

An Uncomfortable Audio Ethnography – Sound and Politics in the Evolution of an Acouscenic Listening Approach to Softday’s Sonically Engaged Art Practice

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Abstract

Sound art is at the vanguard of contemporary fine art practices seeking to establish a platform for meaningful creative debate on a range of contested anthropogenic, social, political and environmental issues. This paper explains how Softday’s practice of Acouscenic Listening may be utilised as a methodology for the Creative Soundwalk, thus creating conditions for a participatory sound art praxis, which advances a novel understanding of the everyday. The etymology of the Creative Soundwalk is defined through the assimilation and application of key theoretical frameworks that demonstrate where and how the practice may be positioned within the everyday. The practice is influenced by the work of experimental composers, scientists, artists and researchers who have created the conditions for this particular interdisciplinary line of enquiry. The practice incorporates adapted Deep Listening, Tai Chi/Chi Kung, creative soundwalks and mindful sonic meditation practices and philosophies. This study clarifies how Softday’s practice of Acouscenic Listening supports a creative turn in the execution and delivery of the Creative Soundwalk, and explains how interdependent both elements are in communicating this new creative praxis. This paper also discusses the development of this creative approach for sound art and acoustic ecology, developed over a nineteen-year timeframe within a collaborative art/science. Importantly the theories we have included locate both the practice of the Creative Soundwalk and Acouscenic Listening within the everyday.

Keywords: Soundscape Ecology, Human Geography, Sound Art and Ecology, Acouscenic Listening, Creative Soundwalk, Climate Change Art.

1 Introduction

For over nineteen years *Softday*¹, the art-science collaboration of artist Sean Taylor and computer scientist Mikael Fernström, have engaged with issues relating to social art practice, natural cycles in time, climate change and its global effects. As a collaborative team we use our arts practice to explore relations to and understandings of nature, expressed through sonifications and multimedia artworks and performances. We are interested in exploring ‘the cracks’ between various media and creative genres such as expanded theatre, sound art, socially engaged practice, sculpture, music, dance and the application of new technologies.

Our acoustic environment is an impermanent, invisible realm made manifest in sound. This realm is transitory in that it is constructed from ephemeral sound events and amorphous forms. Softday’s practice of Acouscenic Listening is the mechanism through which we can gauge the extent of our subjectivity in relation to this temporariness. Acouscenic Listening is a portmanteau of the words ‘acoustic’ and ‘scenic’ (as in picturesque), which is the concept of experiencing constituent sonic events characterising a landscape. In 2010 Softday were working in Killybegs, Donegal, on the *Marbh Chríos* (Dead Zone)² social art project, as part of the Lovely Weather Donegal Residencies: Art & Climate Change³. The work we conducted there was based on collated scientific data specific to contested marine ‘dead zones’ (Diaz & Rosenberg, 2008). We represented this data with algorithmically generated music, sonifications and visualizations in a live performance in Mooney’s Boatyard in Killybegs. On one of our numerous field trips to Donegal Bay to undertake soundscape recordings we found ourselves reflecting on the subjective experience of our sonic engagement with space and

place. We mused on how best to contextualise these concerns. We both concluded that perhaps the components of our field recording praxis could be defined as an interest in two relational areas of research – acoustic space and its relationship to the everyday, Deep Listening and its connection to social art practice.

The elaboration of Acouscenic Listening is the distillation of a shared creative and listening practice that Softday has developed since 2010. Acouscenic Listening is influenced but differs from the Deep Listening work of American composer Pauline Oliveros, (with whom Sean Taylor worked for over four years).

Though the understanding and application of Oliveros’s Quantum Listening theory, constitutes a key starting point towards an on-going investigation of everyday Acouscenic Listening practice, there are recognisable differences in how this theory is applied in our practice. The focus of Softday’s Acouscenic Listening and Creative Soundwalk practice cultivates an understanding and appreciation of soundscape to body on a finely tuned level. The application of the Creative Soundwalk as a socially engaged activity provides the source material for further creative actions and facilitates the creative practitioner’s ability to unlock the rhythms and narratives of soundscapes. Acouscenic Listening through the application of the Creative Soundwalk creatively re-construct spaces of listening, in order to assign aesthetic meaning to them. The production of the Creative Soundwalk sound map/graphic score promotes a co-authored and collaborative practice that democratizes the creative decision making process.

We consider Acouscenic Listening to be a developing sound based fine art practice that has evolved from central concerns in

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our collaborative work and includes elements of performance art, socially engaged practice, acoustic ecology and applied traditions of Eastern thought and practices including Qigong and Tai Chi. Acouscenic Listening also promotes an alternative pedagogical model; counteracting the reliance on and promotion of a traditional bias for individual studio based Fine Art practice. The practice proposes alternative delivery modes to counteract a dependency on the white cube gallery system and calls for public performances to be held in sites more conducive to engagement with new audiences.

The Acouscenic Listening approach towards the Creative Soundwalk as a structured immersive excursion engages participants to become 'active listeners' (Quantum Listening), improvisers and sound makers. Such sonorous immersions in public space potentially create the conditions for spontaneous, attentive, collaborative opportunities or actions of creativity for artists, performers and audience. This enables the listening subject to become fully immersed in the present moment both during the soundwalk and during the improvised performance of the graphic score. Being continuously in the moment enables the participant to let go of preconceived views, and enter into what psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has termed as a state of flow, "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Acouscenic Listening calls for an expanded sound art practice that is alive with all aspects of human sonic experience of the everyday. The practice of Acouscenic Listening underpins the creative turn in the Creative Soundwalk. This in turn fosters a unique approach to sound and performance art and encourages greater interaction between artists and audience in creating, educating, performing, and recording sound/body-based work with a global position.

Sound operates as an axis, and listening provides us with alternative associations to both time and space, and the way in which we interact with them. We explain the experiences, contexts and methodologies that we have investigated and analysed with a view to explicating and underpinning the Creative Soundwalk within the practice of Acouscenic Listening as a viable 'sonically engaged' fine art practice. We investigate similarities that exist between Acoustic Ecology, creative listening and performative art practices and the legacy of sound walking as an art form embodying relationships to environment and the creative re-production of space. The Creative Soundwalk is further defined through the assimilation and application of key theoretical frameworks that demonstrate where and how the practice may be positioned within the everyday. In this essay we explicitly contextualize the Creative Soundwalk within the Acouscenic Listening work of Softday as social and political sound art praxis. This work is predominantly undertaken in collaboration with specific communities of interest (Lennon & Taylor, 2012). This, in turn, leads to the design and creation of collaborative, co-authored and improvisatory sonic art works that differs from more historical soundwalk modes.

Initially Softday worked with sonification, using for example artificial neural network algorithms to create musical mappings of environmentally related data sets for performance by classically trained musicians. The sonifications were complemented by field recordings of soundscapes from the contexts of the data sets, including sounds from normally unheard sources, e.g. using hydrophones. Since then, we have increasingly been using soundwalking to inform our work.

