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“Electroacoustic Categories in the Soundscape Tradition”

Summary

Five main approaches to basic electroacoustic categories — sound, technology, and notation — are discussed in reference to the tradition of ecological soundscape thought. The approaches are: 1. negative-activistic, 2. neutral-scientific, 3. critical-theoretic, 4. positive-creative, and 5. accepting-posthistorical; each is furnished with several examples based on creatively formulated themes.

Electroacoustic problems go beyond a simple imitation of other objects of soundscape thought, instead marking out its unique, and even critical moments. According to the negative-activistic approach, electroacoustic categories transform music and sound into pollution, exerting a pathogenic influence over humans and inimically affecting sound sensations. This, however, does not impede the discussed categories from being used as a specially useful research tool in the neutral-scientific approach. Yet from the critical-theoretic point of view, electroacoustic categories may insidiously falsify and deform true human needs and distort a fragile environmental balance. In another dramatic contrast, the positive-creative approach maintains that electroacoustic categories can be tied with great hopes for the transformation of our stances toward acoustic environments, particularly in soundscape composition. Finally, in the accepting-posthistorical approach, electroacoustic categories ‘absorb’ the history of music, our concepts of sound notation, and even ourselves as listeners of a mediated sound in a ‘submarine home’ of an inclusive stereophonic listening.