EDITORIAL: The Everyday is Every Day

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For as long human hearing has existed, we have been listening to sound spatially. While we are familiar with thinking about the content of sound, for example, a naturally occurring sound signifying that something in our field of perception has happened, the sound of a voice and the message that it is carrying, or a musical sound designed to convey a variety of meanings, all hearing takes place in a spatiotemporal environment. This is to say that we also always hear the context of sound, information in sonic form about a sound's spatial position relative to ourselves. Brandon LaBelle uses the term 'acoustic spatiality' to convey the sense that our hearing operates within a 'temporal flux of perspectives', and that sound as an assemblage of 'spatial coordinates, social mixes, bodily perceptions and ways of knowing' brings us into contact with 'diverse forces, scenes, subjectivities and matters' (LaBelle, 2021).

Given advances in audio technology over the past thirty years, Spatial Audio has emerged as a distinct field of practice within the audio production domain. Drawing on developments in Ambisonic audio in the 1970s that focused on capturing a 360° field of sound, spatial audio in its current form works according to an object-based audio paradigm, where sound objects are placed within a 3D environment, enabling audio producers to manipulate over time, the position of sounds in relation to a listener. While Dolby describe spatial audio as 'the process of placing different sounds in different locations around the room' (2024), Bosun Xie reflects LaBelle's more complex conception, suggesting it combines 'acoustics, signal processing, psychology and the physiology of hearing' (Xie, 2020).

With increased adoption of spatial audio across a range of social media and commercial audio platforms, the immersive mode of listening that it affords is becoming increasingly commonplace. Similarly, where the production of immersive audio was once all-too-often an exclusive experience – with numerous barriers in terms of consumer access, and

numerous obstacles facing producers without specialist tools – we now find ourselves in a world populated by the growing availability of technologies for creative practitioners.

As an editorial team, we wanted to publish this special edition of the International Journal of Creative Media Research, as we see that populating this new 'soundscape' is now the creative challenge facing current and future audio content makers. As access to spatial production technology becomes ever more pervasive, enabling creators and listeners to engage with new modes of auditory experience, and at a time when hearing and listening connect us to a range of global perspectives, our edition operates as a platform to explore a range of ideas, concepts and practices.

Since 2022, we have been running the 'Everyday is Spatial' conference at the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham, with the aim of encouraging exploration and creativity in audio and audiovisual immersive experiences. Presented in our 22.2 spatial audio lab and our Dolby Atmos dubbing theatre, our ambition was to enable conference participants to examine and engage with the potentials, challenges and uses for how spatial audio may come to define the everyday audio experience. Since its inception, 'EiS' has attracted a wealth of projects and presentations examining the integration of spatial audio and immersive listening into a range of accessible formats, media and activities; demonstrating the reach of spatial audio across music, journalism, cinema, education, acoustic ecology, drama, architecture and web browser functionality.

Following on from the conference series, we have developed this special edition as a platform to draw together projects that have been presented at EiS by a diverse range of practitioners, from within and beyond academia, exploring the uses, implications and affordances of immersive audio in a range of environments and contexts. We asked practitioners to consider the affordances of immersive audio: was does the technology allow us to do in different creative contexts, how does immersive listening change the nature of our engagement with sound, how do practices change when we use immersive audio technologies to tell stories and work with audiences and learners? In response, the practitioners' accompanying essays focus on how they have approached using spatial audio technologies in their work, drawing on technological principles and system construction, along with contemporary philosophical perspectives. As a result, this collection presents a dynamic examination of the use of spatial audio in context; working through what it can

do, how we can learn from its use, and its potential to change a range of creative, social and professional practices.

Beyond asking participants to engage with the everyday affordances of spatial audio and immersive listening, we have not prescriptive in our curation of the conference. However, in bringing this special edition together, three ways of working with audio have emerged, that give structure to the special edition: 'Field Recording', 'Strategies' and 'Storytelling'.

