

## Untitled - January 28, 2026

Introduction - Hello and welcome to the Constable Ambisonic podcast with me, your host Stuart Bowditch. This project has many threads, but the main focus is to make ambisonic spatial audio recordings of twenty of the locations of paintings by John Constable. These will be exhibited with the paintings at an exhibition at Christchurch Mansions in Ipswich in the summer of twenty twenty six. I'll also be chatting to people to uncover how we perceive the landscape and the natural world. As Constable had a big hand in our modern day appreciation of the countryside, in this episode, I speak with broadcaster and artist Wendy Bailey more broadly about the project.

WB - I'm Wendy Bailey.

SB - I'm Stuart Bowditch

WB - and would give us your title?

SB - My title?

WB - What would you describe yourself as? In this context?

SB - Um, a sound artist, mainly because it's quite, it's not that specific and it covers many different things. And working with sound, you tend to have to be quite diverse in the things that you do within that field. Uh, also they're quite interesting. If someone says, oh, um, I need someone to do this and you haven't quite done that before, but, you know, you've got the skills of working with sound, then you can kind of adapt them to fit and then you get a new experience.

WB - So tell me about the project that you've been recently involved in all summer? Actually, uh, in Flatford, which was called The Constable Ambisonic. Is that right?

SB - That's correct. Yeah. Well remembered. So the Constable Ambisonic. Can you explain what that actually means, Constable? Uh, and ambisonic and is it all one word? And what is it?

SB - Constable is referring to John Constable, the painter, which many people will know. And the paintings he made in the early

eighteen hundreds. The reason for that is that it's his, uh, two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his birth next year, 2026. So there's going to be a big exhibition of his works at Christchurch Mansions in Ipswich from July to October. There's actually two other exhibitions either side of that are connected, but also there's lots of other events. So East Bergholt, where he lived for a long time, was born. In fact, the town, you know, they're making their own events and putting on lots of celebrations, celebratory activities. So there's a lot of people independently doing things. But there there's also Christchurch Mansions are trying to sort of pull things together so we can share the promotion.

WB - And so it's to celebrate John Constable's anniversary of his birth. And, um, how is this Sonic? What is the Sonic, Ambisonic part of the celebrations that you've been working on?

SB - Well, Ambisonics is a way of recording sound in 3D, so normally you would experience sound through a stereo if you like, think of your Hi-Fi at home, you've got two speakers, a left and a right. And on the record, I mean, we're talking about quite old technology in these days. Uh, and this time, um, so you've got a left channel and a right channel, and so you can imagine the sound moving from one to the other. It gives the illusion of space. But Ambisonic uses four microphones, and they're all sort of facing opposite each other in order to create a three hundred sixty degree image of sound, which is a new thing for me. So that's what I'm learning through this project, is how to make those recordings and how to play them back. So I'm being mentored by a guy called Axel Drioli. He's currently chasing migratory birds around Cameroon, uh, which is what he, he's travelled a lot of Africa, actually chasing birds. So he's quite an interesting character. Um, so it's great to have him on board with the project, but I'm. I am recording the sounds of twenty locations of Constable paintings in and around, well in England. Well, Constable actually never left Britain.

WB - I could, I could comment there because. Didn't he go to France to pick up an award which he didn't want? Apparently his work went to France and he had an agent there.

SB - Oh, he went on a boat trip once, but he came back to land. This is why I'm not an art historian.

WB - But he hated the French. I understand.

SB - Oh, I don't know about that.

WB - Well, he. He was against I think he was against some of the work they did. I think they'd abused his work or something. And they thinking it was far too pastoral. And so they actually awarded him the Légion d'honneur, a medal. Mhm. I read and I heard that he went to get it right. Um, but I don't think he did receive it in the end. Something going on there?

SB - I don't know. I'm not an art historian. No, of course, I have been talking to people. Uh, painters and people. Um, people like Peter Harrop, who's a curator of the exhibition I just mentioned, who actually lives in Constable's old house in Brighton. So I've been picking up nuggets of information, doing my own research, obviously, because when I go to a location, I want to know a bit more about the painting or the history of it.

WB - So. So tell me where you've been.

