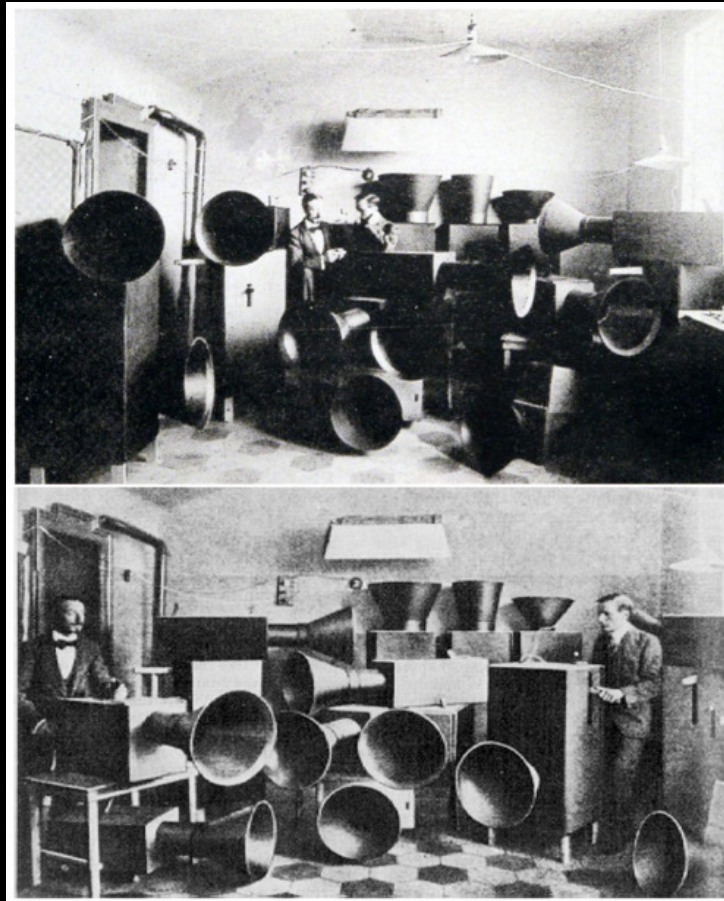


Sound Art + Installations + Objects

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLs7WqlouAKBYmYoAZLiRx7Vytt8O1NIZd&si=96KI0IHZ0eiFkcyd>

Luigi Russolo, *Intonarumori* (1910-1930)



Sound Art developed in the early 20th century, with the Italian Futurist artist Luigi Russolo widely acknowledged as the forerunner in making sound an artistic medium. His 1913 manifesto *L'Arte Dei Rumori* ("The Art of Noises") described the changing soundscape of the industrial revolution. This manifesto encouraged an attention to everyday sound as on par with an attention to concert music. With his assistant, Ugo Piatti, Russolo developed a series of *intonarumori*, or "noise instruments" that made sounds more akin to the noises of the industrial city than of traditional chamber instruments. (And yes, the English word "rumour" comes from the latin *rumor*, meaning noise.) *L'Arte Dei Rumori* was extremely influential and sound art as a distinct artistic medium - crossing over into the field of experimental music - emerged in other movements such as Dada in the same decade, and Fluxus a few decades later.

Pauline Oliveros (1932-2016)



Sound Art in North America came into its own in from the 1950s-‘70s. Two key figures - John Cage and Pauline Oliveros - shaped the ways in which Sound Art permeated the contemporary art landscape of the time. Cage is best known for his experimental approaches to music composition, as well as his crossover into the disciplines of visual art and dance. Oliveros is associated more with experimental music production and her philosophy of “sonic awareness”. Both were deeply influenced by Zen spirituality; both were queer; both valued improvisation and chance in their praxes; and both sought to make music and sound production more democratic and accessible.

