

Human beings were never the only ones who made use of sound: there are many species on planet earth that listen & make sound. Whether a ludic event, or as some sort of medium for communication, audio is always a multiplicity that moves thru lifeforms.

Each species—or even each individual—is attuned to a specific spectrum spread out across the vibratory continuum, where any overlap signals the possibility of noise, of a predator-prey relationship, or maybe the potential of a crossspecies musicking that occurs only in metaphor. At the tail end of the 1980's, bioacoustician & sound ecologist Bernie Krause coined the notion of a 'niche hypothesis' to explain why it was that different species seemed to have different sonic signatures. For Kraus the European migration to North America (i.e. its colonization) disfigured an ordinary animal orchestra that the Indigenous were accustomed to hearing around them, & also take part in. Each critter had its place. As habitats begin to morph & displacement pushes tribes further this interconnexion becomes more & more diffuse. However, the ecology-niche can be read in evolutionary terms, as a meaningful explanation of the variability of sensitivities in audition.

Krause's method is two-fold: record sites over & over to ear-witness any changes, & plot out said recordings as spectrograms. Both techniques allow Krause to pin-point any changes to the (auditory) environment over time & also hearsee the ways species inter-relate within a shared locale. What he noticed verified his niche hypothesis.

The field of soundscape ecology began via Canadian composers in the 1960's. Founded by R. Murray Schafer & Barry Truax, these composers shared Krause's critique of the decadence (deadening) of listening in the industrialization of the environs. Sounds had 3 sources: non-human lifeforms ('bio-phony, the non-biological ('geophony'), & humans (anthrophony)). The 3-fold schema comes from Krause's extension of the work

the deep listening club  
lovers & lollypops

#6: interspecies  
2025

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of the World Soundscape Project. At first their intent was to locate & record 'ear-marks'—audio-focused landmarks—but also to compose music for a more situated ear. However, their idea of 'tuning the world' was full of unaddressed colonial baggage: 'hungry ears' (Robinson) that cannot seem to get enough, that want to collect all & assume access to remote areas as a given. Even still, much of this work features an array of beautiful, well-documented sound of the bio-, geo- & anthrophophonic type.

Many musicians have used non-human sounds in their releases or made recordings that were intended for a non-human ears. There is also zoomusicology & biomusic, studies that focus on the music of critters. Most of us have heard of whalesong & the music of songbirds, but this is often an intra-species music. To bridge the gap between, some amount of training is usually needed such that human & non-human kin alike can tune their auditory system into a broader spectrum that may open up a new pathway & the shift from intra- to inter- can ring.

Since the dawn of music, people have been making sounds inspired by our earth-bound other-than-human kin—a tradition that is on-going & keeps growing. Some find a way to channel signals of the plant kingdom & sonify an otherwise unheard of structure, while others try to create the conditions for spontaneous improvization & communion with another lifeform. Ways to enter into interspecies music are as infinite as the number of species (yet to be) discovered, although only one species has figured out a way to record sound for later playback.

Some of what was heard:

interspecies music.....WHALESCAPES

&

mileece.....bernie kraus

|end| + dora viera.....mort garson

thai elephant orchestra.....the cramps

jingle cats.....a.j. mithra

pink floyd.....olivier messiaen

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why have you done today?

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