Westerkamp (2006) suggests that a participatory soundwalk has three specific functions which may be defined as orientation, dialogue and soundwalk composition. As both an environmental activist and composer Westerkamp advanced the concept that the soundwalk as a form of dialogical exchange with the acoustic environment could be intrinsically linked to politics, embodiment and storytelling traditions. Her research suggests that the proliferation of anthropogenic (man-made) sounds over natural sounds and

silences in industrialized soundscapes contribute to alienation with the acoustic environment and thus has a negative impact on the health of communities. Westerkamp argues that the praxis of soundwalking assists the listener in restoring a meaningful dialogical exchange with the acoustic environment, nature and body. She highlights the social benefits of the soundwalk, as an opportunity to dedicate a specific time frame within a social group context. Westerkamp also observes that a fundamental outcome of soundwalk activities and shared listening experiences create interconnectedness amongst social groupings.

Our research led us to experiment with various creative approaches to soundwalking and sound (sounding) mapping. Influences included the writings of Angus Carlyle and Cathy Lane (Carlyle & Lane, 2013) and the work of contemporary sound artists/composers Francisco Lopez, Andrea Polli, David Toop, Stephen Vitiello, Viv Corrigan, Christina Kubisch and others. Softday initiated projects such as *Sonic Sidewalks* (2010)⁴, *12 Stations* (2011)⁵, *Underground Unknown and Forgotten* (2012)⁶ and *Protest in Silence* (2013)⁷. As Softday, we were also invited to participate in various international sound mapping projects including; *Europe – A Sound Panorama*, Karlsruhe, Germany (2011)⁸, and *Sounds of Europe* (2012). These experiments and projects led to the eventual creation of a situated approach to soundwalking/mapping that became the Creative Soundwalk.

Traditional soundscape walking meditations can be either singular or shared experiences, encouraging participants to create subjective maps based on areas of appeal, mapping mentally and mindfully a relationship to place and memory through environmental sound. The Creative Soundwalk differs from traditional soundwalk methodologies in terms of its objectives to locate the practice within the everyday and to encourage its participants to be active listeners, researchers and creative participants.

Our soundwalks are normally conducted with a community of interest creating a collaborative sound map of an area or location of interest. The sound map is then represented as a graphic score with the participants' annotations spatially distributed as the experienced place is recalled, and using colour coding to signify for example biophony, geophony and anthrophony (Krause 2012). The participants, using their own bodies and voices, then perform the soundmap. Each performance is recorded and discussed by the participants and further iterations/performances of the soundmap may be created. What started as our own intuitive approach for creating environmentally related sound art has now become a more formalised method for exploring soundscapes collaboratively. We are now seeing, or rather hearing, that it is the context of the data that is the critical aspect of our works.

In our latest works, we have extended this method to include the participants' own field recordings of their own soundscapes. We trained participants to use inexpensive recording equipment and open source software tools to edit and process their soundscape recordings and to collaboratively perform with their recordings as a laptop ensemble. As a basis for performance, a graphic score was collaboratively created and after several iterations of the performance, as part of the reflective practice, the participants finally performed the work in public.

2 Acouscenic Listening and the Creative Soundwalk

Sound can be an invasive phenomenon of everyday experience in that it assists our engagement with, immersion in, and commentaries with the environment in which we live. Auditory engagement further challenges the dominance of the pragmatic visual object and counteracts a prevailing bias or dependence upon a predominantly ocular-centric reading an environment through

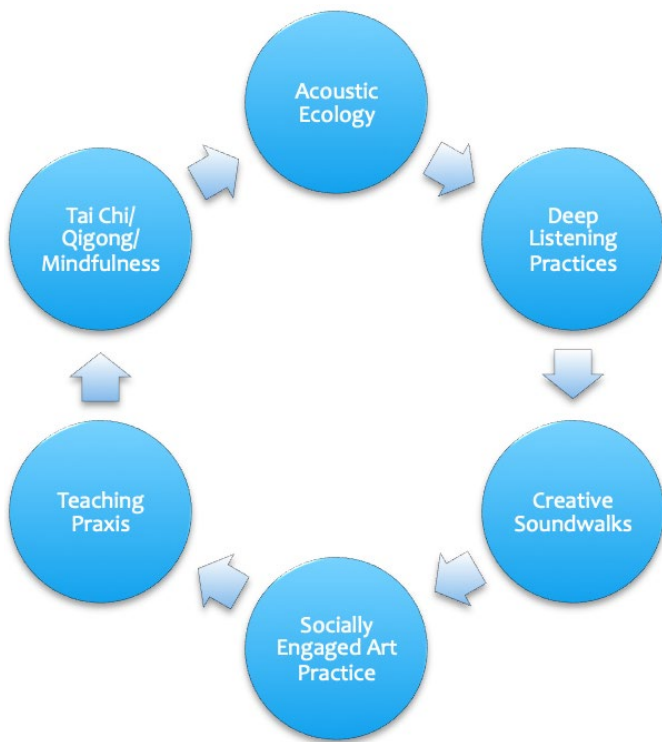


Figure 1. Components of Acouscenic Listening and the Creative Soundwalk

predominantly visual metaphors. The American composer and artist Max Neuhaus demonstrated through a series of what he termed ‘Lecture Demonstrations’, that by re-locating his audience to the street, (place) instead of the traditional concert hall or gallery, he could create a new way for them to listen (space):

“Most of us think that what we think about a place is determined by what we see in it. And I think it is for most of us, consciously. But unconsciously there is a perception of a space which deals with how it sounds, what sounds are there, and how sound acts in it and on our sense of sound”. (Neuhaus, 1984)

The city as an incessant inundation and movement of sonic action may be experienced through the listening body as sound incorporates and mediates a connection between space and narrative. Sound textures can be referred to as the strata of sounds within a musical composition and their relationships to each other. The aural texture of an urban soundscape may be constructed by an attentive listener sensitive to the combinations of competing sound signals arising from background noise, and these aural textures may be considered as static images by the auditory system (Rabinowitz & King 2011). Sound is also concerned with phenomenology, memory, imagery and associations. This may be referred to as sound’s specific relational condition. Sound is something that reacts with space as Salomé Voegelin (2010) suggests, “sound narrates, outlines and fills, but it is always ephemeral and doubtful”.

In 1974 the American composer Pauline Oliveros published ‘Sonic Meditations’ a seminal work that broke away from the prevailing traditions of western music, and challenged the need for standard music notation in favour of prose instructions (similar in composition to Alan Kaprow’s ‘Happenings’ or Fluxus event scores). Oliveros (2010) defined Quantum Listening as “listening in as many ways as possible simultaneously – changing and being changed by the listening”. Quantum Listening directs our attention in a non-judgemental way to what is heard, amassing meaning, and interpreting the meaning of what has been listened to, whilst deciding on further

creative actions. Quantum Listening can be regarded as similar to Schaeffer’s Reduced Listening (1966). A typical Acouscenic Listening and Creative Soundwalk workshop begins with an introduction by Softday to Quantum Listening (Oliveros 2010), psychogeography, soundscape practice and the Creative Soundwalk as methodologies and processes to creatively transform acoustic space through the formation of collaborative and improvisatory sonic art works.

Participants are further introduced to R.Murray Schafer’s (1993) three main elements of the soundscape: keynote sounds, sound signals and soundmarks, important elements that make the acoustic conditions of any space unique.

