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On Listening

Listening has become an increasingly popular subject of study. It features in conferences, in academic journals, in doctoral research projects. However, reflexive listening is an applied practice that exceeds the boundaries of academic institutions to take its place in a number of everyday settings. This book aims to connect the scholarly and the experiential and extend the contemporary discourse on listening.

The essays that are curated here have been commissioned from authors whose work places them in a variety of settings: artists, activists, scholars, scientists. We are conscious that texts in other languages may hold valuable insights, and as editors producing a book in English we have sought international contributions and these lead us all beyond institutional and national categories to listening worlds of expansive horizons.

The book has been organised into four primary sections: Listening Perspectives, Listening Spaces, Listening Devices and Listening to Self and Other. This structure represents one of many possible approaches to the material and through it our intention has been to reveal commonalities rather than expose differences, make connections across disciplines, across geographical locations and across methodologies. In some of the essays, listening is the necessarily primary mode of apprehension—for the musician, for the radio audience, the collector of folk-songs, for the sound recordist. In others, the listening practice provides a new way to understand or describe a situation or interaction—crowds in an urban square, private space in the Renaissance city, the world beyond the prisoner's hood, the temple garden in Kyoto.

The practice of listening can operate to reveal a parallel reality—one that lies below, beyond, behind or inside that which is immediately accessible. While listening may not always capture the 'objective' scene in an instant, the essentially immersive nature of the listening experience over time can lead to a meditative, inward-looking introspection, disappearing as soon as it is grasped. Conversely, that very immersion can place the listener at the centre

of things, offering an intimate connection to place and its inhabitants, sacred and profane.

On Listening builds on the considerable contributions made by composers and musicians including John Cage, Pierre Schaeffer, R. Murray Schafer and Pauline Oliveros; on the theoretical writings of Don Ihde and Jean-Luc Nancy; and on the more recent books *Listening to Noise and Silence* and *Sinister Resonance* by our colleagues Salomé Voegelin and David Toop. Given the fundamental importance of listening not just in an artistic context but throughout lived experience, we also recognise that there is yet to be a publication that takes a wide-ranging, multidisciplinary perspective on listening as an applied practice. This publication aims to begin that process.

Angus Carlyle & Cathy Lane

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Angus Carlyle is a co-director at CRiSAP at the University of the Arts, London. He is curious about how we understand our environment, through sound and through our other senses. He edited the book *Autumn Leaves* for Double Entendre (2007), made the sound work '51° 32' 6.954" N / 0° 00' 47.0808" W' for the 'Sound Proof' group show (2008), co-curated the exhibition 'Sound Escapes' at Space Gallery in London (2009) and produced the CD *Some Memories of Bamboo* (2009) for the label Gruenrekorder. In 2012 he completed a sixth-month residency project called 'Viso Come Territorio' / 'Face As Territory', a collaboration with seven photographers based around a village on a Southern Italian hillside. Another work, *Air Pressure*, has been a collaboration with anthropologist Rupert Cox which led to an exhibition (part of the Asia Triennial Manchester), a CD/booklet and two films.

Cathy Lane is a composer, sound artist, lecturer and researcher. She is interested in how sound relates to the past, our histories, our environment and our collective and individual memories. Her current areas of creative and theoretical engagement are with spoken word composition, field recording, sound and gender, and, of course, listening. Other publications include *Playing with Words: The Spoken Word in Artistic Practice*, an anthology of works from over forty leading contemporary sound artists and composers who use words as their material and inspiration. Her forthcoming CD, *The Hebrides Suite*, a series of compositions that explore history and memory related to the Outer Hebrides, remote islands off the West coast of Scotland, will be released by Gruenrekorder in late 2013. Cathy Lane established the department of Sound Arts and Design and now co-directs Creative Research in Sound Arts Practice (CRiSAP) at the University of the Arts, London.