SB - I've been to lots of places around Flatford, uh, many paintings. That's in Suffolk, the River Stour, um, on both because the rivers are either side. Yes. It's the river is the dividing line. So, um, which makes it hard to get funding. Um, but, yeah, obviously there's a lot of paintings there because he lived and worked. His father owned the mill there, so that's kind of...he was very connected to that landscape, which is why he wanted to sort of depict it in a certain way. And he was also painting at around the time where the land Reformation was happening. So he was also painting from a sort of nostalgic viewpoint even then. And obviously, there's a lot of artistic license used in the paintings, which, you know, that's perfectly normal, isn't it? You know, but moving a tree that is actually not there and putting a lady sitting on the step and a dog drinking the water, you know, that probably didn't all happen at the same time. But in the painting obviously brought those elements that he'd seen over a few months and put them all together. So, yeah, I mean, I'm more interested, though, in the, in the sound of today and what those places are today. Obviously, we can only imagine what those places sounded like two hundred years ago. The most obvious differences being the combustion engine and the jet engine, which we have

now. I can imagine there was probably more bird species, maybe different kind of bird species with the change in climate, uh, probably more insects and animals, maybe. But also that area was a working area. So you would have had all of the labor and the mechanics of the mill working, people working the river. So, horses pulling boats and transporting goods and using the lock. But now we've got a new class of people now, the sort of tourist class, a leisure class of people. They didn't really have that then. So like Flatford has now become this area that's not working at all. Well, you might work in the cafe, but it's just serving the leisure industry. So people engage in that place, the same place, but they engage in a different way. And also it's been kind of afforded a lot of protections because of Constable. So now it's a protected area. And we had to, we've been doing some workshops over the summer and two people went to Flatford and they were like, oh, what's on today? And they were like, oh, it's some workshops. Oh, they're starting in five minutes, just over there. And so they just came in and they were from Malaysia, and they just thought it was incredible that somewhere could be protected, and that people thought about the world in terms of sound, because in their, in Malaysia, it's all just about development and, you know, becoming a first world country and not a third world country. So people have different ways that they treat the landscape and their local habitat, and sound is usually just a byproduct really of something else. So like if you move that chair over there, it might squeak. It wasn't made to make a squeak and the gate wasn't made to go clunk, you know, or the car wasn't made to go vroom or the tyres make some noise, but they're a byproduct of the car as it made to travel from A to B, and the chair's meant to be comfortable and not make a sound. That's what sort of differentiates noise really to sound. I think people see sound as quite an unwanted thing sometimes because it's, it's there just like a byproduct.

WB - That's really interesting. What how does sound become, how does noise, which is an irritant become sound? Well, it is a sound to start with. It's more the other way round. It's just about our perception of sound. And now we're in a nice, quiet, cozy room. But say someone's phone went off, then that would kind of be an irritant, wouldn't it? So it's a sound because it's trying to attract our attention, because we want to know if someone's calling. That's what it was made to do. But it's an irritant now because we don't want that. But

I'm interested in those sounds. The sounds of the everyday. Like when I recorded the sound of The Hay Wain, which was actually called Landscape Noon before it was called the Hay Wain, I went and recorded at noon, so I started at half an hour before noon and finished at half an hour after noon, because I'm trying to get an hour to sort of give us a bit more context about that place. I couldn't know what my experience would be like. There wasn't a woman sitting on the step of Willy Lott's house, and there wasn't a dog drinking like there are in the painting, but there was a guided tour with someone telling some tourists about the painting. There was a van that dropped off, or a minibus that dropped off about like fifteen students, and they all dragged their suitcases along on the gravel path past where I was sitting. So I couldn't predict any of that. But to me, that was interesting. That's the sound of it at that moment.

WB - And how did you actually record? Do you have a microphone in your hand or around your body or what? How does it work and what do you record with?

SB - I have my ambisonic microphone. It's got a big windshield on it. So a big fluffy thing. People like to make comments about those, by the way. I've had all sorts. I did compile a list of, uh, of, um, comments about them, such as, um, such as when I was recording the cattle market in Colchester and I was in a pen of sheep, and some bloke said, 'You won't get much for that, mate. It's got no meat on it!'. Or calling it a dead cat or whatever. Um, but it's just an ice breaker, isn't it? You know.