Acouscenic Listening intensives and workshops also begin with warm-up exercises (predominantly Qigong health exercises) and slow breathing exercises. A slow-walk meditation follows this. Meditations should be undertaken outdoors if possible otherwise a large room is sufficient (Hanh, 1991). Participants are also introduced to Qigong and Tai Chi exercises in order to consciously quieten the mind and body and bring a listening attention to the soundscape. Participants undertake *Ear Tuning* exercises adapted from traditional Chinese Qigong exercises and from R. Murray Schafer who emphasized that ears should be ‘cleaned’ as a prerequisite to listening (Murray Schafer, 1967).

The soundscape of a city is more than just a cacophony of background noises and rhythms with no clear purpose or value. Henri Lefebvre implies that the cyclical daily rhythms of life conveys meaning significant to the disclosure of a city’s purpose “once one discerns relations of force in social relations and relations of alliance, one perceives their link with rhythm” (Lefebvre, 2013). Sound textures refer to the strata of sounds within a musical composition and their relationships to each other. The evolving aural textures of an urban soundscape may be constructed by an attentive listener sensitive to the combinations of competing sound signals arising from background noise. These aural textures may be considered from a Fine Art perspective as static images of the auditory system whilst also containing metaphorical and affective associations (Rabinowitz & King, 2011).

The focus of Softday’s Acouscenic Listening practice cultivates an understanding and appreciation of rhythms to soundscape to body on a finely tuned level, expanding the potential for connection and interaction with one’s environment, body, technology and performance with others in sound and related arts. When working with the quotidian, this is realised through focused creative soundscape walking meditations, a methodology that has become a key element of our Acouscenic Listening practice.

A Creative Soundwalk is always undertaken in silence. Walking in silence is an unfamiliar experience for most people, but it is an important element that creates the space where the main aim of the creative soundwalk is to heighten the participant’s concentration to the myriad sounds and other sensory dynamics of the moment and environment being walked through. In this engaged state the mediating participant is aware of all that happens with transient and situated sound of place occurring within a real geographical time frame. The soundwalker engaging with acoustic space creates a scenario, an improvisational interrupt, a change of perspective that deepens the embodied listening experience, where each listener is free to interpret and contribute to a fluid sonic environment at any given moment. Acouscenic Listening practice is grounded in an embodied approach to listening that integrates direct engagement with sound production and awareness of the environment and refers in particular to Pauline Oliveros’s global mode of listening (Oliveros, 2010) .

In John Drever’s (2009) assessment, “the salient concern in soundwalking is everyday life” and a key concern of the Creative Soundwalk is the corporeal exploration of sound location, narrative and its relation to the everyday. A Creative Soundwalk encourages

the interaction of the individual listener to space and place through immersive or embodied experiential mapping and a basic understanding of psychogeography. Traditional soundscape walking meditations can be either singular or shared experiences, encouraging participants to create subjective maps based on areas of appeal, mapping mentally and mindfully a relationship to place and memory through environmental sound.

Softday identifies a route for auditory exploration, and provides a map of the Creative Soundwalk route for each participant. The walk may take 1–2 hours in duration. The map contains some key listening points on the route for longer more immersive listening experiences. On a Creative Soundwalk traditional field recording methodologies for preserving audio are put aside in favour of a more informal diaristic style of approach to registering sound events. The Creative Soundwalk participant is asked to notice and notate as many sound events as possible as they pass through various soundscapes. Participants document and share their experiences of the soundscapes visited utilising Quantum Listening and note taking. The Creative Soundwalk differs from a traditional soundwalk in terms of its objectives to locate the practice within the everyday, to encourage its participants to be active listeners, researchers and creative participants. In order to achieve this, a creative turn is applied to co-authored subjective maps created by participants on a Creative Soundwalk.

The Creative Soundwalk straddles a polemic between epistemological and practical realms to establish a creative space for meaningful dialogue between the listener and the everyday. In order to do this two elements are applied. The first is the social turn, a term devised in 2006 to describe the return to a socially engaged art form that is collaborative, participatory and involves people as the medium or material of the work (Bishop, 2006). When applied to the Creative Soundwalk this approach to social art practice may be referred to as *intermedial*, a concept that challenges and “re-calibrates inherited understandings of what is within and what is without the art event” (Jackson, 2011). This concept is similar to artist Dick Higgins 1965 description of how Fluxus artists worked across or between creative genres, an approach that he defined as *Intermedia*. An *intermedial* approach to the creation of significant art works has been at the heart of our Acouscenic Listening Practice since 2012.

The second integral element is the *creative turn* which specifically refers to the process by which the co-authored subjective maps created by participants and the artists on a Creative Soundwalk are constructed. The *creative turn* in this context, refers to a conscious moment within the process of a Creative Soundwalk where the original topographical information is put to one side, and new thinking about the potentiality of performing the map as an improvised graphic musical score emerges. The word ‘*potential*’ is important in this context as not all Creative Soundwalks we have undertaken with the public have led to creative sound works. By potentiality, we mean the *possibility* to act upon topographic information, which is in itself not limited by the mapping process. We therefore suggest that the Creative Soundwalk creates moments of speculation, experimentation and reflexivity, constructing spaces of experimentation and improvisation without the constant demand of proven results.

The Acouscenic Listening approach to the Creative Soundwalk may be considered closer to the *dérive* or ‘drift’, defined by Guy Debord (1958) and the Situationists as

“a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. Dérives involve playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll”.

Softday differentiate between the conditions of the *dérive* and the *flâneur* as defined by both Charles Baudelaire (1965) and Walter Benjamin (2002), in that we consider the *flâneur* to be a passive

wanderer/observer of the city and never an active participant in the actions of the city. The Creative Soundwalk as a form of collaborative *dérive* undertaken with small communities of interest involves a primary determination of soundscapes, unlocking the possibility for a subjective understanding of recording, mapping and applying form and value to the ‘inherent indeterminacy’ of the everyday (Pable & Hutton, 2015).

While a traditional soundwalk may be exploratory, scientific, phenomenological, experiential, etc., an inherent aspect of an Acouscenic Listening approach to Creative Soundwalk practice is playfulness, which is an essential ingredient that is fundamentally suited to encouraging creative self-expression for a layperson. Play and improvisation are intrinsically linked when encouraging participant to consider how the Creative Soundwalk map as a graphic score may be performed. We define improvisation in this context as the spontaneous invention of sounds and movements within a supported creative context, understood by participants as both fictive and aesthetic (and hopefully not just a linear representation of the mapped sonic events). Softday define play as engagement with the most authentic manifestations of our creative individuality and our inherent inquisitiveness. Play helps the participant to consider a myriad of potentials in the sound map score thus broadening the range of possibilities for performance. Play also gives the participant permission to expand their own stream of consciousness and create new narratives within the score.

Play liberates the listener from an overdependence upon competition, cogent discourse, rationality and aesthetic angst in relation to music/sound, inherent through pre-existing controlling paradigms of social and cultural conditioning. The Situationists (1958) in their critique of the primitive social functions of play state “its goal must be at the very least to provoke conditions favorable to direct living”. Likewise play is comprehended by Lefebvre (2002) as the portent of a “rediscovered spontaneity”, play transforms, hidden or forgotten aspects of the everyday into moments of intensified presence he writes: “Play recalls forgotten depths and summons them up to the light of day. By making them stay within the everyday, it encompasses art and many other things as well”.

