

Hear Th↓s Space

SITE SENSITIVE SPATIAL SOUND

Activity Report – Grants for the Arts

Building Communities



LOTTERY FUNDED



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

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Evaluation

Building Communities was a Hear This Space project that ran from Spring 2014 to Spring 2015. The project was generously supported by Arts Council England through their *Grants for the Arts* programme.

I. Outputs (what happened).

With the support of ACE we were able to support the development of thirteen electroacoustic / sonic art compositions, run three highly successful workshops, present two concerts showcasing the works of workshop participants and commissioned artists and to significantly develop our orchestra of sounding objects through sculptural commissions and the purchase of equipment.

- Thirteen electroacoustic / sonic art pieces.
- Three successful workshops.
- Two concerts.
- Six sculptural 'Sounding Objects'.

I.1. Barrow-In-Furness

Through the Barrow-in-Furness project we were assisted by the Octopus Collective who were able to advise and support us logistically. This support proved to be highly beneficial, allowing us to focus fully on delivering the best possible quality workshop, supporting artists effectively to develop their own works and realising a high quality concert event.



We were able to connect with six local artists and help them to develop works that explored the sonic character of Barrow and their relationship to the place. Alongside this we were able to commission Brona Martin to both lead workshop sessions and develop her own work inspired by the place. Having Brona as an active workshop leader helped to catalyse the work of the local artist participants and drive the development of compositions.

The workshop event took place on 14th June 2014 and was well attended. We were able to provide opportunities for many members of the public to explore the sounds of their local area through listening training exercises and using sound recording equipment, which we loaned to them. Twelve participants joined us for the workshop and discovered a plethora of interesting sounds in their local area. These materials and the experience of the workshop formed the foundation for the development of later compositions.



Within the period between the workshop and concert Brona, our commissioned composer and workshop leader, re-visited Barrow to work directly with the local artists providing support and tuition to them aiding in the development of their works. This ensured a continuity of development in artist works ensuring that works would be ready for the final concert event.



A few months after the workshop we returned for the concert event, on October 4th 2014. This was hosted in the attic of an-ex industrial warehouse building, with views extending across Barrow, 'Cooke Studios'. Siting the concert in this place provided a clear resonance between the sonic works inspired by the town, and the clear vista of the town, extending out in all directions.



On the day of the concert the loudspeaker concert system was made available to local artists for rehearsal of their pieces within the space, with members of hear this space on hand to provide support and guidance in live diffusion practice. This was not a formal workshop session but an opportunity to work directly with each artist on a one to one basis. The space was also open to the public during this time and members of the public invited to attend and experience the sounding objects within the space as well as to experiment with the system.





The concert took place in the evening and was well attended with a diversity of members of the public, from young children to older adults. All commissioned artists and local artists attended the event to share their works, which were well received by a grateful and interested public.



Hear This Space

SITE SENSITIVE SPATIAL SOUND

@ Cookes Studio, Barrow-In-Furness.

5pm, 4th October 2014

PROGRAMME:

Title: Elegy

By Josephine Dickinson

Duration: 5 minutes 20 seconds

A section of recording of Alice Deakin pulling a pencil or pen across a metal grille to make a repeated high pitched, urgent thrumming against a low pitched background rustle. I slowed this down whilst keeping the pitches the same. The title 'Elegy' refers not only to the usually understood sense of a lament, but also to the gathering, collecting or reading action denoted in the root 'leg-' and hence also to the word for wood and thence tree, 'lignum' (from the action of collecting firewood), together with the prefix 'e-', hence 'gather out of', the tree being the sum of canopy and root of the widely separated, somewhat implausibly counterpointed pitches.

Composer Biography:

Josephine Dickinson studied composition in the late 80s and early 90s with Michael Finnissy and Richard Barrett. She has published four books of poetry and this is her first venture into sound art composition. She is interested in exploring the links between sound, visual and verbal art.

Title: Ring!

By Andrew Deakin

Duration: 6 minutes

Earlier this year the the bell ringers of St James' Church in Barrow played a Full Peal for the first time in a generation on the newly-restored bells. I was there to broadcast the occasion live on our internet radio station FONair. It was possibly the hottest day of the year and I spent the whole of the peal attempt (over 3 hours!) on the spiral staircase outside the Bell Chamber. This was one of the most extraordinary sonic experiences I have ever had. This piece is made from some of the sounds I recorded before and during the day using a stationary microphone placed above the bells. All my favourite sounds are here: bells, birds, muffled voices, creaking – we could discuss why these are my favourite sounds for hours! The recordings are often left untouched but also processed and transformed using a variety of my favourite digital techniques.

