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Time: Dec. 20 (Fri.) and Dec. 21 (Sat.) 10:00-16:00 Venue: Kainan University B103 Conference Hall

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2024第20屆國際電腦音樂與音訊技術研討會WOCMAT

時間：2024/12/20 (五)與12/21 (六) 10:00-16:00 (免費入場)

地點：開南大學B103會議廳

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2024 20th WOCMAT Proceeding論文集

December 30 2024, Kainan University, Taoyuan, Taiwan

**PRACTISING WHAT I PREACH <=> PREACHING WHAT I PRACTISE:
ON TWO RECENT BOOKS AND TWO CURRENT COMPOSITION SERIES**

20TH WOCMAT CONFERENCE – KEYNOTE TALK

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ABSTRACT

In this keynote talk, the focus is on my lifelong interest in bringing new innovative forms of music to new audiences and participants. Although using recent publications and compositions as case studies, the talk's true goal is about making one's work relevant to people beyond specialists in their field and, at least in my case, the work of others as well. After setting the talk's context, I discuss two books published this year, 'Experiencing Organised Sounds' and 'The Music of Sounds and the Music of Things' (co-authored with John Richards, both published by Routledge). I also present two current composition series, the Radio Series and the Old / New Series, both offering expert and non-expert listeners various things to hold on to. These central sections address the talk's aim of bringing new music to a variety of communities of interest and of practice demonstrating how one's creativity and scholarship can be approached holistically. **Keywords:** Talk's Context, Experiencing Organised Sounds, The Music of Sounds and the Music of Things, Radio Series, Expert and Non-expert Listeners.

1. TO START

Before embarking, I would like to thank the WOCMAT team, especially Jeff Huang for the invitation to present my second keynote at the conference (my visit to Taiwan took place in 2016) and congratulate them for their twentieth anniversary event.

The subject that I have chosen for this keynote is one close to my heart. No, not due to my discussing my own work as suggested in the subtitle of the talk. Instead, it is about making one's work relevant to audiences beyond one's own specialist area. As a student, I quickly discovered the inequity between interest in contemporary music and music of past ages, e.g., classical music. The gap between commercial varieties and more innovative ones supported by the public sector was huge. It still is today, but do things need to be this way?

I, like so many, could have worked within new music completely oblivious to this gap; instead, during my first visit to ICMC in 1990, I offered a talk called 'Is Computer Music Reaching the Public It Deserves?' [1]. After this, there was no looking back. This talk was followed quickly by the publication of my first book in 1991 [2] in which the subject was researched more rigorously. Consequently, my career's motto has been to bring new music to new audiences and new participants, especially within my field of electroacoustic or, as I call it, sound-based music.

The title suggests that one seeks unity between their practice whether it is creative, technological, scientific or something else and their scholarship and outreach. In this talk, I shall investigate how my early discovery led me to taking this motto into account with respect to anything I undertake as musician and scholar and how knowledge gained from each aspect can support the other. It is hoped that those attending the talk and reading this paper will find it of inspiration to their own practice.

2. CONTEXT

During these last twelve months, for the second time in my life (the other year was 2007), two books of mine appeared, 'Experiencing Organised Sounds: The listening experience across diverse sound-based works' [3] and 'The Music of Sounds and the Music of Things: Sonic creativity within Sampling and DIY Cultures' [4], the latter co-authored by John Richards, both published by Routledge. The focus of each book, as described in section 4 below, is different. What is of greater interest here is their relationship to my motto as well as to my creative practice.

Most of my compositions [5] over recent years have formed part of two different series, the subject of section 3 below: the Radio series commenced in 2006 and the Old / New series commenced in 2013. The underlying dramaturgy of both series is quite different. The first one involves recording a significant number of broadcasts

collected over a short period from one country's radio and podcast providers and recomposing them using their content as samples. The second focuses on nations' traditional music and ancient instruments seeking to demonstrate that, beyond their historical value, they can possess a dynamic that is of great relevance today. Both series have a cultural focus. Both offer specialists as well as new listeners with 'things to hold on to' [6] by way of access tools to the music based on shared experience.

