

Ear to the Earth: It Started in the Dark Ear to the Earth : tout a commencé dans le noir

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Article abstract

Ear to the Earth was an idea that grew out of a power failure on the coast of Maine while I was on vacation. Back in New York, and using acoustic ecology as a conceptual basis, I proposed environmental-sound events to colleagues at the Electronic Music Foundation. The first major festival took place in October 2006. Dr. Cynthia Rosenzweig, Senior Research Scientist at the NASA Goddard Space Center and leader of the Climate Impacts Group, pointed out that climate change was a fact. The first festival, which took place at various venues in New York City, included seven concerts, three panels, and seven installations, among them *Suspended Sounds*, using sounds of extinct, endangered, and threatened species contributed by The Macaulay Library at the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology. The festival, as a program of the Electronic Music Foundation, became an annual event every October in New York until 2013. In November 2012, we recreated it with an enlarged mission as an independent non-profit corporation in New York.

Ear to the Earth: It Started in the Dark

Joel Chadabe

Background

In its April 25, 2005 issue, *The New Yorker* magazine published the first part of Elizabeth Kolbert's three part series, titled "The Climate of Man." It pointed to scientific evidence that our climate was changing. The second part, in the subsequent issue of the magazine, described the disappearance of ancient civilizations. And the third part, in the subsequent issue of the magazine, focused on the politics of climate change.¹ I had brought those copies of the magazine with me to Stonington, a small and beautiful lobster-port village on Deer Isle in Maine, to read during my vacation there in July. But, in fact, the boats, our walks along the shore of Penobscot Bay, our social moments with friends, and the beautiful weather, all kept me from reading. And then late one evening, just before I sat down with my wife to dinner, there was a major blackout. No electricity, no light. We took a flashlight, jumped in the car, and drove to the village market, arriving just before they closed. They stayed open for us just long enough to give us candles and batteries. In candlelight and flashlight-light, I read the three articles.

My first reaction was that we, as human beings, did not have a lot of time to waste. As president of Electronic Music Foundation (EMF)², I asked myself, what can we do? During the fall of 2005 and into the spring of 2006, I discussed the possibilities with my partners.

I understood the power of sound. It was clear that we are always hearing and listening to the world around us. And because we hear and listen to everything at the same time, to what's ahead of us, to our sides, and behind us, it is sound that gives us immediate information about the space we occupy. It is our analysis of the sounds around us that tells us where to look and whether or not we need to act. It lets us define distance, direction, and movement, to

1. See Kolbert, 2005a, 2005b and 2005c.

2. For information about EMF, see: <www.emf.org> (accessed May 13, 2015).

become aware of immediate danger or to find our friends and families. It is the sound around us that gives rhythm to our movements, that enables peaceful or restless feelings, that gives emotional meaning to our communications in songs, shouts, and speech, and in many different ways at different levels of awareness, it is sound that engages us with our environment and affects our actions.

I was aware that environmental sound art explores, discovers, enhances, and/or transforms sounds, making the quotidian sounds of the world special, illuminating, and engaging. Steven Feld's recordings of the Bosavi Rainforest, for example, not only make the sounds of the rainforest extraordinary, they connect us to the rainforest, they give us a sense of what it feels like to be there. One of Feld's keen interests was the connection between sound and culture. In *The Soundscape Newsletter*, June, 1994, he pointed out that one of the

sounds of the Bosavi environment, layered as a ground to the remarkable figures of avian life, is the hiss of water. Runoff from Mt. Bosavi, an extinct volcano, crisscrosses the Bosavi lands, turning into numerous rivers, creeks, falls, and streams. [...]

Water flow also animates much of Kaluli musical imagination, as all waterway terms are also the names for the musical intervals, the segments of song, the patterns of rhythm, and the contours of melody.³

3. Feld, 1994, online.

As a composer, I had been interested in a research activity launched in the early 1970s by R. Murray Schafer at Simon Fraser University, in Vancouver, known as the World Soundscape Project. It had grown out of Schafer's initial attempt to draw attention to the sonic environment through a course in noise pollution. As Schafer wrote in *The Tuning of the World*: "The soundscape of the world is changing. Modern man is beginning to inhabit a world with an acoustic environment radically different from any he has hitherto known..."⁴

4. Schafer, 1977, p. 3.

Schafer's idea was that we should understand how we interact, individually and collectively, with the sounds around us, and that our understanding could lead us towards monitoring and controlling our sonic environment.

