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## CHAPTER NINE

### Soundwalking: Aural Excursions into the Everyday

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When you take your ears for a soundwalk, you are both audience and performer in a concert of sound that occurs continually around you. By walking you are able to enter into a conversation with the landscape.<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Soundwalking – a persistent yet markedly peripheral activity of experimental music and sound art – in its most fundamental form, in the words of soundwalker/composer/acoustic ecologist<sup>2</sup> Hildegard Westerkamp, is '... any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are.'<sup>3</sup>

The concatenation of peregrinations with a state of readiness for attentive unprejudiced listening that protracts beyond the walls of the consecrated sites of dedicated otic practices (i.e. concert hall, church, lecture theatre) form the commonality that is soundwalking. Within that definition however, motivation, methodology and manifestation radically vary. It can be a linear, dare I say, composed affaire, scored for ensemble or solo (collective or hermetic). Conversely, eschewing such predetermined prescriptions it can take the form of an extemporized performance, contingent on the vicissitudes of the environment in correspondence with the whims of the composer as sherpa (remembering Heraclitus' philosophy of

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<sup>1</sup> R. Murray. Schafer (ed.), *The Vancouver Soundscape*, (Vancouver, 1978), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Westerkamp was a core member of the World Soundscape Project until its demise in 1975.

<sup>3</sup> Hildegard Westerkamp, 'Soundwalking', *Sound Heritage*, Vol. III No. 4 (1974). Reprinted and updated in Angus Carlyle (ed.), *Autumn Leaves: Sound and the Environment in Artistic Practice*. (Paris, 2007), pp. 49-54.

perpetual flux: ‘You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you.’<sup>4</sup>

A more and more prevalent method is reliant on headphone mediation, where audience/ participant is ordained as pathfinder within an open structure with location-specific psychogeographically devised sonic material being released on cue aided by GPS technology, such as Teri Reub’s *Trace* (1999). And soundwalking has even assumed the form of a book, as with Janet Cardiff’s *The Walk Book* (2005). Soundwalking is something that artists have habitually done *ad infinitum*, and as such it straddles that grey area between fieldwork and arts practice.

Whatever the level of composerly determination and technological mediatization (which at its least asks for a good pair of walking shoes), the hierarchical roles of composer, performer and audience are often indivisible, or at any rate authorship is almost always problematized.

As we shall go into, soundwalking asks questions of our engagement with the outside world with a bias towards aural sensibilities. On one level it demands the reverence of concert hall listening, yet we find ourselves physically placed and passing through the everyday: a state that naturally prompts everyday behaviour, which is at odds with the contingencies of concert hall listening. Thus discernment between signal or noise, foreground and background, aesthetics and function, (i.e. what does the composer intend us to listen to and how should we be listening to it?) becomes a matter of shifting attitudes and sensitivities.

This chapter provides a historical perspective and theoretical context on the trajectory from peripatetic composer to soundwalking as a mode of participatory experimental music in its own right. Moreover, as walking is the means and the physical action of soundwalking, the chapter also expounds on artistic forays in the 1960s into pedestrian behaviour, a trope that crosses over with experimental music culture of the day, and helped give soundwalking credence.

### **The Everyday**

The salient concern in soundwalking is everyday life. Bringing into play the everyday suggests a shared tacit knowledge, whilst validating individual’s behaviour, perception and interpretation. It accesses notions of reality that are mundane and

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<sup>4</sup> Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London, 1991), p. 63.

whose processes are transparent, whilst unwittingly engendering the particular, and due to its very everydayness, habituation renders them invisible, silent and unspoken. Henri Lefebvre, who has championed the study of the everyday, attempted to define the field as “‘what is left over” after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis.’<sup>5</sup>

As we cross the threshold of the auditorium, we adopt the (albeit) vestiges of ritualistic practices of classical musical performance governed by highly conventionalized sonic and social relationships and behaviours. To borrow the adjectives designated by Lefebvre, a concert hall performance can be considered a ‘distinct’, ‘specialized’ and ‘structured activity’, supported by the institutions of knowledge: musicology, performance practice, journalism, etc. It has to be said that concert listening is coated by the everyday<sup>6</sup> and spills in to the everyday<sup>7</sup>, but the actual contractual *focus* of the concert hall bifurcates from its realm.

Despite the occasional occurrence of symbolic representation of *extra-musical* sound (for example, Janequin, Vivaldi, Mozart, Mahler, Russolo, Respighi, Varèse, Messiaen, etc.), Western music culture has spent five centuries increasingly retreating from the sounds of everyday life – enclosed ‘behind padded walls’ of the concert hall, where ‘concentrated listening becomes possible’.<sup>8</sup> It remains anathema for street sounds to spill into the auditorium<sup>9</sup> or the recording studio for that matter, cocooned

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<sup>5</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Volume 1*. trans. John Moore (London, 1991), p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> ‘To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.’ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, 1998), p. 9. Small even includes the cleaners and the ticket sales in this definition.

<sup>7</sup> See Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge, 2000)

<sup>8</sup> R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. (Rochester, 1994), p. 103.

<sup>9</sup> Bridging the noise gap between the political turmoil of the Paris streets and the relative quiet of the theatre, in Antonin Artaud’s *mise-en-scene* direction for Roger Vitrac’s *Coup de Trafalgar* (finally performed in 1934) he proposed that: ‘From the very beginning of the Act, a background noise will be established in order to make one feel the constant presence of life outside.’ (Antonin Artaud, ‘Deux

in its acoustically *neutral* bubble. Such a system is predicated on a notional unbroken circuit form composer to score to performer to listener.

Taking the everyday as its context, soundwalking mingles in the everyday but is not of the everyday. Akin to other modes of cultural performance, such as the classical music concert, it is a kind of limbo activity, where the goals and stresses of everyday life are temporarily lifted, and the sensation of partaking in a performance event is invoked, but distinctively in soundwalking the relationship between participant and everyday life is conspicuously porous. In the jargon of Victor Turner<sup>10</sup>, it is a kind of liminoid activity, ‘the quasi-liminal character of cultural performances’<sup>11</sup>, that ‘... originates outside the boundaries of the economic, political, and structural process, and its manifestations often challenge the wider social structure by offering social critique on, or even suggestions for, a revolutionary re-ordering of the official social order.’<sup>12</sup>

Thus one of the underpinning goals of soundwalking is about circumnavigating habituation, in a process of de-sensitization and consequently re-sensitization, in order to catch a glimpse (*un coup d'oreille*) of the ‘invisible, silent and unspoken’ of the everyday.

### *in situ*

The everyday in turn invokes notions of corporeal emplacement and the concomitant geographical concept of *in situ*: as the surrounding *texture* of which an object is embedded informs its narrative. In the case of soundwalking, the audience’s own physicality and actual embodiment in the *here and now* within the environment is put into the equation in a way that concert listening customarily denies – although

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projets de mise en scene’ (1931), *Oeuvres Completes*, vol. 2, p.147, quoted in Denis Hollier, ‘The Death of Paper, Part Two: Artaud’s Sound System’, *October*, Vol. 80, (Spring 1997):

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<sup>10</sup> Victor Turner, ‘Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow and Ritual’ in Edward Norbeck (ed.), *The Anthropological Study of Human Play*, 60/3 (Houston, 1974), pp. 53-92.

<sup>11</sup> Mathieu Deflem, ‘Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner’s Processual Symbolic Analysis’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30/1 (1991): 14

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

this is a sliding scale, as in some walks the audience is brought into an awareness of dislocation (e.g. Janet Cardiff, Christinas Kubisch, Duncan Speakman); a feeling of being cut off from one's immediate/contiguous environment. The audience and the sounds they encounter whilst in transit inhabit the site (albeit fleetingly); they are *in situ*. The dynamic temporal and spatial relationship engenders a dialogue between listener, sound and location (i.e. *locus sonus*), and narrative unfolds.

The *aural texture* of the soundwalk is formed firstly of background noise from which a signal surfaces amongst other competing signals. For Michel Serres background noise is '... that incessant hubbub, our signals, our messages, our speech and our words are but a fleeting high surf, over its perpetual swell.'<sup>13</sup> This is not simply a superfluous backdrop, however: in the study of the everyday even background noise can be the very stuff of research and its influence should not be overlooked. Referring to it as 'our perennial sustenance'<sup>14</sup>, Serres reminds us that 'We are in the noises of the world, we cannot close our door to their reception, and we evolve, rolling in this incalculable swell.'<sup>15</sup>

The second order of *aural texture* is informed by the overall sensorium<sup>16</sup> *via* the exteroceptive senses (i.e. audition, gustatory, haptic, olfactory, optic, vestibular) of an individual member of the audience. Sense data garnered from the outside world (although privation of a particular sense most commonly achieved by blindfold can be a deliberate compositional strategy, e.g. Ben Patterson's *Tour* (1963), which will be discussed later) forms a composite of affects and triggers a matrix of signification. Thus the audience's multi-modal integration through the literacy of the signs of any given environment that they have exposure to will inevitably colour the experience. Moreover the relative sensitivity to what is present, on a phenomenological level will also help shape the individual aesthetic experience and reading of that experience.

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<sup>13</sup> Michel Serres, *Genesis*, trans. Geneviève James & James Nielson (Ann Arbor, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Serres, *Genesis*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Laurence R. Schehr (Minneapolis, 2007), p. 126.

