

Daniel Blinkhorn

frostbYte – one dog night

AB065 | Audiobulb Records



Daniel is an Australian composer specialising in sound and new media

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He has worked in a variety of creative, academic, research and teaching contexts, and is an ardent location field recordist, where he has embarked upon a growing number of recording expeditions throughout Africa, Alaska, Amazon, West Indies, Northern Europe, Middle East, Australia and the high Arctic/ North Pole.

His creative works have received various international and national composition citations, with recent activities including Winner of a 'Giga-Hertz-Preis für elektronische Musik | Giga-Hertz-Award' – Germany, Winner of the 'International Computer Music Association' – 'Asia Oceania Award' – 2013, Winner of the '9th International Composition Competition – Città di Udine', Italy and Winner of the '12th as well as the 9th (2011 - 2009) International Electroacoustic Composition Competitions, 'Música Viva', Portugal.

He is self-taught in electroacoustic's, however has formally studied composition and the creative arts at a number of Australian universities.

More information about Daniel, as well as samples of his work can be found at

www.danielblinkhorn.com

The frostbYte cycle

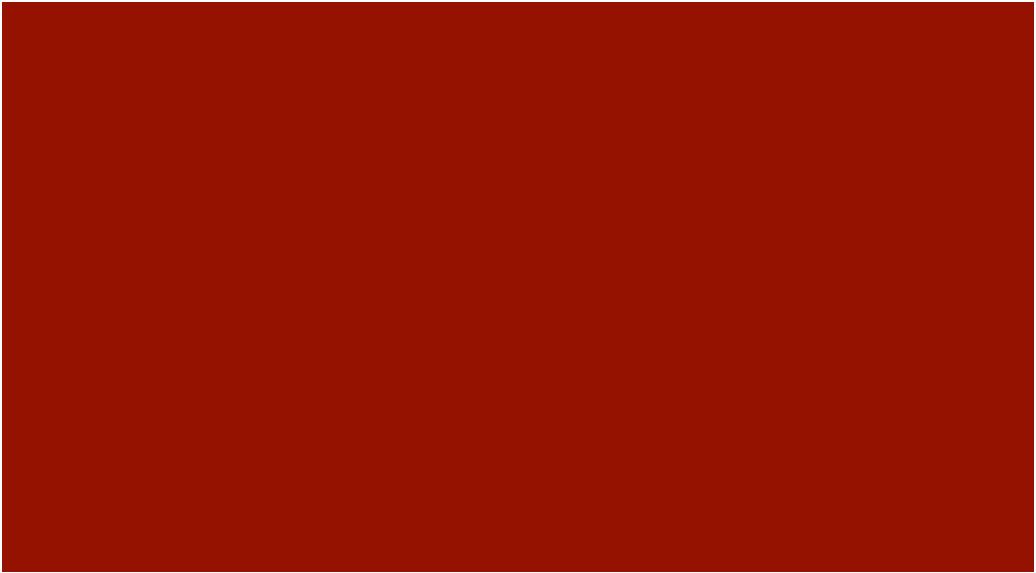
'One dog night' refers to an adage once used to describe how cold the temperature could drop at night. If it was a particularly cold night, it may have been appropriate to have one, two, even three of your dogs on the bed with you to help keep you warm as you slept!

The 'frostbYte cycle', a collection of ongoing pieces central to which are location-based field recordings I made whilst on expedition throughout the Arctic region of Svalbard (Spitsbergen).



Positioned at 79° north, 10° East (situated above Norway) the archipelago of Spitsbergen is a truly remarkable part of the world that continues to inspire awe and fascination, and is often at the heart of our collective consciousness for its ecological and climatic sensitivity.

It's renowned for its visual and cinematic beauty, yet it's also no surprise to find that sound plays an integral role in the uniqueness of its appeal. There's a great deal of sonic activity within the archipelago, both animal and aqueous and the frostbYte cycle of works seeks to portray some of these sonorities in a highly abstracted, yet clearly discernible way.



In the Arctic region of Raudfjorden, on a pebble strewn beach stands a small, crude wooden cabin. It's said that on the same site stood an earlier cabin once inhabited by a lone trapper seeking refuge in the fjord after a terrible mining accident left him disfigured. As I stood in the hut, peering out through one of the many cracks that made-up a wall, I wondered what it must have been like, both for the trapper and others like him who chose to live in such climatically extreme isolation.

I tried to imagine living in concert with such an unrelenting, yet singularly wondrous place; a home amidst the striking duality of extreme elements, harsh winds and frozen ice, and the many fragile, delicate and captivating sounds produced therein.

Within this reactive terrain of sound and light was a world so finely tuned it responded to every nuance in temperature, no matter how slight. As the sun arced across the mountain tops, ice fragments in the fjord dissolved, gently hissing and cracking. Occasionally, two fragments collided, producing strangely resonant harmonies refracting off the pebble strewn shore, creating a prismatic soundscape of colour and motion.

The majority of recordings found in 'frostbYte - red sound' are taken from a day at the hut and its surrounds. The two exceptions are a triangle, which is introduced to provide resonance within the piece (augmenting the resonance that was unexpectedly found within the ice and stones that populated the shoreline so prolifically) and a small dinghy as it slews through an icefield.

This second recording occurs toward the end of the composition, and is used to express the rugged motions of the boats rise and fall as it pounded through the frozen fields of ice collecting in dense masses around glaciers. The omni present glissandi throughout the work represents the vertical nature of the surrounding mountains, glaciers and cliff's that form the contours of the fjord enveloping the cabin.

The title itself refers to the name given to the region in the early 17th Century by the English explorer and whaler Robert Fotherby, who referred to the fjord as 'Red-cliff Sound'.