Neither the books nor the compositions in these two series would ever have been created were it not for my interest in taking innovative music away from the margins of just specialists. How my creative practice has fed my research and broader educational and community outreach initiatives and how my research and associated outreach have fed my creativity can be found in the next three sections of this talk.

3. IN GREATER DEPTH/1: THE TWO SERIES

Although I was taught composition mainly by second generation atonalists and, in contrast, was primarily inspired by John Cage, one central aspect of many works in my early career, and still today, involved recycling: recycling sounds, texts and other things (e.g., see [7]). Sampling as a term did not yet exist; one spoke of sampling rates at that time. It was later that I realised that, through the reuse of sonic elements, experiential links can be made with listeners of diverse backgrounds. Perhaps I had consciously chosen sampling to make my works accessible.

Both series presented here are founded on sampling, utilising radio broadcasts in the first series and, based on a lifelong interest in music of the world's peoples in the second. This awareness of common experience is the main aspect of my approach applied to ensure that nonspecialist listeners have something to hold on to when listening to works the likes of which they may never have heard before.

3.1. The Radio Series

This series was born when I received a commission from the GRM in Paris in 2006 in which I was asked to 'plunder an archive'. It was decided that recording various radio broadcasts across the spectrum of French broadcasters over a short period of time (ca. two weeks) would be acceptable. As a French speaker, language was not an issue. My ideas behind 'Oh là la radio' (2007) were the following: to recompose the materials I collected with alteration of the sounds only when needed (to clean them) with minimal electroacoustic sound manipulation techniques for contrast; to create an immersive 8-channel

work and a binaural version for broadcast that satisfied my expression to describe my compositions, 'a theatre of sound within a choreography of space'; to include aspects that are universal in radio such as many early morning time calls, logos and advertisements, as well as national and even local samples and themes; to involve a range of content from politics to radio plays to daily life to comedy and musical genres; to take a risk with copyright law which is rather unfriendly with regard to sampling; to touch listeners with different emotions ranging from beauty to dark to comedy; to involve a wide range of musical devices including tension/release, layering, contrast and structuring approaches; and to address any listener, not only the GRM's normal audience. As the piece is in French, a translation video was made for performances in non-Francophone countries as in all non-English language works in the series that followed.

Although a huge undertaking, including cataloguing and categorising over twenty hours of broadcasts, creating a storyboard and finally composing the work, the piece proved to be highly gratifying and enjoyable to make, the public reaction was and remains enthusiastic and the GRM even broadcast the composition on French radio several times despite copyright sensitivity.

The consequence of its success, the fact that I could take something from everyone's daily life, 'tilt' it a tiny bit and present it as a musical work as a recomposition of 'found objects' to use a term from Duchamp, alongside the fun I had in making it led me to decide to turn its approach into a series. The pieces that followed were:

- 'To BBC or Not' (2008)
- 'Radio-aktiv' (2011, commissioned by ZKM, Germany)
- '中国广播之声 Chinese Radio Sound' (2013, 5.1, composed with students from Shenyang Conservatory of Music)
- 'Mezihlas – Přeshlas – Nahlas' (Radio Voice-overs) (2017, commissioned by Czech Radio)
- 'On the Éire' (2018, commissioned by Ulster University, including broadcasts from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland)
- 'Aplican Términos y Condiciones' (Terms and Conditions Apply) (2022, commissioned by CMMAS, Mexico)

In the Chinese case, it was the students who wanted to make a collaborative work based on my approach; as a non-Chinese speaker, much translation was involved. I had an assistant for the Czech and Mexican pieces who not only helped with translations but also with cultural issues as all samples deserve to be handled with respect given potential sensitive socio-cultural or political issues.