<sup>16</sup> 'The sensorium is dynamic, relational and political (not the private world psychologists posit), and our senses extend as far as our culture's technologies of sensing (corporeal and extracorporeal) permit them...'. David Howes (ed.), *The Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Cultural Reader* (Berg, 2005)

Due to the ostensible simplicity and universality of soundwalking (most of us can simultaneously walk and listen) and its link to everyday life, such practice can summon the utmost interdisciplinary study, be that experimental music, architecture, acoustics, cultural geography, sociology, natural history, choreography, meteorology, urban design, etc. Perhaps because of these multiple identities it finds itself at the periphery of more established cultural forms.

### **Composer as Aural *Flâneur***

Walter Benjamin, in his vast network of fragmentary observations and quotes *vis-à-vis* nineteenth-century Paris that goes to make the seminal cultural history that is *The Arcades Project* (started in 1927 and abandoned in 1940), citing his old teacher Georg Simmel, distinguishes big cities, ‘by a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear’.<sup>17</sup> Simmel’s conjecture for this ‘uneasiness’ was due to the long time that people had to spend in the presence of each other in public transport. This ocular predisposition is evident throughout *The Arcades Project*, where for the *flâneur*, the urban stroller, ‘who goes botanizing on the asphalt’<sup>18</sup>, the Paris arcades were akin to a ‘diorama’. Benjamin finds one exception, posited by Pierre Larousse from his *Grand Dictionnaire Universel* (Paris, 1872), a kind of the aural *flâneur*<sup>19</sup>: ‘A noise, insignificant to every other ear, will strike that of the musician and give him a cue for a harmonic combination.’<sup>20</sup> The muse for this model was Beethoven, who, mythology retells ‘... was seen walking each and every day ... around the ramparts of the city of Vienna ... who, in the midst of his wanderings, would work out his magnificent symphonies in his head before putting them down on paper.’<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire* (New York, 1997), p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> ‘It was Adorno [‘Radio Physiognomik’ (1939)] who pointed to the station-switching behavior of the radio listener as a kind of aural *flânerie*.’ Susan Buck-Morss, ‘The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering’, in the *New German Critique*, Second Special Issue on Walter Benjamin, No. 39 (Autumn, 1986): 105.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 453 [M20a,1].

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Larousse quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 453-4 [M20a,1].

It was not only in the landscape of the metropolis; the figure of Beethoven traversing the countryside has been a popular theme for artists since the first half of the nineteenth century. However, this is distinct from Benjamin's archetypal *flâneur*<sup>22</sup>, Baudelaire, exemplified in his most famous/infamous collection of poems, *Les Fleur du Mal* (first published in 1857). With its themes of sex and death, garnered from the urban spectacle, Benjamin considered Baudelaire's attitude analogous to that of an explorer in the *wilderness*<sup>23</sup>: 'There is an effort to master new experience of the city within the framework of the old traditional experience of nature. Hence the schemata of the virgin forest and the sea.'<sup>24</sup>

In recurring depictions of Beethoven, however, the representation of his deportment betrays his attitude, one of self-containment and preoccupation: 'he saw nothing; his mind was elsewhere'.<sup>25</sup> This environmentally detached behaviour is concordant with the prevailing bourgeois culture, in an era when walking was elevated from peasant predicament (i.e. in order to get from a. to b. such as the

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<sup>22</sup> This is in contrast to a slightly earlier generation of *flâneurs* (circa 1840), whom, Benjamin recounts, took 'turtles for a walk in the arcades' (Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire* (London, 1997), p. 54.), the turtle setting the pace.

<sup>23</sup> Patrick Süskind's protagonist Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, in *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (1985) provides us with a refreshing yet sinister shift in the bias of the senses, this time an olfactory *flâneur*: 'He would often just stand there, leaning against a wall or crouching in a dark corner, his eyes closed, his mouth half-open and nostrils flaring wide, quiet as a feeding pike in a great, dark, slowly moving current. And when at last a puff of air would toss a delicate thread of scent his way, he would lunge at it and not let go. Then he would smell at just this one odour, holding it tight, pulling it into himself and preserving it for all time.' Patrick Süskind, *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (London, 1987), p. 35. His highly acute sense of smell would lead him through the streets of eighteenth-century Paris, and whilst the *flâneur* is detective-like, Grenouille is driven to homicide in his desire to *grasp* smell: 'No matter what trail the *flâneur* may follow, every one of them will lead him to a crime.' Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Meryon and Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terrail quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 447 [M20a,1].

<sup>25</sup> Pierre Larousse quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 454 [M20a,1].

itinerant *jongleur* and troubadour of the Middle Ages) to cultural pastime and an aid to philosophical musings, warranted in part by John Thelwall's tome, *The Peripatetic* (1793). Echoing Rousseau, Thelwall relates thinking with walking: 'In one respect, at least, I may boast of a resemblance to the simplicity of the ancient sages. I pursue my meditations on foot.'<sup>26</sup>

### **Romantic Ecologists**

The 'ancient sages' in this regard are Aristotle and his school, the Peripatetics, who were said to have conducted their lectures on foot, pacing up and down the colonnade: an account without solid foundations, yet from the eighteenth century, a revered practice<sup>27</sup> that pervaded nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought. It feeds into the cult of the pastoral idyll and the metaphysical figure of the lone artist tackling vast landscapes that propel the individual into the sublime; this is the era of the romantic ecologists Wordsworth and Coleridge. Although contexts and agendas differ, in Rebecca Solnit's history of walking practices *Wanderlust* (2002), she articulates what walking has to offer the artist:

Walking, ideally, is a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord. Walking allows us to be in our bodies and in the world without being made busy by them. It leaves us free to think without being wholly lost in our thoughts.<sup>28</sup>

In that regard Mahler comes to mind. For Mahler, taking long hikes in the Tyrol was a congenial even obligatory compositional process, although this activity was curtailed in later life by heart disease (c.1908). In a letter to Bruno Walter he laments his wanderings:

For years I have grown used to taking strenuous exercise, to walking in forests and over mountains and boldly wrestling my ideas from nature ... I have never been able to work only at my desk – I need outside exercise for my inner exercises ... the desired effect of forgetting my body.<sup>29</sup>

His neurosis led his mind back to his body with continual monitoring of his pulse. He even carried a pedometer<sup>30</sup> to restrain his pace.

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<sup>26</sup> John Thelwall, quoted in Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York, 2002), p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Mahler quoted in Edward Seckerson, *Mahler* (London, 1984), p. 119.

<sup>30</sup> Seckerson, p. 119.

Of course singing (mental or actual), or humming and whistling often accompanies walking, albeit unwittingly. Percy Grainger's *Walking Tune* for wind 5-some (*Room-Music Tit-bits No. 3*, 1904) is one such example, the quasi-Celtic tune coming to the 18 year old Grainger whilst he was on a three day trek in Western Argyllshire (Scotland) in the summer of 1900. Charles Amirkhanian based his homage to Grainger on *Walking Tune*. Amirkhanian's *Walking Tune (A Room-Music for Percy Grainger)* (1986–7) blends synclavier sounds, Grainger pastiche, and field recordings, including the sound of tramping and a swarm of humming birds, plus ambient recordings from Australia.<sup>31</sup>

For Beethoven, Mahler or Grainger or to that mind Elgar – a keen cyclist, whose music often calls for 72 beats a minute, the average rate of a heart beat<sup>32</sup> – these perambulations take the role of catalyst for fantasy. The resulting exhilaration can provide tempi, and untethered from everyday concerns, help promote a creative frame of mind. The sounds they encounter *in situ* can act as a prompt, but the semblance to the *real world* in such work tends to be symbolic in intent and delivery. Peppered throughout the poetry and prose of the Lake District poets we often find allusion to sounds of the *wilderness*. Attributing a 'voice to nature'<sup>33</sup>, Coleridge writes of the 'the brook's chatter' and 'the breeze, murmuring indivisibly'.<sup>34</sup> But these notions have less to do with the sounds themselves and the context that gave rise to them, and more to do with romantic ideology. This is analogous to, say Mahler's mimicking of bird song in *Der Trunkene im Frühling* (The Drunken men in spring), from the fifth song from *Das Lied von der Erde* (1907–9), which functions as a harbinger of spring. And in the fifth movement of *Symphony No. 3 in D minor* (1893–6) where we hear a children's choir imitate the bells, the movement had the working title of 'What the Morning Bells Tell Me' (and later, replaced by 'What the Angels Tell Me'). This double edged relationship with the sound world that the composer

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<sup>31</sup> A similar eclectic yet considered mix of field recordings and synclavier are brought together in his homage to Samuel Beckett, *Pas de voix* (1988), including recordings made in the lobby and environs of Beckett's apartment in Paris.

