

PATRICK SIMPSON  
#8 SCRIPT

LET'S SAY YOU'RE AT A CONCERT. AND LET'S SAY YOU'RE A NERD LIKE ME AND THIS IS A CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERT.

[MOZART - EINE KLEINE NACHTMUSIK]

SO, YOU'RE THERE TO HEAR THE MUSIC, RIGHT? OF COURSE YOU ARE! BUT... ARE YOU? REALLY? WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST FIND IT ON YOUTUBE AND LISTEN TO IT THERE? I GOT THIS RECORDING OFF OF YOUTUBE, AND IT SOUNDS FINE TO ME. IN FACT, IT'S PROBABLY BETTER, IF YOU HAVE GOOD HEADPHONES AND YOU'RE LISTENING TO A DECENT RECORDING. SO YOU'RE AT THIS CONCERT FOR MORE THAN THE MUSIC. YOU'RE THERE FOR THE EXPERIENCE. AND A LOT GOES INTO CREATING THAT EXPERIENCE. YOU'RE IN A FANCY CONCERT HALL, YOU'RE WITH A BUNCH OF WELL-DRESSED PEOPLE WHO ALSO LIKE THIS KIND OF MUSIC, AND YOU'RE ALL THERE TO SEE PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS THAT HAVE WORKED FOR YEARS, MAYBE DECADES TO BE ABLE TO PLAY AT THE LEVEL THAT THEY DO. BUT I WOULD ARGUE THAT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE, AND YOU MIGHT SAY THAT THIS IS JUST A PART OF THE ATMOSPHERE, BUT I THINK IT'S MORE THAN THAT. IT'S THE SOUND. NOT THE MUSIC, BUT LITERALLY THE SOUND OF A CONCERT.

[CONCERT HALL BEFORE PERFORMANCE]

THE AUDIENCE MURMURING...

MAYBE SOMEONE SNEAKING IN A COUGH...

[COUGH]

AND WHO DOESN'T LOVE THE SOUND OF THE ORCHESTRA TUNING?

[APPLAUSE FOLLOWED BY TUNING]

AND EVEN THOUGH ALL OF THAT ISN'T A PART OF THE ACTUAL MUSIC, IT'S A HUGE PART OF THE EXPERIENCE OF SEEING A LIVE CONCERT.

SO NOW I'M GOING CONTRADICT MYSELF HERE, AND AT FIRST YOU MIGHT THINK THIS DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE, BUT WHY CAN'T WE CALL ALL OF THOSE SOUNDS "MUSIC?" WHAT MAKES THEM ANY LESS THAN WHAT WE MIGHT NORMALLY CALL MUSIC? OKAY, YOU MIGHT SAY THAT IT'S NOISE, AND THAT THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NOISE AND MUSIC. BUT I WOULD SAY THAT IT ISN'T SO BLACK AND WHITE. I MEAN, THERE'S A WHOLE GENRE CALLED "NOISE MUSIC," AND A LOT OF IT JUST SOUNDS LIKE, WELL, NOISE. LIKE THIS.

[THE VELVET UNDERGROUND - LOOP]

OH AND BY THE WAY, THAT'S ONE OF THE FIRST SONGS THAT THE VELVET UNDERGROUND EVER MADE. NOT JUST SOME RANDO IN A BASEMENT.

SO WHAT YOU THINK OF AS NOISE IS PROBABLY SOMEONE ELSE'S MUSIC, AND VICE VERSA. THE ONLY THING THAT SEPARATES NOISE FROM MUSIC IS HOW YOU PERCEIVE IT. AND ON THIS EPISODE OF MELOMANIA, WE'RE GOING TO LOOK AT HOW COMPOSERS HAVE STRETCHED THIS CONCEPT TO ITS LIMITS, AND IN THE PROCESS, HAVE TOTALLY CHANGED HOW WE THINK ABOUT MUSIC. I'M PATRICK SIMPSON, AND THIS IS MELOMANIA.

[ROB FUNKHOUSER - THE PARADOX OF MOTION]

SO, IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND HOW THIS KIND OF MUSIC CAME ABOUT, WE HAVE TO GO BACK. NOT THAT FAR BACK, BUT AT LEAST A COUPLE HUNDRED YEARS. SO NOW, WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO IS IMAGINE WHAT 1724 SOUNDED LIKE. AND NO, I DON'T MEAN WITH MUSIC. I MEAN LITERALLY WHAT WOULD A PEASANT IN ENGLAND HAVE HEARD ON A DAILY BASIS?

