

1913/The Art of Noises/2013

13 December 2013, University College Cork, School of Music, Sundays Well road

ALOYS FLEISCHMANN ROOM

10 – 11.15

- James Whitehead, Noise is Stupid – Flat Ontologies, Reality and Noise
- Rodrigo Carvalho, The Metaphor of Noise in early 20th Century Avant-Garde Music: Busoni, Russolo and Schaeffer
- Aonghus McEvoy, Russolo – Mapping Auditory Experience in Belfast City; *noise and meaning in urban space*

[short break]

11.30 -12.45

- Rhys Davies, Why Sound Art Became the Unloved Bastard Child of Music
- Rob Gawthorp, Not Seeing What is Heard | Not Hearing What is Seen
- Victor Cruz, Crisis Music: Futurism, Jazz and the Historiography of Aesthetic Avant-Gardes

2.15 – 2.45 Paul Hegarty, Elizabeth Price, *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*

Ó RIADA HALL

2.45 – 3.15 analogue electronics

Barry Synnott, Modular Synthesiser Live Improvisation

Declan Synnott, Amplified Static

3.15 – 4.15

- Benjamin J. Heal, Weaponizing Noise: William S. Burroughs' Sound & Music Experiments
- Valentina Ravaglia, 'The Vibrations Between Two Objects in Relation to each Other Offer the Pleasure of Magical Thinking': Aural and Visual Noise in the Work of Mike Kelley

[short break]

4.30 – 5.30

- David Spittle, The Lyricism of Noise in John Ashberry's *Flow Chart*
- Danny McCarthy, Luigi Russolo Met John Cage on the Corner of Castle Street

5.45 – 6.45

Scott Wilson (with Edia Connole), The Eroticism of Silence

7.00

Strange Attractor and Guests present intonarumori concert

Vomir

ABSTRACTS

James Whitehead, Noise is Stupid – Flat Ontologies, Reality and Noise

If music is *for us*, if thinking is *for us*, the bounds are tied to the biological, mythic, local logics of anthropomorphism in a universe which is not anthropomorphic. This paper uses the data gained from statistical analysis of digital data from music samples, samples of accidental noise and ‘noise music’ in order to argue that one interpretation of ‘noise music’ given this analysis is that it is identical with the irrational non-signifying nature of noise in general as disorganised data, and cannot be in its form a system of signification. This identification with the lack of meaning identifies ‘noise music’ as an object lacking meaning as identical with any other object in the world or the world itself. This observation justifies noise as a methodology for the production of what contemporary speculative philosophers call ‘flat’ ontologies. The possibility of ‘noise’ works as such democratizes not only noise as sound production and art but also can democratize general and specific imaginative metaphysical thinking in and about the world. The removal of skill and representation for noise is the anti-correlationist move that is ontology flattening, similarly the removal of correlationist constraints in logic, epistemology and ontology can free thought and produce a flattening of ontologies in thinking.

Rodrigo Carvalho, The Metaphor of Noise in the Early 20th Century Avant-Garde Music: Feruccio Busoni, Luigi Russolo and Pierre Schaeffer

The western music of the turn of the 20th century is commonly remembered for matching with abrupt changes in the framework available for its practice, discussion and composition. After assuming a universal aspect, mainly in the figure of Richard Wagner, who saw in music the purest of all forms of art, it was conducted to a hipper abstract level. Most of the traditional musical values were then questioned and taken to its limits, bringing into discussion some essential aspects like instrumentation, notation, emotion, musical piece, compositional material, hearing experience, and, specially, musicality. ‘Noise’ then appears in the vocabulary of urban citizens: in the newspapers, as one of the perils of the modern world; in avant-garde musical activities, as a positive reaction top modernization, and as indicating new hearing possibilities of this new sonic reality. Sounds seemed to create relationships between the individual and the environment, noise seemed to be an inherent source of a negative mediation of this relationships. *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music* (1907) by Feruccio Busoni; *The Art of Noises* (1913) by Luigi Russolo; and *Introduction to Concrete Music* (1952) by Pierre Schaeffer, are three testimonials written by three avant-garde artists, here suggested as a possible path to trace along the musical manifestations of the first half of the 20th century. A path located outside of classic historical perspectives, and which propose noise as a possible metaphor for dealing with this music from the inside of its complexity.

Aonghus McEvoy, Russolo – Mapping Auditory Experience in Belfast City; *noise and meaning in urban space*

Russolo’s assertion that the advent of industry and industrial society has resulted in a situation where “noise reigns supreme over human sensibility” holds true to discussions of auditory experiences contained within contemporary urban spaces. His call for musicians to attend to and analyze noises that surround them can be traced through to John Cage’s work with incidental sound and to Murray Schafer’s conception of Soundscape as a reflection of

social conditions.