It was the beginning of a new field called acoustic ecology. Among the first audio works to emerge from the World Soundscape Project was *The Vancouver Soundscape*, in 1973, motivated not as art but as a study of the local sonic environment. Schafer worked with a small group of pioneers, among them Hildegard Westerkamp and Barry Truax, their initial goal being to document and analyze soundscapes and to promote general awareness of our acoustic environment. It was not long, however, before the focus broadened from a specific interest in our acoustic ecology to include the creation of soundscape compositions.

It was a musical revolution. Other composers had used found sounds, but soundscapes had a particular definition. A soundscape composition had to relate to a place. As a sound art recording, it could be an audio ‘photograph,’ or it could be a transformation of a recorded sound, but to qualify as a *soundscape* it had to relate to a place.

The tenets of acoustic ecology, in particular the necessity of connections between sound and place, provided a conceptual base and an important starting line for EMF to begin its events, and even if EMF’s aim did not target our sound environment, we shared a strong interest with acoustic ecologists in using sounds to engage people in issues of our physical environment and climate change.

In 2005, as it became increasingly clear to a wide public that climate change and destruction of habitat were occurring within an emergency time-frame, I proposed a series of environmental sound events to my colleagues at EMF. Many expressed opinions that the character of our events should indeed be strongly environmental, with scientists as well as artists participating in panels in addition to musical events. Working with New York Society for Acoustic Ecology (NYSAE), we started to plan a major festival for the fall of 2006 with two introductory events, in December 2005 and in April 2006, that would introduce the idea of environmental sound to New York City audiences.

The first event was Knowing the World Through Sound, an all-day symposium and concert presented on December 11, 2005, at the Frederick Loewe Theater in New York in collaboration with the NYU Music Technology program. It began with two morning workshops: first, by Andrea Polli and members of NYSAE who described their New York City Soundmap Project; and second, by Steven Feld, who discussed the techniques he had used for field recording in the Bosavi Rainforest, Africa, Europe, and Japan. The keynote speaker was E. J. McAdams, at that time Executive Director of New York City Audubon, who discussed the role of the arts in presenting environmental issues to the public. There were panels through the afternoon, and an evening concert featuring environmentally-related music by Miya Masaoka, David Rothenberg, David Dunn, and Steven Feld.

The second event was Sound and Science, which took place on April 3, 2006, at Hunter College in collaboration with the Department of Film and Media Studies. The event featured a presentation by sound artist David Dunn on his environmental recordings and a panel on art and science with Dunn joined by scientists Jim Tolisano and James Danoff-Burg. By an interesting coincidence, Elizabeth Kolbert, in the Talk of the Town section of *The*

New Yorker magazine, issue of March 20, 2006, warned us that the mountain pine beetle was eating its way through the Canadian forests. The timing of her words was coincidental because David Dunn's primary concern at the time, and his primary subject for the evening, was his recordings of the New Mexico species of the pine beetle that, along with its Canadian cousins, was decimating huge swaths of forest in the south.

Ear to the Earth, a major week-long festival of environmental sound, took place between October 6 and 14, 2006, at the Winter Garden at the World Financial Center, 3LD Art and Technology Center, Judson Church, and Elevated Acre, all venues in downtown Manhattan. We had support from the New York State Council on the Arts, the French-American Fund for Contemporary Music, and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council with the generous support of the September 11th Fund. Composers, sound artists, and scientists came from England, New Zealand, France, Italy, Canada, Austria, Germany, and throughout the United States to participate in concerts, installations, and panels.

To my knowledge, it was the first major festival of its kind. Although many artists had recognized that our interaction with our environment, both natural and man-made, was a crucial issue of our time, and although that recognition had inspired artists to create an enormous and compelling body of works, there had been no major platform for their public presentation. The plan for Ear to the Earth was to bring a large sampling of those works into galleries, concert halls, and public spaces in New York City, to surround them with discussion, interaction, and knowledge, and to expand their impact through the Internet. Our goal was to engage people in environmental issues through sound.

Put another way, our goal was to use sound to know the world. We heard the song of the Butcher Bird from the Bosavi rainforest, we heard sounds and stories from New Delhi, New York, and many other places, we experienced the sounds of life along the Danube, visited the North Pole, listened to the Amazon River, walked through the sounds of narrow streets in Vancouver, focused on the ecosystem of Manhattan. We took sound walks through the streets of New York. In short, we experienced an immense diversity of works that were based on the sounds of our environment.