The attentive listener plays an active role in actively perceiving sound in the world and simultaneously plays a creative role in developing an impression of a given soundscape, which in turn may lead to greater emotional satisfaction, creative stimuli and communicative experiences of the everyday. The Acouscenic Listening approach to creative soundscape mapping reveals a myriad of sonic events that are often mundane, habitual or ambiguous. Our desire to reveal the minutiae constituent parts of a soundscape finds purchase in the writings of Georges Perec, who along with Michel de Certeau, and others, integrated new ways of engaging with urban spaces through concrete experiences of the everyday.

Michel de Certeau (1984) puts it succinctly when he states, “the approach to culture begins when the ordinary man *becomes* the narrator, when it is he who defines the (common) place of discourse and the (anonymous) space of its development”. In an Acouscenic Listening workshop or intensive, when Softday works in and with communities of interest, we identify those potential collaborators who wish to sonify the narrative of a soundscape. As Perec (1997) asks:

“How do we speak of these common things, how to track them down rather flush them out... how to give them meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what is, of what we are.”

Perec stipulates that the quotidian exists below the listening threshold of the noticed but remains both omnipresent and hidden at the same time. We hear but we don’t often listen. This statement may appear contradictory but the vast majority of subjects filter their listening in an everyday context, potentially missing out on the minutiae of data and narratives located within any given soundscape. Filtered listening prevents this information from being remediated

for creative ends. The Creative Soundwalk directs participants to register as many possible sonic events in a democratic and authentic manner in the particular soundscape under investigation. A complex soundscape may also reveal localized histories and memories that can lead to the creation of fresh narratives for further creative development.

As Lefebvre states, this social place is the space where participants use and transform the information of the everyday and the soundscape they are mapping. Potentially, it offers the engaged listening subject the possibility of maintaining a creative transformation of space and place on a daily basis, beyond the Creative Soundwalk exercise. The Acouscenic listener is now more aware of the potentiality of prevailing conditions that occur in a soundscape, and that soundscapes are in a constant state of flux (no soundscape will sound exactly the same, depending on time and conditions). Redressing the value of creative listening narrows the gap between art and everyday life.

Lefebvre's concepts about rhythmanalysis remain dispersive and incomplete (his book *Elements of Rhythmanalysis* was published posthumously). However it is our contention (and the subject of our on-going research) that they offer the Acouscenic listener a pathway that can frame and study the dialectics of power that are revealed during a Creative Soundwalk in urban settings, particularly in the interrelations between sound/music, the body and everyday life within society.

Participatory art practice requires the involvement of a specific community of interest to engage in a creative investigative process within a social space (Finkelppearl, 2013). Softday use the term 'consensus reality' as a methodology for achieving a level of agreement in the nature of the shared experience of space that also challenges hegemonic relationships of authorship and creativity (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Dialogue plays a crucial role in how any Acouscenic Listening artwork may progress. This means that both the artist and participants determine the appropriate form for any creative intervention in a soundscape and potential outcome by applying dialogical and discursive methodologies in order to establish consensus.

This participatory approach to cultural production is further underpinned by art historian Grant Kesters' positioning of Dialogical Aesthetics as a tool for social art practice. Kester demonstrates through the work of a number of contemporary artists work (Wochenkrasleur, Steven Willats, Jay Koh, etc.) how Dialogical Aesthetics employs both discursive elements and social relations as its subject and material. Kester (2000) challenges our understanding of what contemporary art may be by placing little significance on visual experiences in favour of discursive exchange. Kester also challenges the primacy of the art objects aesthetic, which is also secondary to reciprocal exchanges. We believe the objective of Acouscenic Listening practice is to create the conditions where artist and participants not only determine the appropriate form of the creative outcome but also establish its aesthetic value or to state it simply, at this stage of the creative process 'the art is in inherent in the dialogue'.

We explore the continuous integration of everyday sounds in sound/music composition, a tradition instigated by Russolo through Cardew, Cage, the Fluxus movement and others, that seek to insert sounds of the banal, the mundane and the everyday directly into live performance. We regard this approach as a means of giving aesthetic credibility to these sounds.

The Acouscenic Listening Workshop

Since 2012, Softday have been conducting creative workshops based on our practice in Acouscenic Listening, drawing upon and combining methodology from Acoustic Ecology and Socially

Engaged Art practice. We are interested in the dialogue that occurs between the listening participants, place and space, a dialogue embarked upon through the language of sound. The participants are introduced to some theoretical contextual and practical frameworks for the use of Acouscenic Listening as both a creative deep mapping exercise and holistic sound art practice. A typical Acouscenic Listening workshop may be broken down into a number of learning outcomes:

- Theoretical context and practical frameworks for the use of Acouscenic Listening.
- Participation in and understanding of the Creative Soundwalk.
- Introduction to psychogeography and deep mapping.
- Introduction to collaborative, co-authored sound art practice.
- Critical reflection on aspects and potential creative outcomes of the workshop.
- Introduction to Eastern thought, pedagogical theory and practices, and Acouscenic Listening.
- Introduction of group sonic meditations work.
- Introduction to graphic music scores and the application of a creative turn to the completed soundmap.
- Performance, recording and dissemination of the completed sound work.

A key element of the workshop is derived through consensus by the participants and Softday to collectively develop, document and track the evolution of the proposed work, from its original 'pitch' by the artists as a workshop concept, to the collective mapping, movement meditations and improvisations, to final performance and public dissemination of the creative work. Agreement is also sought on how work in progress may be documented (audio/video/photo). Continuous critical reflection on the delivery of workshop elements also assist both the participants and the artist/educator to reflect upon the learning experience, and to inform all participants steering the development of the work towards a possible shared vision. Reflection also highlights any emergent misunderstandings or antagonisms within the shared group experience as the workshop evolves.

The artist's role in this process is both socially communicative and creatively pedagogic, working with participants to share 'expert' and 'lay' knowledge, and allowing participants to find their voice or form of expression that can co-exist with others in a communal discourse. Participants are introduced to *Qigong* and *Tai Chi* exercises and adapted *Ear Cleaning* exercises. *Ear Cleaning* exercises were first proposed by R. Murray Schafer who emphasized that ears should be 'cleaned' as a prerequisite to listening (1967).

The Acouscenic Listening Creative Soundwalk is undertaken in silence with the agreement of all participants. Walking in silence is an important element so that there are no demands on the attention of the participants from mobile devices or conversation. During the Creative Soundwalk, mindfulness techniques are applied in order to consciously quieten the mind and bring listening attention to the soundscape. This process can be described as 'training the muscle of our attention'. Interrupting the cycle of incessant communication affords the participant the space to temporally 'switch off' from the demands of technology and 'switch on' the listening body to the evolving soundscape environment.

This silence may also be thought of as a meditation or at very least a temporary agreement between the participant and the artists to employ a mode of consciousness in order to cultivate an embodied response to the sonic environment. In this state the meditating participant engages in, or is aware of, all that happens with transient

and situated sounds of place occurring within a real geographical time frame. This action creates a temporary social bond within the group, even though each participant may articulate a unique listening experience upon completion of the walk. The participant engaging with acoustic space creates a scenario, an improvisational interrupt, and a change of perspective that deepens the embodied listening experience. The Acouscenic Listener should therefore expect that they are immersed in incomplete positions of uncertainty and 'not-knowing', continuously searching for the value of 'sounds-in-themselves' in order to establish the sound objects as well as establishing themselves.

