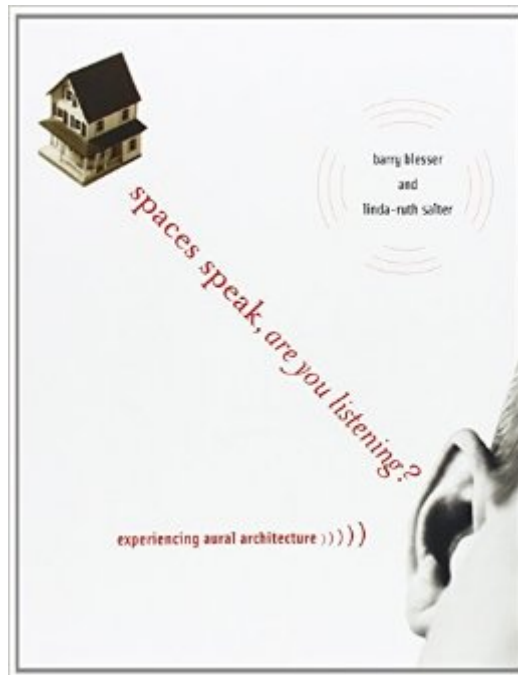


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# Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?: Experiencing Aural Architecture (MIT Press)



## Synopsis

We experience spaces not only by seeing but also by listening. We can navigate a room in the dark, and "hear" the emptiness of a house without furniture. Our experience of music in a concert hall depends on whether we sit in the front row or under the balcony. The unique acoustics of religious spaces acquire symbolic meaning. Social relationships are strongly influenced by the way that space changes sound. In *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?*, Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter examine auditory spatial awareness: experiencing space by attentive listening. Every environment has an aural architecture. The audible attributes of physical space have always contributed to the fabric of human culture, as demonstrated by prehistoric multimedia cave paintings, classical Greek open-air theaters, Gothic cathedrals, acoustic geography of French villages, modern music reproduction, and virtual spaces in home theaters. Auditory spatial awareness is a prism that reveals a culture's attitudes toward hearing and space. Some listeners can learn to "see" objects with their ears, but even without training, we can all hear spatial geometry such as an open door or low ceiling. Integrating contributions from a wide range of disciplines -- including architecture, music, acoustics, evolution, anthropology, cognitive psychology, audio engineering, and many others -- *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?* establishes the concepts and language of aural architecture. These concepts provide an interdisciplinary guide for anyone interested in gaining a better understanding of how space enhances our well-being. Aural architecture is not the exclusive domain of specialists. Accidentally or intentionally, we all function as aural architects.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Since I first heard Stevie Winwood sing about his choice between deafness and blindness, I have known that my ears were primary. This book is the authoritative confirmation. Barry Blesser defines a "New Science" in this book, which mirrors his leading-edge career. This is a shining example of Nextism (the Science of Everything) because it integrates conventional divisions of science and painstakingly assembled factoids into a raft of fresh multi-disciplinary theses. It represents a decades-long study utilizing creative insights, and flows with well written, compelling examples without sacrificing rigor. I met Barry at the 1978 Convention of the Audio Engineering Society, where he was demonstrating the first professional digital reverberation generator. This mathematical room simulator was the starting point for elucidating how our ears provide us with more and better information about our environment than our eyes. Aural acuity and aurally generated mental maps have been largely lost in our visual culture, starting with Gutenberg's enabling of widespread education through reading alone and continuing to television and Internet where LCD monitors have replaced most direct human contact. This has been exacerbated by the Industrial Age which has filled the aural environment with the noise of motors, controlled explosions and collisions. Further insult and injury to our hearing sense comes from audio production by alarms and annunciators and sound reproduction by increasingly cheaper transducers. Modern architecture has produced terrible acoustic environments, some masquerading as suitable concert and conference venues as well as residence and office. "Spaces Speak" is a clarion call to re-gain this lost ground.

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