A Time to Hear for Here is a five storey high circadian mobile in sound, conceived and orchestrated by aural

architect John Oswald, that can in an unpredictable interval transform from a whisper in Mecca to a storm in Moncton. Distributed over dozens of loudspeakers and throughout each unique day are thousands of never ending combinations of sonic signifiers and musical moments in six-dimensional time/space.

a spectacular, shifting six-dimensional soundscape installation shaped to the architectural contours that embrace it

a time to HEAR FOR HERE

BY KELVIN BROWNE

John Oswald's sound installation at the Royal Ontario Museum's Spirit House

The soundscape created by John Oswald for the Royal Ontario Museum's Spirit House in its Michael Lee-Chin Crystal addition can be thought of as a unique sight and sound work that involved three creative forces—the artist, John Oswald; the architect, Daniel Libeskind; and the impresario, William Thorsell, Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) CEO and Director.

The project brings together a combination of sound and architecture to create an experience like nothing else in the world. To be sure, Oswald is the composer of the soundscape, and Libeskind the architect of the building, and they've never met and certainly not worked together on the Spirit House project, but the end result is still collaboration. The link between them was Thorsell, who realized that Libeskind's space would best be animated by sound, and that Oswald was the person to add this missing component.

The Spirit House is a space at the centre of the ROM's new construction. It's where the crystal shapes forming the galleries link together in an engineering vortex which ties all the structures together. Conceptually, it's where the crystal shapes intersect, and it might be thought of as the negative space formed by their intersection.

It's a difficult space to describe, for it's not a simple void or atrium in the middle of the building, but rather more like a fissure in a mountain that changes shape as it metaphorically cleaves through the structure from top to bottom. The Spirit House begins on the lowest level of the ROM's crystal, the new Garfield Weston exhibition hall, and wends its way—narrowing and widening as it goes—to the fourth floor, where one can glimpse it from a bridge connecting the two galleries under the peaks of the crystal addition. The Sprit House can be traversed at each level on bridges that join galleries on either side of it. It is from these bridges that most will see the Spirit House, there being few other vantage points giving onto it.

The architecture of the Spirit House is of a kind never seen before, and creates a sense of wonder. You walk from one of the large open gallery areas through an entryway in what feel like castle-thick walls, realizing then that you're on a bridge soaring over the space. There is an intense sensation of compression and release as you move from an open gallery through a tight passageway to be met with the impact of the large, irregular Spirit House void. It's an unexpected moment, and some will linger, while others will rush through, and many will want to return.

In addition to the fascinating conceptual idea that Libeskind has realized, the Spirit House is a symbol for the museum, which is why the crystal has been given that name. It's a space that touches on galleries that represent the dual mandate of the ROM—nature and culture. It's at the centre of the institution, certainly reflecting its new energy and engagement with the contemporary world. The Spirit House embodies the spirit of the new ROM.

But how do you communicate the importance of this place to the public? The space began life as part of Libeskind's artistic vision, and might have remained merely a remarkable outcome of the architect's deconstructivist sense of space. But Thorsell saw the space as having the potential for more meaning than that.

Explains Thorsell, "Initially, I thought of graphics in the space, which would make references to world cultures and nature, but this seemed both too obvious and didactic. That is the kind of installation that attempts to impose meaning rather than provoke thoughtfulness. This isn't in keeping with how the ROM relates to visitors and it cer-

tainly wouldn't be the right approach in the Spirit House."

The insight was that sound was what the space needed to fully become itself. "Cultures make sound, nature makes sound … and museums can be too quiet," says Thorsell. "There are no objects in the space; we're not asking people to look at things here but rather to experience the architecture and more fully appreciate it. I began to think that adding sound, as long as we still allowed silence, would be the right way to move forward and create a truly unique experience [that would be] intrinsic to the ROM."

This approach would also offer the ROM visitor another kind of experience from that of looking at objects and reading descriptions interpreting them. It would be a more visceral, emotional experience. Much like the need for visitors to be exposed to changing levels of light (and natural light in particular) to prevent museum fatigue, the Spirit House is that jolt that refreshes, as people move between galleries.

