

**SOUNDING
THE CITY**

—

GUELPH 2018

Sounding the City 003—Guelph
Jen Reimer & Max Stein

soundingthecity.com/003

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The Improviser-in-Residence Program is a collaborative partnership of Musagetes and the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation (IICSI), which brings improvising musicians into meaningful, sustained contact with Guelph and the surrounding areas.

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**JEN REIMER &
MAX STEIN**

FOREWORD⁷

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**FOREWORD:
BEING ALONE IN GUELPH'S
LIMINAL SPACES**
RACHEL ELLIOTT

**8-9 IN THE LIVED EXPERIENCE
OF ACTUALITY WE HAVE
THE PRIMAL SOURCE POINT
AND A CONTINUITY OF
MOMENTS OF REVERBERATION.**

Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*¹

¹ Trans. James S Churchill Bloomington:
Indiana University Press, 1905/1964: 100.

Being alone, without being lonely.
Moments of small, private epiphanies—a smell,
a breeze, a pattern in the whitewash;
They pop out for you from what initially seems
to be nothing-special.
Within the breath of one's own experience,
an aspect, seeming to dawn only for you.
These personalized gifts—the winking world—give
the impression that they would melt
under the intense rays of group gathered.
For all this, Husserl writes, “names are lacking.”
“We are people of few words,” says Jen Reimer
by telephone.

This foreword will be more about what is happening
outside of the book than what is contained in it.
Sounding the City is a lived experience of Guelph,
Ontario. At its primary source point, *Sounding
the City* is the sound of Guelph itself, resonating
in you and reverberating, so to speak, throughout
the accompanying postcards, exhibit, documenta-
tion, online map, and, of course, this book.

Jen Reimer and Max Stein are facilitating
this lived experience of the sounding of Guelph.
The duo first detected a resonant frequency
in the other at the Square-Victoria Metro Station
in Montreal, where Jen would go to practice
her french horn at night. Max was drawn to the
reverberant rotunda while researching the
Montréal Sound Map. To find a resonant
frequency is a special thing. It means noticing
that another being is moved by what you do,
quite literally; your sound makes them vibrate
with you. This vibratory sympathy between beings
amplifies the shared frequency, each body
contributing unique overtones, adding colour
according to their specific material composition.
Resonant frequencies are how Reimer and Stein
create their sound installations. They elicit the
resonant frequencies inherent in a place so that
we can hear them. They make the city sound.

The story of their meeting illustrates Max
and Jen's shared quest to locate urban areas

offering that rich quality of experience that comes
of being alone, but not lonely—places empty
enough to make a sound, if you will, but
responsive enough for sympathetic resonance
to occur. Such places can be elusive in cities:
cities can be, paradoxically, both crowded and
lonesome. Seeking out such places lead Reimer
and Stein to liminal spaces, places existing at
a threshold: between nature and industry; past
and future; neglect and purpose; safety and
danger; staying and leaving.

Not all of us have the impetus or the
opportunity to rove around the city seeking places
to receive that precious solitude. *Sounding the
City* is a sort of treasure map leading us to such
pockets. To residents of Guelph, past, present
and future, these locations may be familiar. The
train tracks that run through the Ward. That steep
walkway on Palmer Street. The Covered Bridge.
Jen and Max call these places to our attention in
ways that are unhabituated and anti-spectacular.
We notice this in the simplicity of the photographic
documentation, for instance. The objective style
brings them out of the background haze of our
everyday lives. In their planeness, they do not
grab our attention. They wait for it.

Sounding the City presents something
of a paradox, then. Attempting to bring spaces
of solitude to a group jeopardizes the very quality
of rich aloneness, of unforced perception, that
Jen and Max seek to make available. When we
perceive as a group, we perceive together. And
so *Sounding the City* itself exists as an unstable
liminal space—between solitude and collectivity,
private discovery and public display, live improv-
isation and online documentation. We can come
and go to these places on our own initiative,
perhaps finding others alone there when we arrive.
There is not a particular time when the show will
begin. Or end.

Jen Reimer and Max Stein are the Guelph
Improvisers-in-Residence for 2018; it is the only
such residency in the world. This singularity

10-11

reflects the unique combination of forces between the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation, Musagetes, and the Laurier Centre for Music in the Community. The Residency has been connecting improvising musicians with the local community since 2011. This year, in addition to the invitation to (re)discover the sounds of the city, the Boarding House is hosting an exhibit of the project, and PS Guelph is publishing this accompanying book. The Guelph chapter of *Sounding the City* will be documented in perpetuity in the online interactive map/archive, along with the other two project locations

(Montreal and São Miguel). In this foreword, I have introduced the installations and in-situ experiences of place that are at the heart of *Sounding the City*. It is my hope that this book and its relata will serve to enhance, and imaginatively (re)create, that experience, without overly determining it; may it inspire new perceptual collaborations between you and the city in the liminal solitude that *Sounding the City* makes appreciable.