I intend to continue the series in the future as the formula, despite the rigour involved, works for me and the reactions are always highly enthusiastic. Clearly, different people will identify with different aspects in each piece based on their knowledge related to the materials used and the cultural elements. This is nothing new. Viewing a children's movie, for example, there are jokes for young people, some for adults and some understandable only by movie enthusiasts, creating multiple levels of appreciation and understanding. Keeping this in mind is the ideal way to ensure that my motto is applied making works for everyone in this unusual and often funny series.

3.2. The Old / New Series

I had the fortune as a child to be introduced to folk music of diverse cultures and studied ethnomusicology alongside composition during my university years. Although the Radio Series is dealing with any sounds, the approach in this series involves what I call music-based music, that is, using samples from music recordings which are similar to Hip-Hop except that the sonic result and means of composition are quite different.

As traditional music globally is threatened due to the power of the commercial sector, one cannot expect the same experiential level of listeners as one has in terms of the mass media. Nonetheless, my intention is to demonstrate the richness of traditional forms of music and their instruments and suggest that, although these forms are old, they have been able to evolve, demonstrate dynamic and therefore remain relevant within today's 'global culture'. There is a message here about the threat of extinction of traditional music as well as a celebration of their distinctiveness, their instruments, techniques and sounds that have always been and remain highly diverse, a huge contrast with mainstream commercial music today.

The series' dramaturgy is therefore: to demonstrate each type of music's dynamic; to demonstrate that these forms of music deserve our respect; and, more importantly, to support their survival. In one work, a piece with a slightly different title, 'E Pluribus Plures' (2021, From Many There are Many), music from across the world is remixed to take this dramaturgy a step further, suggesting that we should discover, enjoy and respect traditional musics in their diversity implying that this goal is also relevant with regard to cultural, religious and other aspects of today's world involving diversity.

It is thus the dramaturgy of this series more than the direct previous experiences with the sonic material that is recomposed which is of importance. That said, for those from the culture of the original material, there are many

experiential links to be discovered which in turn heightens the series' goal of demonstrating how something old can sound new.

The series was born when I received the Musicacoustica Festival International Commission in 2013 in Beijing. The work was titled 'China/Music 中國/音樂 Old/New 舊/新' celebrating twenty years of working visits in that country. I assembled dozens of recordings of a variety of forms of traditional Chinese music and recomposed them, again in 8-channel sound, applying that same notion of 'a theatre of sound within a choreography of space'. In this case, my idea concerning the dynamic of traditional music was also applied in the title to reflect Chinese culture which, being ancient, has evolved dynamically whilst retaining its deep roots. The compositions that followed, two of which continue the East Asian focus, are:

'Xūn 埙 Old / New 舊/新' (2015, for the ancient Chinese ocarina)

'E Pluribus Plures' (2021, using musical samples from dozens of countries, again commissioned by the Musicacoustica Festival)

'Qing + Cha 磬 + 鐃 Old / New 舊 / 新' (2023, for singing bowls and Chinese cymbals, commissioned by Thierry Miroglio)

'Musical Bow Old / New' (2024, commissioned by the South African College of Music, University of Cape Town)

It is worth noting that the xūn is the oldest non-percussion instrument in China as is the musical bow in Southern Africa. Working with masters of these instruments has been highly rewarding. In the case of the work for singing bowls and Chinese cymbals, the dynamic is reflected by the fact that a French percussionist has become a virtuoso in East Asian traditional and modern percussion techniques and possesses quite a few of these instruments in his personal collection. This 2023 work was performed in its fixed medium version in concert at the WOCMAT 20 event.

Again, due to many forms of traditional music's remaining outside of mainstream commercial media and being less familiar than in previous ages, achieving my motto is more challenging regarding this second series. Nonetheless, I believe that anyone, when given the chance, can discover the profundity of history and the richness of sound and cultural identity in these forms of music making. They deserve a more prominent place in today's music culture. Furthermore, in composing these works, again with virtually no manipulation of the

samples (cleaning some, retuning a few), and applying my spatialisation techniques, acoustic sounds can, at times, become electroacoustic in nature adding another form of dynamism, that is, turning something old into something new. Connecting with listeners can be found through the magic of recomposition combined with spatialisation and other musical devices offering the public with diverse things to hold on to.

