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Bowing Australia's Outback Fences: A Sonic Cartography

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The Great Fences of Australia project of Jon Rose and Hollis Taylor finds the duo crisscrossing the continent in pursuit of their instruments. They draw on bass and cello bows to reveal the sonic properties of diverse fences, including the iconic Rabbit-Proof and Dingo Fences. Their bowed fence explorations are the result of a collision among the biophony, the geophony, and the anthrophony, as evidenced by five transcriptions from their many road trips. The sonic complexity of fences is echoed in the rich metaphors that they suggest. Outback landscapes may be experienced as awestruck splendor as well as read for historical signs, both ancient and modern. Following on this, the duo joins the landscape as documenters, facilitators, and catalysts—as sonic cartographers sounding the land, the lives, and the politics of the Australian outback.

Keywords: Fence Music; Landscape; Soundscape; Australia; Sonic Cartography

Dateline: 07:05 hrs, 7 June 2004, Stuart Hwy north of Coober Pedy, South Australia.
A vehicle pulls off the road toward us. I get back into the car. I'll let Jon [Rose] explain what we're up to—or try

Good morning.

Good morning.

Are you fence runners?

No, we're policemen.

So, before you ask me what I'm doing, let me first say I'm not blowing up the Fence.

[Smiles] I'm playing it.

What are those things?

Contact microphones—we use them to record the fence.

Oh, I see. Reckon you get a hot sound out of that when the wind is up.

Here, check it out with these headphones.

Crickey!

Officers Bill Cunningham and Frank Abbott are fast becoming devotees of fence music. We explain more about our project (The Great Fences of Australia) and are surprised to learn that they have already heard of it. They recommend a fence at a nearby secret (but decommissioned) US military base that we should check out (Taylor, 2007, p. 215).

Fences dominate Australia's landscape—the iconic Rabbit-Proof and Dingo Fences, to be sure, but also many an unnamed one. Although we are both violinists, fences are our other instruments. It began like this: Jon's experimental homemade instruments had expanded by 1983 to include long-string gallery installations. Then, on a road trip he heard the wind humming and popping, rattling and echoing fences in outback New South Wales: 'the penny dropped. Why was I making string installations when the continent that I was living on was covered with strings?' (Rose, 2012, p. 197). He sees his three-decade-long odyssey of fence music as a natural development of experimenting with strings.

Like all chordophones, fence wires (or strings) vibrate—but a fence fulfills the second chordophone requirement, that of a resonating chamber (such as the body of a violin), in an unusual manner. A long fence wire is able to serve as both resonator and trigger, making it possible for the sound at one end of a wire to amplify, echo, or contradict the sonic story a 100 meters away at the other end.

In 2002, Jon and I took the first of many road trips crisscrossing Australia in order to bow, record, photograph, and film fences in situ. These events saw no human audience, save for the odd property owner (or police duo) that might come across us. During this time, Jon perfected the skill of turning on the video camera and quickly hopping a fence to be in position; I would hand him his bow and off we would go. He could even outrun our digital camera's ten-second time delay. Only once did we perform for an outdoor audience: at the *Violins in the Outback* contemporary music festival at Wogarno Station. Tent flaps flung open early that Easter Sunday and hung-over campers struggled out to the sound of amplified fence with broadband feedback. They were captive but captivated.

In addition, since we have not forsaken gallery spaces altogether, we occasionally erect a five-wire fence indoors and perform concerts on it. Like their outdoor counterparts, these indoor events are improvised, although we discuss beforehand a potential order of the sonic qualities and bowing techniques we intend to explore in our 20- or 30-minute set. We even have a personal fence instrument in our garage—the fifth 'Kronos'; the others Jon designed and built for the quartet of the same name.

Indoors or out, bowing technology—hair, stick, prepared, or amplified—serves us well. Surprisingly, fence wire is not particularly destructive to bow hair, although barbed wire offers challenges beyond that of everyday string music. Barbs contribute a timbral complexity and modulation to the sound when the bow settles between the treacherous thorns. Meanwhile, the fingers of the left hand must also cleave to an inter-barb agenda; the upside is that the scale is clearly demarcated.¹

Post Impressions

While the spacing of posts, as well as the tension, age, and gauge of the wire, dictates pitch fundamentals, nothing is straightforward. As the temperature rises and falls, the wires stretch and contract, challenging the fencist to tweak with dispatch in order to ensure a well-pitched sound. The reputed claim of the late violin virtuoso Jascha Heifetz is pertinent: ‘I don’t play in tune—I simply adjust faster than anyone else in the world hears’.² Although the harmonic series is available to us on every fence wire and the left hand finds the nodes that are arithmetically proportional to other chordophones, in general we don’t retune a fence; instead, we approach it as an *objet trouvé*. A fence player is never so much out of tune as out of tone. Furthermore, Jon maintains that tuning pertains to function and cannot be simply reduced to pitch (Rose, 2012, p. 206).