A soundscape in the Spirit House would also offer a change of focus from a concrete experience of objects to a more ephemeral one that would stimulate the imagination. "With a sound installation, the Spirit House becomes a very different kind of gallery at the ROM," says Thorsell. "The sound completes the meaning of space. As well, it's a foil to the traditional expectations visitors have of a museum. It's not something you'd expect to find there."

Enter John Oswald. After considering other proposals, the ROM selected Oswald to create the Spirit House soundscape. "I was impressed with what an artist of John's stature and experience could bring to the project," says Thorsell. "He had a good understanding of the architecture but, more importantly, understood that the sound should be a collaboration with the space, and that the result wasn't a performance but something more elusive." In other words, Oswald had no intention of producing a tape that repeated like clever Muzak day after day. He had much grander ambitions for the Spirit House. "I was inspired by the space, both the unusual nature of it and the possibilities for sound that you simply couldn't do in any other location," you simply couldn't do in any other location," says Oswald. "There are five levels of bridges traversing a void. Sound can go from top to bottom, or seemingly leak in from the galleries, or be thought to be coming from outside the building. Sound can be very specific to a spot a visitor walks through, or all-encompassing, bathing visitors in an overwhelming moment." As much as Oswald appreciated what sound could do in the space, he also knew there was an equally important component in the mix: silence.

"I never thought of producing a continuous soundtrack, I felt that the silence in between sounds and events would be equally

A rendering of the Spirit House arch

The design for A Time to Hear for Here is monumental, but there is a natural, human scale to its content.

—John Oswald

important." Indeed, many will walk through the space and it will be quiet. The Spirit House sound is also unpredictable, because the timing of sound moments and their combinations is fluid. "I wanted to create a mobile sculpture of sounds," says Oswald.

This sound sculpture combines natural and man-made sounds, both musical and non-musical. With natural sound, there is no sense of it being a Disneyesque experience. While there may, for instance, be something recognizable as jungle noises or as exotic melodies associated with the Far East, this isn't a literal cultural tour, an audio *National Geographic.*

It's certainly a different kind of sculpture, not just because it's made of sound.

Laurel MacDonald, *Qui* choirmaster

eters for himself when he began. "The soundscape wasn't going to be a museum of human musical activity." He wasn't going to have melodies but instead a collection of sounds that made good use of the architecture as part of their presentation.

Oswald was very aware of the architecture and its opportunities but equally cognizant of some of its limitations in terms of the sound that could be added to the space. "People are passing through this space: some might be in it for fifteen seconds, others for a few minutes. Many people will experience it on several occasions on different floors as they visit the ROM's various galleries. I was very conscious of this when I began planning."

Was Oswald influenced by other projects? "The most obvious and influential precursor, I think, was *Stress,* which I created with Bruce Mau Design." *Stress* was originally developed for Wiener Festwochen 2000 (Vienna) and was a large-scale video installation of over twenty episodes of various combinations of text, images, multi-voiced narration, and sound. The work used multiple digital projections to create a cinematic experience for the viewer.

Oswald elaborates: "The challenge with *Stress* was to provide a soundtrack to a video installation of seven twenty-foot-tall screens. Each had separate but synchronized content and was distributed around the museum gallery at odd angles. The screens were viewable from both sides. Viewers were free to wander about, so there was no one ideal point of perspective to work from.

Along with sound engineer Phil Strong, Oswald elaborates: "I'm working in six dimensions. Musical reproduction usually has two, width and the illusion of depth. We're adding height in the Spirit House. The fourth dimension is something I'm calling teleception, the reception of distances beyond the horizon of direct perception which occurs usually via telephony, broadcast, webcast and so on. And to this, we're adding two more dimensions, those of time, chronometric time passing and times remembered—there's a sense of history in the soundscape."

The sounds that come, go, and on occasion combine, are as varied as the world inside the ROM—and outside it, for that matter. Oswald, however, set definite parameters for himself when he began. "The soundscape wasn't going to be a museum of human musical activity." He wasn't going to have melodies but instead a collection of sounds that made good use of the architecture as part of their presentation.

