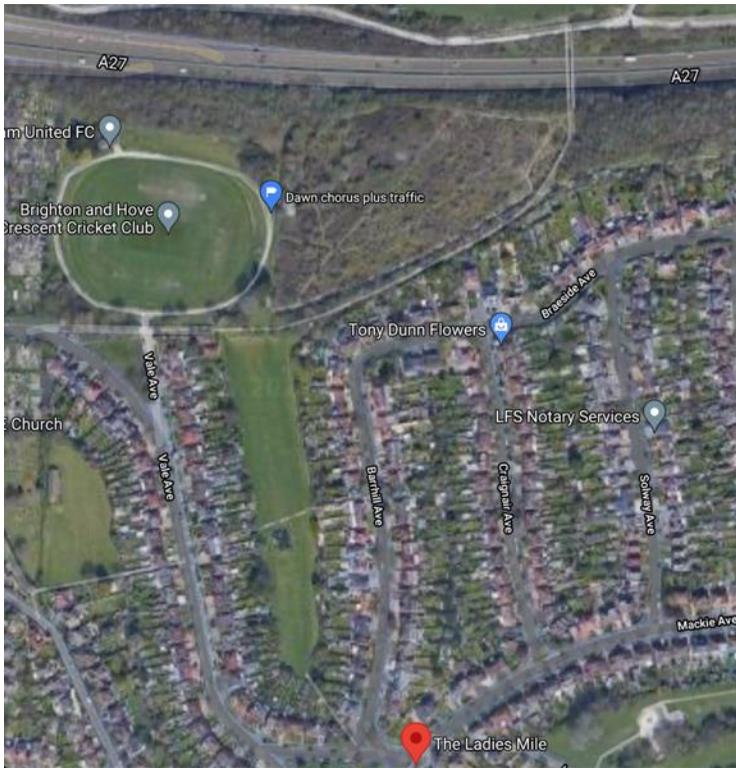
Artist Notes:

There are some places, when discovered for the first time, that become apparent as ripe grounds for a soundscape. A Straight shot off the 5A Brighton and Hove Bus to “The Ladies Mile” stop and a brisk two-minute walk up Vale Avenue, you pass through a quiet and quaint suburban neighborhood. The end of Vale Road funnels into the open space of The Brighton and Hove Crescent Cricket Club. If one heads right uphill to the lip of the concave bowl, by the park bench (pic below) not only can one survey the openness of the landscape, but one is also notably situated at a clear point of audition for unhindered, channeled soundwaves. A lush and scrubby hinterland forest borders directly behind, with many inviting trails into the depths swallowed up by overgrown vegetation. I have noted this as potential for both future dawn chorus recordings and a possible location for a soundwalk. As an outsider, I am immediately struck by a characteristic English landscape, with a clear view down into the lower elevations of Brighton’s cityscape.

Heading up along the stony trail running parallel along the anterior of suburban homes, taking a left fork, brings one to a footbridge across the A27 Highway. One a windless day and depending on the amount of traffic, the rhythms of east/west traffic can become unexpectedly hypnotic, with the added strange feeling of being suspended above it all. We might take this for granted and simply use it as a path to get safely from A to B but pausing to look and listen can, in my opinion, rival any

“natural” landscape. Facing north with the headset mic atop the apex of the bridge, cars zip furiously past in a ping pong style in both the left and right channels (beginning around the 2:40 mark). On this day I had the added sonic brush of a fresh rain, coasting the pavement for that distinct high-wash frequency of tire on pavement.

