

Proposal

Snapshot of a Soundscape

The constant buzz of the alarm, the pitched, screaming whistle of the train, water singing from the shower at eight in the morning: time to get up. The toaster pops and I munch at my breakfast. I hop onto my bike, each spoke complains as it hits the frame. A honk, a quick swerve onto the sidewalk, hearing the driver yell. The emerging chatter of the early-class students, the squeak of the door handle, the knock of my backpack as I sit down. Ten thirty in the morning, the droning begins.

“Hola,” she says. The slow taunting click of the clock. Next. A cacophony, sometimes symphony, concert pitch Bb, ready to go. Fast forward, history. The honk of jazz, the sound of space, a glimpse of the possible future embedded within a sterile PowerPoint. Dark outside, ice forms on the grass, no stars, silence. Inside, another concert Bb. Finally, home, quiet save for the whisper of breath. Asleep.

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First, noise. Next, sound. Then, music. And finally, Identity. The modern world flaunts its identity of progress and fast-paced living through its noises and soundscapes. We, on the other hand, achingly organize sound to create music, and in turn, our own identity. The world identifies itself to us through sound, and we, in turn, identify ourselves to the world through music.

These soundscapes, one of the self, one of the surrounding, constitute the entirety of our lives. The soundscape of the self – of the soul – is the aural and oral creation of our identity and place in the world through sound and music, i.e., the music and noise that we make. The

soundscape of our surroundings instead describes the identity of the place in which we are – this soundscape is the noise and music of the environment.

I want to, with the Givens, explore my own soundscape, the soundscapes of others, and the soundscapes of the world. Through my years of education, two topics have persisted from year to year: Music and Spanish. I began “studying” music in the fifth grade – although it was more akin to sitting in a room trying to figure out how to hold my instrument. However, I now study the nuances and intricacies of sound, identity, and music as a World Music student. And with Spanish, I began as a floundering English speaker in the eighth grade. Now, in my fifth year of studying Spanish, I have shed my earlier timidity. And where do these two constant strands of my life unite?

El Camino de Santiago. Or, The Way of St. James. The road that few pilgrims began taking in the 9th century – often for the absolution of sins through earning an indulgence – now sees the shoes, bicycles, and cars of a diverse pilgrimage population that numbers over 200,000 per year. This historical path, once an isolated trip of over 800 kilometers, is now the focus of tourism development, e.g., paved paths, bustling hostels, and increased highway traffic, to name a few.

And with the changing of the physical place of El Camino, so too are the identities of those who walk the path changing. With a multitude of ideas – many spiritual, some not – about what now constitutes El Camino de Santiago, these modern pilgrims – *pelgrinos* – now descend in droves upon “the way” for a variety of reasons.

I want to travel this way, as a pilgrim on the way, for two specific reasons. First, I want to explore the sounds of El Camino - I want to listen to, make, and record (via photography and

sound recordings) everything from ambient envirosounds, to noise pollution, to the music-making that happens all along the path. I want to record this moment in the history of the path and pilgrim's quickly changing soundscape.

With these recordings – visual and aural – I plan on creating a piece to reflect upon the changes of sound that constitute El Camino in this day and age. In essence, a snapshot of a soundscape. And to “bookend” my time on El Camino, I am also planning to spend a few days in both Madrid and Barcelona to record and create a beginning and end for my project: recordings of an already hyper-modern cities which I can then compare to El Camino and incorporate into my final piece.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, I want to traverse this quest for my own edification. I want to not only be a student of the path, but of myself. In recording, listening, and making music along the way, I hope to discover something, anything new about myself. Whether it be a deeper connection to the music that we all make, or a deeper connection to the people of this earth to whom music binds us, I want to take the strands of my life, Music and Spanish – two different languages, really – and experience and live with them outside of the only the place that I have known: the academic institution.

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This journey will start March 25th in Barcelona. From Barcelona, I will make my way via public transportation to St. Jean De Pied De Port. From this small city in southern France, I will begin what will amount to a forty five day backpacking hike of roughly 800km through southern France, the Pyrenees, and the northern half of Spain. It will be throughout these days, in and out of hostels along the way, that I will record the bulk of my experiences.

Ending in Finesterre on the coast of what was once considered the “end of the world,” I will complete El Camino. Although, I am hesitant to say complete, for I am hoping the journey I begin on El Camino is one I that I will never stop: a journey to discover more about the sounds and music of this world and myself. Finally, on May 19th, I will make my way from Madrid to home.

My soundscape, as you read above, has been that of the student in a standardized, already modern world dedicated to escorting me through four years of university. Now, I hope with your consideration, that I will be able to greatly expand the soundscape of my soul by diving into the experiences of a place that contains the souls and soundscapes of a world in transition.

Givens Fellowship Budget

- **Airfare** (\$2000)
 - Detroit – Barcelona (\$1000)
 - Madrid – Detroit (\$1000)
- **Public Transportation** (\$170)
 - Barcelona – Saint Jean De Pied De Port (\$80)
 - Train (\$60)
 - Bus (\$20)
 - Finnisterra to Madrid (\$90)
 - Train (\$70)
 - Bus (\$20)
- **Food** (\$1120)
 - On El Camino: \$20/day (45x18 = \$900)
 - In Barcelona (\$100)
 - In Madrid (\$100)
 - In Saint Jean De Pied De Port (\$20)
- **Room** (\$700)
 - Average for cheap hostels / stops on El Camino is \$6-11/day (8.5x45 = \$400)
 - Barcelona Hostel (3 Nights @ \$150)
 - Madrid Hostel (3 Nights @ \$150)
- **Recording equipment** (\$1150)
 - Canon EOS Rebel SL1 Camera + Lens (\$600)
 - Zoom H5 Handy Recorder (\$300)
 - 4x 32Gb SDHC cards (\$80)
 - Mic wind screen (\$22)
- **Gear** (\$100)
 - I will already have most of the equipment required for backpacking
 - Misc. / Unexpected Gear (\$100)
- **Visa** (\$100)
- **Travel Insurance** (\$250)
- **Miscellaneous** (\$410)
 - Sales Tax
 - Emergency travel / lodging
 - Fluctuations in Euro to Dollar exchange rates

Total: \$6000

Expected time to travel: 55 days

2 Days of Travel: 4 Days in Barcelona: 45 Days on El Camino: 4 Days in Madrid