Sun Ra,
1914-1993



African American jazz musicians were also tearing apart Western conventions in the 1950s and '60s. Free Jazz musicians like Ornette Coleman and Joe McPhee were testing the limits of their medium with experimental approaches to instrument-playing, improvisation, and world influences. As Cage and Oliveros were influenced by (“Oriental”) spirituality and introspection, musicians such as Alice Coltrane and Sun Ra were also influenced by religions originating in the Asian and African continents. They were all influencing each other!

Nihilist Spasm Band (1965-present?)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzpUz57DUYQ&list=RDRzpUz57DUYQ&start_radio=1

Against this backdrop of Russolo's industrialized *rumori* influence on sonic experimentation in the worlds of contemporary art and music in the mid-20th century, noise music emerged. Noise music did away with most traditional musical conventions: song structure, melody, rhythm, virtuosity, etc. Traditional instruments were either played non-traditionally or replaced with bespoke instruments or everyday objects.

In 1967 Pauline Oliveros' work "A Little Noise in the System" is regarded as one of the earliest examples of noise music. Two years before that, in Deshkaan Ziibing (aka London Ontario), the Nihilist Spasm Band formed. NSB's instrumentation included kazoo, mbira, cooking pot, and "pratt-a-various" (Art Pratten's many homemade instruments), among others. They celebrated their 50th anniversary as a band in 2015 with a series of special performances with free jazz legend Joe McPhee. Like Oliveros, the members of the NSB sought to democratize sound production, although unlike Oliveros, they were trained as neither musicians nor academics.

Brian Eno (b. 1948)



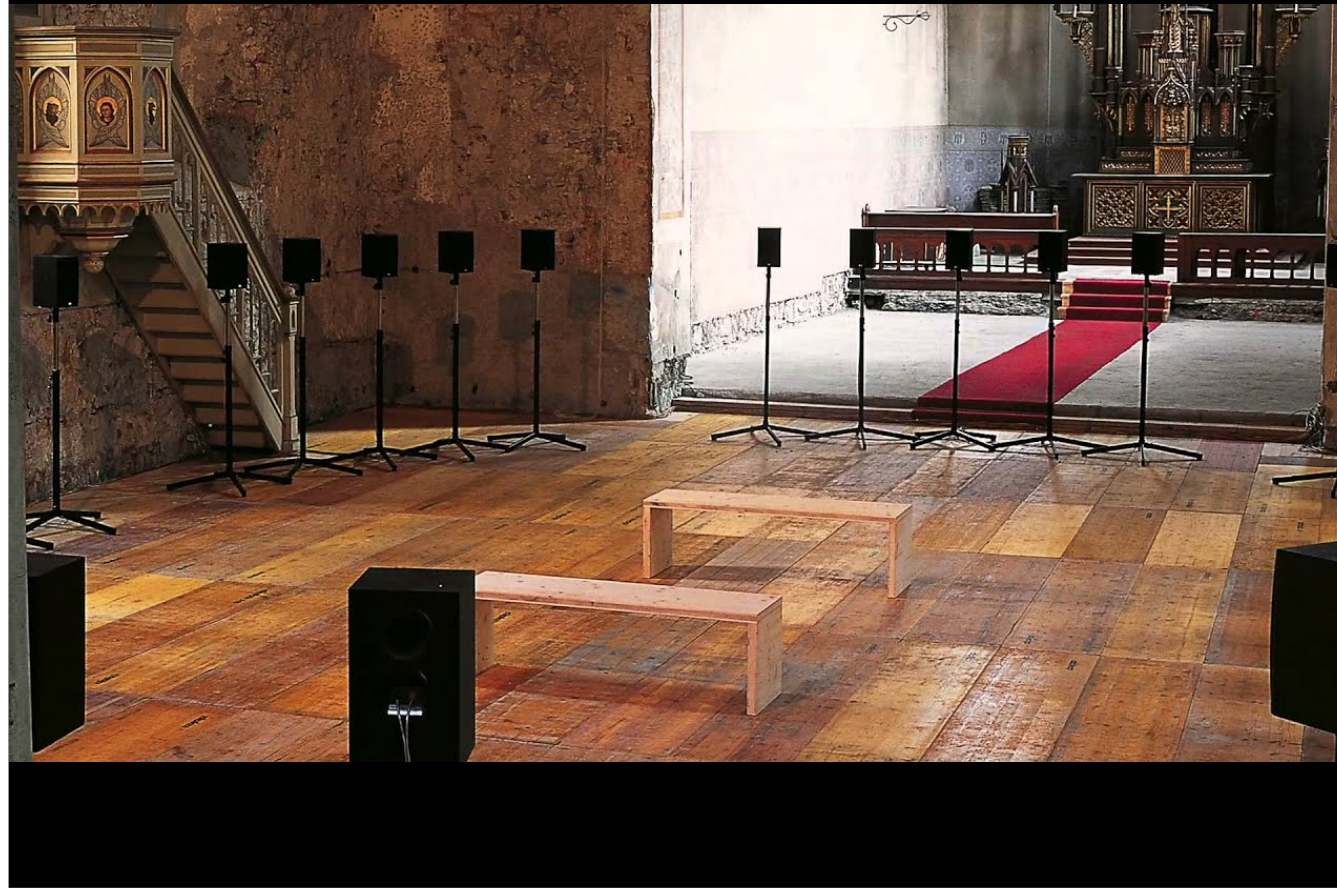
Another experimental form of music that emerged in this era was ambient music, which focuses on atmosphere and aural tone. Experimental composition, Jamaican Dub, and German electronic music contributed to the emergence of ambient music; and the musician Brian Eno helped popularize the genre in the 1970s.