I have often been told by listeners around the world that they have been able to engage (also known as enjoyment, something beyond just interest) with my works. I have also been told by specialists that I have my own ‘sonic signature’ which, by definition, makes the work innovative. To be able to reach new audiences with what is acknowledged as innovative is not only gratifying, but it also illustrates that my motto is achievable. Furthermore, it demonstrates that what I have written about is being translated into accessible creative work. In other words, I am ‘practising what I preach’.

4. IN GREATER DEPTH/2: THE TWO BOOKS

2024 has been a special year, for it is the second time in my career that two of my books appeared within twelve months (one appeared in September but has 2025 as its date of publication for some reason). The first of the two is more analytical in nature; the second is more unusual as you will discover. The first book was consciously written for both specialists and a more general readership. The link to nonspecialists in the second title is through its core message as will be described below. Their links to my motto and to this talk’s title will be embedded into their discussions.

4.1. Experiencing Organised Sounds

One of the many strands of my writing over the years has been the search to find appropriate means of analysis of electroacoustic music. Traditional musicology and the field of electroacoustic music studies have found few meeting points despite the three-quarter century history of electroacoustic composition. (The Electroacoustic Music Studies Network [8] I co-founded with WOCMAT keynote speaker Marc Batter and Daniel Teruggi was created to combat this situation.) Part of this issue is to do with the focus of an analysis. Is it the score as is commonly the case in traditional musicological analysis? Most electroacoustic music has no prescriptive score; perhaps we are to look at notes for analog works or computer code or ProTools (and equivalent) sessions for digital ones. Alternatively, when should the listening experience be the focus of analysis? For years it has been

my and many others’ view that listening indeed must form at least part of an analytical study within electroacoustic music. This in no way makes musical philology less relevant.

The book therefore forefronts the listening experience and allows for triangulation by way of a questionnaire filled in by each case study musician complemented by discussions after my listening analysis had been completed. The questionnaire was compiled to reflect the book’s template of presentation for each work. It was created with two challenges in mind: to investigate the widest diversity of sound-based creativity possible to discover both means of description/analysis that go across subgenres and those unique to some, and to focus on an under-investigated subject, namely the benefits of *in situ* listening (that is, hearing works as they are intended to be presented) in comparison to the majority of listening: in compressed formats and, especially relevant here, with at least one dimension of the music’s 2 or 3d sonic space removed.

As stated, it was determined to write each case study with both specialists and nonspecialists in mind. This was challenging; a solution was found to include summaries without technical terminology for those new to the music.

A further stimulus was that the research institute that I helped found and directed had just celebrated its 20th anniversary. The Music, Technology and Innovation Institute of Sonic Creativity was created to develop practice and theory in the rapidly evolving field of sound-based music as eclectically as possible. The sixteen case studies chosen were selected to celebrate this breadth and to identify how this eclecticism is present in the institute’s history by choosing, with one exception, works made by staff members as well as current and former doctoral students. The exception, the first case study, was composed by a 15-year-old who made his first acousmatic work due to the development of the software, Compose with Sounds, supported by an EU Culture grant that was led by our institute. Once the software was made public, pairs of professional musicians and secondary school students across Europe were given the chance to make works with at least some shared sound materials. The work chosen for this case study was made by a French student. In this way, there is a link to the institute as well.

The book’s website contains all of the works’ recordings discussed including audio-visual media where relevant. Some analytical audio-visual representations are also included in which helpful information regarding salient characteristics or just structure boundaries appear.

