

# Retracings: Common Gestures Collective Soundings, Shared Emotions Curated by Helen Frosi (SoundFjord)

## Programme Notes

*Retracings* is a two-part audio-visual exploration of selected calendar-based traditions, customs and religious rituals, bound to specific locations and communities, as documented and scrutinised from the vantages of three different practitioners:

Rosalind Fowler, an artist filmmaker whose pseudo-ethnographic practice often touches on issues surrounding landscape and identity, and one's sense of purpose within community. Her work acts as a crystallising agent, highlighting both a sense of being, and belonging; Ian Rawes, a seasoned field recordist and researcher whose inexhaustible documentation of London's ever-changing soundscape, by day and night, in his acclaimed London Sound Survey beautifully captures the variety of traditions, customs and diurnal soundcycles of our sprawling metropolis; and, Duncan Whitley, a visual artists and sound recordist, who has, over numerous years, documented and explored the sacred rituals of Easter Week at Seville (Spain) through sound, photography, film and video.

As a collection of sound and audio-visual works, *Retracings* particularly focuses on collective gestures and communal soundings; actions that are purposeful and repetitious within a framework, reenacted as palimpsests drawn over a particular place, or improvised around an idea or belief: shared moments that bring together a sense of community and belonging, motivation and meaning – engraved as a distinct sensoryscape onto collective memory.

The works, by way of the recordist's presence within the moment and inside the space of action and sounding, capture the collective performative gesture – activity, movement and sound making (thus action and the voice captured *in situ*, in the field.)

*Retracings* may be seen as an exploration of collective gestures, the voice 'in the field', and the social and cultural soundscape, but it is equally an exercise in scrutinising what "the field" actually is, or could possibly be. We should ask ourselves what constitutes "recording" (are we confined by materials, place, technical ability, conceptual conventions?), and also bring to question the foundations of what constitutes 'documentation' and 'fiction'. And what of beyond the boundary or 'framework' of selection? – does 'the field' ever end?

## Future Listening

**Duncan Whitley** has been commissioned to produce an exhibition of his extensive research on the traditions and sacred rituals of Seville's Easter Week by SoundFjord. The result, *Sbarbi's Arrow*, an AV installation will be exhibited at SoundFjord from 21 March to 21 April 2013. The exhibition will be complimented by a curated programme of events that have emerged from themes running through Duncan's practice and are pertinent to the commissioned work. Duncan will present an illustrated artist's talk at SoundFjord on 11 April 2013 and will take part in a round table discussion with respected specialists, researchers and practitioners on 16 April 2013. He will also present a live performance of field recording and soundscape works at Goldsmiths' Great Hall on 22 April 2013. Exhibition information: [soundfjord.org/exhibitions.htm](http://soundfjord.org/exhibitions.htm)

**Rosalind Fowler** will screen the premier of the full-length edit of the above film as part of the events programme associated with Duncan Whitley's exhibition on 13 April 2013. Those interested in viewing the film in full should RSVP as soon as possible to avoid disappointment as audience numbers are limited. Email Rosalind for further information on her practice and screenings.

**Ian Rawes** will take part in the round table discussion as part of the extended programme of events for *Sbarbi's Arrow*. Email Ian for further information on his work.

Thanks to Grants for the Arts funding (Arts Council England), all above mentioned events are free to attend. For further information on events: [soundfjord.org/eventsperformance.htm](http://soundfjord.org/eventsperformance.htm)

**Helen Frosi** has curated an evening of improvisation with an international roster of musicians with Simon Reynell of Another Timbre. John Tilbury, Phil Durrant, Jamie Drouin, Angharad Davies and Johnny Chang will perform on 16 February 2013, 8pm at Café OTO. A site-specific installation, *Collected Gestures*, with performances by Jamie Drouin and Johnny Chang will open at SoundFjord on the evening of 17 February 2013 and will run until 22 February 2012.

## Screening Schedule

### Part I: Soundscapes of the Sacred:

#### Ian Rawes [sound]<sup>1</sup>

- I. "Outdoor Caribbean Religious Service" taken from, Services and Rituals [2010] (03:15)
- II. "Hare Kristna Festival" taken from, Major Religious Festivals [2008] (02:23)
- III. "Wood Green Religious Singers" taken from, Street Preachers and Proselytisers [2012] (01:29)
- IV. "Vespers Westminster Cathedral" taken from, Services and Rituals [2010] (03:35)

#### Duncan Whitley [audio-visual]<sup>2</sup>

- V. "A saeta sung by Pepe 'El Peregil' in the Plaza Museo, Seville, on Holy Monday" [2011] (03:22)

#### Duncan Whitley [sound]<sup>3</sup>

- VI. "A saeta sung by Saetero Manuel Cuevas in the Plaza Cristo de Burgos, Seville" [2012] (09:29)