Rachel Elliott
Toronto Ontario

INTRODUCTION:
SOUNDING THE CITY
JEN REIMER & MAX STEIN

12/13

There is a musicality to the sounds of a city: the lingering resonance of a church bell, the subterranean rumble of an approaching train, the cacophony of cyclists, cars, trucks and trains in transit, and the gentle, pulsating drone that emanates from streetlights, power lines and ventilation ducts. These sounds create a meditative counterpoint to the intermittent rhythms of the urban soundscape.

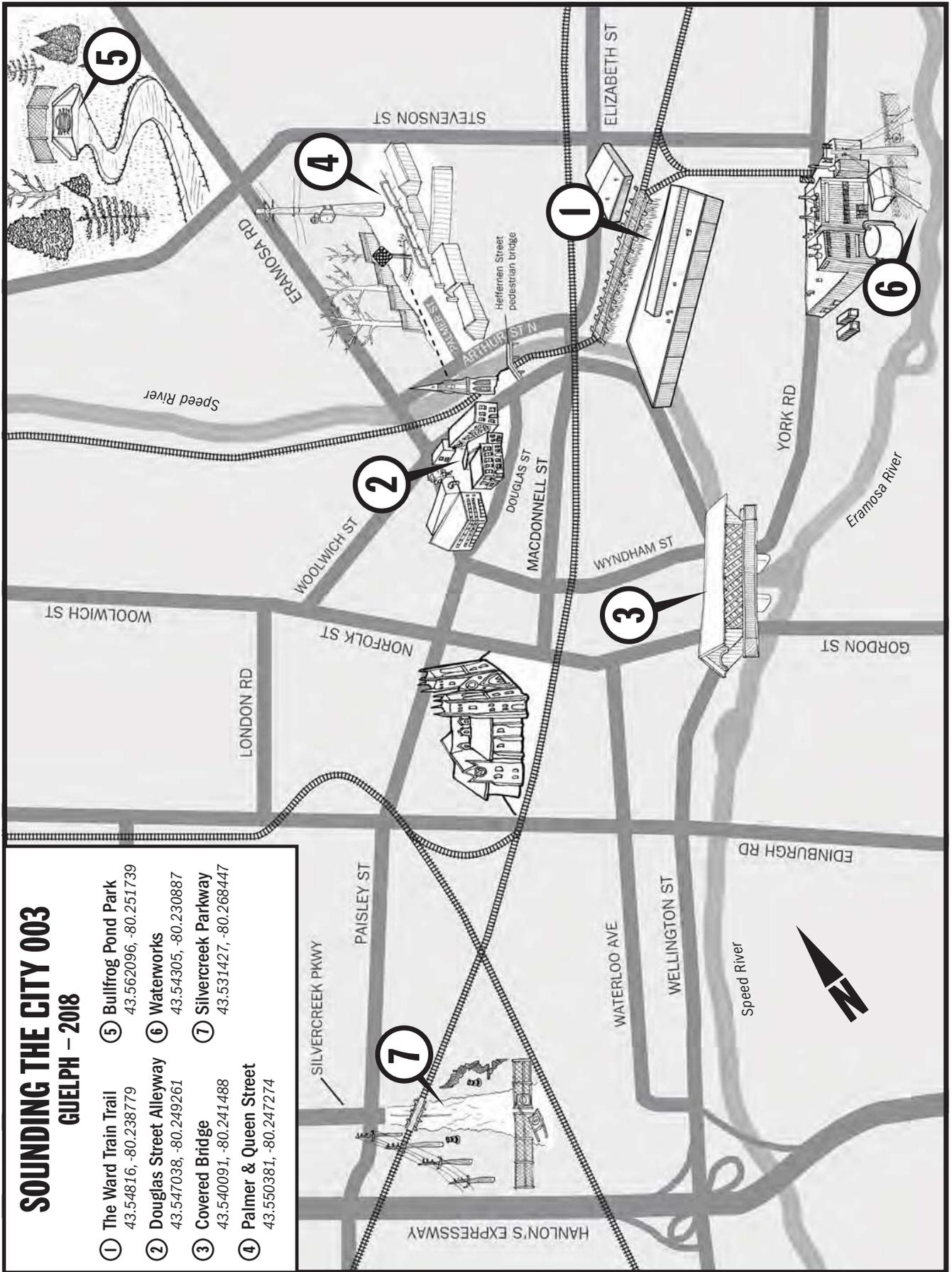
Sounding the City is an online exhibition dedicated to capturing specific urban environments and re-imagining their soundscapes through site-specific installations and acoustic interventions. These installations emerge from their surroundings and occur in the environments themselves. They invite our ears to focus on the music of the places we find ourselves in, and draw our gaze towards characteristics of urban environments that might otherwise go unnoticed. These interventions aim to transcend our everyday experience of space by blurring the perceptual lines between what is natural and what has been introduced into the environment.

