

# Sound Source

*Sonic reflections from Gary Diggins*

## *The Aural - Imaginal Connection*

Leave a child alone with a piano and soon you'll hear strains of that classic improvisation: The Storm. Upper notes are tinkled to simulate falling rain. Lower notes are pounded to mimic booming thunder. Middle notes are crashed to imitate bolts of lightening.

Making impressionistic soundscapes began when early musicians blew into reeds to evoke bird images. Now full orchestras can induce a cinematic spectacle in our heads. Sound, for the human species, kindles and stokes our imaginative fires. Author **Robert Jourdain**, in *Music, The Brain, and Ecstasy*, suggests that "composers are thinkers in sound, and their stock in trade is auditory imagery." The hallucinogenic potential of sound isn't reliant upon drugs. Under the right conditions, most of us can envision scenes through sound. Occasionally our capacity to merge the aural and visual yields unforgettable realizations.



Just ask my friend Tim.

Recently Tim lay in a coma pitching between life and death after a hospital operation went bad. At one point he became aware of a choral sound. Hearing and imagining a celestial choir was not the remarkable thing however. That the music sounded so "crude and banal" was the conundrum. Tim has a discerning ear and so when the angels were not up to snuff he was puzzled.

Despite being comatose, Tim analyzed the ethereal sound only to realize that the heavenly hosts were nothing more than nearby mechanical drones. Humdrum sounds, passing through the filter of his imagination, were interpreted as choral chants.

Another friend is presently receiving radiation therapy for breast cancer. Once a day she sits perfectly still as the treatment is delivered. Alone in a quiet room, she is acutely aware of the humming drone generated by radiation equipment. To help accept the therapy into her body, she imagines the droning sound in a variety of ways: as light shining into her chest as she lays on an altar, or as a didgeridoo pouring in energy from the Dreamtime. Here again, the sonic and imaginative work their magic and impart good medicine.

Many of the soundwork events listed on my website build upon the healing potential of sound. Although I often suggest that participants bring certain items to a workshop (water, a bag lunch, hand percussion, a yoga mat), I always assume that individuals will show up with an essential ingredient...their imagination.

*G. Diggins*

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