

# SINGING PLACES

**Richard Elliott and Sally Jane Norman**  
Recital Room (Falmer House Room 120)  
University of Sussex

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013, 9am – 4:30pm

The interweaving of song and place as a literally resonant cultural identifier offers a richly interdisciplinary research focus. Music, sonic arts, cultural anthropology, and human geography feature amongst disciplines mobilised by this domain, which is also strongly invested by a range of creative practices including poetry, architecture, acoustic ecologies, and site-specific sound art. Drawing together theorists and practitioners, this seminar aims to identify key research questions associated with the theme of "Singing Places", with a view to launching a longer-term programme of academic and artistic events.



## PROGRAMME

Arrival from 9:00

9:20 – 9:30	Welcome and introduction	12:30 – 13:30	Lunch – Student Union meeting room
9:30 – 10:00	Margaretta Jolly <i>Singing Feminist Lives: Oral History as Autobiographical Place</i>	13:30 – 14:00	Jean Martin <i>Echoes of the Past</i>
10:00 – 10:30	Amy Cunningham <i>The Voice of the Iron Horse: Mechanical Voices and Nostalgia</i>	14:00 – 14:30	Matthew Hodson <i>Architects of Composition</i>
10:30 – 11:00	Eugene McCloskey <i>...over borders...</i>	14:30 – 15:00	Danny Bright <i>Subterranean Sound Tunnel: singing the ghosts of the melting shop</i>
11:00 – 11:15	Break	15:00 – 15:15	Break
11:15 – 11:45	Richard Follett <i>Soundscapes, Creolized Identities, and the Matrix of Memory</i>	15:15 – 15:30	Sally Jane Norman: introduction to second plenary session <i>Making places sing</i>
11:45 – 12:00	Richard Elliott: introduction to first plenary session <i>Songs of/and place</i>	15:30 – 16:00	Plenary discussion <i>Making places sing</i>
12:00 – 12:30	Plenary discussion <i>Songs of/and place</i>	16:00 ➔	Final plenary, chaired by Michael Bull

## **Danny Bright**

### ***Subterranean Sound Tunnel: singing the ghosts of the melting shop***

*Subterranean Sound Tunnel* is an interactive sound installation currently on exhibition at MAGNA Science Adventure Centre, Rotherham. It incorporates three 'sonic ghosting' soundscape compositions constructed using manipulated and warped field recordings made in different spaces around the site. These are then 'regenerated' through the current sound-scape of the building, re-sounded along an underground cable tunnel and emerging from a giant galvanized steel trumpet. The work thus seeks to occupy both a conceptual and physical sound environment, using the building as an instrument, reverberant chamber, processor and point of critical and sonic synthesis. This presentation will explore the project development, compositional process and some of the core critical concepts.

**Danny Bright** is a sound designer, composer, recordist and sonic manipulator working within the fields of theatre, performance, installation, music and media. He has variously lived, studied and worked in Sheffield, England; Burlington, Vermont, USA; and Brighton and Hove, England where he is now based. His work has appeared nationally and internationally including at the World Soundscape Conference, Victoria & Albert Museum, Prague Quadrennial, British Science Festival and tours of the UK, Europe, Australia and the USA. Commissions include ACE funded projects for MAGNA Trust and Octopus Collective and he is currently undertaking an AHRC funded PhD at the University of Sussex.

<http://www.bogstandardaudio.co.uk/Sound%20Tunnel.html>

[http://twitter.com/danny\\_bright](http://twitter.com/danny_bright)

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## **Michael Bull**

### ***Chair of Final Plenary***

**Michael Bull** is based in the School of Media, Film and Music at the University of Sussex, where he is co-director of the Centre for Material Digital Culture. His research and teaching address mobile communication technologies and their use, music and sound in urban culture, new directions in critical theory (the Frankfurt School), and sensory experience and methodologies. He is founding and managing editor of the journal *Senses and Society* published by Berg, and co-founder and Executive Board Member of the *European Sound Studies Association*.

## **Amy Cunningham**

### ***The Voice of the Iron Horse: Mechanical Voices and Nostalgia***

Amy Cunningham will present extracts of her recent work, which explore the mediated voice as a tool to consider nostalgia for technology and environment. A key starting point for this research began with the film and sound installation *The Voice, the Iron Horse*, which responded to one type of mechanical voice, that of the sound of a freight train horn travelling through the Tennessee landscape.

