

## MASTER SNORER, The last lesson

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### ABSTRACT

*Master Snorer* imparts what he considers the last lesson with his powerful voice, on psychoacoustics, in which he aims to unite his mastery of the spatial dimension. The main objective is to show the challenges of acoustics for this 21 st century, based on the high knowledge it has of communication for human relationships developed in specific scenarios, and the new information provided by the participants of their workshops.

In this case, before the "everything sounds", you need to debate about "how it sounds". For this reason he intends to ask attendees about the sound adjectives applicable to this Everything that sounds, starting it in ourselves, going through the objects that we transport and those around us, until we reach the proportions, materials and textures of the finishes of the spaces where we meet.

**Keywords: Soundscape, Psychoacoustics, Architectural acoustics**  
**I-INCE Classification of Subject Number: TP-13**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

I have written a book about the Master Snorer who an acoustics teacher and you can download it in this link:

[http://www.sea-acustica.es/fileadmin/publicaciones/libro\\_maestro\\_roncador.pdf](http://www.sea-acustica.es/fileadmin/publicaciones/libro_maestro_roncador.pdf)

Master Snorer is a fictional character corresponding to a nickname for the starring of a series of short stories published in Spanish Sociedad Española de Acústica under the name of *Maestro Roncador* in 2014. Master Snorer is a lecturer who educates Engineering, Architecture, and Art students of hearing in detail their environments, what improves, at a great extent, their professional abilities.

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Unfortunately, Maestro Roncador cannot assist to this workshop. It seems that he felt asleep during the BCN-MAD flight and the profuse interferences from his snoring diverted the plane to the **Malvinas** islands. For the moment, he is held back there, but he was allowed to contact with me, so I am going to read his **instructions** for this session, as he has given me a letter.

First of all, I'm going to read you his letter:

*Hi, my name is **Maestro Roncador**. Professor Daumal is going to distribute some papers with instructions, which you must read carefully. Those who do not want to follow them must abandon the room, as the door will be closed with key (I'm just joking).*



The book Maestro Roncador. Photography by the autor

## **2. THE ACTIVE LISTENING WORKSHOP WHITH MAESTRO RONCADOR**

I am convinced that very few ask for more than one of the following questions:

How will I sound today? Dress, footwear, pendants, briefcase / bag.

What sound objects I choose for today?

What sound food I prepare / like today?

What is the working sound space for today?

What means of sound transport do I choose today?

What sound show will I attend today?

In general, we ask ourselves very little about our sound world

## 2.1 Instructions for the active listening workshop with Maestro Roncador

1. *Switch off or turn the Airplane Mode on of your mobile phones.*
2. *Take out a sonorous object of your pocket, bag or purse and put it in an accessible place, so as your neighbors do not notice it.*
3. *Put the blindfold or the non-vision glasses over your eyes.*
4. *If I say HELLO, make your object sound; if I say GOODBYE, stop making that sound.*

## 2.2 Definition of Active Listening by the book *Maestro Roncador*

*It is the attitude that an expert acoustician must always adopt towards the perception of sound world in general, and towards its specialty in particular. Active listening means listening and understanding information from the point of view of the speaker. The difference between hearing and listening is the following: hearing implies just perceiving the vibration of sound, while listening means understanding, realizing or giving sense to sound. It refers to the ability of listening not only what the speaker is saying directly but also to their feelings, ideas or thoughts, which underlie what they are saying. Source: Maestro + W.*

So, let's start with the active listening.

**Listening in an active way** is very important. It implies **being always ready** to interpret those messages that arrive to us. Why? Because many messages get lost. We do not want to hear some of them, but when we really listen, we understand so many things. And **understanding is being aware of everything that surround us**. Well, in order to learn, from now on we will **close our eyes and listen**. But in general we cannot do it because our world is visual. Today I ask you to close your eyes and listen, not only what I say, but **everything that happens around you**.

**Absolute silence is negative**, it imposes. I do not know if any of you has been in an anechoic room for an hour. It's a torture listening just to yourself. Because you are the main character. You should know how to breathe or you fail. When I was in the anechoic room I still didn't know this, I have no idea about impost voice nor declamatory techniques based on correct breathing. We make so many noises that prevent us from listening properly. When you learn active listening you can find so many **subtleties**, because **the world is extraordinarily sonorous**.

For the active listening, I must learn to **listen my interior and exterior without listening my internal sounds** (swallowing, intestinal and synovial sounds, etc.)



Old sounds? Photography by Francesc Daumal

## 2.1 Example

Let's listen a short tale of Maestro Roncador included in page 144 (hundred and forty four) of the book named *Active listening*.

