

AUDITORIA & AUDIENCES

– “SHAKKEI” - 借景 AND THE OUT IN THE OPEN LISTENING EXPERIENCE –

Jérôme Joy

Ph.D. student in audio art and experimental music, Laval University Quebec
Locus Sonus – audio in art, Sonic Research Lab, <http://locusonus.org/>
Professor at the National School of the Arts of Bourges, France
joy@thing.net, support@locusonus.org
<http://jeromejoy.org/>

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The reason why music becomes a series of sound expanses - besides explanations related to the search for unusual acoustics and unexpected possibilities of sound transmissions that both arrive with the wider frame enabled by extended outdoor spaces - relates to the opportunity to open up a mix of ambience and place. This ‘opening up’ is also a “musical transformation” - synchronous and a-synchronous - of the social space. In other words, music opens up an attentive and focused attitude, at once collective and singular, that intensifies our (mutual and individual) consciousness through the listening to what comes (in all its fortuitous flows) and the music is thus created, fabricated and composed; a music that we designate as such.

We could call this opened mix of ambience and place, this musicalisation of social space, an “audiosphere.” This audiosphere, in the context of contemporary listening practices and the increasingly sophisticated systems available for diffusion, has the distinction today in that becomes mediated by sound transportation systems across to other remote acoustic spaces. This audiosphere is neither antagonistic nor complementary to the music aimed for concert houses (such as *Musikhaus* or *Kammermusik*). Both of these approaches diffuse various facets of the real (they are, after all, “*passeurs de réels*”) and are linked to diverse listening experiences; experiences that run a continuum from a directed listening - for which every acoustic event demands attention (“panacousticon”) - to another, less directed form of listening, one that we must direct and adapt ourselves, and which remain in all likelihood partial and wandering, yet which nevertheless has the capacity to profoundly altering our perception of our environments and, ultimately, the world itself.

The reason why I devote myself today to exploring the conditions of an extended music, through concerts and performances that frequently oscillate between improvisation and composition, between strategies of minimum and maximum saturation of acoustic spaces (“merging into the surroundings”), by deploying instrumental, electronic and networked music (this latter term can also be understood to encompass both “telemusic” and musical sonification) is because this is how it seems to me that music can work to manufacture listening experiences. Only through such a complex assemblage can the different dimensions of distance listening be invoked. For me, it is critically imperative, that this manufacturing of the listening experience investigated, precisely in order to question our surroundings. This process of manufacturing — effectively the establishment of an *auditorium* — collaborates with the environment and experiments with acoustic expanses; it modifies, to repeat, our ways of perceiving and enables us to participate, evaluate and modulate “together” the very listening experience that is being constructed.

These constructions are able to simultaneously alter our participation as listeners and our perception of what music is made of, between what it is to receive those played sounds and what it is that constitutes the played sounds themselves. Participation in these audiospheres is an art of roaming and of interpreting. An *auditorium* is a space, constituted itself by various spaces (imaginary, fictive, apparent, suggested) involving different scales and routes, depths and shades, that could be compared to an architecture and to a landscape.

To play sounds while wandering across different spaces (and fluxes) involves the transmitted sounds successively lighting up echoing acoustics. Our wandering follows the furrow and “groove”, without having to record or read a preliminary sound. It creates the impression of audio filtering as distances between transmission and reception increase and decrease, as sounds leave and then return from the surfaces of the spaces reverberated and reflected. In some respects, this is reminiscent of the practice of ambulatory lighting as it stimulates and explores acoustic spaces thorough the soundscape. What is *already there* becomes real through our wandering movement and the distances we establish between things. The interpretation of these perceptible spaces, either occasionally or as something more regular, involves seizing the opportunity of the moment and the place, making what is *already there* manifests through its multiple fragments and variations, as if they were so many coloured and tinted planes and volumes. These kinds of perception profoundly and permanently alter the topography: the road and the landscape are more complex than they seemed to be at first. At the same time, we both lose our way and discover new landmarks.

To play instrumental or electronic music out in the open and to move around (and we could extend the notion to incorporate the mobile listening and portable music delivered through, for example, permeable headphones from podcasting, ipods or walkman) is to see the auditorium being progressively manufactured as the piece is played. The auditorium — the place : auricle, horn and membrane — becomes defined as the musicians move and progressively spread themselves in the space, like electrons or in clusters. This movement and spreading creates this creates a powerful impulse; the listeners divide themselves in the manner of a choir (from the Greek term, *choros*), fortuitously creating a *chôra*, which for Plato meant the 'space' where form materialised but which here means a temporary establishment of the space. The listeners navigate their listening in relation to the performer's instruments responding to each other by phrases and through the echoing between points in the open space. Distances vary constantly between the instrumentalists and between the instrumentalists and the audience. Yet, instead of tearing apart the music and dissolving it into whatever constitutes the current acoustic background (such as the rush of the waves and the roar of the wind, or the sounds of the urban everyday), the aim is to create paths and expanses in sound that develop a more balanced relationship to the surrounding environment. These movements create an ensemble in the meaning of "playing music together" as the performers and the listeners adjust to each other from a distance. This parallels the ways that the performers encounter unity and harmony between each other through calibrating their unique music to the fate as it is acted on acoustically by the environment and with all its structural characteristics.

Let us set the scene.

This art of manufacturing the space of remote listening encounters, by analogy, another art: *shakkei*. In Japanese tradition, *shakkei* (which literally means "borrowed scenery") refers to the subtle practice of gardening considered as a technique of perception, construction and interpretation of the reality (and of collaboration with the exterior world). It corresponds to what is called *mitate* ("see like") and, if taken into the acoustic field could be translated as *ototate* (a term surprisingly close to that of *Oto date*, which designates the listening station works of Akio Suzuki).

Thinking of distance listening / extended music in relation to *shakkei* allows us to become aware of how the multiple successive planes integrated within a single perspective; it reminds us of the conscious decision involved in placing an item (such as, for the gardener, a plant) in a relationship between the foreground and a remote background. The plant in front of you is placed in a composed layout: the bed nearby, organized, and a mountain far away for example. We suggest that extended music and distance listening serve as "clutches" for such situations: through collaborating and borrowing from the distance, experimenting with expanses and modulating our own listening(s).

Selected References

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Bio

Jérôme Joy is a French composer and musician working in instrumental, live-electronic & electro-acoustic music, and network music. He's currently engaged in a Ph.D. in audio art and experimental music at LAVAL UNIVERSITY (Quebec) (Research subject : "Distance listening and Internet auditoriums"). Since 2004 he is research director with Peter Sinclair of the research group LOCUS SONUS - Audio in Art ; he's a tenured Professor of Sound Arts at the National School of Arts Bourges (F). Recent projects and research include : 'NMSAT Networked Music & SoundArt Timeline', JOKTTJJEG (a noise quartet with Julien Ottavi, Kasper T. Toeplitz and Emmanuelle Gibello), 'Geographies Variables' a research residency at UQAM Montreal, 'Klar' for clarinets and live-electronics, etc. Other projects include : Collective JukeBox, ForumHub, pizMO, PacJap, picNIC, RadioMatic, nocinema.org, Sobralasolas!, etc.

<http://jeromejoy.org/>