



ACOUSTICS 2012

A soundscape composition concert: real and imaginary spaces

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Multi-channel audio reproduction provides listeners with a highly immersive auditory experience that has greatly benefitted the practice of soundscape composition by creating aesthetically enhanced experiences that are based in real-world experience but move the listener into an abstracted or even a completely imaginary space. This concert presents three octophonic works by the author that illustrate this potential, beginning with *Pendlerdrøm* (1997) (Commuter Dream), which takes the listener to Copenhagen train station where a commuter arrives at the end of the day and waits for a local train, lapsing at two points into a daydream in which previous sonic elements return as memories that swirl around the space. *Island* (2000) takes the listener to an imaginary island where hyper-realistic sounds are accompanied by processed versions of the same sounds, suggesting a magical quality to this space. The listener progresses from the shoreline up a river, into a watery cavern, then to a windy mountain peak, through a nighttime forest and finally to the opposite shore. *Chalice Well* (2009) takes the listener to mythical underground caverns beneath Glastonbury Tor in England. All three works were realized with computer-controlled diffusion and digital signal processing techniques such as granular time-stretching, convolution and waveguide resonators.

Pendlerdrøm (1997), 8-ch. tape, 12:00

Pendlerdrøm (or "Commuterdream") is a soundscape composition that recreates a commuter's trip home from the Central Train Station in Copenhagen. At two points, one in the station and the other on the train, the commuter lapses into a daydream in which the sounds that were only half heard in the station return to reveal their musical qualities. It is hoped that the next day the commuter will hear the musicality of the station's soundscape in a different manner as a result of the dream; the rest of us may discover the very same aspects the second time we hear the work. *Pendlerdrøm* was commissioned by the SKRAEP group in Copenhagen.

Island (2000), 8-ch. tape, 19:00

Island is an 8-track soundscape composition that blends natural acoustic environmental sounds with processed versions of the same sounds. The result is a visit to an imaginary island imbued with magical realism, beginning at the shoreline, proceeding up a rapidly flowing stream, visiting a resonant cistern, climbing to the windy peak of a mountain lake, descending again through a nighttime forest of crickets, and ending at a different shoreline. Original sound recordings by the World Soundscape Project, Robert MacNevin, David Monacchi and the composer.

Chalice Well (2009), 8-ch. tape, 14:20

Chalice Well is a holy well situated at the foot of Glastonbury Tor in southwest England, thought to be originally the island of Avalon from Arthurian legend, and the site where Joseph of Arimathea placed the chalice known as the Holy Grail. According to legend, the Tor, a masculine symbol, is hollow underneath and the entrance to the underworld, guarded by the Grail. The well, on the other hand, is a symbol of the feminine aspect of deity, and its waters are believed to possess healing qualities.

This work *Chalice Well* takes the listener on an imaginary journey down into the well, passing through several cavernous chambers on its descent, filled with rushing and trickling water, including the chamber of the feminine spirit. The journey continues to the glass chamber, then to the gates of the underworld, only to be confronted by the image of the Grail, and finally coming to rest in the space where wind and water, the masculine and the feminine are combined.

Biographical note

Barry Truax is a Professor in both the School of Communication and formerly the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University where he teaches courses in acoustic communication and electroacoustic music. He has worked with the World Soundscape Project, editing its *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology*, and has published a book *Acoustic Communication* dealing with all aspects of sound and technology. As a composer, Truax is best known for his work with computer music and soundscape compositions. A selection of these pieces may be heard on eight solo Compact Discs, all on the Cambridge Street Records label. In 1991 his work, *Riverrun*, was awarded the Magisterium at the International Competition of Electroacoustic Music in Bourges, France, a category open only to electroacoustic composers of 20 or more years experience. Website: www.sfu.ca/~truax