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# MetaSon #5 Skruv Stockholm: turning schizophonic sound into audiovirtual image\*

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Schizophonic soundscapes in Murray Schafer's critical acoustic ecology mean a split between listening and seeing, between space and place, between audience and communicator. His idea of a gap between senses is based on electronic media like radio and telephone, but it gains new actuality in modern (multimedia) times. The new technology and its users have too experimented with the creative inversion of schizophony in sound and vision. Film sound design and film music combine sound in and out of context, composition works with contrapunctual audiovisions; video art and sound art, as in the work of Robert Cahen, combine and mix genres of all kinds and senses. *MetaSon #5 Skruv Stockholm* is an audiovisual soundwalk, based on soundscape recordings in Sweden in the 1970s and 1990s, combined with associative pictures and designs, each in its own rhythms and times. It consists less of the common meaning both share, being more dependent on the fluidity and dynamic of the relationship between the elements. Sound and image create an intermedium, intermodal space neither of which could project alone. From moment to moment, schizophonic montage and idea invert into a fresh, maybe evocative look at the way we perceive, where the audio flow transforms stable pictures into liquid forms, where image follows sound and is treated like sound.

## 1. METASON – META SON

I konsertsalen  
vibrerande tonklanger  
hänför öronpar (Yngve Wirkander)

A silent, cold day in 1975. The drone of a not-too-distant factory is the acoustic horizon of the empty village space of Skruv. Slow steps on ice – a soundscaper with microphones. The perception of the audio-author changes the soundscape – which is a net of finely tuned vibrations melting into life experience. An audiotactile mode towards granular acoustics. A sound biography, a way through an environmental score. Each and every way and day leads into new sounds, because we change, even if they remain the same. We are always in flux and in flow, in trains and transition of sound memory and acoustical identity. Sound, time, speed and motion (in

*MetaSon #5 Skruv Stockholm*) stream forward and backward simultaneously and our presence is a virtual moment where past and future, sound and image intertwine and intersect.

META, meant as metamorphosis, metaphor, transformation, melting of sound and light. And the 'smellody' of a Paris perfume, composer Pedro Elias remembers, that changed its colour and sound during the day . . . son, sound. Sound image. Keynotes, signals, soundmarks, rhythm and time, music, speech, man-made and object sounds, processed material and – rarely enough – tonal silence. MetaSon: the heard, perceived and remembered sound in all sounds, real and imaginary; Soundscape – not as it is, but as it is interpreted, the sound behind and beyond sounds.

MetaSon is a title borrowed from our Madrid Soundscape Collective in the 1990s, coming into existence when the vocal polyphony of Pedro Elias' piece overlapped with Michael Rüsenberg's research for rhythmic proportions of daily life in the city – the urban beat in footsteps, voices and motions. Composer and scientist Francisco Lopez added urban layers, inspired the WHITE – the 'inverted prisma' (Chaya Czernowin) – in Robert Ryan's paintings. Textures that, in his current 'biotic' compositions, like *La Selva*, imply the 'look' through the sonic microscope and probe deeply into the MATERIAL itself. My own more radiophonic sound story – forever untold – juxtaposed urban density with the remaining places of silence in the last olivars of the city. The montage combined silence, voice, music, noise, 'virtu-real' moments (the Austrian artist SHA), document and commentary, a melting continuum and broad palette of everyday life.

Soundscape composition is still – maybe will always be – open form and definition without edges, ranging from acoustical photography to semi-abstract sound construction. MetaSon means sound-recycling and soundscape composition to me – it is instant replay, cut and paste, process and morphing always as audiovisual work, even without using pictures. The term reveals the process and culture of listening, creating an ambient texture and story, where the voices of the soundscapers themselves become an inevitable component and sense of place. Most pieces relate to you, where you are and come from. The space you move through takes place in

\*Dedicated to Mona and Yngve Wirkander, George Drury in Chicago for his expression 'klanguage', and with special thanks to Kyra Witt.

a context of acoustic ecology. The soundscapers themselves are actors and listeners inside or outside their song. The sounds change from sound object to soundscape event and subject.