Most people look at fences and see not much; we look and see giant string instruments. In their unpredictability and resistance to mastery; in their rust, barbs, and slackness; in their psychic presence and assertion of function over beauty, fences join other ‘resistant materials’ of musical practice (Hogg & Norman, 2013). In foregrounding attention to what is typically ignored, or at minimum relegated to the background, some precedent exists: music has a long tradition of flipping fore- and background, as evidenced by ostinatos, riffs, and Passacaglia. While many fences are barely audible, contact microphones wedged into or clamped onto fence posts reveal a surprisingly diverse sonic world—taut or slack, rusty or new, and barbed or electric. The ‘ghosts of Edison and Westinghouse’ haunt the Australian outback in the snap-crackle-pop of DC batteries powering contact mics (Rose, 2012, pp. 198–199).

We trust the moment to reveal the unique sonic properties inherent in each fence. We will not be playing *Waltzing Matilda*, expressing our emotions, or flaunting our genius. A fence is a grand impersonator: is it a woodwind—or perhaps a member of the percussion family? Are we hearing a free-jazz trombone, or is that the broadband drone of a synthesizer? Any exploration of the click ... click ... click of quite powerful electric fences I defer to Jon. Our instruments range from ethereal to explosive, playful to plaintive, squeaky to rumbling, atmospheric to strident—all this without electronic effects. A synthesizer has nothing on an amplified acoustic fence; ‘this country cousin can pretend city ways’ (Taylor, 2007, pp. 7–8).

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that ‘[t]aste classifies, and it classifies the classifier’ (1984, p. 6). The fence may be an exception to this rule, with broad audience appeal. A fence is much more than its sound. When we began, I imagined the fence audience to be slouching in a dark downtown alternative space. I was only partially correct. Country people ‘get’ fence music immediately, displaying rapt attention and often volunteering their own fence-playing stories post-concert.

Landscape/Soundscape: A Sonic Cartography

We document our fence trips via still camera, video camera, and audio recorder. We have snapped many a photo, from the *pas de deux* of two forlorn, unstrung fence posts

dancing in an arid landscape to a shattered fence prostrate in a salt lake. (Even sections of the iconic fences may not be maintained.) Fences come painted, flooded, and snail-encrusted; they may be festooned with horseshoes, hubcaps, tires, skulls, or signs, or even burdened with the rotting carcass of a dead dingo.³ Their variety is beyond summary.

Environmentalist and composer Murray Schafer understands soundscape compositions as 'wide-angle tableaux; the composer observes the landscape at a distance. Nature performs and he provides the secretarial services. Only in the landscapes of the romantic era does the composer intrude to colour nature with his own personality or moods' (Schafer, 1977, p. 105). Bowing fences forces us to close the distance gap, so Schafer's understanding of distance is not applicable to our embodied, too-hot-or-too-cold fence excursions that present regular challenges to personal comfort and safety. Our video footage may feature close-ups of hands and bows, but the sweeping outward zooms reveal a harsh and desolate land. We imagine ourselves as cartographers compiling an audio-visual map of the great fences of Australia.

Fences became our way into the landscape. We are not 'behind the easel', as it were. While the painting metaphor is apt, sound, and not only vision, shapes our perception of a landscape. We join the landscape as facilitators and catalysts. Since we never intended for our fence music to be a political statement, we did not theorize it, but we thought about it deeply. We called our activities 'experimental music', and if anyone termed it 'environmental music', we did not disagree—but 'political music'? If our fence music was also political, it first and foremost concerned the politics of music: yes, a fence is a long-stringed musical instrument. We were worrying the borders of what was acknowledged as music.

