

Crossing Borders

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1. INTRODUCTION

Following the creation of *Birdsong for Prisoners* (Osmond 2011) this new composition *Crossing Borders* continues to explore the nature of sound as an internal and external form of interpretation. Birds, voices, sounds and languages are not necessarily restricted by artificially imposed borders. The ability to translate and transpose compositional materials, digitally store and retrieve recordings made in transit provides a new means of compositional accessibility.

2. COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS

Crossing Borders is an example of controlled improvisation and, as always, a digital cousin of an original idea. Computer-aided, fragmented, altered, slowed down and repeated sounds find their own meaning. The delivery of sound remains melodic in intention. The voices recorded on a fine afternoon in May 2014 blended from those available on the day. Different circumstances would lead to different voices. These are the often unheard and unrecorded stories of travels through Africa, Greece, Italy, Spain and France – a “without borders” collaboration of the human voice incorporating French, Greek, Italian and Xhosa. The words; “beautiful word birds” translated colloquially providing a link with previous work

And what of birds? Recorded on an April morning in Seville the birds were unseen but certainly heard; the echoing building interrupted by the first travellers arriving wheeling bags across the concourse. This sound provides the rhythmic click of the composition, enhanced by the computer’s capacity to emphasise the unwanted, to capture the unheard.

This is how the mix is stirred to create a concoction of words, birds, clicking African voices and rhythmic wheels. Like spice, or flavouring, other elements are added to individual taste including: small

snippets of migrant birdsong from the Hampshire databank, extra elements discovered in playback and a growing awareness of the fragile nature of birds, trees and voices

This piece exists because of, rather than in spite of, technology and borders – without access to both it would only remain as a fragmented memory. Technology brings this idea to life. Without technology the component pieces would remain in time, space, memory and imagination but not in this compositional form. Illustrating that it is possible to explore the nature of a new compositional form that is improvisational in intent and without formal musical notation, *Crossing Borders* provides an opportunity to demonstrate the hidden potential of computer-aided composition.

In a demonstration that intends to explore the relationship between language, ambient sound and creativity, *Crossing Borders* seeks to enhance our understanding of the unique capacity of 21st century technologies to present sound in new and differentiated forms.

3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Crossing Borders uses a variety of digital technologies to create the final composition including a H4Zoom digital recorder – with inbuilt mics for Seville recording, with the addition of a Rode NTG2 microphone for voices, birdsong and ambient sounds edited using *WavePad* and *Cubase*. Inspirational influences include *The Voices* (Catherine, Shelia and Melanie), *Mediación Eirene*, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and birds that fly without borders or passports.

4. REFERENCES

Osmond, J. (2011) *Birdsong for Prisoners*. In *EVA London 2011: Electronic Visualisation and the Arts*, pp. 245–249. Electronic Workshops in Computing, British Computer Society.