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**CPRIS 2020 Paper Submission**

**Title**: Sounds from a Dream Place: Selective Listening and Its Implications for Sound Design

**Abstract**: This project explores the ways sound simultaneously amplifies and silences contemporary issues surrounding politics, religion, and tourism in Kagbeni, Nepal. In this project, I curated a series of four compositions along with written analysis, bringing attention to how sound claims space and reshapes communities based on anthropological observations of listening practices in Kagbeni. These compositions draw attention to how different listening practices impact perceptions of a place or community, specifically Kagbeni. This project hopes to shed light on the consequences of selective listening, and how analysis of listening practices can inform sound design. Based on this work, I provide generative questions to consider when creating a design, which take into consideration forms of friction between people that push us forward.

I argue that theatrical sound design can be enhanced by better understanding how selective listening is culturally informed. In order to show this, I will first explain what is meant by "selective listening," and provide examples of what this looks like in Kagbeni, Nepal, where I conducted research on the intersections of sound, place, and identity in the summer of 2018. Through analyzing the ways people listen to and understand this one town, the material impacts of selective listening become apparent. With this in mind, I turn towards creative sonic representations of Kagbeni in order to think through how imaginations of the town change when coming from various points of view. Based on these findings, I will explore how selective listening can be used to inform theatrical sound design.

Kagbeni, Nepal sits at a series of overlapping crossroads, both literally and figuratively. The paths around the town trace political, economic, and cultural issues impacting contemporary Nepal. Situated between the restricted region of Upper Mustang to the north and a pilgrimage site to the east, the town is constantly being shaped by the politics of globalization, religious and cultural identities, and tourism. These overlapping ways of life, much like sound, do not have clear boundaries. They are messy, always shifting, and perceived differently by each observer and listener. Therefore, sound becomes a good medium for exploring the messiness of a town at overlapping borders. Kagbeni, like sound, is always shifting under the force of imposed boundaries, and is understood differently by each group who encounters it.

Over the course of one month during the summer of 2018, I traveled to Kagbeni, Nepal in order to learn from the people who live there. This followed a previous month-long trip to

Mustang with the University of Vermont in 2016. While I was able to explore a few of the other villages nearby in 2018, most of my time was spent in Kagbeni, teaching English to 64 novice monks and wandering around the village. Most of my conversations occurred with monks or with locals involved in tourism, such as shop owners, hotel staff, and trekking guides. In addition, I talked to many foreigners passing through who were either staying at the same hotel as me, or who visited the *gompa[1]* when I was there. My interactions with people ranged from a single conversation with a tourist over dinner, to daily interactions with Kagbeni locals, to conversations with friends I have known for two years. Conversations were limited by language, as I only have a basic understanding of Nepali and even less knowledge of Loke, the Tibetan dialect in Upper Mustang. None of my conversations were meant to be formal interviews, and all occurred organically. In addition to these interactions, I also spent hours observing how people went about daily life in the town.

Based on my observations of and conversations with people in Kagbeni, I collected recordings of sounds that are significant in the every-day life of the village. The recordings were made on a handheld TASCAM DR-05 recorder, mounted on a tripod. Some recordings were made with the goal of capturing a single distinct sound, such as a bell or spinning prayer wheel, while others sought to capture more holistic soundscapes. I have used both of these forms of sound capture together with the aim of representing the relationships between identity and place through the medium of sound.

Anna Tsing defines friction as, among other things, "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference." Kagbeni, amidst its intersecting crossroads, is a clear site of global friction. Tsing explains that friction is required to move the world forward. It relies on and reinforces structures of inequality. Power dynamics are unequal, and often follow historical narratives of imperialism, yet there is still agency to be found for the less powerful. Kagbeni, at the center of these many crossroads, is actively involved in its own change. After spending a month in Kagbeni studying its multiple frictions, I created a series of four sound compositions to express the way that the town and the larger region of Mustang are imagined by people through a variety of listening practices. I questioned the politics of sound and space, the role of sound in Kagbeni's daily life, and how sound reshapes the lives of people who live there. Through this series of compositions and analysis, we see how a narrow view of

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[1] A Tibetan Buddhist monastery or place of fortification and learning

life in Kagbeni similarly reshapes and limits the lives of people living there, altering the interactions between people. By creating compositions which convey selective listening practices, I hoped to also show the workings of global friction and the impacts of both forces on the town.