Composer Biography:

Andrew Deakin started experimenting with electronics and musical instruments at 14 and continues to do so to this day. He has been working as a composer/sonic artist since 1988 working with choreographers and dancers including: EmilynClaid, Rebecca Skelton, Andrew Fifield, Gaby Agis, Lea Parkinson and Jodi Falk. He has also produced music/sound for installations, films and animations.

Collaboration is central to his practice and he has been instrumental in bringing together artists and others from diverse backgrounds to work together on short- and long-term projects, most recently with the FON (Full Of Noises) festival of Experimental Music and Sonic Art (www.fonfestival.org).

Since 2005 he has lived near Barrow in Furness where he is a Director of Octopus – an organization committed to the development and dissemination of exciting music and sonic art activity in the region.

Title: Beats of the Barrow

By Jessica Rowland

Duration: 3 minutes 46 seconds (Work in progress)

The piece reflects the two distinct parts to the sound walk: in the first part the traffic noise is dominant, but with other subtle sounds (some made others just captured) coming through. Secondly, the quieter section nearer the dock, where there were lots of sounds to be made like walking on gravel, but with the sounds of the birds coming through as well. As with all my pieces, sounds were mixed and edited to create different textures. I have also put a little panning in to see how it works with the multi speaker system.

Composer Biography:

Jessica Rowland studied Music & Performing Arts and then worked as a Lighting and Sound Technician in Theatres before studying Music Technology.

Since 2003 she has been creating works that have been exhibited as part of online radio, exhibitions, and for Theatre.

She is interested in cross discipline collaboration, having worked on several projects with Visual Artist Pat Hodson and Poet Liz Cashdan; a project during her MA with a choreographer and Dancers; and more recently a group of artists and writers in Warrington.

She works with musical and found sounds, and the spoken word; recording & remixing, creating rhythmic patterns and layers of sound.

She lives in Manchester and works as a Technician for the School of Performance & Cultural Industries, University of Leeds.

Website: www.jessicarowland.me.uk

Title: Kordadarow

By Rick Thompson, Carlito Juanito and Bomi Seo

Duration:

Description: Kordadarow is a collaboration piece by Rick Thompson, Carlito Juanito and Bomi Seo. All the sounds contained within were recorded in or around Barrow by Rick, Carlito and Bomi. They also included a recording made by a participant of the Hear This Sound workshop. For the vocal part, Bomi Seo used a cut up technique first utilised by the Dadaists. The original text related to her experiences in Barrow.

Composer Biography:

Carlito Juanito and **Rick Thompson** began collaborating around 2006 and work together on various projects live performances and curating art exhibitions.

In 2010 they established Must Die Records as a tool to release and promote Experimental music. To date Must Die Records has 31 releases across Vinyl, Cassette Tape, CD and Digital Releases; have been interviewed and had airplay on national and international radio; been featured in international Music publications; curated live events and showcases, and invited to submit recordings to the National Sound Archive.

Their work evolved in 2014 by setting up Field Art Collective. Field is a platform to explore Field Recordings, intuitive/contemporary composition and Sound Art. Field exists to encourage networking across related fields, enable specific art projects, run workshops, gallery exhibitions, experimental multidisciplinary works, sound walks and to encourage active listening.

Bomi Seo is a performance artist and painter from Seoul, Korea. She has recently collaborated with Stained Afro on a live performance sound art piece in Preston, UK and many guerrilla art performances in downtown Seoul.

She is also the singer for renowned Korean pop band Tirikilatops which recently completed a mini UK tour.

Title: Beneath the Barrow

By Brona Martin

Duration:

On the 15th June I led a soundwalk in Barrow-in-Furness. The aim of the sound walk was to listen to the sounds of Barrow and record some of these sounds along the route. This piece is a brief exploration of the sounds gathered by the participants during the soundwalk. It is also an exploration of my own recordings that I have gathered during various visits to Barrow. The aim of the piece is to reveal some of the intrinsic qualities of these sounds while creating a contrast between sounds that symbolise elements of industrial life alongside those that reflect the beautiful natural surroundings of the area.

I would like to thank all the participants for their recordings and Hear Th|s Space for commissioning the work.