WB - And you hold them or are they?

SB - No. I tend to I tend to, um. Well, I use a tripod, basically, because for one, there's less handling noise, and I'm recording for an hour. I don't want to be holding something very still for an hour. So I actually use a very heavy, tripod that's really short. And it's actually made for a mic for a bass drum. So I used that and I actually connect my recorder, which is a Sound Devices MicsPre to that. I've jerry-rigged a GoPro connector to that so that it fixes to the tripod itself so I can just, it's autonomous and I can just leave it over there and I can remove myself from the location. Obviously, you know, there's a bit of kit over there and I want to keep an eye on it, but the further away I can be, the less I'm going to influence the recording or

I don't want to hear myself. You know, I don't want to record myself. So I always try and wear clothes that don't make a sound...

WB - move your arms.

SB - Well, now I'm. Yes. It's not. It's not too bad. No. This isn't. I wouldn't wear this out, you know, but here I am.

WB - Yeah. So you've just mentioned a GoPro. Does that mean you're filming it?

SB - Well, usually, no, but I am actually, uh, recording the image at the same time. So I position myself where I think Constable actually have been when he made the paintings. So there's a bit of interpretation, a little bit of guesswork, especially on paintings where it's a bit more ambiguous. People have done a lot of research about Constable, so I'm quite blessed in that fact, where I can use that as a resource and so on. East Bergholt Society map. They've, you know, they've got a lot of actual locations where the paintings were made. So a lot of that work has already been done. But some of it you're just in the middle of a field. So you're kind of like within, you know, maybe ten, twenty metres maybe of where he might have been. But I quite like that. I feel like I too am exploring that area as he would have done. Obviously he was more familiar with it because he lived there, but I'm becoming more familiar with it now.

WB - I have been to some of the fields around Flatford, and I do happen to know there are a lot of big cows there that move around a lot. Did they bother you in any way?

SB - I haven't been bothered by it. I have seen them obviously, and recorded them, but I've not been bothered by them.

WB - I'm quite scared of them myself.

SB - Well they are well they're huge, they are massive. And what I, what I quite like is if they're because they're curious as well aren't they. So they just slowly move towards you. It's a bit like they're a zombie, like, you know, slowly with their big staring eyes, like moving towards you. And it can be quite intimidating, I think. But, um, so far I've been the other side of the fence, so, uh, but, um, you know, if you can get the sound of them, they're such beautiful creatures. I

mean, you know, and they do, you know, they're a community and they do communicate with each other, so.

WB - So the sound that you're getting today is so very different to, as it was in John Constable's day. But that is the whole purpose really of what you're doing. Is it is it that.

SB - Yeah. The main I think difference we, we can only really imagine can't we, what it would have sounded like. But we know that we're having an impact on, on the natural world through our activities as a species. So for instance, you know, there's many planes that go over while I'm recording, but I use my plane tracker on my phone and you can see in real time where the planes are going from and to. And one was going from Ahmedabad in North Western India to Miami. The people on that plane would not think that they would be being heard in Flatford. So inadvertently, they're having a negative effect on our landscape here. But, well, that also means is that our own activities are negatively affecting someone else's landscape or someone's habitat. Some things habitat. So I'm very aware that I'm doing a lot of travelling through this project. You know, the fact that I'm even there in the middle of a field has disturbed all the wildlife. Obviously, if you stay for long enough that wildlife will come back to you slowly and after fifteen twenty minutes you will start to see more activity. And the longer you stay there and the quieter and stiller you are, the more you will see. But that's again why I try to remove myself from the microphone. If I hide in the hedge over there, birds will come back, you know, because they can't see me. So, like, um, I mean, I'm not in a hide, I've not got a load of camo gear on.

WB - I was just having an image there. Um, a good sound, visual image of of you hiding in a, in a hedge. I mean, you must get a lot of funny comments.

SB - Exactly. People do think, who's that and what's he doing? You know, and you're going, well, I'm just trying to ignore them, actually, because it's like, I don't want to engage. As soon as you engage someone, they'll they'll say something. So but it's what you learn when you record, you know, I've mostly actually recorded urban environments, but in recent years more so rural environments. But, um, Yeah. You learn ways to engage or not engage with people. It's just I think that just comes with experience, you know? Um, a lot of

people are quite suspicious of your motive, but once you explain to them what you're doing, most people are okay.

