Final Project Reflection
Music and Everyday Life
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We began our project by contemplating the definition and subjectivity of music. In the opinion of Christopher Small, "there is no such thing as music. Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do. The apparent thing "Music" is a figment, an abstraction of the action, whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it at all closely," (Small 1998, p. 2). Small's analysis outlines the importance of recognizing all sounds that people engage with as music. Small's definition of music pushed us to compare the concepts of soundscapes and noise music and examine the role of sound in our everyday lives.

As Raymond Murray Schafer defines the idea of a soundscape, he explains that "today all sounds belong to a continuous field of possibilities lying within the comprehensive dominion of music. Behold the new orchestra: the sonic universe!" (Schafer 1969, p. 96). With this exclamation, Schafer furthers Small's perception of music as subjective as he emphasizes that "all sounds" lie within the "comprehensive domain of music." Thus, Schafer explicitly includes soundscapes, made of sounds from our everyday lives, in the definition of music.

In his analysis of soundscapes, R. Murray Schafer explains the critical components of a soundscape. In order to fully represent the acoustic environment of a place, Schafer argues that a soundscape analyst must include keynote sounds, signals, and soundmarks. Schafer defines keynote sounds as the "notes that identify the key or tonality of a particular composition," because "it is in reference to this point that everything else takes on its special meaning," (Schafer 1969, p. 100). Thus, keynote sounds do not have to be listened to consciously but have a strong influence on our behavior and moods. Man-made keynotes sounds often appear as ambiance and hums while natural keynote sounds can be water, wind, or insect and animal noises. In our soundscape, the background tonality comes from our chosen keynote sounds of the hum of a radiator and air blowing through a laundry-room vent. Although these sounds and their inherent pitch may not be consciously attended to, they establish the overarching key of the piece.

Soundscapes also must include signals, which Schafer defines as "foreground sounds" that are listened to consciously (Schafer 1969, p. 101). They "*must* be listened to because they constitute acoustic warning devices: bells, whistles, horns, and sirens," (Schafer 1969, p. 101). In

our soundscape, the bells, along with the beep of a OneCard, serve this role. Bowdoin's bells also function as the third essential part of a soundscape: the soundmark. The term soundmark "refers to a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community…" (Schafer 1969, p. 101). At Bowdoin, the bells have cultural and historical significance, uniting Bowdoin students, faculty, and alumni with recognition of the bells' melody.

The combination of the elements of a soundscape help preserve the sound of a community and moment in time. Since "every location on earth has a unique acoustical bio-spectrum," recording and analyzing sound "provides information as to the dynamics of the ecosystem in that place," (Krause 1987, p. 15). Thus, soundscapes help us "to predict how certain human-induced, biological or geological audio changes might affect the ecosystem as a whole," (Krause 1987, p. 15). In our soundscape, biological elements such as the rustling of leaves and water flowing help represent and preserve the biological elements of the Bowdoin campus in December of 2022.

Towards the end of the piece, the natural sounds transition into a musical melody. The footprints establish a beat, while samples of a OneCard beep, the Bowdoin Chamber Choir's winter concert, and the chapel's bells create a melody. Thus, this piece also incorporates elements of noise music, defined as "a genre of music that is characterized by the expressive use of noise within a musical context," (Klett and Gerber 2014). Although noise music often uses abrasive sounds, many noise artists utilize softer everyday sounds. The OneCard beep, a sound from everyday life sampled into a musical melody, demonstrates our incorporation of noise music into our project. The different melodic interactions of sounds sampled exclusively from Bowdoin's campus expand upon our soundscape and musical representation of the College.

In conclusion, our project incorporates elements of soundscapes and noise music to represent the acoustic environment that encompasses our everyday lives at Bowdoin. With keynotes, signals, and soundmarks, our project includes Schafer's necessary elements of a soundscape. As the biological sounds transition to a melodic rhythm, our piece incorporates elements of noise music. Upon completing this project, we contribute to the essential preservation of Bowdoin's unique natural and man-made sounds.

Works cited:

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Schafer, R.M. *The New Soundscape.* Ontario: Berandol Music Limited, 1969.

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