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“Traces of a Cosmological Imagination: Metaphor and Esotericism in R. Murray Schafer’s Writings on the Soundscape”

Summary

The introductory part of the article presents R. Murray Schafer’s concept of the soundscape as developed from the late 1960s in the interdisciplinary framework of acoustic ecology, and shows Schafer’s propensity toward cosmological thought. Schafer’s frequent statements about God (‘the acoustic designer’), the Universe (‘music of the spheres’), the material world of a lower level (‘a huge musical composition’), man (‘the composer of the world-composition’), and entities of a lower nature (sounds as ‘living organisms’) are collected and arranged according to basic cosmological categories. The main four parts of the article follow this order and devote special attention to the specific means used by Schafer to present his ideas. Metaphors, historical references, analysis and definitions of music and the soundscape, as well as specific elements of discourse all play an important part in the rich cosmological imagery of this author.