

Sounding Out! Podcast #54: The Sound of Magic

Sounding Out! Authors

Blog post published May 12, 2016 in *Sounding Out!*

<https://doi.org/10.59350/xt5d8-x1d84>

Abstract

Each of the essays in this month's "Medieval Sound" forum focuses on sound as it, according to Steve Goodman's essay "The Ontology of Vibrational Force," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, "comes to the rescue of thought rather than the inverse, forcing it to vibrate, loosening up its organized or petrified body (70). These investigations into medieval sound [...]"

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Medieval Sounds, Pedagogy, Performance, Podcast, Ritual

Recommended citation

Authors, S. O. (2016, May 12). Sounding Out! Podcast #54: The Sound of Magic. *Sounding Out!*.

<https://doi.org/10.59350/xt5d8-x1d84>

Copyright

Copyright © Sounding Out! Authors 2016. Distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.



Each of the essays in this month's "Medieval Sound" forum focuses on sound as it, according to Steve Goodman's essay "The Ontology of Vibrational Force," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, "comes to the rescue of thought rather than the inverse, forcing it to vibrate, loosening up its organized or petrified body (70). These investigations into medieval sound lend themselves to a variety of presentation methods loosening up the "petrified body" of academic presentation. Each essay challenges concepts of how to hear the Middle Ages and how the sounds of the Middle Ages continue to echo in our own soundscapes.

The posts and podcast in this series begins an ongoing conversation about medieval sound in *Sounding Out!*. Our opening gambit in April 2016, "Multimodality and Lyric Sound," reframes how we consider the lyric from England to Spain, from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries, pushing ideas of openness, flexibility, and productive creativity. We will post several follow-ups throughout the rest of 2016 focusing on "Remediating Medieval Sound." And, HEAR YE!, in April 2017, look for a second series on Aural Ecologies of noise! **—Guest Editors Dorothy Kim and Christopher Roman**

<https://soundstudiesblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/sound-of-magic-podcast.mp3>

CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD: [The Sound of Magic](#)

SUBSCRIBE TO THE SERIES VIA [ITUNES](#)

ADD OUR PODCASTS TO YOUR [STITCHER FAVORITES PLAYLIST](#)

Medieval charms run the gamut from offering protection for journeys (travel was often perilous) to warding your cattle from thieves (the runic letter for 'cattle' also means 'wealth') to various kinds of healing for people, animals and even the earth. Many of them include verses that are meant to be sung.

What is the sound of magic? How do you sing it properly without notation? Does it affect the efficacy of the charm if you sing it wrong?

‘Sing ðis gealdor’ Sing this charm the Anglo-Saxon texts command. The words are even linked as ‘galdorsangas’ incantations, but the doom-and-gloom 11th century preacher Archbishop Wulfstan uses that term in the pejorative sense of things to avoid, lumping it together with ‘sorceries’ as things to avoid. In its time the right way of singing was understood but, as is the case about much of the social context, we have lost the specifics.

How to recreate an Anglo-Saxon charm in a modern sound file then? If you’re going to do it right, how do you capture the magic in a way that’s true to the source material and yet accessible to a modern audience (even if it’s just my students)? I was determined to do it and do it right.

I

—

K. A. Laity is the author of the novels *White Rabbit*, *Knight of the White Hart*, *A Cut-Throat Business*, *Lush Situation*, *Owl Stretching*, *Pelzmantel*, *The Mangrove Legacy*, *Chastity Flame* and the collections *Unquiet Dreams* and *Unikirja*, as well as editor of *Weird Noir*, *Noir Carnival* and *Drag Noir*, writer of *other stories, plays and essays*. Her stories tend to slip across genres and categories, but all display intelligence and humour. Myths and fairy tales influence much of her writing. The short stories in *Dreambook* [originally *Unikirja*] found their inspiration from The Kalevala, Kanteletar, and other Finnish myths and legends: the stories won the 2005 Eureka Short Story Fellowship and a 2006 Finlandia Foundation grant.

Dr. Laity teaches medieval literature, film, digital humanities and popular culture at the College of Saint Rose, though she was at *NUI Galway as a Fulbright scholar* for the 2011-2 academic year.

—



REWIND!...If you liked this post, you may also dig:

‘A Clateryng of Knokkes’: Multimodality and Performativity in “The Blacksmith’s Lament”–
Katherine Jager

Mouthing the Passion: Richard Rolle’s Soundscapes–Christopher Roman

EPISODE LI: Creating New Words from Old Sounds–Marcella Ernest, Candace Gala, Leslie Harper,
and Daryn McKenny