And the Maestro said:

–Don't move. Listen carefully.

Students, astonished, kept quiet, many of them turned their mobile phones off.

All of them were listening in silence. They waited for more than two minutes, which they perceived like three times longer.

It seems that one group didn't perceive anything. The Maestro asked them what did they heard. The first student said nothing.

The second student asked said he had only listened his own breathing and his heart beating.

The Maestro said: –John Cage composed many pieces based on these perceptions.

Then, the Maestro asked them if they had listened anything else. A third student, in a joking tone, dared to answer that he had only listened the background noise of the room.

–Have any of you listen something different? –asked the Maestro, ignoring this student.

A fourth student answered:

–I heard the building's crunch, its dilatations, its instalations.

–Well –said the Maestro, and he added– finally someone listen to architecture.

One day we will do an exercise exclusively about that.

But the outstanding student raised her hand up and said:

–I have heard the city’s life in the distance, the air passing through the building’s slits, the murmur of the corridors outside the classroom, and even I may have listened the thoughts of the Maestro.

The Maestro concluded:

–Only when we want to listen life, it appears in every form of expression and in its entire splendor.

### 3. SOUND ADJECTIVES

We are going to start the workshop **learning sound adjectives**. This is an **artistic part** I consider fundamental. If at the end of your acoustic lives it has been useless, let me know.

A sound can be **pleasant or unpleasant**, based on **who or what produces it**, the **listener’s mood** and the **acoustic field existing**.

Some of these sounds are not pleasant *per se*, but because they evoke some **memories** or incite some **actions** that were satisfactory.

I am going to make sound from the objects contained in the **Sound Briefcase of Maestro Roncador**. Please, **raise your hand** those who think that it is a **pleasant** noise and **stay still** those who find it **indifferent or unpleasant**.

Active listening, without seeing, allow us being exclusively aware of sound, not knowing who or what it produces it. This is the most important thing, **not knowing the origin**.



Attention please. Photography of Francesc Daumal



Active Listening. Photography of Francesc Daumal

#### 4. DOMINANT CHARACTERS

Adjectives and characters of the objects, instruments and voices are really important in psychoacoustics, as they determine our **initial pleasantness or disgust**. I am going to expose **these adjective** and you will write them down

##### 4.1 Adjectives by Origin

EXTERIOR / INTERIOR

NEAR / FAR

SOLIS / FRAGILE

DENSE / LIGHT

CALMED / STORMY

SACRED / PROFANE

LUDIC / MANUFACTURING

CONSTANT / VARIABLE

TONAL / ATONAL

SILENT / NOISY

EXPOSED / ISOLATED

FAITHFUL / FICTIONAL

INDIVIDUAL / COLECTIVE

ARTIFICIAL / NATURAL

FAST / SLOW

RHYTHMIC / ARRHYTHMIC

ORDERED / CHAOTIC

FREE / PRESSED

WIDE / NARROW  
BRILLIANT / MATE  
RUSTIC / URBAN  
NOBLE / POPULAR  
CLEAN / DISTORSIONED  
DURABLE / EPHIMERE  
SONOROUS / LOOSE  
VIVID / MUTE

#### **4.2 Adjectives by Transmitter**

LOVELY / HATEFUL  
RESPECTFUL / INSOLENT  
FEARFUL / BRAVE  
IRRITABLE / PACIENT  
HAPPY / BITTER  
SHAMEFUL / AUDACIOUS  
CHEERFUL / SAD  
SERIOUS / BURLESQUE  
PROUD / HUMBLE  
ROMANTIC / INSENSIBLE  
FREE / PRESSED  
RHYTHMIC / ARRHYTHMIC  
ORDERED / CHAOTIC  
INTIMATE / PUBLIC  
VICTORIOUS / DEFEATED  
SOLITARY (ALONE?) / ACCOMPANIED

#### **4.3 Adjectives by Transmission Channel**

REVERBERANT / ANECHOIC  
AMPLIFIER / MUFFLER  
CONCENTRATOR / DIFFUSOR  
MASKING / TRANSPARENT  
AERIAL / CORPORAL

#### **4.4 Adjectives by Architectural Space**

SIMETRIC / ASIMETRIC  
CENTRIPETAL / CENTRIFUGAL  
DIRECTIONAL / OMNIDIRECTIONAL  
GLOBAL / ZONAL  
DINAMIC / STATIC  
LINEAL / PUNCTUAL  
CONCENTRIC / RADIAL  
DOOR / BARRIER  
LATERAL / CENTRAL