As for the production of final versions of the sound recordings that are included in this work, I have tried to maintain as much of the original qualities of the sounds as possible, while making the recordings easy to listen to. In some cases this simply meant changing the level or pan of recordings to manage different relationships of sound in space around the listener. Due to the windy nature of the region, many of the recordings have a high pass filter applied, in order to cut out the worst of the wind while keeping everything else intact. While the point of some recordings is specifically to hear the way the wind moves through different materials, I felt that in others the wind diminished the experience of hearing the main subject, and wanted to bring the listener's ears to other sounds instead, like the clang of bells and construction.

This methodology is influenced by the work of R. Murray Schafer, put in conversation with the work of anthropologist Steven Feld. Schafer defines *keynote sounds* as those which "help outline the character of men living among them" (2012: 101). They are sounds associated with the landscape and geography of a place, and are ever-present in the lives of the people who live there. In his theory of the soundscape, however, Schafer leaves little room for anthropogenic sounds – relegating them solely to the categories of *sound signals* and *soundmarks*. Steven Feld complicates this idea in his anthropological study of sound, by showing how ingrained sounds of a place are in the people who live there, and that there is more of a dynamic relationship between the two (Feld 1988). With this in mind, I interpret keynote sounds to be ones that are always present and that people build their days around, but are not purely environmental.

From my observations and conversations, I identified important sounds present in daily religious, social, and physical landscapes of Kagbeni, guided by Schafer's notion of keynote sounds, signals, and soundmarks in a soundscape. Not only are these sounds representative of life in the small town north of the Himalayas, they also present a manner through which it can be reimagined and shaped by the selective listener. While I recorded general soundscapes when in Nepal, the final product is a stylized representation of the ways in which we selectively listen to and understand a region. I use the word "composition" to refer to the sound components of each chapter because each one is purposefully created and shaped to achieve a certain purpose. As

such, I believe "composition" is the word which best points to what I have done with the raw recordings. These compositions were created by determining what keynote sound would be the underlying, ever-present base of the piece, and then building other sounds up from that base.

As someone researching the area, I certainly play a role in the ongoing discourses surrounding Mustang. With this in mind, I did my best to wipe away assumptions I had before arriving in Kagbeni. It is similarly important to note that, while the microphone is used as an ear to record sounds, the microphone is not an ear. Laura Kunreuther reminds us that "recording is itself a kind of mediated experience" (Furmage 2018). A microphone collects everything that hits it, regardless of frequency. They do not have the ability to focus on certain sounds and tune out others. Directionality matters, because most recording devices will not pick up what happens behind them. Thus, each recording involved a conscious decision to place and turn on my microphone. As a result, every sound in this project is mediated by myself and by the TASCAM recorder. Although I did my best to record as much as possible and remove my own biases, what was included in the final compositions is still mediated by the logistics of IRB concerns and having a recording device available when certain sounds occurred, in addition to my own daily patterns and what drew my attention.

To understand what selective listening is and why it is important, we must begin with R. Murray Schafer. In his chapter titled "The Soundscape," Schafer poses the question: "Is the soundscape of the world an indeterminate composition over which we have no control, or are we its composers and performers, responsible for giving it form and beauty?" (Schafer 2012: 96). People experience or imagine a single place in a variety of ways based on their life experiences. We see this in the way someone interacts with a space sonically; for example, a person who is an avid bird lover, when traveling to a new area, will most likely be more perceptive of different bird calls and species present than someone who is there primarily for sightseeing. This difference in personal experience or background changes the way that two people might experience the same place, even if they are traveling together.

In order to represent the extent to which people create their own perception of a place like Kagbeni, I turn to the medium of sound. Sound is an important part of Tibetan religion and culture, thus giving it importance in the daily life of the town. Sound, just like place, is often only selectively comprehended. As R. Murray Schafer reminds us, we cannot turn off our ears. This does not mean, however, that we are always listening (Schafer 2003).  As a result, sound

plays a part in the ways that a region is conceived in a variety of ways. In this project, I used the sounds of Kagbeni itself in order to help present these selectively created perceptions of the Mustang region.