Lisa Conway-Bühler, *SOUNDMILL* (2021)



As part of the Guelph Jazz Festival in 2021, the artist Lisa Conway created a large-scale, site-specific audiovisual installation in the ruins of the Goldie Mill, behind the Guelph Youth Music Centre. The installation consisted of sonic samples from field recordings, composed into over an hour of ambient music, and played through a series of speakers mounted throughout the mill; as well as DMX-controlled lights and a fog machine. Every piece of the installation and the subsequent recorded album took the specificity of Goldie Mill into consideration: from the hydrophone Conway used in the nearby Speed River to get underwater recordings, to the limestone lithograph print on the album cover by sophia bartholomew.

Janet Cardiff, *The Forty Part Motet* (A reworking of "Spem in Alium" by Thomas Tallis 1573) (2001)



In Cardiff's words (from her website): "While listening to a concert you are normally seated in front of the choir, in traditional audience position. With this piece I want the audience to be able to experience a piece of music from the viewpoint of the singers. Every performer hears a unique mix of the piece of music. Enabling the audience to move throughout the space allows them to be intimately connected with the voices. It also reveals the piece of music as a changing construct. As well I am interested in how sound may physically construct a space in a sculptural way and how a viewer may choose a path through this physical yet virtual space.

I placed the speakers around the room in an oval so that the listener would be able to really feel the sculptural construction of the piece by Tallis. You can hear the sound move from one choir to another, jumping back and forth, echoing each other and then experience the overwhelming feeling as the sound waves hit you when all of the singers are singing."

Evgenia Mikhaylova, *Songs of a Wild Rumour (detail)* (2022)



<https://www.instagram.com/p/CrirKPCgVH4/>

In this audiotactile installation, Mikhaylova uses the MIDI Controller Playtron from Playtronica, which uses a closed electrical circuit to trigger sounds through conductive materials such as fruit and copper. Here, the fruits are connected to the Playtron via alligator clips and grounded by the copper rectangles, so that when someone touches both the copper and a fruit, the current flows through their body between the two, triggering a sound sample. To preserve the theatrical magic of the experience, Mikhaylova constructed a bespoke table to hide the Playtron, connecting clips, and laptop through which the Playtron sound software was running.

