'VISIBLE VOICES'

Illustrated Presentation for ACMC 8.7.2011.

Some general points before we begin.

This is not an attempt to present a synopsis of the goals and objectives of the entire work, or to give any idea of its overall effect. It is merely a few observations about some of the aesthetic and structural mechanisms I have employed in its making.

*The work uses **24 channels** but only for a short percentage of its duration. The majority of the texture remains very simple.*

*The **multiple outputs** are used to establish **credible contrasted acoustic environments.***

*The **dimensions of the installation** are critical for success. Tolerances are down to a few millimetres with a very small sweet spot.*

*This causes a **severe promulgation problem**. Single point listening (one at a time) in a 24channel installation requires very specific playback circumstances not at all suitable for short duration events (like this one for example when more than one person at a time wishes to listen).*

*Consequently I must give a **presentation** about a fully completed work, because it is impossible to play the work to a collective audience!*

*Furthermore **the performance element** in this work (although very small) disqualifies it from an intact playing without my physical presence, a fact that further exacerbates promulgation difficulties.*

*The work is also **site specific** in various ways. Traffic noise (an unfortunate fact of life in my suburban space and unavoidably present in some of the hours of voice recordings made during the gestation of the work) is co-opted as an active sound source and used both literally and in various transformations.*
The fact that my house is next door to my studio is also exploited in various references to 'his being next door' etc.

Lets begin with an introductory extract.

Eg. 1.

Various formal strategies and gambits are employed in the work. Many of them seem unrelated to one another. They often sit side by side in surreal juxtaposition, or tangential contradictions.
I shall identify some of these elements, comment upon what I consider to be their function, and play some examples. Note: The lack of three-dimensional positioning removes some of the connective plausibility from these examples.

Gambit 1) The idea that I can physically inhabit a speaker enclosure.

Before the work begins I interact with the listener (being physically present and in conversation with the them as I usher him/her into the listening enclosure).
After they are in place I go to the computer (behind the listener and invisible to them) and while continuing my conversation, I casually establish the fiction that I am about to enter a near bye speaker enclosure. In doing so I leave **un-recorded time/space**, and enter **recorded time/space**.
Within the context of the performance situation the listener has met me physically, knows my name and usually something about me, and has just been interacting with me in a normal 'real time' manner. Then I imply I am entering the enclosure, and on doing so, take on a new name (RM:Real Me) and emphasise the fact that I am *'the actual me'*.
I deliberately draw the listener's attention to this anomaly, while treating it as a normal situation. This is, in fact a performance gambit.

(NB: Ask audience to shut their eyes and speak the cue for the next example.)

Eg1.1

Gambit 2) The loudspeaker as a fictional personality.

The idea that the sound emanating from a loudspeaker is uttered by an entity living inside the speaker enclosure, leading to a myriad of characterisation possibilities.
This of course is a simple application of the acousmatic fact that the listener accepts the contrivance of the recording, and relates to the recorded artefact as if it were an actual source. NB: The repercussions of this fact are most overt when the sound is a semantic data stream, viz recorded speech. **Eg 2.**

Gambit 3) The characters are all the same voice.

This is an essential element at the heart of the work. The listener is faced with the unresolvable fact of an entirely credible scenario (one which to all intents and purposes takes itself absolutely seriously) being an overtly contrived impossibility.
The listener responds to an incredulous context as if it were truly authentic.
This fact hopefully produces a base level of low grade, unresolvable tension.
Somewhere in the back of their mind the listener knows they are being duped, but they choose to enter the pretence. This mechanism is very similar to our response to theatrical or cinematic experiences. **Eg 2.1**

Gambit 4) The voices embark on a game of 'find the file'.

Because the participating voices are all the identical person they inhabit a common history and life experience.
It is therefore credible that they are familiar with the corpus of their past repertoire and consequently might enjoy searching for, finding, and playing excerpts of past works, in a sort of silly identification game.
This throws up various extracts for further development, either spectro-morphologically, or through re-contextualisation.
Often the characters argue about the lineage of the extracts. The response from the

listener will vary depending upon their own experience of these works. **Eg 3.**

Gambit 5) The Embrace Monologue.

This is an extract from a previous performance work from the 1980's (the result of a *find the file* episode).
It has been considerably re-worked and re-recorded. It is tangential to the scenarios occupied by the recorded characters, but gradually implicates them in a variety of ways. Notice how the central contrivance of the work precipitates further implausibilities that are nonetheless accepted by the listener. **Eg 4.**

Gambit 6) Stylised Vignettes.

Contrived ensembles often intended to be humorous. They are deliberate kitsch. For me they have a similar feel to Dennis Potter's works for BBC Televison ….'The Singing Detective', 'Pennies from Heaven', etc. **Eg 5. Eg 5.1**

Gambit 7) Pitched, organ-like passages.

These appear periodically. They are similar to those used in contemplative periods in church or at a funeral. They are intended to be enigmatic, infusing the materials surrounding them with a less literal light.
They sometimes accompany an unidentified protagonist as he attempts to find his place amongst a plethora of documentary material relating to the work.
Note: This character is never introduced. He is not part of the hierarchy of voices and acoustic zones set out at the beginning of the work. **Eg 6.**

Gambit 8) Abstract electroacoustic materials.

These often emerge as transformed sign elements, either speech, or some other mechanical source. They act as sonorous commentaries upon the semantic scenarios and more mimetic material. **Eg 7 Eg 7.1**

Once all of the participating characters have been introduced, and a certain fictional hierarchy established the work attempts to synthesis these through various multi-layered connections.
Hopefully a sense of related but juxtaposed realities is established via these groups or individuals, all of whom have their own particular attitudes and values, made extant by their spatio/spectral placement and behaviour; and their differing semantic content.
Having initially set up clearly defined roles within a bounded, interconnected structure, the remainder of the work exploits the implications and repercussions of these boundaries being obeyed or transgressed.

Final extract
Eg 8.