[COUNTRYSIDE FARM AMBIENT (BIRDS CHIRPING, OTHER ANIMALS)]

WELL, PROBABLY NOT MUCH. MOSTLY ANIMALS.

[COW MOOING]

PROBABLY THE LOUDEST THING THEY'D HEAR REGULARLY IS INSECTS, LIKE CICADAS.

[CICADA BUZZ]

OR MAYBE A THUNDERSTORM.

[LOUD THUNDERCLAP AND STORM]

THE SOUNDSCAPE IS PRISTINE.

BUT NOW, LET'S FAST FORWARD A HUNDRED YEARS AND SEE WHAT THAT PEASANT'S GREAT GRANDCHILDREN ARE HEARING.

[VICTORIAN FACTORY]

WELL, THANKS TO THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, THEY PROBABLY WORK IN A FACTORY NOW. AND THAT FACTORY MAKES A LOT OF NOISE.

OH, AND THERE'S TRAINS TOO.

[STEAM TRAIN STATION]

GO FORWARD ANOTHER HUNDRED YEARS, AND NOW IT'S REALLY STARTING TO GET CRAZY.

[20S STREET TRAFFIC]

WE CAN ADD PLANES AND AUTOMOBILES.

[BIPLANE FLYING OVER]

AND OF COURSE, THERE'S THE RADIO...

[ANALOG RADIO STATIC]

AND IT'S JUST GOTTEN WORSE EVER SINCE. ALL OF OUR NEW  
TECHNOLOGY MAKES NOISE. IT'S INESCAPABLE.

[CAR REVVING UP]

[ROB FUNKHOUSER INTERVIEW: "Modern life, modern day life is so much more  
permeated by noise.

Uh, my name's Rob Funkhouser and..."]

HE'S A PERCUSSIONIST AND COMPOSER.

["Just finished my master's degree in music composition at Butler University.  
Life just got a lot louder. You know, if you listen to this room, even though it's pretty  
quiet comparatively, you hear the AC going..."]

[AC BUZZ]

["There's always, there's pretty much always some layer of white noise going on if  
you're in a contemporary living space. And the ramifications of that are that, that is  
comfortable. Profound silence has become much more uncomfortable for a lot of  
audiences. And so, these sorts of sources of noise, you write what you know, and I think  
that is part of the reason. And I do think it's unifying, but I think it was almost unifying  
across the age just regardless of what people were trying to do. I think noise found its

way into a lot of other people who wouldn't necessarily consider themselves ambient or  
noise composers.”]

[LUIGI RUSSOLO - RISVEGLIO DI UNA CITTA]

[“Now this goes all the way back to the Italian Futurists.”]

AND THE ITALIAN FUTURISTS ARE THIS GROUP OF ARTISTS IN THE  
EARLY 20TH CENTURY WHO WERE OBSESSED WITH THE FUTURE AND NEW  
TECHNOLOGY. ONE OF THEM EVEN NAMED THEIR DAUGHTER “PROPELLER.”

[“Um, like noise and music... not Busoni, but um...”]

HE'S ACTUALLY TALKING ABOUT LUIGI RUSSOLO.

[“Who made these intonarumori, which are just these noisemakers.”]

[INTONARUMORI]

[“There's just like these big boxes that you crank and they make these noises...”]

INTONARUMORI, LITERALLY MEANING “NOISEMAKERS” IN ITALIAN. AND  
THEY REALLY ARE JUST WOODEN BOXES WITH CRANKS ON THEM. THEY LOOK  
SO WEIRD, YOU SHOULD REALLY JUST LOOK THEM UP YOURSELF.

[“It's all just straight noise, but it was from like 1920.”]

SO THAT LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR NOISE. BUT IT WOULDN'T BE  
UNTIL THE 1930S, THAT NOISE MUSIC'S FIRST MASTERPIECE WOULD BE  
COMPOSED.

[JOHN CAGE - FIRST CONSTRUCTION (IN METAL)]

THIS IS FIRST CONSTRUCTION IN METAL, BY JOHN CAGE, WRITTEN IN  
1939.

THE INSTRUMENTATION IS STRANGE, TO SAY THE LEAST; IT INCLUDES BRAKE DRUMS, ANVILS, AND A PIANO WITH A METAL ROD PLACED ON TOP OF THE STRINGS TO PRODUCE THIS KIND OF METALLIC EFFECT.