There is a stairway leading down to the very edge of the highway, if one chooses to hop the rail, wild with overgrown vines sprawling over and in the concrete. From there one can stop a few feet from the guard rail and aim the microphones or climb back up under the architecture of the bridge itself for a slightly altered, perhaps blurrier, lower frequency, sonic wash, one that was reflected off the concrete foundation or arc of the structure. What consists in this recording, however, is mostly different vantage points with the headset mic and switching the degree width on the H6 XY pair. In the beginning of the composition, the directionality of the traffic can be heard right to left (if one is facing the road) and left to right, as I had turned my back. This was to set up a simple oppositional relationship of directionality – left/right, east/west. The recording then leads into what I was extremely fortunate to experience as I walked back along the trail. A few waves in a huge flock of jackdaws passed overhead moving from left to right in the headset. It was a slow “migration”, and some lagged while others sped ahead. They struck me as quite noisy in fact and highly communicative and it suddenly dawned on me that this was oddly another form of traffic, their own so to speak. The recording became a reminder that all species are in a movement, a flux, a direction. Where are we headed, all of us living creatures? Humans seem to be in such a rush, and so oblivious to the external world, sealed into sound insulating, two-ton metal machines, speeding off in a direction with a purpose unbeknownst to us. Being inside such a box is the antithesis of existing in a world where we connect with the exterior surroundings, where we incorporate sound into our present awareness.













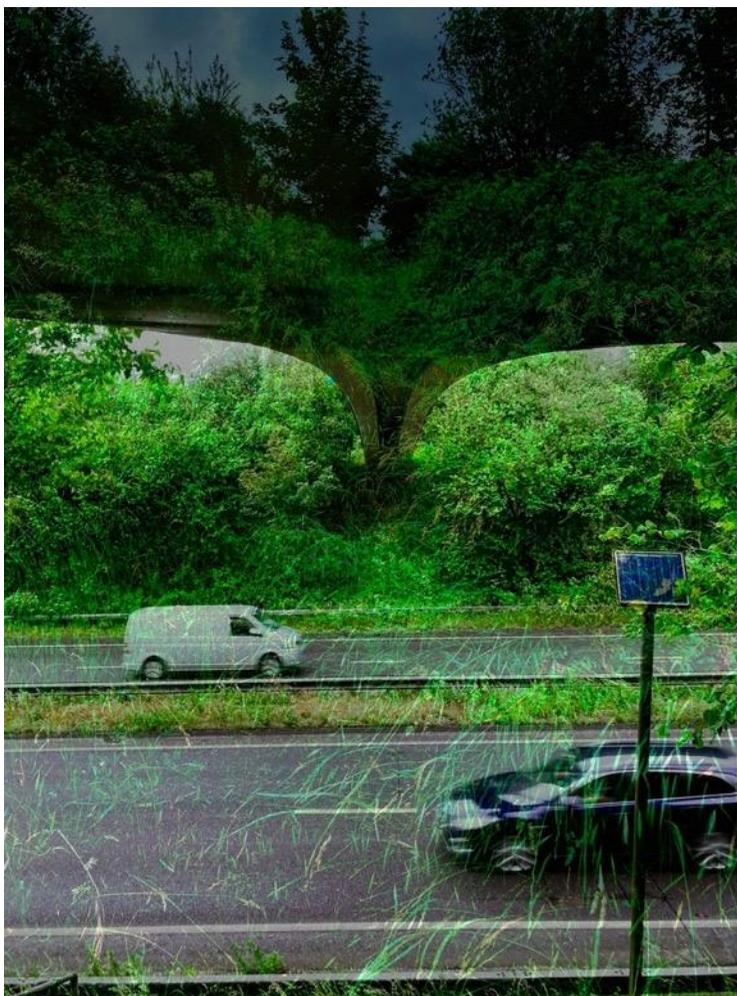


























6. A27 + High and Over Dawn Chorus Integration 23:38

Resolution/Sample Rate: 24 bit/48k

Microphone: Sennheiser AMBEO Smart Headset, DPA 4661 Heavy Duty

Omnidirectional Lavaliers, Zoom H6 XY attachment (120 degrees), Sennheiser MKE 600 Shotgun Mic.

Sound Source Location: A27 Underpass, and High and Over Cuckmere Landscape, South Downs National Park.

Keynotes: Vehicular high-speed traffic, songbirds, sheep and cattle.