Composer and researcher Barry Truax once expressed that soundscape compositions are like rehearsal stages for the acoustic design of the real world. They are also rehearsals to challenge the images we tend to absorb so easily but would never accept for sound objects. So new sound for historic pictures in Chicago was a fruitful experience to create 'stories crafted from sound' (radio producer Jim Metzner). This craft should and could be true for more than radio – from awareness to intermodality – sound as and behind image.

## 2. CHICAGO CHICAGO – SOUNDSCAPES FOR A CITY AND A FILM

In 1931 a German journalist Heinrich Hauser drives up the Mississippi to go to Chicago by boat. He carries a silent camera with him and wants to show the impressive industrial progress of this 'city at work' to his Berlin and German audience. He filmed outdoors, very interested in people but to be seen from a . . . distance. He showed the obvious and the hidden of urban life: the workers, unemployed, architecture and ghettos, growth and human wracks. Thief's market and leisure life on the typical accessible beaches. The archaic EL-Train – Chicago's sound and landmark until today – and segregation. A city in transition, during the depression and with images which are not far removed from today's.

An interesting document in the context of Walter Ruttmann's Berlin pictures in the 1920s – but not a piece of art. The film disappeared for a long time and was rediscovered in the 1990s. Hauser died in the 1950s after a restless wandering life in Germany, Australia and North America. For German television the film was complemented with a soundtrack: not reconstructive but interpretative and beyond the obvious. Texts from Hauser's book *Feldwege nach Chicago* have been added as well. Sounds of today merge with the picture of the past. Later we brought the film back to Chicago to present it to artists, historians, journalists, directors and writers. Their associations were documented in an introductory film preceding Hauser's pictures. This work with sounds, pictures, associations and texts of Chicago splits and reunites many interesting layers of a city's perception.

Some time ago we explored the city and the biography of now ninety-year-old oral historian and journalist, Studs Terkel. He has interviewed many people in Chicago with experience of ghetto life, the slaughterhouses, the south side. Later we took part in the Chicago soundscape project, *Experimental Sound Studio*, by Dawn and Lou Mallozzi. Groups of artists took a look into micro soundscapes within the city. In a detention

centre, in city hall, in music life, underneath the airport and in a steel plant. Dawn Mallozzi developed a sound-biographical approach from this – *STEEL MEMORIES*.

From both projects many sounds of today were gathered and processed; they already revealed that in Hauser's story and in the new – muted – soundscape of the film there is a Chicago today. We see a social drive and skyline understandable from our view of this busy city. The soundtrack to the film was made with that idea in mind, confirming and juxtaposing the same time. The sound of the elevated train is a key for me. The EL is a transitional space. A moving house, a frozen metal sound of the American dream. An audio icon of the restless growth. Forward motion. The power of the pioneers, the workers, the capitalists, the unions in the 'city of hands'. Mobility is the motif of the city. Dynamic flow. Hectic socialising. Soundscapes in Chicago generate urban grooves. Codes, sequences, that are present in every city, but never appear identical. They are genetic patterns of their environment and change their 'gestalt' permanently. The soundscape is in a steady process of erosion and renewal. Chicago lives in and out of time. Now. Then. Soon. Sound is historic at the moment of listening to it. This relation of voice and ear is in a flow, a vertical and horizontal sound layer, whose change is its constancy. The film sound project has motifs of an auditive Rorschach test and targets its audience participation rather than the listener.

## 3. SOUND(E)SCAPE

Flowing water images on a large video screen draw the viewer into its motions and breath. A dancer emerges on the dark stage, her movements extremely slow in the style of the traditional Japanese dance *nihon buyo*. Interactive sensors and senders throw digital shadows from her hands to the musician behind computer screens and algorithms. Unaccelerated, ancient gestures, gathered from a lifetime of training, meet newest sound technology. The sound patterns of composer Curtis Bahn come to life through the motions of dancer and music ethnologist Tommie Hahn. This is improvisation based on years of cooperation and understanding of each other's disciplines: music played through the body, a crossroads in virtual space, in image, sound, and algorithm, in motion and stillness.