On our walks through the city we discovered places that are undergoing significant change. Most are neglected or in-between spaces, and they may vanish in the near future. As we direct our attention to their uniqueness, their sounds and their resonances with past and future are transformed into memorable experiences. In a sense, our work is a living archive where these spaces can live on in our collective memory, even as they disappear from sight.

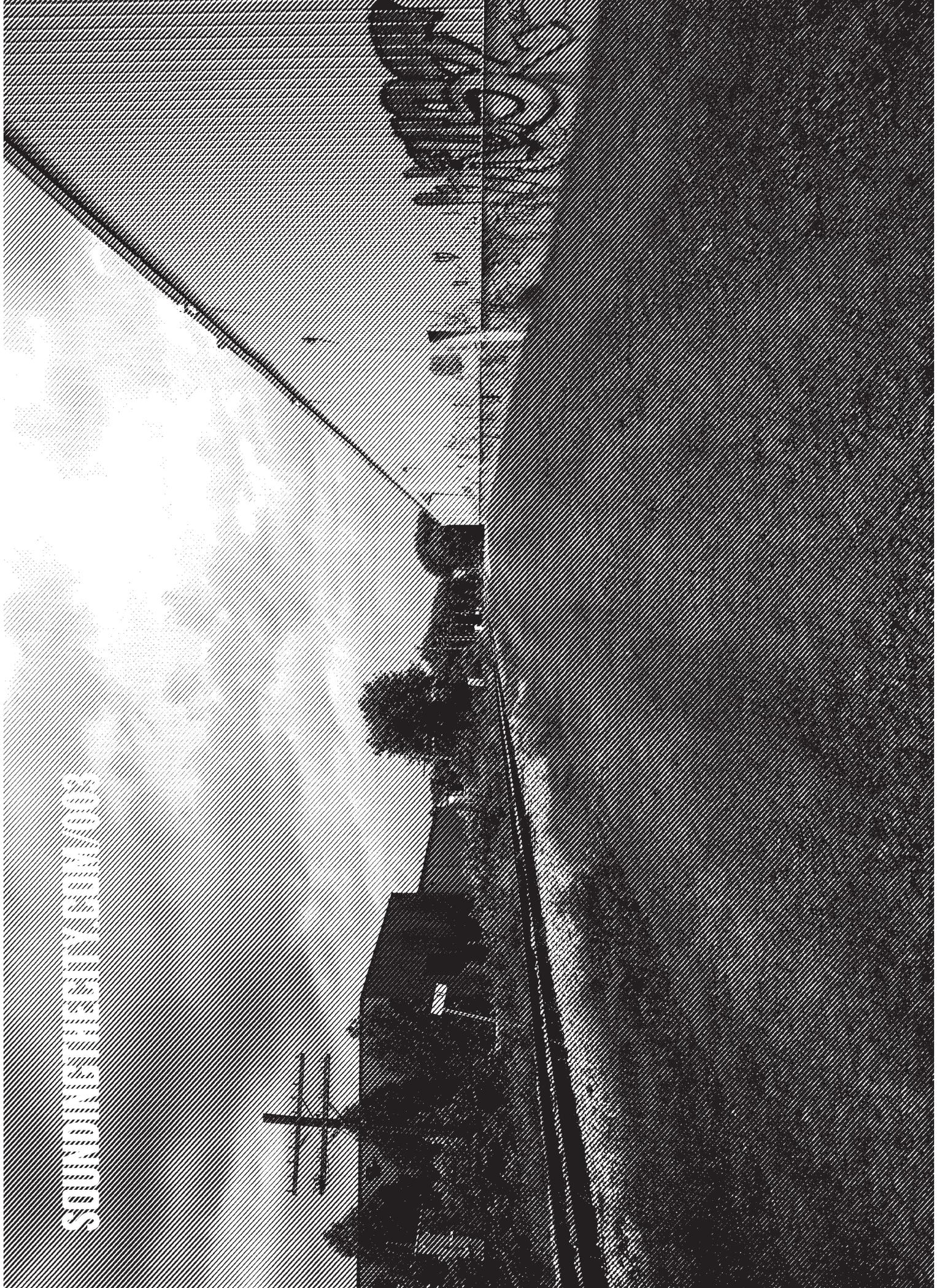
SOUNDING THE CITY 003

GUELPH – 2018

- ① The Ward Train Trail
43.54816, -80.238779
- ② Douglas Street Alleyway
43.547038, -80.249261
- ③ Covered Bridge
43.540091, -80.241488
- ④ Palmer & Queen Street
43.550381, -80.247274
- ⑤ Bullfrog Pond Park
43.562096, -80.251739
- ⑥ Waterworks
43.54305, -80.230887
- ⑦ Silvercreek Parkway
43.531427, -80.268447



COMMUNITY SERVICES



01 THE WARD TRAIN TRAIL
43.54816, -80.238779

