



Stadt Zürich
Nordamerika Native Museum



Report

Gathering Material for a «Soundscape Southwest»

Participants:

Harald Brand (journalist, sound specialist)

Monika Egli (museum curator, ethnological expert)

Karin Isernhagen (museum deputy director,
supervisor of the project)

H.B. and M.E. travelling on US grant funds,
K.I. on museum funds

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**Harald Brand recording
at Bandelier National Park**

The purpose of this trip was to gather material for a new soundscape at the NONAM. The participants wanted to find and record as many different sounds as possible in order to represent this culture area.

A big problem with such a project is to pre-arrange meetings with contact persons of different tribes and different professions, living far apart from each other in the vast area of the Southwest. Meticulous planning of the trip enabled our group to meet representatives of various Rio Grande Pueblo Nations as well as Navajo and Hopi people.

Starting point was Albuquerque, NM, where H.B. was able to record sounds of drumming and singing at the Pueblo Cultural Center. The typical noise at a casino was recorded at Sandia Casino, which represents one of several modern ways of money making for Indian reservations.

Our next stop was at Santo Domingo Pueblo, where a well-known Indian jewelry maker took us to his workshop to capture the sounds of his trade: filing and sawing silver, soldering, polishing stones etc.

Further north, in Bandelier National Park, H.B. recorded nature sounds, such as the wind, dead old trees creaking, water splashing, birds singing. The National Park sounds will represent undisturbed nature (i.e. historic environmental living conditions) as opposed to the ever present technological sounds of contemporary Indian life.



**Travis Terry, Karin Isernhagen
and Harald Brand beneath
Echo Ruins at Canon de Chelly**

A full day in Canon de Chelly rendered a myriad of sounds. Our group was guided by a Navajo with a special permit to take us to places that visitors are ordinarily not allowed to visit. Besides croaking ravens (a „typical“ Indian bird) circling above the canon, H.B. captured chainsaw sounds that show how modern technology tries to remedy mistakes of the past by cutting down non-indigenous Russian Olive trees that were introduced into the Canon about fifty years ago. Most impressive was a pre-arranged meeting with Travis Terry, a famous Indian flute player. Travis met with our group at the so-called Echo Ruins, located in a steep canon wall. Recording conditions at that spot were superb.



**Navajo weavings being
auctioned at Crownpoint, NM**

Unfortunately, only comparatively few Navajo speak their own language fluently any more. Our guide was able to do so and he told us a wonderful bear story. Of course, visitors to our sound chamber will not understand a single word – they will grasp, however, that indigenous languages are an indispensable element of the cultural heritage of that area.

The next stop provided quite a different experience – actually a counterpoint to the previous one. Our group visited a Navajo rug auction in Crownpoint, NM. At this monthly event hand-woven rugs are auctioned off through a weaver's guild. This is a most important economic event. The typical "singsong" of an auctioneer will provide for a lively spot in the soundscape.



**Lawrence and Griselda Saufkie
in their backyard on Second
Mesa, AZ**

The last stop was at the Hopi Cultural Center on Second Mesa, AZ. There we were lucky to witness an unannounced drumming session. H.B. was delighted to record various drum groups. And last but not least one of the “grand old men” of the Hopi Nation, Lawrence Saufkie, told us the origin myth of his clan in Hopi. This not only puts a second indigenous language into our soundscape – it is going to be a very rare cultural document for the museum.

Furthermore, the soundscape will contain acoustic elements of modern transportation (trains, cars, trucks etc.) without which everyday life for indigenous people in this vast area is inconceivable.

Production of the soundscape will be realized by H.B. in a professional sound studio, under the supervision of M.E.

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