

SOUND AND SPACE

Spring 2014
NMDS 5422 / CRN 7572

Shannon Mattern
matterns@newschool.edu
Barry Salmon
salmonb@newschool.edu

Technical Associate:
Josephine Holtzman
holtj201@newschool.edu

Silence itself, in a place of worship, has its music. In cloister or cathedral, space is measured by the ear: the sounds, voices and singing reverberate in an interplay analogous to that between the most basic sounds and tones; analogous also to the interplay set up when a reading voice breathes new life into a written text. Architectural volumes ensure a correlation between the rhythms that they entertain (gaits, ritual gestures, processions, parades, etc.) and their musical resonance. It is in this way, and at this level, in the *non-visible*, that bodies find one another. – Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*

Sound is not something merely projected into a space. Space is not merely sound's container. To the contrary, sound has the potential to *define* space, to create metaphorical walls. Sound “happens” in space; its waves traverse a distance from source to ear. Furthermore, both sound and space have a structural design, an architectonics. This seminar addresses the sonic qualities of space, the spatial properties of sound, and the myriad other links between space and sound. We will begin by addressing theories of space – particularly those that acknowledge the role of sound, or silence, in shaping and giving character to space. We will then move on to examine some historical examples in which sonic and spatial constructions have worked in concert to define a place in time. The remainder of the semester is devoted to a variety of sound/space applications: artists crafting spaces out of sound, architects creating sonic spaces, sonic landscapes and sculptures, sound in mediated spaces, and auditory media's role in shaping spaces or demarcating boundaries.

Students will complete regular short writing assignments and presentations, and, for their final projects, will have the choice of completing a traditional research project or a theoretically-informed creative/production project. **The class will meet in the new Made in NY Media Center in Dumbo, Brooklyn**, and final projects may be exhibited and/or performed as part of a public exhibition, demonstration, or workshop.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Think critically about sound in relation to and separate from conceptual and physical space.
- Appreciate the importance of a critical examination of sound to both media studies and spatial design practices.
- Practice interdisciplinary scholarship and critical making, and appreciate the special challenges and responsibilities of this work.

RESOURCES

Class Website. You'll find the most up-to-date course info, along w/ pdfs of all the readings, here: <http://www.wordsinspace.net/sound-space/2014-spring/> To access the readings, you'll be prompted to enter a username and password, which we'll share with you on the first day of class.

Texts: All readings – aside from the Bachelard text – are available on the class website as pdfs.

Tickets: All students will be asked to purchase a ticket to the Wozzek performance at Carnegie Hall.

REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation. We need everyone to show up regularly, on time, and prepared to ensure that we have sufficient time for discussion and hands-on lab work. You will be permitted **two excused absences** (“excused” means that you must have contacted me *prior* to class to inform us of your absence) for the semester. Additional excused absences – and any unexcused absences – will negatively affect your grade. **More than three absences**, excused or unexcused, will result in failure of the course; if you anticipate needing to miss several classes, you are advised to drop the course. A pattern of late arrivals is likewise detrimental.

There are various ways to participate: We hope you’ll all contribute regularly to class discussions and take part in our lab workshops, but we also invite you to *post relevant resources, project updates, etc., to our class website*. Attendance and Participation are worth **20%** of your final grade.

In-Class Design Exercises. Throughout the semester we’ll complete a number of lab exercises; we’ll begin our work in class, and you’ll need to complete the exercise for the following class – and be prepared to share it and talk about it. We’ll critique your work, but you won’t receive a formal evaluation. You’ll simply receive credit for completing each exercise. Keep in mind that these productions need not be *magnum opi*; they’re merely *exercises* – but they do require thoughtful conceptualization and execution. This work is worth **20%** of your final grade.

Project Proposal + Positioning Paper. By **April 3**, each student will submit via Google Drive, to both Barry and Shannon, a **1200- to 1500-word paper** that lays out the critical/conceptual/theoretical framework for his or her proposed final project, and describes that proposed project. The proposal should include (1) a project description and/or research question; (2) a substantial discussion of the theoretical/historical/aesthetic context for the proposed project; (3) a discussion of your proposed methodology and/or production plan; and (4) a bibliography identifying relevant scholarly and popular resources and/or creative precedents (must include at least three scholarly references!). The proposal is worth **20%** of your final grade.

Final Project. Over the course of the semester, each student will design and execute a project that explores some relationship between space and sound, and that lends itself well to exhibition. Our work will be exhibited, sometime during the final two weeks of the semester, in the Made in NY Media Center in Dumbo (specific schedule and location TBD in consultation with Media Center staff). Your final project should be accompanied by a **900- to 1500-word “support paper”** that explains its conceptual, theoretical, historical, and/or aesthetic underpinnings, as well as a **100- to 150-word wall text** for the exhibition. The project, due **May 15**, is worth **40%** of your grade.

