

# The Making of Music

## Building Sounds

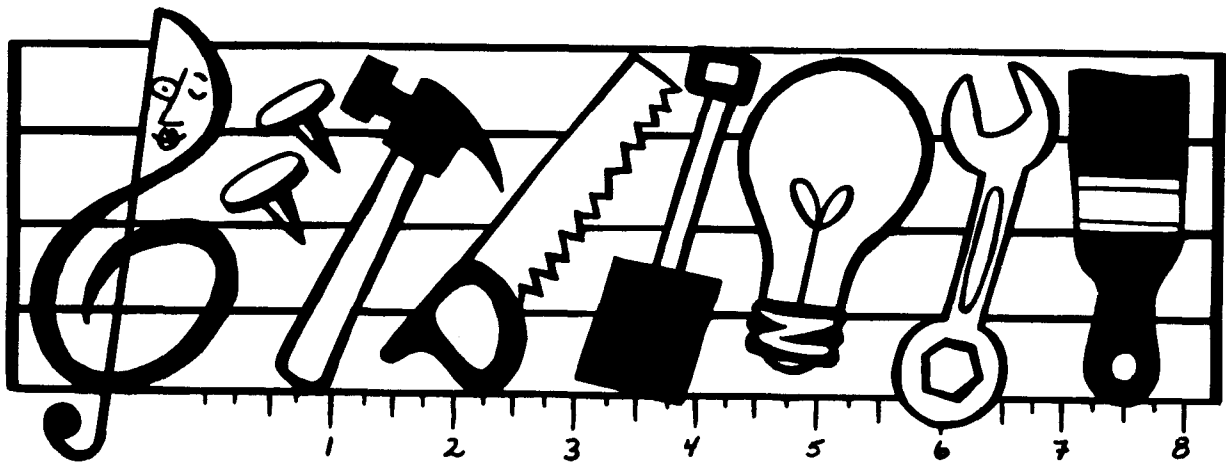
by Kate Braid

*L'auteure parle de ses expériences en tant que menuisière et entrepreneuse de construction. Elle décrit, entre autres, son attachement aux bruits des chantiers de construction.*

Here is the music we have been waiting for, the high fidelity clatter of a tool belt lifted to a carpenter's hips, settling to order around her waist. The click of the silver metal buckle. Touch the hammer. Just checking. The sound of hands full of nails, iron rain into her belt.

world as it should be.

This is the ultimate rhythm. Two by fours and two by tens yearn for it. They submit to the will of the carpenter in order to achieve their own ecstasy. It is shameless. This joining with nail penetration has its own sound far back in the throat, a change



Nancy Reid

In the beginning there is quiet, the fading song of birds finding shelter elsewhere, faint bass of a heartbeat as the carpenter's shovel bites earth as she checks the bones: drainage, foundation, gas lines.

The roar of the digger as the warm up, the violin-gone-violent sound of steel blade on rock, scraping over the going gone old concrete of cracked patios, ancient stairs. Belches and farts of air horns, tooting disrespectful over Earth. Relief, a deeper silence when it stops. The echo of a hammer from somewhere else. That night the neighbours listen hard before this space is forever changed in resonance.

Now come the carpenters, conductors of construction, making joyful sounds, making change. All the others play around them, a chorus to their melody. That is why the others are called sub-trades. This is a totally unobjective point of view.

Whispering of paper plans, murmur of carpenters deciding what, where, how. Hesitation. Deep breath. The plunge.

Stereo of boots on earth as they approach the wood pile, then the first rich feel of lumber, the *thwuck, thwuck* clicking tongue sound of it wet, water running off as she moves it around, gets the feel of the pile, says hello. The first sounds are a blast, the fast buzz of a clean cut, and it is begun.

The hammer sound is music in a carpenter's ears. Pounding spikes are tympani dominance, drum beat assertion of order, command over the chaos of lumber and dirt. The timbre of hammer reaches from ear to groin, encompasses arms and heart on the way down. It lifts, shifts at the place where the first spike meets the wood it has been waiting for. It is a sensuous union. It is a masculine sound: success, achievement, victory. It is a feminine sound: reunion, completion,

in timbre. As a carpenter she listens for it, knows the sudden thickening, a deeper tone. Satisfaction.