<sup>32</sup> Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Spirit of England: Edward Elgar in his World* (London, 1984), p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Rée, *I See A Voice: A Philosophical History* (London, 1999), p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> Coleridge, 'Lines written in the Album at Elbingerode' (1799), quoted in Rée, pp. 56-7.

extrapolated from is demonstrated in Ken Russell psychodramatic film, *Mahler* (1974): on composing the Fourth Symphony, Mahler complains to Alma about the noises (e.g. sparse sound of cows mooing and a distant church bell) (1899–1900) penetrating his composing hut at the utmost picturesque location of Maiernigg on Wörthersee.<sup>35</sup>

### Satie

In October of 1898, Erik Satie relocated to Arcueil, 10 km from Paris, where he stayed till his death (1925). From here he would set off on a daily walk to Paris (sporting, one can only assume, one of his seven identical grey velvet suits until he changes his guise for the final time in 1906). This was no hike, rather a peripatetic stroll, with generous hiatus for refreshment and composition *en route*; it was reputed that Satie notated ‘ideas at night on foot which he would then work on in cafés during daytime’.<sup>36</sup> In a conversation on Satie with John Cage (another walking composer and champion of Satie, that we will return to), Roger Shattuck and Alan Gillmor, Shattuck suggested that:

... the source of Satie’s sense of musical beat – the possibility of variation within repetition, the effect of boredom on the organism – may be this endless walking back and forth across the same landscape day after day, and finally taking it all in, which is basically what Thoreau did: the total observation of a very limited and narrow environment.<sup>37</sup>

Robert Orledge, stimulated by this notion, goes further to suggest that, ‘the absence of expressiveness and sentimentality surely reflects the drab and often dangerous areas through which he walked’<sup>38</sup>, suggesting that the 76 beats per minute pulse of *Parade* (1917) echoes Satie’s walking speed. It is plausible that this may be a two way process, as the gait and actual walking speed of the composer at work is adjusted in correspondence with the allure and tempo of the music that is being unfolded and reworked as a mental walk through.

Satie’s *Vexations* (c. 1893) – a short ostensibly simple homophonic work scored for piano, yet containing beguiling harmony, to be repeated 840 times with the tempo

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<sup>35</sup> Russell takes a liberal approach to chronology, as Mahler met Alma Schindler in 1901.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Orledge, Orledge, *Satie the Composer* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> John Cage (with Roger Shattuck and Alan Gillmor), ‘Erik Satie: a Conversation’, *Contact*, 25 (Autumn 1982): 25.

<sup>38</sup> Orledge, *Satie the Composer*, p. 18.

marking of *Trés lent*<sup>39</sup> – is a pre-Arcuil work, yet it demonstrates his predisposition to repetition and simplicity over long durations (i.e. scale<sup>40</sup>). The effect of *Vexations* on the listener is similar to going on a long walk through homogenous topography. The scenery remains pretty much the same, but the light changes with the passing of the day through which we encounter intermittent showers (Satie was known for walking in all weathers). When John Cage mounted a performance (reputedly the first) in 1963 in New York with a relay team featuring luminaries from the New York scene, the total duration was 18 hours and 40 minutes. Cage noted an ambient quality of the work that acknowledges the here and now, enabling us, (and with Robert Rauschenberg's canvases in mind) '... to see such things as dust or shadows. Whereas, if we had the shadows carefully painted, as in Rembrandt, any other shadow entering the situation would be a disturbance and would not be noticeable, or if noticeable, a disturbance.'<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, as with the long trek simile, as one would expect, during a performance of *Vexations*, concentration drifts, fatigue and hunger take precedence, long forgotten memories are recalled, and like the ailing Mahler you are brought to mind of your own physicality through discomfort. If you are in a group this shared discomfort can lead to a welcome solidarity. Cage, and the other performers and members of the audience of the 1963 performance were struck at how they was transformed by the performance, during and even more profoundly, by the morning after:

What happened was that we were very tired, naturally, after that length of time and I drove back to Stony Point ... – and I slept I think for, not 18 hours and 40 minutes, but I slept for, say 10 hours and 15 minutes. I slept an unusually long period of time, and when I woke up, I felt different than I

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<sup>39</sup> For a fuller description see Gavin Bryars, 'Vexations and its Performers', *Contact*, 25 (Autumn 1983): 12-20.

<sup>40</sup> 'Up to one hour you think about form, but after an hour and a half it's scale. Form is easy - just the division of things into parts. But scale is another matter. You have to have control of the piece - it requires a heightened kind of concentration. Before, my pieces were like objects; now, they're like evolving things.' Feldman quoted in *Universal Edition Composer Brochure: Morton Feldman* (Wien, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Cage, Gillmor and Shattuck, p. 22.

had ever felt before. And furthermore, the environment that I looked out upon looked unfamiliar even though I had been living there. In other words, I had changed and the world had changed...<sup>42</sup>

Well into his Arcueil lifestyle, Satie even attempted to foster dispassionate meandering and chatting in the presence of a performance of his music. He tried out his *Musique d'ameublement* (1920), a forerunner of ambient music, during the intervals of a performance of music by Les Six, with the performers spread throughout the auditorium to provide a surround sound effect. Ironically, the result was that the audience stopped talking and headed back to their seats. Satie cried out at his audience to: 'Go on talking! Walk about! Don't listen!'. Of course all his peroration achieved, even despite a note in the program to 'pay no attention'<sup>43</sup>, was in fact to draw more focus to the music, rather than less.

### Thoreau

Like Satie, Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) – another marginal figure whose oeuvre was frequently referenced by Cage – took to daily saunters.<sup>44</sup> During two years and two months he lived hermit-like in Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, on land owned by Emerson, daily traversing the territory. He wrote up this experience and musings back in 'civilized life'<sup>45</sup> resulting in *Walden* (first published 1854). But unlike Ken Russell's portrayal of Mahler, Thoreau indicates that during his sojourn he did not assume an antagonistic relationship with the environment, quite the contrary:

My vicinity affords many good walks; and though for so many years I have walked almost everyday and sometimes for several days together, I have not yet exhausted them. An absolutely new prospect is a great happiness, and I can still get this any afternoon. Two or three hours walking will carry me to as strange a country as I ever expect to see... There is in fact a sort of harmony discoverable between the capabilities of the landscape, and the threescore years and ten of human life. It will never become quite familiar to you.<sup>46</sup>

Thoreau composed and recomposed his walks within a defined territory, proclaiming that combinatory variation could not be exhausted within the span of a

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Darius Milhaud, quoted in Robert Orledge, *Satie Remembered* (London, 1995), p. 154.

<sup>44</sup> Thoreau's preferred term (Henry David Thoreau, *Walking* (1861), in Jeffrey Kastner and Brian Wallis (eds), *Land and Environmental Art* (London, 1998), p. 235.)

<sup>45</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Oxford, 1924), p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Thoreau, *Walking* (1862), <http://thoreau.eserver.org/walking2.html>

lifetime.<sup>47</sup> This approach corresponds with one of Jean-François Augoyard's characterizations of walking practices (expounded in *Step by Step: Everyday Walks in a French Urban Housing Project*, first published in 1979) as analogous to the rhetorical figure<sup>48</sup> of the *metabole*: 'A bound spatial set is walked at one's pleasure, according to combinations whose variety seems endless ... Metabole is always carried out in one's walks with a poetic, ironic, or playful tone. The space walked is always valued for itself.'<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> 'The length of his walk uniformly made the length of his writing. If shut up in the house, he did not write at all.' Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Thoreau* in Joel Myerson (ed.), *Emerson and Thoreau* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 422.

<sup>48</sup> Augoyard's concept of relating walking to rhetorical figures was picked up by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (first published in 1980). On surveying Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center, de Certeau is ordained with the, 'voluptuous pleasure in 'seeing it all': 'It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive.' (Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 92.). On his return to ground level to continue his analysis of the spatial practice, in order to get beyond 'graphic representations alone,' de Certeau, displaying his semiotic proclivities, comparing 'pedestrian processes to linguistic formations,' (de Certeau, p. 103.):

The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statement uttered. [...] it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial-acting out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies *relations* among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic "contracts" in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an "allocution," "posits another opposite" the speaker puts contracts between interlocutors into action). (de Certeau, pp. 97-8.)

Despite employing the metaphor of *rhetorics* and the tantalizing wide ambit in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, disappointingly de Certeau defers to a more literary *scoping* of the city.

<sup>49</sup> Jean Francois Augoyard, *Step by Step: Everyday Walks in a French Urban Housing Project* (Minnesota, 2007), p. 52.

Notwithstanding this creative cartographic spatial practice, Cage was impressed with this attitude of perpetually renewed interest within a limited area and topography<sup>50</sup>, yet resulting in fresh perception and affect, noting that ‘Many people taking such a walk would have their heads so full of other ideas that it would be a long time before they were capable of hearing or seeing. Most people are blinded by themselves.’<sup>51</sup>

It is worthy of note that in antipathy to Cage’s professed stance, Thoreau aligned himself with the romantic ecology canon<sup>52</sup>, bound up in a heroic quest – seduced by overloaded hyperbole<sup>53</sup>: ‘for every walk is a sort of crusade’<sup>54</sup> - for transcendental spiritual reality accessed through the perception of the wildness of nature:

... all good things are wild and free. There is something in a strain of music, whether produced by an instrument or by a human voice – take the sound of a bugle in a summer night, for instance – which by its wildness ... reminds me of the cries emitted by wild beasts in their native forests.<sup>55</sup>

Hence, Thoreau’s avowal: by adopting a greater sympathetic ‘free’ and ‘wild’ disposition and lifestyle in alignment with the *natural world*, we can begin to approach those ‘good things’.