VibraFusionLab, *Haptic Voices* (2016-present)



Haptic Voices is a sound and vibrotactile wall from VibraFusionLab, founded by David Bobier, a Canadian hard of hearing and disabled artist. The installation was designed and created by media artist and electronics engineer and VibraFusionLab partner Jim Ruxton. Five sound compositions by different composers were commissioned for the wall. The compositions were designed specifically for the translation into vibration. Audience-participants can interact with the piece by leaning against the wall and navigating composition files on an iPad, feeling the sound against their body.

(Up until November 15 at White Water Gallery in North Bay!)

Christine Sun Kim, *The Grid of Prefixed Acousmatics* (2017)



<https://hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu/publication-chapters/christine-sun-kim>

Christine Sun Kim (b. 1980) is a profoundly deaf Korean-American artist, now based in Berlin, who has been making art with and about sound and communication from the perspective of Deaf culture for the last decade+.

Acousmatics are sounds one can hear but can't see the source of. Think of closed captioning: ex/ *[cars honking outside]*. You can hear the cars and identify them as cars honking, even though they aren't visible in the shot. In this body of ceramics work, Sun Kim plays with acousmatics by turning sounds into tangible objects, exploring the role of the interpreter as someone who makes sound visible and vice versa.

Nick Cave, *Soundsuit* (2015)



<https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s8/nick-cave-in-chicago-segment/>

Nick Cave (b. 1959) is a sculptor, dancer, performance artist, and professor best known for his *Soundsuit* series of wearable sound sculptures. Initially a response to the beating of Rodney King by the LAPD in 1991, the suits draw from “African art traditions, armor, ceremonial dress, couture fashion, and designed textiles, as well as stereotypically feminine objects”, carnival, and ball culture [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Cave_\(artist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Cave_(artist))]. They offer protection and empowerment for vulnerable bodies in America: Black, poor, queer, etc.

Kara Walker with Jason Moran, *The Katastwóf Karavan* (2017)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JKVgfHfrQo>

Kara Walker (b. 1969) created this calliope, or steam organ, for the 2018 art festival "Prospect.4: The Lotus in Spite of the Swamp" in New Orleans. It was mounted on a wagon painted in her signature silhouette style, with sonic activation by jazz pianist Jason Moran (b. 1975). Walker is renowned for her storybook-like, darkly humorous depictions of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the Antebellum South.

Rebecca Belmore, *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother* (1991)



<https://www.banffcentre.ca/listening-devices/speaking-to-their-mother>

Walter Phillips Gallery in Banff, AB commissioned the Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore (b. 1960) to create this iconic sound sculpture in 1991. A response to the “Oka Crisis” of 1990 in which Indigenous resistance to a golf course that was going to be built over a Mohawk burial ground in Oka, Quebec was met with military force from the Canadian government. Belmore took the megaphone as a symbol of grassroots collective organized resistance and fabricated a giant one for audience-participants to speak into, directly to the land, our Earth Mother. The work simultaneously amplified Indigenous voices, physically and symbolically re-integrating the sounds produced by their bodies with the bodies of nature, and infantilized the Canadian government’s violent pushback as a tantrum. “Just wait til your mother hears about this!”