### Part II: Of Customs and Traditions:

#### Ian Rawes [sound]<sup>4</sup>

- VII. "Jouvert" taken from, Notting Hill Carnival [2008] (04:02)
- VIII. "Lord Mayors Guards" taken from, Lord Mayor's Show [2008] (02:00)
- IX. "Harvest Festival Morris Dancers" taken from, Other Events [2012] (02:55)
- X. "Duke of Kendal" taken from, Pub Song and Music [2008] (02:18)

#### Rosalind Fowler [audio-visual]<sup>5</sup>

- XI. [Untitled work-in-progress] [2013] (11:03)

## Notes

1. Sound: Ian Rawes, London Sound Survey
2. Sound: Duncan Whitley; camera: Simon Day
3. Sound: Duncan Whitley
4. Sound: Ian Rawes, London Sound Survey
5. Camera: Rosalind Fowler; additional camera: Tom Lock and Kevin Brown amateur footage at Sway: Ady Moorhouse; sound recording: Andrej Bako and Duncan Whitley; sound design: Andrej Bako; voiceover: Rosalind Fowler (provisional); local voices: Patrick Bate, Richard Poole, Malcolm McCarthy, Kelty Seaber, Sue Norfolk, Dale Smith, Ian Thorpe, Lol

## Contact Details

**Rosalind Fowler:** [rosalindfowler@googlemail.com](mailto:rosalindfowler@googlemail.com)  
**Helen Frosi (SoundFjord):** [soundfjord.org](http://soundfjord.org)  
**Ian Rawes:** [soundsurvey.org.uk](http://soundsurvey.org.uk)  
**Duncan Whitley:** [shotgunsounds.com](http://shotgunsounds.com)

## Please Note

Artists' programme notes with biographies are available to read over the page, or download here: [soundfjord.org/eventsperformance.htm](http://soundfjord.org/eventsperformance.htm)

**In the Field Symposium**  
**15/16 February 2013**  
**[inthefield.co.uk](http://inthefield.co.uk)**

## Duncan Whitley works from *Cante y Rezo*

### Screening Notes

*Cante y Rezo* (literal translation: Song and Prayer) is the umbrella title for an open research project looking at Seville's Holy Week (*Semana Santa*) through processes of field recording and video production, cataloguing and archiving, and the subsequent development of sound and video works in response to the archive. The broad objective of the project is the study of the current panorama of the *saetas flamencas*<sup>1</sup> of Seville through the prism of contemporary soundscape studies.

Performances of *saetas flamencas* can be heard on a great number of commercially released flamenco records. Recorded in studio conditions, these recordings are produced outside of their original context – the processions of *Semana Santa* – and as such abstract the relationship between the singer, religious image, and performance space, bearing in mind that the *saetas* are prayers inspired by and responding to specific religious images. The focus of *Cante y Rezo* is the recording of *saetas* in their original and unique contexts, moving away from the tendencies and techniques of studio recordings, and favouring techniques of environmental sound recording that can assist us in understanding this a capella musical form.

The pieces screened in *Retracings* are sketches from *Cante y Rezo* recorded in 2011 and 2012. They document, respectively:

I) A *saeta* sung by Pepe 'El Peregil' in the Plaza Museo in Seville, on Holy Monday 2011. His *saeta* is addressed to the religious image *Cristo de la Expiración* as it is returned to its church in the Plaza Museo. A renowned *saetero* throughout Seville, Peregil sadly died in January 2012 following a long period of illness. The singer was affiliated to the brotherhood of *El Museo*, and he habitually sang from the same spot on the corner of this square every year, as the *El Museo's* images were returned from their processional journey. (Sound: Duncan Whitley; camera: Simon Day.)

II) A *saeta* sung by *saetero* Manuel Cuevas in the Plaza Cristo de Burgos. The research leading to the realisation of this particular recording developed out of discussions on an Internet forum, in which a number of people described hearing the spectacular voice of an unknown *saetero* emanating from the darkness of the Plaza Cristo de Burgos on Holy Wednesday. The musical accompaniment to the image *Madre de Dios de la Palma* following Cuevas' *saeta* is performed by the Banda de Música del Maestro Tejera. (Sound: Duncan Whitley.)

### Artist's Biography

Duncan Whitley practices as a visual artist and sound recordist. His creative output ranges from project-specific field recording archives, to multi-channel sound work, film and video, and site-responsive sound installations. As an artist working with both musical and "non-musical" sound, he is fundamentally concerned with themes of acoustic communication – language mediated in and through sound – and the experience of visual and acoustic space. His approach to working with sound is at once forensic and poetic, marked by both rigorous methodology and a delicate, subtle aesthetic language. Duncan explores themes of sound, space/place and collective memory: in the empty wards of ex-NHS hospital buildings; in the football stadiums across the breadth of the UK; in the religious processions .org.uk of southern, Catholic Spain; or in the journeys of shepherds in the Portuguese mountain villages of *Magaio*. Much of his recent work explores emergent issues in contemporary sound work, in particular those related to contemporary ethnography and socially-engaged art practice.