WB - You know, maybe you could have a sign that says, please be quiet. I'm recording. I'm not a nutter or something like that.

SB - Yes. Interesting.

WB - Where have you been? You've been to Flatford, Suffolk, where he was born. Where he brought up his family. Um, where did you go to follow his tracks around the UK?

SB - Well, so far I've been to Osmington, which is a little village in Dorset. He spent a lot of time down there and he's made several paintings of Weymouth Bay. So I went in early October as that painting was dated from early October. So, um, I thought I would go there at the same time. Places I am planning to go are Brighton. He also painted in Salisbury, but I don't think that painting's been selected for the exhibition. So he did travel around quite a lot. He also painted Hadleigh Castle near Southend. But that's not in the exhibition either, so I'm trying to.

WB - So you're tying it up with the exhibition at Ipswich? Christchurch mansion, is it? And you know what's going to be in there. So that's effects what you're recording.

SB - Yeah, I've chosen to record paintings in the exhibition.

WB - How many are there?

SB - There's going to be over one hundred. Well, pieces of work, some drawings. There's another exhibition before that, which I think is mainly drawings, but I've chosen twenty locations myself to record. And some of those will be exhibited with the works. So I'm not sure exactly which ones. Or there's still a lot of work to do on the technicalities of that. So that's stuff I've still to do.

WB - So I'm going to the exhibition. It's a wonderful building isn't it. Christchurch Ipswich and Christchurch Mansion. And I've got the exhibition John Constable's two hundred and fiftieth anniversary. And I'm standing in front of the Hay Wain. What? What? How will your work work with that? Will there be sounds going around it, or

will it be on headphones or what? And what will I hear at the moment?

SB - It hasn't really been decided. They do have a system already in place where you can, for instance, have a narrative about the painting which you opt in to. You can choose to have that experience while you're with the work. I've got the specs for that now, and the bandwidth is not very high. So and obviously it's only going to be in stereo of where the recordings are in three hundred sixty degrees. So to recreate that would be quite hard. Also, if you play the sound in the space, it's less, uh, easy to opt out of that because people might not want to hear the sound. So I don't want to impose the sound as a, the only way to experience a painting, because people are going to see the painting and I see the sound as like an additional extra thing. So you can get directional speakers. And so if you stand in a certain spot, then you'll be able to hear the sound.

WB - So that might be how would that work through a sort of, um, QR code or something?

SB - Uh, no. That just you were just positioned, for instance, the speaker on the ceiling. And if you just stand in a certain spot, you can hear the sound acoustically, but it's directional so it doesn't fill out the rest of the space. Um, I've done quite a lot of installation work, and sound can drive people nuts, especially people invigilating if something's on a loop or if a place is a quiet place. So, for instance, I had an installation in Harlow Library once, and people didn't like it because they went to the library because it was a quiet place, even though one of the sounds in the work was the sound of the squeaky fan that was on all the time. So I'm quite mindful of people's experience, you know? And that sound can be a noise, an unwanted, irritable thing. So it's all things still to work out, really. And I'm working closely with, um, Emma Roodhouse and Peter Harrop, who are working on the show. So yeah, it's quite exciting though, knowing that we're going to do something and we look forward to to seeing it.

WB - When will it open again? It's in July. From memory the eleventh of July. Um, but obviously we'll be promoting that in the run up and it goes on to October.

WB - It's this very interesting. Is this experimental? Do you see it in the future where where it's going towards.

SB - I think just on your point of it being experimental, that's what I always try to make my work, because I find it interesting to be doing new things, trying out new things, going in an unknown, uncertain direction. So for me, that's it's quite a critical part of my practice, really, that I'm trying. I don't really want to get, you know, stuck in a rut and keep churning out the same old thing. I'm not a production line, you know. I'm trying to educate myself and do something that's interesting to me. You know, that's what it has to be first and foremost, interesting. You know, I can record the locations of any number of things. So it can be sort of packaged up and taken to other institutions, galleries, etc.. So it's expandable. Definitely. And I think because it's funded by the Arts Council, I must mention through one of their project grants, that's what they like to see. You know, they like to see that you're taking a risk, you're learning new skills, you're broadening your horizons. You're giving yourself more opportunity to work in new fields, earn money doing different things, you know, build resilience into your practice. So I think that's all that's all in there, you know,

WB - and teaching others and sharing the experience, which is what you've done a lot of in this.