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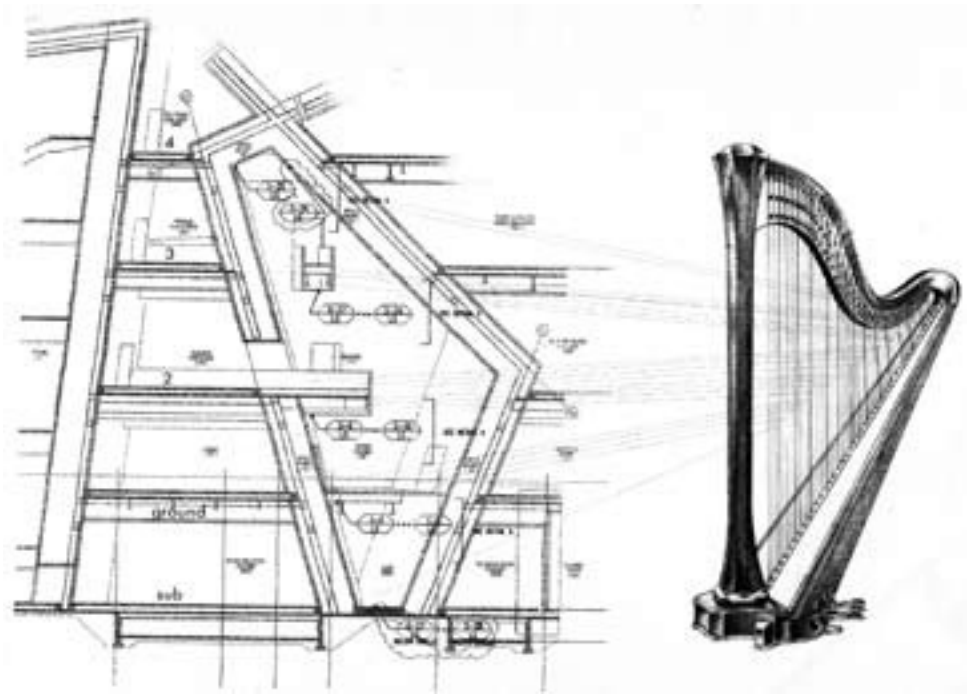
Along with sound engineer Phil Strong, I designed a multi-channel system of three kinds of speakers: very near, far, and tactile. The very-near speakers were hanging all around the space, just above the heads of the audience. They sometimes each had different content. Only those nearby would hear what was coming from a particular speaker; and sometimes the speakers worked together collectively to fill the room. The single far speaker was a large metal outdoor public address horn, a very obnoxious sound, which we situated at the very top of the space. We were working in very large rooms. Our rehearsal hall, for instance, was an abandoned airplane hangar in Toronto."

With the experience of *Stress* as a foundation, how did Oswald approach the Spirit House, another very large room, so to speak, although smaller than an airplane hangar? "I began by thinking of the components in terms of what might be specific and repeating for individual areas of the Spirit House. I also began thinking of what elements would cycle through the entire space on regular or irregular schedules, especially those things that might have connections outside the ROM—birth and death rates, time, and so on. As well, I began to consider composing a few major events, some that might happen at set times, and others randomly. These could be anything from a sunrise in a rain forest to streetcars passing on a track that used to be near the museum."



The shape of the Spirit House is similar to the inside of a concert harp case.

The result is a complex work that is not the same from day to day, its components having algorithms that ensure its variety. Oswald mentions a few highlights. "Several different acoustic clocks indicate global rhythms in multiple dimensions of local, provincial, national, and global time, space, and history. Hear noon as it occurs simultaneously in the different time zones across Canada or Big Ben from London at 5 p.m. Hear the signals and sounds, present and past, of local public transit, as if the skin of the museum were acoustically transparent. Hear an indoor storm gather and recede. Witness the passing of a rare species of animals as tolled by the extinction clock."

