

Remote Islands Radio Plays: Teaching Soundscape Composition in the Uncertain Future of the Anthropocene

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My paper addresses the theme of 'uncertainty' via the subject matter of a creative project in my remote-learning classes in radio play, audio narrative, and soundscape composition. The focus is on remoteness and the toll that extreme environmental conditions may have on individuals and small communities of people living on isolated islands in the great oceans. This resonates with the current situation that many students find themselves in, where they might be physically isolated due to pandemic regulations, or feel isolated from their peer group because of the explosion of the traditionally very social university experience due to changes in conditions for the same external reasons. Students in the very large 'island city-states' of Hong Kong and Singapore find parallels between their own lives and narratives from very tiny island places. This leads to a high degree of engagement and creative output of generally good quality, and sometimes of high artistic merit.

Judith Schalansky's book "Atlas of Remote Islands", which first appeared in English in 2010, was a timely artistic contribution to perennial political discussions on imagined communities, post-colonialism, militarization of islands, (e.g. Diego Garcia; Loyd 2015), disputed territories (e.g. China's 'Nine-Dash Line') which in turn are imbricated in urgent issues of climate change. The very remoteness of islands - oases in a desert of water - predicates the ambivalence between conceiving islands as sites of refuge from global catastrophe (Turchin 2019) or as first-line victims of sea level rise (consider e.g. Tokelau and the Seychelles). Schalansky selected fifty "tiny little spots of land that looked most forgotten"; so many of the island stories I would dig up [were] horrendous: shipwrecks, failed expeditions, prison colonies, megalomaniac conquerors, cannibalism, murder and mayhem. Most of these islands are barren, without drinking water"; unsuitable settings for finding paradise: hell is an island too." The rich imagery and precise narrative style in these stories invite interpretation and meta-art. Over the past eight years, the author has included 'Remote Islands' as a starting-point for teaching undergraduate classes with majors in music composition, design, and sound art, to create narrative radio plays, explore voice recording, Foley, compose with DAW, and design soundscapes. The conference presentation will offer sample student works and a discussion of experienced gained.

🕒 This paper starts on **Saturday** at **20:05 HKT** in room **A**