Nonetheless, music's inherent ambiguity has long been recognized, and many viewpoints can be read into it. Reviewers and previewers (of our concerts and CD) and members of our audiences often pointed to the central political and cultural issues at stake. Some read our direct sounding of outback fences as also a sounding of the land metaphorically, with all the attendant political ramifications. In these days when eating is regarded as political and musicology is power, we had to weigh in—to be less ambiguous and to translate our fence music into text, as I am now.

The evolution from long strings in a gallery to the long strings of an outback fence then looked more like a leap. We come to a fence, discover, experiment, perform, and leave as if we were never there, but an excess of metaphors and associations (beginning with duality, control, and ownership) crowds even the most basic thinking about fences. Landscape is not a fixed singularity. For instance, Australian cultural practices have had a profound impact on its 'natural' landscape—the very notion of it (as opposed to 'wilderness') includes the human, whether symbiotic or destructive. In addition, while a fence could protect a nature reserve, more often a fence stands in opposition to unspoiled nature, a visible scar of the human impact on the environment and a testament to the destruction that domesticated animals wreak within a fence's boundary. Most musical instruments are mobile, but, short of pulling it down, a

fence is not. We do not own our instruments; in an irony not lost on us, we both sound them and critique their presence.

In his groundbreaking monograph, *The Tuning of the World*, Schafer drew attention to the planet's changing environmental sounds (Schafer, 1977). He called for careful listening to the soundscape, the sum total of an area's acoustic resources as heard by humans. 'I am willing to contend that this capacity to hear the soundscape as music', writes composer David Dunn, 'is simultaneously one of the most archaic ways of listening and the most modern' (Dunn, 2008, n.p.). Since a 'soundscape represents the acoustic footprint of a landscape' (Farina, Pieretti, & Piccioli, 2011, p. 354), the sound of an Aeolian fence (named after Aeolus, the Greek god of wind) can be considered an ecological property of that landscape (Pijanowski et al., 2011, p. 203).⁴ The necessity of coining the word soundscape carries with it the reminder of our ocularcentrism.⁵

What constitutes a sonic cartography? Australian fences represent European colonists' maps thrust nonsensically onto millennia-old Aboriginal songlines and sense of country. Nonetheless, these fences went on to become key geographical markers for pilots and those on the ground, including Aboriginal people (as the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* documents). In our case, we followed our instruments from beginning to end—the iconic Dingo Fence and Rabbit-Proof Fence—cataloguing the variety of sounds you can draw out of them. 'Performing on fences places the musician in an area where terrain, map, score, and instrument are physically connected and signified, if not interchangeable', notes Jon (Rose, 2012, p. 206).

Our outcomes are multiple; the sum total forms an audio-visual map of Australia as seen through the viewfinder of its fences. Photographs feature in our book (Taylor, 2007) but may also be printed on paper and mounted on a gallery wall as part of an installation, which will in turn include evocative fence recordings and short interviews with locals who live along Australia's iconic fences. DVD screens project fence videos when we are not performing live in the gallery. We may call upon our archive of fence audio files for a variety of projects, from atmosphere for our radiophonic works to an entire CD of fence music (Rose & Taylor, 2002). *Infidel* is a CD of American fiddle repertoire set in radical new sonic environments, including fences (Taylor, 2006). I have also performed my birdsong (re-)compositions with fence audio files as my 'backup band'—a sort of Music Minus One. Likewise, screenings of our fence videos may provide a backdrop for Jon to improvise a solo violin concert or for ensembles to perform a composition of his along with. The word 'content' has seen a swift but often dubious uptake in recent years. Our fence audio and video are content that required more of us than click-and-drag.

Assessing '-phonies'

Musician and soundscape recordist Bernie Krause coined the terms biophony (the collective sounds produced by a habitat's more-than-human animals), geophony (the nonhuman natural sounds of wind, thunder, rain, streams, waves, geysers, avalanches,

and earthquakes), and anthrophony (the sound signature of humans) (Krause, 2002, p. 152). Fences are the result of a collision among all three, as evidenced below by a few selected stops in our journeys.