JAN. 30

INTRODUCTION

CONSIDERING ESSENCES WHILE AVOIDING ESSENTIALISMS

The following will be referenced in class; you're not expected to have read these texts for class, but you're certainly welcome (and encouraged) to!

- Jonathan Sterne, "Sonic Imaginations" In Sterne, Ed., *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 1-17.
- Brandon LaBelle, "Sociality of Sound: John Cage and Musical Concepts" In *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2007): 7-23.
- Overview of Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, and Gill Valentine, *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004).
- Richard Cavell, "A Short History of Space" and "Prosthetic Aesthetics" In *McLuban In Space* (University of Toronto Press, 2002): 3-30, 69-90.
- Brandon LaBelle, "Conceptualizations: Michael Asher and the Subject of Space" In *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2007): 87-97.
- Daniel F. MacGilvray, "The Proper Education of Musicians and Architects" *Journal of Architectural Education* 46:2 (November 1992): 87-94.

SOUNDLAB

- **In Class:** Walk around Dumbo. Consider what distinguishes its spatial and sonic character from The New School's neighborhood and your own neighborhood. Try to develop a vocabulary, without resorting to essentialisms, to describe these characters. Identify a few neighborhood-specific "soundmarks." Then we'll compare *our* initial sonic impressions with the official, copyrighted Soundwalk.com Dumbo soundwalk.

FEB. 6

RESONANT BODIES [MEET ON-CAMPUS]

- Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007): 1-46.
- Brandon LaBelle, "Word of Mouth: Christof Migone's Little Manias" In *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2007): 133-146.
 - Christof Migone, *Crackers* (1998).
- Gascia Ouzounian, "Embodied Sound: Aural Architectures and the Body" *Contemporary Music Review* 25:1/2 (February/April 2006): 69-79.
- Shannon Mattern, "[...with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it...](#)" *Words In Space* [blog post] (June 3, 2013).

SOUNDLAB

- **In Class:** Basic Production Tutorial: Discuss Equipment and Submission Formats

FEB. 13

SOUNDING BODIES

- Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, “Auditory Spatial Awareness” In *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?: Experiencing Aural Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007): 11-66.
- Ola Stockfeld, “Adequate Modes of Listening” In Christoph Cox & Daniel Warner, Eds., *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (New York: Continuum, 2004): 88-93.
- Christoph Cox, “Beyond Representation and Signification: Toward a Sonic Materialism” *Journal of Visual Culture* 10:2 (2011): 145-161.
- Max Lord, “[Why Is That Thing Beeping?](#)” *Boxes and Arrows* (August 31, 2004).
- Roman Mars, “[The Sound of the Artificial World](#)” *99% Invisible* 15 (February 11, 2011) [podcast].
- Roman Mars, “[The Accidental Music of Imperfect Escalators](#)” *99% Invisible* 43 (December 19, 2011) [podcast] (click “listen”).

SOUNDLAB

- **In-Class:** Explore [Max Neuhaus](#), [Zimoun](#), [Listening Instruments](#), [e-sounds](#), [Designing Sound Objects](#)
- **For Next Class:** Listen to yourself listening. Consider the sounds of quotidian objects you encounter in your everyday environments and routines. Create a three-minute recording, edited “in-camera,” of three discrete object-events that exemplify three widely disparate stages of your day. Remember, these exercises need not be *magnum opi*; they're *exercises*!

FEB. 20

ECHOES OF PLACE

- Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Beacon Press, 1994 /1958).
- Brandon LaBelle, “Finding Oneself: Alvin Lucier and the Phenomenal Voice” In *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2007): 123-132.

SOUNDLAB

- Share and critique our recorded object-events.

FEB. 27

LISTENING IN AND AGAINST NATURE

- Toru Takemitsu, in *Music from Nature, Terra Nova: Nature & Culture 2* (Summer 1997).
- Jacques Attali, “Sacrificing” In Brian Massumi Trans., *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003): 21-45.
- **Excerpts** from G. W. F. Hegel, “The Relation of the Ideal to Nature” In *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art: Volume I: 160 -174 and Volume II, Section I: Architecture: 630-690, Section III; Chapter ii, Music: 888-955.*
- T. W. Adorno, “Natural Beauty,” in *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 61-77.
- Francisco López, “[Environmental Sound Matter](#)” [liner notes] *La Selva: Sound Environments from a Neotropical Rain Forest* (1998).