Schafer's question posed above about the human relationship to soundscapes is one I wanted to explore throughout this project. Not only do humans shape the world around them through construction and physical changes to the landscape, we also choose what we listen to and what to block out. Listening to the sounds of a place and coming to understand the people who live there shapes global interactions. Some sounds are deemed beautiful, others invasive. Some are given attention, others remain unnoticed. Schafer writes about this distinction, saying "noises are the sounds we have learned to ignore" (95). What is considered noise and what we give our listening attention to is related to issues of control and power. "Noise" is generally considered unfavorable, while "sounds" are something you distinctly listen to or for. Contrary to this, many sound studies scholars would argue that listening to noise is just as important as listening to other aspects of a soundscape, and that much can be learned by looking at what is considered "noise" by whom (Novak 2015, Schwartz 2011).

Historically, listening and hearing have been described in contrast to each other. Hearing is passive, whereas listening is active (Rice 2015, Sterne 2015). Increasingly, however, sound studies scholars argue that listening can be just as selective as hearing. This idea was laid out in Hillel Schwartz's "The Indefensible Ear," which ends with a call to action: stop talking about the ear as if it is defenseless (Schwartz 2003). It might be true that we do not have the capability to block out any specific noise that bombards our ears, but we *are* in fact capable of focusing only on specific sounds, and reducing the rest to the background. This is what I refer to as selective listening.

Clearly, the listener has agency. In choosing what to listen to, or what to disregard and label as noise, we enact power in a situation. Tom Rice explains that there is a huge variety of modes of listening and qualities of attention, which have a range of distinct purposes, functions, and techniques (Rice 2015: 104). The way we listen and focus our attention is in part determined by our context. In fact, "ways of listening are an aspect of 'habitus,' a set of culturally informed bodily and sensory dispositions" (101-102) which shape how we understand stimuli. Thus – to apply what Steph Berns argues about museum patrons – each listener brings with them their own cultural "baggage" which impacts the way they listen to and understand a specific set of sounds

(Berns 2017). I find this a helpful frame to use here, as the "baggage" someone carries directly shapes how they interact with and understand the world around them. Sound is constructed, just as culture is, by the meanings communities apply to different noises. These modes of listening are an integral part of how we process information and understand the world (Feld 1988). Thus, ways of listening must be "understood by reference to the broader cultural and historical context within which they are formed" (Rice 2015: 102).

Schafer defines the soundscape as an acoustic field of study, a sonic version of a physical landscape (Schafer 2012: 99). In his definition, a soundscape has three components: keynote sounds, signals, and soundmarks. Keynote sounds are those which are ever present in the landscape, a central figure around which the rest of the soundscape forms. They often fade into the background, and are not necessarily listened to consciously. Signals are listened to consciously, and communicate a message. Finally, soundmarks are unique to each community, and may have special meaning to the people who live near them.

Emily Thompson, in response to Schafer, adds that "a soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world" (Thompson 2002: 1). Here, the link between sound and culture becomes even more apparent. Sounds mean nothing to us without a cultural context that informs how we listen. This addition by Thompson points to an important trend in the field of sound studies, where the agency of the listener is studied and recognized in addition to the sounds and their human relationships more generally. This pairs nicely with Steven Feld's argument that sounds contribute to our meaning of humanity by adding understanding, compassion, and identity (Feld 1988). Thompson goes on to argue that "a soundscape, like a landscape, ultimately has more to do with civilization than with nature, and as such, it is constantly under construction and undergoing change" (2). Here, Thompson connects sound and space, and pushes her readers to think about the ways in which both are shaped and understood by those who encounter them.

The link between sound, landscape, and meaning goes deeper than this, as what we hear relies on the physical landscape around us. Sound exists as a physical entity, directly shaped by the landscape it moves in. Waves of sound bounce off surfaces constantly, impacting the way we hear. In a gorge like the Kali Gandaki of Mustang, for example, the walls of the mountains rising up on either side make sound bounce around and reverberate differently than it would on a

plateau, or in a forest. As Eisenberg argues, "sound and space… are phenomenologically and ontologically intertwined" (Eisenberg 2015: 193). In other words, our experiences of a place or sound interact with how we understand the world more broadly. Steven Feld articulates this in his ethnographic work with the Kaluli, who live in the rainforests of Papua New Guinea (Feld 1988). This relationship occurs in part because of sound's inherent spatial qualities, which attach narrative meaning as it moves across a space.

