

Sounds out of Place
© by **John E. Simonds**

My voice has a lot of the city in it—
but not enough of its music—
direct, disturbing, edged
with tones of whine and discord.
Gershwin might have used it
to score the clash of taxi horns
in his rush-hour rhapsody.
But George was gone when I was three,
his big street sounds already in place.
Music escaped me, leaving a fan,
a consumer but no player,
a traveler with a sense of time,
a listener without tempo.
A mother who played piano
and sang, a father self-taught
on the mandolin, both neutral
in accents, are blameless for these tin ears.
But the spoken word continues,
charming some with echoes of Camelot,
grating others with Rust Belt buckling.
Our only instrument, the bull-horn,
greeted Oahu's Sunday runners,
formed up for Diamond Head directions:
Release a squeal of the horn to start...
Jog the race and afterwards declare
the scores of performance:
times, trophies, medals, ribbons,
to those in training for speed
or aging in motion with friends.
I, the guy with the horn
and amplified brogue of command,
channel the Chanticleer
ring-master rooster,
coaxing the rays of dawn
with harsh but accustomed notes,
abrupt as a rapping baton,
accenting the sunrise
making the morning official.

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