Composer Biography

Brona Martin is an Electroacoustic composer and sound artist from Banagher, Co. Offaly, Ireland. Brona is in the final stages of her PhD in Electroacoustic Composition under the supervision of Professor David Berezan at NOVARS Research Center, University of Manchester. Her research interests include narrative in Electroacoustic music, soundscape composition and acoustic ecology. Her site specific works composed in stereo, 5.1 and 8-channel have included the creative exploration of soundscapes from Ireland, Manchester, East Coast Australia, Spain and Germany. Her works have been performed internationally at EMS, APMC, ICMC, NYCCEMF, ISSTA, NOISEFLOOR, Balance/Unbalance, SSSP, iFIMPaC and MANTIS. Have a listen to some of her work at www.soundcloud.com.

www.bronamartin.com

1.2. St. Martins Square

The St. Martins square project sought to engage persons with the sounds of Leicester's city centre, taking place on 30th August 2014. Centered around the 'Leicester Lanes' and in particular the St. Martins Square shopping arcade, the intention was to hire empty shop units to act as a central hub for the workshop and to be a final venue for the concert event.



Regrettably, even for the workshop our contact with the shopping arcade seriously let us down. Resulting in us instead hosting the workshop within a café on the Arcade. This proved to be surprisingly successful and led to an informal air which proved to be highly effective with the workshop.

As with Barrow, the workshop centered around listening exercises and recording sounds within the local area. We took the participants on a tour of the area, leading them from the varying acoustics of the narrow shopping lanes, into the larger spaces of the city Cathedral and local Guildhall museum. Recording sounds of the exhibits and the acoustic of this holy space.

Participants were then invited to continue to develop works from the recordings made and were provided with offers of online support to help their move their project forwards.

Unfortunately due to conflicting and negative interests of commercial parties we were unable to secure a concert venue in the desired location and therefore were forced to cancel the St. Martins concert event. No proprietors were willing to open up their empty shop units for such a transient and short-term event a single concert. This was incredibly disappointing and reflects the limitations of not collaborating with established groups in the organization of events. The contact who acted as arbitrator for these discussions proved to be a very unreliable individual, further compounding the difficulties in convincing the landowners to facilitate our event. No doubt, if we had been able to secure local authority help there might have been more progress that could have been made in this area.





1.3. New Walk Museum – ‘GESAMTKUSNTWERK’

Building our project to run in parallel with the strategic priorities of an established arts institute we worked effectively with curators at New Walk museum to deliver the third and final workshop and concert event, inspired by the German Expressionist art collection in the museum.

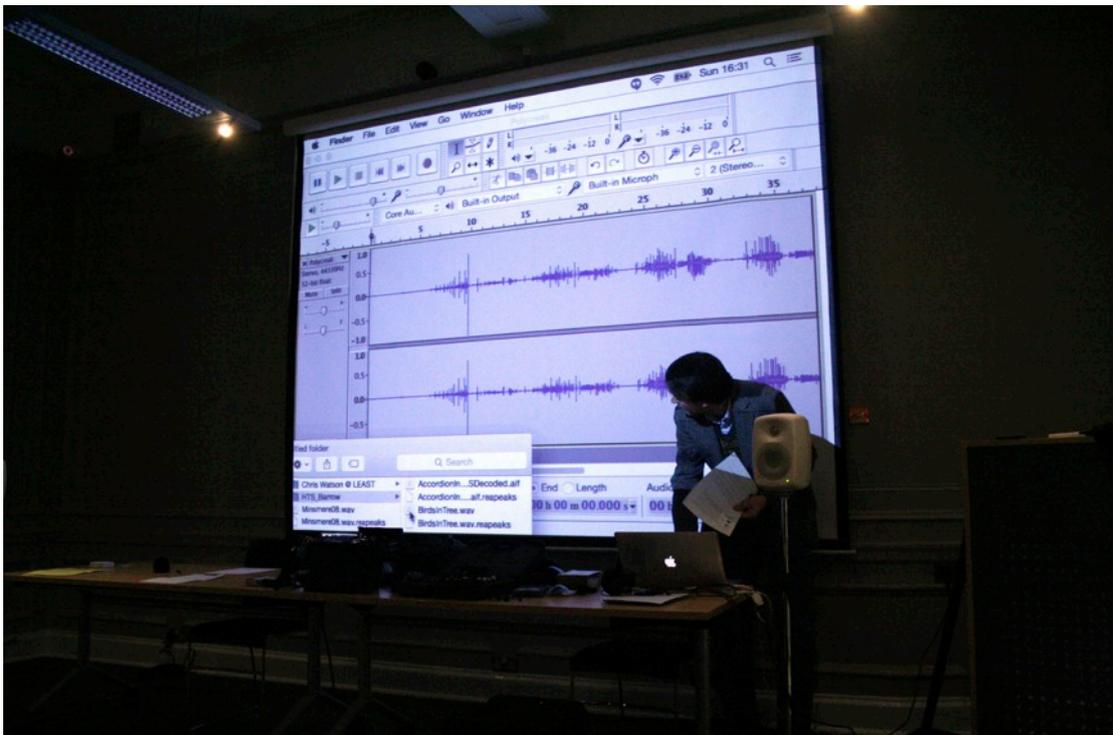


The first workshop took place on the 11th January 2015 in the Lord Mayors room at New Walk museum. Once again, we introduced the participants to listening training exercises and then took them on a tour of the internal spaces within the museum. They captured sounds of the space and the environment. We then received a talk from Simon Lake, head curator at the museum, on the topic of German Expressionism and the works contained within the collection. This was most edifying and provided great opportunity for inspiration.