Addressing the way in which people interact with the spatial qualities of sound, Eisenberg explains:

> As a phenomenon that exists at once within and beyond perceiving subjects, sound cannot but reveal social space as an artifact of material practices complexly interwoven with semiotic processes and the 'imaginations, fears, emotions, psychologies, fantasies and dreams' that human beings bring to everything (202).

The meaning attributed to certain sounds teaches us about other processes and ontologies. Sound thus becomes a site where we can interpret how people understand the world.

The other component of the physical quality of sound is that it takes up space. Sounds permeate spaces, shaping the people who come into contact with them. Eisenberg sums up this territoriality of sound, saying "sonic practices territorialize by virtue of combining physical vibration with bodily sensation and culturally conditioned meanings" (199). In other words, human understanding of what sounds are appropriate in a certain situation are shaped by both the physical properties of sound, as well as the cultural norms surrounding the location or the sound itself. Beyond cultural constructions, sound is also physically constructed, actively put out into the world by humans claiming space. Speaker systems amplify sounds, allowing them to take up more room and interact with more bodies.

This use of space leads us to consider the politics of sound and space. What sounds are listened to? What meaning do they carry? How do sounds interact and overlap with each other in space? Brandon LaBelle argues that sound "exists as a network that teaches us how to belong, to find place, as well as how not to belong, to drift. To be out of place, and still to search for new connection, for proximity" (2010: xvii). His book, *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*, examines the exchanges between environments and people within them through aural experiences. Through this, LaBelle shows how sound conditions and contours subjectivity

as a method of social negotiation. It becomes clear through his discussion that sound is not only a key factor in creating cultural meaning, but also in belonging.

In the Nepali context, sound is linked to the dominant religious beliefs of Hinduism and Buddhism. In both traditions, sound allows for a connection to the divine. As the *khenpo*[2] of Kag Chode explained to me, sound is both an offering and a way of reshaping people performing the *puja*.[3] In South Asian languages, the term *āwāj* refers to sound and metaphoric meanings of voice. Nepali-English dictionaries translate this alternatively as sound, noise, and voice. This term thus brings together the physical and discursive qualities present in sound: resonance, tone, pitch, power, subjectivity, representation, agency, and so on. Thinking about sound in this way "helps us focus our attention on the connections between the rational and the affective, the articulate and the inarticulate, rather than their fundamental division" (Kunreuther 2018). Sound does not have clear boundaries. It is messy, always shifting, and perceived differently by each listener. Therefore, it becomes a good medium for exploring the messiness of a town at overlapping borders. Kagbeni, like sound, is always shifting under the force of imposed boundaries, and is looked upon differently by each group who interacts with it.

On the southern border of restricted Upper Mustang, Kagbeni is the last town that foreigners can travel to without paying a hefty daily permit fee. Approximately 300 people live there, surrounded by terraced fields growing barley and buckwheat. The town is positioned at a narrow part of the Kali Gandaki gorge, the deepest gorge in the world, and the Kali Gandaki and Dzar-Dzong rivers flow together at its center. One road branches to the east, following the valley up towards Muktinath, while another stretches north into Upper Mustang. Tiri village can be seen across the river, about a half hour's walk north. The majestic Annapurna mountain range is visible to the south, and Dhaulagiri mountain lays visible beyond the next bend. This narrow part of the gorge has historically been a stopping point for trade moving back and forth between India and China, allowing Kagbeni the strategic position to collect taxes on the goods moving through. At the convergence of two rivers, the town gets its name. *Kag*, a "stopping point," and *beni*, where two rivers come together.

Nepali-Canadian writer Manjushree Thapa chronicled her travel through Mustang in her monograph *Mustang Bhot in Fragments*, describing Kagbeni as "the southernmost of the Bhotia

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[2] The head of the monastery, this term refers to someone who has a higher degree in the study of Tibetan Buddhism
[3] A ritual ceremony in Buddhism

villages of Mustang; [where there were] fixtures of Tibetan culture in the houses and *chörtens*,[4] and in the *gomba* that had been closed to tourists since a theft a few years back" (Thapa 2008: 26). The *Bhot*, or Tibetan highland, begins at Kagbeni and stretches north (29). Today, 64 students between the ages of 5 and 18 attend school at Kag Chode monastery (the *gompa* she refers to), which has since been reopened to tourists. This summer, Kag Chode consecrated and opened a new building. In preparation for the ceremony, construction work was underway every day to finish the new building and bridge leading across the river. As a result, construction sounds often mingled with the normal sounds of the *gompa*. Children screaming and running around during their breaks between class, the ringing of the meal-time bell and the class-time bell, and the low rumble of locals repeating the mantra *Om mani padme hum*[5] as they walked along the prayer walls met ever-present rushing wind and water, interspersed with music and car horns. The sounds of the *gompa* are similar to the rest of Kagbeni, with the addition of occasional *pujas* and instruments.