'cHaTteR' is essentially presented in two parts, with the primary source of sonic material for the first part being open air and hydrophone recordings of icebergs and iceberg fragments as they melt, collide and dissolve. The second part of the work places these sonorities alongside close-microphone recordings of the Barquentine sailing ship I travelled throughout the region within.

The title itself refers to the beautifully crisp and articulate sounds emitted by icebergs, where I was struck by how much they (seemingly) 'chatter' with both one another, as well as with the surrounding water and coastline. I found that, when approaching the icebergs from an underwater recording perspective, they became even more vocal, chirping, popping, snapping hissing and gurgling constantly. The ship also seemed to chatter ceaselessly as it interacted with the ice, water, wind and even crew, producing sharp friction-type sounds alongside the motion-bound sounds of the hull on the waves and other shipboard sonic miscellany. It should also be mentioned that, in the second section many of the sonorities generated from the field recordings become increasingly fictionalised, attempting to portray the types of vessels that usually travel within the region (both by air and sea). The title also suggests the involuntary physiological response prompted by extremely cold temperatures; the rhythm of teeth chatter!





Wild flower is the last in a cycle of works using field recordings from the high arctic region of Svalbard.

What was most discernible when recording fragments of glacial ice floating in fjords were the many and varied sonorous ecosystems emanating from underwater, each with its own distinctive personality. In every instance the ice fragments reacted differently to temperature, pressure and other observable phenomena, producing similar, yet unique sonorities. From a physical perspective, over relatively short periods of time both smaller and larger fragments became naturally sculptured by the elements into unusual and strangely evocative forms and shapes, each tempered and distorted by the elements in its own unique fashion.

Throughout the work I wanted to capture some of the delicate complexity, as well as the unified symmetries produced through the charismatic, audible ecosystems indelibly linked to each of the naturally formed ice sculptures.



In order to transcribe, then sculpt these natural carvings into gestures and phrases within the piece I chose to de-construct a number of hydrophone recordings into discrete elements, often organised into families of sound shapes. These typomorphologies were then re-constructed into a variety of gestures, phrases and forms, each of which contained its own attendant ecosystem of sound, much like the original field recordings.

From a broader perspective, the resultant phrases are intended to mimic the idea of something that is carved, or sculptured using an array of tools and techniques produced when physically carving ice sculptures. To my mind the final geometries and patterns sculptured became like those of the short-lived wildflowers that grow in the region, each populating its own unique ecosystem and all subject to the natural forces at play around them.

Looking across the water, sounds can seem to mimic the visual sense of panorama; wind and wave sounds, sea spray and splashing. Underneath the waves however there is a very different portrait. The crisp, delicate clicks, pops, and snaps produced from coral reefs present a soundscape far more intimate and dexterous as the many marine animals bustle and fossick amidst the reef.

Structurally, the composition depicts the many and varied shapes of coral reefs, from their jagged yet intricately textured features, to the dramatic variegations of size, depth and density. The sound shapes created in the piece are designed to describe my impressions of coral reefs.

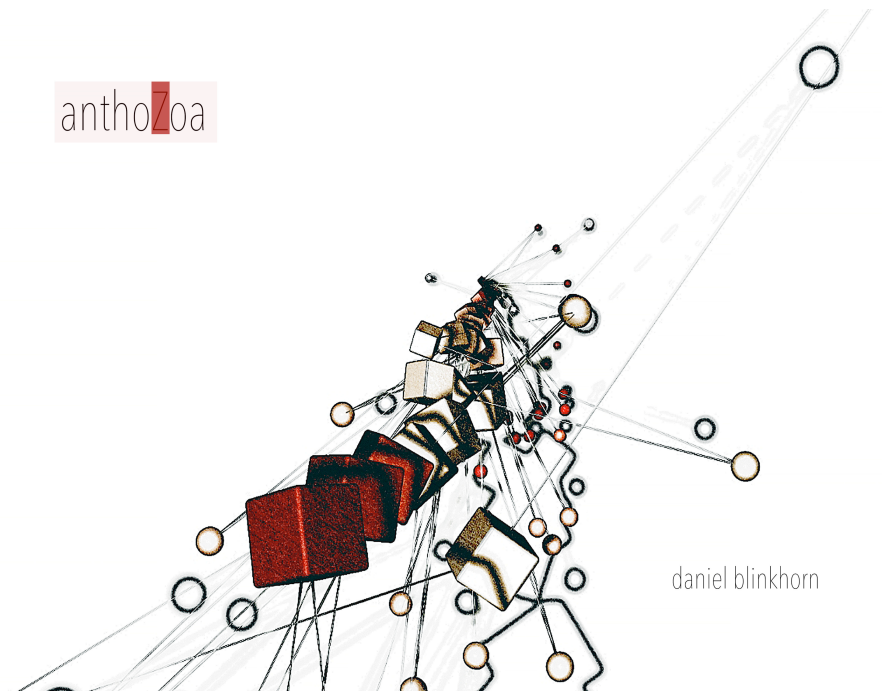
There are only two sound sources within the composition, that of a prepared piano (more specifically a single D note) and a composite recording of coral. The composite coral recording is comprised of two field recordings; one was captured in the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, and the other is from a coral reef off the coast of Barbados in the West Indies.

I have used the prepared piano note as a central pitch axis for the work, providing a metaphor for the clear, unbroken line of an ocean horizon, whilst the remaining material consists almost entirely from the (largely unprocessed) composite coral recording that can be heard beginning from 1:25 in the piece.

The work was composed in the Studio Alpha, Visby International Centre for Composers, Sweden and the composer's home studio in Sydney, Australia

(*special thanks to EcoSono for making the Barbados field recordings possible).

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