There are as well some dramatic moments in store for visitors. "Greetings in many languages will be whispered in your ear," Oswald says. "Also, because the space is shaped like a harp, there'll be a moment when a cascade of harp notes sounds, as if a musician were playing the instrument of the Spirit House."

Perhaps the most memorable component of the Spirit House soundscape is a twenty-four-part canon, with each of the parts sung in a different language (see the extended description in the accompanying sidebar). This component of the installation, entitled *Qui*, after the medieval choral work *Qui Habitat*, on which is it based, is evocative of the diversity of the cultures represented in the ROM's collections, and of the multicultural nature of Toronto, and of Canada in general. This remarkable piece is heard once daily, near the end of the day. The multiple-voice, multi-speaker work, the realization of a technical concept that occurred to Oswald some twenty years ago, transforms the Spirit House, each voice having a particular spot in the House's mountain-cavern-like space. As with much of the sound in the Spirit House, the sound and the manner in which it is heard are intrinsically connected. This is just what Thorsell and Oswald envisioned. In fact, Oswald eventually gave a name to the Spirit House composition that reflects this close meshing of architecture and sound: *a time to hear for here.*

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF JOHN OSWALD

John Oswald and Royal Ontario Museum CEO William Thorsell on top of the new construction.

Kelvin Browne *is the managing director of the Institute for Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum. The ICC explores world cultures and current issues through exhibitons of contemporary art, lectures, symposia, films, and a wide range of public events. Browne has a masters degree in architecture from the University of Toronto and writes frequently about design for* The National Post, Azure magazine, *and other publications.*

fyi John Oswald has written many articles for *Musicworks*. "Alto sax playing" appeared in *Musicworks* 1; "Plunderphonics, or Audio Piracy as a Compositional Prerogative" appeared in *Musicworks* 47; and "Taking Sampling 50 Times Beyond the Accepted" appeared in *Musicworks* 48. Chris Cutler's article "Plunderphonia & Vox" appeared in *Musicworks* 60.

The making of *Qui:*

evoking a contemporary relationship with spirit

BY ANNE BOURNE

When I arrived at Laurel MacDonald's home, we climbed to the third floor, past the vocals room with permanent microphone set-up, and arrived in the room where she sits with John Oswald while she records the singers for his choral composition *Qui*. This remarkable piece will sing once near the end of each day, as part of Oswald's sound installation *a time to hear for here,* the voices sounding through thirty-five speakers placed within the structure of Daniel Libeskind's new Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, dubbed Spirit House, at the Royal Ontario Museum.

Oswald's choral feature is the realization of a musical point of departure shared some twenty years ago by John Oswald in a discussion with composer Christopher Butterfield about a multi-speaker installation in which each individual voice would be heard through its own speaker. Butterfield remarked that the best music for such spatialization would be a motet from the late Tudor period, densely polyphonic, composed for many choirs of voices.

Oswald's new piece, named *Qui*, the Latin word for *who*, is based on *Qui Habitat*, a twenty-four-part motet written in the fifteenth century by Josquin des Prez. "It looks," John writes to me, "like I'll be deviating quite a bit from the traditional motet form in the final mix (or separation) of *Qui*." By this point there is a composite of twenty voices arranged by Oswald's compositional instincts. And while his aim is to make balances appear natural, there will be no central listening vantage point. He has begun the process of separation, as he shifts the tunings of individual pitches in microtones to meet the requirements of a specific tuning system, and moves the voices throughout the geometry of the imagined space, to create his sound mobile.

As I speak with MacDonald, Oswald is across town on his third floor, listening to the nineteen tracks recorded so far, and imaging them in his listening, anticipating how they will, when balanced, resonate within the space.

It is a perfect opportunity for the choreographer and dancer in Oswald to send into the space sound that can affect the movement of a listener. In addition to the speakers built into the architecture, Oswald has added hyper-directional speakers that can be heard only if the listener steps into the speakers' streams of sound, and notices a fragment from the in-between moments of the *Qui* recording sessions. An invisible whisperer might surprise you, as you walk in and then through to the next gallery.

