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Férdia J. Stone-Davis

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INTRODUCTION

Sense Making and Place Making Through Music

Férdia J. Stone-Davis

Lived bodies belong to places and help to constitute them. Even if such bodies may be displaced in certain respects, they are never placeless; they are never *only* at discrete positions in world time and space, though they may *also* be at such positions. (Casey, 1997, p. 24)

Time and space are not neutral frames into which humans insert themselves and their activities. Rather, time and space gather relevance in relation to the interaction between a subject and her environment (which includes the physical world but also other subjects), relating at a fundamental level to the kinds of activity in which she is engaged—it is on this basis that ideas of ‘quick’ and ‘slow’, ‘far’ and ‘close’ are established (Gallagher, 2008, p. 41). This interaction develops not only through imaginative engagement, but through physical interaction: ‘No creature lives merely under its skin, its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame’ (Dewey, 1934, p. 12). Thus, ‘By the time we think about things, or explicitly perceive them as what they are, we have already been immersed in their pragmatic meaning’ (Gallagher, 2008, p. 39).¹

The poverty of descriptions of existence that depend upon conceiving time and space as absolutes² is brought into relief by sound and music, which afford a means of ‘making sense’, of positioning subjects within environments. Sound, for example, is heard and orients the subject within physical surroundings: ‘Reflexively turning to look for the source of sound or ducking when you hear something coming from behind would make little sense unless you were aware of sound sources’ (O’Callaghan & Nudds, 2009, p. 12). However, it is not a simple conception of a sound source that results, for sound imparts information about the environment and the interaction that gives rise to it:

Because the pattern of frequency components that comprise the vibration of an object and the way that pattern changes over time is determined by the nature of the object and the events that caused it to vibrate, that pattern and the way it changes provide a great deal of information about the object and the interaction that produced the vibration. (Nudds, 2009, p. 71)³

When shaped and transformed into an imaginative realm of intention with its own 'field of force' (Scruton, 1998, p. 17), sounds open up 'a phenomenal space of tones' (1998, p. 75) in which the subject is situated and to which she responds. Here, the resistances built into the physical production of sound and the negotiation of a tone's development imbues imaginative time and space with shape and feel, giving a sense of height, depth and extension—allowing the perception of tones, for example, as more or less thick, as having a weight and mass, and clusters of tones can appear as 'open', 'hollow', 'filled' and 'stretched' (1998, p. 78). Thus, 'real' and 'virtual' places are opened up by sound and music (see Stone-Davis, 2015).

This special issue explores some of the ways in which music 'makes sense' by bringing into focus different types of music and various aspects of musical activity, examining how they relate to 'home'. Attempting to single out the particular way in which each article of this volume addresses the notion of home would not do justice to the breadth of consideration that prevails (different conceptions of home very often weave together over the course of a single essay). It would also serve to reduce musical activity into discrete operations (composition, performance and reception), reinforcing the misguided idea that they are somehow isolable from one another. Moreover, it would give a false impression of the articles' content: certainly, authors approach the idea of home through a primary orientation, for example, composition; however, these orientations are holistically situated. Thus, in the case of composition, its dependency upon listening and performing is made evident.

It is more purposeful to outline the main themes addressed across the articles. These might be considered via two interrelated motivating concerns. (1) How is home constructed musically? Authors consider the various materials out of which musical homes are built, including sounds, musical instruments, physical environments, social communities, already formed musical worlds and technologies mediating musical activity. They address the creative processes that enable this and reflect upon the stability and permanence of the resulting musical constructions. (2) How does the inhabiting of musical homes occur? Casey clearly articulates the dynamic nature of place in relation to physical geography: 'A place is more an *event* than a *thing*' to be assimilated into known categories (1997, p. 26). That is, places 'not only *are*, they *happen*' (1997, p. 27). This understanding resonates with music and the ways in which it can be inhabited, and makes clear the involvement of the subject: just as physical geography involves imaginative involvement (so that the subject feels not only that she somehow 'belongs' to it but it to her) so does musical place. This dynamism is reflected across contributions, which understand musical home variously as place and journey, as bound up with location and yet positioned in between, as constituted through the conjunction of the material and the imaginative. In doing so, authors address how impermanence and changeability relate to the subject's sense of belonging. They examine the desire to feel at-home and the sense of possession that often accompanies this desire, and consider some of the strategies through which musical places become habitable or uninhabitable. These may be determined variously by certain modes or

regimes of listening, preferences for one over another, and by laying claim to a musical home's fittingness or authenticity.

In what follows, then, authors consider music's capacity to position subjects within a variety of environments, allowing them to make sense and thereby to place make: 'As place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place' (Feld, 1997, p. 90).

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Notes

- [1] This resonates with Ingold's understanding of the 'taskscape', which comprises the myriad activities that comprise 'dwelling' (1993).
- [2] This is typically thought to occur primarily in the course of modernity. Casey explains:

Beginning with Philoponus in the sixth century A.D. and reaching an apogee in Fourteenth-century theology and above all in seventeenth-century physics, place has been assimilated to space. The latter, regarded as infinite extension, has become a cosmic and extra-cosmic Moloch that consumes every corpuscle of place to be found within its greedy reach. [...] in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries place was also made subject to time, regarded as chronometric and universal, indeed as 'the formal *a priori* condition of all appearances whatsoever', in Kant's commanding phrase. (2008, p. x)

- [3]

We can perceive the size of an object dropped into water, that something is rolling, the material composition of an object from the sound of an impact, and the force of an impact. We can distinguish objects with different shapes, and we can tell the length of a rod dropped onto the floor. When something is dropped, we can hear whether it bounced or broke. We are good at recognising natural sounds, such as footsteps, hands clapping, paper tearing, and so on. We can tell that a cup is being filled and when it is full. (2009, p. 70)

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