Field Recording

This group of projects engage with field recordings and performances. **Nikki Sheth** *integrates a series of sonic snapshots recorded in Mmabolela, South Africa, exploring a hybrid approach to ambisonics and stereo recordings in soundscape composition.* **Philip Reeder and Danielle Meunier** *investigate aspects of immersion and presence through the production of traditional folk songs, performed and recorded in rural locations around SW England.* **Tim Land** *presents a series of field recordings taken from around Dinas Head in Pembrokeshire, Wales to explore how the soundscape might function as a conceptual bridge for 'whole listening'.*

Strategies

Pieces here use concepts and systems to generate new relationships with the spatialisation of sound. **Adam Parkinson and Justin Randel's** *Lorenz Factor brings live electronics and spatialisation together via strange attractors and Euclidean rhythms.* **Lewis Wolstanholme and Francis Devine's** *AV work utilises Josef Albers' colour theory with spectral decomposition and chromatic spatialisation.* **Kasey Pocius** *presents an improvised piano duet which takes the lockdown-imposed distance as a concept to spatialise the pianos.* **Gary-Martin Rolinson** *investigates performance and spatialisation via the theoretical framework of subscendence, through the objects of a guitar, a song, and a chord.*

Storytelling

In this grouping, artists explore how stories and spatialisation can come together. **Teddy Hunter's** *Yr Ogof is a work created in response to a 5000 year old burial mound, which acted as*

*a catalyst for questioning how sound art and immersivity can contribute to storytelling and vocal as ritual. **Iain Findlay-Walsh** espouses the idea of 'aural selfies', which are recorded in binaural and ambisonics, to create a series of sonic-spatial fictions that suggest the possibility of allowing a listener to experience self-presence in the virtual. Finally, **Tahera Aziz** has created an immersive binaural presentation of the [re]locate audio installation relating to the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. The project uses immersive audio as a way of reconstructing events from a number of different perspectives, and investigates audiences' responses to the project, through qualitative research.*

Set out below are the practitioners' abstracts, detailing their ambitions for their work, and providing insights into how a listener might approach these differing spatial sonic experiences.

Field Recording

Nikki Sheth / Mmabolela – A hybrid approach to working with ambisonics

From the palm-strewn banks of the Limpopo River to the dark depths of the Hippo Pool, Mmabolela transports the listener through the soundscapes of this remote location in South Africa. A series of interweaving "snapshots" and constructed realities based upon the many recording locations visited during the 2017 Sonic Mmabolela residency transport the listener to this hyper-real time and place. This work has been composed using a combination of stereo and ambisonics A format recordings, requiring a hybrid approach to working with ambisonics.

The research statement addresses the aesthetics and workflow behind the composition, including the idea of soundscape composition and environmentalism within the work, recording in ambisonics, workflow and methodology (including a hybrid approach), aesthetic choices (including the idea of hyper-realism), the use of ambisonics to create a portable work that can be decoded to listen to on any loudspeaker system and the power of ambisonics to create an immersive listening experience.

Danielle Meunier and Philip Reeder / Returns

Between October 2014 and July 2018 singer Danielle Meunier and producer Philip Reeder performed and recorded three folk songs, in sixteen locations across the British Isles. The duo searched for rural sites with distinct and varied characteristics. An hour's walk above the coastal moorland of Zennor, Danielle performed Seal Song to a chorus of summer wildlife. Two years later, What A Voice resonated across the stony interior of a roofless engine house on the Botallack cliffs, insulated from the wider environment of birds and water. A Stor Mo Chroi was sewn together from recordings of Penrose Lake's shoreline, Loe Bar beach's crashing Spring-tide waves, and a chilling Autumn rainstorm from lonely Dodman Point.

Affected by these environments, Meunier's meditative singing and Reeder's composition of the soundscapes, offer an immersive return to the songs.