These calls for analysis of sound and sound environment are acknowledged in my work, however attentiveness to everyday auditory experience can guide research without preconceived results or end-goals. The sonorous object reveals its own narrative and expresses to the beholder the medium in which its transmission may take.

To express this methodology I wish to present a vignette drawn from field-work undertaken in Belfast City where personal auditory experience and the guidance of specific communities has allowed me to trace a sonorous map of Belfast revealing experiential elements of the cities spaces and boundaries. My research commenced by detailing and documenting personal explorations of Belfast City, extending outwards to engagement with communities in specific spaces regarding their sonic relationships with the city. In the paper I am proposing I wish to outline a map of Belfast City, representing the move from personal to shared experience in order to explore the unique sonorous characteristics of spaces, the lives of people contained within them, and the narratives that unfold through attentiveness to everyday sound. Audio recordings gathered over my time spent researching in the field will supplement this text.

Rhys Davies, Why Sound Art became the unloved bastard child of Music

In his 1913 manifesto, Luigi Russolo defines 'Noise' as the evidence of an industrialised societal interaction which was a central Futurist component of the artistic celebration of modernity. However, when setting down his vision, Russolo chose to integrate his *intonarumori* within the traditional orchestra. This decision has subsequently been cited as evidence of Russolo's failure to conceptually grasp that his notion of noise art should have been categorised as an integral creative pathway, distinct from the hegemony of both the production and transmission of music.

But was this a lack of vision on Russolo's part? The *Art of Noises* manifesto is a document permeated by the internal politics of the Futurist movement, and I argue that Russolo's manifesto should be regarded first as an example of Futurist housekeeping. There is evidence that Russolo had developed the initial idea for an **Arte dei Rumori** by as early as 1910 and Giovanni Lista states that the manuscript for *The Art of Noises* was "apparently finished three months prior to Pratella's concert, but postponed so as not to disrupt on-going preparations and embarrass a fellow Futurist". If the desire was to avoid Pratella's blushes then publishing the manifesto as an open letter addressed to him was, at best, ill-conceived.

In this paper, I argue that the reverse was the case; that the publication of *The Art of Noises* was delayed and its context altered in order to create the maximum impact upon Pratella and the Futurist movement. So that he might achieve this, the loyal Futurist Russolo was obliged to make editorial compromises which has resulted in him being held partly to account for the subjugation of sound art within music for the next hundred years.

Even today, one of the '**Possible themes:**' for this conference still privileges 'Music' over 'Sound Art'.

Rob Gawthorp, Not Seeing What is Heard | Not Hearing what is Seen

Russolo's radical and culturally expansive manifesto was neither progressive nor egalitarian.

Though he sought to enlarge the composers' palette he demanded control and conformity: "*We want to give pitches to these diverse noises, regulating them harmonically and rhythmically*". One hundred years on and theories and practices concerning the acousmatic, silence and acoustic ecology have brought many of Russolo's propositions into question. During the same period, the development of visual and audio recording (and amplification) has taken his concept of "the noise sound" into multiple and often contradictory directions.

Pythagoras allegedly gave his lectures from behind a curtain so that his appearance did not distract. The bracketing-out of extraneous sensory material can draw attention to both consciousness and perception (Husserl's intentionality & Schaeffer's reduced listening). "The see-able and the listenable do not usually have any direct connection with each other except when the source of a sound is seen or anticipated. This is reversed in performative situations, and cinema in particular. Sound will always be in juxtaposition with image and their relationship demands attention consciously or unconsciously". Steve Goodman effectively identifies two polarized positions as being between the Futurists' "...[fascist] politics of noise and the reactionary [acoustic ecology] politics of silence." Russolo stated, "Ancient life was all silence." That is of course except for the noises of the natural world.

Drawing from the theoretical framework outlined above, my chapter *Thunder & Lightning* and referring to Duchamp, Cage, Fluxus, Althusser and Ranciere; A performance-lecture is proposed that will include short film extracts, sound improvisation and projection. The intention, following Russolo's legacy, is to present and demonstrate the problems of perception of *incidental* sounds (noises) in visual / aural practices and in particular to contest the diegetic / non-diegetic binary dominant in media studies.

