

Composition title: ***Psithurism*** (2017)
Duration: 8 minutes, 10 seconds
Composer: Miles Warrington
Affiliation: University of Pretoria
Technical requirements: 2 channel fixed media
World Premiere: North Western University, Boston, MA, 2017 @ concert of South African Electronic Music Compositions

Introduction

Casuarina equisetifolia - the Horsetail Tree, Whistling Pine, Iron Wood or Australian Pine, is an invader species in South Africa. One of the many plants introduced that are native to Australia and the Pacific Rim region, this species disturbs the natural vegetation of sensitive coastal areas in our country. They have the longest needle- like leaves out of any of the casuarina or pine species known. For this reason, they make incredible sounds, similar to the wind through other trees with needle-like leaves, although the characteristic of the sound through this particular species is unique, simply because of the length of the leaves. This sound is called a *psithurism* or a sougling of the wind through the trees. Wind noise was recorded on several farms around the Western Cape, where the trees are used as wind-breaks.

Composition

Recording the material for the work was achieved by positioning a pair of condenser microphones in an ORTF configuration (110° angle between them) on a very long microphone pole beneath the trees during a windy day for an hour on each farm. The work seeks to underscore narratives of biology and ecology. With careful transformation and application of electroacoustic composition techniques, the generation of much effective material is possible, whereby everything from long sustained tones, bell-like tones, staccato attacks, highly varied timbres and many other sound-related gestures are obtained or may be created from the dense sounds unique to these plants in the wind. With respect to the tradition of *Musique Concrète*, no other sounds are introduced in the material selection process, therefore only transformations of the recorded wind noise from the trees are present in the work.