

'What does winter sound like?' Five-day masterclass in Bogong High Plains led by international sound artists

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From Sunday 30 June to Thursday 4 July, [YMCA Howmans Gap Alpine Centre](http://howmansgap.ymca.org.au/) (<http://howmansgap.ymca.org.au/>) in the Bogong High Plains, hosted a five-day intensive masterclass for artists, composers and designers who want to learn how to record and capture sound in extreme climate and wilderness ecologies.

The Bogong Centre for Sound Culture's 'Art of Field Recording' Winter Masterclass, with 13 participants, was overseen by internationally acclaimed sound artists and recordists American Douglas Quin and Australian Phillip Samartzis who have produced work across the globe, including the Arctic and Antarctica.

Their wide breadth of work includes capturing the effects of extreme climate and weather events and soundscapes which have been played at music festivals and venues such as Merkin Hall, The Kitchen, The Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts, Spoleto Festival USA, and Venice International Performance Art Week.

YMCA Howmans Gap was chosen as a base for this specialised work as it is ideally located above the snowfield and provides a rare pristine environment to experiment with conditions mirroring the Arctic and Antarctica. It also paid tribute to the long partnership between the Australian Antarctic Division and YMCA Howmans Gap Alpine Centre, which has previously provided a base for similar training.

YMCA staff led field training, which involved preparing participants for spending extended time in extreme environmental conditions as well as understanding weather patterns and emergency protocols.

"Our bunk beds at camp aren't usually occupied by soundscape artists but we are thrilled to welcome and accommodate all types of groups, of all abilities and needs at the YMCA.

"I will be helping the group reach and explore some of the remote areas. I am excited to hear what Howmans Gap sounds like," YMCA Camp Manager Michael Jowett said.



The group of keen sound artists at YMCA Howmans Gap at the five-day masterclass

During the five-day intensive masterclass, the participants lived, worked and participated in group and individual tuition with the two world renowned sound recordists. They learnt how to prepare for and undertake deep fieldwork in remote wilderness environments, and their attendant conditions.

Practical fieldwork was complemented by technical demonstrations and conversations focusing on sound recording, compositional methods and analysis, spatial sound techniques, approaches to sound design, and strategies for broadcast and exhibition.

“The cold and the wind can be a source of agitation, but they also provide great recording opportunities once you know how to channel their creative potential,” Philip Samartzis said.

“The workshop tailors to what folks are interested in, from arts-driven projects to scientific data collection to connecting with those who share a passion for the cold and snow.

“We hope participants come away with both technical knowledge about how to work in trying conditions as well as a deeper appreciation for the often quiet and nuanced soundscape of winter,” Doug Quin said.

Back (javascript:history.go(-1);)

