Listening In Towards Sound: 
creating soundscapes to sound our presence

by

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Abstract

Employing the arts based methodology Performative Inquiry, attending to emergent moments, those of surprise and discovery, I am inquiring and listening in towards where sound, performance, identity, and place intersect. I am interested in how sound performs identity, how identity is performed by sound, how we can relate to place through sound, and what forms of knowledge are held in sound beyond the lingual. This research inquires into how students and educators, as co-researchers, perform and are performed by deeply listening with and into our environments as we create soundscapes to sound our presences. I explore these performances, researching while in a holistic pedagogic environment in a Montessori middle school classroom. What do we attend to? Why are we attached to certain sounds while others are ignored? What becomes highlighted into the mix and what becomes muted into silence? What stops us? Why does it matter if we listen?

**Keywords:** Performative inquiry; performative writing; soundscape; education; arts education; sound
Dedication

To my family:

Beth, Joyce, Warren, Myrna, and Ted

For undergoing this journey with me.
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warm-up: a readers’ guide

“To write in past tense is to enter into an explanatory voice, a voice of examination, clarification, investigation.

To write with presence is to voice exploration possibly absence.

To write performance onto the journey-landscape that is this thesis is to imagine into being interplay between memory possibility performance revolution embodied within a moment of imagining a universe” (Fels, 1999, p.15).
My writing is performative. Can I go so far as to call this text a performative soundscape\(^1\)?

"Taken to its logical conclusion, expanding the semiotic field in practice as well as in theory implies attention to an ever-widening – and, potentially, impossibly unconstrained – constellation of signs…

Attending to different signs – to nonlinguistic ones alongside linguistic ones, to signs in their material and sensual, relational totality – means promoting new habits as well” (Faudree, 2012, p.531).

\(^1\) Soundscape can be defined as an embodied and emplaced perception of the acoustics of one’s environment. Soundscapes have been captures via recording techniques, the recordings can be altered and edited or they can be left whole and intact as they were captured.

\(^2\) While post-modernism has highlighted the complexity of knowledge as interacting with context, the concept of interstanding is concerned with what knowledges lie at the intersections of
Can this text be heard?

"Hearing shall rather be regarded as a social and cultural capacity that shapes men’s and women’s concepts of their world and influences their actions in given historical contexts" (Muller, 2012, p.446).
I ask questions and I listen, but I don’t openly tell stories.

When I do tell stories they are to the point with a poetic directness that requires a reading between the lines: I question and consider multiple interstandings\(^2\) (Taylor & Saarinen 1994) through the presentation of unresolved juxtapositions of textual elements, and I listen for and invite yet-to-be-known multiplicities of understandings from the reader.

“A modality which would allow the autobiographical text to really listen to the reader.
A written page filled with words that continue in the reader the work begun on the blank page of the author” (Daignault, 2005, V).

Performative writing does not produce a lacking of through narrative or meta-organization of ideas (McDowell 1994).

Rather,

ideas are delivered performative, purposeful, organized

much the same way a musical piece may have an orchestrated ensemble of actors

much the same way a soundscape is reflections, resonances, reverberations interacting

\(^2\) While post-modernism has highlighted the complexity of knowledge as interacting with context, the concept of interstanding is concerned with what knowledges lie at the intersections of multiplicities of contexts. Between reader and author, between one moment in the text and the next, between academic rigor and other-than-institutionalized-voice, between soundscapes and words, for example.
sonic actors sounding not in unison contextual polyphony.

This text has been designed performatively, designed to be heard as polyphony\(^3\) of sound thoughts. Sound thoughts that emerge from acts of listening in between the text to voice the many potential yet-to-be created interstandings.

The gaps and interruptions continually invite and challenge the reader’s not-yet-voiced text into becoming in relation to the text.

It is my intention that by writing

in around through

a poetically storied soundscape that as-yet-enacted performances\(^4\) will sound

that polyphonic soundscapes of understanding will be

co-authored by the reader.

“The unstilled, fleeing sounds, though they may be cast with a new text, are a haunting of cultural pasts and presents” (Norment, 2011, p.194).