### **Walking Zazen**

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<sup>50</sup> Cage finds a similar manner of recomposition in his perception of the canvases of Rauschenberg, that Thoreau found in Walden Pond: ‘Over and over again I’ve found it impossible to memorize Rauschenberg’s paintings. I keep asking, ‘Have you changed it?’ and then noticing while I’m looking it changes.’ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures & Writings* (London, 1978), p. 102.

<sup>51</sup> Interviews with Lisa Low (1985), quoted in Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage* (London, 1989), p. 45.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Most of the experience he describes in Walden are defined by literary and philosophical allusion in a sort of freefloating Platonic realm of traditional ideas.’ (Louise Westling, ‘Thoreau’s Ambivalence Toward Mother Nature’ (1992), in Laurence Coupe (ed.), *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (London, 2000), p. 265.)

<sup>53</sup> ‘The writing of one’s steps produces at the same time a reading that magnifies the site.’ (Augoyard, p. 57.)

<sup>54</sup> Thoreau, *Walking* (1862), <http://thoreau.eserver.org/walking2.html>

<sup>55</sup> Thoreau, *Writing the Wilderness* (1862), quoted in Coupe, p. 24.

Cage was renowned for his eclectic transcultural accrual and concatenation of ideas developed throughout a lifetime, providing a coherent patchwork of compositional procedures. But it has been noted that where he was open to verbalized ideas, he was less interested in related ‘bodily practices’.<sup>56</sup> For example despite profuse recourse to the writings of the Japanese Zen master, Dr D. T. Suzuki, to such an extent that his name became synonymous with Zen, Cage did not practice *zazen per se*. Consequently, it would be more precise to say that Cage’s attitude was tangential to Zen, as Suzuki clarifies:

Personal experience is strongly set against authority and objective revelation, and as the most practical method of attaining spiritual enlightenment the followers of Zen propose the practice of Dhyana, known as *zazen* [i.e. to sit in meditation].<sup>57</sup>

In Zen meditation, walking *zazen* is customarily used as physical respite between sittings, nevertheless the practitioner attempts to maintain the same quality of focus whilst walking very slowly, step by step around the room in a group. The Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh has led a number of silent Peace Walks in Los Angeles (2005 & 2007) with groups of circa 3,000, practicing what he calls mindfulness (a popular metaphor for Zen). This is a sharp contrast to the customary barrage of noise that accompanies public protests. Beyond the spiritual goal – ‘when we practice walking meditation beautifully, we massage the Earth with our feet and plant seeds of joy and happiness with each step’<sup>58</sup> – the spectacle of thousands of people walking slowly and ‘mindfully’ in silence is a powerful political act. Despite its outward manifestation such practice is at heart centripetal.

Walking *zazen* has found its way into experimental music via a Deep Listening exercise<sup>59</sup> harnessed by electronic music pioneer, Pauline Oliveros. Oliveros’ instructions are similar to the Zen practice, however as the title suggests, *Extreme*

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<sup>56</sup> Douglas Kahn, ‘John Cage: Silence and Silencing’, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Winter, 1997): 566.

<sup>57</sup> Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (London, 1991), p. 34.

<sup>58</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, flyer for a Peace Walk, 2007, <http://www.zcla.org/>, (accessed 2008).

<sup>59</sup> ‘These exercises are intended to calm the mind and bring awareness to the body and its energy circulation, and to promote the appropriate attitude for extending receptivity to the entire space/time continuum of sound.’ (Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer’s Sound Practice* (Lincoln, NE, 2005), p. 1).

*Slow Walk*, it has a kind of Bhutto-like task-based orientation, where the brief focuses the practitioner on one's bodily awareness aided by the challenge: 'you can always go slower'.<sup>60</sup> Whilst walking *zazen* does not encourage inference of external stimulus, which can cause a distraction from the exercise in hand (i.e. mindfulness), one practitioner has recounted how the experience of the *Extreme Slow Walk* led him to a greater aural awareness of:

... the creaking wood floor beneath my feet, the shuffle of socks against the lacquer, and the swish of jean fabric against itself ... All of these auditory elements combined to play as a sort of soundtrack to the act of walking, which was transformed into an art.<sup>61</sup>

### **Cage the Forager**

Cage was known for rambling in the countryside during his free time. In August of 1954 Cage moved from the relative privacy of downtown New York, into a communal living farmhouse for artists, in rural Stony Point, New York State up the Hudson River, set up by friends from Black Mountain College, 'living in the attic with a wasps' nest for company'.<sup>62</sup> Ironically, despite eschewing the buzz of New York, Cage did not take to the crowded living space. Long walks in the neighbouring woods offered him the mental space he strived for. It was here that his knowledge of mushrooms became encyclopaedic, an interest that had grown out of sheer necessity for nutrition in 1934 during the Great Depression.<sup>63</sup> After his time at Stony Point, walking continued to be a means of hedonic foraging for mushrooms, something that he made time for in his itinerant life style around the globe, which was aside to his artistic practice and thought<sup>64</sup>: '... I was involved with chance operations in music, and thought it would just be a very good thing if I get involved in something where I couldn't take chances.'<sup>65</sup>

By the time Cage arrived at Stony Point he had already instigated a paradigm shift in the prevailing music culture – that has certainly helped engender soundwalking

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>61</sup> Andrew Taber, quoted in Oliveros, p. 60.

<sup>62</sup> David Revill, *The Roaring Silence: John Cage: A Life* (London, 1992), p. 180.

<sup>63</sup> Revill, p. 43.

<sup>64</sup> Although he did say that 'mushrooms allowed me to understand Suzuki'. (John Cage, *For the Birds* (London, 1995), p. 188.)

<sup>65</sup> Yale School of Architecture (1965), quoted in Kostelanetz, p. 15.

as a valid offshoot of experimental music – exemplified in the *untitled event* in Black Mountain College and his ‘silent work’ 4’33” both presented in the summer of 1952.

### ***untitled event***

Although accounts differ concerning the duration and even the date of the *untitled event*, which used the unconventional venue of the dining hall at Black Mountain, we do have a vague sense of the scenario, thanks to William Fetterman’s collation of first hand accounts<sup>66</sup>: simultaneous and staggered performances which individually did not intentionally support any other element. The elements included Cage, M. C. Richards and Charles Olson reciting text up ladders, David Tudor playing Cage’s *Water Music* (1952), Robert Rauschenberg playing Edith Piaf records, Rauschenberg and Franz Kline painting suspended around the room, Merce Cunningham (who was chased by a dog at one point) and other dancers moving around the audience, projection of films and slides, etc.<sup>67</sup> Cage provided time brackets so performers had a sense of when to start and stop performing, and there was a plan charting out where performers were to be positioned. So duration and approximate location was a given, but it seems that everyone had freedom as to what to present. The audience were seated in a configuration of four triangles forming a square, with space for performers to move between the triangles, and space in the middle suggesting a theatre in the round. The perimeter of the dining room was the spatial frame for the performance.<sup>68</sup>

Of relevance to soundwalking in *untitled performance*, the customary focal point of a concert experience is exploded. There is no dedicated front or back orientation for the audience: foreground or background. And it called for a juxtaposition and superimposition of many different media and genre. As a result performance spills into the everyday, as it is unclear what is inside or outside of the performance, the perimeter of the room defining the limits of the performance space. And akin to the everyday soundscape, phenomena collide, coalesce and bifurcate in a haphazard manner regardless of intention.

This event helped spur Cage’s interest in theatrical works, including the humorous *Music Walk* (1958) and *Water Walk* (1959). Although walking was a minor

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<sup>66</sup> William Fetterman, *John Cage’s Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances* (Amsterdam, 1996).

<sup>67</sup> For a collation of accounts of *untitled event* see Chapter 5 of Fetterman, pp. 97-104

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 97-104.

feature of *Water Walk*, it was manifest as an integral element in *Music Walk*. In a version done with Jill Johnston in New York in 1962 (*Music Walk with Dancer*), among other elements, Philip Corner, interviewed in 1989, still had a clear impression of the quality of movement:

There was a lot of movement. I remember this being very lively. David Tudor and John Cage had to get up and go to other places to do things, and turn on things and do other things, so there was that whole theatrical aspect, the conjunctions in space. The movement from one point to another was very much a fast movement. Efficient. No hesitancy. It wasn't a slow drag by any means, but I wouldn't say it was hectic – it seemed like it was totally under control. They gave themselves enough time to get wherever they were going.<sup>69</sup>

And in the *musicircus* (the first version done in 1967) events – ‘a multi-media event of simultaneous and independent performances, often presented in non-traditional performance spaces, with a large number of participants, and lasting for several hours’<sup>70</sup> – it is the audience who is required to manoeuvre, and through their multiple locomotion and trajectories the work is given form.<sup>71</sup>

As well as the many different circumstances and combinations of *musicircus* that have been performed even after Cage's death, the method of the mobile audience, has led to open air works such as *Fifty-Eight* (1992) for Landhaushof (mansion courthouse) in Graz, where 58 musicians are placed in the 58 arches of the courtyard, generating a 58 point source polyphony. A work with a similar homogenous, albeit more continuous texture is James Tenney's *in a large open Space* (1994) for variable orchestra (12 or more players), where he invites the audience to physically move through the harmonic series (based on a double bass F) spread throughout the site and maintained by the performers who are assigned a harmonic, for an indefinite duration: an otherwise static sonic field is made fluid through movement. Unlike the hectic *Music Walk*, in the *musicircus* approach the audience tends to move slowly, with generous lingering.