At the same time, our environment-based compositions, as much as they may have derived from our perceptions of the world around us, had a larger meaning. Sound art may reflect harmony with our environment, but its interactions with people and with life also represent a goal that allows people to experience, understand, engage, and interact with a complex world. To

put it simply, I learned that environmental art is an exercise in learning and discovery.

The First Ear to the Earth Festival

The first festival began on Friday evening, October 6, 2006, with a talk by Dr. Cynthia Rosenzweig, Senior Research Scientist at the NASA Goddard Space Center and leader of the Climate Impacts Group, who set the tone for the week by pointing to the inevitability of climate change and concluding that our goals now have to be mitigation and adjustment.

There were seven concerts that, among them, included Steven Feld's commentary and sounds from the Bosavi Rainforest, the Arctic Circle in Norway, Japan, and Ghana; Philip Dadson's performance with rocks from the southernmost beaches of New Zealand; David Monacchi's river sounds that approached *bel canto* lyricism; Jean-Claude Risset's music based on recordings of the sea near Marseilles; Cecile Le Prado's portrayal of the European Atlantic coast from Holland to Spain; Hildegard Westerkamp's lyrical imagery of rain in British Columbia; Pierre Marietan's vivid sampling of the sounds of Hanoi; and Robert Rowe's wild trip through the world with sounds defined by the Freesound collection in Barcelona. There were other compositions and performances, by myself, by the Princeton Laptop Orchestra, by members of the New York Society for Acoustic Ecology, and by Maggi Payne, David Dunn, Steven M. Miller, Barry Truax, Thomas Gerwin, Iannis Xenakis, John Cage, Luc Ferrari, Rama Gottfried, and many more.

There were three panels. The first panel took place on October 7, with Philip Dadson, Bernie Krause, Andrea Polli, and Joe Gilmore describing their experiences in the earth's polar regions, how it affected their work, and how their work reflects the realities of those regions. The second panel took place on October 8, with Steven Feld, Annea Lockwood, Bernie Krause, and David Monacchi offering different perspectives on water. I represented the Unesco Young Digital Creators program and described how they encourage students around the world to create digital art to explore real-world problems such as water and urbanization. The third and last panel took place on October 14, with Laurie Spiegel, David Dunn, David Monacchi, and Shankar Barua (through a visual document that I presented in his place) discussed sound art, preservation, and environmental issues with scientist Jim Tolisano who differentiated between art as amusement and art as engagement.

There were seven installations. *Calls of the Wild*, with sounds from Bernie Krause's Wild Sanctuary field recordings archive, turned the Winter Garden at the World Financial Center into a different natural environment every

5. See: <<http://earthtotheearth.org/2015/01/suspended-sounds>> (accessed May 13, 2015).

day. *Elevated Harmonies*, an outdoor installation by Bruce Odland and Sam Auinger, harmonized the sounds from automobile, helicopter, and boat traffic, turning Elevated Acre, a second-story park at 55 Water Street, into a quiet, reflective ambience. *A Sound Map of the Danube River*, an installation by Annea Lockwood at 3LD Art & Technology Center, was based on sounds of the Danube River and conversation by the people who live alongside it and are affected by it. *Ferals*, by Laurie Spiegel, was a touching sound-and-image presentation of the plight of New York City's pigeons. *Fragments of Extinction*, by David Monacchi, was based on recordings from the Jauperi River in the Brazilian Amazon. *N.*, by Andrea Polli and Joe Gilmore, was a quasi real-time installation that portrayed the wind, the barren landscape, and the melting ice of the North Pole as the ice melted under the camera and the camera slid into the sea. The last installation, in place during the last two days of the festival, was *Suspended Sound*, a 3-dimensional virtual-reality immersive audio environment of sounds from extinct, endangered and threatened species, produced by EMF in partnership with Arup Acoustics and New York City Audubon. Alban Bassuet, Senior Acoustics Consultant at Arup Acoustics, designed the sound space with sounds coming from high and low, distant and near, moving in all directions, and all around us. The sounds were provided by The Macaulay Library at the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology and processed for noise reduction by Soundcurrent Mastering. Several composers contributed to the project with ideas, orchestrations, research, organizational skills, and/or audio processing, among them myself, Morton Subotnick, Joan La Barbara, Alvin Curran, David Monacchi, Aleksei Stevens, and Rama Gottfried. For those of us who worked intensively on *Suspended Sounds*, it was emotionally gripping. Joan La Barbara's words, written for the festival website, describe what many of us felt: "As I worked with the sounds of these now extinct or endangered animals and birds, the depth of the poignancy of the situation was almost overwhelming. I felt as if I were breathing life into beings that no longer exist."⁵ It was also an example of the emotional strength that the arts can contribute to environmental engagement. The combinations of sounds in *Suspended Sounds*, the duets, the opposing rhythms, the ensembles of different birds, would not have been encountered in real life. Although all of the sounds at any one time came from the same geographic region, the specific combinations were composed as ensembles, which in fact made them more exceptional, more musical, more accessible, and more engaging.

