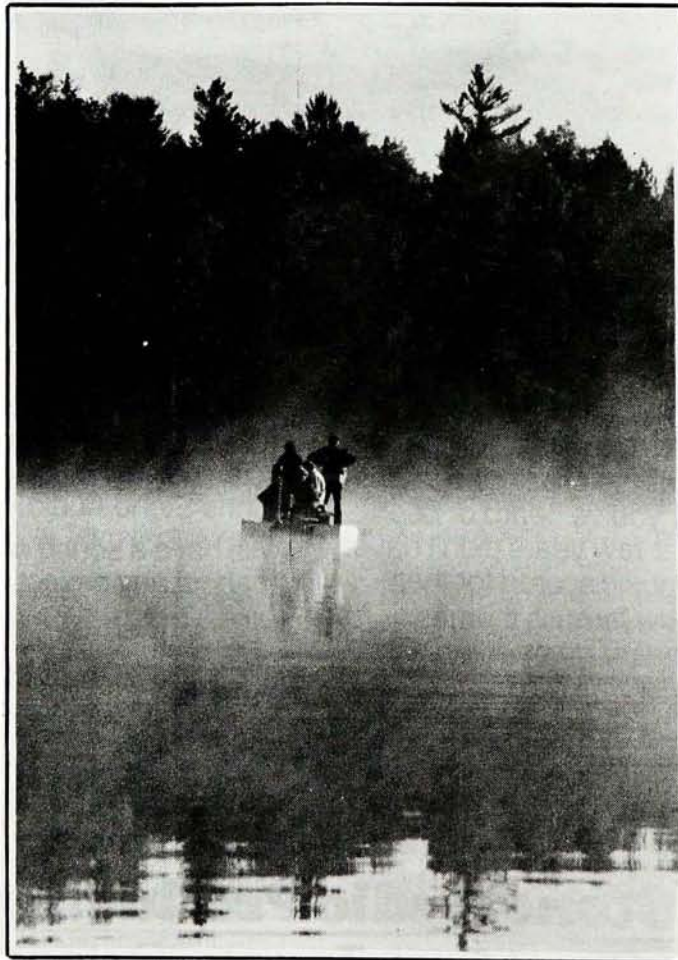


soundscape in concert

by robert paton

Noise pollution is part of modern life. But in *Music For Wilderness Lake*, Fichman-Sweete Productions lets nature have its say... In response, a soundscape solo at dusk and dawn.



Striking the right balance, composer Murray Schafer and the recording crew adrift on Wilderness Lake

"Nature wanted the film to be made," muses Larry Weinstein as he perches himself on the edge of a stool. Barbara Sweete quickly interjects, with a frankness she often displays, "The whole point of this film is to express the interaction of two sound environments: the natural and the created." Meanwhile, Niv Fichman has turned off the droning hum of the editing machine. As he slides back into his chair, there is a slight lift to his eyebrows: the rushes of their latest work-in-progress, **Music For Wilderness Lake**, have just been viewed — and they're proud of it.

But their work is only half-completed; still to come are the arduous hours of confinement in the editing room. Spirited and confident, this trio of young independent filmmakers is certain that the post-production work for **Music For Wilderness Lake** will be finished by February 1980, when the public will have its chance to screen this unusual and interesting film essay.

Aimed at an international television market because of its unique sound capabilities for Simul-Cast reproduction, the film explores the juxtaposition and interaction of a musical composition performed on nature's own sound stage.

In co-operation with one of Canada's leading composers, R. Murray Schafer, who originally conceived the idea and the music, Fichman-Sweete Productions assembled twelve trombonists, an experienced film and sound crew, then set out to film **Music For Wilderness Lake**.

"Soundscape," a term coined by Mr. Schafer, refers to the collection of sounds within our environment. But, because our world is often nothing more than a "sonic sewer," we, its diseased inhabitants (victims of sound glut), remain unaware of the *true* sounds that exist in our surroundings. **Music For Wilderness Lake**, as the visual statement of this concept, conveys the spatial, concentrated chant of nature, free of sound garbage.

The transmutation of actual sound to recorded sound is of primary importance in the making of such a film. Under the experienced direction of Timothy Wilson and John Reeves, the film was able to achieve its proposed design.

The trombone choir, a group called Sonare, was divided into three separate parties and positioned around the perimeter of an isolated lake amidst the colourful September scenery in the remote countryside near Bancroft, Ontario. Their objective: to play a slow, meditative, musical language, then allow the elements of nature to answer.

Floating near the three groups of trombonists were a corresponding number of canoes equipped with recording facilities. But these were only back-up systems. The master recording system (along with R. Murray Schafer directing the trombonists with coloured flags) was located on a raft in the centre of the glassy lake. The body of the film's sound was supported by a bizarre piece of recording machinery — the Kunstkopf microphone.

Niv Fichman explains this unique instrument: "The microphone is shaped similar to a human head: it records spherically. So, the listener who is prepared with a set of headphones would be likely to hear the cry of a bird that



Barbara Sweete and Niv Fichman enjoying a break on location at Wilderness Lake (photo: Steven Veale)



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This page is a musical score for Murray Schafer's 'Wilderness Sounds'. It features a central illustration of a creature with large, spiral eyes and a long, curved horn. The score is organized into several sections:

- Strings on Stage:** Includes staves for Violins I & II, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses.
- Orchestra:** Includes staves for Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons, and Percussion.
- Groups 1-10:** Ten distinct instrumental groups, each with its own set of staves.
- Central Illustration:** A detailed drawing of a creature with large, spiral eyes, a long horn, and a textured body. It is surrounded by musical staves and annotations.
- Annotations and Diagrams:**
 - Handwritten notes such as "Cut about 15" after tape attack" and "This part is for conductor and only the strings play. Other groups function as 'stoplights'".
 - Diagrammatic elements like "Repeat first 3 groups twice each separately, alternately" and "From 1900" when conductor's cue".
 - A diagram at the bottom left shows a series of triangles with angles of 105°, 110°, 115°, and 120°.