Dateline: Hawker, South Australia, in the Flinders Ranges. This small, arid town has seen better days. The Ghan railway no longer comes through. Sheep and cattle are the economic mainstay, but stocking rates are low. The Aeolian keening of a cattle fence in a super-charged wind entices us to stop and record. Contact mics can only amplify the closest ambient sounds. In this case, an outback truism is revealed: where there are cattle, flies flourish. In this plague, flies buzz the mics; we don our fly veils to survive the onslaught. With the Aeolian sounds as my string pad and karaoke backup, I add a few tasteful notes to the soundscape. (Figure 1)

It has become fashionable in some circles to critique and resist Western music notation. However, the technology of notation is not going away, entangled as it is with issues of musical value. When it comes to saying (whether in bowing fences or in my birdsong research) ‘this is music’, nothing says it better than conventional notation. Musicologist Kofi Agawu believes ideology and politics strongly influence the even apparently neutral act of making transcriptions. For Jon and me, placing a soundscape, including fence music, in conventional notation brings it into ‘a sphere of discourse that is enabled by a distinguished intellectual history and undeniable institutional power’ (Agawu, 1995, pp. 392–393). Notation also helps us get our aural bearings as it portrays the ‘multi-directionality of our sound worlds’ (Hogg, 2013, p. 261).

Hawker: Aeolian Fence, Bowed Fence, and Flies

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system is titled 'Aeolian Fence' and 'Flies'. The second system is titled 'Bowed Fence'. The third system is titled 'Aeolian Fence'. The score uses various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system has a treble clef staff with a whole note and a bass clef staff with a series of eighth notes. The second system has a treble clef staff with a whole note and a bass clef staff with a series of eighth notes. The third system has a treble clef staff with a whole note and a bass clef staff with a series of eighth notes.

Figure 1 A Transcribed Excerpt from ‘Hawker’, DVD Menu 1, Track 6 (Taylor, 2007).

Hits and Rumbles

Funereal

Figure 2 A Transcribed Excerpt from ‘Hits And Rumble, No 3, Rabbit Proof Fence? Meekatharra, 12/3/02’, Track 3 (Rose & Taylor, 2002).

The striking theatricality of the Australian outback, as well as occasional moments of irony—all of this can be embedded in conventional notation and its marginalia. You can play a notation, but you can also play with it.

Dateline: Meekatharra (place of little water), in Western Australia’s declining gold-fields. Rabbit-Proof Fence No. 1 is the movie star, but there are at least seven other Rabbit-Proof Fences in Western Australia. The northern sections of the various Rabbit-Proof Fences do not appear on maps, so we are left to guess whether we have found authentic ones or look-alikes. A case in point: the mournful ‘Hits and Rumbles’ fence, where the sticks of two wooden bass bows conjure up (col legno) the sounds of the many broken spirits who have passed through here (Figure 2). Later in this recording, the long-ringing wires betray an old-fashioned studio spring reverb.

Dateline: the flat, treeless, and arid Nullarbor Plain. Traversing approximately 4,500 kilometers across three states, the Dingo (or Wild Dog) Fence is the world’s longest human-made structure, well over twice the length of the Great Wall of China. Despite this, the Fence fails to appear on many maps, and when it does, the zigging zags, bulging loops, and meandering dotted lines advance erratically. Confusion ensues when the Fence doubles as a state border fence. Sometimes, cartographic error puts the Fence in the wrong place (as in the case of Cameron Corner), thus defeating the whole precept that a fence is an exact demarcation of difference. (Rose, 2012, p. 207)

We speed right past The Dingo Fence, but then Jon has an intuition, and I turn back. His clue: a grid spans both sides of the Nullarbor Highway (Figure 3),

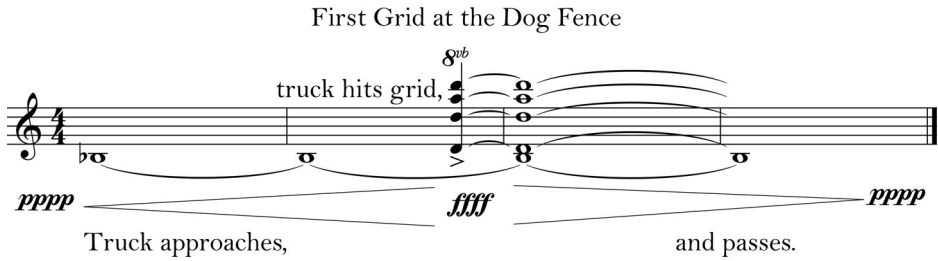


Figure 3 A Transcribed Excerpt from ‘First Grid at the Dog Fence?’, Track 1 (Rose & Taylor, 2002).

