



NATASHA BARRETT

PUZZLE WOOD



01	<i>Little Animals</i>	13:09
	<i>Little Animals</i>	13:09
	<i>Little Animals</i>	13:09
	<i>Little Animals</i>	13:09
	<i>Little Animals</i>	13:09
02	<i>Earth Haze</i>	13:32
	<i>Earth Haze</i>	13:32
	<i>Earth Haze</i>	13:32
	<i>Earth Haze</i>	13:32
	<i>Earth Haze</i>	13:32
03	<i>Racing Unseen</i>	19:50
	<i>Racing Unseen</i>	19:50
	<i>Racing Unseen</i>	19:50
	<i>Racing Unseen</i>	19:50
	<i>Racing Unseen</i>	19:50
04	<i>Animalcules</i>	05:13
	<i>Animalcules</i>	05:13
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05	<i>Puzzle Wood</i>	13:34
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Natasha Barrett, electroacoustics

INTRODUCTION: Four of the five works on this CD were composed between 1994 and 1997, prior to Barrett visiting, and finally settling in, Norway. In this intense period, she was working on her PhD and her compositional style began to take shape. A number of live electroacoustic and acousmatic works were composed as part of the doctoral degree program, and a selection of the acousmatic works are presented here.

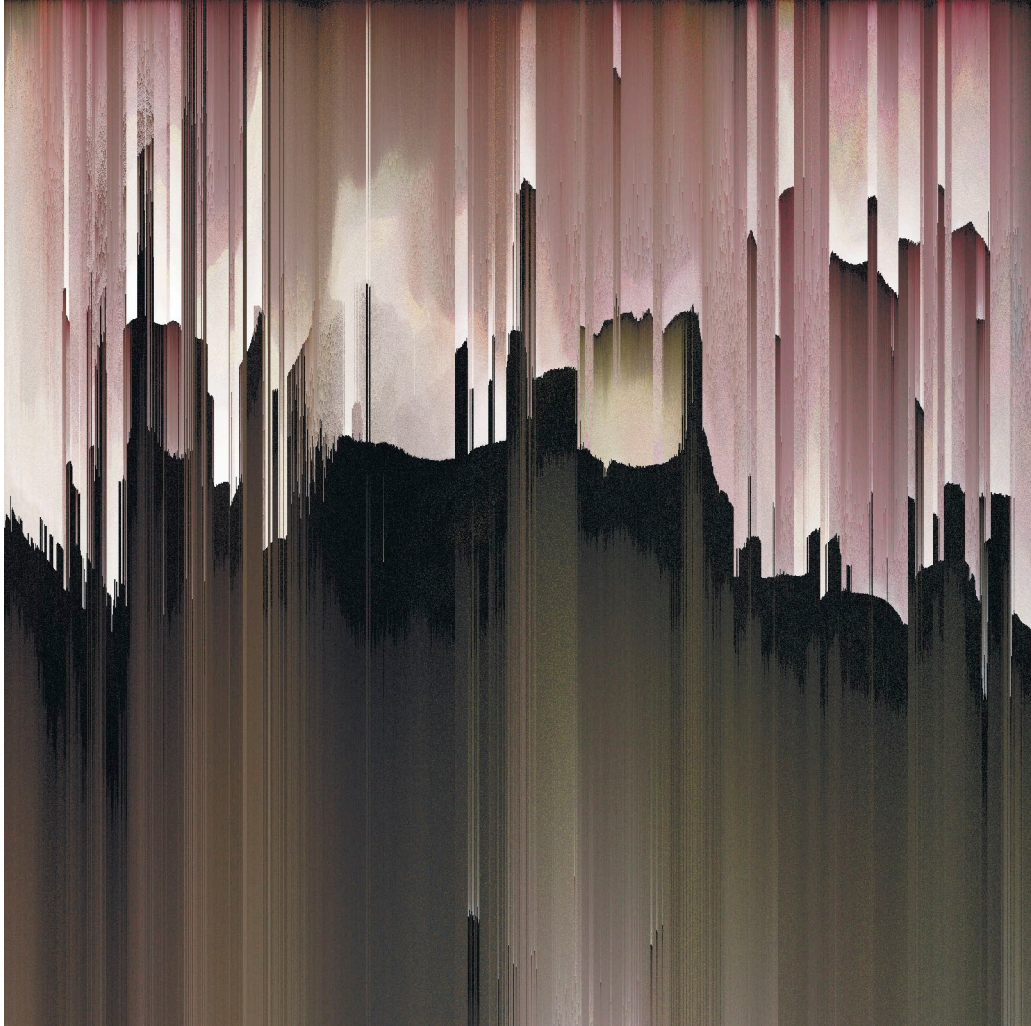
Barrett's sound-worlds in these pieces originated in acoustic sources, explored through the acousmatic approach to listening and composing, where removal of visual information frees the sound to the imagination. Following the lineage of Pierre Schaeffer and subsequent British, French and French-Canadian developments, these works already suggest a departure in musical language that has journeyed further in her more recent work.

