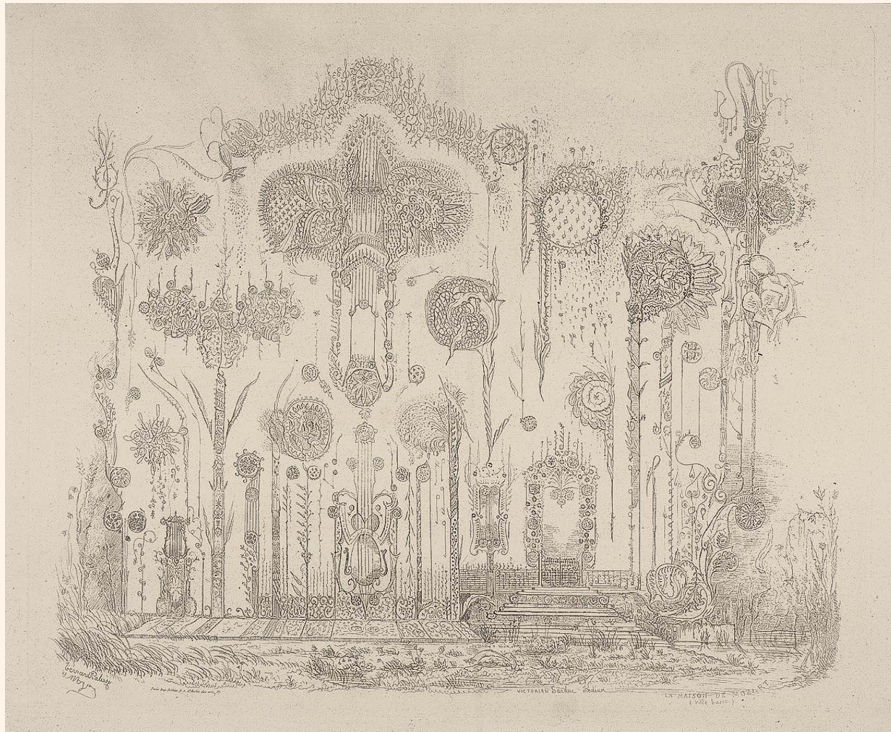


**The Subliminal World: Intuitive, Stochastic, and Supernatural Sound-making
Workshop by Wave Farm Fellow (December-February), Tyler Maxin**



Victorien Sardou, *La Maison Mozart*, 1858. An automatic drawing by a French dramatist who believed himself to have contacted the spirit of Bernard Palissy, a 16th century Huguenot potter. Palissy guided him to draw this depiction of Mozart's house, located in a city of the dead on Jupiter.

Thanks for your interest in *The Subliminal World: Intuitive, Stochastic, and Supernatural Sound-Making*.

Session #1: Music from Elsewhere... (January 22)

Introduction and workshop outline

Spiritualism and the origins of the Electronic Voice Phenomenon (EVP)

Music from Elsewhere: A visit with Doug Skinner

Suggested reading

- Aura Satz, "Typewriter, pianola, slate, phonograph: recording technologies and automisation," 2016. Chapter in *The Machine and the Ghost: Technology and Spiritualism in Nineteenth to Twenty-First-Century Art and Culture*, ed. Sas Mays and Neil Matheson.

For next time:

- Browse online databases of contemporary experiments in EVP (<https://idigitalmedium.com/share/exhibit-evp/>, www.itcbridge.com , or the [Varanormal YouTube video](#) are some examples), and note the techniques used and the results. Think about if you find it convincing. Do you hear the voice, and does your interpretation align with the EVP investigator?

Further listening:

- Various Artists - *Okkulte Stimmen – Mediale Musik (Recordings Of Unseen Intelligences 1905-2007)* (2007, Supposé): a three CD box-set by a German label compiling trance speak, mediums, ethnographic recordings, EVP, and more.
- Various Artists - *The Ghost Orchid: An Introduction To EVP* (1999, PARC): a CD compiling examples of EVP narrated by Swedish artist Leif Elggren

Further reading:

- Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth Century America*, 2012. A very good survey of the cultural context of the emergence of spiritualism.
- Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, 2000. I've stolen a lot from this. A nice survey that draws a line from spiritualism to EVP, and also goes into other examples of "ghosts in the machine," like TV specters.
- Ann Broude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth Century America*, 1989. An influential study on spiritualism and gender politics.
- Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment*, 2000. A nice survey of pre-spiritualist American Christian auditory encounters with the beyond.
- Christine Ferguson, *Determined Spirits: Eugenics, Heredity and Racial Regeneration in Anglo-American Spiritualist Writing, 1848–1930*, 2012. Many scholarly surveys of spiritualism have focused on its entanglement with American radical and reformist politics. So it is useful to have this, which dives into the movement's complicated relationship with racial essentialism and eugenics. And also paints a nice portrait of the curious occultist Paschal Beverly Randolph.
- Emily Ogden, "[Beyond Radical Enchantment: Mesmerizing Laborers in the Americas](#)," from *Critical Inquiry*, 2016. Similarly, Ogden cuts against dominant interpretations by considering mesmerism's use in labor management.