not so much interrupted by as continued by the unusual grid, a massive framework of widely spaced, narrow metal bars about 10 feet long. I can barely walk on it; clearly it’s meant to stop something more agile and wily than cattle. When the heavy trucks roll over it, the grid rings out like a symphonic gong. Jon records every truck for 20 minutes and then performs a drum solo on the grid with sticks and brushes. Next, he plays the attached fence, which the grid amplifies as well. Farther down, we improvise a double bow solo on the dusty, barbed Fence proper. (Taylor, 2007, p. 11)

Dateline: Old Andado Station at the western edge of Central Australia’s Simpson Desert. On the red sand track into the station, we come upon a windmill circling like a Ferris wheel. We stop to record a duet of mezzo-soprano fence and ground bass windmill (Figure 4). As we depart, Jon records a gate able to groan at each

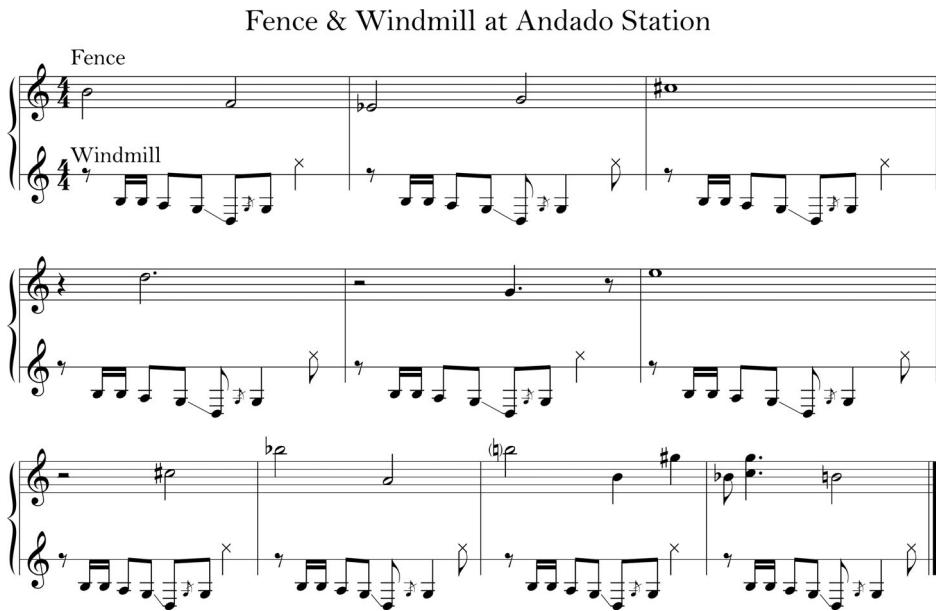


Figure 4 A Transcribed Excerpt from ‘Windmill at Andado’, DVD Menu 2, Track 10 (Taylor, 2007).

of the 180 degrees of its ambit, and another gate that is higher pitched and more subdued.

Dateline: black-soil country between Bell and Jimbour, Queensland. In our search for where the Dingo Fence ends, we stop at an exposed black field abutting a pale one awaiting harvest.⁶ Jon gets out to take some photos of black-soil country, but the rain forces him back in, so instead he rolls down the window and records. A contact microphone he has installed on a nearby fence adds its slowly modulating soprano with feedback to the rain's alto drizzle, while the bawling cattle take up the bass register. Black soil, black clouds, and an eerie silvery light provide the backdrop to 'Screaming Feedback with Unsettled Cows'. (Figure 5)

Screaming Feedback with Unsettled Cows: End of the Dog Fence?

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with four staves. The top staff is labeled 'Fence Feedback' and uses a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is labeled 'Fence' and uses a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The third staff is labeled 'Raindrops' and uses an alto clef with a 4/4 time signature. The bottom staff is labeled 'Cows' and uses a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The score features various musical notations including notes, rests, slurs, and triplets. The 'Cows' staff includes vocalizations 'Moo' and 'ooo' indicated by lines and dots. The 'Raindrops' staff includes triplets of eighth notes. The 'Fence Feedback' staff includes a series of notes with a sharp sign and a slur. The 'Fence' staff includes a series of notes with a slur. The score is divided into three measures by vertical bar lines.

Figure 5 A Transcribed Excerpt from 'End of the Dog Fence?', Track 22 (Rose & Taylor, 2002).