SB - Yes, exactly. You know,

WB - and tell us a bit about workshops, the workshops and and how they evolved and how how they've turned out because they've finished now.

SB - The premise of the workshops was that Constable, who was part of the sort of romantic movement, he and they changed the way that we looked or experienced the landscape. So what I wanted to do was experience the same very familiar visually landscape, again in an unfamiliar way. And to do that was to use sound. So which is why I chose to work with Fraser Merrick, who's a sound artist from Colchester, and Kelly Buckley, who's a sound artist from Southend. We put out a call on socials and on BBC radio, thanks to yourself.

WB - BBC Essex actually

SB - BBC Essex for members of the public to join us on these workshops, which were free and very kindly supported by Colchester and Ipswich Museums, with some funding, and National Trust Flatford, who gave us The Granary building for free.

WB - Um, very accommodating and a wonderful building. It's great to do the work inside. It was we were right in the heart of Flatford. You can feel that, that kind of tranquility. The building was very old. You could almost feel that John Constable and his kids and wife had been there in that sort of space.

SB - Exactly. Well, they definitely walked up and down the lane, didn't they? And I've been on the river and the towpath where we were, so, um, it was great. We had lots of different people came all ages. Um, and we also worked with the Romanian Community in Ipswich. So they came on a bus. There was quite a few of those guys, and we all got to explore the landscape in a different way through listening, writing, drawing, recording, sound, processing sound, doing some improvised performance. All manner of things. And people really got involved and we've had some great feedback from that actually. So from that, we've decided we're going to do some more workshops next year, probably in the summer again, because that sort of connects mostly to Constable's paintings are mainly in the summer, and obviously it's weathers a bit better and it's nice to be, you know, down there, isn't it? And the sunshine and the warmth and

WB - could you paint a picture now? A picture in sound describing what you actually see at Flatford now? Um, so you could probably close your eyes and tell me that might be an interesting.

SB - Well, when you're there, you get this sort of sense of calm and you kind of connect back to a time before. But the reason for that is that it's kept a certain way. It's a very manicured landscape, and it's kind of kept a certain way in order to connect us back. Yeah, that's the reason why it's done. But I'm very aware that it's not wild or natural. You know, that there's a little capsule in amongst that landscape. There's a lot of protection about what can happen there or is not allowed to happen there in terms of building or, you know, infrastructure and that kind of thing.

WB - So what do the people do there?

SB - well, people like to, um, like to have a little walk around and, um, you know, just experience that peace. I think connect back to that time. It's a bit romanticised, but I suppose that is what that movement was all about. Stand in the exact same spot. You know, have their photo taken with Willy Lock's Cottage in the background because they want to be a part of history, I suppose, and a part of connecting to that time. Why does anyone go anywhere? You know, like if you go to Sydney and touch the Royal Opera House. Sorry, uh, but Sydney's a massive city and lots of other things happen there, so it's surely only just part of one's experience of life.

WB - I think for me, going to Flatford, as I have done so often, it's the it's the river which runs through the whole whole place from Dedham, past through Flatford, and on and on it goes all sorts of places. Um, but then on the river, it's very busy. It's busy with people in Canoes and paddle boards and lots and lots of traffic that way, and having people having fun in the water.

SB - Yeah, well, the river does that. I think water does. That attracts people to it. You go to the seaside, you know, to have a day out. You know, you go for a walk by the lake, there is an attraction to water. I think what no one has actually spoken about, I think in terms of Flatford and the river. Not since I've been working on this project, anyway, is that, um, just three hundred metres up the, down the river is Judas Gap, and that's like a sea defence. Okay, it's a couple more miles to Cattawade, but there's a bigger sea defence. But then you've got the open water. So if there's, you know, a rise in sea level Flatford is like going to get hit pretty early on.

WB - So like this protected, manicured, precious thatched cottage.