16/17



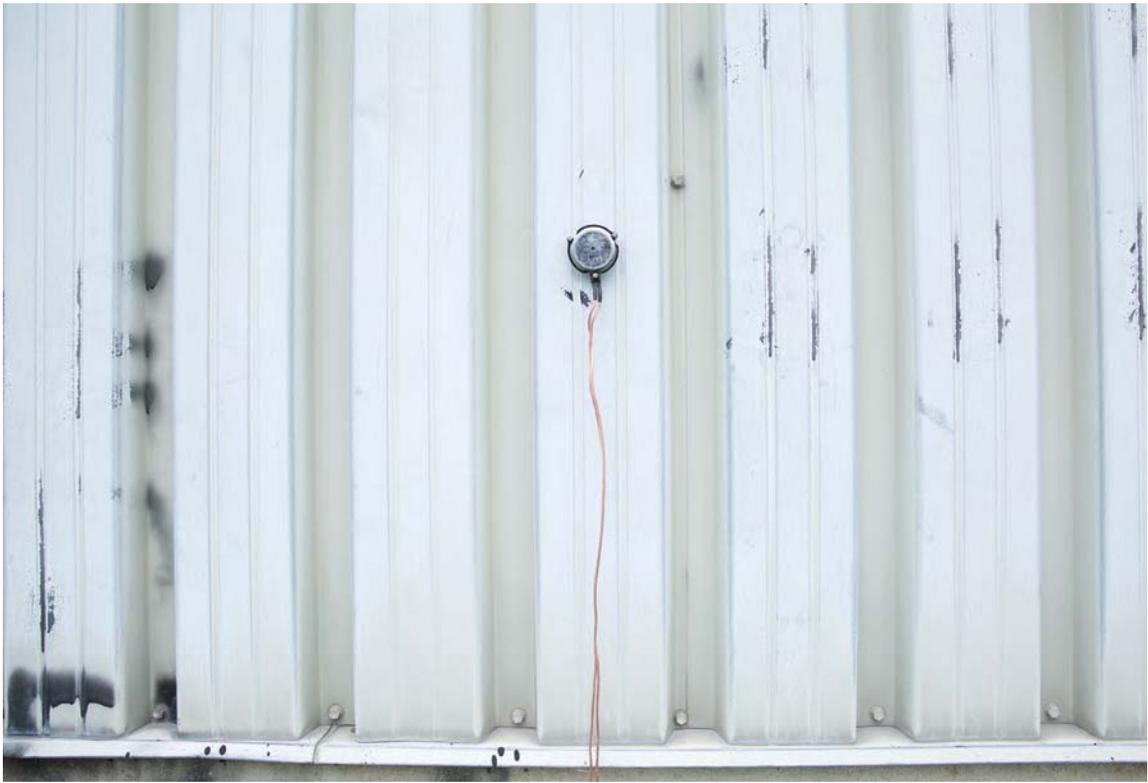
—
Along the railway, two ventilation systems resonate between the surfaces
of two buildings on opposite sides of the tracks.



18/19



—
Surface transducers attached to the building amplify these textures.



20/21



01 THE WARD TRAIN TRAIL

02 DOUGLAS STREET ALLEYWAY
43.547038, -80.249261

22/23



—
Pipes line brick walls in the alleyway behind Douglas Street.
Corridors and enclosed spaces echo a polyphonic chorus of oscillating tones
and rattling vents.



24/25



—
PVC pipes amplify emergent tones within these textures.



26/27



02 DOUGLAS STREET ALLEYWAY

03 THE COVERED BRIDGE

43.540091, -80.241488

28/29



Along the Speed River, songs of various birds and soft noises of the river merge with distant construction sounds. Between silences, bicycles pass through at varying speeds. A distinct pitch (D#) sounds quietly from afar.