**Amy Cunningham** is a multidisciplinary artist who uses the singing voice and visual art to explore gaps and glitches in forms, media and ideas. Cunningham has exhibited in various galleries and festivals in Europe including, IKON, Cafe OTO, St James's Piccadilly, Slade Research Centre, Towner Gallery, Parlour Gallery, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nîmes, Soundwaves, SC Gallery Croatia and Serpentine Gallery. She has presented her work at various conferences and symposia. Cunningham studied Fine Art at Wimbledon School of Art and at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London. She is Senior Lecturer in Music and Visual Art, University of Brighton.

<http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/staff/amy-cunningham/>

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## **Richard Elliott**

### ***Chair of Songs of/ and Place plenary***

**Richard Elliott** is Lecturer in Popular Music at the University of Sussex. His research interests are in the roles played by loss, memory, nostalgia and revolution in popular music. His work in these areas is heavily influenced by theories of place and spatiality and the ways in which music creates or evokes 'memory places' that take on significance for individuals and communities. He has published articles on Portuguese fado, Latin American nueva canción, music and consciousness and the poetics of place. He is the author of the books *Fado and the Place of Longing: Loss, Memory and the City* (Ashgate, 2010) and *Nina Simone* (Equinox, 2013). He is currently writing a monograph on the representation of time, age and experience in popular song.

## **Richard Follett**

### ***Soundscapes, Creolized Identities, and the Matrix of Memory***

Historians who have examined the sounds of New World slavery and the soundscape of plantation cultures quite reasonably focus on the audible transcript left by the enslaved. Song, folktale, hollers, and religiously inspired sound contributed to an audible slave culture, that Shane and Graham White conclude, "was made to be heard." These audible and visible shards of slave testimony constitute what Valentin Yves Mudimbe refers to as "a matrix of memory," a diasporic African "orature." As literary scholars Mudimbe, Adéléké Adéèkó, and Tim Armstrong observe, the aural soundscape of slavery leaves "sonic echoes" of subaltern agency and visibility deep into the twentieth century. As this paper makes clear, we should not think of audibility and silence in binary terms; they were instead slipping modes of expression, at times intensely soldered, at other points, gliding linguistically and culturally, giving voice in a multiplicity of ways.

**Richard Follett** is Professor of American History at the University of Sussex. A historian of slavery and emancipation, he is currently writing *White Fright: Slave Revolts in American Memory*, a history of slave rebellions and their legacies from the 18th to early 20th centuries. He is also completing *A Global History of Southern Commodities*, co-authored with Sven Beckert, Peter Coclanis, and Barbara Hahn. Follett's earlier work focused on sugar and slavery. It centered on Louisiana, the last of the New World sugar colonies where nineteenth century slavery reached its most modern, advanced form. Outputs included a major, publicly accessible digital resource on the American sugar economy, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (2005), *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation* (2011) co-authored with Eric Foner and Walter Johnson, and articles on demography and public health in slave societies. Co-founder of *Atlantic Studies* (Routledge), Richard edited this quarterly from 2003-2013.

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## **Matt Hodson**

### ***Architects of composition***

Some of us subscribe to the idea that all sound is music, with others taking a more popular culture view of music. Based upon both of these stand points, my research intends to raise questions and explore the idea that as humans contribute to the development of places through building, design and interaction, can they themselves be considered as composers? What is the impact of the materials, constructs and interactive components of place? Can humans also compose music as it is understood in the popular context to places that already exist and if so how?

**Matt Hodson**'s involvement in the music industry spans a range of disciplines including performance, composition and studio production. He is a computer music specialist who has worked over the past decade in music production and education. As well as an extensive career in the music industry, Matt has led Music Production pathways from Level 4 through to 6 within Higher Education. As an electronic music producer and performer his output of beat crunching and synthesiser drenched aesthetic, incorporates a wide range of contemporary technologies with innovative application. As Composer and Sound Designer, Matt has worked with clients including MTV, The Olympic Games, Nestle, and Universal Records. He has contributed in the past two years in the Brighton Digital Festival and recently presented ideas on live electronic music performance at this year's Music Tech Festival in London.