The crest of the High and Over Landscape overlooks the Cuckmere Valley in the South Downs National Park. Late May and early June is the optimal time to capture an annual sonic event called a “dawn chorus”, where birds vocally compete for territory and mating rights in a cacophonous high-pitched orchestra. It usually begins before sunrise and follows a natural trajectory, peaking shortly thereafter and dwindling as the sun begins its climb. Growing up in my home state of New York in the late 70’s early 80’s, before I ever conceived of recording any sound, some of my fondest memories are the plethora of morning birdsong I recall so vividly in the late spring. My house was adjacent to a large tract of undeveloped eastern woodlands, before developers would eventually carve it up and build homes to accommodate an expanding suburban population that would eventually decimate the soundscape. I can still hear the bobwhites classic three-part call, robins, northern orioles, yellow bellied sapsuckers, their woodpecker cousins, nuthatches, whippoorwills, warblers, and the rarest of all: scarlet tanagers. Forty years later the soundscape is vastly different. Songbirds can still be found, and the experience can be as thrilling with new species migrating up from the south with climate change, like the extremely charming and diminutive grey cat birds.

In my brief time spent here England has always struck me as country rich in the treasure of bird song. I am sure much has changed here over the years in a similar way, but I am routinely reminded how this landscape is a haven for some of the most operatic species, as far as my foreign ears can detect. The thick brush and hedges here seem to be the perfect spot, providing protection and space for uninterrupted blaring. I have also experienced this along the village paths of my previous home in Newhaven, where a thin layer of trees and scrub buffer the A259. A particularly good spot in my opinion is the area captured in this recording of the High and Over Landscape because the open valley below provides a clear but distant picture of waterfowl and livestock that make such a dawn chorus unique.

The composition is structured in three parts. I have allowed the natural shape of the dawn chorus play out but have bookended it with two different sections. The intro features the hypnotic rhythms of A27 traffic where I have utilized a few experimental microphone placements to coax out some additional frequencies. The piece begins with a thinner section of traffic recorded in proximity facing the traffic. I decided to move roughly twenty feet back up to the base of the foundation under the bridge. Here I placed the DPA 4661's facing a short distance away from the solid concrete wall at to capture any reflections. This seemed to pick up the lower frequencies inherent in the larger vehicles: trucks, semis, vans etc. It also seemed to fill out the sound, what I might liken to adding a low gaussian blur to a picture. The power and force of the traffic is due to the layering of several of these recordings. Eventually this gives way to the dawn chorus.

The last section however is the integration of sections of the dawn chorus with traffic by using different short patterns of traffic waveforms as the template for a *convolution reverb*. According to the creators of Max for Live by Ableton, convolution reverb,

“takes a sample from a real-world space (called an impulse response or IR) and uses this to digitally simulate the

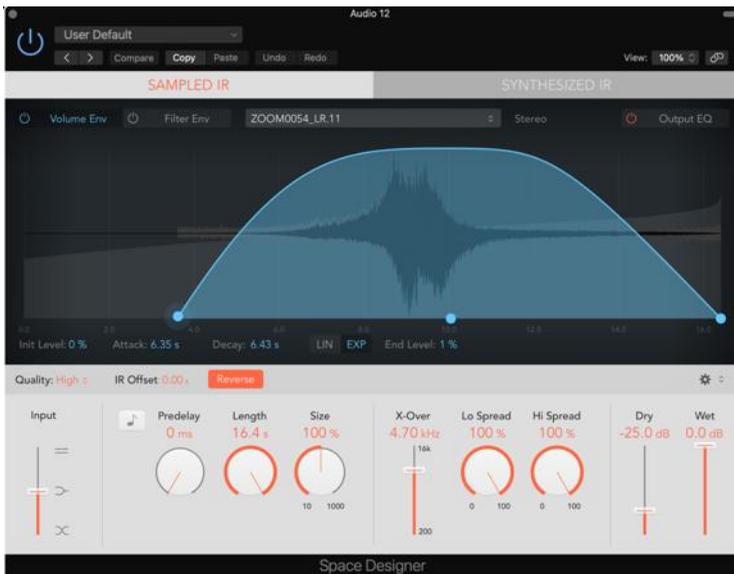
reverberation of that space. "Only a convolution reverb can capture the ambience of a real space, or real hardware, and recreate it on a computer," explains Ableton sound designer Christian Kleine. "With a convolution reverb, you can easily access the reverb of many spaces, and still tweak them."⁷