Many of us who participated in the festival, attending the concerts and panels, found it deeply affecting. By the end of the festival, it had become

clear that environmental sound could be an important vehicle for engaging people in environmental issues. Mark Moffet said it well in “The Tepui,” a brief article written in December 2006 for Arts Electric, EMF’s online magazine. He wrote that “modern ecologists may have reached a limit on how effectively they can convey messages to the public, and they may now need to draw upon the emotional vibrancy offered by the arts.”⁶ At a certain point during the festival, Steven Feld and I concluded that the concept of Ear to the Earth should be continued and sustained in the form of an ongoing network that inspired, encouraged, and supported environmental sound art. EMF followed through in 2007 with the formation of an Ear to the Earth membership, dues, email list, and an ongoing website.⁷

I have often had occasion to say that we can become engaged in the environment through sound at three different levels: We can listen to the sounds of the world around us. We can listen through the ears, sensibilities, and talents of sound artists, which is more compelling and engaging. Or we can create sound art, which leads us to become yet more deeply and thoughtfully engaged.

Yet engagement with the environment is not always a goal of environmental sound art or music, nor is it always an outcome. Olivier Messiaen’s *Catalog of Birds*, for example, contains magnificent piano compositions based on bird-calls, but the compositions do not, and were not meant to, sound an alarm for disappearing species. Played in a concert, they are reminders of the beauty of the natural world. Could such artworks be presented in a context that would interpret them as the sounds of extinct or endangered species? In the festival, it was the panels with scientists and ecologists that gave the sound art its bite, and the beauty of the sound made it all the more poignant. My formula was ‘sound art and multimedia compositions’ + ‘interpretive context defined by panels’ = ‘engagement in the environment.’

Based on a ‘think globally, act locally’ strategy, the newly-formed Ear to the Earth network had as its goal to work at a grass roots level to encourage, support, and promote events that bring environmental activists, scientists, musicians, artists, and the public in all communities together in dialogues; to explore creative formats that mix concert, conference, installation, and performance; and to foster engagement with environmental issues. Once engaged, we can learn. And as we learn, we can help ourselves and others understand what is happening to the world.

6. Moffet, 2006, online.

7. See: <<http://eartotheearth.org>> (accessed May 13, 2015).

A Sequence of Events

Following the major festival of 2006, EMF presented an Ear to the Earth Festival every October through 2012. What follows here are descriptions of some of the highlights from the festivals.

The Ear to the Earth 2007 Festival included a performance of John Cage's *A Dip in the Lake*, assembled in Toronto, performed in Judson Church, New York, by Bill Blakeney, Gayle Young, and George Boski. Bill Blakeney explains the piece:

The published score consists of a list of 427 locations divided into 10 groups of 2 (*Quicksteps*), 61 groups of 3 (*Waltzes*) and 56 groups of 4 (*Marches*). The mental image evoked by the composition is a summer band concert by the lake, with a brass band playing a selection of short instrumental pieces for the amusement of the crowd. [...] The recordings in this performance were made between 2003 and 2007 by Gayle Young, George Boski, and myself. The random selection of addresses resulted in a number of locations with unexpectedly humorous names—examples being the Purple Pig Bar & Grill, Hello Hair Boutique, Beaver Fishery Company, Boris the Friendly Butcher, Hollywood Tickle Trunk [...].⁸

8. Program notes by Bill Blakeney.

In performance, the three performers each controlled four channels of sound, distributed through eight loudspeakers placed throughout the Judson Church Meeting Room. The audience was invited to walk through the space and through the sound to hear the piece from different sonic perspectives.