Subsequent HTS workshop and discussion centered around how to translate the ideas of German Expressionism into the realm of sonic arts and inspire the development of compositions.



Participants left with many ideas but we had had little time to discuss the practicalities of realizing works. Therefore a second workshop was convened, focusing on the technical realization of works through sound editing and practice. This took place a few weeks later on the 15th February 2015. As a result of both workshops participants were able to deliver compositions for the concert in March.



The final concert took place on the 20th March 2015, within the German Expressionist gallery at New Walk museum. The art works, which had helped to inspire the participants and commissioned composers, surrounded the audience and the loudspeaker system. Due to the practicalities of setting up within a public gallery space, we were unable to set up much in advance of the concert therefore there were not as extensive rehearsal and performance workshop sessions as in Barrow. Each composer had a thirty-minute session to rehearse but there was little time of experimentation or performance development.



Loudspeaker placement for this concert was inspired by the concept of the gallery with pairs of speakers situated in 'frames' as opposed to equally and concentrically, in the common "French" electroacoustic tradition. This allowed performers to present their pieces to the audience from different angles and at different perspectives, from close up and enveloping to distant and spacious.



New Walk Museum concert programme:

Hear Th↓s Space

SITE SENSITIVE SPATIAL SOUND

@ New Walk Museum
20th March 2015, 7pm.

‘GESAMTKUNSTWERK’

Concert Programme

Steph - STET

Rick Nance - CCR

Elena – Fab Work #1

Andrew Hill – Abstracted Journeys

Amit Patel – Clocktower

Lucy Stephens - GE

Rick Nance – St. Marty Dreams the Future

Runa – Runa’s Museum Piece

1.4. Sounding Objects

One of the main goals of the grant was to develop our collection of “Sounding Objects” including both traditional prefabricated loudspeaker units and custom designed innovative sculptural objects.

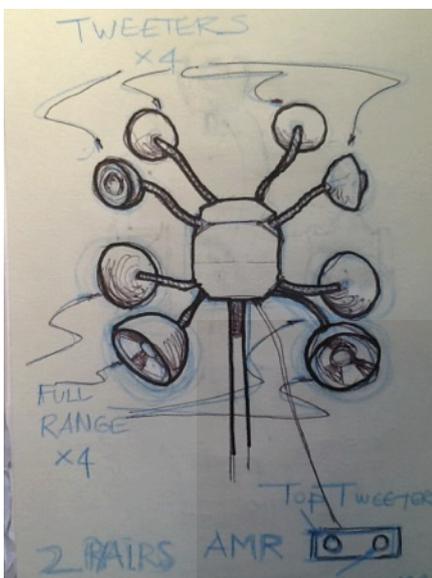
Through the duration of the project we purchased a number of prefabricated speaker units, so as to reduce our reliance upon support-in-kind loans of equipment (which had previously caused problems in terms of availability), and to acquire a more advanced multichannel sound interface, which provides far greater stability and efficiency for multichannel loudspeaker concerts.

With these fundamentals in place we began to plan and design custom made loudspeakers that operated in an alternative fashion to traditional loudspeakers.