Opening up the listening experience for potential transformative aural events is dependent upon where and how listeners place their attention. In this state the meditating participant engages in or is aware of all that happens with transient and situated sound events occurring within a real geographical time frame. Canadian composer Barry Truax suggests, "Any human auditory interaction with a citizen's everyday urban environment initiates a dynamic mediation of the auditory space as a sonic construct" (Truax, 2001). The collective mapping of the Creative Soundwalk as a social construct is dependent upon the participants' ability to collate a multiplicity of subjective and sensory auditory responses. This is necessary in order to fully comprehend the aural characteristics of the soundwalk and creatively bring these responses into form. The mapping of the soundwalk practically demonstrates to participants how sonic knowledge may be represented as visual knowledge of space and place. On reflection, participants note that their focus is changed, their listening is heightened and perceptions of the soundscapes being explored are altered.

Upon completion of the Creative Soundwalk participants are invited to collectively create a soundmap of the experience. This map is not necessarily an accurate graphic representation of sonic features that appear in the sound environment, as is the case with detailed topographic maps. The sound map is a graphic score with the participants' annotations spatially distributed as the experienced place is recalled, and using colour coding to signify for example biophonic, geophonic and anthroponic sound sources. The participants then, using their own bodies and voices, perform the soundmap. The Acouscenic Listening sound map is at this juncture a visual representation (a graphic art work in itself), which suggests no limitations as to how it may be further represented or transformed. Therefore, the map (Fig. 2) can be received as subjective truth insofar as a sound map is an abstraction derived from the territory of the sound environment, but is not the thing itself, as scientist and philosopher Alfred Korzybski suggests; "the map is not the territory".

Understanding cartography as a form of creative abstraction assists the participants to reflect upon the space of the Creative Soundwalk not necessarily in terms of its topology but more in terms of its unique acoustical properties.

Participants are encouraged to consider the soundmap that they have co-authored, as a graphic score for live group performance. Graphic instructions are considered as an alternative means of contemporary music composition whilst also functioning as a map of the musical territory, democratising both music composition and improvised performance. In effect, we are essentially imparting a rudimentary form of musical composition to the participants. The soundmap/graphic score is used as a medium in which to explore methods of creation and exhibition. We also address the salient features of collective decision making in terms of where, how and under what conditions art takes place within the creative process. In this respect the performance of the graphic score is not such much a finished work of art but a by-product of larger concerns pertaining to the separation of art and everyday life (Fig. 3).

Each performance is recorded and discussed by the participants



Figure 2. Holy Island soundmap/graphic score August 2016.

Photo: Robert Corrigan

and further iterations/performances of the soundmap may be created. What started as our own intuitive approach for creating environmentally related sound art has now become a more formalised method for exploring soundscapes collaboratively. What we observe, or rather hear, at this juncture is that it is the disclosure of the hidden and personal narratives in relation to that mapped data that emerges as the critical aspect of our works. A sonified data set can be almost anything, while a collectively experienced, internalised and re-represented soundscape being expressed as a collaborative performance can help to communicate both personal context and affective aspects of the work.

This subjective and reflective approach with embodied listening results in the inclusion of the lived experience of listening to a soundscape. The sound sources are neither distal nor proximal; they become instances of human experience and can be communicated as a creative narrative structure. Acoustic gestures function as aural triggers that locate the active listener in the tempi of the everyday, assisting in the social and cultural characterization of both space and place. It is important to take time to help the listening participant to learn a process of aural way finding. Auditory engagement with space and place is the result of a reciprocal process between the listener and the sonic environment. The environment suggests distinctions and relations, that enable the listener to pick up information in the ambient acoustic array (Gaver 1993) and to select, organise, and transform the meaning of what is heard.

The ambient acoustic array can provide us with rich information about place and activity in the world. Without having to think about it, hearing contributes to our immediate awareness of surrounding



Fig 3. Mapping the Limerick City Soundwalk, October 2016.
Photo: Sean Taylor



Figure 4: Softday public Soundalong, Harplinge, Sweden, July 2014.
Photo: Mikael Ericsson.

space. For example outdoors, aspects of the soundscape can be rapidly picked up. A blindfolded person can be led around between different places and their hearing will immediately pick up subtle cues about the structure of the environment and surrounding activities (McGrath et al. 1999). Hearing also helps shifting attention between events happening around us, including behind, above or in places in the immediate environment where the actual source is visually occluded (Van Valkenburg et al. 2004). Therefore the listener plays an active role in perceiving sound in the world and simultaneously plays a creative role in developing an impression of a given soundscape, which in turn may lead to greater emotional satisfaction, creative stimulation and communicative experiences of the everyday.

A statement such as “everybody can sing but it sounds different” may seem humorous, but herein lays an acceptance that everything that can make sound may also be listened to and an original aesthetic can be negotiated and agreed among the participants as the development of the work is progressing. In our research we developed the concept of ‘sounding’ as opposed to ‘singing’ the graphic score, which allows for a more democratic performance of the work, which we now refer to as *Soundalong*.

We first used the *Soundalong* concept in a live performance context for *Sonic Pareidolic Ceromancy* at the Harp Art Lab, Harplinge, Sweden, in April 2014. In the case of the Swedish performance, the audience was given pre-agreed visual clues in the form of letters/words during key moments of the live performance, which they sounded and improvised upon, under the direction of Softday (Fig. 4). We have since modified and used the ‘Soundalong’ concept for public performances of the *Song of the Urban Bees* at the Crescent Hall, Limerick in October 2014 and *Chant des Abielles* at the Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris in September 2015 and specifically for Creative Soundwalk outcomes.

From a creative perspective, it is interesting to note that the first iteration of the Creative Soundwalk composition resulted in the majority of performers attempting to imitate the mapped sounds of the environment from the graphic score. This is often an unconscious reaction by the performers to dissociate the concepts of sense (purpose, meaning, etc.) from the senses. Performers were encouraged to imagine the sound map as an embodiment of the topographical information, to sound the place, using the appropriate language of the soundscape to create a specific narrative order within the composition. Sometimes it takes a number of iterations of the performance in order for participants to begin to feel comfortable with the composition transitioning to an artwork and to understand the value of improvisation in relation to a developing aesthetic appreciation of the score. It is in these moments where intention, artistry

and aesthetic are synergised and developed. This is where the work comes alive for both the artist and participants and suggests diverse possibilities for the composition. We observe that participants become more animated by and familiar with the score, as if they are in a different decision making headspace or place of listening.

The practice of Acouscenic Listening promotes embodiment based on the assumption that thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are grounded in bodily interaction with our environment. From an Acouscenic Listening perspective the body may be likened to an operating system, it is the context from which the listener feels, attends, thinks, breathes, moves, relates and perceives the world during the course of the Creative Soundwalk, in order to best positioned to take further creative action. Within the framework of multimodality the emphasis therefore is on the relationship between physical experience, multimodal resources and social spaces. This relationship is a symbiotic one where meaning making is grounded in physical experience “We know not through our intellect but through our experience.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962)

Mindful listening to one’s fellow improvisers encourages performers to extend the *Soundalong* concept to also include awareness of the acoustic space where the performance is taking place, to other incidental sounds, and to the performers’ own sources of sound. Combining the *Soundalong* with movement elements, whilst listening attentively to what other performers are sounding, opens up reciprocal dialogues about how the work may be constructed. Working organically from this position significantly changes the nature of the performance and creates a space for a far more meaningful and empathetic rendition of the score.