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<sup>69</sup> Philip Corner, quoted in Fetterman, p. 58. For a collation of accounts of different performances and versions of *Music Walk* see Chapter 3 of Fetterman, pp. 47-59

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>71</sup> Umberto Eco had already noted this trend from a European perspective in 1962. ‘Contemporary poetics proposes a whole gamut of forms – ranging from structures that move to the structures within which we move – that call for changing perspectives and multiple interpretations.’ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*. trans. Anna Cancogni (London, 1989), p. 24.

### 4'33"

This problematizing of intention and focus of the concert hall performance is taken to polar extremes in 4'33".<sup>72</sup> David Tudor, who gave the first performance of 4'33" in Woodstock, New York in 1952, recounted that 'There was a tin roof and it rained during the second movement - not during the first or third.'<sup>73</sup> Although the rain was not notated, what is groundbreaking here is that the sporadic sound of the rain did not contaminate the work; rather it was as valid an element as any other sonorous occurrence within the time brackets of the three movements: 'Those [sounds] that are not notated appear in the written music as silences, opening the doors of the music to the sounds that happen to be in the environment.'<sup>74</sup>

In his collection of short anecdotes and aphorisms to be retold as an accompaniment to Merce Cunningham's dance, *How to Pass, Kick, Fall and Run* (1965), Cage retells the story of a piano performance by Christian Wolff which includes chunks of silence in the score. The performance took place whilst the windows happened to be open, consequently the sounds of 'traffic, boat horns' spilled in the room, masking much of the piano. On being encouraged to perform the work again with the window closed this time, Wolff remarked that '... he'd be glad to, but that it wasn't really necessary, since the sounds of the environment were in no sense an interruption of the music.'<sup>75</sup>

With a nod to his chess teacher and first generation Dadaist, Marcel Duchamp, whose notion of the *readymade*, e.g. *Fountain* (i.e. a urinal) (1917), proposes that, 'the artist cannot make, but can only take what is already there',<sup>76</sup> in 4'33" Cage extends the aural frame from stage onto the extant soundscape: Nyman calls this an act of 'decentralization'.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Much has been written on the genesis of 4'33" founded on Cage's self-proclaimed account. For a debunking of some of the myth see Kahn, p. 566, and Dickinson's interview of Tudor in 1987 (Peter Dickinson (ed.) *Cage Talk: Dialogues with and about John Cage* (New York, 2006))

<sup>73</sup> Tudor, quoted in Dickinson, p. 88.

<sup>74</sup> John Cage, *Silence: Lectures & Writings* (London, 1987), pp. 7-8.

<sup>75</sup> John Cage, *A Year from Monday: Lectures & Writings* (London, 1968), p. 133.

<sup>76</sup> Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), p. 71.

<sup>77</sup> Nyman, p. 25.

Cage had witnessed Rauschenberg's white and black canvases of 1951–52, which were ostensibly blank (in fact consisting of a layer of domestic paint), encouraging the viewer to concatenate the dust settling on the canvas, and the glare of the gallery lighting as a here-and-now functioning of the artwork. With a similar nerve, Cage uses the concert hall context to *facilitate* a time-based listening frame out of a mute musical act (i.e. *musicing*), allowing all that is audible, listenable and musical: 'I have felt and hoped to have led other people to feel that sounds of their environment constitute a music, which is more interesting than the music which they would hear if they went into a concert hall.'<sup>78</sup>

The phenomenologist Don Ihde reflecting on the habitual filtering of audible information bifurcates incoming sound as either *fringe* or *focal* phenomena; the reading of which is continually shifting due to cultural convention and contingencies of the site:

I go to the auditorium, and, without apparent effort, I hear the speaker while I barely notice the scuffling of feet, the coughing, the scraping noises. My tape recorder, not having the same intentionality as I, records all these auditory stimuli without distinction, and so when I return to it to hear the speech re-presented I find I cannot even hear the words due to the presence of what for me had been fringe phenomena.<sup>79</sup>

Cage's *4'33"* upsets the *status quo* of the concert hall, bringing *fringe* phenomena into the foreground, becoming *focal*. Moreover the listener is embodied in the space. Cage however, did not limit performances of it to the concert hall. In collaboration with Nam June Paik, Cage took this work onto the streets of Manhattan. On making a film version of *4'33"*, they randomly selected locations to record the ambiances of Manhattan using a map and the *I Ching*: 'to simply hear what was there to hear'.<sup>80</sup> Cage also performed the work on piano in Harvard Square, Boston, in 1973.

Although much of Cage's work is positioned in the classical music context of the concert hall, James Pritchett notes that it is ultimately not a question of letting the sounds of the world in, rather, 'he opens it to let the world invite us out'.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Cage, quoted in Kostelanetz, p. 65.

<sup>79</sup> Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* (Ohio, 1976), p. 74.

<sup>80</sup> John Cage, from CD Booklet for *Roaratorio*, Wergo WER 6303-2 (1994), p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> James Pritchett, "*Something like a hidden glimmering*":

*John Cage and recorded sound*, [www.rosewhitemusic.com/cage/texts/glimmering.pdf](http://www.rosewhitemusic.com/cage/texts/glimmering.pdf)

... the music I prefer, even to my own or anybody else's, is what we are hearing if we are just quiet. And now we come back to my silent piece. I really prefer that to anything else, but I don't think of it as 'my piece'.<sup>82</sup>

Thus for Cage, *4'33"* is not context specific, and it does not require the *musicizing* paraphernalia of concert performance: shifting it from compartmentalized composition in a concert hall into a listening attitude emplaced in the everyday. It is apposite to compare this approach to Westerkamp's definition of soundwalking. Both share an attention to listening to the environment whatever the context, however underpinning Cage's stance is the oft-quoted mantra: 'New music: new listening. Not an attempt to understand something that is being said, for if something were being said, the sounds would be given the shape of words. Just attention to the activity of sounds.'<sup>83</sup>

In his critique and demystification of the genesis of *4'33"*, Douglas Kahn articulates the limitation of this attitude: '[Cage] did not incorporate the social, or the ecological for that matter, into the immediate materiality of sounds, but only simulated their compass and complexity through undifferentiated totalization.'<sup>84</sup>

It is the artists working in the aftermath of *4'33"*<sup>85</sup>, in particular the Neo-Dadaist and Fluxus artists, that we find an acknowledgment, and for some an embracement of the social and/ or ecological, resulting in a plethora of walking based activities.

### **Fluxus walks**

Paradoxically it was Cage's own students in his Experimental Music Composition class at the New School for Social Research in Manhattan (where he taught from 1956 to 1960) who resolutely reintegrated the social, although refracted through Cagean precepts of chance and indeterminacy. The class included George Brecht, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow and Jackson MacLow, a veritable role call of the first generation American Fluxus movement.

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<sup>82</sup> Cage, quoted in Kahn, p. 561.

<sup>83</sup> Cage, *Silence: Lectures & Writings*, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> Kahn, p. 589

<sup>85</sup> 'Every young artist tried to define himself/herself as going past Cage but this was very difficult because the Cagean revolution was very thorough.' (James Tenney quoted in Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, Mass, 1999) p. 225.

Brecht, like the rest of this group, was not content with framing his work within the rubric of music, rather he adopted the notion of ‘an expanded universe of events’<sup>86</sup> where ‘each event comprises all occurrences within its duration’<sup>87</sup>, yet within an event, ‘sound is deemed incidental’.<sup>88</sup> He adopted the notational device of the ‘event score’: pithy, haiku-like performance instructions printed on cards, a technique that became a pervasive device for Fluxus art.

For example in *Water Yam* (a collection of event scores on cards that he worked on between 1959–1963), on a card titled *Air Conditioning* the instructions are: ‘move through the place’. There is a parsimony in the delivery of the instruction, and a simplicity in carrying it out, albeit open to interpretation and influence by contingencies of the site, resulting in an ephemeral act that anyone can perform, demonstrating an everyday orientation: suggesting there is no boundary between art and life.<sup>89</sup>

Intentionally performing everyday life is bound to create some curious kind of awareness. Life’s subject matter is almost too familiar to grasp, and life’s formats (if they can be called that) are not familiar enough.<sup>90</sup>

There are many text scores that ask for some kind of ambulatory activity, most famously, La Monte Young’s *Composition 1960 No. 10*, a performance score consisting of the instruction, ‘draw a straight line and follow it’, Takehisa Kosugi’s *Theatre Music* (date unknown) with the instruction, ‘keep walking intently’ and Dick Higgins’ *Gángsáng: For Ben Patterson* (1963):

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<sup>86</sup> Ina Blom, ‘Boredom and Oblivion’, in Ken Friedman (ed.) *The Fluxus Reader* (New York, 1998), p. 68.

<sup>87</sup> Liz Kotz, ‘Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the “Event” Score,’ *October*, 95 (Winter 2001): 75.

<sup>88</sup> Anna Dezeuze, ‘Brecht for Beginners’, *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 4 (Winter 2005), [www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal4/acrobat%20files/dezeuzepdf.pdf](http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal4/acrobat%20files/dezeuzepdf.pdf) (Accessed 2008): 2.