The performance was a small but evocative part of the 2000 Conference on Acoustic Ecology at Trent University in Ontario, maybe even a symbolic picture of the flow and processual phase of the soundscape movement itself. An intense and engaging atmosphere was created by the main conference organiser, professor Ellen Waterman and her team, connecting cultural studies and the interdisciplinary tradition of this university with the still new field of acoustic ecology. R. Murray Schafer, pioneer of soundscape ideas, composer, author and visual artist, lives on a farm nearby. A modern Thoreau,

without television and and telephone, deeply involved in his music and texts; a strong and unique 'gestalt' in the vast landscape, like the listener in the cold of his 'winter diary' – who was awarded the reputed Sczuka Prize in German Radio. Schafer is a relative of Glenn Gould, whose *Radiophonies* dealt with cruising through the world of the northern existence, the significance of one voice in open spaces, the inner sound of silence between the words of the 'latecomers'. The polyphonic messages of voices in a truckstop. A climate and body feeling, a solitary soul, a single voice in an ascetic texture, the music of the north, the music from the cold and for wilderness lake, as Schafer calls it.

The ideas and thoughts of his World Soundscape Project, a research group in Vancouver in the early 1970s, have spread and grown into today's open and nuanced network of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology. His impulse was present in many of the themes at Trent, as in Cameron Harbidge's multimedia presentation from Calgary. He turned filmic relations of sound and image upside down and transformed Schafer's critical neologism 'schizophonia' – *Klang//Spaltung* – into a fresh contrastive combination of urban daily sound and digital video polaroids. His sound and image of Calgary challenges one's associative energy to make the 'acoustic erosion' understandable in urban areas. Theory-conscious but unpretentious, the composer and researcher musicalised juxtapositions, both stimulating perception and reflecting its sharpness.

Composing with the sounds of a city seeks a balance between active and receptive modes, as 'the microphone alters listening' (Hildegard Westerkamp). Inevitably the inner microphones, our sound biography and the listening culture we represent get in the flow. Soundwalking and listening, recording, analysing and processing the material, and finally embodying a subjective image of the city. Acoustic identity is a deep feeling of home and heart. They are timescapes and their rhythm is a unique fingerprint of acoustical community. Soundscape projects are like rehearsal rooms for 'acquiring space and environment': images are in the ear and the eye of the beholder. Transition is the key, comparison the mode. Eye and ear seek new sense – 'Sinn' – through their own energy of synchronicity and form – as a 'confluence' of all senses.

#### 4. VIDEO SOUNDSCAPE VIDEO

*MetaSon #5 Skriv Stockholm* is a soundscape video, not only a video soundscape. It is based on sound, image follows the ear, different than the conventional audiovisual production process: 'image ahead, sound behind'. The images are understood as environmental as the sounds themselves, perceived and processed like and as listening. The audio stream stems from experiencing Sweden acoustically – as part of 'Nordic soundscapes'. You hear the voices of early soundscapers visiting and

researching, the sound and song of those they encountered. Yngve Wirkander was the human key to Schafer's research in Skriv. He is now an anchor(man) for us, the next generations of soundscapers return to his village from time to time. The project of AEC – Acoustic Environments in Change – from Finland into Europe – heard his voice again, commenting on the changes of sound life in his world. AEC grew among other influences from the Stockholm Conference of Acoustic Ecology in 1998, whose acoustic horizons too became part of *MetaSon #5*. The townscape with waters, audio moments from the bell concerto, special events and vivid daily life, Stockholm as the cultural capital and as a 'laboratory of emotions' for visiting soundscapers. Several radio pieces and sound reportages melt into the Cologne HEAR.ing Performance Series, where in January 2001 *MetaSon #5* met live with other compositions about the North, such as *Winter Passage* by Hanna Hartmann and *Memory* by Darren Copeland. All the sounds have travelled a long way and a long time, moved through media forms, touched experiences and discussions. The many layers split, remembered and reunited with themselves and with digital pictures in theme and variations.

Exploring a third space between the two media and senses, a *Klanguage* of radiophonic forms for moving images. Synesthetically inspired by floating visions – imagery slowed down to artificial sound and found soundscape objects. Anything goes, free combinations of eye and ear, of sound time and image time. You might call it schizophonic sound in critical language or metaphorical use of media in positive thinking. Image and sound are partially independent of each other, but starting the audiovisual composition with mutual knowledge of the sub-text in each other. Tony Schwartz, the post-McLuhanite, often compared radio sound to the television screen's pointillism and the floating points of the picture. Sound for him is like audio pixel, coloured. Pictures are rhythmical waves, he says, so we see as we hear.

