

a time to hear for here

daily schedule

by John Oswald

Approximately 7000 sound events are scheduled to occur in the Spirit House each 24 hour period, distributed through 35 loudspeakers in the space. Most of these sounds happen randomly; some re-occur more often than others; and several dozen events are scheduled at specific times of the day. These are some of them:

10AM	noon horn in Charlottetown PEI
10.03	Laurel MacDonald - Brightest and Best (traditional song)
10.10	Qui alto (8 women singing in 8 languages, based on a 15th century motet by Josquin des Prez)
10.30	Shalva Makarashvili- Urmuli Kakheti (traditional Georgian shepherd song)
10.45	Philip Strong - Tone Factory (an everchanging composition of the sound of electrical current)
*	Sashar Zarif singing the Azan (synchronized with sunset in Mecca)
11.AM	the noon schoolbell in a small town in Quebec
11.11	Qui Weave (29 singers singing in 29 languages)
11.30	Lizzy Mahashe- Qongqothwane (African 'click' song)
11.45	Eddie Lang - Prelude by Rachmaninof (recorded in 1927)
noon	Ottawa gun and bells.
12.12	Qui (10 men singing in 10 different languages)
12.30	Ori Dagan Scat singing
12.45	tone factory
1PM	noon in Winnipeg
1.13	Qui (7 women singing in 7 languages)
1.30	Pat Patrick - Wade in the Water (sung in the sub-bass register)
1.45	Beniamino Gigli - Ave Maria by Strauss (recorded in 1926)
2PM	noon in Lethbridge Alberta
2.14	qui Men (10 men singing in 10 different languages)
2.45	tone factory
3PM	noon horn in Vancouver (plays the first four notes of Canada's national anthem)
3.15	Qui alto
3.30	Narendra Datar - Alhaiyya Bilaval
3.45	tone factory
**	Northeast Australian rainforest at dawn (simulated simulcast in compressed time)
4.16	Qui Weave
4.30	Tanya Tagac - solo throatsinging (this is her part in Qui)
4.45	tone factory
5.17	Qui All (26 voices in 26 languages all singing together- 2 different versions on alternate days)
5.30	tone factory
5.45	Laurel MacDonald - Nemias Sirenes

* Sunset in Mecca drifts a minute each day or two from 9.45AM Eastern Standard Daylight Savings Time on June 21st to 12.05PM Eastern Standard Time on December 21st and then minute by minute earlier again until the first day of summer.

** dawn in Northeast Australia occurs sometime between 2.30PM Toronto time on the first day of winter and 4.50PM on the first day of summer.

The big gong heard every twenty minutes marks the extinction of another of Earth's living species.

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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...

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conceived and created by John Oswald

Philip Strong is instrumental in the realization of a time to hear for here

Laurel MacDonald was the choir co-ordinator and recording engineer for Qui