There were other wonderful presentations in 2007. Andrea Juan described her visits in Antarctica, Bernie Krause described his trip in the Arctic, Julia Calfee told us about her shaman's journey through Mongolia, David Monacchi described his trip in the Amazon, Mark Moffett told the story behind his photos, Andrea Polli led a forum called Citizen Sound. Walter Branchi presented moments from his *Intero* at the New York Friends Meeting House. Bruce Odland and Sam Auinger presented their *Requiem for Fossil Fuels*. They write:

We have used the form of the Requiem Mass as a spiritual lens, and with it we have extracted sounds from the entire output of our work and our recordings of dozens of cities. These will form an orchestra of noise and order—an 'orchestra of cities'—played live by O+A into an 8-channel mix, which will resonate in the acoustics of the Judson Church. Against this orchestra of noise we have scored the words of the Mass for four extraordinary singers, who will sing acoustically at the center of the church. Sometimes they will be buried, as are we all, in the cities' roar. Sometimes they will sing the songs of our victorious machines. All in all, we hope to enact this spectacle in order to listen to who we are and what we have become.⁹

9. Program notes by Bruce Odland and Sam Auinger. See: <www.o-a.info/rfffny/info.html> (accessed May 13, 2015).

The theme for the Ear to the Earth 2008 Festival was New York Sound-
scape. It included *New York Big Fritz*, a name from the psychoacoustic
research model of a ‘listening head’ called Fritz that wears microphones
instead of ears. *New York Big Fritz* was a multimedia event recording sound
in Times Square around the clock. The event was organized by faculty and
students in the NYU Steinhardt Music Technology Program. I was involved,
as were Agnieszka Roginska, Paul Geluso, Tom Beyer, Robert Rowe, and two
graduate students. Agnieszka Roginska said:

It sounds beautiful. And the spatial effect is absolutely superb. It’s all Times Square
in the triangle between 45th and 46th street, at 6pm, midnight, 6am, and noon.
This started as a much larger idea, of collecting sounds of various places around
the world. We’re mostly thinking of larger cities like New York, Paris, Moscow,
and analyzing the noise patterns. But in this case, we’ve given the recordings to
four composers who will each take a raw recording, process it, and create a com-
position, and we will assemble all of these compositions and present them at the
festival. The audience will hear Times Square. But better than in Times Square,
because they’ll be hearing it through the ears of artists.¹⁰

10. Personal communication.

Many other artists presented works. The closing event was John Cage’s
Lecture on the Weather. Composed in 1975, commissioned by the Canadian
Broadcasting Corporation in observance of the United States Bicentennial,
it was produced for the festival in collaboration with The John Cage Trust
at Bard College. Cage set the tone in a recorded prelude as he stated his
political, social, and environmental concerns regarding the direction the
country was taking. During the prelude, twelve readers gradually took their
seats in two rows back-to-back. Following the prelude, the readers—Merce
Cunningham, Mari Kimura, Joan La Barbara, Chris Mann, Joan Retallack,
Agnieszka Roginska, Mikel Rouse, Jan Williams, and four others—recited
excerpts from Henry David Thoreau’s writings while a gathering storm
emerged. Lightning, in the form of white shapes from Thoreau’s workbooks,
flashed on screens surrounding the audience. The performance ended in a
storm.

The theme for Ear to the Earth 2009 Festival was biodiversity. I wrote the
following text for the website:

But what does biodiversity mean to the participating artists? Or to you? It means
that entering into a natural environment can result in personal growth. The see-
ing simplicity of Yoko Ono’s *Secret Piece* belies an underlying complexity and
stunning beauty. It means that Bruce Odland and Sam Auinger’s *my eyes... my
ears...* and Elliott Sharp’s *Ganging the Hook* offer different perspectives on urban
environments.

It means that David Monacchi's presentation of the sounds of the Dzanga-Sangha Reserve in the Central African Republic give us the sense of being in a primary equatorial rainforest. And it means that Steven Feld's demonstrations, with the participation of master drummer Nii Otoo Annan, from Accra, Ghana, will show us ways that our environment is reflected in the rhythms and performances of our music.

The theme for Ear to the Earth 2010 Festival was water. It began with an invitation by Jennifer Monson, director of iLand (Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art Nature and Dance), in these words that I took from various emails and fliers: "I am writing to invite you to a public event for my latest work, *SIP (Sustained Immersive Process)/watershed*, coming up October 1-3 and 7-10. This is the first phase of a year-long project and we are experimenting with inviting the audience into elements of our process..."