Tim Land / Pembrokeshire Coastal: Spatialising an experience

An iteration of an ongoing practiced based research project that intends to realise educationally relatable techniques for production of spatial audio to wider audiences. This work focuses on the use of spatial soundscape as a framework composition technique. Working with loudspeaker spatialisation as a starting point rather than end mix, it proposes how the soundscape holds an approach for the inherent translation of spatiality for music. Alongside competing and opposing theoretical positions, it posits the value of soundscape and as a necessary conceptual bridge for broader spatial music making.

Strategies

Adam Parkinson and Justin Randell / Lorenz Factor: an algorithmic improvisation

This single-piece exploration contextualises and reflects upon Lorenz Factor, a musical performance developed by the authors for the Everyday is Spatial conference held at the University of Gloucester in June 2022. The piece utilises a performance system for live electronics that incorporates algorithmic elements for the performers to improvise with, such as Euclidean rhythms and strange attractors. In addition, sound is spatialised in real-

time using computer vision as part of an algorithm that observes the audience within the environment of the performance.

An intention for this piece is to blur the boundaries between performers, algorithms and audience, problematising notions of agency and authorship. The piece does not imagine an idealised static listener position, as the audience are invited to move freely round the space, investigating their own agency as they shape and spatialise the performance. This leads us to discuss two expanded ideas of musical instruments, performance and audience participation, Simon Water's "performance ecosystem" and Christopher Small's "musicking", and consider some of the different factors that contribute to an immersive sonic experience.

Lewis Wolstanholme & Francis Devine / josef: Spatiality as a Material Property of Audiovisual Art

josef is an audiovisual performance piece composed specifically for an immersive surround sound environment. Throughout every stage of its creative development, spatiality was one of the principal materials used to shape this work's overall form and structure. As a result, spatiality came to encompass this work's sonic and visual composition, performative enaction, and its eventual studio production and release. Thematically, this work was largely influenced by Josef Albers' Interaction of Color, which contains a collection of ideas demonstrating that spatiality can be conveyed using colour. Sonically, we portrayed this visual notion using additive synthesis coupled with a chromatic spatialisation technique. In keeping with Albers' ideas surrounding colour interaction - his emphasis upon the way in which one's perceptive capabilities alters their experience of an artwork - this work utilises spatiality as a means of curating diverse and nuanced experiences, sympathetic to their environments and unique to their spectators.

Kasey Pocius / Piano Dreamscapes Ice-Flow Isolation - A case study in binaural mixing for multi-speaker arrays

Piano Dreamscapes Ice-Flow Isolation is the third in an ongoing series of works focused on transformations of piano improvisations done by myself, as well as collaborators Simon

Henley & Neusha Taherian. Composed in remote collaboration throughout late 2020 and early 2021, the piece explores concepts of isolation through spatialization, granular synthesis & spectral transformations. I investigate the process of creating a piece that is both fulfilling to listen to in binaural as well as large speaker array systems from home, with minimal hardware and largely spatialized using the free SPARTA software. I then outline some novel expansions on existing spatialization techniques such as timbre spatialization which arose during the composition process as well as my research work leading up to the piece.

Gary-Martin Rolinson / Practising Scales

Practicing Scales is a practice-based research project that explores the theoretical frameworks of subscendence through music performance and spatial audio composition, utilising the disassembly and reassembly of musical 'objects' as a method for investigation. By examining the interplay between music-related 'wholes' and 'parts,' the project aims to demonstrate the fluidity of boundaries and the entanglement of elements in the process of music creation.

Storytelling

Teddy Hunter / Yr Ogof: Site Responsive Immersive Composition of Bryn Celli Ddu

Wayfaring: 'one follows a path that one has previously travelled in the company of others, or in their footsteps...' (Ingold, 2007, p15-16)

Yr Ogof is a site responsive composition that was created prior to an artist residency. It is an ethereal vocal sound works that uses movement and spatial ambience to create an otherworldly, canonic and hypnotic choral soundscape that reflects on vocal as ritual prior and the journeying to a prehistoric site. Yr Ogof is a choral works with no words that was influenced by the storytelling like encounters of Bryn Celli Ddu from archaeologists and artist interpretations. In the passing on of knowledge, these encounters shaped the direction in how to respond to the site. As a non-Welsh speaker, it was also through these encounters that lead me to come across the phrase Yr Ogof, translating from Welsh to English as The Cave. Yr Ogof is a common label often seen on maps for unexcavated sites, and at one point prior to Bryn Celli Ddu's excavation in 1928 it was sited on OS maps as

Yr Ogof. These words became the catalyst for this piece having not been to Bryn Celli Ddu before, it was as if this was a pilgrimage and wayfaring to excavate Bryn Celli Ddu through a sonic lens.