The initial chapter introduces the book’s goals, its dual audience, its general approach and its questionnaire and template. This is followed by three chapters which involve the sixteen case studies. These are now

summarised:

- Fixed medium works: acousmatic (two, including the youth's composition), soundscape, lowercase, electronic/formalised, visual music and text-sound composition
- Live works: mixed music, improvised, live coding, DIY electronics, turntablism and performance art
- Sound art: a video installation, a sound installation and sonic objects

This choice reflects the huge explosion and breadth of sonic creativity's genres and categories, means of performance and presentation. The chosen works largely challenge the traditional categories of art vs popular music as much of this work resides in the world of the sonic.

Two points deserve consideration before moving on to the second volume. The first is to do with potential appreciation by those new to the music. The way the work discussions were conceived include aspects of each work that listeners can hold on to thus enabling access to highly diverse works. In this way, the book might be said to serve as a listening guide to open the world of sound organisation to those who have thus far heard it by stealth, in IDM, new media, advertisements, games and so on, but have not consciously been aware of these types of sonic creativity. This point obviously relates to my motto. It also helps me to better understand how musicians offer those things to hold on to supporting a broader appreciation of their works as well helping me offer access in my own compositions.

The second concerns the view of all artists included, that physical presence in performance, at exhibitions, specific sites or wherever this work is presented offers added value in comparison with the more consumer-oriented listening at home, work or classroom which is more common. It is about the quality of the experience, the collective audience response to it and more which is detailed in each individual discussion.

4.2. The Music of Sounds and the Music of Things

This book, written with co-author John Richards (also known as Dirty Electronics) took years to prepare and was mentioned in my WOCMAT 2016 keynote as we had decided to take on this initiative in that year. As stated, a major component of my artistic work is creatively engaging with any type of sonic sample. Richards, in contrast, is someone whose improvised practice is founded on the hacking movement focusing on what is commonly known as DIY (do it yourself) or, ideally, DIT (do it together) electronics/instrument building, a lo tech

approach to sound organisation, a reaction to today's omnipresent hi tech.

It was decided that we would write some chapters together, others individually and split chapters with a single subject that involved two different approaches. We also invited a diversity of sonic artists involved with either the music of sounds or the music of things or both to reflect on their practice using another questionnaire.

The chapters are ordered as follows using the initials of the author(s) for each one:

Introduction (LL, JR)
On the music of any sounds (LL)
The DIY sound-making artist (JR)
Recycling sounds: sampling culture (LL)
Workshops and participation: new communities (LL + JR, separate sections)
Artist statements (8 invited artists)
The 21st-century sound-based musician (LL, JR)

Beyond writing histories of each of the two areas of focus, we investigated the cultural context of the practices, how both, especially DIY approaches, are collaborative (sampling collaboration is more often sequential than simultaneous) and how the workshop plays a central role in both practices.

However, this keynote is not intended to include extensive book descriptions. Instead, it is about how this book reflects my motto and how it enables me to preach what I practice. Even though Richards' aesthetics and mine could not be further apart, our attitudes about music making are very similar. Part of our journey in writing the book was to attempt to discover what those similarities are and what is significantly different between the music of sounds and the music of things. In each discussion the number of similarities discovered was higher than their differences.

The reason for this is, simply stated, that both practices are inclusive, largely nonhierarchical and open to all. Readers will know that many people, especially children, when starting to learn an instrument, can be overwhelmed by the challenges in achieving virtuosity and learning theory. In the case of sample-based creativity and DIY electronics one can eventually become virtuosic, but their essence is the enjoyment of participation open to all.

Thinking of my interest in traditional forms of music around the globe, this formula holds true for many of these forms of musical making as well. Take, for example, the practice of drumming in West Africa. The concept of master drummer exists. Nonetheless, in traditional practice, people of various abilities play along, making additions at the level of their expertise and those not

playing participate by dancing. In short, we are talking about a music of the people which is also known as folk music.