#### **4.5 Adjectives by Receiver**

COSY / UNPLEASANT  
SWEEPING / INDIFFERENT  
FANTASIST / OBJETIVE  
RESPECTFUL / INSOLENT

LOVELY / HATEFUL  
FEARFUL / BRAVE  
IRRITABLE / PACIENT  
WELLBEING / UNCOMFORTABLE  
WARM / COLD  
CHEERFUL / TRISTE  
NEUTRAL / INFORMATIVE  
TERRORIFIC / HOPEFUL  
SOLITARY / ACCOMPANIED  
COMPLEX / EASY  
ROMANTIC / INSENSIBLE  
ABSURD / LOGIC  
DEFICIENT / PERFECT  
SWEET / SALAD  
COMBINED / UNCOMBINED  
INTIMATE / PUBLIC  
PROUD / HUHUMBLE  
SERIOUS / BURLESQUE  
VICTORIOUS / DEFEATED  
HIGH / LOW

#### **4.6 Another Adjectives, from *Hush City App***

BORING  
NATURAL  
LIVELY  
FAMILIAR  
STRESSING  
UNPREFERRED  
RELAXING  
DISTANT  
BLURRED  
FRIENDLY  
ARTIFICIAL  
INFORMATIVE  
MEARINGFUL  
MEANINGLESS  
UNPLEASANT

#### **5. IT IS MY TURN TODAY**

And Master said:

–You cannot make me do that.

The Master was not accustomed to receive commands or specific indications that might affect his authority, but he really appreciated how brave a blind student was, he who told him:

–You don't dare go walking as a blind man for 24 hours, do you? –, he told him in a voice in G1 as the fundamental frequency. –So I can see that it is my turn today! – he thought.

–Master, you cannot force others to make things that you don't dare –, the young man told him.



–But it happens that I can not afford that of wasting time –, he answered in a bad mood. –Apart from that, who will go along us?.

–You won't waste your time, and you know it –, the young man answered and he continued –if you dare now to come with me to the city, your daughter is ready to come along us.

The Master saw that he had really planned it and that they agreed to work together in that plan.

His daughter was waiting in the corridor. She entered with an open smile, put two patches on his eyes and then a pair of dark glasses with a thick frame, so his vision was completely cancelled. She told him:

–Instead of bandaging you, as a Guinea pig in an experiment that might not be good and could obstruct your ears, I have thought of this solution, even you don't believe in it; I spent a lot of time looking for the spare parts of it.

<<She is very intelligent>>, the Master thought, beginning to enjoy the situation, –and I can see that they have been spending time thinking in it.

They left out of the center, and walked some meters towards the parking area. He began to listen to that pavement.

They sat down it on the rear seats of this woman's car, the Headmaster, saying: –How lucky are you, today you are the student.

The Master, only when hearing the Headmaster's voice, was so happy as being the main character of the experience, and he asked: –And who will be my guide?.

The doors of the vehicle closed. The student was next to him and near the mother and daughter.

A serious voice coming from its left side told him: –If you want, I will be the following one –. He allowed some seconds of silence to happen and added: –although I don't believe that you trust my cane too much.

–Don't worry! –, the Headmaster said; she knew the reason of this question. –I will go along you while my daughter goes along with the boy.

–Thank you for going with the boy, the blind man said. –But I am already 22 years old.

–As I am –, the young girl thought, although for his comments she had thought that he was older.

When they were in the city, both couples really affected the visual landscape, since the pedestrians were not indifferent. The four ones went walking very close to each other.

–Can you observe the *tunnel effect*? –, the young man said.

–Which effect do you mean? –, the Master replied.

–It is the effect that takes place when you pass before the gate of a house that has an open wide internal lounge facing the street. Hence, it takes the sounds of the street and it returns these sounds but as a reverberation –, and she added: –Can you hear it, as I passed before a house with the doors closed, can you?.

The young man was leading forwards and backwards to his blind guider, forcing the Master and the Headmaster to do the same, and then he said:

–Now we pass before a gate that returns back to us a reverberated sound. Do you notice it? Do you hear the difference?

–Yes, indeed –, the Master said. –But in occasions it seems that we pass in front of a small tunnel.

–Each gate resonates different –, the student said. –But in occasions these shades of sound are difficult to be appreciated, since the existent sounds are changing and the volume of so high noises of the street also mask the phenomenon.

–I notice it, indeed –. The Master added: –the noises of the street are reflected on the façades of the buildings, and therefore it is necessary to focus attention on that moment, instead of its reflection, what we receive, that it is the resonance of the gate.

–Some of these *tunnel effect* phenomena are very singular, for this reason I often think that this building should be important, the young man said.