Victor Cruz, *Crisis Music: Futurism, Jazz, and the Historiography of Aesthetic Avant-Gardes*

While Russolo's *The Art of Noises* is today regarded as a powerful, prophetic statement on the sounds and shapes of music to come, its spirited call for a transformed sensorium was scarcely heard in the midst of early 20th century mass-culture's most visible and popular forms: jazz and cinema. This paper compares and contrasts the Italian Futurist music manifestos with the accounts of some of the earliest public performances of African-American jazz, particularly by James Reese Europe's military band; here I employ Fredric Jameson's distinction between the 'utopian project', the explicit attempt, usually voiced by elites or *déclassé* intellectuals, to refashion society through art or other means, and the 'utopian impulse', the inchoate, affective desire for new worlds implicitly captured and expressed in vernacular musics like jazz. I argue that conventional historical trajectories and definitions of 'avant-garde' and 'modernism' remain far too Eurocentric. This is not to dismiss Russolo's precient statements or his unique technical achievements, but rather to suggest that expanding our frame of reference to take in non-European developments in music- beginning, say, from the context of global economic crisis and war- allows us to rethink what avant-gardism, as mode a social-aesthetic experimentation, was and could be.

Paul Hegarty, presenting Elizabeth Price, *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*

This 2012 Turner-prize winning multimedia piece sets up a series of interactions between media, between sounds, noise, visuals and technologies. Intermedial noise.

Barry Synnott – Modular Synthesiser live improvisation.

The aim of this performance is to explore the nature of a Serge Modular Synthesiser through a live improvisation. This improvisation will work by setting up the Serge Synthesiser live; this entails connecting, 'patching', each individual module during the performance. In doing this we may see the unpredictable nature of this synthesiser; as each element to the sound is brought into play via it's patching into the system, the audience will hear the consequential effect on the overall sound produced, and will come to see how these sounds are unique and virtually unable to be replicated. In this, an understanding of the organic nature of the synthesiser will be achieved. An initial set of noises produced by an oscillator will slowly evolve into something deeper and more complex with the patching in of filters and further elements to the synthesiser, thus introducing further aspects to the overall sound. The audience is invited to think about the sense of narrative achieved through the evolution of a set of sounds created within a modular synthesiser; the unpredictability and vastness of possibilities of what sounds may be produced may also be reflected on, given the high number of combinations of patches to be made on the synthesiser, we may imagine an infinity of possible resulting sounds.

Declan Synnott – Amplified Static

Amplified Static is a sound performance based around an amplified static signal generated by high gain effects pedals and amplification. Subtle changes to the sound will be made, aiming for a gradual evolution of the static signal and the construction of an enveloping sound. The focus of this piece is to reflect on the nature of duration, change and volume within a noise performance. The sense of a changing or composed piece of music or sound will be replaced with a virtually unmoving sound, only subject to intermittent gradual modulation. The audience is invited to listen to this piece and reflect on what is expected in terms of duration, volume and change from a performance.

Benjamin J. Heal, Weaponizing Noise: William S. Burroughs' Sound & Music Experiments

This paper examines the effect European art movements, particularly Dada and Surrealism, had on Burroughs' tape experiments that were part of his 'cut-up' project, in order to reveal Burroughs' wider attacks on notions of authorship and contemporaneous American culture & society.

Burroughs is an American writer regarded as an iconic figure of 20th Century avant-garde art and literature. The cut-up technique was discovered by chance by Burroughs' friend, the artist Brion Gysin. Derived from Tristan Tzara's Dada game of creating poetry by drawing words out of a hat, and other Surrealist collage techniques, the method involved different permutations of cutting-up and folding-in sections of texts, including Burroughs own work, but also work of other authors and non-literary texts, and rearranging them to create often surreal and jarring juxtapositions and new words. Burroughs used the method to assist the writing of his 'Nova' trilogy of novels of the 1960s. He was introduced to the magnetic tape recorder in the mid-1960s and immediately realised the potential for experimentation presented by using the cut-up methodology with this new technology. Burroughs' theoretical aesthetic of the 1960s had moved beyond traditional Modernist

targets such as mechanised, urban existence and overt mechanisms of state control to responding to less apparent, more abstract forces of control, particularly the mechanisms that control information. His responses were through new forms of personal and political resistance typified by the tape experiments. In his essay “The Electronic Revolution” (1966) the tape recorder is presented as a key weapon of resistance against both overt and covert methods of state power. These techniques are demonstrated in the experiments released as *Nothing Here But the Recordings* (1981) and *Break Through In Grey Room* (1986) where Burroughs’ spoken word is juxtaposed in a disorientating way with Moroccan trance music, electronic squeals, tape noises, commercials and news reports.