\(^3\) Although polyphony was first employed as a form of literary analysis by the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin in 1984, it is now used to “1) question modes of authorship and representation in the context of research writing, and 2) to understand organizational practice as multi-centered, non-linear, and intersubjective activity” (Belova et al p.494).

\(^4\) “...performance as a living encounter that calls us into presence, alerting us to the responsibilities of relational reciprocity of intimacy, vulnerability and care” (Fels 2012, p.2).
Whose voices might remain muted or undiscovered without such invitations?

“It is the arrival of the unexpected stranger who calls who we are into focus. And who asks of us, in this moment of coming into presence, that we reconsider who we think we are, who we may become, and how we may now respond. To be willing to be astonished” (Fels 2012, p.4).
Daignault's (2005) theorization of an acoustic modality suggests that, both, the author and the reader can listen, can be in dialogue with the text, revealing the knowing of oneself. An ideal of an acoustic modality in text is a text that listens, embraces the subconscious journey, and revels in the ‘holes’ of unknowing.

I’m listening to my own stories

when I tell them...

...I’m never sure

what I’ll hear

as I improvise

and tell what I’ve half

forgotten...

...never sure

of what the reader will hear

as he or she improvises

in response

to my text.

“We know from other domains that expression hides in text and that, despite concealment, text finds its way to light through alternative routes.

The displaced, understressed, unintended, and overlooked word or deed, in this guise, reveals far more than the famous monologue. Because truth is bent (or we are), the unguarded subtext bears signature of true intentions more clearly than the main body of text does” (Appelbaum, 1995, p.vii).
The use of varying performative fonts\textsuperscript{5} is a device intended
to guide the reader, to assist in providing a map\textsuperscript{6} to
display the several writing styles and textual elements
present and set juxtaposed one after the other within the
text.

I want my authentic voices to resonate and reverberate
what I have chosen to cite
  unmediated
- to be keep apart,  acting to interrupt,  so
  the reader is invited
  respond
  create
  interstanding.

\textsuperscript{5} Fels (2012 writes, “I play performatively with text layout in this article in those places where I
wish the reader to pause, to interrupt linear reading, and to evoke poetic response, within which
the reader, as with the overall intent of the writing, may be moved to reflection and inquiry and
recognition” (p.8). I play with text fonts, spacing, filled or empty space, crowded or spread out
text, and interruptions within a line to portray a sense of how I am hearing the textual soundscape;
to denote pulse, tone, ambiance, texture, melody, accompaniment, and harmony. Blank pages,
empty spaces, have been incorporated into the text to offer invitation to the reader, time to listen.
Do thoughts emerge, the buzz of a light, or the sound of a child crying? What melody is sounded?
\textsuperscript{6} I have used several fonts to help map one’s journey through this text: \textbf{1) Futura has been used to mark boundaries, to label partitions; 2) Times New Roman has been used for footnotes and references, as well, when italicized, the spoken voice of the students; 3) Andale Mono serves to mark my voice in storytelling, and when italicized, my spoken voice in class; 4) Century Gothic plays the role of performer and poet; 5) Chalkduster reminds me of the old west, and like any good slinger, it helps citations stick to the page; and finally, 6) Apple Chancery visits from the Ivory Tower, marking a conservative style of academic writing.}
As sound exists in relation to emergent elements within environments (Shcaefere 1977), its interconnected complexity is not wholly grasped without consideration of such relations.

As such,

- elements of this text
- sound together
  - in polyphony
  - yet-to-be-sounded
  - resonances and reverberations
  - emerging
  - from the intersections of the text itself.

The reader creates a new soundscape in response with each new reading.

What it is that is

- heard/not-heard

what it is that is

- sounded/not-sounded

in this, my not-yet-voiced text

in direct relation to

the overtly presented text on the page

the overtly presented text’s ideas

reverberate and resonate

the not-yet-voiced text in the reader’s performance

of this intertextual soundscape
designed to educe
interstanding.
“Performative writing is evocative. It operates metaphorically to render absence present” (Pollack, 1998, p.80).

