

Study for EC(h)OLOCATOR:
Greenpoint 0311109

Project Documentation

Soundwalk Scores

Images

Questions from the Composer



Michelle Nagai
2003

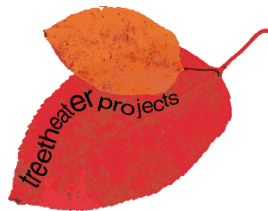
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Like bats and whales, who use emitted chirps, calls and whistles to hunt and survive in dark, low-light worlds, we too can thrive by echolocation. By listening responsively to our own sounds and those of the world around us, by sounding and receiving as if our lives depend upon it, we can connect to our environment and each other in ways that enrich us well beyond the reach of imagination.

Study for EC(h)OLOCATOR: Greenpoint 0311109 was my first attempt to engage with other human beings in a process inspired by echolocation. In addition to being a sound-rich place, Greenpoint is also my home - the territory where my ears have the most practice listening.

As part of a live performance event that took place at Domestic Arts, in Greenpoint Brooklyn on March 9, 2003, the audience participants (also Greenpoint residents) went on soundwalks through the neighborhood guided by the enclosed written scores (chosen at random). Then they responded to questions about the soundwalks they had just taken and shared their experiences of listening by talking privately into inexpensive hand-held tape recorders distributed throughout the Domestic Arts space. Before, during and after the soundwalks I improvised with a combination of processed and raw sounds I had previously collected from the neighborhood, a live microphone feed coming in from the rooftop and snippets of the tape recorder sounds as I could get my hands on them.

I am enormously grateful to the excitement and sincerity that each participant brought to the process. This event was made possible in part by the generous assistance of Jessica Reeves Cohen and Iain Machell at Domestic Arts. All sound editing, processing and composition is by Michelle Nagai. The photographs documenting the soundwalks and performance are by Eric Cohen, with additional assistance from Bill Dorvillier.



Study for EC(h)OLOCATOR: Greenpoint 0311109 is the first in a series of *EC(h)OLOCATOR* productions scheduled for the spring, summer and fall of 2003. *EC(h)OLOCATOR: Sounding The Terrain of Home* is a touring project designed and produced by Michelle Nagai, with short-stay residencies and live radio broadcasts planned from May to October in communities throughout the US and Canada. Tour stops include cities and towns in Eastern NY and Vermont, Western Ontario, Midwestern States, Eastern Ontario and Quebec, Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, Maine, the Maritimes and California. Visit www.treetheater.org for more information and current schedule updates.

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Score #1

Step outside and close your eyes - take a minute to clear your mind and let your ears warm up and tune-in. Open your eyes and look across the street to your left. There is a C-Town grocery store there. Go over and go inside. Take a few minutes to walk through the store, listening to the soundscape. What kinds of voices do you hear? Is there background music? Is it noisy? How do you feel being in there listening? Are there constant sounds or drones? Try going in a few other shops up and down the block.



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Score #2

Step outside and close your eyes - take a minute to clear your mind and let your ears warm up and tune-in. Open your eyes and choose a direction you want to walk in. Walk for about 5 minutes and as you walk, listen to sounds from all directions. Sound is 3 dimensional. Listen above you, below you, to your left and right, in front of you and behind you. Hear a sound before you see it, and keep listening once it moves out of sight. When you've reached a turning back point, stop, close your eyes and turn in a slow circle. Listen to how the sound moves around you. Walk back to Domestic Arts listening in the same way.



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Score #3

Step outside and close your eyes - take a minute to clear your mind and let your ears warm up and tune-in. Open your eyes and choose a direction you want to walk in. Walk for about 5 minutes, then turn around and return to Domestic Arts. Listen for very tiny sounds. What are the smallest sounds you can possibly hear? Where are they coming from? Are they close or far away? Are they getting louder, or softer? When a soft sound is interrupted by a louder sound, are you able to hear it again when the loud sound passes?



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Score #4

Sound waves can be absorbed and processed by your whole body, not just your ears. You can feel the sound in your stomach, against your face, in your hands, through the soles of your feet. You have to be REALLY listening to do this. Step outside and close your eyes - take a minute to clear your mind and let your ears warm up and tune-in. Open your eyes, turn and walk to your right - move slowly and quietly, so the waves of sound can reach you with as little disruption as possible. Listen and hear with every part of your body. When you get to the corner of Green, make a right and continue to the end of the block. Three more right turns and you've circled the block, back to Domestic Arts.



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Score #5

Step outside and close your eyes - take a minute to clear your mind and let your ears warm up and tune-in. Turn to the left, facing up Manhattan Ave. Notice the overall volume of noise – very loud? Average? Quiet? Notice if you hear mostly people, or traffic, or something else. Do you hear any wind, or humming, or buzzing? Walk towards Greenpoint Avenue (4 blocks away). As you proceed, notice how the sounds around you change. Don't think too much, just notice and listen. When you reach Greenpoint Avenue, if you're brave enough, stand with eyes closed again for a minute. Turn around and try it again as you walk back to Domestic Arts.



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Score #6

Step outside and close your eyes - take a minute to clear your mind and let your ears warm up and tune-in. Open your eyes and choose a direction you want to walk in. Holding on to the arm of a partner, close your eyes and begin to walk forward, relying as much as possible on your own ears. Your partner should keep you from walking in front of a bus or stepping in something unexpected. Your job is to follow your ears. When you reach a turning back point, take a minute to stand and listen to the soundscape with your eyes open. On the return trip, trade roles with your partner. How does it feel to move through space with only your ears for guidance?



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How did listening make you feel?

How do you feel now?



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What do you remember hearing?



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What did you expect to hear?

What didn't you hear?