#### 5. A EUROPEAN SOUND VILLAGE: SKRIV

The musical archaeology of Swedish researcher Csaja Lund, who works with reconstructed sonic projections from very early environments, has inspired the soundtrack's opening. Archetypical drones, overlaid with playful samples of string improvisation and instrumental effects develop the keynotes, roads and horizons for a series of soundscape situations. Like a bordun they sharpen the senses to new vertical sounds. And colours and movements within the visual domain. The musical gestures were donated from a lively source and energy, borrowed by EIS, the Experimenting Improvisational String Ensemble in Germany, a network of professional, alternative string players who go beyond the instrument and beyond the rituals of their daily institutions of music. They improvise on a free base and both audience

and critics and the musicians themselves are often surprised at which point they move in an unexpected direction – collectively. Their sounds are modulated with the help of granular program MacPod. Inspired by the work of Barry Truax and developed by his former student and composer Chris Rolfe, the processing seems to slow down not only instruments, voices and vocals, sounds and silences, but the image too. MacPod rebuilds the sonic material as ‘composition in sound instead of composition with sounds’, and at the same time reveals the inner resistance of environmental textures, tuned sound events as well as the visual environments.

We see a horse rider passing by, the movement of trains, darkness abstracted contours of movement, decoloured natural beach and water, wind, grass. Connects. Contrasting, urban maps and traffic lines are the blueprint, the coloured songlines of cities. The pace of transportation and the sounds of machines have organic, pulsating qualities of archetypal forms and gestures. You encounter them – sometimes even in your own city – as a stranger in town and culture. You also bring your own sounds with you, acoustic history, your song, your recordings from somewhere else. The shape of the new place is from the first moment an inner image as well; the outside sounds resonate with the sounds inside you. Soundscapes are relationships, perceived and interpreted environments – inside and out.

Skruv in Sweden is some hours inland from the Baltic Sea, a scenic car ride into ‘Glass-Reich’, the centre of Sweden’s artisanal glass production and design. Vast woods, wavy landscape and a net of smaller villages and houses are woven around the factories, the commercial input and impact of the region. In 1975, Canadian composer Murray Schafer and his World Soundscape Project produced a comparative study of five European villages in Scotland, Germany, France, Italy and Sweden. For each village, the archive at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby near Vancouver contains all the descriptions and data, many hours of recordings, interviews and sound diaries. Skruv was the first place the group visited in winter, a rural community of about 2,000 souls, a train station, a brewery and a glass factory. Murray Schafer’s guide was the cantor, composer and teacher, Yngve Wirkander who, now in his eighties, came to Skruv fifty years ago and developed a strong impact on the cultural life of the village. He was and is today a very energetic ‘gestalt’, an independent character and artist, a writer and a painter, art-net-working with his wife Mona. He is a composer with his own (Nordic) idiom in string quartets and vocal compositions for community choir. As a musical educator he has experimented with the sound of the environment and organised sound operas for children. For decades he has cruised through the region from church to church as organ player, driving the same big American car, ‘which does not consume much gasoline’, he says with his bright eyes. Mona is laughing.

We hear Yngve Wirkander’s voice often in Schafer’s Skruv recordings of 1975. Those passages in mind years later, I imagined cruising with the cantor through the microcosmos of the village in his American car and listening to new sounds. In *MetaSon #5* some of these layers of time and voice are present in one passage. Schafer commenting on the local church choir, a soundscaper asks Mona about her way of listening to daily life, there are the voices of friends and events – now and then. In the 1970s the sounds and stops of seven regional diesel trains determined the overall pattern of the day. Their punctuating motors are now replaced by the modern ‘whoosh’ of new futuristic trains that rush through so fast, that they stop with a singing glissando in the next bigger community, 12 km away. The X2000 trains connect the region efficiently with other remote areas in Sweden and Stockholm, but the station is no longer within walking distance. In *MetaSon #5*, in a kind of time-spiral, Yngve of 1975 speaking about the seven trains, meets Yngve of the 1990s, remembering the early sounds with an onomatopoeic imitation of the new trains passing by today.

