Sound and Music in Virtual Worlds

Julian J. Green
University of the West of England (United Kingdom)
julian2.green@uwe.ac.uk

Abstract

The investigation of sound and music in 3D virtual world contexts, such as Second Life, provides a rich field in which to understand the aesthetic and metaphysical nature of music and sound. If we understand music as an 'intentional object', as Roger Scruton has postulated[1], then the very formation of the concept and experience of 'music' in the virtual world demands our complicity. If this is the case, the resultant immersion in the virtual world may be augmented through our increased musical engagement:that is, listener and user of the virtual world becomes more immersed in the environment as a consequence of their musical experiences. In addition, if we accept that our experiences of music may be understood from the metaphorical position 'music is space', as Scruton amongst others has argued, then hearing music also becomes something that we negotiate at a bodily or phenomenological level. Since the virtual world is composed of space, the coincidence of two spatial systems - music and virtual environment - is one that needs to be understood in regard to the possibilities of educational design and the effective use of sound and music. This paper will illustrate and argue that a metaphysical understanding of the aesthetic nature of sound as music will lead to a more considered educational use of this medium in virtual worlds.

References

[1] Roger Scruton, The Aesthetics of Music (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997)