1.4.1. Tweeter Tree

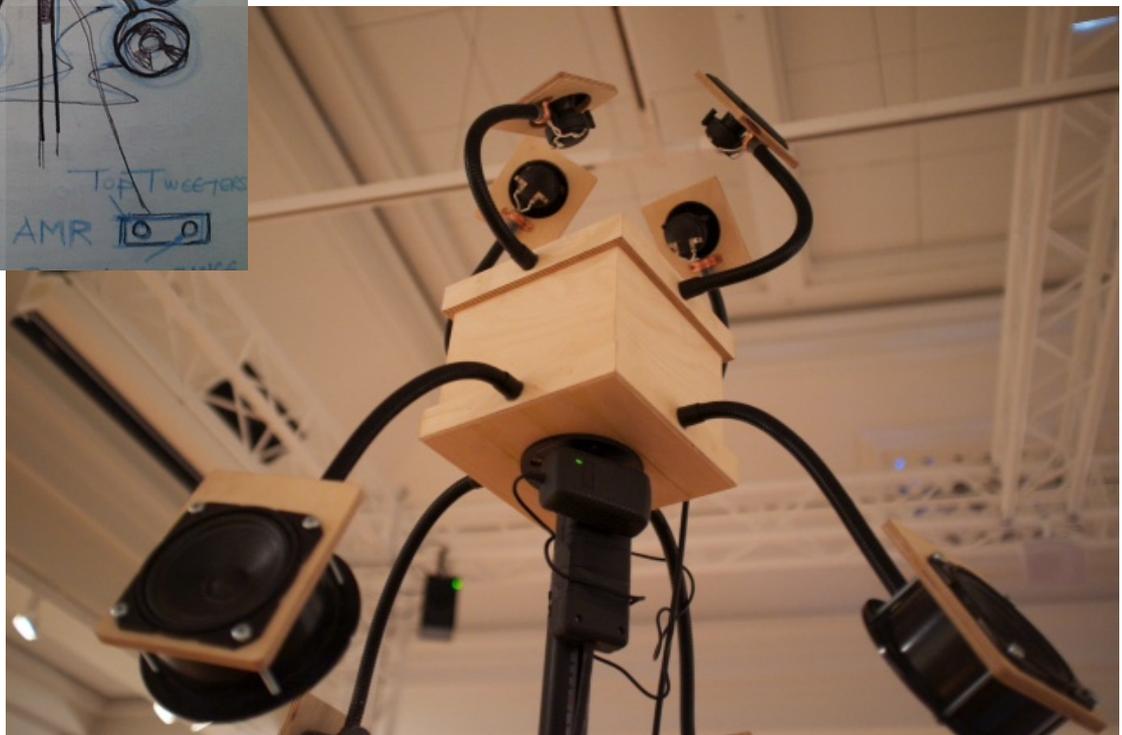
We were conscious that we lacked any specialized speakers to produce high frequency sounds. We had many mid range loudspeakers and subwoofers but none specifically designed to complement the higher registers.

Therefore we set out to commission and design a speaker unit that would allow us to take advantage of this high frequency range. The directional nature of high frequency sounds and the necessity for the unit to be applicable to a wide diversity of acoustic environments led to a unique ‘goose neck’ tweeter tree design, with the drive units adaptable and configurable in a variety of shapes and directions.



The tweeter trees proved to be highly successful allowing detailed and controlled emphasis to be applied to the sounds of the concert and adding greatly to the aesthetic impact of the Hear This Space concert rig.

Two units were delivered, providing a stereo tweeter array, which can be raised above the audience on stands to create a high frequency canopy of sound.

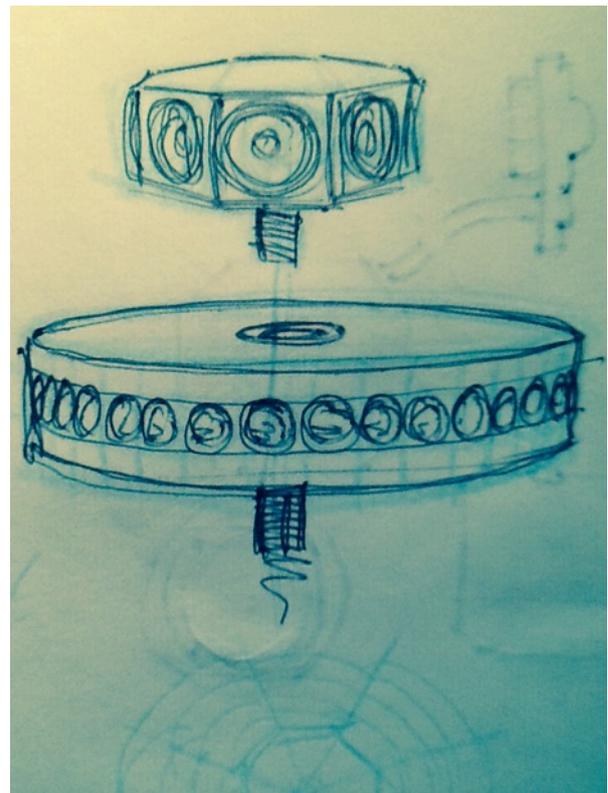
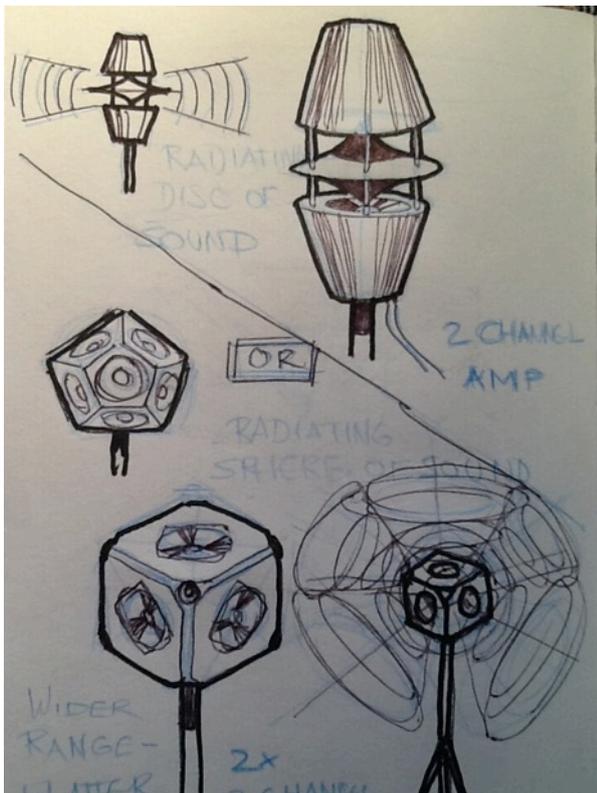