Session #2: Stochastic Resonance (January 29)

A survey of Electronic Voice Phenomenon (EVP) techniques
Nam June's Spirit Was Talking to Me: A visit with Aki Onda

For next time:

Cross-Communications...

Ahead of Sunday, February 5th, I am hoping that we will have an opportunity to attempt to replicate the EVP phenomenon (or a related method of *instrumental transcommunication*) and share and contemplate the results. As EVPs are typically quite brief, this task could take as little as a few minutes. I'd like us to aim for each producing a **recording of 2-4 minutes**, but longer or shorter attempts, multiple attempts, or no attempts are all good options, too.

The essential core of the EVP phenomenon is a sound recorder, and (if necessary, but not always) a sound source. Some EVP practitioners have two explanations for how this method interacts with the spiritual world: *transformational* and *opportunistic*.

- In transformational EVP, a spiritual intelligence will interact directly with the electronic signal. In this account, the phenomenon will not be audible until playback (think back to Sarah Estep's [Beethoven music](#).) Skeptics have attributed this to radio interference, reused tapes, and hoaxes.
- In opportunistic EVP, a spiritual intelligence will utilize some sort of sound source to communicate: a radio, ambient environmental sound, a running faucet, crowd noise. The electronic recorder picks this up, and its ability to replay, amplify, and noise-correct makes the message more apparent. Skeptics have attributed this to interference and *pareidolia*, or pattern-seeking cognition.

In parapsychology books and EVP forums, there is little consensus on the best techniques or equipment. EVP practitioner and sound artist [Michael Esposito](#) says he uses the cheapest recorder possible, because more expensive models have built in noise reduction and "our signal is in the hiss"; other practitioners suggest using upper-end equipment in hopes of capturing lossless sound information. Some EVP practitioners do diligent sound editing such as noise reduction, adding "stochastic resonance," or slowing/speeding/reversing audio. The important thing is being deliberate about the process.

At the end of our [conversation with Aki Onda](#), Onda suggested that connection with the spiritual world will be individualistic and intuitive. He advises attempters to keep in the moment, and think of themselves as participants rather than observers.

Prompts:

#1: Transformational EVP

1. Make an intentional field recording. It can be in a significant place, or not.

2. Listen back to the field recording and pay attention to anomalies. Note and/or isolate any anomalies. You might want to subject these anomalies to forensics, such as changing the speed, reducing the noise, or adding white noise.
3. Some EVP practitioners use two or more recording devices to confirm that the sound is indeed originating from the device.

#2: Opportunistic EVP: radio scanning

1. Scan a radio for interesting sounds, whose origins are not straightforward. Possibilities include listening to unused frequencies, quickly and randomly scanning through stations (the Frank's Box method), or removing a radio's antenna.
2. Record and relisten to the results. Note and/or isolate any anomalies. You might want to subject these anomalies to forensics, such as changing the speed, reducing the noise, or adding white noise.

#3: Opportunistic EVP: other sound source

1. Choose a sound source that provides a constant stream of random noise. These might include: a running sink or stream, a crowd of people, a white noise machine.
2. Windows users might want to try [EVPMaker](#), the early '00s EVP generator.
3. Record and relisten to the results. Note and/or isolate any anomalies. You might want to subject these anomalies to forensics, such as changing the speed, reducing the noise, or adding white noise.

#4: Other forms of mediumship

1. Feel free to attempt and document another form of mediumship, such as automatic writing, channeled music, et cetera.

Possible questions:

You might want to ask questions into the ether to invite a response. Here are a few common ones: *"Is there anyone here who wishes to speak with us?"*, *"What is your name?"*, *"How old are you?"*, *"Why are you here?"*, *"Are you alone?"*

Session #3: Group listening: or, a séance? (February 5)

Works discussed:

- Diana Deutsch, *Musical Illusions and Phantom Words: How Music and Speech Unlock Mysteries of the Brain*, 2019.
- Mike Kelley and Scanner, *Esprits de Paris*, 2002.
- The works of CM von Hausswolf, Michael Esposito, and Leif Elggren.

We'll listen together, in various configurations, to examples of EVP, artistic engagements with supernatural sounds, and our own creations.

EVP web resources:

www.itcbridge.com - a now dormant web forum for EVP enthusiasts to share resources, tips, equipment, and encounters

<https://idigitalmedium.com/> - a non-profit that compiles resources for EVP

<https://www.varanormal.com/> - a collaboration between the now-defunct ITC Bridge forum and iDigitalMedium that compiles a lot of interesting historical and contemporary EVP resources, and hosts live streams

https://www.vtf.de/index_e.shtml - a German organization for EVP research active since 1972