The musical note of nails into wood, all the woods: cedar, fir, pine, hemlock, spruce, a different color in her ear to each. The thickness of nails into wet wood, *thwack*, like a juicy smack of the lips, or into dry, a much politer sound. The sound of size, of delicate little 2 1/4" nails as opposed to their big tough cousins, the spikes. Of cranky galvanized nails and finicky chihuahua-hyper finish nails.

Sounds of laughter, the rising pitch of voices getting ready for concrete.

Concrete has an army of sounds to accompany it, as befits such a heavy customer. First the heavy breathing of anticipation at the snorts of the concrete truck, revving up to hoots and roars as the driver manoeuvres that huge bulk, lets down the chute and the first thick shovels of stone-rich concrete roll down. Then it is all

intensity and shouts and the giant's dinner as we rush to serve the needs of this lovely monster before it turns everything to stone. Forewoman shouts, Shovels! Shovels! Grunts and sighs as they sweat and run. The scrape of gravel and sonorous, sucking sounds as concrete pours out of wheelbarrows into the forms. Dull clunk as wheelbarrows hit and miss. The concrete truck driver watches it all, silently.

When it's all in the forms and it's up to the patient scraping of the concrete finisher, she welcomes the wet of the washing off of tools, tucks steel pins into the hardening mix to hold the house down later, sends the apprentice for Slurpees. Sucking sounds of satisfaction, Pina Colada or Orange.

Then come the sounds of the sub-trades, percussion of sheetmetal and pipe and the swish of glue. If you hear the scream of a chain saw, run! The plumber cuts before she asks.

Electricians consider themselves the intellects on site. The whining of drills is an embarrassing sound forced on the apprentice. Then there is only the quiet of wires unravelling, connections being made, the liquid surd of light.

Now neighbours-getting-curious sounds, the thump of the carpenter's

hammer like a bass beat keeping this show on the road until the finishing trades come in. White sounds of the drywall finisher as he puts on the final coats, the sibilance of screw guns and screws as cabinets are hung. Tiles are pressed into place by women in red coveralls. The slap of paint, first flush of a toilet, and finally the carpets are laid. All sounds now change. Take your shoes off in respect. It's almost over.

Goodbye is terribly sweet. Expiration, sounds of packing, throwing away odd handfuls of nails, patches of paint. These were all once desperately important.

All that is left is the scratch of a pen on the final paycheck, the cold click of profit and loss. Acoustics of Good bye, good bye. Parents have mixed emotions. She has made their lives ugly and more beautiful at once. When she goes, only the children will be sorry. It will be so silent without her.

*Kate Braid worked as a carpenter for 15 years and a construction contractor for five years before teaching construction at the British Columbia Institute of Technology. She is presently Director of the Labour Program in Continuing Studies at Simon Fraser University.*

## Call for Papers

Submissions are invited for a special issue of *Ecological Economics* on theme of women, ecology, and economics. Topics include:

- ecological aspects of feminist critiques of neoclassical economics; common threads among ecofeminism, feminist economics, and ecological economics
- examination of the parallels between women's work, environmental services, and natural resource use, with regard to valuation, status as "externalities," sustainability, complementarity with financial capital, incorporation in national accounts, etc.
- role of women in creating the conditions for sustainable economies and sustainable trade
- women's health as an environmental and economic issue
- economic implications of women's position as environmental stewards, especially in the South
- the impact of globalization on women, from an ecological economics perspective
- women and population policy
- submissions on other related issues are welcome.

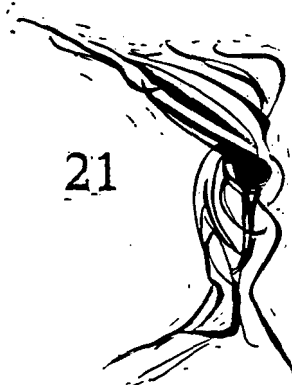
All papers will be peer reviewed and are expected to meet the same the same scholarly standards as other articles published in the *Journal*. Authors should refer to the Guide for Authors published in the first issue of each year for the appropriate editorial format.

Submissions should be sent no later than February 15th, 1995 to the guest editor for the issue:

Dr. Ellie Perkins  
355 Lumbers Building  
Faculty of Environmental Studies  
York University  
North York, ON M3J 1P3

Email:  
ESPERK@ORION.YORKU.CA  
Phone: (416)736-2100 x 22632  
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