

web www.leoalmanac.org

email info@leoalmanac.org

phone +90 216 483 9292

address Sabancı University, Orhanlı - Tuzla, 34956 Istanbul, Turkey



LEONARDO ABSTRACT SERVICES (LABS) 2008-2009

TOWARDS A SPECIES SONGBOOK: ILLUMINATING THE VOCALISATIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN PIED BUTCHERBIRD (*CRATICUS NIGROGULARIS*)

By Hollis Taylor

Is musicality a capacity *Homo sapiens* shares with birds? The pied butcherbird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*) is suggested for a zoömusicological case study on how birdsong might be like the human animal's music (whether homologous or analogous). The thesis includes a critical reflection on an accompanying portfolio of music compositions (scores paired with field transcriptions and a CD recording) that are integral to the analysis process. The study of birdsong by biologists and the appropriation of birdsong by composers are reviewed, with a primary focus on how composers have used the song of the pied butcherbird in their works. To date there has been no systematic study of the vocal behavior of the study species, and much remains to be illuminated. While the collection of extant recordings is essential, conducting fieldwork to secure original recordings and experience pied butcherbird vocal behavior firsthand are central to the research. Portamento as an impediment to "off-the-shelf" musicology in the case of birdsong analysis is discussed. It is proposed that the employment of different types and levels of description could facilitate the most fecund survey and analysis. Hardware and software choices are detailed, along with recording methods and data analysis techniques. A survey on how pied butcherbirds use notes, calls, and song is presented, including sonograms and standard music notation, followed by an elucidation of an extensive repertoire of procedures found in both human music and pied butcherbird song. Building on this, repertoire, general principles, and overarching matters of form and structure are interrogated through the analysis of two long songs, one diurnal and the other pre-dawn. Many components from their rich and nuanced repertoire are subject to recasting, some via elaborate strategies. Transcriptions and analyses from nearby pied butcherbirds at both study sites serve to increase the sample size, situate the targeted singers, and assist in the determination of whether phrases are improvised or part of an established convention. Pied butcherbird songs are found to be dynamic and in a constant state of change. The creative compositional component informs and becomes the final step in the analysis process. The portfolio of compositions demonstrates in a practical application, as the investigation in prior chapters does through a range of other analytical methods, how the species has been successful in creating and re-creating a culture with clear and unequivocal links to the experience of human music. Specific new contributions are itemized in the final chapter, and recommendations are made for those areas that could be most productive for further research into pied butcherbird song. It is concluded that pied butcherbirds' elaborate song culture overreaches

web www.leoalmanac.org

email info@leoalmanac.org

phone +90 216 483 9292

address Sabancı University, Orhanli - Tuzla, 34956 Istanbul, Turkey



biological necessity, indicating an aesthetic appreciation of sound is present in the pied butcherbird.

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Year: 2008

Pages: 620

University: University of Western Sydney, Australia

Supervisor: Professor Michael Atherton

Email: M.Atherton@uws.edu.au

Supervisor 2: Dr. Garth Paine

Language: English

Dept: School of Contemporary Arts

Copyright: Hollis Taylor

Lang_author: English, French

Email: HollisTaylor@me.com

Keywords: birdsong, pied butcherbird, zoomusicology, notation, sonogram

LEONARDO LABS

Leonardo LABS is annually peer reviewed by an international panel of reviewers. This year the panel selected the following abstracts to be published on Leonardo Electronic Almanac (LEA) in order to bring attention to the outstanding work of these authors by the international community interested in the intersection of art, science and technology.

The Peer Review Panel for 2009-2011 are: Yiannis Colakides, CoDirector, New Media (NeMe), Limassol, Cyprus, Christo Doherty, Chair, Digital Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, PhD., Chair, Department of Media and Audiovisual Culture, University of Lodz, Poland, Tom Lesser, Director, Center for Integrated Media, California Institution of the Arts, Valencia, California, United States, Rachel Mayeri, Assistant Professor of Media Studies, Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, California, United States, Andrea Polli, Director, Interdisciplinary Film and Digital Media (IFDM) and Mesa Del Sol Chair of Digital Media, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, United States, Sheila Pinkel, Professor of Art, Pomona College, Claremont, California, United States.