

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Aberdeen		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 33 (Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies)		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Sounding the North East: developing awareness of sound in everyday life		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2005-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Pete Stollery	Professor	08/2007-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Stollery's research at the University of Aberdeen has changed how people think about the soundscape they live in and has enabled engagement with place through sound, with particular focus on NE Scotland. Stollery's creative output and activities has influenced communities of all ages and musical abilities, enabling new modes of sound-exploration. Complementing this work in NE Scotland, Stollery has been collaboratively generating new ways of thinking about sound and how it impacts upon lives around the world. Stollery's practice encourages deeper listening and reflection upon the role of sound in everyday living, leading to active participation in projects and the co-creation of work with communities. His most recent project, the COVID-19 Sound Map, has built upon models from NE Scotland (which has attracted attention from Google and the BBC) and encapsulates this co-creation and further demonstrates the impact of the research.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Sound recording technology allows us to record sounds in one place and play them back in another, giving us new possibilities of understanding our relationship with place through sound. Yet, active listening demands time and attention and requires us to reflect on the sounds around us and how they impact upon our lives. Participatory-based research led by Stollery seeks to address the challenges described above, exploring how sound interacts with and impacts upon our daily life, in particular how both the dominance of the visual in contemporary design and the speed at which we live our lives often mitigate against deep listening. His research addresses issues of history, tradition, memory and identity by examining a relationship between sound and place and responses to it, achieved by embracing developments in technology through the creation of a multi-modal range of creative outputs including concert pieces, sound installations, web-based projects and mobile apps.</p> <p>In 2004, Stollery set up <b>sound</b>, a new music incubator in NE Scotland, which runs a highly respected festival, commissioning new music and sound art activity. <b>Sound</b> has showcased much of Stollery's participatory research.</p> <p>In 2005, Stollery won the Gordon Forum for the Arts Award, for which he created the intermedia sound project, <b>Gordon Soundscape</b>; its main research question asked how we can preserve sounds that are about to disappear. A 'call for sounds' to the public, via social media and through local press, provided a wealth of sonic material which was incorporated into all four project outputs [1,7].</p> <p>In 2007, Stollery was Chair of the Aberdeenshire Youth Music Forum and was able to direct funding from the Scottish Government's Youth Music Initiative scheme to set up the <b>Sonic Postcards</b> project across over thirty Aberdeenshire schools [2; 4]. This project, devised and delivered by Sonic Arts Network, for whom Stollery was Chair and part of the Sonic Postcards</p>		

project development team, enabled schools from across the UK to explore and compare their local sound environments through the exchange of online 'sonic postcards' with other schools.

In 2013, **sound** commissioned **Three Cities**, a multi-modal project using sounds recorded in Aberdeen, Bergen and St Petersburg. Workshops for the general public were held in all three locations, with the public creating work with recorded sounds and discussing how they engaged with their sonic environment [3]. A resulting paper [6] identifies and describes these types of engagement by observing the phenomena of displaced sound relating to listening.

Stollery's fascination with sound maps and participatory involvement began in 2005 with the **Gordon Soundscape** and continued with **Aberdeen Soundsites** in 2012, a commission from Aberdeen City Council to develop a new sound archive for the city. This web-based sound map uses a bespoke sound mapping tool to enable users to upload their own sound recordings to the map, not only engaging members of the public with the research, but also allowing them to co-create an 'audio heritage' of Aberdeen for the future [P1; 5]. This crowdsourcing of sound continued with the launch of **Hilton Soundscape** (<http://bit.ly/hiltonsoundscape>) in 2018, another web-based sound map where sounds recorded in 2003 are accessed on a map showing the location when the sounds were recorded (a place of work) and what the location has become in 2020 (a housing development). In 2021, the new community will record sounds in the same location, affording a kind of comparative sonic archaeology [5].

The culmination of this participatory co-creation and map making can be seen in the **COVID-19 Sound Map**, a project where Stollery is crowdsourcing recordings of the changing soundscapes under lockdown from around the world [3].

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[1] **Gordon Soundscape** (2005), project comprising four outputs:

**Still Voices, Fields of Silence, Resound** and the **Gordon Soundscape Sound Map** - <https://bit.ly/gordonsoundscape>) with 75 individual performances.

[2] **Sonic Postcards** (2007), website and educational resource (<http://www.sonicpostcards.org/> and, as part of **sound**, <https://sound-scotland.co.uk/participate/schools/resources/sonic-postcards>).

[3] **Three Cities** (2013) – multimodal project including stereo fixed media concert piece with the same title:

Premiered as part of *From Tape to Typedef* international conference, University of Sheffield, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2013 with seventeen further international performances.

[4] **COVID-19 Sound Map** (2020) - (<http://bit.ly/covid19soundmap>)

[5] **Stollery, P.** (2019), 'Listening to Place: Music, Sound, Heritage and Memory', *Mundos Sonoros: Cruces, Circulaciones, Experiencias*, ed. R. Minsburg, UNTREF (Argentina), 13th September 2018, pp. 68.

[6] Kim, S-J., **Stollery, P.**, Whyte, R. (2013), 'Three types of engagement with place through acousmatic listening and composition'. In I. Russell & C. Ingram (eds), *Taking Part in Music: Case Studies in Ethnomusicology*, Elphinstone Institute Occasional Publications 9, Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, in association with the European Seminar in Ethnomusicology.

[7] **Stollery, P.** (2013), 'Capture, manipulate, project, preserve: A compositional journey'. *Journal of Music, Technology & Education*, 6 (3), 285-298.