<sup>89</sup> Friedman, p. 247. Brecht’s attitude to music is laid bare with a jibe at Cage in his *Virtuoso Listener*, with the instructions ‘can hear music at any time’ (Jill Johnston, ‘George Brecht, the Philosopher of Fluxus’ (2007), *The Johnston Letter*, Volume 2, Number 7, [http://www.danceinsider.com/jill\\_johnston/j041907.html](http://www.danceinsider.com/jill_johnston/j041907.html) (2007).

<sup>90</sup> Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), p. 187.

*One foot forward. Transfer weight to this foot.*  
*Bring other foot forward. Transfer weight to this foot.*  
*Repeat as often as desired.*  
 Stockholm, February 27, 1963<sup>91</sup>

Clearly these works are open to interpretation, which could quite easily take on a metaphorical reading. Other Fluxus works that are walking based include: Alison Knowles - *Shuffle* (1961), Ben Vautier – *Run* (1963), Milan Knizak - *Walking Event* (1965), Bengt af Klintberg - *Forest Event Number 6* (1966), Wolf Vostell – *Circle II* (1966).<sup>92</sup>

In *Tour* (New York, 1963), by double bass player Ben Patterson (despite being an American he emerged out of the Cologne Fluxus scene working with George Maciunas), interpersonal relationships and one's extra-visual spatial awareness of the everyday is explored. Participants are blindfolded and led through an environment by a guide. The guide chooses the route, leading the participant for over 45 minutes.<sup>93</sup> Patterson has continued his interest in site, in *The Liverpool Song-Lines* (2002), shifting the concept of the Australian Aborigine song-line to Liverpool, he provides an aural map, guiding the listener through the city using the names of public houses and places of worship as signposts.

### **Judson Dance Theatre**

Concurrently with the flourishing of Fluxus and in the light of minimal sculpture, by such artists as Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, the dance world was rebelling against the erstwhile obligatory dance training and deference to the balletic canon, with a refocusing towards the abstraction of pedestrian movement. This was most pronounced in the work of Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton of the

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<sup>91</sup> Geoffrey Hendricks, *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia, and Rutgers University, 1958-1972* (New Jersey, 2003), p. 11.

<sup>92</sup> The text based score of these and other performance scores can be found at Fluxus Performance Workbook (Ken Friedman, Owen Smith, and Lauren Sawchyn, *Fluxus Performance Workbook*, supplement to *Performance Research*, Vol. 7, No. 3 'On Fluxus' (2002), <http://www.thing.net/~grist/ld/fluxus.htm> (Accessed 2008).

<sup>93</sup> Achille Bonito Oliva (ed.), *Ubi fluxus ibi motus 1990-1962* (Milan, 1990), p. 241.

Judson Dance Theatre, based in Judson Memorial Church, New York, which was directed by Merce Cunningham colleague and Cage student Robert Dunn.

For example, in striving to eradicate dance's predilection to: phrasing, development and climax, variation, character, performance, the virtuosic feet and the fully extended body<sup>94</sup>, in *Trio A* from *the Mind is a Muscle* (1966), Rainer substitutes these aspects for a minimal aesthetic founded on: 'found' movement, task like activity, singular action, engendering a neutral state of performance.<sup>95</sup> 'Emptied of all ambiguity, of any traditional dramatic content or climax, Rainer's work leaves movement itself, as it were, walking on its own feet.'<sup>96</sup> In fact a faithful presentation of *Trio A*, demands a new kind of virtuosic, yet pedestrian, discipline.

### **Bruce Nauman's studio walks**

Bruce Nauman's starting point for his studio films was the context of the artist's studio and reflection on the kind of mundane activity that goes on there. He found that he paced around a lot (in a peripatetic manner) while he worked, and that developed into an interest, 'in the sound of pacing and just the activity of pacing.'<sup>97</sup> He consequently started to film himself pacing around his studio and with the advice of Meredith Monk (another Judson Dane Theatre associate), validated by knowledge of Cage and Merce Cunningham's<sup>98</sup> outlook and harking back to Eadweard Muybridge's staggered motion picture capture from the late nineteenth century (whose studies, as well as equestrian subjects included the human figure in motion), he elaborated the process *via* a range of strategies. The result was a series of dance/ movement exercise

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<sup>94</sup> Yvonne Rainer, 'A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A', in Mike Huxley and Noel Witts (eds), *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader* (London, 2002) pp. 328-9.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>96</sup> Suzi Gabilk, 'Minimalism', in Nikos Stangos (ed.), *Concepts of Modern Art* (London, 1991), p. 253.

<sup>97</sup> Janet Kraynak (ed.), *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words: Writings and Interviews* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), p. 166.

<sup>98</sup> Cunningham had already worked with non-dancers in 1952 at Brandeis University. The students were asked to do 'simple gestures they did ordinarily... these were accepted as movement in daily life, why not on stage?' (from *Merce Cunningham's Changes: Notes on Choreography* (New York, 1968), quoted in Coosje Van Bruggen, *Bruce Nauman* (New York, 1988), p. 230.

based films, enacted by himself, with the camera in a fixed position taken in one unedited take. This included: *Playing a Note on the Violin while I Walk around the Studio* (1968), *Dance Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square* (1968)<sup>99</sup>, *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* (1968) and the silent film *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square* (1968).

In *Slow Angle Walk* (aka *Beckett Walk*) (1968) we literally get documentation of a sound walk of ‘apparently real-time record of human activity’.<sup>100</sup> We hear amplified footsteps, which act as percussive punctuation of the step, as Nauman abstracts an awkward clownish gait of, ‘stiffened legs without bending a knee or stopping’<sup>101</sup>, the movement, an amalgamation and variation on the protagonists' gaits from Beckett's *Molly and Watt*.<sup>102</sup> Even when Nauman stumbles out of shot the resonant footsteps continue.<sup>103</sup> The step sound is varied by a ‘scraping sound caused when he makes the turn from one end of the studio to go back to the other’.<sup>104</sup> The duration (i.e. 60 minutes) is defined by the amount of time it takes for Nauman to complete all the possible variations of the rules that he set in the task. Again, after Satie and Thoreau we have ‘the possibility of variation within repetition and the effect of boredom’<sup>105</sup>, and another example of Augoyard’s *metabole* in action.

### **Scratch Orchestra & Walking**

In England between 1969 and 1972 we find a thriving of experimental activities that interfaced with the everyday, spearheaded by Cornelius Cardew’s (who had

<sup>99</sup> Where his movements are kept in time by a metronome.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>101</sup> Bruce Nauman, *Image/Text 1966–1996* (Wolfsburg, 1997), p. 69.

<sup>102</sup> Steven Connor, ‘Shifting Ground’, <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/english/skc/beckettnauman/> (Accessed 2008). This is the English version of an essay published in German as 'Auf schwankendem Boden', in the catalogue of the exhibition *Samuel Beckett, Bruce Nauman* (Vienna, 2000), pp. 80-7.

<sup>103</sup> Similarly in *Playing a Note on the Violin while I Walk around the Studio*, where Nauman played, ‘two notes [on a violin, an instrument that he was not adept at playing] very close together so that you could hear the beats in the harmonics’ (Bruggen, 230), when he walks out of shot the double stopping continues.

<sup>104</sup> Bruggen, p. 115.

<sup>105</sup> Shattuck, quoted in Cage, Gillmor and Shattuck, p. 25.

performed *Music Walk* with Cage and Tudor in 1958) collective Scratch Orchestra. The group was influenced by the New York School and Fluxus events going on in America and continental Europe, and stimulated by George Brecht's move to England in 1968. Michael Parsons writes that their 'more collective approach to performance reflected its loose and informal sociability, which was based on mutual respect and tolerance rather than on adherence to any preconceived structure or set of rules.'<sup>106</sup>

Shunning the concert hall, their chosen performance platform included shopping centers, on the underground and in isolated coastal areas.<sup>107</sup> Among their vast collection of graphic notions and event scores in *Scratch Music*<sup>108</sup> are a number of walking pieces, including Parsons' *Walk* (1969), for any number of people walking in a large public space. In keeping with Scratch Orchestra's proclivities, the work was performed in Euston Station, London. Parson recounts:

this involved walkers individually criss-crossing the space at different randomly determined speeds, waiting for different lengths of time at chosen points and then setting off in another direction. At Euston this naturally intersected with the activities of *bona fide* travelers as they hurried or waited for their trains.<sup>109</sup>

In contrast to Rainer's minimalist aesthetic and Nauman's endurance and discipline, the Scratch Orchestra made different versions of *Walk* inviting participants to select from a repertoire of walks, including walking backwards and imitating the

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<sup>106</sup> Michael Parsons, 'The Scratch Orchestra and Visual Arts', *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol. 11

(2001): 7.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Cornelius Cardew (ed.), *Scratch Music* (London, 1972)

<sup>109</sup> Parsons, p. 8. We find a similar blurring between participants and the general public in the Noise Memory Gesture project. From March to May 2007 a number of flashmob silences instigated by Ross Brown were convened around London. Participants were invited to attend a given space at a given time to memorialise something. The exact nature of that something was not clear: the stories in the noise of the silences would tell us. The performers were asked to lay objects as wreathes if they liked and to probe the silences for clues. The silences evoked many memories and suggested many characters, narrative contexts. The events were inevitably contextualised by coincidental world events such as the Virginia campus killings as well as the participants 'noise journeys' to the designated journeys.

iconic John Cleese's silly walk (of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, first aired in 1970).