Iain Findlay-Walsh / 'Fifty-one aural selfies': capturing and sharing the space of personal listening

The research statement that accompanies the soundscape project 'Fifty-one aural selfies' proceeds from a premise that listening may be understood and practiced as an embodied, embedded, personal, intimate and proximate process of hearing-feeling material and social connectedness with all that surrounds. While the term 'immersive audio' is often used to refer to spatialised sound media that affords a listener's sense of envelopment within vast spaces, I am interested in developing approaches to capturing and sharing a more mundane, proximate field of sonic experience, in order that spatial listening and immersive audio may be considered and felt from a different perspective. Using held or worn recording devices, including binaural and ambisonic recording approaches, and employing compositional strategies of layering, filtering and audio transformation to render recordings more vivid, I use ubiquitous sounds of my own everyday sonic encounters and close-at-hand interactions as a basis for sonic reimaginings of everyday listening. This combined practice of field recording and soundscape composition is presented here as one way to explore immersive audio practice as a creative domain for capturing and eliciting sensory immediacy, intimacy and self-reflection. As the title suggests, the series of fixed-media stereo audio tracks presented in this volume of IJCMR is conceived of as a collection of 'aural selfies', brief audio snapshots that capture, extend and re-present personal listening encounters in everyday environments. The following overview proposes that such a practice of making and using aural selfies as core materials in the composition of 'sonic fictions' (Eshun 1998) constitutes a creative and aesthetic innovation in the fields of soundscape art and immersive storytelling, with transformative potential for immersive media production, including the production of XR experiences.

Tahera Aziz / Immersive Audio Storytelling: An Exploration of the Potential of Spatial (Multi-channel) Audio to Represent Stephen Lawrence's Story

[re]locate is a responsive, multi-channel audio installation revisiting the tragic events surrounding the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence by a gang of white youths in 1993. Derived from earlier AHRC-funded practice-based research, the art installation exploits the immersive properties of spatial (multi-channel) audio to offer an audio reconstruction of events, based on transcripts of witness statements from the Stephen Lawrence Public Inquiry, published as the Macpherson Report in 1999. The exposition aims to provide an overview of the theoretical underpinnings and methodological framework for the original research, which involved developing a prototype immersive audio story environment based on the 'violence hub' narrative format, from which the installation was created. Given that the prototype was purpose-designed to unlock the potential of Stephen Lawrence's story to engage audiences with the complex issue of racism, the exposition concludes with reflections on an analysis of qualitative audience feedback gathered following encounters with the immersive audio story, highlighting the significance of the artwork for spatial audio design and narrative storytelling.

The binaural mix available for listening through headphones re-presents one version of the story from the original multi-channel audio installation.

Conclusion

When agreeing the title for the conference and this special edition, the editors debated whether we were referring to spatial audio as an 'everyday' experience, in the quotidian sense of the word, or whether the proliferation of audio technology, and our concomitant understanding of the spatiality of sound, means that we are now able to both recognise and experience this inherent spatiality because of the increasing ubiquity of spatial audio technology; literally spatial sound is with us 'every day'.

While our verdict was coloured by the appeal of a catchy conference title, the slippage between the terms speaks to the relationship between the cultural production of spatial audio and its potential for subsequent ubiquity and mundanity. As the projects included in the special edition attest, hearing spatial sound is now an everyday occurrence, and as technological paradigms continue to advance, every day, opportunities present themselves to create continuities between spatial audio production and what is a fundamentally human capacity to be immersed in sound.

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