Each morning in Kagbeni begins with the sounds of water and wind; fitting, since these are the main elements people mention when they talk about Mustang. Animals are herded into the hills early every morning, and sounds of construction begin to ring within the town and from the road above. As the day goes on the wind picks up, reaching its height in the early afternoon. Kunga, who owns one of the hotels in Kagbeni, tries his best not to go outside between noon and 5:00 to avoid the gusts that bring dust into your eyes and mouth. Messengers call out the local news, and people working in the fields play music to accompany them in the harvest. Animal bells return as the goats are brought back from grazing in the late afternoon. Herders whistle at the cows, goats, and dzos to keep them in line. Around dusk the construction noises ebb away, and people return to their homes for an evening spent talking over *dal bhat*[6] and tea. Crickets chirp in the grass outside, slowly building to become the dominant sound, interspersed with dogs barking down the street. These are the sounds and rhythms of everyday life in Kagbeni. People wake up with the sun, go to work, come home, and spend time with family and friends, as the wind and water shape the gorge around the town. Although the town has recently been overcome with jeeps and busses trundling through, most days remain quiet for long stretches of time. A

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[4] A Buddhist shrine or monument
[5] This translates as "all hail the jewel of the lotus," and is one of the most common mantras in Tibetan Buddhism
[6] Rice and lentils

donkey braying is often the loudest sound in the immediate area, though noises from the construction of the road echo around the walls of the gorge.

While these sounds and patterns of daily life play out all around us, we tune out the noises that seem unimportant, or irrelevant, or are always there so we no longer pay them any mind. Because listening is culturally encoded, as Feld, Schafer, Thompson, and others argue, people who have lived in Kagbeni most of their life come to hear it differently than seasonal workers, or tourists just passing through. Throughout my month in the town, three major themes appeared in the way people acted and talked. Government officials and Nepalis from other parts of the country frequently distanced Mustang from the rest of the country, calling it a "dream place" or saying that it was different and special. The monks at Kag Chode and the pilgrims on their way to Muktinath represent a second set of intangible boundaries, specifically regarding religion. Kagbeni is a Tibetan Buddhist community with traces of Bon Po in a majority Hindu State.  While the religions have much in common, it still becomes a focal point of life in the town. And then there are the tourists who come through on a trek or in Jeeps, playing their own music and drowning out the sounds of the world around them. Each of these ways of life thus impacts interactions in Kagbeni, and therefore how people perceive the town.

In order to represent these different listening practices and understandings of Kagbeni, I created a series of four sound compositions, each focused on a major theme that I identified in the way people speak and think about the town. First, I introduced the political history of the region. This meant understanding Kagbeni's relationship to Nepal, Tibet, and globalization and development initiatives connected to the United States and other larger countries with something to gain. Next, I looked at the religions present in the Mustang region and how they interact in Kagbeni, as the town sits on the road to a major pilgrimage site. Thirdly, I observed how tourists interacted with others in the town, how they perceived it, and how others perceive them. Each of these three themes exposed new layers of life in Kagbeni, elucidated by their different focus.

Each of these compositions alone does not tell the full story of Kagbeni. They are partial truths based on the selective listening of a particular group of people, mindset, or focus. In order to convey how thinking about the town along only one of these themes could have damaging material impacts on those who live there, I created a fourth composition with the goal of bringing everything together in a more holistic expression of the town. This final piece includes segments from the prior three, as well as some additional material. While all four compositions follow the

rhythms of the day, each has a distinct character. When listening for just one theme, it becomes difficult to hear what is missing. It is my hope, then, that this final composition presents a more full experience of Kagbeni, with all of its overlapping complexities. The four compositions are [available to listen to online](), in addition to selected other recordings made in Kagbeni.