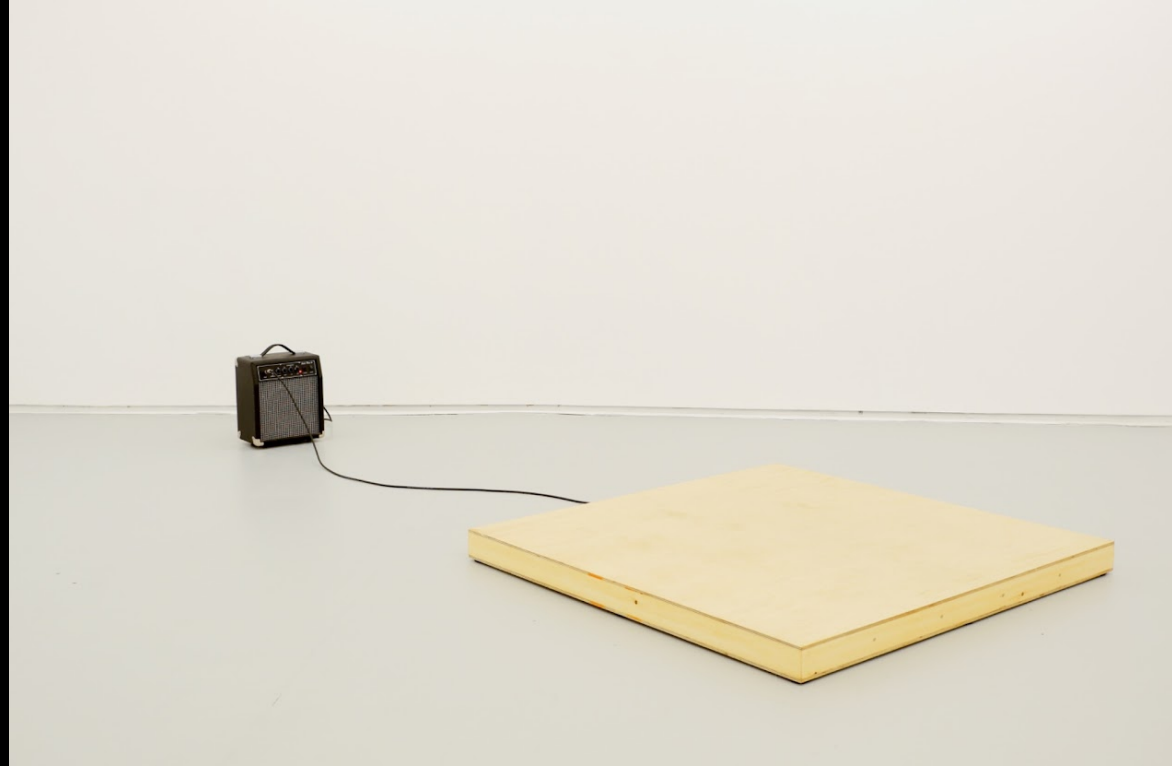
Annie Dunning, *Toad Touch* (2021)



<https://anniedunning.com/projects/toad-touch/>

From Annie's website (because she says it better than me): "Toad Touch is a sound-sculpture installation that is anchored by two, human-sized bronze toads – each of which can hold a bowl of water on its back. This work was inspired by a viral video of a toad, sitting in water making its mating call. In the video, water ripples in concentric rings radiating from the toad's body, and at times the harmonics seem to split the ripples, doubling the number of rings. I wanted to explore the haptic qualities of sound and seek out ways in which humans could parallel this moment of a toad vibrating in sympathy with its surroundings. The bronze toads are meant to have an ancient, mythic quality, and to make them a touchstone I gave certain areas a high polish. These touch points reference public sculpture that develop a shine from the repeated touch of passersby who hope to take some luck from the statue. Each toad can hold a bronze bowl in its back that is based on Han dynasty spouting bowls. When the handles are rubbed, vibrations produce sound and movement in the water emanating from the four nodal points of the bowl."

Danan Lake, *Going For A Walk With Traynor* (2022)



Going for a Walk With Traynor is a small wooden platform concealing tuned strings and a contact pickup on its underside, transforming the audience-participants' footsteps into resonant, amplified sound through a small Traynor guitar amp. Influenced by the genres of horror and weird fiction, Lake uses acousmatic effects in this piece to produce feelings of wonder, confusion, and campy eeriness.

Charlie Star, *Astral Records* (2023-25)



<https://charliestart.ca/projects/astral-records/>

From Charlie's website: *Astral Records* are "a series of handmade, playable records that feature astrology charts based on significant dates from albums and songs in my vinyl collection." The etched vinyl stickers on the records create a layer of noise which Star then mixes in with digital music samples. Star is interested in Black music as it relates to Afro-Caribbean diaspora culture and heritage. Influenced by Afrofuturism and Black cosmic belonging, they use the leaky, permeating powers of sound to explore future dreaming beyond the limits of the present.