Environmental Destruction, Colonial Devastation, and Other Trespasses

Whether a postcard readymade or a photoshopped simulacra, a landscape awes us, or so we expect—although clearly many landscapes are not so lavishly endowed. Aboriginal Australians offer up an entirely different conceptual framework for confronting and apprehending a landscape. As anthropologist T. G. H. Strehlow noted about the Central Australian Aboriginal people, ‘the sights and the sounds of the landscape are recorded’ in all songs (Strehlow, 1971, p. 674). Every feature of a landscape is associated with a historical episode in their cosmology—and not only those optimal for ‘the tourist gaze’ (Urry, 2002). Europeans think they own land; Aboriginal people know that the land owns them.

As anthropologist Tim Ingold interprets Western Australia’s Pintupi people of the Gibson Desert, a landscape forms neither an external background nor a platform for life; instead, religion, law, and the physical world converge in ‘life’s enduring monument’ (Ingold, 2011, p. 54). Thus it is that ‘meanings that the people claim to discover in the landscape are attributed [by the Pintupi] to the minds of the people themselves’, continues Ingold, ‘and are said to be mapped onto the landscape’ (Ingold, 2011, p. 54). It must also be noted that the continent has been manipulated by, and thus dependent on, Aboriginal people for millennia.

What about the human mind, or at least the European colonial mind, is represented by an outback fence? Fences deliver diverse narratives. Much more than a warning from power, a fence is an enemy of the gray and nebulous. It is the ultimate Cartesian actor: a symbol for division, exploitation, and our compulsive view of life’s experience in terms of duality. In/out, public/private, yours/mine, domestic/foreign—these classic binaries and more come to mind when a musician trespasses the moral boundary of a fence. It is either them or us. Psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist has observed that ‘one hemisphere [of the human brain] tends to see things in their context, while the other as carefully removes them from it’ (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 4). The left hemisphere’s world, dependent on language and abstraction, ‘yields clarity and power to manipulate things that are known, fixed, static, isolated, decontextualised, explicit, disembodied, general in nature, but ultimately lifeless’ (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 174). The left hemisphere, in short, conceives of a fence as a clear dividing line and a firm emblematisation of power.

In contrast, the right hemisphere ‘yields a world of individual, changing, evolving, interconnected, implicit, incarnate, living begins within the context of the lived world, but in the nature of things never fully graspable, always imperfectly known—and to this world it exists in a relationship of care’ (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 174). The right hemisphere bridges and collapses. It understands the messiness of life and feels implicated in the mess. Thus, as it must surely be with all seemingly clear-cut encounters, political and ethical issues intrude on the act of bowing fences in this colonized landscape. Bennett Hogg has argued for an ‘ecosystemic approach’ that includes us, our activities, and our constructions, rather than allowing us off the hook as mere observers (Hogg, 2013). Such an approach imparts an imperative for humans to

care for things and find balances between our cultural/technological aspirations and all living beings. Rather than skimming the surface of this ecosystem, we are wholly embedded in it and ultimately responsible to and for it.

Philosopher Holmes Rolston III argues that ‘the full story of natural history is too phenomenal, too spectacular, to be mere landscape; it is a sacrament of something noumenal’ (Rolston, 1995, p. 384), but this view perhaps shortchanges landscape. Any grasp of landscape relies on acknowledging the social dimension—the mess. Similarly, Steven Connor warns us that ‘sound is not enough to constitute a soundscape. For a soundscape is sound plus relation, and that relation need not be fully and in itself sonorous’ (Connor, 2013, p. 5). A soundscape, like a landscape, may be ‘natural’ or managed, enchanting or threatening, a pleasing readymade or a design problem. Philosopher Kate Soper draws a distinction between “nature-endorsing” and “nature-sceptical” arguments’, though stopping short of characterizing them as simply the opposing green and postmodernist discourses (Soper, 1995, p. 4). We musicians are practical; we are doers. We gravitate to practice over rhetoric. Jon and I recognize landscapes as at once natural and cultural, and though the two are superimposed, layered, and shifting, we seek a tangible, embodied experience. Bowing fences produces a performed landscape.