Perhaps the most radical idea presented in this book is exactly that: both forms of sonic creativity involving sampling any sounds and building instruments together could form part of the 21st century landscape of folk music, even though they are very different from traditional forms given the technologies involved and the sounds produced. It is the participants' common ground that enables them to create new types of folk music.

If our hypothesis is true, then my motto of bringing new music to new audiences and new participants (also known as communities of interest and of practice respectively) is demonstrated in this book. The chapters on sonic sampling could not have been written without my experience as a creative sonic artist; the chapter on workshops and collaboration would have been impossible to write without my experiences in outreach (see below) and in sharing samples collaborating with others.

There is something precious about working at a cutting edge doing something that everyone can do and enjoy. 'The Music of Sounds and the Music of Things' is a book written by practitioners who have rejected their experience in elite practice presenting non-elite approaches to music well beyond that specialist audience I encountered as a student, namely to any group of people.

5. A BRIEF WORD ABOUT REACHING OUT

When writing my first book, one of the guiltiest parties discovered concerning experimental music's marginalisation were the musicians themselves. The attitude I discovered as a student was something along the lines of: 'people can like or dislike my music if they like; it is others' responsibility to make the public aware of my work'. Nothing is further from the truth.

I first saw the word, citizenship, applied in terms of university staff obligations when writing recommendations for people working in the US. It is an interesting use of that word which, years later, is seeping into UK university vocabulary as well. Citizenship is apparently those things that are 'above and beyond' one's normal work as educators, researchers and administrators/managers. I would suggest that the ultimate manifestation of citizenship in this sense is supporting the interest in and impact of one's work beyond our subjects' experts.

The reason why I left the Netherlands, where I worked during my early career, and moved to the UK was that community arts development (now often called participatory arts emphasising inclusion) in Britain was decades ahead of most others. Many countries have now

caught up supporting making both innovative and elite arts more relevant to society. In the same way, artists must take charge of bringing their own music to new audiences; otherwise, we live in the bubble of a status quo of contemporary art being created, studied and appreciated in elite organisations, such as conservatoires and universities, disconnected from anything outside of their gates.

It is with this in mind that, after learning about the community arts in mid-career, I have been able to reach out in other ways than through my publications, some of which have been written for schoolteachers. Where else will people hear about this kind of music at a young age than in schools? For example, I have led the creation of online resources, such as the EARS 2 eLearning website containing that Compose with Sounds application [9]. This resource is translated in 10 European languages and has been partially translated into Chinese as well [10]. The site introduces users to learn about and make music with sounds and was originally intended for children at middle school age (11-14) but has been used by people from 8 to 80 and has even been placed on the National Curriculum in Cyprus for all children studying music. In this way, as we suggest in 'The Music of Sounds and the Music of Things', sonic creativity is not only for specialists; it's for everyone.

Through EARS 2, publications for nonspecialists, workshops offered internationally and participating in various outreach cultural events for general audiences, people have been introduced to novel approaches to organising sounds and, indeed, some have opted into studying it and making it, too.

There is an equivalent to this type of reaching out relevant to the entire WOCMAT community. It is hoped that you will consider investing some of your time in similar initiatives if you do not already.

6. TO END: IT'S NOT ABOUT ME

We live in a celebrity culture, but in the kind of work I, or should I write we, including the readers, am involved with it is not about becoming a celebrity. It is instead about contributing to one's field and reaching out to make those contributions exciting and relevant to others.

I am highly aware that most of this text focuses on some of my contributions, but they, in turn, illustrate an approach to that motto of making music relevant to people beyond specialists though creative endeavour, scholarship and outreach. I hope I have been able to illustrate here that through practicing what one preaches and preaching what one practices, one can work simultaneously at the cutting edge and make that work relevant and impactful to others turning our world into their world, too. In short, the title

of this talk *is* relevant to all in the WOCMAT community. Whether you are a creative artist or are involved in technological research or anything else, you can formulate your own version of that motto and discover that holistic relationship between your practice and your scholarship and, ideally, your outreach, too.

7. REFERENCES

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