The collective sound of voices recorded so far holds the heart of the many individual singers MacDonald has sought out. This is not an existing trained choir. One operatic tenor is singing, but in Korean. Another tenor, Lizzy Mahashe, born in South Africa, is female, and sang a second alto part in Zulu. Almost all the voices are singing in their mother tongues.

Oswald sketched a list of languages, proportionate to the Canadian populations that speak them, as established by the 2002 census. Not all, but many of the nation's languages will be present in the piece. Oswald feels it is important to represent indigenous languages, though the number of Canadians who speak these languages are fewer. MacDonald is researching the possibility of a distance recording with a Cree singer living in Edmonton. It worked well when she facilitated a recording of Scottish Gaelic singer Mary Jane Lamond in Nova Scotia, while MacDonald was in Toronto. Constant communication and FTP Internet sound-file transfers make possible such recording over distances.

The afternoon I speak to MacDonald she is preparing her studio to record Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq. Looking at the text translated into Inuktitut adds to the increasing abstraction of *Qui* as it comes to life in sound.

Psalm 91 is the text for the Josquin Des Prez motet. In addition to the English

version in the King James Bible, there are hundreds of translations to be found. Still, not all of the languages that began to emerge through the singers' inspiration had translations available. (Ori Dagan called MacDonald back late and said, 'Get me the score: my grandparents speak Hungarian!') Singers began developing and rephrasing translations, making the words their own, often with family members' help, and the process lifted the sounds of sometimes buried languages to where they would be in present-day conversation—families together created translations that are both accurate and musical.

It may have been MacDonald's setting of the English-language version of the motet that established personal translation as part of the recording process. She was assigned the original soprano part written for the Latin text in the late fifteenth century. And it may be that her take on it as a singer, her interpretation in English, is why each singer had the opportunity to discover a relationship to the sacred in the text, in terms of their contemporary, familial languages. And Oswald's receptivity to their interpretations of *Qui Habitat* is why his piece becomes, for me, a declaration against fear. "I gave the singers both the Latin, and my English version for reference," explains MacDonald. The Latin text's meaning remains more or less intact when Neema Bickersteth, using the Krio language of Sierra Leone, sings in accordance with the words her uncle has given her: "the big man" for "God" and "the bad people" for "sinners." In the singing of *Qui*, God becomes female or remains male, "...and in Finnish," Oswald muses, "God is supposedly an it."

MacDonald changed the English lyrics to change the meaning and sensation of the sound, and because a word like *wicked* is simply awkward to sing as a lyrical phrase. She tells me further, "I sang in my own voice, not operatic, more like a boy soprano—like painting a neutral line with my voice." And, "I was not comfortable with the negative tone, and the original language was not beautiful to sing, so I changed the English translation of the last verse." The words were, "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold the eyes of the wicked," which MacDonald resolved as "With thine eyes see innocence, justice and purity."

What will linger for MacDonald is the response from the singers she has invited to be part of Oswald's piece. They have approached the creation of this piece with heart and individual inspiration, offering more than was asked for. Now that the essence of the motet recording is complete in its original arrangement, singers are beginning to improvise, to the combined sound of all their voices together in John's mix. Lizzy Mahashe, her Zulu track completed, returns once more to sing in some additional African languages. "While I was singing I felt like I was home, with the cat strolling in," she says. "What I would *like* to do," she offers, "is listen to the others and sing in my home languages, Sesotho, and Xhosa [a language that uses tongue clicks]. I want to listen to the others and respond."

The Spirit House, as the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal is called, will resonate once daily with the sound of singing in Oswald's circadian sound mobile. With *Qui*, Oswald's invitation is to listen to the sound of who we are, where we are in the time-space continuum, and how this time holds meaning. And in contrast to this, a bell will sound, timed on the clock of extinction, for each living species that disappears. When the voices of *Qui* are heard, it will be a sound with the resonant sense of whom we walk with.