Murray Schafer's score, designed to elicit wilderness sounds in

This is a detailed musical score for a large ensemble, likely a film score. The score is organized into several sections:

- Conductor's Part:** Located at the top left, featuring a staff with a 10-measure conductor's cue and various performance markings.
- Vocal Soloists:** Includes parts for "American 3 wood block", "American 2 wood block", "American 1 wood block", "American 4 wood block", and "American 5 wood block".
- Instrument Groups:** The score is divided into numerous groups, including:
 - Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.
- Annotations:** The score is heavily annotated with performance instructions, such as "Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 play chords indicated anytime between 1:20-1:30 at liberty of leader of each group", "Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100", and "Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100".
- Time Markers:** The bottom of the score features time markers: (1:10), (1:20), (1:30), (1:40), (1:50).

to trombone choirs, to be recorded from the centre of the lake

has flown overhead, the conversational voice of someone standing within a few paces, or the crackling of gravel beneath a pair of boots passing along a country road." Through this microphone, all sounds are duplicated in their respective positions to the human ear upon the recorded tape.

Music for Wilderness Lake is performed in two movements: the first at dusk and the second at dawn.

"We also considered a soloist performing on the raft in the middle of the lake," says Niv, "but in the long run, we felt that would defeat the purpose. The lake and the sounds around it — that's the soloist."

Fichman-Sweete Productions' involvement in the close relationship between film and music did not develop overnight. Two years ago, with aid from York University, Niv Fichman and Barbara Sweete (before the arrival of Larry Weinstein), produced a twenty-minute film: their first major work, **Opus One Number One**. Since its completion, this film has been widely recognized by many international film festivals. It documents the growth and development of three young classical musicians; a pianist, cellist and violinist, as they familiarize themselves with a Beethoven sonata.

Soon, Fichman-Sweete Productions will find themselves in a north-Toronto high school to film a student opera by Raymond Pannel, in co-operation with Multi-Lingual Television.

Although concerned about pursuing the relationship between film and music, Niv, Barbara and Larry are not prepared to be labelled or limited to working in that one field. **Garney Willis** is their testament to this fact. Based on the true-life antics of Barbara's grandfather, the film is an inviting portrait of an 85 year-old's refusal to allow age to interfere with his self-determined lifestyle. But plagued by inadequate post-production financing, **Garney Willis** remains on the editing table. As Niv explains, "Even if we have to dig into our own pockets, **Garney Willis** will be finished."

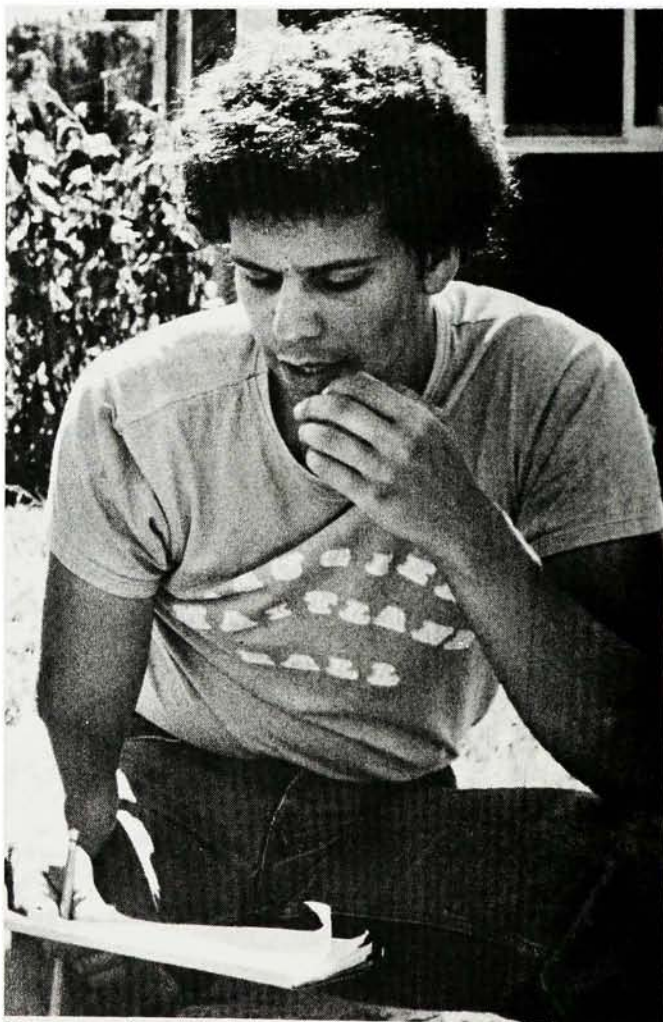
That said, Niv twists his director's chair around, so that once again it faces the editing machine. Larry slowly lifts his stool and places it closer to the centre of attention. Barbara resumes her position to the right of Niv as the editing machine comes to life and the rushes of **Music for Wilderness Lake** wind between the reels.

For this trio, it's only the beginning.

□



Composer Murray Schafer in a **Music For Wilderness Lake** "soundscape" rehearsal (photo: Steven Veale)



Musing over his notes, production manager Larry Weinstein (photo: B. Stewart)



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