Performative writing writes the questioning of possibility into knowledge as interstanding is being experienced, and problematizes “the scientific principles underlying positivist distinctions between true and false” (Pollack, 1998, p.81).

The textual elements, stylings, and intentions within the text, reflect themselves and within the reader’s own context and literary, aural, embodied, remembered forgotten experiences. Each encounter performs, disturbs, interrupts, invites poetic sonic as yet unknown revelations.

Performative writing “takes its value from the context-map in which it is located and which it simultaneously marks, determines, transforms” (Pollack, 1998, p.79).

The rigour and vigour in this writing comes from honouring: words that are sounding to resonate and reverberate in the recounting of moments that have been performed and storied.

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7 Performative writing embodies recognition of knowledge as a verb, as first introduced by Heidegger and elaborated upon in which knowledge embodies knowing doing being creating not-knowing undoing. See Fels, 1995, 2014, and Frantzich 2013.

8 Fels in her writing, (1998) introduces the concept of journey-landscape in which performance is an emergent exploration within a landscape that is embodied, relational, an action site of learning and inquiry.

9 Karen Meyer (2006) explores how fieldnotes are central to reflective writing within Living Inquiry, that through the practice of engaging in non-thematically-directed exploratory fieldnote writing themes emerge. Fieldnotes expose unexpected pedagogical revelations in relation to places and moments experienced by the author.

Performative inquiry (Fels 1998-2014) highlights the pedagogic potential within written interactions between educators and their students. Written exchange in performative inquiry
throughout the process of the study; that which is from a
world of sound beyond what language can directly represent,
offered poetically to the reader as an intertextual
soundscape. Understanding emerges through listening for the
reader’s performance of the not-yet-voiced texts’
relationships to the overtly presented text. It is through
creating understanding that polyphonic soundscapes emerge
to sound through the text.

arises through the exchange of electronic ‘post-cards’; students journal reflections and the educator replies in writing to these postcards. Fels notes that knowledge as verb does not move solely in one direction; students often reveal learning to the teacher in terms of their own teaching, responses, relationships and performances.

Leggo (2005) describes that educators engaging in autographical poetic writing, poetic living, and poetic knowing, listen through their hearts into their lives and into their pedagogical encounters.

“There is an art to listening to our lives. Research is not only an outward endeavour, but it travels in the realm of re-searching our own lives, knowledge, passions, and practice… I integrate autobiographical inquiry, narrative inquiry, and performative inquiry as research methodologies with my students” (Snowber, 2009, p.3). Snowber reminds us to listen to our bodies as we travel through research.

“The body obediently went silent as we agreed not to notice our emotional or feeling life. Although our bodies continue to hold in silence what was stuffed, there comes a time when the body finally needs to speak out, in its own voice, to catch our attention” (Thanas, 1997, p.43).

“In life writing through metissage we dwell there, in those overlapping places and spaces. We orient and align ourselves through reflection and contemplation until there arises in us, like a vision, the future’s possibilities in our imaginations” (Kelly, 2012, p.366).

It has been argued that reflective writing can demand a lengthy period of time before clarity may present itself to the author (Wiebe et.al., in press). Spending time with writing, editing and revising in search of reverberations and evocative insights allows emergent themes to surface.
chapter one: prelude

If we created a soundscape of education, what would we hear....if we are invited to sound our presence what melody would we create — Fels, 2014, in correspondence

isolation sound

“What we do is what we know,
and ours is but one of many possible worlds.
It is not a mirroring of the world,
but the laying down of a world ...”
(Varela, 1987, p.62).

My earliest memory comes from when I was a toddler, maybe around pre-school age. I was misunderstood and I didn't have the words to clarify the situation. I felt hurt. I closed down, dug in my heels, and decided that I would never again speak. Words always lead to confusion, misunderstanding, and to partial truths involving winning and losing.

“...withdrawing is not nothing.
Withdrawal is an event.
In fact, what withdraws may even concern and claim man [woman]
more essentially than anything present that strikes and touches him”
(Heidegger, 1968, p. 9).

