

Book Review

Prague

Soundscapes:

Listening to the City – Urban Soundscapes Revisited

Kjell Skjellstad Editor in Chief

Here it is. One of the most comprehensive collections of scholarly writings about a concept first introduced by the Canadian composer and “sound ecologist” Raymond Murray Schaffer and his colleagues- the Soundscape.

More than any other publication on a music related subject that has recently been released, the present volume demonstrates the continuity of musical research in a living professional environment deeply rooted in tradition and at the same time interacting with our times in a model interdisciplinary way.

The merits of this interdisciplinary approach become fully apparent in the introductory chapters by Professor Zuzana Jurkova of the Charles University in Prague, the editor of this unique volume and prime mover in the research environment of her institution. Enriching the scope of urban studies through a necessary focus on music and the arts especially in European contexts she no doubt has set an important example for other institutions to follow.

In the first introductory chapter Listening to the music of a city she gives a critical outline of the theory and philosophy of musical space applying it to her search for the specific character of Prague musical worlds: ” Our initial decision to understand music not only as sound, but also as a social phenomenon i.e. the sounds and people who produce and accept them, is substantial. In this case we are primarily interested in how the people of our Prague musical worlds are connected to a concrete place, including the meanings they attribute to it.”

* Dr. Kjell Skjellstad, Professor Emeritus, University of Oslo, Department of Musicology, Norway.

Situating the origins of the cooperative research projects that motivated and formed the basis for the present publication in the research environment of the anthropological seminar of the Faculty of Humanities, there follows an outline of the following chapters:

- Music and identity
- Music and social stratification
- Music and rebellion
- Music as goods
- Electronic dance music
- Music and spirituality

Each of these six chapters in their own way presents a wealth of material as a valuable contribution to understanding the place of the arts in city environments with special emphasis on the place of music in negotiating cultural and social values in the multi-multicultural community.

Zuxana Jurkova et.al: Prague Soundscapes
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To learn more about Charles University and Prague Soundscapes see:
<http://cupress.cuni.cz>



Figure 1. Dancing children of paradise - photo: Tomas Martinek for Children of Paradise.