Valentina Ravaglia, “The vibrations between two objects in relation to each other”: aural and visual noise in the work of Mike Kelley

As an art student, American artist and musician Mike Kelley (1954-2012) titled one of his earliest performances *The Futurist Ballet* (1973), in a tongue-in-cheek tribute to the Italian avant-garde movement and its irreverent, confrontational, dissonant theatrics. This influence is particularly evident in Kelley's long-term preoccupation with the aesthetics of noise in his work as a visual artist and in his experiments with music: his use of toys, tape collages and electric appliances as musical instruments (most notably as a member of seminal art-noise band Destroy All Monsters) was declaredly indebted to Russolo’s writings and to his *Intonarumori*. Indeed, one of his contributions to *Performa 09: Back to Futurism* was a two-day noise music festival reconstructing a ‘minor history’ of the genre. Many of Kelley's works are explorations of the cultural connotations of noise, both in its aural sense and as visual or semantic chaos: synesthesia, miscommunication, false memories, ambiguity, degradation and sensorial overload are recurring tropes across his oeuvre, which never lost the countercultural attitude of his psychedelic youth.

This paper argues the centrality of notions of noise in Kelley’s work, and the depth of his critical understanding of dissonance as an aesthetic strategy, inspired by the machinic cacophony of Futurism and applied as a form of critique of late 20th century belief systems, social rituals and hierarchies of value. It will discuss in particular early performance works such as *Spirit Voices*, *Tube Music* and *Oracle at Delphi* (all 1978), his collaborations with Scanner (*Esprits de Paris*, 2002), Sonic Youth (*Plato’s Cave*, *Rothko’s Capel*, *Lincoln’s Profile*, 1986), Tony Oursler (*The Poetics Project*), Paul McCarthy and Violent Onsen Geisha, as well as his interest in Electronic Voice Phenomena and other soundscapes associated with paranormal or mind-altering experiences (i.e. *Channel One*, *Channel Two and Channel Three* and *Silver Ball*, both 1994).

David Spittle, ‘The Lyricism of Noise in John Ashbery’s *Flow Chart*’

‘Lyricism’ in poetry has been historically and etymologically (‘Lyric’ derives from the Greek, ‘Lyrikós,’ meaning ‘singing to the lyre,’) associated with music, a derivation that has

since morphed into a more conceptual, Romantic ideal, pertaining to self-expression. To return to its original relationship with music, I want to suggest that a contemporary trajectory of lyricism asserts itself in relation to 'noise'. Just as the established conventions of 'music' were challenged by Luigi Russolo's key Futurist text 'The Art of Noises' (1913) and then later developed in the experimentation of John Cage, there arises an emergent parallel in poetry. Logically, if lyricism in poetry is linked to music - and music has now evolved in accordance with challenges to what a traditional conception of 'music' implies and excludes - then the nature and understanding of 'lyric poetry' must change as well. Rather than approach the disturbance of poetic noise as an updated aesthetic of Whitman's democratic poetics, in which a new textual multiplicity or linguistic polyphony is addressed, I will instead draw on the theories of recorded noise asserted by Stan Link. Link addresses the intentional inclusion of 'recording noise' (crackle of static, hum of wires etc.) in music as a nascent trend of the mid to late 90s, from which he explores the effects on our listening experience. Through suggestions of nostalgia, absence and memory, Link posits 'recorded noise' as an evocative tool that dispels the stance of production transparency and its notion of the 'original' in favour of a much deeper engagement. To apply these suggestions to a study of poetry, I want to draw upon John Ashbery's novel-length poem, *Flow Chart* (1991). Through a playful use of interruption, confusion and shifting rhythms of attention, the poem itself can be conceived of as a form of 'textual noise'.

Danny McCarthy, Luigi Russolo met John Cage on the corner of Castle Street

This is a performance work rather than a straight lecture or presentation but the submission is submitted for the papers section bearing in mind the normal way papers are presented this would be disruptive in the true spirit of the Art Of Noise/ Futurist tradition. I have made a series of mesostics based on the text the Art Of Noise using LUIGI RUSSOLO as the spine also did the same thing with John Cage's SILENCE. The presentation would consist of the live reading of the mesostics from the Art Of Noise whilst at the same time the mesostics from SILENCE would play back at random from a 99 track CD being played on shuffle .There would only be 33 voice tracks on the CD so obviously some tracks would play as silent/noise/voice. An additional live element will be the artist manipulating cassette walkmen as noise instruments

Scott Wilson (with Edia Connoles and Suzanne Walsh): The Eroticism of Silence

'Eroticism is silence'

Georges Bataille, *Death and Sensuality*, 264.