Wirkander’s spontaneous glissando is morphing into the visual forward motions on board of the fast trains, that are treated as sonically coloured textures. Both an abstract, dreamlike, and daily experience in travel and commuting, as Barry Truax balanced it in his piece *pendlerdroem* about trains in Copenhagen. The images of *MetaSon #5* were recorded at various? times and spaces – and places – and alchemically interwoven into each other, sometimes with the opalescent light of half-closed eyes, of dreams between sound and day. Even sight gets in a virtual flow, inter-spacious, audio-virtual or ‘virtua-real’ as the Austrian composer Sha often says. Virtuality as perception is not as new as it claims to be. Music and the cinema have connected eyes and ears for a long time, sometimes in a long-distance relationship.

Although the visual bias of society is valid for its films as well, there is a subversive tradition of an autonomous soundtrack, not mechanically synchronised, but counterpunctual, with a resonating space and an independently flowing time. In Robert Cahen’s audiovisual masterpieces of European video art, and in the first long format of his collaborator Ermeline Le Mezo we see and hear shifted worlds slowed down, returned upside down, running backwards and with inverted colours. We hear rich soundscapes and gestures of audio communication, enhanced by Michel Chion, their peer in a ‘cinema des copains’. They are composing with all their senses and from neither sound nor image alone, starting from both at the same time. A personal, but challenging metason-metaphor, that listening and seeing create their own worlds and a third one, a residual one between them.

## 6. STOCKHOLM LANDSCAPES

In 1975 the World Soundscape Project additionally recorded some urban scenes of Stockholm – meant to



provide a contrasting image to the small world in the forest. Listening to these acoustic photographs (with today's ears) reveals a city of a moderate pace, a wide space and a casual atmosphere. A vivid but overall quiet 'Metropolis' along and in the water with a clear pattern of active and contemplative areas, adjacent to each other. This pattern is still valid today, but on a higher noise and densification level. The contrasts appear sharper now. Parks, niches, quiet zones, canals and walking routes, little harbours and islands invite to acoustic relaxation. The country is in the city, the city is country with a wide acoustic horizon – suddenly obscured by a helicopter control. During the water festival with its millions of visitors, soundwalls cover and overlay the fine tuned differences between neighbourhoods and open areas. The big event produces a colourful electroacoustic confusion from sale boxes, eating places, information booth, music, games and entertainment. Boom-box-sound, a world heritage, covers all the subtle water sounds themselves, the daily bells, the bird songs, the soft spoken voices. The festival is loud, joy is more important than relaxation. This constellation is not typical for the city, the Stockholm listener knows, but the sounds become more frequent. They are social messages as well, indicating in which direction the city and the inhabitants might want to modernise. Dense traffic, many private airplanes and the frequent 'tunnelban' carry their strong rhythm on parallel sound-tracks into the city down from Kristinenberg, while on Djaergarden the old streetcar is starting for a scenic and nostalgic sound-ride, that Darren Copeland evokes in his piece 'Memory'.

After the Soundscape Conference 1998, the most particular sound I remember of urban Stockholm is – however – a rural signal and song: high pitched, spatially interpreted herding calls from Gammelboning, sung by Susanne Rosenberg, who is influenced very much by the folk singer Lisa Boudré. Susanne and her vocalists opened the soundscape conference with that song in the concert hall, they once produced a version chanting along and towards a silent lake and they sang it down from the Catharina Church into the Sunday morning of Södermalm:

Acoustic roots, that melt the rural with the urban into the familiar: home, pastoral region, dialect, family, summer youth, grandfathers, apple trees, Nordic landscape, fade into a sweet church song, rehearsed down below inside. The inhabitant of the apartment across the street – invisible – has placed his hi-fi speakers on the balcony and injected loudly a dense word collage – audio art – into the songs: it sounded as if the neighbours from the third and fourth floor yelled at each other at least three times a day.

Surprised silence. Laughter. Two ravens in Gamla Stan continue their dialogue in empty streets, where on Sunday morning a group of soundscapers walked

silently together. Their steps became a parameter of variable space, as the walls and houses vary in distance to the pedestrians. One walker remembers his childhood here, and still hears – inside – the horses, the carriages, the calls, birds and no traffic. Suddenly a bottle breaks, thrown by someone returning early – late from concentrated drinking. This sound has a dramatic moment. Surprised silence.