It continued with an evening Hudson River sail. In my words:

Launched by Pete Seeger in May 1969 to promote the cleanup of the Hudson River, the sloop Clearwater has been sailing up and down the Hudson since then, inviting people to explore the river and fostering environmental education. To see the Hudson River shores from the water was not only a beautiful experience, it also reminded us that New York is a coastal city, connected to the oceans of the world, and that the Hudson is one of the world's great rivers with a great heritage. The weather was perfect, a strong breeze propelled the boat, we served soft drinks, wine and hors d'oeuvre, a crew member played the violin, and Tom Beyer made a field recording of the trip.¹¹

11. This text was part of a report of the festival that I wrote for the website.

R. Murray Schafer discussed his work. Bernie Krause joined in and conducted a public discussion. Among many other present and participating artists, there were: Annea Lockwood, David Monacchi, Matthew Burtner & Scott Deal, Phill Niblock & Katherine Liberovskaya. Yet other artists, whose fixed media work constituted a listening program, included Barry Truax, Maggi Payne, and Francisco Lopez.

The theme for Ear to the Earth 2011 Festival is described in the following paragraph:

New York Soundscape, the theme of the Ear to the Earth Festival 2011, is a panoramic portrayal of New York City's personality and urban ecology in sound, including documentary field recordings and sound art compositions (as well as images and multimedia) created by sound artists, students, and New Yorkers from all walks of life. It is an ongoing project, begun in the context of the Ear to the Earth Festival in 2008, aimed at creating a collection of works that in their ensemble portray the audio personality and urban ecology of New York City at this time in history.¹²

12. I wrote this promotional statement for the website, introducing Ear to the Earth 2011 Festival.

We organized a jam session at Issue Project Room to explore sounds and images that were recorded in Brooklyn. Milica Paranosic, at The Point in the Bronx, performed *A Bronx Tale*, composed with sounds she had recorded in the Bronx. Joseph Kubera and I recorded Staten Island sounds that Kubera performed at Snug Harbor Cultural Center. Izzi Ramkissoon performed with the teenage group Urban Art Beat at Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens. And Richard Lainhart performed *Manhattan Sounds* at the Greenwich House Music School in Manhattan.

Ear to the Earth 2012 Festival was less a festival than a series of events through the fall of 2012 and spring of 2013. The first event in the 2012-2013 series was *Birdcage Bricolage*, on October 9 at Experimental Intermedia Foundation, with canaries in a cage. While Leslie Ross performed her hand-made bassoon, Katherine Liberovskaya picked up the canaries' motions in their cage to trigger sounds and images as they sang, hopped from perch to perch, to bath to feeder. The process was shown on a screen.

The second event in the 2012-2013 series was Non-place/Place, November 26 at Judson Church. As described in the program note, Gill Arno and Daniel Neumann organized, in space and time, field recordings sent by multiple phonographers from many countries.

A group of local sound artists and musicians, performing with acoustic as well as electronic instruments, created an acoustic topology of a world of non-place spaces, of presence and solitude.

The concept of non-place was based on anthropologist Marc Augé's observation that airports, railway stations, leisure parks, hotel chains, and supermarkets, for example, are places of transience that are not significant enough to us to be considered places in our lives. They are non-places because they do not relate to us, or contain a history that we share, or an identity that is ours, whereas we have a relationship and feel a history and identity with what we think of as places. In Augé's line of thought, "non-places are a measure of our time." They suggest a perspective of, as he calls it, supermodernity, in which travelers feel part of a larger world yet feel solitude, as if they are always yet never at home.¹³

13. Arno and Neumann, 2012, online.

Daniel Neumann explains the concept as represented in the music:

The musicians on-site in Judson Church are confronted with an acoustic environment of displaced recordings which address the notion of non-places. Gill and I have specified different modes of listening as the 'score' for the concert, which the musicians follow in their reactions to the environment and to each other. We chose musicians that have a vocabulary of textural, unusual sounds rather than traditional, expressive melodies, and in their listening and reacting, we ask them to remember that neither places nor non-places ever exist in pure form. One can have characteristics of both and can change into the other.¹⁴

14. *Ibid.*

15. This text was read by John Cage, at the invitation of Bonnie Bird, a member of the dance faculty, to a group of artists at the Cornish School of Fine Arts in Seattle in 1937. It was not until 1958, in the booklet accompanying George Avakian's recording of Cage's 25-Year Retrospective Concert, that it appeared in print.