[www.matthewhodson.com](http://www.matthewhodson.com)   [www.bitbin.co.uk](http://www.bitbin.co.uk)

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## **Margaretta Jolly**

### ***Singing Feminist Lives: Oral History as Autobiographical Place***

This talk draws on my experience of moving from analysing letters and diaries to recorded interviews as a means to pursue the life narratives of feminist activists. As director of Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project, I have been privileged to hear the stories of 60 key activists and intellectuals from the British women's movement, and to discover how much oral history opens up intriguing elements of voice, relationship, affect, as well as curation, which push beyond the dimensions of the text. At times, this even involves singing, a gesture to the gendered history of music. In considering the example of feminist lives, I will focus on the unusual soundscapes within which their oral histories resonate and help us to hear.

**Margaretta Jolly** is Reader in Cultural Studies in the School of Media, Film and Music at The University of Sussex. She directs the Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research at Sussex and is Principal Investigator to 'Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project', available at [bl.uk/sisterhood](http://bl.uk/sisterhood). She is author of *In Love and Struggle: Letters in Contemporary Feminism* (winner, Feminist and Women's Studies Association UK 2008) and editor of *The Encyclopedia of Life Writing* (2001, Outstanding Reference Book Award, American Libraries Association).

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/clhlwr/1-7.html>

## Jean Martin

### *Echoes of the Past*

Over several days, people visiting the ancient Abbey of Fontevraud in France will be able to “experience the past” by hearing live ambient sound from a fully functioning cathedral far away in England - footsteps, prayers, music, voices, etc. This is made possible by multi-channel live transmission via the internet. The event itself may seem simple enough, yet it will provide an opportunity to point towards and explore numerous themes: the power of sound to evoke a sense of place; historic links between France and England; the role of religion and pilgrimage then and now. The findings will be relevant to a range of disciplines, including sound archaeology, filmsound studies, history and theology, and sound technology.

**Jean Martin** is a musicologist, sound researcher, composer, writer about film sound and music, radio producer and documentary film maker. His research interests span film music, sound design, sound diffusion, acoustic ecology and film sound, 20th Century music history, aesthetics of music, electronic and experimental music. He has co-authored a book on film sound (Filmgeräusch, 2012), curated an exhibition on sound art, made a documentary film on sound artist Peter Vogel, and published numerous articles on film sound.

[www.soundbasis.eu](http://www.soundbasis.eu) and <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/staff/jean-martin>

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## Eugene McCloskey

### **...over borders...**

The process of performing in different places has in turn informed and become part of my performance and writing practice e.g. travelling in the Southern States of the USA. Using examples of my material I will demonstrate how music and words can relate to ‘Singing Places’: geography, culture, aspirations, Diaspora etc. I will look at the significance of particular sounds, words, points of reference, style of music and poetry within a performed piece. Acknowledging the significance of particular environments in relation to creativity naturally leads to an interest of working in, and with, different places.

**Eugene McCloskey** is a musician, composer and sound artist, who works with a spectrum of styles collected from international influences whilst living and performing in Ireland, Germany, Spain and coast-to-coast in the USA. Now in Brighton his expanded practice includes digital recording and methods. This has led to involvement with soundscapes and environments, in addition to computer and more traditional instrument settings. He has made the CDs *The whine of life* and *Clear Waters*. Interdisciplinary work includes *Following Shanks Pony* and *The Song Picture Performance*, which has toured internationally; recent work has been presented at The University of Creative Arts, Farnham, with the project STEAM.

**Sally Jane Norman**

**Chair of *Making Places Sing* plenary**

**Sally Jane Norman** is Professor of Performance Technologies and Director of the Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts at the University of Sussex. Convenor of “Sound Environments” (Music and Sonic Media MA), her research focuses on live art, its relations to technology, and transdisciplinary practices. Practical initiatives with expressive gesture and real-time interfaces have involved partners including the International Institute of Puppetry (Charleville Mézières), Zentrum fuer Kunst und Medientechnologie (Karlsruhe), and Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music (Amsterdam, artistic co-director 1998-2000). She co-organises Newcastle University based *Music & Machines* events with Bennett Hogg, with whom she recently edited a *Contemporary Music Review* issue on “Resistant Materials”.