["A lot of it has to do with organizing these non-musical sounds musically. And he achieves some really awesome effects. But I think that then led him later on to this sort of total sound philosophy that he was working on."]

AND THIS PHILOSOPHY IS BASICALLY THE WHOLE IDEA OF THIS EPISODE, THAT ALL SOUND CAN BE MUSIC. AND AT THE TIME, THIS WAS REVOLUTIONARY.

["I think he realized that this sort of dialogue or aesthetic progress so to speak that was taking place in tonal music, up through atonality, which is basically all characterized by some sort of notion that there is some grand harmonic scheme that is more important than something else. Some sort of teleological narrative that somehow imbues meaning onto these harmonies. And while that's a beautiful method of communication, you know with emotions and stories and things like that, I think John Cage really found that what he liked about music was not the linguistic qualities or not the syntactics, but really the meat of music, which is the sounds."]

[JOHN CAGE (WITH TRAFFIC IN BACKGROUND): "When I hear what we call music..."]

JOHN CAGE HIMSELF.

["It seems to me that someone is talking."]

[CHOPIN - NOCTURNE IN E FLAT MAJOR]

["And talking about his feelings, or about his ideas of relationships. People expect listening to be more than listening. And so sometimes they speak of inner listening, or the meaning of sounds. When I talk about music, it finally comes to people's minds that I'm talking about sound."]

[CHOPIN ABRUPTLY SWITCHES TO CAGE'S SONATA II FOR PREPARED PIANO]

["That doesn't mean anything.

That is not inner, but is just outer. And they say, these people who understand that finally, say "you mean it's just sounds?" Thinking that for something to just be a sound is to be useless. Whereas I love sounds, just as they are. And I have no need for them to be anything more than what they are. I don't want them to be psychological. I don't want a sound to pretend that it's a bucket, or that it's president, or that it's in love with another sound... \*laughs\* I just want it to be a sound. And I'm not so stupid either. There was a German philosopher, he's very well-known, Immanuel Kant, and he said there were two things that don't have to mean anything. One is music, and the other is laughter. \*laughs\* Don't have to mean anything that is, in order to give us very deep pleasure."]

SO, FOR THE END OF THIS EPISODE, I WANT YOU TO TRY SOMETHING. WHAT I'M GOING TO DO IS JUST LEAVE A FULL MINUTE OF SILENCE BEFORE THE CREDITS, AND I WANT YOU TO JUST LISTEN. NOW, IT'LL BE A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE, BUT DON'T TUNE OUT. LISTEN TO THE WORLD AROUND YOU. LISTEN TO THE PITCH OF THAT AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM. LISTEN TO THE SOUND OF PEOPLE TALKING NEARBY, AND I DON'T MEAN EAVESDROP ON

THEM, I MEAN JUST NOTICE HOW THE VOICES MOVE UP AND DOWN AND GO FASTER AND SLOWER, LIKE A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT. LISTEN TO THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN BREATHING, YOUR OWN HEARTBEAT. JUST LISTEN. SO ARE YOU READY? HERE WE GO.

[MINUTE OF SILENCE]

[CAGE - SUITE FOR TOY PIANO]

MELOMANIA IS WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY ME, PATRICK SIMPSON. THE TRACKS THAT I USED ARE, IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE, MOZART'S EINE KLEINE NACHTMUSIK, THE VELVET UNDERGROUND'S LOOP, ROB FUNKHOUSER'S THE PARADOX OF MOTION, LUIGI RUSSOLO'S RISVEGLIO DI UNA CITTA, JOHN CAGE'S FIRST CONSTRUCTION IN METAL, CHOPIN'S NOCTURNE IN E FLAT MAJOR, CAGE'S SONATA II FOR PREPARED PIANO AND A PORTION OF 4'33'', AND WHAT YOU'RE HEARING RIGHT NOW IS HIS SUITE FOR TOY PIANO. MELOMANIA IS A PRODUCTION OF 91.3 WHJE, BROADCASTING FROM BEAUTIFUL, DOWNTOWN, CARMEL INDIANA. THIS IS THE END OF SEASON ONE OF MELOMANIA, BUT DON'T WORRY, I'LL BE BACK AFTER THIS SUMMER FOR SEASON TWO. THANKS FOR LISTENING.