SB - Yeah. It's, you know, it's it's right on the front line. Almost. You know, I think the conversation about preservation and conservation shouldn't only be attached to the buildings and the history and Constable, it should be slightly wider to, um, to include that the other landscape around it. But also it's much more urgent than what people are making out, I think. So it could be a case study for why we need to be stepping up our action. Maybe.

WB - Gosh, because it's so very flat there and it's that water level can't be very, very high, can it? No, I don't know what the Dedham you can almost see straight on the horizon again flat. So there's not much that doesn't go up until you get to about Stoke by Nayland when you get a little peak there.

SB - Yeah, well, I suppose you could do it by the locks, and there's a few weirs along the way, but between Flatford Lock and Judas Gap is, you know, a few hundred metres, then you've got a big drop of about ten foot. I suppose that's not that big in these terms. Yeah. Uh, then to like the tidal water. But the river actually goes left there and I can't remember. I have been down there on the boat. I can't remember how far you go. So you get to another drop, but it's not a huge distance.

WB - So it's under threat. The landscape is under threat of being flooded. And that could be disastrous. So, you know, your record is very important. Going back to the experience of the people, um, that took part, Um, they were obviously not professional recorders, uh, sound people. So for them, it was a totally new experience. You can listen, but do you listen?

SB - Well, that is a very. Yeah. Good point. You know, we the brain is very good at filtering out sounds we don't want to hear. A lot of sound gets masked by other sounds. So the traffic, you know, drone masks a whole load of sound. You know, natural sound, but also domestic sounds. Yeah. I think the point of the workshops were that anybody of any level could come and have a go.

WB - And so what do you actually do? Do you give them a tape recorder and say, go and make a record or something? How does it work?

SB - Well, in Fraser's workshops we did do a bit of recording. Yeah. People, we sort of just explain how to record. And then people were free to go and record whatever they wanted. So some people recorded like the river, the lock, um, a bird, um, some rustling trees. I think the willows, because it was a bit windy. The willows were making a nice sound, but other activities included just listening, like sitting somewhere for half an hour, not doing anything except for listening.

WB - And what could you hear?

SB - And the more you listen, the further you can hear, the more you can hear. Obviously. Um, because you're paying attention to it because before you weren't paying so much attention to it, you were walking the dog, or you were going down the shops or whatever. So.

WB - Or on your mobile phone. Well, is that such a distraction? You know, like headphones?

SB - Terrible. You know, just completely isolating. What I was hoping for is that people would be more aware of sound. After the workshop, it wasn't necessarily about having to make something or having to be creative. It was more about let's pay more attention to sound and what can we do with it? What is possible? What is actually happening in the world that we can hear rather than see?

WB - And also, I suppose it could have a knock on effect to mental health and wellbeing as to what listening would do to yourself and our health. It's a bit like a meditation, I suppose, in a way. Is that what you think you should do? Half an hour's listening a day.

SB - Well, I certainly, you know, because I've been recording for an hour. I have to be very still. I have to stop, slow down, be present. And obviously I'm thinking about the technical aspect of it, you know, is everything running? Um, I know there's a dog and there's panting and it's walking past, but, you know, I love all that. Or if someone parks a car next to it, you know, and all you get is the sound of the engine or whatever. I'm sort of aware of that. But after a time, I tend to become more introspective and think more about me. And then after half an hour, I seem to go, especially when I'm in a more rural area, there's less sort of distractions, I go into another state of mind, and I do...I think it does start to become a meditation then, and which definitely helps me. Life's just too busy at the moment, isn't it, for everybody? You know, we're all rushing around earning money, doing this and that and the other. And, um, it's quite a luxury, actually, just to stop. I mean, you're not doing nothing. You're listening and being and just thinking about things or just reevaluating or, you know, I think it was Jules Pretty. He's, uh, he's a local guy.

WB - Um, and professor, isn't he?

SB - Yeah. Uh, Essex University or maybe Suffolk. Um, he's written a lot of books, actually. And, um, he calls it the Natural Health Service, and, you know, it's there. Why don't we all use it? You know, and listening is only one way of engaging with nature. But I think it's a really important one because because of that reason, you have to it's less about you. And it kind of forces you to slow down and to to just be a bit more mindful.

