

Sonora V19

Robert Jarvis

<https://www.robertjarvis.co.uk/installations/info/sonoraExhibit.htm>

PROCESS

A sonic interpretation of the transmission of the COVID-19 disease across nineteen of the earliest countries to report the disease. Further details plus audio at:
www.robertjarvis.co.uk/sonoraV19.htm

Like everyone, I was hearing the daily reported numbers of COVID-19 cases, initially just from China, and then from other countries as well. The problem for me was that I didn't find the numbers on their own to be all that useful. I found that I had to do other mental calculations to understand the general flow of what was being reported, such as percentage change and so on. What seemed most important to me was to be able to get a grip on how the data itself was changing, and I just wasn't getting this from the daily reporting.

In early February then, I found myself noting down some of this data and plotting my own graphs, mainly so that I could better understand this number-flow, as represented by the curve of a graph. However, it wasn't long before there were so many countries reporting cases that just looking at a few graphs no longer gave me an understanding of a fuller picture. So, I decided to work with sound.

Working with nineteen of the earliest countries to report COVID-19, I gave each one its own pitch corresponding to the natural harmonic series, as related to a low "C" that I assigned to China. I then applied the number of 'active-cases' reported for each of my chosen countries to the volume of their assigned musical tone. The result is a long, complex, evolving note that gradually increases in volume and changes in timbre according to the daily reported active cases.

SonoraV19 is an audible way to experience one aspect of the story, or journey, of this virus, as it is told through the reported data and translated into sound. It may even provide another way of understanding this era that we are all living through.

QUOTES

"super interesting" (SoundArtRadio)

"Remarkable - and brilliant in its simplicity." (Bryan Crump, broadcaster, RNZ)

"we were very moved by your COVID-19-themed 'sonification'; it's a brilliantly innovative idea executed with beautiful use of digital tech and artistry. Therefore, we will be exhibiting your work in the festival." (Sophie Chester-Nash, digiArts fest 2020)

"This looks amazing. A musical work composed by a pandemic and curated musically by my favourite genius" (Peter Morgan Barnes - Librettist, Stage Director)

"Remarkable idea. The sound design based on stats and maths modelling is intelligent and emotional." (digiArts fest 2020)