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Visual Metaphors in Raymond Murray Schafer's Idea of Soundscape

The central concept in Raymond Murray Schafer's (the Canadian composer born in 1933) reflections on music is that of the soundscape. This refers to the sonic environment of a particular place, but it can also describe a musical composition.

Schafer stresses that soundscape analysis requires new vocabulary and introduces some coinages resulting from direct metaphorical transfer from the visual to the aural domain. His writings on music education are full of pictures. In many instances, the composer considers visual and auditory parameters to be mutually interchangeable. By transforming sound immediately into image, Schafer communicates not just without words but also without abstract musical notation. In this way, he realizes an important aim of his educational project, namely, to restore the connection between different senses and different arts.

In my paper I would like to present and analyze the complex system of visual metaphors used by Schafer and discuss the ways in which it influenced his views on music education as well as his own work and the idea of sound in contemporary music.

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