WB - Do you see your work? Maybe if you think of a sort of spider eating out across the UK or across the country or the world into that, you know, half an hour's thinking and sound and what that would do. Because in meditation you don't take notice of the sound. It's the sound within. So this is the sound without or outside of you. And that is a different way of approaching it. Do you see that sort of message? Is that the sort of message you think could happen with this?

SB - I hadn't thought about the work being a vehicle for that, for other people, for myself, I suppose. Yeah. I mean, a lot of other people have made work about that, especially Pauline Oliveros, who's kind of she spoke a lot about deep listening. Where you were, you like, that's what Kelly was working on in her workshop is about really slowing, stopping, you know, and giving things time. Giving your time. I initially asked Kelly because she does a thing that she calls bioacoustics or biosonics, which is where you attach some electrodes to plants and you can pick up the electrical signals and control an instrument with that. So I thought, that's quite a unique way of, you know, and definitely a way that people wouldn't have engaged with Flatford, for instance.

WB - So are you making music?

SB - Yes. Yeah. But obviously a plant's not going to give out something in a pentatonic scale.

WB - But does it speak?

SB - Well, I suppose music is a voice, but it was, you know, it's a bit more like a free form jazz kind of, uh, solo, but attaching in different

parts of a leaf, there's different parts of the same leaf, different parts of the same plant, different plants, a tree, all gave different responses. So people really, um, engaged with that and suddenly got excited and thought, wow, what can that do? And what can this do? And before we know it all, you know, we're walking all the way down the path and all these new possibilities open up in someone's mind. And that's what we wanted really, is to take away the barriers and like, see, this is what is possible or this is a different way of looking at a thing that you're maybe familiar with already. And I think that is what that's what art is about, isn't it? What sound does a tree make? Well, you can plug it into any number of things. So you can be part of that decision and you might plug it into a little synth so it will make, you know, random notes on this thing. Or you could plug it maybe into a drum machine and it would play different beats. I mean, you know, like, um, if you, that's down to you to play with. So if you

WB - what do you put a probe into the tree or two little crocodile clips. Two, two clips on the tree. And can you just get the pure sound that's coming from that? Can you not be a continual.

SB - No. It's more like small pulses.

WB - Wow.

SB - I suppose it could be more continuous. It depends. It depends. Like every combination of things is different.

WB - Wow. So, um, is that why we're drawn to trees? What? People want to hug them. It used to be derided, but a lot of people actually get some kind of health healing, even from a tree.

SB - People are very attached to trees, aren't they? But I think now we're because of we're realising how complex and interconnected all plants and trees are through the mycelium underground and how all the this communication happens. We are all more connected than we realise.

WB - So maybe it's us trying to be more connected because we've become less connected, haven't we? So from nature especially, maybe it's a way of trying to reconnect finally, because you have to

go. I'd like to know what the next project is going to be. What are you working on next? I know you've got a lot more work to do.

SB - Yeah, there's like nearly a year left on this project.

WB - Have you got thoughts of what you want to do next? Um, I'm off to Africa and record birds,

SB - so that would be amazing. Um, I'm always open to opportunities, obviously, uh, conversations. I've actually got a meeting about, um, another project which is happening in Colchester. It's about garden, and I need to go and find out more. So that's what I'm doing next. But

WB - um, very secretive. Will you let us know?

SB - I don't really know much more. Because I haven't had the meeting.

WB - We're intrigued about that.

SB - But it's, you know, someone who I know. Not very well, but I've met him a few times. He just said, hi, I've got this idea, and, um, it sounds like, it's kind of up your street, and I do want to come and have a chat about it. So I'm like, yeah, okay. That just helps me to enrich my life and connect with other people, places, which is really important. Record some sounds to document, but also then make some sounds. So add my own layer on top of all of. That you know, I'm just part of this process. It's not all. It's not just me. I'm part of this bigger ecosystem, but like, you know, a network of ideas basically.

WB - Yeah. So I would say watch this space. But I'm going to say listen to this space.

SB - Exactly. Yes, please.

WB - Stuart, thank you very much.

SB - Thank you. Stuart Bowditch, sound artist. And I'm Wendy Bailey, broadcaster. Artist.

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