SOUNDLAB

- **In-Class Viewing / Listening:**
 - Takemitsu, *Requiem*
 - Excerpts from *Music for the Movies: Toru Takemitsu* (Dir. Charlotte Zwerin)
 - *Musique de la Grece Antique (Ancient Greek Music)*, Atrium Musicae de Madrid (Audio CD)
 - Music of Mali, miscellaneous excerpts
 - Doug Aitken’s [Sonic Pavilion](#)

MAR. 6

SOUNDING THE SACRED

- Miriam Kolar, “[Tuned to the Senses: An Archaeoacoustic Perspective on Ancient Chavin](#)” *The Appendix* 1:3 (July 22, 2013).
- Hope Bagenal, “Bach’s Music and Church Acoustics” *Music & Letters* 11:2 (April 1930): 146-155.
- **Excerpts from** Karl Berger, Introduction & “Bach’s Cycle” *Bach’s Cycle, Mozart’s Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008): 1-19, 45-131.
- Richard Cullen Rath, “No Corner for the Devil to Hide” In Sterne, Ed., *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 130-140.
- Virginia Postrel, “Come All Ye Faithful” *D Magazine* (July 2002): [reprinted on vpostrel.com](#)
- Tong Soon Lee, “Technology and the Production of Islamic Space: The Call to Prayer in Singapore” *Ethnomusicology* 43:1 (Winter 1999): 86-100.
- Roman Mars & Sam Greenspan, “[Heyoon](#)” *99% Invisible* 83 (July 2, 2013) [podcast].

SOUNDLAB

- **In-Class:** Listen to excerpts from Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179). Screen excerpts of *Into Great Silence* (Dir. Philip Gröning, 2005). Listen to excerpts from the “Ritual Soundscape” & “Heavenly Sounds” episodes of David Hendy’s [Noise: A Human History](#) series on BBC4. Listen to excerpts from John Zorn’s *Gnostic Preludes*.
- Consider our contemporary *secular* sonic ceremonial spaces.

AFTER CLASS

MAR. 6

Berg’s *Wozzeck* at the [Metropolitan Opera](#)

- Listen in Advance: two preludes, Tristan, Parsifal

MAR. 13

IDEALISM, ARCHITECTURE, AND SOUND

- Alain Badiou, “The Enigma of Parsifal” *Five Lessons on Wagner*, Trans. Susan Spitzer (London: Verso 2011): 135-159.
- Frederich Kittler, “World Breath: On Wagner’s Media Technology” In David J. Levin, Ed., *Opera Through Other Eyes* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993): 215-35.
- Michael Forsyth, “Theme and Variations” In *Buildings for Music: The Architect, The Musician, and the Listener from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985): 3-17
- Katie Mondloch, “A Symphony of Sensations in the Spectator: Le Corbusier’s *Poème électronique* and the Historicization of New Media Arts” *Leonardo* 37:1 (2004): 57-61.

SOUNDLAB

- **For Next Class:** Create an audio catalogue of four Bachelardian acoustic “characters” (e.g., inside/outside, intimate immensity, the miniature roundness) of various architectural spaces around Dumbo (samples should be no more than one minute each). Aim for as wide a variety as possible. You might also consider how these acoustic characters help to (or fail to) distinguish between public and private spaces or between different programmatic functions; or how sound “interpellates” particular publics or conditions various kinds of behavior.

MAR. 20

SOUND AND ARCHITECTURE

- Emily Thompson, “Introduction: Sound, Modernity, and History” and *skim* through “Noise and Modern Culture, 1900-1933,” “Acoustical Materials and Modern Architecture, 1900-1933,” “Conclusion: Rockefeller Center and the End of an Era,” and “Coda” In *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933* (MIT, 2002): 1-12 [+ 115-228, 295-324].
- Shannon Mattern, “[Ear to the Wire: Listening to Historic Urban Infrastructures](#)” *Amodern* 2 (Fall 2013).
- Shannon Mattern, “[Turning Into the Invisible: Roman Mars’s 99% Invisible](#)” [forthcoming in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (2014)].
- Skim through [Soundscape Architecture](#)

SOUNDLAB

- **In-Class Viewing:** *Playtime* (Dir. Jacques Tati, 1967)
- Share and critique our catalogues of architectural sonic characters.

MAR. 27

NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

APR. 3

DESIGNING SOUND SPACES

- Peter Grueneisen, “Basic Acoustics” In *Soundspace: Architecture for Sound and Vision* (Boston: Birkhauser, 2003): 42-71.
- D. G. Malham, “Approaches to Spatialization” *Organized Sound* 3:2 (1998): 167-177.
- Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, “Aural Arts and Musical Spaces” and “Inventing Virtual Spaces for Music” In *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?: Experiencing Aural Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007): 127-214.
- Jonathan Sterne, “Sounds Like Mall of America: Programmed Music and the Architectonics of Commercial Space In *Ethnomusicology* 41:1 (Winter 1997): 22-50.