In his ongoing research into the *saetas flamencas* of Seville he works with the British Library, the Platform for Contemporary and Modern Flamenco Studies (part of UNIA – the International University of Andalucía *Arteypensamiento*), and Weekend Proms (curators of Sensxperiment and Andaluciasoundscape). His work has been exhibited recently as installations at the Museu Serralves (Porto, PT), Herbert Art Gallery and Museum (Coventry, UK), and his sound and video/sound works have been presented in festivals across Europe, such as Valfíno al Cante (IT), Gorey Arts and Film Festival (IE), CTRL\_ALT\_DEL (TR). He is currently an associate artist of Binaural/Nodar (PT).

[shotgunsounds.com](http://shotgunsounds.com)

## Rosalind Fowler [Untitled work-in-progress]

### Screening Notes

The film (in the final stages of production) starts and ends in London, and is narrated by a fictional female character living in the city reflecting back on the archive of footage she has collected over the years on her visits to two seasonal folk traditions, the mid-Winter custom Haxey Hood in North Lincolnshire, and Padstow's 'Obby 'Oss in Cornwall on 1<sup>st</sup> May. Her voice is interwoven with those of locals she meets, who either live in these places or travel back each year to take part, and forms part of a wider reflection on place, belonging and ritual in a global world.

The film takes as its starting point the phenomenological viewpoint that is through experiential being in the world that is known and understood. Influenced by Vivian Sobchack's conception of the film as a body in itself, (in which the bodies of the filmmaker, the film itself, subjects, and audience are closely inter-linked), the piece explores how film as a medium capable of directly conveying lived experience might transmit the sensual qualities of place, ritual, and landscape to an audience. Wary of realist approaches to documentary representation, I am interested in the ways that this 'raw' experience is then distorted, fragmented and transformed in the process of filmmaking. Through the use of embodied camera methods, auto-ethnography and fictionalisation, performative 'truths' and new embodied readings instead emerge. The film explores this interplay between meaning and being, both drawing close and pulling apart to present and *re-present* place and ritual.

### Artist's Biography

Rosalind Fowler is an artist filmmaker, with a background in film, cultural geography and visual anthropology. She is currently completing a practice-based PhD in film at London College of Communication. The research explores performative folk traditions and wider themes of place and belonging in contemporary Britain. She is particularly interested in experimental ethnographic approaches to filmmaking, and shoots her work on both 16mm Bolex and digital film. Alongside her own practice she has worked at film festivals curating, teaching, and programming events.

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## Ian M Rawes works selected from The London Sound Survey

### Screening Notes

The work has been selected from Ian's "labour of love", The London Sound Survey, an extensive mapping project and online collection of field recordings, focused on the social, political, economic, historic and ecological soundscapes of the seething metropolis that is London. The London Sound Survey is richly illustrated with text and image to

### Artist's Biography

Ian M Rawes is an amateur field recordist respected for his tireless work on his London-centric field recording project, The London Sound Survey. Previously he worked at various jobs including compositor, graphic designer, market stallholder and music venue manager before settling at the British Library, where he now helps run the Listening and Viewing Service. The London Sound Survey presently hosts around 1,000 modern-day and archival recordings of the city, and has been featured in Time Out and the Wire magazine, and on Radio 4, World Service and Resonance104.4FM. A co-operative arrangement was recently agreed with the Museum of London's Thames Discovery Programme in developing a sound-oriented historical project covering the post-Ice Age period. A London Sound Survey LP is also planned for release in the first half of 2013. Ian likes listening to the radio and reading about history, science and current affairs. He spent his earliest years in the West End and has lived in South-East London for the past 13 years.

[soundsurvey.org.uk](http://soundsurvey.org.uk)

### Curator's Biography

Helen Frosi is an artist and arts professional with a specific interest in museum- and ethnographic studies, and sensory research (particularly around sound and olfaction) within creative practice. In 2010, she co-founded SoundFjord, a gallery and research unit dedicated to the sonic arts, fostering creative and critical listening practices, supporting current research, and facilitating creative opportunities and education within the field. Helen has featured on the selection panel of Supersonix, Yinka Shonibare's Guest Projects and is on the steering committee for TAP. She has written on the sonic arts for Art Licks, Sound and Music, 3LEAVES and Jotta, amongst others.

SoundFjord is a not-for-profit gallery and research unit (with nomadic tendencies) dedicated to offering artists a platform for interdisciplinary work and critical discourse in and around sound and listening; fostering creative collaboration and dialogue between the fields of contemporary art, music, architecture, ethnography, computer science, sensory research and beyond. SoundFjord presents itself as a hub for research and networking events, as an occasional venue for live performance within the field of experimental music and sound art, as host to lectures, workshops, talks and critiques in and around creative sound practice and research, and also as a collaborative force, motivated to work with other inspired individuals, collectives, galleries, venues, recording labels, institutions and foundations to assist with the materialisation of creative ventures, projects and events.

[soundfjord.org](http://soundfjord.org)