1.4.2. Omnidirectional Units

With the full frequency complement accessible to us, via the tweeter trees, attention turned to more unique and alternative sound wave propagation systems. Most standard loudspeakers are directional, projecting sound primarily in one direction.

However, the physics of sound tells us that sound actually propagates from vibrating surfaces in all directions. Therefore we wanted to commission loudspeaker units that too would propagate sound in all directions.

This would allow for a completely different sound field type to be added to the diffusion performance system of Hear This Space, providing new opportunities for composition and performance.



A variety of designs were proposed, but through testing these were limited down to two types.

These two types of unit again needed to be adaptable to a variety of acoustic environments and potential concert spaces, and to provide unique sound propagation patterns not already possible with the existing Hear This Space system.

The first type of omnidirectional speaker utilises a wave field approach, in which multiple drive units are synchronized in the correct (same) phase relationship, positioned facing outwards around a central axis to create a uniform omnidirectional wavefront. These were built into an octagonal frame, with eight drive units within each sounding object. The effect of these created a diffuse and radial sound field, ideally suited for diffuse holding patterns within the performed sonic image.

The second type of omnidirectional speaker utilizes a completely different approach to the first, with a single drive unit and a custom made diffuser to deflect the audio wavefront outwards. This speaker produces a very diffuse hemispherical sound image, radiating outwards from the centre point.



2. Key Areas of Development (lessons learned)

Reflecting upon the successes of the various projects run over the past year, they were most successful where we were able to take advantage of existing infrastructure, in the form of existing arts institutions or groups. These obviously already have an extensive knowledge of the local area as well as having an added caché of authenticity and significance in the local artistic communities of the area. Working collaboratively with these organisations enabled us to focus upon the delivery of our own workshops and concerts without expending significant energies on managing logistics and connecting with unknown communities.

That said, the St. Martins workshop was also successful, proving that the marketing undertaken for this stand alone event was significant enough to attract members of the public to take part, perhaps also reaching an alternative public who would not ordinarily engage with the formality of the New Walk museum.

We faced challenges when attempting to interface with commercial ventures, namely around the potential availability of space in St. Martins square. We had hoped to hire an unused shop unit for a concert event but the commercial parties (owners of these complexes) were very negative and, despite many attempts to liaise with them, caused the planned concert event in St. Martins Square to be postponed indefinitely. The complexities of working with commercial partners was unexpected and we now have a much more significant understanding of their priorities. In future projects I would look to work with the local council or more established local arts groups with a proven track record in organising events in order to make this communication with local businesses more constructive and to identify appropriate spaces for events.

2.1. Participant Comments

We asked those who had been involved with our project to write a short statement outlining their experience. They were encouraged to reflect upon the following:

- How did you find the experience?
- What worked well?
- What would you have liked more of?

Their comments have proved invaluable to our evaluation and to reflections upon our work over the past year. Fortunately many of the comments received were also reflected by our own experience of the events and so we took steps, even through the project, to modify our practices.

Future projects will be heavily informed by these comments.

Jess Rowland – Artist / Participant Barrow-In-Furness

I really enjoyed taking part in HTS, talking to other artists and listening to what others had created from our shared soundwalk experience.

I think the soundwalk was an interesting way to find sounds and i would certainly think about taking part in another one. What was good was the blindfold listening exercise which made us all stop and listen without any distractions.

Maybe there could have been a more practical workshop for the afternoon (i know from personal experience this is difficult equipment-wise so understand why this may have not been an option).

I thought the sharing concert was a good idea - the space was great (though out of

the way for any passing public that may have staying from the other events in the building) and the speaker system was a great way of hearing the pieces.