This didn't last the day, my speechless self, but the feeling has never left me. Maybe it has been my nature to be so inclined, or maybe this incident opened a door for me, but I've not been much of a talker since. I listen.
“...the lens from which we view our lives and the world around us is one which is not only situated, but dynamic,

that is to say,

in a constant state of being created and recreated” (Andrews, 2014, p.4-5).
I listened to my father,
    a great talker, a wise thinker, at the dinner table or in the living room for years. He only needed the slightest of prompts from me to keep his intelligence flowing as we listened to Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, Oscar Peterson, or Billie Holliday.

I listened to my mother,
    a studied and ethical musician, always playing, always practicing the piano or the French horn at home. I'd follow her to rehearsals and sit in when I was old enough - where I could listen to how the older musicians played together, and how they'd treat one another during and between songs.

I listened to my older sister,
    unpredictably cold or warm, her eyes invited me into play or sent me whimpering away wondering how to be a friend. For years my friends had been her friends first, like generous hand me downs.

I listened to my heart,
    which was often a little too heavy like during the long period when I drew using only black crayons, and, sometimes, hopeful and light like when I'd be riding my bike down the street to the forest's edge or when I'd be teaching myself to downhill ski using cross country skis on a five foot tall peak in our back yard under a tree.

"In doing research we question the world's very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world, and which bring the world as world into being for us and in us. Then research is a caring act: we want to know that which is most essential to being" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 5).
But what I most learned to do was to listen to myself.

My imagination spoke to my inner world where I was in control, where I could speak, perform miracles, and create any companions that I desired. My own isolation sound\textsuperscript{10}.

“So I lived my life alone, without anyone that I could really talk to, until I had an accident with my plane in the Desert of Sahara, six years ago.

Something was broken in my engine.
And as I had with me neither a mechanic nor any passengers, I set myself to attempt the difficult repairs all alone.

It was a question of life or death for me:
I had scarcely enough drinking water to last a week.
The first night, then, I went to sleep on the sand, a thousand miles from any human habitation.

I was more isolated
than a shipwrecked sailor on a raft in the middle of the ocean.

Thus you can imagine my amazement, at sunrise, when I was awakened by an odd little voice”
(Saint-Exupery, 1943, p.9).

\textsuperscript{10} Isolation sound, a term that I employ that means to trust in what one hears in one’s inner world. What is heard in an inner world may not be coded and signed, it may be direct or pre-conceptual, too nuanced for representation, too complex for description or encryption. Isolation sound hears and sounds a directly personal being, revealing an inner reality of self. Isolation sound is not inert, it is dynamic and emerging, shifting and disrupting. Isolation sound creates itself continually as it is being sounded or as it is heard.
Isolation,
for me,
has not been a hurtful side effect
of a technological world.
Isolation has been in my life
long before the internet was
ever omnipresent.

Isolation,
has provided
me with safe passage
during times when life has turned dissonant and difficult;
a time to reflect, create and imagine
what could be, to listen, to relate,
and to reconcile
the gap
between my life
and the reality

that everyone else seemed to me to be in sync with¹¹.

¹¹ Poetry involves imagining, embodied response, that involves thinking. Ezra (2011) has named these ways of engaging in poetic work as Philo-Poesis. Poetry can be read and reread, inviting new interpretations that voice multiple meanings. How do the spaces in a poem sound differently with each reading to create new meanings? How does interpreting how the words have been grouped change with each reading? How is the poem inviting you to become embodied, imagine, think, and respond? How does the reader bring renewal to a poem with each experience?
Always the shy kid through school, exhausted by socializing and fitting in enough to get by, I found voice in music class. I could be with people, not talk much, but still interact in a socially appropriate manner with little effort. I was finally able breathe life into my own isolation sound at school, where it had been politely trained into submission and out of commission – I was being normalized just the same as the rest of the students at school.

“...we have to hold in mind that the modern world is an administered world structured by all sorts of official languages.