### Grants

[P1] **Aberdeen soundsites** (2012) (<http://www.aberdeensoundsites.net>)

Interactive, community-driven sound map; winner of the 2014 Aberdeen Public Art Award, commissioned and funded by Aberdeen City Council (GBP14,000).

[P2] **[M]apping Aberdeen** (2016) (<https://www.soundingaberdeen.net/mappingaberdeen>)

Mobile app for iOS devices, created with funds from a Knowledge Exchange and Commercialisation Award (Scottish Funding Council), internal seed funding from UoA (GBP10,000)

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Stollery's impact on creativity, culture and society can be demonstrated through a range of projects with communities whose behaviours towards sound have been changed through their documenting and preserving of the sounds of their everyday lives. His approach has encouraged people to listen more deeply, enabling them to understand sonic experiences in new and informative ways and to contribute to archiving their local soundscapes, whilst developing public attitudes to the appreciation of sound.

Much of Stollery's community activity focuses on generating new ways of thinking about sound – a more 'active' listening rather than a 'passive' hearing. The ideas first presented in **Aberdeen soundsites** [S1] have since gone on to be developed in further projects with a range of partners and audiences. His work has also influenced music education both nationally and internationally, presenting his research to the Scottish Association of Music Educators and, working with secondary schoolteachers in Aberdeen, producing advice for the Scottish Qualifications Authority on how to assess sound compositions using technology. The co-production of cultural artefacts is central to his community engagement activity, whether these be co-created sound maps or other listening experiences, which are usually new forms of artistic expression for the communities involved.

**Granite Sound** (2015) has enabled both locals and visitors to understand the city in new ways. Part of a large-scale arts project to celebrate Aberdeen, and developed in collaboration with the National Theatre of Scotland, it is a one-hour guided sound walk using the SonicMaps platform, joining together different sounds over a range of locations around Aberdeen that encourage and invite listeners to reflect on granite and the history of the city. During the launch weekend, over 120 people participated in the guided sound walks [S2].

**Image 16** (2015) continues the theme of exploration of Aberdeen through sound, forming part of an exhibition that paid homage to George Washington Wilson, a Victorian Aberdeen-based photographer, combining contemporary images by John Perivolaris, text by Ed Welch and an 8-channel sound installation by created by Stollery. The exhibition established a dialogue between an Aberdeen past and present, to help visitors understand the city today, through sound and image. The exhibition attracted over 4,450 visitors over a period of seven weeks. [S3].

Developing the idea of understanding the city through sound initiated in Granite Sound and Image 16 and taking on board the combined experience of sound, image and walking, **[M]apping Aberdeen** [P2], developed as an iOS mobile application in 2016, enables users to explore the city through sound, image and text, introducing them to new places both on and off the beaten track, changing perceptions of places they already knew. By December 2020, the app had been downloaded 2969 times, with the majority of downloads from users outside of the UK [S4, 5].

Stollery's investigation of the relationship between sound, place and experience, developed in the NE of Scotland, culminates in the **COVID-19 Sound Map**, a community-led web-based sound map, aiming to capture sonic environments affected as a result of lockdown measures initiated across the world [S6]. Set up by Stollery three days into the UK lockdown in March 2020, with a view to documenting this unique period of time, it comprises sounds and reflective text submitted from all over the world. By December 2020, 231 recordings had been sent from 24 countries around the world. As one participant said, *'the absence of vehicles and activity has resulted in heightened awareness of our surroundings. In April my wife was able to record a frog chorus at a pond next to the road through the glen.... I myself was inspired to record the sounds of a burn, with photographs at each site, as it trickled through turf from source to it joining the river'* [S6]. The sound map has been featured as an example of good practice using Google Earth at Google's *Geo for Good Conference* (October 2020) [S7] and is being featured in a short film by Google featuring projects created using Google Earth during lockdown. The project has gained much attention in the media and was featured in the influential *WebUser* magazine, as an essential

bookmark under 'Amazing Audio Sites'. It was featured in an online presentation for *The Cusp Magazine* (April 2020) and in the *Kitchen Sisters* podcast in San Francisco (August 2020) [S8]. Stollery was contacted by BBC Radio 3 producers about the creation of a thirty-minute piece of sound art for broadcast on *Between the Ears*, which will be made entirely from sounds submitted to the sound map.

Further international impact can be seen in the influence of the **Sonic Postcards** project, and Stollery's other work in educational and community contexts [S5]. In 2018, Stollery, worked in collaboration with composer and animateur José María D'Angelo, to facilitate a sound piece made by youngsters belonging to vulnerable socio-cultural backgrounds. This work, along with the pedagogic strategies used, was included in the educational resource pack: 'What do you hear in my neighborhood? Sound micropieces', commissioned by the Primary Education Music area of the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires and was later implemented by the Ministry of Health and Social Development [S9].

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [S1] *Aberdeen soundsites*, project page and user uploads
- [S2] *Granite Sound*, National Theatre of Scotland Brochure and media article
- [S3] *Image 16* visitor numbers and exhibition details
- [S4] *[M]apping Aberdeen*, media articles and iOS app details
- [S5] Testimonial from Cultural Development Officer, Aberdeenshire City Council
- [S6] Testimonial from workshop organiser and COVID-19 Sound Map participant
- [S7] Google's *Geo for Good Conference* (October 2020)
- [S8] Media articles showcasing *COVID-19 Sound Map*
- [S9] Testimonial from Pedagogic Artistic Director (ABC project, CVLP)