More Sound walk events please!!!

Brona Martin – Commissioned Composer & Workshop Leader, Barrow-In-Furness

I found the experience of working with Hear This Space to be a very rewarding one. I thoroughly enjoyed my recording trips to Barrow, exploring the area and engaging with the surroundings. Presenting workshops on soundwalking and listening was also an enjoyable and rewarding experience. The workshop and performance events were very successful resulting in a lot of positive feedback from participants.

These events have played an important role in my professional development and I hope to work with Hear This Space again in the future. I would like to thank them for giving me the opportunity to write a new piece and deliver workshops on topics that I am passionate about.

I would like to see a continuation of this type of events perhaps adding an extra day for workshops, where there is more time for participants to explore compositional techniques. I would also like to develop these workshops in the future based on age and experience where all levels would be catered for.

Steph – Artist / Participant, St Martins Square

For me, as a visual artist in process of re-engaging with my practice, HTS has provided resources I would not have been able to access otherwise. Training with equipment and software, discussion and feedback, support and the opportunity to play my piece at an event have all had a significant impact and contact with HTS has been invaluable.

In terms of promotion, I only heard about the sound walk event in St.Martin's the night before and could very easily have missed it. In terms of outreach, further events at New Walk Museum seemed targeted at a wider public and some very good pieces came from this - especially from younger people. I was only able to attend the first event in St.Martin's and would have liked to have attended the others as it seems to me the idea was to provide an opportunity for professional and non-professional / sound and visual artists to spend time interacting and devising work together.

Lucy Stephens – Commissioned Composer

Hear This Space were great to work with and very encouraging in terms of developing my practice as a sound artist as well as showcasing my work at the museum to a new audience. I've learnt so much from working with the team, including recording using different microphones and recording devices, collaborating with a vocalist, picking up handy tips for editing sound and diffusing in front of an audience for the first time!

I never would have performed my piece over 22 channels without the support of Hear This Space! Now I've done it once I want to do it again!

I found you very professional and easy to work with! :)

Amit Patel – Commissioned Composer, New Walk Museum.

I usually compose in two-channel so the opportunity to work with Hear This Space allowed me to think about surround sound environments and presenting the composition to audiences in a unique multi-channel environment. Working this way sounds can be placed and localised around the room providing an immersive listening experience, a literal 'cinema for the ears'.

In general most of my sound work is full frontal a strong aesthetic from DIY rave and dub sound system culture, whereby speakers are usually placed directly in front of the audience with the emphasis on the volume and sound level. This opportunity to move sounds around the room will fully immerse the audience to the locality of the Clock Tower. The listener becomes the monument.

I appreciated presenting the work at a Hear This Space gig as usually the concerts are well organised in an unusual place with a strong astute sound diffusion set up which really helped to complement my artistic concept and immerse the audience in sound. Bring on the bass.

2.2. Trends from Participant Comments

Common trends from participant comments highlight the value of the group listening and sound recording workshops, which were greatly appreciated by members of the public and participating artists alike.

Feedback comments from the Barrow-In-Furness workshop highlighted the desire and need for participants to undertake more practical editing and composing workshops. Providing them with the skills to act upon their recordings captured on soundwalks and to turn them into pieces. These comments were taken on board and so in the New Walk workshop we organized a second day to focus upon editing and composition with sounds. This was greatly appreciated by the participants and allowed non-specialist participants to take part in developing works for the final concert event.

Marketing was also identified as a potential weak point with no clear forums within the East Midlands to target those who might have a specific interest within the field of sound art. Working with cultural partners negates this failing through providing pre-existing channels for communication and advertising.

3. Future Plans

Following the successful realization of the current project and the summary and evaluation of its outcomes we are hopeful that there seems to be continuing interest in Hear This Space and its projects.

If we were to undertake a similar project in future a clearer marketing strategy should be one of the key elements of any future Hear This Space projects. It is important to target advertisements at specific groups, and to utilize established cultural organisations / venues as a conduit for reaching a relevant public seems to be an appropriate approach.

We would also look at the structure of our workshop sessions and seek to expand our plans in order to arrange events that take place over a longer period of time. There is a large amount of content to introduce to participants and they must have time to experiment and explore the possibilities of sound practice.

Perhaps a two day structure might be more appropriate for future events allowing for multiple workshop opportunities, with day one focused on sound recording and capture and the second day focused upon editing, transformation and representation of these sounds.