This surreal, ethereal sounding combination is essentially bird song (and a previous dawn chorus section of cattle bellowing travelled up from down below in the valley), filtered through the space and shape of highway traffic. Anthrophony and biophony fuse into a hybrid new imagined dreamscape.



traffic as form of a convolution reverb in Logic X

⁷ <https://www.ableton.com/en/packs/convolution-reverb/>



South Downs – Cuckmere/ High and Over























7. Queens Park Day/Night Part I 25:00

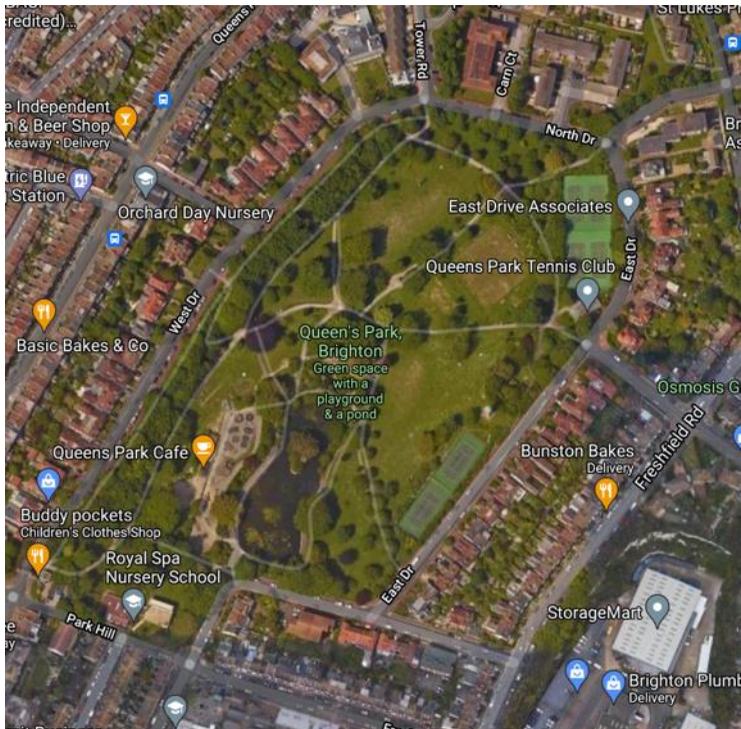
Resolution/Sample Rate: 24 bit/48k

Microphone: Sennheiser AMBEO Smart Headset, DPA 4661 Heavy Duty

Omnidirectional Lavaliers, Zoom H6 XY attachment (120 degrees), Sennheiser MKE 600 Shotgun Mic.

Sound Source Location: Queens Park day and night recordings.

Keynotes: Pigeons, gulls, gatepost, playground, clocktower bells (forward and reversed), traffic, airplanes, pond, songbirds, duck chatter, human chatter



Artists Notes:

Most people rarely, if ever, venture out into the night with the intention of listening. As we go about our day, we become accustomed to the hustle and bustle of the day, the jumbled noise of the cityscape. By the time night rolls around, we are ready to escape indoors, into the quietude of our own homes. Yet, if one sets out with intention into the late hours of the night, devoid of the usual daytime din, it is almost as if the urban landscape is physically transformed into something wholly different. A city can take on a certain clarity - a tranquil, drowsy atmosphere, distant and spacious. If one were to envision a continual diurnal and nocturnal soundscape waveform for days on end, a peak and valley rhythmic pattern would become clearly apparent, based around our own internal biological clocks. Soundscape recordists are continually after engaging and dynamic recordings, something that can grab hold of a listener and hold their attention – especially in today’s fast paced, attention seeking climate. Going out into a windless, calm spring evening to sit in the park would require putting down the phone, turning off the television, unplugging the myriad distractions that stop us from truly experiencing the moment and, perhaps even more unsettling, ourselves. Constructing recordings from these moments is another story.