***Anne Bourne** is a composer, cellist, and vocalist who lives on Toronto's Ward's Island. She composes for dance and film, and improvises and records with John Oswald and Marvin Green's ensemble dwct, Pauline Oliveros, the Fred Frith Anne Bourne John Oswald dearnessTrio, and with Eve Egoyan.*

résumé français

L'installation circadienne de John Oswald, *a time to hear for here*, est une installation permanente située dans la Spirit House, au nouveau Daniel Libeskind Crystal du Royal Ontario Museum, inauguré en juin 2007. La Spirit House est traversée sur cinq étages par des ponts qui relient les galeries de chaque côté, à travers un espace vide en forme de harpe. Les visiteurs entendent l'installation sonore depuis les ponts. Certains sons ne sont audibles qu'en des endroits spécifiques alors que d'autres peuvent être entendus de plusieurs endroits différents. Oswald crée ainsi une sculpture mobile de sons — les temps d'apparition des moments sonores et leurs combinaisons étant fluides. Un encadré d'Anne Bourne discute du processus artistique d'Oswald, des contributions de Laurel McDonald et de l'écriture des voix de Qui, un canon à 24 voix que l'on peut entendre une fois par jour comme élément du paysage sonore. Chaque partie est chantée dans une langue différente pour refléter la diversité des cultures qui cohabitent au Canada.

Qui ?

When one first hears that John Oswald is creating a sound installation that contains a Motet, a cognitive disonance automatically occurs. The memory juxtaposition of first, Oswald's notoriety stemming from his work in his autodidactic medium of Plunderphonics, and then parallel to this, the memory of Janet Cardiff's highly recognized work "40 Part Motet" completed in 2001, could lead one very quickly to an assumption that Oswald's piece is either a trope or a spurious act of Plunder.

Perhaps it is a cultural phenomenon in our country that we create as a collective, giving each other courage and materials, through an open dialogue and a necessary community connection, derived from the landscape and the experience of winter. The white blanket, the lack of fresh food , did this lead us to share and encourage each other's creative spirits and plant seeds in each others minds?

When one pursues this question in this case, the answer is affirming and surprising. A lineage can be traced in the artistic process of John Oswald that makes the choice of Josquin des Prez' Motet a natural choice within the story of his artistic practice and it points to the time and place where Oswald's work intersected with Cardiff's; in the beautiful creative sanctuary this country provides for artists to develop from the mountainous landscape of Banff to the world forum and humanity's historical galleries. —Anne Bourne

What follows is, as Oswald recalls:

A Selective Lineage of Multi-Speaker Sound Installations

—mid 70's: John Cage collaborator David Tudor visited Toronto to present his environmental work *Rainforest,* which involved spatially distributing objects which had been made into loudspeakers. Marvin Green assists in the creation of the Toronto version of the work.

—1976 Marvin Green and John Oswald began working on their project Pitch:
sound distributed in perfectly dark environments.

—ca.1982 Marvin Green was contracted by artist Mick Tebb to make sound for a sculptural simulation of New Orleans' Bourbon Street he was commissioned to make for the West Edmonton Mall. Life-size mannequins of musicians were fabricated with loudspeakers installed in their instruments; for example in the bell of the trombone, or behind the tympanum of the banjo. Although in the final piece there was no separation achieved between individual tracks, a multi-track recording of Dixieland Jazz, was projected through each individual instrument and its respective installed loudspeaker. (Some of the musicians are purported to look like Marvin Green).

—ca.1984 John Oswald described Marvin's scheme to Christopher Butterfield and he suggests that an ideal piece of music to spatialize in this fashion would be Thomas Tallis' 16th century composition *Spem in Alium*, a 40-part vocal motet, with an individual loudspeaker for each of the voices.

—1991 Oswald was in residence at the Banff Centre creating a soundtrack for a Belgium TV production, assisted by sound engineer and Banff Centre audio intern Phil Strong. Strong wass concurrently assisting other artists, as well as pursuing and demonstrating a personal research project consisting of a 24-speaker installation in which each speaker reproduces a track from the Centre's 24-track tape deck. Observing the multi-speaker array Oswald recalled Butterfield's suggestion that the perfect musical source for a spatially-distributed multi-track recording was the Tallis Motet. While at Banff Oswald and Cardiff never met. Neither Strong nor Cardiff remember specifically discussing the multi-speaker installation.