The compositions utilised some of the latest technologies of the time, yet we hear no specific technology drawing attention to itself. Many sounds appear to hover on the threshold between surreal, half-familiar worlds, and that of the abstractly electronic.

This malleable movement inside the real-surreal-abstract framework lends itself to both the complexity and order that can be found in the composition.

Compared to the computer processing power and easy to use software that are common today, the electroacoustic composer of the mid 90's faced non-real-time workflows, a necessity to program or to control software with command lines and scripting languages, a few basic graphical interfaces and an equipment collection that was outside personal budgets. The works on this CD were composed in these conditions, using the electroacoustic composition studios of City University, London, (UK) as a regular workplace.

Early versions of the works were released on two CDs: *Rocks and Wraiths* (1996) and *Chillies and Shells* (1997). On this new release the works were revised and significantly remastered in 2016 to enhance musical qualities obscured in the original stereo mixes.



LITTLE ANIMALS (1997)

A forest of small creatures is gradually unveiled.

Despite the 'living' qualities alluded to by many of the sounds, all materials in *Little Animals* stem from non-vocal, inanimate acoustic objects. I remember, when composing this work in 1997, being surprised by how the sounds evolved into these living qualities.

The original *Little Animals* features on a number of compilation CDs. The version here is re-mastered, and unlike the other works on this CD, has not undergone any compositional revision.

Little Animals was premiered March 28, 1998, 5e Prix international Noroit-Léonce Petitot (Arras, Pas-de-Calais, France). It was awarded the First Prize at 25th Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Competition (France, 1998), received an Honorary Mention at the Prix Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria, 1998), and was a finalist at the 5th Prix international Noroit-Léonce Petitot (Arras, France, 1998).

EARTH HAZE (1995)

Earth Haze is a journey through images and events that dissolve and reveal. In this work, I had attempted to blur the distinction between musical and extra-musical sound by placing the interaction between physical objects, people and the environment behind a 'sonic haze' or 'sound veil'. *Earth Haze* was composed in 1995, and was one of my first experiments exploring the fragile ambiguity between the musical and the extra-musical in acousmatic music. In addition to re-mastering, this 2016 version has involved some compositional adjustments in time, frequency and spatial perspective.

Earth Haze was premiered in 1996, in the City University concert series, London (UK).

**RACING UNSEEN:
RACING FAR, RACING WIDE (1996)**

Racing through,
Racing with,
Into new spaces,
Away from old,
Racing high, racing low,
to escape, to seek,
racing into the eddy...
racing forever... racing unseen.

Composed in 1996, *Racing Unseen* was the longest composition that I had created up to this time and I remember struggling to embrace the extended musical structure with the available computer tools. As a solution, I composed the work in two movements, where the second is a development of the first, rather than defining two distinct thematic ideas in a traditional sense. The 2016 version of *Racing Unseen* has involved some compositional adjustments that I believe cohere the two sections into one 20-minute form.

Racing Unseen was premiered in 1996, in the City University concert series, London (UK).

ANIMALCULES (2010)

Animalcules was commissioned by Notam (the Norwegian Centre for Technology in Music and Art) with support from the Norwegian Cultural Council, for the Pierre Schaeffer 100-year jubilee celebrations. In composing *Animalcules*, to prepare my mind-set I returned to Schaeffer's *Cinq études de bruits*. Many years had passed since I last heard the études. Listening anew, entertained by new thoughts, I revisited Schaeffer's ideas: the sound object, the classification of sound parameters, reduced listening, and theories about how we hear and listen. How do these concepts relate to the listener in our current society? In Schaeffer's time, did people listen differently? Thinking about my own experience as a contemporary listener, and addressing how time changes our perspectives, I returned to an older work of my own: *Little Animals* (1997). The étude *Animalcules* is the result of this process.