The three stayed thinking in silence, until he continued: –Come on, I should have told you that I would recognize the sound of the Center if you transferred it to this street, but I would surely make a mistake.

The other ones thought that they certainly were walking as blind. The capacity of this student's recognition was impressive. The Master asked him about what he was learning, since for him it seemed evident that it was happening just the opposite. The young man said as a conclusion:

–Some people don't hear the world, neither the air, nor the fire, nor water, nor life. This is because they only can see them, but they don't know anything about how much the sounds communicate to us and how much they enrich us.

The three thought that a new Master was born.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The architect and acoustic engineer should walk spaces without vision, so as to understand the sound adjectives explained.

Not seeing sounds during 30 minutes do not allow to learn fully the active listening, but it is a start.

The selected objects for the listening are just the ones contained in the Sound Briefcase of light weight (because of the travel by plane), but there are much more to get started,

You should read my book *Maestro Roncador* to understand the importance of the sound adjectives in the components of soundscape.

To as to sum it up, *Master Snorer* acoustic short stories are useful to transmit concepts from natural observation in life so as to introduce students to some principles from Acoustics in a simple way, a good starting point for any lesson at University when the tiny details of the environment are not perceived as being important, when not all the concepts are easy to be understood and there is a lack of motivation for the learning of technical data or phenomena when disciplines such as Architecture or Engineering are considered as fields of knowledge independent and separated from daily life.

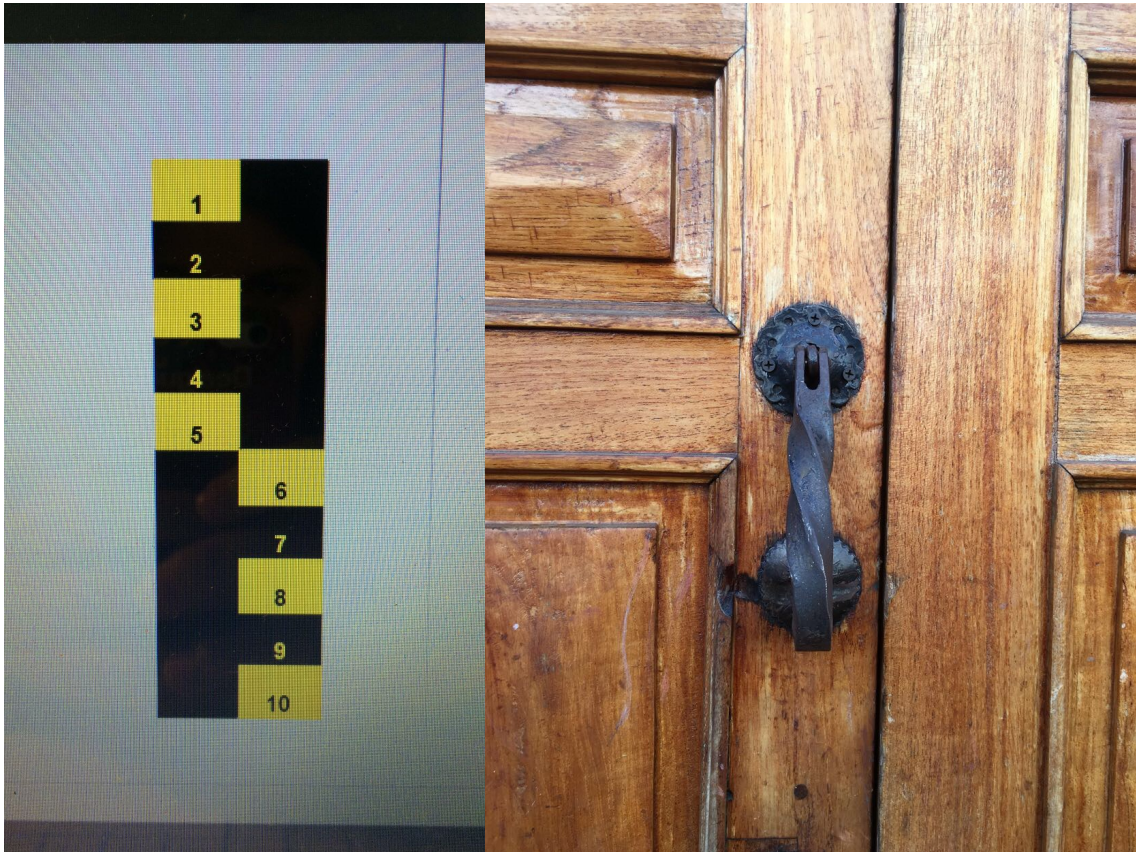
## **7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Doorknocker, Photography by Sandra del Rio