EDITORIAL
'Sound, History and Memory' thematic issue

We live in an age which is increasingly concerned about preserving and documenting the past and making the resulting resources available through new communication technologies. The possibilities offered by photography and sound recording to collect fragments of daily life are already proving invaluable to historians. Media and oral history archives give insights into everyday experience that in former times were lost to history. Such archives allow us to assess the impact of world events on the individual. To the historian, then, the memories and reminiscences found in the archives form an important resource in the attempt to reconstruct and interpret the past. In recent years, artists and composers have been increasingly drawn to historical archive material. Found music, old news broadcasts and personal interviews are finding their way into sonic artworks that to a greater or lesser degree deal directly with issues around history and memory. Unlike the historian, many of the artists represented in this issue of *Organised Sound* are interested in the process of memory itself. Many use archive material as much for its power to transform the present as for its evocation of the past. False memories and embellishments are as important as accurate recollection; the continuous creation and recreation of memory is a dominant theme in this work. In the process, some of these practitioners are creating new archives, which in turn are being accessed by researchers from other disciplines.

Other contributors to this issue deal with the importance of historical awareness and an appreciation of the techniques and practices of the past. This may take the form of the re-creation or re-enactment of past events, as part of the creative process. Alternatively, the close investigation and reinterpretation of historical processes and techniques may shed light on contemporary sonic practice.

The first three papers in this issue deal explicitly with the use of archive material in sonic art. Cathy Lane contextualises compositions that draw on oral history and media archives within the wider sphere of spoken-word composition and sound poetry, investigating 'the tension between their semantic and abstract musical characteristics'. Analysing a number of works in a variety of styles, she finds a common repertoire of compositional techniques, which deal with the accumulation and dissolution of semantic meaning.

Salomé Voegelin's paper emphasises the idea that memory is 'not something we summon from the past . . . but that it is triggered by a current event and becomes materialised in the now'. Proposing the use of 'sonic memory material' as a 'pathetic trigger', she suggests that such material encourages an active sensorial engagement on the part of the listener, challenging the formalism of the modernist tradition.

Brandon LaBelle shares Voegelin's view that sound and memory are closely allied. Investigating, through a discussion of his installation, *Phantom Radio*, the particular power of radio to forge arbitrary but powerful associations in our memories, he celebrates the 'overheard' and the social space opened by random juxtapositions of individual experiences and their musical accompaniment.

The following two papers offer two very different responses to the London soundscape. What they have in common is a sense that the city is experienced from a certain distance. Both authors offer very personal responses to the sounds they encounter on a day-to-day basis and bring a level of personal interpretation to bear. Viv Corringham uses the backdrop of two river walks, one along the route of the now buried Fleet, and one along the still extant Lee, for her 'Urban Song Paths', vocal improvisations that draw on the history and mythology of the sites as well as the present reality she encounters.

Postgraduate student Tsai-Wei Chen makes sound installations based on her experience as a Taiwanese sojourner in London drawing both on her experience of London and her memories of Taipei. She argues that, in the sojourner's encounter with the sounds of London, the remembered soundscape of home is always present, forming 'sonic constellations' that interpret and are interpreted by the present perception.

The next two papers both centre around issues of ecology with regard to the gathering, structuring and display of sound material and work. John Wynne discusses his work with disappearing languages (in this case the endangered click languages of the Kalahari Desert), his fruitful collaboration with linguistic researchers, and the links between acoustic and language ecology. These issues are discussed with specific regard to the making of an eight-channel installation,

Hearing Voices, in which he investigates the boundaries and connections between speech and music.

Damián Keller and Ariadna Capasso offer a detailed examination of the history, methodologies and theoretical underpinnings of 'eco-composition', in which the social and historical relevance of the sound material informs the composition at all levels of its structural hierarchy. They discuss the application of those ideas to a section of their multimedia installation, *Paititi, A multimodal journey to el Dorado*, which is based on a re-enactment of a 1541 expedition up the Amazon, during which the material for the piece was collected.

In the following articles, issues of both documentation of, and responses to the creative and technical practices of the electroacoustic composers of the past are discussed, along with their possible relevance to the present. Eric Chasalow describes an oral history project, *The Video Archive of Electroacoustic Music*, which captures a first-person history of electroacoustic music through interviews with many pioneering composers, scientists and engineers. As well as discussing the archive itself, Chasalow goes on to discuss possible compositional opportunities and approaches to working with archival materials in reference to his works, *Left To His Own Devices* (1996) and *Crossing Boundaries* (2000).

Edward Kelly writes about the issues and problems concerned with the development of new software tools designed to aid creative work with sound archives consisting of spoken word material (oral histories, life stories, etc.) collected from many different people. The paper discusses existing technologies that may be adapted for specific creative uses and the existing frameworks for defining and identifying both linguistic fragments and words, and assesses their suitability for creative use by sound artists working with the spoken word. He ends with a description of smaller mid-project software solutions designed using Max/MSP and Pure Data.

Peter Manning offers a heartfelt call for more detailed research into the variety of compositional practices dating from the birth of electroacoustic music, and in particular the creative use of analogue technology and techniques. On the one hand, he argues, this should be documented more thoroughly before all firsthand knowledge of it disappears, and on the other, the understanding of creative practices which are intimately connected to the means of realisation could enrich and extend the practices of present practitioners working with primarily digital technology and techniques. He develops his argument with an in-depth investigation of the use of sound imaging and spatial distribution in some notable early works.

Cathy Lane and Nye Parry
Guest Editors