Agreement is sought from the participants on whether all of the preparations of the live improvisations should be recorded or not. When permission is given to record the improvised sessions, these recordings are played back to participants for further commentaries on the aesthetic of the work. In this respect the composition is always in a state of flux or incompleteness. The recordings of the group performance of the Creative Soundwalk operate as creative works-in-progress, perpetually open to new processes and interpretation. Copies of the co-authored sound map/graphic score and audio recordings are shared between all participants with agreement that participants may undertake additional work on the graphic score if they so wish. Participants are also asked if they wish to share the results of the workshop (both the map/graphic score and audio compositions) on social media platforms. If there is no consensus, the recordings and documentation stay with the authors. The possibility of undertaking additional work on the graphic score either by Softday, the participants or others may be considered as a form of re-mediation. A re-mediated approach to an original Creative

Soundwalk graphic score considers concept, assessment of counteractive alternatives, remedy selection and remedy design, through to construction and implementation of the chosen remedy as *secondary/new* artwork or performance.

Any performance thereafter is a re-mediation, in an allegorical sense. When re-mediation of a graphic score occurs at a location different to the original soundwalk setting and without the original collaborators present, any new performers automatically constitute an alternative community of interest. Potential new performers assume the role of sonic “narrators and translators” to the original community of interest who created the graphic score. This out of context re-representation of the original narrative of the Creative Soundwalk by new performers communicates an imaginary space of sonic allusions and metaphors. Further improvisations of the work blend real and fictive sonic details into a concoction of arbitrary but interrelated narratives. Turning to literature once again we find parallels between these imagined re-mediated soundscapes and descriptions of fictional cities in Italo Calvino’s seminal literary work “Invisible Cities”. Calvino’s imaginary cities are not just accounts of incredible physical spaces but also may be read allegorically as cities of memory, cities in flux, historical entities that morph over time. Performers of a re-mediated Creative Soundwalk imbue the graphic score with their own perceptions of memory, space and place and invite the audience to do likewise. This is done in an order to temporally locate both performers and audience in a specific but fictive time and place. Performers in collaboration with an audience re-construct the narrative of the soundscape and bring it to life, even if the original location of the soundwalk is not familiar or known – “It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear” (Calvino, 1997). Therefore a Creative Soundwalk graphic score created in Sweden, Paris or Limerick may be re-mediated and performed in a myriad of ways. Any attempt to re-create the aural experience of the original listeners who participated in the Creative Soundwalk is an abstracted exercise, just as American composer Steve Reich’s *City Life* (1995) composition with its inclusion of samples of speech, car horns, door slam, air brakes, subway chimes, pile driver, car alarms, heartbeats, boat horns, buoys, fire and police sirens remains a fictive impression of city life on the streets of New York.

Case study: Using Acouscenic Listening in the Amhrán na mBeach (Song of the Bees) projects

This section examines how the Creative Soundwalk and the practice of Acouscenic Listening (as both a philosophical concern and practical methodology) functions within the work of Softday. In this section we outline how Acouscenic Listening and Creative Soundwalk methodologies have influenced the direction of the on-going Amhrán na mBeach (Song of the Bees) project 2012–17, and how these practices may be applied in order to re-mediate contested environmental narratives and spaces in a creative way for public dissemination. This approach sets the work of Softday apart as a distinct new approach for creative sound art composition. The Amhrán na mBeach (Song of the Bees) project is a good example of how Acouscenic Listening as a form of social action can be linked to the urgent call for arts critical role in making the science of climate change both intimate and aesthetically attractive. Though this project does not specifically depend upon the Creative Soundwalk for delivery of the creative content, it does outline how responsive and adaptive the practice of Acouscenic Listening can be.

Lefebvre (2013), in his final publication, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, suggests that the most essential external rhythms that the rhythm analyst interprets are those of nature, as both nature and the cosmos are the instigators of cyclical rhythm. We suggest that Softday may be considered as contemporary creative rhythm analysts in that we explore rhythms in nature through the

incorporation of methodologies related to the practice of Acouscenic Listening and the Creative Soundwalk. These methodologies are augmented with field recordings and (often contested) scientific environmental data sets. Through the application of sound art we attempt to create an awareness of those rhythms of nature and society that may be fractured or taken for granted.

The Amhrán na mBeach (Song of the Bees) project was initiated as a result of a conversation with Dublin based curator and apiarist Jenny Haughton during the Lovely Weather Culture and Climate Change conference in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Ireland in 2010. Jenny drew our attention to the global condition of honeybees and in particular current threats such as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) relates to the mysterious disappearance of honeybees (*Apis mellifera*), a fatal condition that has swept through US and European honeybee apiaries since late 2006. The honeybee is the perhaps the most celebrated collector of nectar and pollen as bees pollinate a cornucopia of flowering plants, fruits and vegetable foods. It is estimated that pollination services provided by insects, mainly bees, are currently estimated at €153 billion a year. With 71 out of the 100 crops that provide 90% of food worldwide being pollinated by bees, it would appear that we take our pollinators for granted. In Ireland crops such as apples, strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, carrots and onions are reliant on insects (mainly bees and hoverflies) for pollination and without pollinators many of our native plant species would quickly become extinct.

In March 2011 we initiated a dialogue with Simon Sleeman O.S.B. the apiarist at Glenstal Abbey in Murroe, Co. Limerick, who agreed to collaborate with Softday on developing a project that would creatively address the global impact of CCD on honeybees and food production from an Irish perspective. The research and development stages of the project was funded by CREATE, the National Development Agency for Collaborative Arts in Social and Community Contexts on behalf of the Arts Council of Ireland.

We used field recordings and soundscape analysis to further inform our research. We quantified issues of interest with large numerical data sets, or, where these issues were abstract various forms of sonification or auditory display were used as part of our compositions. We met with local and national beekeepers and conducted empirical research with beekeeping organisations such as the Galtee Bee Breeding Group (GBBG) who are part of the Native Irish Honeybee Society and representatives of the Federation of Irish Beekeepers Association (FIBKA).

In 2011 we established a community of interest of Irish beekeepers that wished to work with us on the further development of the project. Employing Acouscenic Listening methodologies we conducted a series of Creative Soundwalks at the Glenstal Apiary and trained our community of interest to apply Bernie Krause’s taxonomy with three basic sound source classes when listening to their own apiary environments – Geophony, Biophony and Anthrophony. We introduced our beekeepers to Quantum Listening theory and the concept of the Creative Soundwalk in order to deepen the listening experience of the individual beekeeper to the unique soundscape of the apiary space through immersive experiential audio mapping and a basic understanding of psychogeography. In this instance the psychogeographic turn assumes that the sonic investigation of the environment of the beekeeper’s apiary has a direct effect on the beekeeper’s emotional and cognitive state, which is beneficial for encouraging creative behaviour (Fig. 5).