It’s times when I am tired and begin to convince myself that carting out my sound equipment at 11 PM to capture sound might have to wait another day – after all the world does not wait for us and sound will still be there tomorrow. It’s a strange roulette wheel, the possibility of any given sounds during any given window of time, and it is eventually the reminder of this potentiality that pushes me out the door against my admitted laziness. Driven by a fear of missing out, I know based on experience that amazing things are more likely to happen if you put yourself in the space (mentally and physically) for it to unfold. They certainly won’t happen at all if you don’t. Sometimes the universe goes beyond giving you a “great” recording, and instead reveals itself to you in a lived experience you will carry with you for as long as your memory can recall. I will never forget the first night I ventured into Queens Park at midnight, with my tripod and recording kit, trepidatious over my own personal safety.

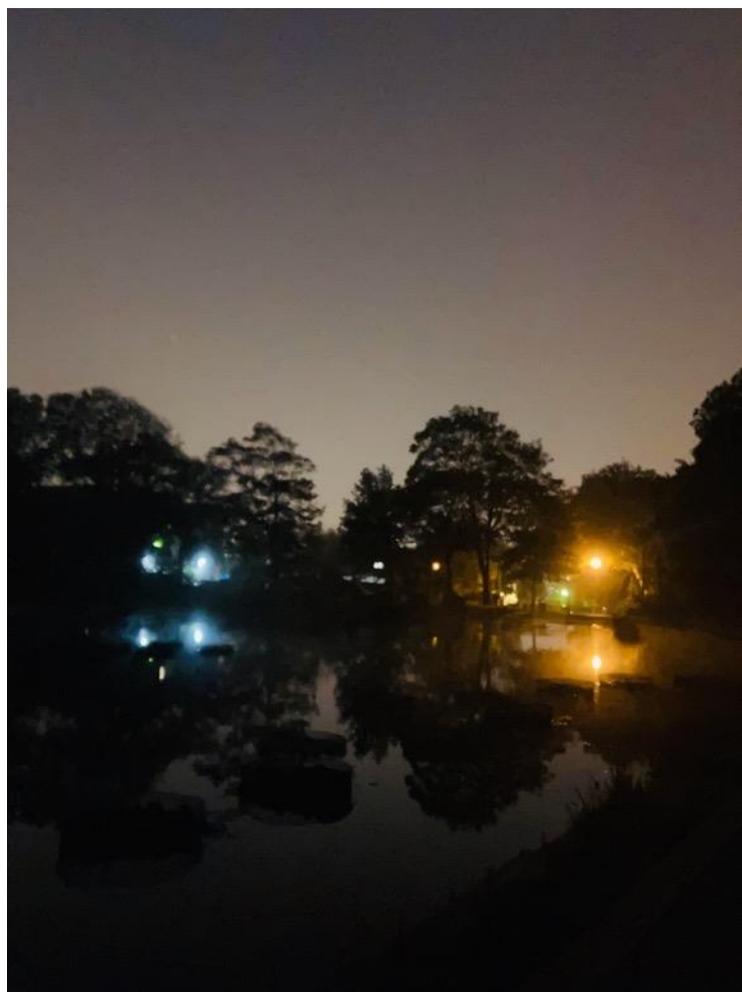
It was a particularly still night, slightly hazy and unseasonably warm for the time of year (mid-April). Though the second half of this recording is a composite of several nights and includes a fair amount of human chatter that imposes upon the silence, the thing I recall most about the recording session was that the first hour of recording yielded virtually nothing of interest – no wind to rustle a single leaf, not one passing car, not one person in the park. Suddenly, and seemingly out of nowhere, a duck that I could not see in the cloak of night flew directly across my position on the pond's dock, splitting the night's calm with its brief cries. I then started to notice more clearly, the occasional small sound of a water ripple against the dock on occasion, also delicately punctuating the silence. Eventually the far-off rumble of a motorcycle engine came into being and the never far off ubiquity of gull calls could be made out in the distance. Soon after, my sound recorder's batteries died (this is notably how this recording ends, if one can hear the short, slight high-pitched warning whine of my equipment, and the sharp intake of my breath as I stare in disbelief of a night of recording cut short). I do recall it was a moonlit night and I sat down for a while, taking in the glow, and felt as though this serenity was meant for me. There is a point when experiencing something alone, though you may wish you could share the experience, that makes it feel all-the-more profound. The thought occurred to me that I could happily fall asleep on the park bench.