Animalcules was realized in the ambisonics format at the composer's studio in Oslo (Norway). The work was premiered on December 4, 2010 at Caféteatret, as part of the Grønland Kammermusikfestival in Oslo (Norway).

PUZZLE WOOD (1994)

Puzzlewood is the name of a small forest nestled on the edge of the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire. The landscape is shaped by strange rock formations and caves formed by natural underground erosion, exploited by Iron Age settlers, and later the Romans, for the extraction of iron ore. Nature reclaimed the landscape that is now covered by ancient trees and traversed by meandering and confusing paths.

I first visited Puzzlewood at the age of four or five, when my family moved to the Forest of Dean. Fewer visitors than now frequented the area, and on my visit, the deserted Puzzlewood made a lasting impression. In recent years, the area has been used for movie sets, amongst others for the filming of Star Wars Episode 7 in 2015. I prefer to preserve my nostalgic memories of the place from the late 70's.

An alluring aspect of acousmatic music is its ability to evoke a multi-faceted and paradoxical listening experience, where our imagination for 'unheard' sounds interacts with what we are actually hearing. As new connections are made, new allusions jostle for attention. Some tiny fragment of sound

may shatter the existing context to reveal an even stronger 'Trompe L'Oeil', or sweep it aside in favour of some personal reminiscence. In this way, I would like listeners to lose themselves in the composition *Puzzle Wood*.

Composed in 1994, *Puzzle Wood* is the earliest work on this re-release. At this time, I was experimenting with how to combine many simultaneous sounds without them masking each other. The process involved some extreme frequency 'carving', and although the results functioned in sound diffusion concerts, with the available tools I found it problematic to create a representative CD master. The 2016 version includes some smaller compositional adjustments and a revision of this mastering process, which brings forth musically important elements lost in the original stereo version.

Puzzle Wood was premiered in 1994, in the City University concert series, London (UK), and was awarded an honorary mention at the 17th Luigi Russolo International Competition (Varese, Italy, 1995).

Puzzle Wood is dedicated to my granny, Edna Maude Cooke, who died aged 101, September 2016.



DR NATASHA BARRETT is a composer, performer and researcher in the field of electroacoustic music. She composes live electroacoustic and acousmatic concert music, sound-installations, interactive performances and sound design for other types of media. She regularly collaborates with musicians and visual artists, as well as architects and scientists, and has taken part in cutting edge creative projects throughout Europe and North America.

Her work is inspired by acousmatic sound and the aural images it can evoke, particularly in terms of the evocative implications of space and the projection of 3-D sound; an area in which she has become one of the world's leading composers.

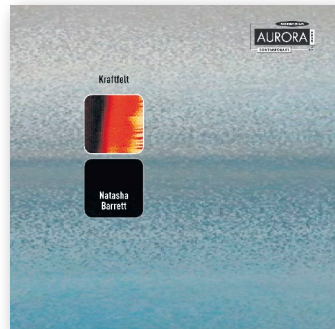
Barrett studied in the UK for masters and doctoral degrees in composition, where both degrees were funded by the humanities section of the British Academy. Since 1999 she has followed a career predominantly as a freelancer. She is currently resident in Norway.

Her works are performed and commissioned throughout the world and have

received a long list of prizes. These include the Nordic Council Music Prize (Nordic Countries), Giga-Hertz Award (Germany), Edvard Prize (Norway), Jury and public first prizes in Noroit-Leonce Petitot (France), Five prizes and the Euphonie D'Or in the Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Awards (France), prizes at Musica Nova (Prague), CIMESP (Brazil), Concours Scime, (France), International Electroacoustic Competition Ciberart (Italy), two prizes in Concours Luigi Russolo (Italy), two prizes in the International Rostrum for electroacoustic music, and prizes in two Ars Electronica competitions.

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All tracks apart from «Animalcules» were originally recorded at the music studios of City University, London
«Animalcules» was recorded at Notam

All works were remixed and remastered at the composers' studio in Hvalstad, Norway

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