More often than not, they are languages of domination, entitlement, and power;

and there are terrible silences where ordinary human speech ought to be audible, silences

our pedagogies ought somehow to repair”
(Greene, 1995, p.47).
I could even spend hours alone in my basement practicing without my family worrying that something might be wrong with me, that depression might be engulfing me once again.

Because I’d be riding the bus downtown to lessons or to rehearsals after school, alone, listening to records that I’d taped from library on my Walkman, I avoided many tiring social encounters, choosing instead to live happily inside of the world of my imagination that I’d co-created through a constant absorption with the music.

“To be social is inevitably to both risk losing or compromising the things one calls one’s own and to gain something more than one is, has or can accomplish alone.

Human existence is thus a continual oscillation between quite different modes of being

- from the singular (ipse) to the universal (idem)”

(Jackson, 2009, p.104).
Years later there's an illness in the family, we're waiting weeks for test results.

I can't sit still to think.

I'm on the brink of something like madness.

“I was carried beyond myself by the inspiring force of urgent necessity” (Saint-Exupery, 1943, p.24).

Each day, morning or night, I walk, searching for…(?)…listening to the sound of my breath and of my shoes on the icy snow reverberating off of the school that I'm spending hours circling in my neighborhood.

I'm listening for isolation sound, but I've lost the touch, I'm mute inside of myself.
“No theoretical construct, the stop is an actual moment, 
the moment of poise.

Dancer, player, and performer display it. 
But so do we who pick up 
hammer, shovel, iron, needle and thread, knife, or pen.

To use an implement with intelligence somehow 
relies on a gathering of attention in the moment before we use the 
implement. 
An active concentration of awareness - the poise before movement 
- again is the stop. 
The stop lives in the interstices of action, an ordinary recluse” 

This disruption, this gap that opened up, this stop\textsuperscript{12}, 
brought up what was mute, embodied absence, without sound—

\textsuperscript{12} Appelbaum (1995) describes a ‘stop’ as something that is not a literal stopping, but that 
is rather like an ‘aha-moment’ of awareness that occurs during lived moments, those 
moments that emerge from either creative experiences or from daily lived experiences. 
Fels (1998-2014) describes the ‘stop’ as a stop moment; a moment that calls us to notice 
what is disrupting our perception, a moment that calls us into action in response to 
becoming aware of what has been revealed through our perception in the stop, and a 
moment that calls us to reflect on our actions and habits.
I'd been mute for some time.

Having spent years as a professional musician I'd been playing any gig that came around so that I could survive financially and so that I could feed my ego.

I was looking to be sustained in the war of attrition that had seen so many of my musician friends pull away from the life all together.

In the process, I'd stopped listening, my isolation sound was being unattended to. I'd been drawn to music because it allowed me to listen to my isolation sound, yet here I was years later unable to hear and unable to find meaning.

It was at a high point in my musical career when I quit. I had a lot of momentum but no purpose.

Without purpose all that momentum faded the day I walked out of the studio and off of the stage.

I walked away from a lifetime's worth of connections, expecting to look inside myself, expecting that I had been the reason for my momentum in the first place, and expecting that I could do it all again when I willed it so.

What I misjudged was that my connections, my community, and the places that we inhabited together was where my identity and purpose had been created and reflected.

Having abandoned it all, I found humility and loss. I found quiet, anger, failure, confusion, sadness, and isolation – mostly I found that I was too stubborn to move. I was stuck.

I didn't want to rely on others. My creativity should have been able to stand on its own to satisfy me and propel me into action and fulfillment. And then it hit me.
...a stop moment...

I wasn’t venturing out, journeying into the unknown. Immobilized inside of myself I forgot to look back out into the world. I didn’t want to communicate beyond my inner world.

I realize now that I needed some play between my inner world (Wachtel 2009) and the ‘out there’ world to nourish my creativity.

Creativity is fragile. Soaring one day. Crushed the next. And this is part of the journey – to misstep, to encounter a stop, and to recalibrate.

“...if there is to be a true renewal of meaning and value in our lives, and so in our art,

it cannot come about simply from arbitrarily rearranging our reactions to life’s external circumstances, where, inescapably and remorselessly, we would in any case be obliged to admit to an implied, pre-existing pattern according to which the new arrangement must be conceived.