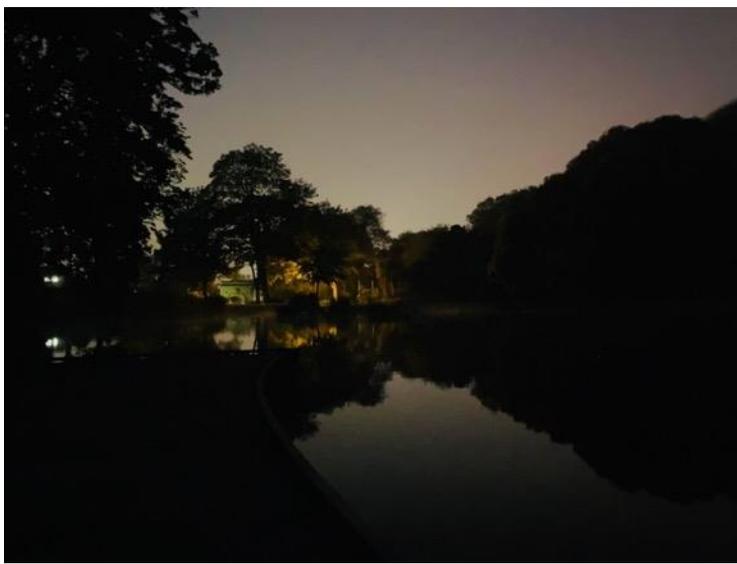
Having described my nighttime experience, it becomes necessary to say that it is almost shocking how animated a day at the park can be. It has been my aim through this recording to illustrate that difference in sound and the length of the work is a testament to a soundscape that is continually vibrant and littered with small details. Conceptually I will say that each section – day and night – is divided into two halves with a small overlap at the midpoint. I may not have to point this out, but while the nighttime belongs to the ducks, the daytime belongs to the pigeons. They are an almost inexhaustible source of mating coos and wing beating. Of course, the seagulls veer toward the maniacal and on occasion are matched by the piercing squeals of children. I would like to also point out that it was to my dismay that the clocktower