Following on from this, we undertook a series of intensive workshops at Glenstal Abbey, with our group of Irish beekeepers. We formed the Softday Apiary Ensemble (Ciarán Casey, Jenny Haughton, Simon Sleeman, Áine Nic Giolla Coda) a musical entity that was influenced by composer Cornelius Cardew’s (1969) ‘Scratch Orchestra’ concept. Cardew defined a Scratch Orchestra as “a large



Figure 5. Soundwalk recording in Glenstal Abbey apiary, Murroe, County Limerick, May 2011. Photo :Sean Taylor.

number of enthusiasts pooling their resources... assembling for action (music making, performance, edification)". He noted, "The word music and its derivatives are here not understood to refer exclusively to sound and related phenomena (hearing, etc.)."

Our ambition for the Softday Apiary Ensemble was to enable all our beekeepers to record, process and play the sounds collected from their own habitats. There are several critical skills that a performer has to have to carry out these tasks. In our pedagogical approach to these workshops with the beekeepers, we discussed a number of conceptual and aesthetic issues that Acouscenic Listening highlighted, including how participants responded both differently and uniquely to the sound environment they recorded and the technology that we utilised (Fig. 6).

Throughout the project, we used both Open Source software and software designed by Softday, as such software was available at no financial cost to the beekeepers.

In preparation for the performance of *Amhrán na mBeach* (Song of the Bees), a graphic score was collaboratively created for a live concert (Fig. 7 and 8). The use of a graphic or text score draws from a number of historical and experimental alternative methods of contemporary music composition from the late 1950's onwards. The Softday graphic score draws influences from experiments in musical notation by John Cage, Event Scores or Happenings of the Fluxus art movement, the Graphic Scores of Cornelius Cardew and the Text Scores of Pauline Oliveros.

What attracted Softday to employ a variation of the Event Score in this context was the realisation that the performance could produce its own intrinsic aesthetic value, where performers were encouraged to improvise and extend their own interpretation of the graphic score. The Softday score as a form of Fluxus Event Score or Happening involved the re-contextualization of actions, movements, concepts, and objects from the everyday life of the beekeeper as a live sound art performance.

We decided to stage the live performance of *Amhrán na mBeach* (Song of the Bees) not in a conventional concert hall or gallery, but in the church of Glenstal Abbey.

It is important to note that all aspects of the choreography of the

performance and interpretation of the graphic score was discussed with and agreed by the participants. Both Lefebvre, and Debord acknowledge the influence of the theatrical methodologies of Bertold Brecht for creating constructed situations that turned the traditional passive spectator into an actively engaged participant. This creates the conditions for a form of egalitarian theatre (Softday prefer to use the term expanded theatre) production where the beekeepers were the main focus and participants in their own creative work. Here we also favoured the Brechtian technique of direct address by performers to audience. Direct address was employed to break what French philosopher and critic Denis Diderot described as the (invisible) 'fourth wall' of artistic creativity, which extends the idea of crossing that imaginary boundary between, in this instance a performative



Figure 6. Softday Apiary Ensemble Rehearsal, Glenstal Abbey, County Limerick, 2011. Photo: Sean Taylor

Softday Apiary Ensemble
draft laptop score 2014-04-25

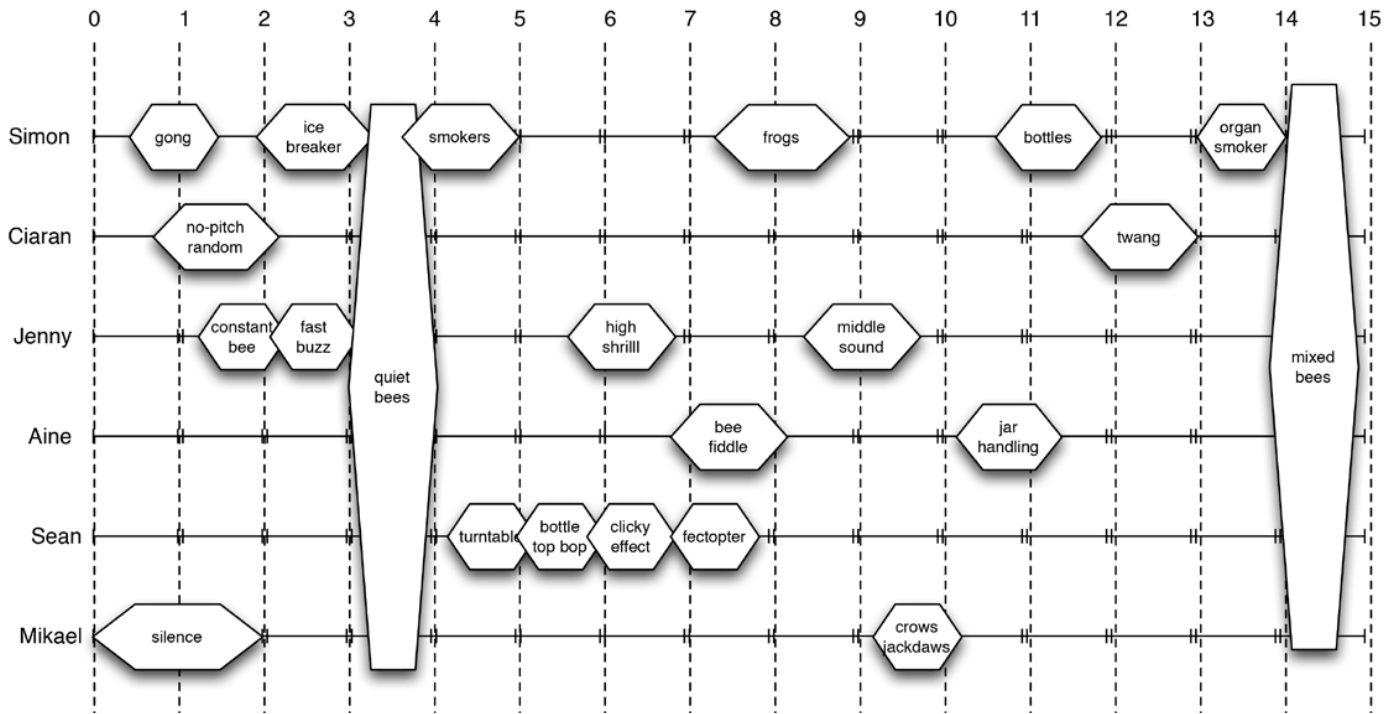


Figure 7. Amhrán na mBeach (Song of the Bees) Softday Apiary Ensemble Graphic Score, Glenstal Abbey, Murroe, Co. Limerick, 2012.
Image: Mikael Fernström

sound artwork and its audience, thereby transforming the passive spectator (Brecht’s terminology for the audience) into active participant (Stevenson, 1995).

Some of the participants in the project had never considered partaking in or listening to contemporary sound art/music before, but during the process of engagement and development of this work they discovered that such art forms were accessible to them. Evaluation feedback from participants suggested that the experience of being socially included in the project in this manner significantly enhanced their creative experience of the artwork.