—2001 Oswald (with Strong) creates an elaborate installation to compliment a series of multi-screen videos in a collaboration with Bruce Mau Design. The project is titled Stress. Cardiff creates her Forty Part Motet, distributing the Tallis composition through 40 loudspeakers in a circle.

—2006 Oswald is creating a sound environment he is creating for the Royal Ontario Museum's new architextural expansion. He desides to revisit the theme of spatially distributed acoustic individuals in an evolving circadian sound cycle. As the number of voices fits with the number of loudspeakers planned by the architects, he chooses as his point of departure a 15th century 24 part motet by Josquin des Prez, to be transliterated into 24 languages.

—2007: Avril Lavigne records the chorus to her new single Girlfriend in eight languages. In addition to English,she sings in French, Portuguese, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese and Mandarin.

all the incidents mentioned involve Canadians.

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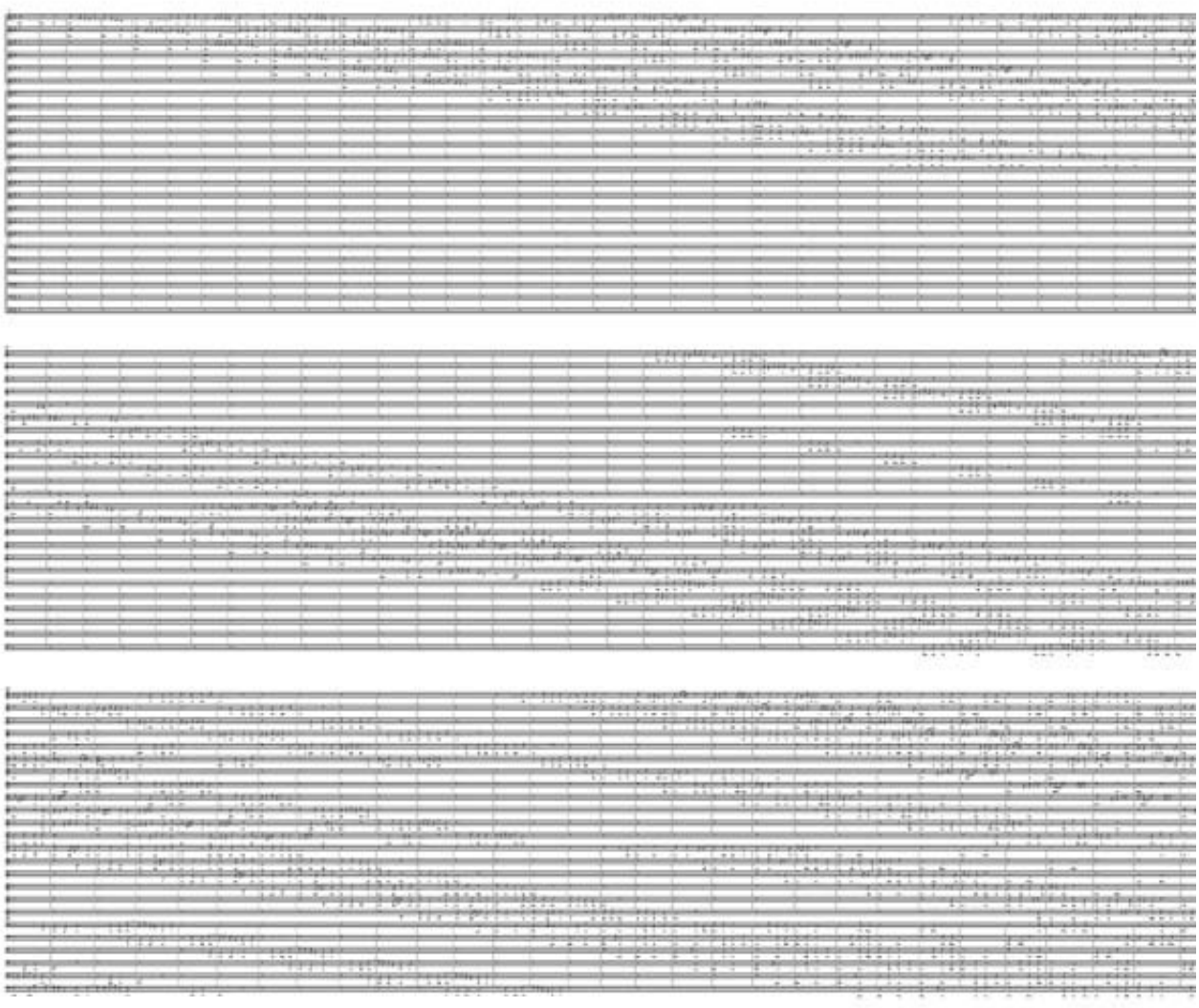
Also interesting from the historical perspective of Plunder, is the discussion that Thomase Tallis' composition sounds so similar to another 40-part motet from the same time, *Ecce Beatem Lucem* by Alessandro Striggio, that, with scant evidence, it is assumed by most people that the more famous *Spem in Alium* is a knock-off of the Striggio work. It is also possible that the reverse is the case. In either case the Tallis version is a more dramatic work, and if it was written in imitation, it is a case of the work being better by the borrower.