16. This expression first appeared in Joel Chadabe, 1996, p. 21.

17. This collection is available at the Ear to the Earth website.

The third event in the 2012-2013 series, at the Whitebox Art Center from Thursday December 20 to Sunday December 23, was *100 x John: A Global Salute to John Cage*. In 1937, in a talk titled *The Future of Music: Credo*, John Cage said: "I believe that the use of noise to make music will continue and increase until we reach a music produced through the aid of electrical instruments which will make available for musical purposes any and all sounds that can be heard..."¹⁵ As a global salute to Cage for his leadership in what I called "the great opening up of music to all sounds,"¹⁶ and in the spirit of the 100th anniversary year of his birth, EMF created a collection of 100 compositions and sounds—60 compositions, 40 sounds, all based on field recordings, natural and urban, some using also traditional instruments and voice—by composers and sound artists around the world.¹⁷

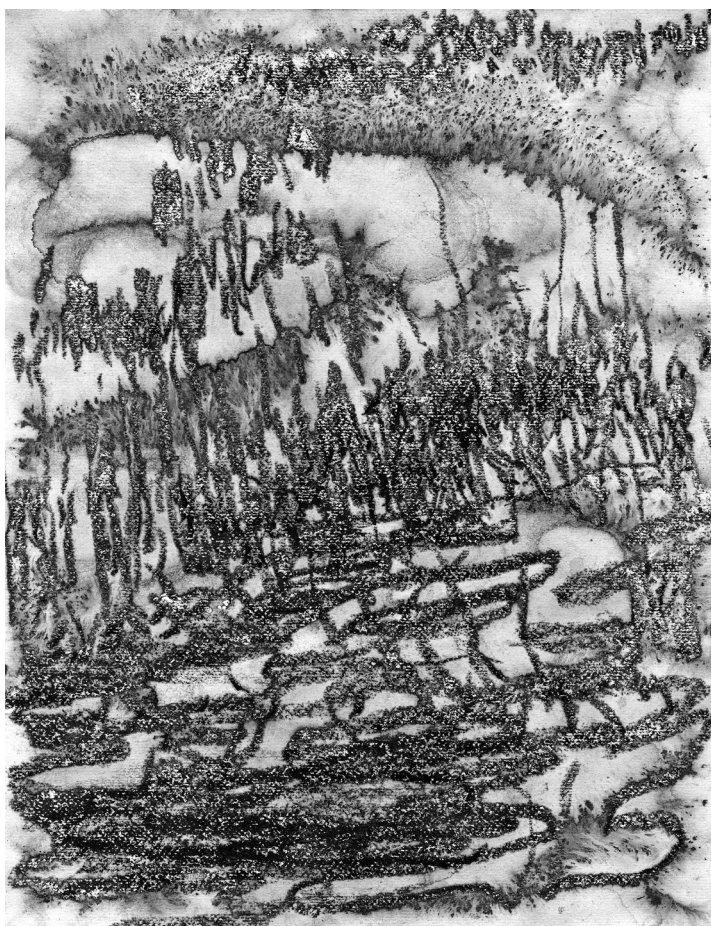
The fourth and last event in the 2012-2013 series, which took place on May 22, 2013 at Judson Church, was *Insect Music*. This program was about the once-in-17-years emergence of periodic cicadas in the New York area, which happened around New York in the spring of 2013. Organized by David Rothenberg, the participants included Dan Mozgaj, cicada expert; Richard Robinson, film maker; and Pauline Oliveros, Timothy Hill, and Garth Stevenson improvising with cicadas.

By the end of the 2012-2013 series of concerts, many of us who had been involved in Ear to the Earth noted that the game had changed and that in order to maintain a sustainable and useful line of activities, we had to jump forward into a strong global stance and deal more directly with climate issues on a global level. For one thing, Ear to the Earth is no longer a program of EMF. It is now its own organization with an international board of directors, all of us aware that art and sound art will need to play a more educational and aggressive role than they have in the past, pointing to solutions as well as problems and reimagining how the arts might function for social good. Indeed, there's an idea in the air. It's about the arts as something active and useful in our lives.

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