Throughout this analysis of Kagbeni and the intersecting barriers creating friction there, I tried to express the way that Mustang is imagined by people through a variety of listening practices. I questioned the politics of sound and space, the role of sound in Kagbeni's daily life, and how sound reshapes the lives of people who live there. Through this series of compositions and analysis, we see how a narrow view of life in Kagbeni similarly reshapes the lives of people living there, and alters the interactions between actors.

Mustang, Nepal has a long history of being pushed to the margins, where its people occupy a space between Tibetan and Nepali. This has been accentuated by governmental policies, which are mapped onto cultural divisions created concurrently. Tourist literature constantly romanticizes the region, describing it as a place stuck in the past and in need of saving from globalization in the name of preservation. As with the first three sound compositions, a focus on only one of these intersections in Kagbeni neglects the complexity of the town. There are no simple barriers to be drawn between each of these categories or identities. Politics are entangled with religion which is entangled with tourism. Sound provides a way for us to understand these entanglements, and the impossibility of separating these forces. By trying to separate these from each other, we are not able to look at the full context of the Mustang region, or understand the ways these forces interact in the daily lives of Kagbeni.

So how does this understanding of selective listening relate to theatrical sound designs? Why is it important for us to be aware of selective listening in a wider context? Theatre, much like Thompson's definition of a soundscape, is simultaneously a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world. We often talk about how theatre helps us explore what it means to be human, or how it is a direct response to the world around us. As a result, the soundscape as a world becomes an incredibly relevant idea in thinking about theatrical sound design.

Here, I present a few questions that can further complicate or generate ideas for a design. First, what are the listening practices of the characters in a given production? How do they differ from each other, and how do they differ from the audience? This line of questioning can be helpful in teaching us (or the audience) something new about a character and the world they live

in. What draws their focus, and what do they tune out? What does that say about the way they grew up, or who they are now? On the other side of the equation, should this information be used to inform what curated experience the audience has when experiencing a particular character? For example, a character's listening practices could be mirrored in order to either bring the audience into their world, or to set them apart from others.

This first set of questions can lead us further along other separate lines of inquiry. Preshow playlists and transition music can be further informed by using these guidelines, as can other effects contributing to general ambience. I was able to use these generative questions to guide my own work as an assistant designer for the University of Vermont's 2018 production of *Hand to God* by Robert Askins. Tasked by my designer to begin brainstorming potential songs to use in the show, I began by thinking about what music each character would listen to. We knew we wanted to use a variety of Christian pop, rock, and metal, and that the music would get darker as the show went on. In my research I therefore found songs that fit what Margery might play on the radio, as opposed to her son Jason, as opposed to her troubled student Timmy. After the initial brainstorm, we looked at which characters were in the scenes immediately before or after a transition, and determined who we wanted the audience to be most connected to in that moment. In this way, we were able to potentially provide more information about the characters on stage, and deepen their connection with the audience.

Other design aspects such as ambient noise and effects can also be developed with these questions in mind. Beyond making a cue historically or situationally accurate, we can think more deeply about different cultural understandings of, and responses to, sound. In the imaginations of Kagbeni, we saw how having a different cultural context can completely change how the same area is heard and understood. These selective listening practices therefore can be beneficial in thinking about what to include or leave out in a given situation. Returning to Schafer's idea of the soundscape, it can be beneficial to think through which keynote sounds are present in a character's daily life. How does their presence or a sudden absence impact the character? Is it something they only notice once it is gone?

Friction, too, provides a useful frame for us to think about how sound is used. Who holds the power in a given situation, and how does it ebb and flow between people or groups? How might thinking about a performance in this way highlight new or different things in it? Theater

thrives on constantly shifting dynamics, so it makes sense that actively thinking about friction in this way could bring something new to a design.

The questions I present here are not entirely new, nor are they meant to critique current practices of sound design. Rather, I hope to offer more context for why this line of questioning can be useful, and to generate further conversations around the benefits of thinking about conceptual sound design in this way. Through this project centered on Kagbeni, I also hope to complicate the way we think about agency and understanding by bringing together a creative representation of sound and listening in Kagbeni with a deeper analysis of its material consequences. And finally, echoing Hillel Schwartz's argument that the ear is not defenseless, I ask that we continue to think about and learn from differences in listening practices and the implications they carry for agency and identity.

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