This English eccentricity also surfaces in the *Sounds Heard* projects (1976–77), by experimental composer and instrument builder, Hugh Davies, whose encourages creative listening in different environmental contexts. *At Home* (1978), calls for a home-made sheep dog on wheels which is taken on a walk.<sup>110</sup> Nether the less the eloquence of this Scratch Music text score, speaks for itself.

*Walk music.*  
*Movement music.*  
*Stop - watch - listen.*  
*Continue.*<sup>111</sup>

### **Field Trips & Lecture Demonstrations: Beyond 4'33"**

Returning to listening and walking, in 1966, Cage associates and regular performers of his music, Philip Corner and Max Neuhaus, separately developed aural excursions through the everyday as a logical next step or perhaps, as in the words of Corner, 'the ultimate consequence'<sup>112</sup> to 4'33" *et al.*

*Corner*

In the summer of 1966, Philip Corner, Fluxus artist, resident composer and musician to the Judson Dance Theatre (1962–64) and co-founder of the Tone Roads Ensemble (1963-70) – which were an 'important force behind the Charles Ives renaissance, and also gave influential performances of works by Cage, Feldman, Ruggles and others'<sup>113</sup> at the New School for Social Research – started to take people on walks 'around the block' in New York (documented in his note book/stream of consciousness style publication, *I Can Walk Through the World as Music (first walk)*, 1980). His instructions were again simple: 'Just listen to sounds as given as if at a concert (with that attention)'.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Hugh Davies, *Sounds Heard* (Chelmsford, 2002), p. 48.

<sup>111</sup> Cornelius Cardew (ed.), *Scratch Music* (London, 1972)

<sup>112</sup> Philip Corner, *I Can Walk Through the World as Music (first walk)* (New York, 1980), p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> Larry Polansky, 'Philip Corner' Grove Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/> (Accessed 2008)

<sup>114</sup> Corner, p. 7.

In a frenzied mind map, Corner puts Cage's maxim to task, scribbling: 'what kind of 'just listening?'' and in reference to his own practice: 'Why didn't Cage (John) go this far?'.<sup>115</sup> He poetically sets the scene:

That morning I decided no museums no other art, but belief in This reality To act it and spend a day within That other place where everything from This one Time To pure meaning. Oh! – it became three weeks long of it.<sup>116</sup>

For Corner, attentive listening to the everyday has continued to be a central activity, and fed into subsequent projects. For example, in 1995 he led a 'listening walk' at a fabric factory, Lanificio Bonotto in Italy, an event, which he recorded, where '... the regular workers were the conductors of that music made by the machines. ... each part of the mill with its own sound; all in rhythmic counterpoint.'<sup>117</sup> On the CD release of the recording he identifies the work as 'pieces of (acoustic) reality and ideality'.<sup>118</sup>

LISTEN: *a demonstration in situ*

Also in 1966, the percussionist Max Neuhaus began to organize listening excursions in New York. Neuhaus had made his name interpreting works of avant-garde composers such as Stockhausen and Cage, and his harnessing of acoustic feedback in performance. Through his role as performer he had witnessed the opening up of everyday sounds into the concert hall:

I saw these activities as a way of giving aesthetic credence to these sounds – something I was all for. I began to question the effectiveness of the method, though. Most members of the audience seemed more impressed with the scandal of 'ordinary' sounds placed in a 'sacred' place than with the sounds themselves, and few were able to carry the experience over to a new perspective on the sounds of their daily lives.<sup>119</sup>

In a sense the notoriety of 4'33'' within the context of the classical music canon had hijacked its simple message and, unlike the rain, had contaminated the work. His answer was, instead of bringing sounds in, to take people out.<sup>120</sup> In this regard, in

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>117</sup> Corner, <http://www.mimaroglumusicales.com/artists/philip+corner.html>

<sup>118</sup> Philip Corner, *Pieces Of (Acoustic) Reality And Ideality*, Alga Marghen, C 2NMN.013 (1997).

<sup>119</sup> Max Neuhaus, 'Walks', *Max Neuhaus*, <http://www.max-neuhaus.info/soundworks/vectors/walks/> (Accessed 2008).

<sup>120</sup> Max Neuhaus, *Max Neuhaus: Inscription, Sound Works Volume 1* (Ostfildern, 1994), p. 130.

1966 Neuhaus organized an event for a small group of invited friends. At the initial *rendez-vous*, with a rubber stamp he branded the hand of each member of the group with the imperative ‘LISTEN’, and led them down West 14th Street in Manhattan towards his studio in lower East Side, where he concluded with a performance of some percussion works. These were the first tentative steps towards a series of extra-concert hall excursions which he explored for the next ten years, where listeners went on ‘*Field Trips Thru Sound Environments*’. In future excursions-cum-‘lecture demonstrations’ he excluded his own musical interventions, content with the sound environment as found to do the talking. Starting from the mundane, locations became more elaborate, including trips to industrial locations normally inaccessible, such as the Consolidated Edison Power Station, Hudson Tubes (subway) and New Jersey Power and Light Power Plant. Rather than the concert performance and composition status that 4’33” maintains, it is interesting to note the deference of the ‘field-trip’ mode of presentation billed as ‘Lecture Demonstrations’ – Neuhaus regarding the rubberstamp as ‘the lecture and the walk the demonstration.’<sup>121</sup>

Bearing the mark of ‘LISTEN’ bore multiple functionality for the audience: as mnemonic (in case one forgot to listen), as score and as concrete poem: ‘The simple clear meaning of the word, to pay attention aurally, and its clean visual shape – LISTEN – when capitalized.’<sup>122</sup> Its simplicity, in tandem with the quality of the environments that were traversed, also provoked one to reflect on what it is to listen, and hence help foster a refocusing of ‘people’s aural perspective’<sup>123</sup> – the hitherto untapped aspiration of 4’33”.

As a follow-up, Neuhaus created a series of LISTEN branded works including postcards and posters: most famously superimposed on Brooklyn Bridge - South Street (1976). This was not the first time that ‘LISTEN’ had function as a score. In 1960, Dennis Johnson reduced non-intentional music as a Fluxus text score with the single word ‘LISTEN’. He proclaimed to La Monte Young that with this one word he

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<sup>121</sup> Neuhaus , 2008

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

had produced a work that ‘was entirely indeterminate and left the composer out of it’.<sup>124</sup>

### **Cage’s *Demonstration of the Sounds of the Environment***

Not to be left out, responding to an invitation to do a guest lecture, in the Fall of 1971, Cage adopted a similar lecture/demonstration approach to Neuhaus and Corner, that he titled *Demonstration of the Sounds of the Environment* (which was also considered a *musicircus* as the audience members were the performers, structuring the work through their own movement and perception, albeit following each other in a single file for ninety minutes through the campus). In an interview with Joan Retallack Cage responded to the questions of soundwalking:

I think that was done at Oh, I haven’t done it as a composition, so to speak, but I’ve done it. At the University of Wisconsin, I think Milwaukee rather than in Madison, I gave what was called a ‘demonstration of sounds’ in which we set out from the hall where we had met to make a chance-determined [using the I Ching] walk through the campus. And we were to walk silently, so that we would hear the sounds of the environment. Then came back to the hall and talked briefly about what we’d heard. I gave sort of a lecture.<sup>125</sup>

It is worth noting that the group was approximately 300<sup>126</sup>, so like Thich Nhat Hanh’s *Peace Walks*, it would have been an impressive sight.

### **Acoustic Ecology**

Vancouver in the late 1960s/early 1970s saw soundwalking decisively put on the map with the critical mass of the World Soundscape Project (WSP) team directed by R. Murray Schafer, based at Simon Fraser University. This group developed methods to analyse, communicate and educate people about the soundscape, inaugurating the interdiscipline of acoustic ecology. Central to the WSP endeavour is the concept of *soundscape*, articulated by WSP member and composer Barry Truax as ‘An environment of sound with emphasis on the way it is perceived and understood by the individual, or by a society. It thus depends on the relationship between the individual and any such environment.’<sup>127</sup> Advancing the ideas of WSP, in the

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<sup>124</sup> La Monte Young, ‘Lecture 1960’, *Tulane Drama Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, (1965): 76-7, quoted in Branden W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage* (Cambridge MA, 2008), p. 102.

<sup>125</sup> Joan Retallack (ed.), *Musicage: Cage Muses on Words, Art, Music* (Hanover, NH, 1996), p.186.

<sup>126</sup> Revill, p. 166.

<sup>127</sup> Truax, 1999

introduction to *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (2002), Emily Thompson's provides an elaboration on this definition:

Like a landscape, a soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world ... A soundscape's cultural aspects incorporate scientific and aesthetic ways of listening, a listener's relationship to their environment, and the social circumstances that dictate who gets to hear what. A soundscape, like a landscape, ultimately has more to do with civilization than with nature, and as such, it is constantly under construction and always undergoing change.<sup>128</sup>

Within the context of acoustic ecology soundwalking can simultaneously have a number of indivisible goals: pedagogical tool, qualitative fieldwork method and compositional practice. Composition was never far from the WSP concerns, which is unsurprising since Schafer, who is a seminal composer in his own right, had pulled his team from the Music faculty. In his *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (first published in 1978) Truax defines soundwalking as:

A form of active participation in the soundscape. Though the variations are many, the essential purpose of the soundwalk is to encourage the participant to listen discriminatively, and moreover, to make critical judgments about the sounds heard and their contribution to the balance or imbalance of the sonic environment.<sup>129</sup>

The notion of a *balanced soundscape* is a founding tenant of acoustic ecology, with a concern for the relationship between the sounds of human society and the prevailing sonic environment. There is a clear link here with the burgeoning Green movement of the 1970s and in particular the noise pollution agenda, however a positive stance is adopted, with a foregrounding of artist-based solutions, acknowledging that man has already been creating ideal soundscapes for the 'imagination and psychic reflection'.<sup>130</sup>

Schafer has differentiated between two types of soundwalking: a *listening walk* and a *soundwalk*:

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<sup>128</sup> Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), pp. 1-2.