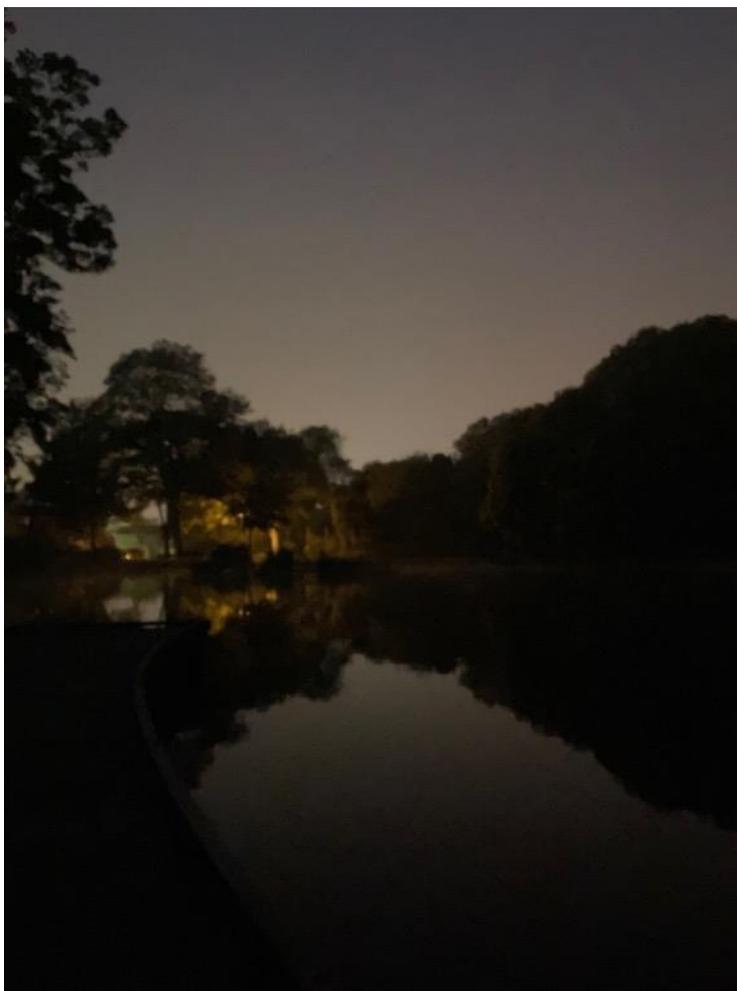
does not ring out after 8 or 9 pm, for obvious reason in a working neighborhood, though this led me to insert the last twelve notes in reverse as an arbitrary form of sonic opposition. The other thing that occurred to me is while conversation does occur during the day it is mostly swallowed up by the rest of the soundscape, however at night, young people can be heard in the space that is characteristic of Queens Park, conversation travelling intelligibly across the pond. I too love *The Farside* comic strip as one gal professes. It was later, after creating the piece that I began to realize that humans and ducks are two species that are both in the habit of chatting. Another note I would like to add is that I purposely “played” the soundscape in the form of the park gates. Throughout the first half of the recording, the opening and slamming of the far gate is a continual keynote if you keep your ear out for it. At night however, I began to slowly open and close them in order to impart the eerie-ness of their own musicality – and to have them break through the silence.





















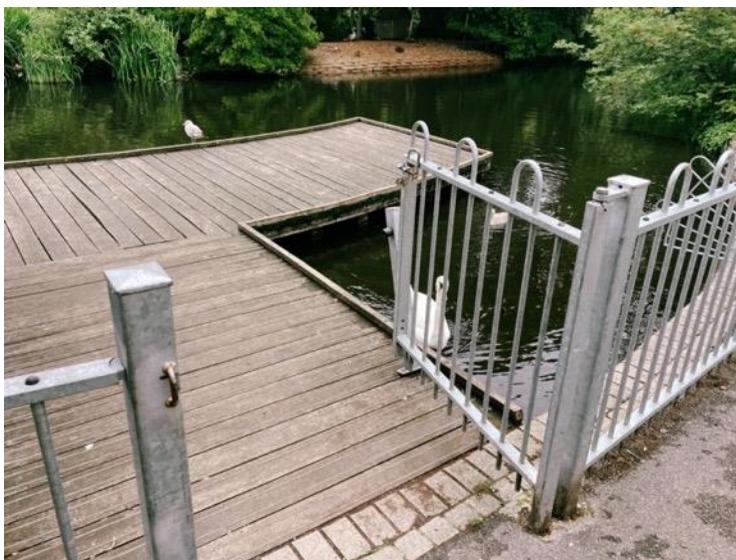








































8. Queens Park Day/Night Part II 24:46

Resolution/Sample Rate: 24 bit/48k

Microphone: Sennheiser AMBEO Smart Headset, DPA 4661 Heavy Duty

Omnidirectional Lavaliers, Zoom H6 XY attachment (120 degrees), Sennheiser MKE 600 Shotgun Mic.

Sound Source Location: Queens Park - day and night recordings.