We also created scores for the Irish Chamber Orchestra and for the Glenstal Abbey Choir, in Western Music Notation, generated from algorithmic sonification of four years of scientific data about bee diseases and colony losses in Ireland. The world premiere performance of *Amhrán na mBeach* took place in Glenstal Abbey Church in April 2013. We produced a limited edition artefact of the *Amhrán na mBeach* (Song of the Bees) project, which contained a full HD

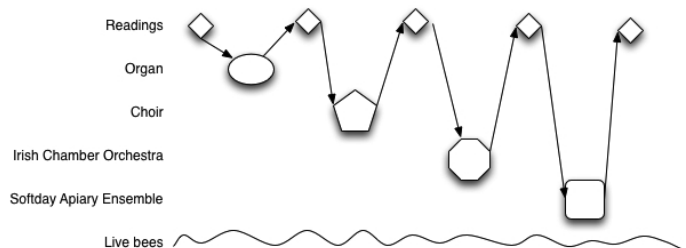


Figure 8. Amhrán na mBeach (Song of the Bees) performance Graphic Score, Glenstal Abbey, Murroe, Co. Limerick, 2012.
Image: Mikael Fernström.

video documentation of the live Glenstal Abbey performance, audio recordings, and an e-book documenting the process and progression of the project, from conception to performance (Fig. 9).

In July 2014, Softday created and performed a Swedish version of *Amhrán na mBeach* entitled ‘Sonic Pareidolic Ceromancy’, which was performed at the Harp Art Lab in Harplinge in Sweden as part of the BZZZ! International Sound Art Festival 2014⁹. In Sonic Pareidolic Ceromancy we disclosed and contrasted the Irish bee data and sound compositions with Swedish CCD bee data and field recordings in collaboration with, a community of interest comprised of Swedish beekeepers, performers and musicians. Softday undertook a public Creative Soundwalk in the village of Harplinge, located in the Halmstad municipality in county Halland in South West Sweden. The soundwalk formed part of a series of socially engaged processes and fledgling Acouscenic Listening experiments that eventually informed the finished version of Sonic Pareidolic Ceromancy. Twenty-two members of the public participated in the Harplinge soundwalk and the creative outcome of that soundwalk was the first Acouscenic Listening co-authored sound map/graphic score. We visited a number of apiaries in county Halland and undertook empirical research and field recordings with the beekeepers.

In August 2015 Softday was offered a month long art residency at the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris. For this residency we proposed to work in collaboration with a Paris based curator and director of Leonardo/Olats Annick Bureaud on a new project inspired by urban beekeeping in Paris and our scientific and creative findings conducted during our *Amhrán na Beacha* (Song of the Urban Bees) art project of 2014.

In Paris Softday established a new community of interest and began a dialogue with a number of Parisian beekeepers and musicians in an attempt to reveal the unique and hidden soundscapes of Paris apiaries and to create a sound art performance inspired by the everyday soundscapes of Paris and data around pollination and bees. Paris boasts some 400–500 urban beehives that are located in municipal parks, private gardens and on rooftops of iconic buildings such as Opera Garnier, Galeries Lafayette Haussmann, Grand Palais, and the École Militaire. In our initial research period and before the residency



Figure 9, Amhrán na mBeach – Song of the Bees, USB Artefact. Photos: Robert Corrigan.

commenced, we contacted the Association L'Abeille de Grand Paris (The Association of the Bee of Greater Paris) who introduced us to a number of urban beekeepers in Paris.

During the period of the residency at the Centre Culturel Irlandais, Softday mapped a considerable amount of urban hives and undertook field recordings at apiaries and locations across the city. Employing Acouscenic Listening methodologies we also conducted a public Creative Soundwalk workshop exploring the unique soundscapes of the Rucher école apiary at the Jardin du Luxembourg in the 6th Arrondissement. Participants on the Acouscenic Listening workshop created a sound map/graphic score of the Jardin du Luxembourg soundwalk (Fig. 10). In this instance participants did not wish to continue working with Softday in realising the full performance of the sound map/graphic score. Each participant was given a jpg-file of the sound map for further use if they so wished. In September 2015 we premiered the live performance of *Chant des Abeillies-Song of the Paris Bees* with Parisian sound artists Dinah Bird and Jean-Philippe Renoult, at the Centre Culturel Irlandais.¹⁰ The improvised performance included field recordings of the Paris apiaries and city centre soundscapes, audio interpretations of the Jardin du Luxembourg Creative Soundwalk soundmap/graphic score, a public *Soundalong* and other acousmatic sound elements.

After the original performance of *Amhrán na mBeach* we have had



Figure 10. Mapping the Le Rucher-école at Jardin du Luxembourg soundwalk, Paris, August 2015. Photo: Sean Taylor

several opportunities to deliver re-mediated versions of this work. In a re-mediated version where we don't have access to an orchestra or trained laptop beekeepers, we use samples from the recordings we made during the original performances. While a re-mediated performance can be quite different to the original performance, a re-mediated performance is a statement or reveal of the oft-unheard narratives and memories from the original community of interest that we are bringing forward to new audiences. Some of the audience at the original performance were direct stakeholders or participants in some way, while audiences experiencing a re-mediated work can only have an indexical relation to the original work.

Conclusion

The practice of Acouscenic Listening folds the traditions of soundwalking and Deep Listening into the discourse of spatial practice theorized by Oliveros, Westerkamp, Lefebvre and De Certeau and creatively engaged by Debord, the Situationists and Fluxus. These theories of spatiality and listening reveal connections between urban space and everyday life, in relationship to the body, creative/social action and the re-mediated environment.

The work of Softday through the Acouscenic Listening methodology and the Creative Soundwalk, offers new artistic perspectives on the relationships between body, landscape, soundscape and the everyday whilst challenging assumptions that the predominance of anthropogenic sounds can be linked to a lack of environmental quality, or that they inhibit the perception of other natural sounds. Encouraging participants to function as self-directed listening learners is an important cognitive strategy in order to improve perceptual intuition to aural clues. This creates the possibility for participants to practice and enhance their skills beyond the Creative Soundwalk experience, in an everyday context, and attain proficient levels of personalised listening skills. This physical approach to listening to sound offers yet another approach to learning through listening.

Acouscenic Listening and the Creative Soundwalk retains the concept that contemporary art production requires levels of technical and theoretical knowledge, but it also accentuates the value that non-art specialities bring to the creative process.

The resulting Acouscenic Listening manifestations sit at the intersections of cultural anthropology and contemporary sound art practice, whilst drawing on a range of creative languages. We argue for a creative re-exploration of the human listening experience in

a non-judgemental frame of mind, where an active listener can consider all aspects and elements of a soundscape with an open mind. Furthermore, as discussed in the Amhrán na mBeach case study, the methodology can be used to help fuse data and context in a work of sound art.

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Endnotes

- 1 <https://softday.ie/>
- 2 <https://softday.ie/deadzones/>
- 3 http://donegalpublicart.ie/dpa_lovelyweather.html
- 4 <https://softday.ie/sonicsidewalks/>
- 5 <https://softday.ie/wld2011/>
- 6 <https://softday.ie/wld2012/>
- 7 <https://softday.ie/antiausterity/>
- 8 <https://softday.ie/hypoxia/>
- 9 <https://softday.ie/bees/spc.html>
- 10 <http://softday.ie/bees/paris/>