Silence, as we know from John Cage's experiments in art and science, is impossible. But so too, perhaps, is noise. Certainly the title of Russolo's great text is paradoxical given that in so far as there is an art of noise, which is to say a form of music that encompasses noise, noise is abolished. On the one hand, all Russolo's letter-manifesto seeks to do is expand the repertoire of sounds that can be music, to 'enlarge and enrich more and more the domain of musical sounds' and 'score and regulate' them. As such, *The Art of Noise* is one of a number of works in the 20thC that transformed and infinitely expanded the definition of music to one of a simple principle of organization, bringing it in line with the Pythagorean tradition in which the old idea of *natura musicans* is revived in the ecological idea that

music permeates, even constitutes the cosmos.

On the other hand, there is in the Futurist imperative of the piece a conception of noise that breaks violently with any natural order of things that it dismisses as a world of silence. ('In Antiquity life was nothing but silence. Noise was not really born until the 19thC with the advent of machinery. Today noise reigns supreme over human sensibility'). Another tendency in Russolo's text, then, is to evoke an erotic mechanics of noise that denudes itself of all the discursive trappings of human sensibility, all sense and organization, at the explosive, violent threshold of death – and therefore silence – ('those noises man's mouth can make without talking or singing'). When Bataille says that 'eroticism is silence' he means two things: first, that it is beyond speech and second, that 'the final sense of eroticism' is death. Eroticism is noisy, but it can be figured as an open, 'divine' mouth stripped of speech and song that 'moans, screams, laughs, rattlings and sobs' (Russolo) in a negation of the animal desire that it paradoxically wishes to regain in order to communicate from the mute site of enunciation over-written by the signifier. This is a noise that ultimately obliterates dissonance and the sonic differences necessary for an art of noise-music, a noise that is equivalent to the silence of death and the continuity of non-human sound from which it erupts.

This paper will therefore produce a 'Bataillean' double reading of Russolo's *Art of Noises* but in relation to early 20thC contemporary examples in which this double movement is in play whereby music, discourse and song are invoked only to be displaced by the animalistic machinism of the body – especially the speechless and songless mouth (and other apertures) – in the silence of eroticism. In so doing, we will invoke and deploy the futurist concepts of *conrumore* and *disrumore*, *conmusica* and *dismusica*.

Strange Attractor and Guests present an intonarumori concert

Strange Attractor is a dynamic multi-dimensional collaborative venture between five artists, Anthony Kelly, Danny McCarthy, Irene Murphy, Mick O'Shea and David Stalling, using sound, experiments with technology and combined media. The collaboration began in 2010 and was curated in partnership with Dawn Williams of the Crawford Gallery, Cork, Ireland and consisted of a series of monthly durational performances with invited guests, that led to a gallery based residency during April 2011. Performances were also held in the RHA Gallery, Dublin, Ireland, and Cafe OTO & Pigeon Wing Gallery in London during November & December 2011. In August 2012 the Strange Attractor performed and exhibiting in Studio Soto and Mobius, Boston and Harvest Works New York. Strange Attractors' live performances with invited guests have featured internationally renowned artists such as David Toop and Mary Nunan, Stephen Vitiello, Rhodri Davies, Alessandro Bosetti, Steve Roden, Lee Patterson and Jed Speare. For this performance, they will be joined by Sarah Hayden, Harry Moore and Rachel Warriner.

Vomir

A solid wall of noise, an indefinite mountain range where all sounds merge and add their voices. Density and volume combine to overwhelm rational listening to create a powerful experience of hearing noise as fullness, solidity. This is a philosophy of life, but of bare life, in its end state, an eternal return of the same.

Exhibition of MIX House

“Mix House” is an architectural proposition that deploys found sounds of the exterior environment as a generator of both architectural form and interior experience.

Situated on a generic suburban plot, the dwelling is composed of two sound-gathering volumes outfitted with three audiovisual windows. The curved profile of each of these sonic windows is composed of two elements: a louvered glass window wall that regulates the sound of the air-borne ambient environment, and a parabolic dish that electronically targets exterior found sounds and transmits them to an interior audio system controlled from the kitchen island. (MIX Counter) From this sound command center of the house, occupants are free to design original domestic soundscapes by mixing media sponsored sounds with the ambient noises of the neighborhood.

Mix House offers its occupants the potential to “know” the domestic environment in an unfamiliar way that calls into question traditional distinctions between nature and culture, music and noise.

The exhibition includes descriptive drawings of the house (see sample below) as well as an accompanying 5-minute animation video that describes the house and its attributes.

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