Keynotes: Daytime: Pigeons, gull crushing a discarded plastic cup, gatepost slamming shut, playground with children, clocktower bells (forward), Duke of Edenborough community task workers throwing magnets into the pond to fish up metal trash, Italian couple playing tennis, construction noise, traffic, airplanes, pond, songbirds.

Nighttime is composed of duck and human chatter. The creaking of a gate (I am actively playing the soundscape) a solitary person kicking a football against a wall, reversed clock tower bells, natural effects.

Artist Notes:

Part II of the Queens Park soundscape features a slightly different composition in that it presents various types of human activity in the park. It begins again with the quintessential pigeon chorus. After a minute, one can hear some splashes into the pond, some unintelligible dialogue and the odd sounds of something crunching. In an odd conflux of events, a seagull happened to pull some trash into the mix. It was a crushed, red plastic cup with no trace of any liquid or food in it but enticing enough for this one determined (or bored) bird. Consequently, a small team of young boys guided by an older woman were engaged in some curious behavior across the lake. I slowly made my way around for an interview that can be heard around the 4:50 mark. There I found city youth working for the Duke of Edenborough program, cleaning trash out of local ponds with heavy magnets tied to strings. These drag the bottom of the lake to “fish up” metal trash. It was amazing to hear of a fence, a scooter, a crowbar, and a plethora of money as surprising items

gathered. One articulate youth can be heard wondering about the life of the crowbar “I don’t know how that got there but that has a story to tell.” Indeed, it does. I was quite impressed in his thinking this way. This might be the start of a burgeoning documentarian/storyteller. What is truly a treasure in this recording is the lead woman overseeing the youth exclaiming after one of the kids accidentally throws the entire magnet into the pond, after not having securely “wrapped it” in his hand (as can be heard in the recording) – the irony of it becoming trash itself. This was fortunately not the case though, as they soon used another magnet to fish it back out. One of my favorite bits of sound on file was the conversation afterwards, the laughter we shared after the accident and the assurance that her outburst would surely be going into my final work.

The next section of the piece transitions into a lively Italian couple playing tennis. What strikes me about this section is the pace of life around the frenetic volleying. There seems to be a natural laziness in the overhead drift of an airplane, the lilting birdsong, and even a stray electric saw that is captured from a construction site across the road. Even their language has an air of ease about it, though this could be my own bias having grown up as a New York Italian American. It is this ease that sets Queens Park II apart from the often dense and loud predecessor. However, what really stood out for me and connected the day and night soundscape can be heard after the close to the midway mark, before the transition into “night”. In fact, it can be heard overlapping with the bouncing of the tennis ball.

When I first arrived at the park on another calm night, there was a rhythmic staccato sound I could not identify. This is more indicative in the right channel around 15:11 mark. It turns out someone was practicing striking a football against the wall of a building at the back edge of the park- one can also make out when it hits a section of chain link fencing. I found this act quite different from the lively tennis couple in that it struck me as lonely, solitary sound in the cloak of darkness. Both a form of sport, truly defining the space and mindset of each time of day.

From here the conversations in the park reflect the natural echo of the space and I still view the duck activity and the speech as two natural forms of chatter. At one point a girl discusses the controversy surrounding the pharmaceutical drug, fentanyl. To think of people's conversation in a similar spirit to duck communication is certainly bizarre but gives me quite a joy. I do not think it necessary to discuss the ending, except that there is an additional joy and relief that solitude in a park provides after hours on end of recording. This is a primal, final moment of reflexivity, a natural ease between me and the moon of Queens Park.

DEDICATION AND THANKS:

For a diary of the work in progress please refer to <https://chrissciacca.tumblr.com>

Or my website at <https://www.chrissciacca.com>

Dedicated to Charles and Elise Sciacca.

I would also like to thank the tutors and technical staff for invaluable guidance in seeing this work through during the difficult transition of the pandemic. For all those who listened and provided crucial feedback including my peers I am grateful and indebted.