PANEL DISCUSSION + DEMO?

APR. 10

SONIC METHODS: SOUNDWALKING & SOUNDMAPPING

- Pauline Oliveros, “Some Sound Observations” In Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, Eds., *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (Continuum): 102-6.
- Brandon LaBelle, “Seeking Ursound: Hildegard Westerkamp, Steve Peters, and the Soundscape” *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2007): 201 – 208 [stop @ “Contexts of Dreaming”].
- Hildegard Westerkamp, “[Soundwalking](#)” *Sound Heritage* 3:4 (1974): 18-27.
- Andra McCartney, “[Soundwalking in Queen Elizabeth Park](#)”
- [Janet Cardiff](#): Focus on “Walks,” especially Münster Walk, 1997; Her Long Black Hair, 2004
- David Pinder, “Ghostly Footsteps: Voices, Memories and Walks in the City” *Cultural Geographies* 8:1 (2001): 1-19.
- Jacqueline Waldo, “[Soundmapping: Critiques and Reflections on This New Publicly Engaging Medium](#)” *Journal of Sonic Studies* 1:1 (October 2011).
- Brandon Mechtley, “[Sound Maps on the Web](#)”

Supplemental:

- Mags Adams, Trevor Cox, Gemma Moore, Ben Croxford, Mohamed Refae, and Steve Sharples, “A Palimpsest of Sound in the Urban Environment” In Colin Ripley, Ed., *Architecture | Music | Acoustics Conference Proceedings*, Toronto (7-10 June 2006).
- Michael Gallagher & Jonathan Prior, “Sonic Geographies: Exploring Phonographic Methods” *Progress in Human Geography* (2013).
- John Krygier, “[Making Maps With Sound](#)” [on data sonification] *Making Maps* (25 March 2008).

SOUNDLAB

- **In-Class Listening:** [London Sound Survey](#); Jay Allison et. al. “[New York City: 24 Hours in Public Places](#)” *Transom.org* [28:44]
- **For Next Week:** Create a Sound Map. **Directions to be provided.**
- **Also For Next Week:** Review Barry and Shannon’s feedback on your project proposal, and consider how to synopsise that proposal for a five-minute informal presentation to your classmates.

APR. 17

DISCUSS FINAL PROJECTS + EXHIBITION SOUNDLAB

- Share and critique our Sound Maps

APR. 24

SONIC HISTORIES

History, to paraphrase sound theorist and historian Douglas Kahn, “has been read and looked at in detail but rarely heard.” How do we restore the aural to history? How do we bear the cities of the historical world – their human sounds, natural sounds, sounds of labor, sounds of leisure, etc.? How can we bear histories that preceded recorded sound? What resources does the historian of these periods have recourse to, and how does he or she interpret those resources? What are the methodological and ethical challenges of creating an aural history of a place in time?

- Eric Wilson, “Plagues, Fairs, and Street Cries: Sounding out Society and Space in Early Modern London” *Modern Language Studies* 25:3 (Summer 1995): 1-42.
 - London Sound Survey, [Historical Sounds](#)
 - Skim through Chris Brookes, Paolo Pietropaolo & Alan Hall (BatteryRadio), “[Hark! The Acoustic World of Elizabethan England](#)” BBC Radio 3 [43:32; click yellow “listen” button next to “BBC Radio 3 Sunday Feature” in right-hand sidebar]
- Mark M. Smith, “Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense: Perils and Prospects for Sensory History” *Journal of Social History* 40 (Summer 2007): 841-58.
- Alain Corbin, “Identity, Bells and the Nineteenth-Century French Village” In Mark M. Smith, Ed., *Hearing History: A Reader* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004): 184-204.
 - Peter Leonhard Braun, “[Bells In Europe](#)” The Just Good Radio Show *Re:Sound* 81 (December 22, 2007) [24:15]
- “[The Roaring Twenties](#)” *Vectors* (2013).

SOUNDLAB

- **In-Class Listening:** various episodes of David Hendy’s *Noise: A Human History*, BBC 4 (Spring 2013).
- **In-Class: Mapping Echoes:** We’ll walk around Dumbo (again!) and consult various historical documents about the neighborhood’s history in order to piece together – and speculate about – its sonic history. We’ll add these sonic traces to our Dumbo sound maps.

MAY 1

IMPROVISATORY WEEK

MAY 8

PRESENTATIONS

MAY 15

PRESENTATIONS