

A Contemplative Pedagogy of Listening

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How can musical artists articulate a vision of hope that leads to action? In the midst of multiple environmental and social catastrophes, feelings of despair can hinder our ability to participate in movements for change. Students feel the burden that their generation will have to bear and are hungry to engage in honest dialogue about the climate emergency. When educators provide a place to face fears and respond artistically, emerging artists become empowered to transition from individual to collective, from inaction to action. To educate and bring about change through artistic engagement, it is essential to provide creative structures for emerging artists to increase their understanding *through* the art forms in which they communicate. Using the lens of artsbased inquiry, this pedagogy cultivates artistic and ecologically conscious lives by addressing issues of climate change in a way that is relevant and applicable to artists. As the pace of life intensifies and the climate crisis grows more urgent, the need to reflect increases. This session will explore contemplative approaches to listening that provide space for students to reflect and translate their reflections to the world.

Music helps to process uncertainties, cope with trauma, sustain spirits and energize activism. Listening and sounding practices provide ways to grapple with climate anxiety through the process of paying attention. *A Contemplative Pedagogy of Listening* explores connections between listening, art-making, and activism. Grounded in the need for reconnection with the Earth and each other, these listening practices can nurture hope and develop courage to challenge systems perpetuating climate collapse. This pedagogy draws from Sustainability Education and is informed by composers including Pauline Oliveros, R. Murray Schafer, Pamela Z, and Hildegard Westerkamp.

In this session, the author will discuss how students at Berklee College of Music and New England Conservatory are engaging with climate change issues through listening practices and creative projects. She will describe student pieces and discuss assignments such as creating landscape compositions, composing activist songs, creating sound documents and experimenting with sonic journalism. These explorations become tools of empowerment leading students to participate in caring for the planet and each other. Understanding the world through sound enhances musical expression but other disciplines can also find resonance with this work. To consider what sound teaches us, participants in this session will be introduced to listening and sounding practices that can be utilized by those with or without a music background. Examples of environmental listening, imagined sound, Deep Listening®, and soundwalking will demonstrate how contemplative sound practices communicate hope to those who listen.

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