

# WATER MUSIC, EXETER

A Sound Walk  
for Alexandra Scarlatt  
Emma Welton  
May 2021

① Once upon a time, when the thickening pressure of machines briefly ceased, voices cut shapes in the air.  
Today, traffic drones and rasps meld with ventilation fans, dulling the edges of chatter and children's shouts.

② Voices fade, engines move in. Ahead, ripples slap hulls, rigging tink masts. Gulls yelp, 'I'm here'.

④ An open front door emits the sound of vacuuming - or is it a hissing swan? Feathers of a tiny unseen bird shiver from brambles. Percussive clucks & chirrups are threaded with blackbird's graceful contours.

⑥ New sycamore and rowan leaves flop together. A small plane pulses overhead, for ever. Thunder grows from rusty chimneys emitting vapour. If the factories are silent you may hear poplars shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

⑧ Steam turbine rumble from the Energy from Waste plant joins in - a massive kettle whose pitches you can whistle. A train tears past. The power plant's poplar facade is an illusion of tranquility. David wren slings trills at generator Goliath.

⑨ Look out for heron in frozen attention on the bank, a silent (coiled) spring. Richer music emerges. Goldfinch triptips from treetops. Martins jajajajaja overhead. Thrush commands. Invisible lambs b-e-e-ah. Finally, the lock-gate's gushing water drowns the machines.

③ Cross the bridges with experimental footwork to find their singing tones. The acoustic broadens. Runners pant, plastic soles scuff-thud, groups plod in friendly chat, bikes tick-a-tick. Canine toenails tapdance.

⑤ I caught a shoal of kayakers' cries & surging paddles. On weekdays, metalwork screams from cavernous sheds. Forklifts move beeps through space. Rackety radio music and an indecipherable DJ jostles with icecream van chimes.

⑦ Where possible, slip between trees. Wait a while, peacefully, so the birds forget you. Woodpecker will be drumming, regardless. Hear them (all) speak. A church bell rolls across the flood plain every hour.

Walk distance:  
about 2.5 km

PIAZZA  
TERRACINA

①  
CITY BASIN

EXETER  
SHIP

SALMONPOOL  
BRIDGE

CANAL

DOUBLE  
LOCK 5  
PUB

N  
↑