<sup>129</sup> Truax, 1999

<sup>130</sup> Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, p. 4. For a full account of the underpinning concepts of acoustic ecology see this text (first published in 1977 and republished in 1994) and Barry Truax's *Acoustic Communication* (First published in 1984 and republished in 2001).

- *Listening walk*: ‘A listening walk is simply a walk with a concentration on listening.’<sup>131</sup> No talking is allowed for the duration of the walk.<sup>132</sup> The intention is that the collective mute experience raises the level of awareness to that of an attentive concert hall audience. It is practiced in single file following a leader (a quasi-mute pied piper), leaving a wide enough gap between the participant in front so their footsteps are out of earshot. Of course if hard heels are worn and the terrain under foot is stone or concrete, then footsteps can provide a recurring motif, albeit modulated by the changing acoustics. Moreover thanks to the proxemic gap ‘a privacy for reflection is afforded’.<sup>133</sup>
- *Soundwalk*: ‘an exploration of the soundscape of a given area using a score as a guide. This might also contain ear training exercises’<sup>134</sup> and sound making tasks: ‘In order to expand the listening experience, soundmaking may also become an important part of a soundwalk. Its purpose is to explore sounds that are related to the environment, and, on the other hand, to become aware of one’s own sounds (voice, footsteps, etc.) in the environmental context.’<sup>135</sup>

Such an active role in the *soundwalk* shifts the participant from audience member to ‘composer-performer’.<sup>136</sup>

### **WSP Soundwalks from the *European Sound Diary***

Whilst the WSP traversed Europe in a Volkswagen bus in 1975, *en route* to documenting the soundscape of five European villages presented in *Five Village Soundscapes*<sup>137</sup>, an unashamedly rural enterprise, they also visited a number of cities to undertake preparatory research. When they arrived in a new location they devised and carried out *listening walks* that consequently fed into the prescriptive mode of the *soundwalk*, that suggest modes of engagement with the environment. Some of these have been documented in the *European Sound Diary*.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., pp. 212-3.

<sup>132</sup> I have witnessed Schafer’s resistance to members of the audience recording and filming walks, by experiencing the work in an electronically mediatized route, they exclude themselves from the collective experience.

<sup>133</sup> Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, p. 213.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. A series of tasks developed by Schafer to encourage focused and detailed listening to the soundscape.

<sup>135</sup> Truax, 1999

<sup>136</sup> Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, p. 213.

<sup>137</sup> R. Murray Schafer (ed.), *Five Village Soundscapes*. (Vancouver, 1977).

<sup>138</sup> R. Murray Schafer (ed.), *European Sound Diary* (Vancouver, 1977).

For example, the *Salzburg Soundwalk* calls for a level of interactive sound making:

This is a soundwalk for baritone (and friend). The bells of the inner city form the framework for a walk, providing cues to move on from one place to another, on the quarter hours. A baritone voice is required in order to play with the eigentones found in the course of the walk. An eigentone is the resonant frequency of an enclosed space, and you will find it by humming continuously up and down until the one note is found which sounds louder than all the others do.<sup>139</sup>

The *Paris Soundwalk*, located in the Louvre, eschews acoustic sounds, prompting the walker to ‘LISTEN to these paintings? ... Let the genius of their execution speed your imaginations to provide the appropriate soundtrack.’<sup>140</sup>

The *London Soundwalk* asks for a contemplative overture, commencing at a Sunday morning Quaker meeting in Euston. On leaving the meeting it is expected that your ‘aural facilities should [now] be well prepared’<sup>141</sup>, challenging the walker to ‘practice your aural flexibility by mentally closing out the traffic noise as you walk down the Euston Road toward [Regents] Park’.<sup>142</sup> Precise directions and tasks including directed listening are given (later on, some possible responses are given from their fieldwork of April 1975), for example:

Jets at fountain, north-central within Gardens [Queen Mary's Gardens in the centre of Regent's Park]. Consider here both kinds: water and airplanes. While considering the water jets, keep track of how many of the other kind, as well as propeller airplanes, you hear in a 10-minute period.<sup>143</sup>

Continuing the theme of contrasts, the interface of the park and the street are highlighted: ‘Leave the Park by the same route you came in, and note the THRESHOLD OF DISCOMFORT: the transition point where the sounds of the Park are once more buried by the sound of city traffic.’<sup>144</sup> This is in counterpoint to the ‘THRESHOLD OF COMFORT’ that the walker, it was anticipated, experienced on entering the park earlier.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

Methods of soundwalking have recently been taken up as a valid *in situ* mode of participatory qualitative soundscape and environmental study, in particular this can be seen in the research of Jean-Paul Thibaud<sup>145</sup> and Mags Adams<sup>146</sup>.

### **Vicarious Soundwalking**

Field recording offered an invaluable resource for documentation and analysis of the soundscape. In a desire to communicate their findings more widely, members of the WSP collected and edited recordings in order to create interpretative and pedagogic works for public broadcasts, resulting in the monumental ten one-hour radio series, *Soundsapes of Canada* (1974). Westerkamp continued this approach, beyond the demise of the WSP in 1975, leading to such compositional projects as *Soundwalking* (1978–9) produced for Vancouver Co-operative Radio. She visited and explored a wide range of environments throughout Vancouver equipped with her microphone, and played back the everyday material on the radio. ‘It brought community soundscape into the listeners’ homes and simultaneously extended listeners’ ears into the soundscape of the community.’<sup>147</sup> These were often presented without the obligatory voice-over, however sometimes she would provide a commentary, speaking from within the soundscape she was recording, ‘forming a link between to the listener who is not physically present’.<sup>148</sup> Soundwalking has continued to provide a rich source of inspiration and material for soundscape/phonography-orientated composition, including work by Peter Cusack, Luc Ferrari, Sarah Peebles, Dallas Simpson, and myself.

### **Conclusion**

When I have led soundwalking (in Schafer’s jargon, more correctly *listening walking*), at the end the participants are invited to verbalize what they got from the walk. I often find that initially there is a collective resistance to break the silence, not

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<sup>145</sup> Jean-Paul Thibaud, *La Méthode des parcours commentés*, in *L’espace urbain en methods*, Michèle Grosjean & Jean-Paul Thibaud, eds. (Marseille, 2001).

<sup>146</sup> Mags Adams, ‘On Soundwalking as Sensory Sociology’, presented at *Beyond Text: Synaesthetic & Sensory Practices In Anthropology*, University of Manchester, 2007.

<sup>147</sup> Hildegard Westerkamp, *The Soundscape on Radio*. In *Radio Rethink: Art, Sound and Transmission*. Dainer Augaitis and Dan Lander (eds), (Banff, 1994), pp. 89-90.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

out of reticence but out of a desire to prolong the experience; once broken there is always much to share, and I am struck by the degrees to which each reading is unique and is often presented with a feeling of ownership: there is something uniquely empowering about soundwalking. Participants may have extant intimate knowledge of the sites, be that from a social, economic, ecological, political or architectural standpoint, but through such an ostensibly mundane procedure, unwittingly, new insight is acquired from a more phenomenologically situated stance: ‘The feel of a place is registered in one’s muscles and bones.’<sup>149</sup>

This approach can unconsciously engender a naivety of experience that experimental music culture has learnt to embrace, but is tacitly discounted as a valid form of research in the scientific community. Neurologist Oliver Sacks, aptly writes ‘A piece of music will draw one in, teach one about its structure and secrets, whether one is listening consciously or not. Listening to music is not a passive process but intensely active, involving a stream of inferences, hypothesis, expectations, and anticipations.’<sup>150</sup>

We can surely say the same about soundwalking. By providing a space for our ears to be open in the everyday, and open to the everyday, much knowledge can be gained of its implicit structures and suggest future configurations.

In soundwalking in its many permutations, we find an art form that offers a nuanced engagement with the everyday where: all sounds are site-specific (autochthonous), *real-time*, synchronized, digetic<sup>151</sup> or (to borrow Luc Ferrari’s term) *anecdotal*; the fringe unspecified; and in a Cagean tradition, everyone is in the ‘best seat’.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space & Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, 1977), p. 184.

<sup>150</sup> Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* (London, 2007), p. 211.

<sup>151</sup> In film theory, digetic refers to the ‘narratively implied spatiotemporal world of the actions and characters.’ Claudia Gorbman, ‘Narrative Film Music’, in Rick Altman (ed.), *Cinema/Sound*, Yale French Studies, No. 60, (1980): 183-203. The interesting question here, in regards to soundwalking is implication, i.e. how do we infer narrative?

<sup>152</sup> Cage, *Silence: Lectures & Writings*, p. 97.