***Qui* score overview – Josquin Desprez's entire full score in miniature reveals in subtle gradiations of density the flow of the choral parts**

a time to hear for here

"Our task is to paint this contemporary Sistine Chapel with a fresco of sound, applying the layers of aural chiarascuro on site."
—John Oswald

Visitors to the new Crystal wing of the Royal Ontario Museum travel from gallery to gallery by crisscrossing bridges on four levels. The chasm-shaped space they traverse is the Spirit House.

There are no visible exhibits here. Instead, the Spirit House is filled, at various moments of the day, with sounds, placed there by acoustic architect and composer John Oswald.

He calls this A Time To Hear for Here.

The sounds are familiar ones: signals and events from our worldwide environment, combined with human voices; everything from a whisper to a thunderstorm, a hummingbird to a choir.

These sounds are all scheduled by a central computer. Some are random and can transpire, as in life, anytime and anywhere, through one or more of the three dozen loudspeakers situated throughout this central crevice in the museum. Other sounds happen according to a global clock, occurring at a particular hour, or else shifting along from day to day, as scheduled times of sunrises and sunsets on the other side of the world progress and regress through the year.

As often as not the room is silent, except for half a dozen windows of sound which can only be heard when one is standing in one of several particular sonic spots. The continuous beams heard through these invisible windows issue multilingual greetings and aural indications of the global birth and death rates of human beings. And a gong sounds throughout the Spirit House on the occasion of the loss to the planet of another species to extinction.

One can set one's watch to the hourly signals in A Time to Hear for Here: these soundmarkers are transmitted from different time zones in Canada and around the World. So at 10.30AM one hears the distant noon gun of St.John's Newfoundland, in the East, and at 15.00 (3PM) the first four notes of the Canadian national anthem sound from the noon horn in Vancouver, on the West Coast.

Historical time also becomes part of the six-dimensional spatial-temporal structure of the composition. Acoustic events which are no longer part of the world's soundscape return to the Spirit House. Hear the groan of an old diaphone fog horn, or perhaps the fragile twitter of an increasingly rare avian species.

Then there are the many sound events that happen by random chance — no one knows what comes next: hear a loon and a whale sing a duet, or a Chinese folk melody accompanied by a plaintive CN train whistle. Some of these chance juxtapositions will only happen once in a blue moon.

Not everyone chooses to subscribe to a 24/7 culture, where anything is accessible anytime. A Time to Hear for Here celebrates occasional events as preferable to having everything always available on demand. So a visitor to the ROM may wish to personally schedule a visit to the Spirit House at 17.17 (5.17PM) when Qui occurs — a once-a-day choral concert of Renaissance polyphony translated into two dozen simultaneous but distinct languages. For listeners who can't be there for this virtual vocal ensemble, they might catch rehearsals by some of the singers at other times. Or one might chance to hear a whistled snippet of a familiar melody from long ago or far away...