Down to the water electronic music pours over the lake. Sometimes the sound gives voice to the passing boats – like film music and design. Airplanes mix easily into the composition of water and an electronic sound projection. In the evening many voices, dialects and cultures move along into the tunnelbana, cross and mix and overlap and produce more than anything else a vocal URBAN FLOW. German journalist Katja Bürki works and lives in Stockholm often and she vividly memorises a sonic pattern of Swedish language. It is maybe a symbol of the cultural ability of making consense (at least in small themes, as the critical journalist and writer Jan Guillou often complains – not in the real deals, when a different game of power takes over). The melodic slogan 'jo jo juste' means that you are not alone and someone is listening. Katja is rapping good stuff in that pattern, as this typical sonic delight grows from her daily speech into a song-like moment. In *MetaSon #5* it loops, reverses and tunes and overlays into a bigger wall of sound. The vocal movement matches with another loop that is inter-punctuating the city. The T-Bana subway in Stockholm is producing a short riff in daily life, an urban percussion.

This little song touches big sounds, musics, bells, voices of listeners overlap with smaller sonic elements from the old town. They encounter each other, inter-punctuated by the hiss of famous ballons, a soundmark crossing Stockholm's sky and heaven. The playing of a church organ is a calming connection between village and metropolis as the Yngve Wirkander's son works as organ player and composes in one of the churches in town. The changing of the Royal Guard synchronises with the Russian street musicians (who played as a sound bridge for the Stockholm Conference for Acoustic Ecology).

Other dense communication is taking place between peer groups by 'walk and talk'. The mobile phone, the 'nalle', the teddy bear, is everywhere. The overall beeps and the monodic, but vivid talk is inter-punctuated by digital audio from traffic lights. This new acoustic communication follows us and them everywhere, through the city and onto the idyllic beach in southern Sweden, where the dream of a life 'outside' comes true, not only in commercial advertising, but within the personal inspiration of most Swedish inhabitants. In *MetaSon #5* the music soundtrack returns us to the beginning. Steps along the beach – borrowed from Darren Copeland's piece on Stockholm – *Memory* – and more instrumental

textures and layers from the introducing string instruments lead in and out again. Out of urban activity onto the island, meant and aura-visualised as the inner nature, the desire to be in a rich and healthy environment and connecting the human soul to the overall texture of life. MetaSon means a dialectic of being inside and outside, in and above the soundscape, feeling the sonic waves and reflecting their value within an acoustic-ecological context. A context, but also a song without words, which is still to be explored, with senses still to be found that we don't know yet.

## 7. FADE OUT SOUND OUT

Further MetaSon movements will extend that process of both researching and composing. After you touch singular soundscapes and their images, listen, record, evaluate and maybe compose with the material, you juxtapose it to completely different worlds. We began with Lisboa, Madrid, La Palma, Vancouver, Chicago and as group work in progress of course the 'Home-Page' – MetaSon KlangStattKöln. Currently the Soundscape Project in Uruguay comes into existence – 'de-venir' – through the multi-dialectic networking of composer Daniel Maggilo and his University Music Academy, the Goethe Institute in Montevideo and remotely with a little help from Hildegard Westerkamp and myself.

In comparing soundscapes you discover many cities in one, but you also find unique Micro soundscapes in each and every life. Space of birth and death, education and marketing, eating and communication, ritual, music, public passages and sacral rooms. They all build the homophony, the acoustic fingerprint heard from above

and from the distance, the overall sound pattern and audio culture of a whole area.

From the first moment the image of the new place is an inner image as well; the outside sounds resonate with the sounds inside you. We believe vision, but we trust and feel threatened by sound we can never see. The eye is demanding, but the ear is diversifying the world. The barrier between the senses is a mental one and socially determined. The producers of image and sound have a hierarchy, not the perception and the senses themselves. They are complimentary and have to prove this fractally new relationship in every encounter. Maybe then schizophrenic sound is not a 'requiem for the party girl' (as a Schafer composition is named), but a symbol for audio flow that transforms the visual bias.

Audiovisual composition or creating or designing is a blurred, unsharp process 'in between' perception and even existence. Turning schizophrenic sound into audio-virtual image. Jean-Paul Fargier once said about the videos of Robert Cahen:

... in time as well as in space. In that gap where a face  
from yesterday  
equals a face from tomorrow, a winter landscape is in effect  
a summer  
landscape ... and travel is the true season of existence.

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