30/31



03 THE COVERED BRIDGE

—
soundingthecity.com/audio/003/03

04 PALMER & QUEEN STREET
43.550381, -80.247274

32/33



The bells of St George's Church chime once every hour. From the top of a steep hill on Palmer Street, ringing harmonies - ((F# & A)) reverberate in the distance.



34/35



—
A siren speaker fastened to a telephone pole amplifies the resonant frequencies of the bell.



36/37



04 PALMER & QUEEN STREET

05 BULLFROG POND PARK
43.562096, -80.251739

38/39



—
A tunnel under Stevenson Street echoes the sounds of cars passing overhead. The chamber's resonant frequency shares that of an electrical tone nearby which vibrates exactly at 61 Hz.



40/41



05 BULLFROG POND PARK

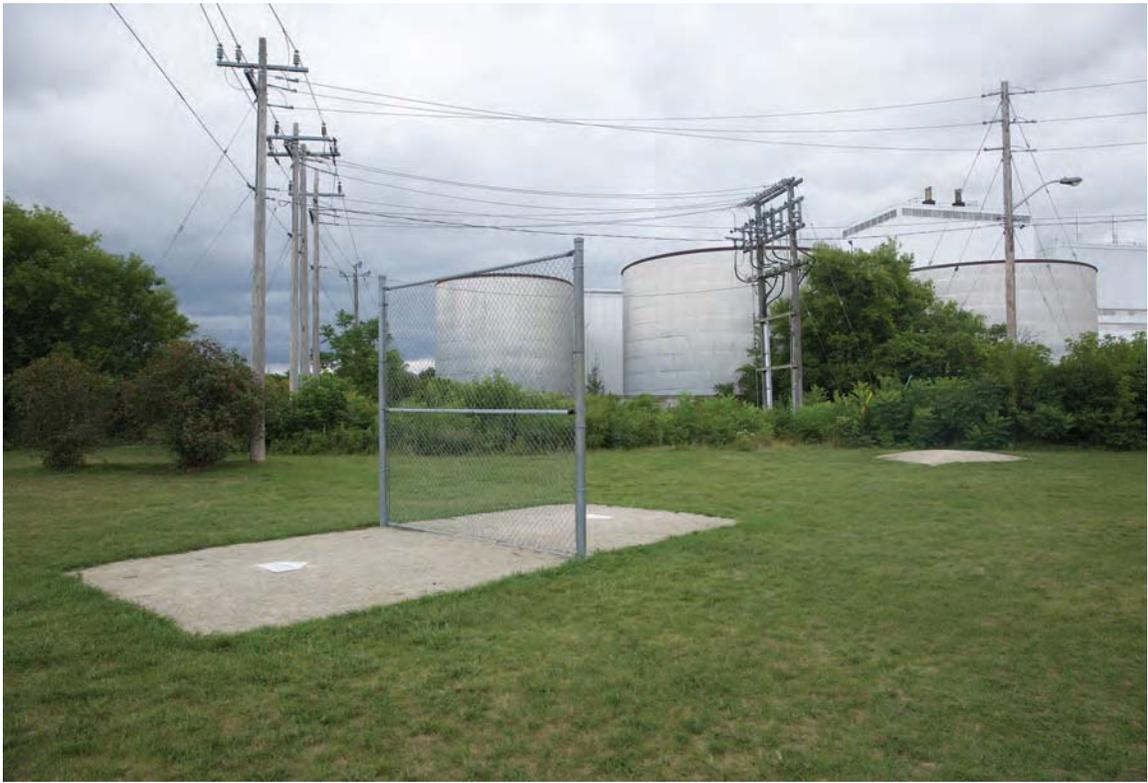
06 WATERWORKS

43.54305, -80.23088

42/43



—
Harmonies in the shape of tritones (c#-g, d#-a, f#-c, a-d#) emerge as a luminous melody from industrial buildings.



44/45



—
A vent-shaped speaker box mimics the tones present in the soundscape.



46/47



06 WATERWORKS

—
soundingthecity.com/audio/003/06

07 SILVERCREEK PARKWAY
43.531427, -80.268447

48/49



In a wasteland near Silvercreek Parkway, long winding gravel roads lead to scattered constructions sites. The wash of noise from the highway merges with sounds of crickets, cicadas and singing frogs.



50/51



07 SILVERCREEK PARKWAY

**PAST INSTALMENTS OF
SOUNDING THE CITY:**

**STC 001: MONTREAL
— 2015-16**



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**STC 002: SAO MIGUEL
—2017**



SOUNDINGTHECITY.COM/002

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND
DOCUMENTATION:
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