We came to see our fence mapping as an encounter between music, landscape, and society. Environmentalist and professor of environmental studies David W. Orr insists:

We need an ecological concept of citizenship rooted in the understanding that activities that erode soils, waste resources, pollute, destroy biological diversity, and degrade the beauty and integrity of landscapes are forms of theft from the commonwealth as surely as is bank robbery. (Orr, 2004, 168)

Sounding the earth (as well as listening to its voices) is an urgent undertaking in this time and place of climate change, rapid environmental degradation, species extinction, and colonial devastation. Sound (and scholarship on it) can play a key role in generating environmental awareness. For instance, the United Nations Environment Program’s ‘Music & Environment Initiative’ seeks to address pressing environmental problems facing the planet, claiming, ‘Music is one of the most powerful media to communicate environmental messages to billions of people worldwide—irrespective of race, religion, income, gender or age’ (United Nations, 2013). (We can simultaneously commend billions receiving environmental messages and lament the subsequent universalism inherent in much of the music that delivers such messages.)

In our case, fence music, and not of a universalist kind, frames the Australian landscape as a theater for human agency and action, a drama founded on the dispossession of a people who suffer to this day.

It sets me reflecting on how it might have been here when every feature of the landscape was woven into song. This land was a giant travel book ... a history book ... a natural science book. The great Australian songbook stretched back and forward in time. And then it snapped. (Taylor, 2007, p. 240)

We bow the signposts of theft. Our urban areas demonstrate that '[w]e have surrounded ourselves with geometrized, humanized landscapes cut from an ancient wilderness' (Shepard, 1978, p. 35). Even on rural properties, we almost always view a managed landscape: planted or harvested, built-up or cleared, paved or scraped, terraced or hollowed out.⁷ Fenced.

The common conceit is that while the sound in a soundscape is fluid, the land in a landscape is much less so. However, fences are transitory in part because of sudden turns of fate and weather. 'Gravity gets its way in the end' (Rose, 2009). The seasons and years see immense fluctuations in Australia's arid, fragile landscapes. Can a fence's music rebalance negative energy created by its very presence? Is there value in transforming the base desire and design of fences into something, even momentarily, beautiful? We challenge the mere functional role of a fence by playing it and temporarily turning it into something else—although in its Aeolian moments it may realize its musical potential without human intervention. Breaking down barriers is one thing as metaphor, but it is quite another thing to traipse about the land in the body of an outsider, a stranger, and a potential troublemaker. It ceases to be an abstract concept and becomes instead a visceral experience.

In mapping these parts, a cartographer is not what is called for. Forget triangulation. Give me a philosopher and a statistician to debate and discharge the charting of extremes or averages, and throw in a climatologist and an oral historian to predict the future and recollect the past. The concept of an unmappable area appeals to me, but the reality does not. If I only had a songline, a comprehensive story from the beginning of the Dreamtime, I would have all this information plus a song in my heart (Taylor, 2007, p. 172).

Artists are edge-dwellers, like some wildlife. Our work on the fringe, the brink, and beyond refuses to take boundaries at their fixed and unbreachable word. In modes that are frequently entangled, Jon and I attempt to alter the ideological orientation of our audience vis-à-vis the landscape. In the process, we have altered our own. Strange as it may seem, fence music encourages extravagantly wandering off paths and overstepping orderly lines. Our maps are sonic ones, where the lines disappear inward into our imaginations and extend outward, inviting all of us to craft a more nuanced understanding of colonialization, the exploitation of natural resources, the introduction of destructive species (like rabbits, foxes, and humans), and the ease of binary clichés.

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Notes

- [1] See, for instance, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUARc6ufZak>. Also see <https://vimeo.com/7809333>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-BAqDGtQPY>; and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1V5zFGZnGo.
- [2] 'Jon Rose is the Jascha Heifetz of fence music' (David Harrington, Kronos Quartet, on ABC Radio National's The Music Show, 9 January 2010; see <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/musicshow/kronos-quartet-and-jon-rose/3096888>).
- [3] See Taylor (2007, pp. 99–142).
- [4] See also Farina (2014).
- [5] Tim Ingold observes that 'landscape' is multi-sensorial in nature and can accommodate our sonic encounters. For him, 'soundscape' objectifies sound rather than treating it as experiential. His argument, however, fails to convincingly grapple with the overwhelming visual connotation that accompanies the word 'landscape'. At issue is ultimately not the word but the habit behind it, and our habit is to favor seeing over hearing and looking over listening (Ingold, 2007).
- [6] A decade after our initial trips, some towns are now proposing the tourist bait 'Dog Fence ends here'.
- [7] Architect Robin Boyd described the national urge toward needless embellishment as 'featurism' in his classic book, *The Australian Ugliness* (Boyd, 1960).

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