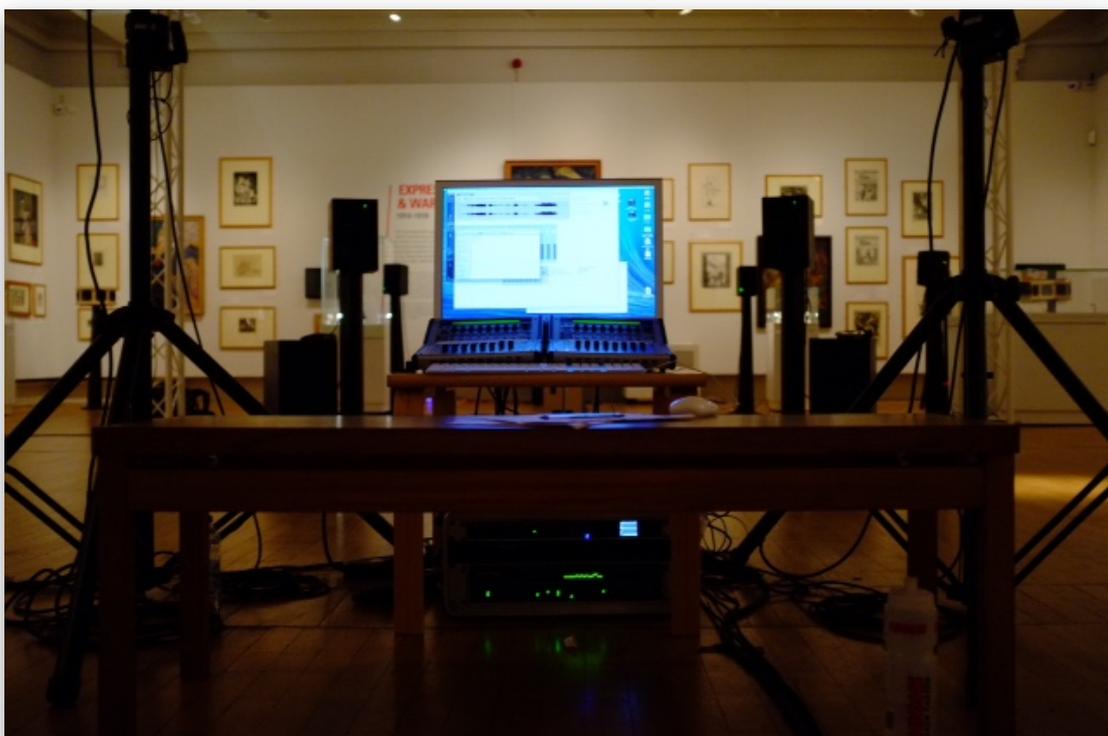
External commitments proved to be a significant drain on resources and energy through the duration of this project so any future undertaking needs to appropriately take into consideration such limitations and pressures. The commissioning of external workshop leaders was very successful and helped to mitigate some of these problems, and presents a significant learning opportunity for all parties involved. Including external artists within the Hear This Space project will introduce new skills to the group and allow for our skills and expertise to be shared with the wider artistic community.

Connections with artists and participants have proved positive with a firm foundation of sound art / electroacoustic music communities being founded within both Barrow and Leicester. It is hoped that these connections will continue to flourish and lead to future collaborative possibilities.

Possessing such a unique multichannel diffusion system lends itself to being utilized in future concerts and it is hoped that there will be much opportunity for this. It is also hoped that the system might be implemented for longer-term sound installations, in which it might be established for an extended period of time. The modular style of the system also lends itself to being integrated or complemented with other such systems in order to form hybrid collaborative projects.

As a result of our events in Barrow-In-Furness we have been commissioned to attend and establish our concert system at the 'Full of Noises' festival in July 2015 and to facilitate diffusion concert workshops. This event is closely followed by a concert event at Café Oto in Dalston. Further collaborative events may continue building out from our contacts and connections established through the project.

Continued reflection on project outcomes will take place through the development of peer reviewed journal articles exploring the artistic and pedagogical aspects of undertaking these workshops.



4. Special Thanks

A very special thanks to the following people, without whom this project would not have been possible:

- Simon Smith,
- Brona Martin,
- Andrew Deakin & Octopus Collective,
- Simon Lake & New Walk Museum,
- Michael Gatt.

Thanks also to all workshop participants and composers who shared soundwalks with us and provided exciting new works for us to present:

Barrow – Andrew, Jess, Rick, Hannah, Dan, Seo, Brona, Carlito, Josephine, Alice, David.

St. Martins – Steph, Jiarui, Mungo, Rick, Amit, Darren & family, Claire, Anita, Peter.

New Walk Museum – Lucy, Louise, Runa, Elenor, Therese, Tessa, Dylan Graham, Simon, Colin, Rick, Steph, Mungo & Amit.



Thanks also to Arts Council England, without whom none of this would have been possible.