Such a pattern can only be located at its innermost source, where our true subject is rooted in the timeless matrix from which all orientation and renewal proceed” (Keeble, 1998, p23).
chapter two: etudes

"...I need to point out
that I am not after an explanatory principle.

In part,
I think that principles do not work,
that whenever one has an explanatory principle,
one invents a mechanism to conceal
what one wants to explain"
(Maturana, 1987, p.65).

I am drawn to questions surrounding performance, particularly to what performance can signify in our daily and professional lives. I am interested in how sound performs identity, how identity is performed by sound, how we can relate to our environment through sound, and what forms of knowledge are held in sound beyond the lingual. I am curious to see how these questions resonate within the context of performing, recording, and in the creation of soundscapes.

As an extension of these inquiries, I ask: how will these questions translate inside a classroom; how will they enable “both learner and educator to co-create a learning experience and mutually undertake a pilgrimage to a new level of self-knowledge” (Cayete, 1994, p.218)? This study inquires into how students and educators, as co-researchers, perform and are performed by deeply listening with and into environments, listening in, as we create soundscapes to sound our presences. I explore how these performances enable the creation of identities within the context of relationship to place.
visions of an inquiry

- To illustrate how soundscapes can be an affective pedagogical form
- To illustrate how soundscapes can be an artistic form
- To synthesize how I create and perform identity through sound
- To synthesize how my students perform identity through sound
- To synthesize how my students and I, as co-researchers, perform identity through sound collaboratively
- To contemplate, listen, record, and produce a soundscape of my own
- To enable my students to contemplate, listen, record, and produce soundscapes of their own
- To collect reflections from myself and my students regularly and comprehensively on the processes and ‘stop moments’ (Fels, 1998-2014) encountered
- To research academic works of writing and other sources of interest that will help me to best frame and understand my inquiry
- To discover new research questions regarding the value of sound in my life, in education, and for society

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13 Objectives, visions, are listed here to guide the reader. In practice, the objectives emerged as the inquiry progressed, as I recognized ambitions and intent resonating in the work and through myself as a researcher.

“Performative inquiry as a research methodology and action site of learning is a collaboration among researcher and participants, engaging our bodies, imaginations, individual and collective experiences and narratives, feelings, memories, biases, fears, ambitions, judgements and prejudgements, hopes, and desires—simply who we are within co-evolving contexts and environments in relationship with others. Learning happens through performative inquiry as we bring forth new possible worlds through our actions and interactions” (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p.32).
etude one: soundscape studies

“Words are not the way to talk to animals.  
They’d rather sing with us  
- if we learn their tunes without making them conform to ours.

Music could be a model  
for learning to perceive the surrounding world  
by listening,  
not only by naming or explaining”  
(Rothenberg, 2001, p.1).

Abram (1996) suggests that identity, sanity even, cannot be ‘coherent’ without sensual and perceptual relationship to our environments and those entities beyond ourselves within it, without a sensual relationship to place. He argues that today’s human beings, having become less attuned to perceiving nature and place, have lost a balanced relationship with nature, that identities and sensual selves are at a distance from the realities of inhabited places, and that this disconnect from nature and place is the root cause of our degraded environments.

Pierre Scaeffer remarked while being interviewed:
“so there is, within the human ear, as it developed  
over millions of years,  
a great capacity for hearing all this sound.

Sound is the vocabulary of nature”  
(Hodgkinson, 2001, p.37).

Prior to the creation of the word soundscape, artists and philosophers like Thoreau and Debussy, among countless others, had already made connections between nature, sound, place and music (Eisenberg 2001). As a point of departure, a broad definition of what constitutes soundscapes includes a sound environment that is being perceived by someone and/or a community, and their relationship(s) to it (Truax 1978). A more recent definition of soundscape composition reads: “in soundscape composition the artist seeks to discover the sonic/musical essence contained within the recordings and thus within the place and time where it was recorded...aesthetic values will emerge from the recorded soundscape or from some of its elements” (Westerkamp 2002, p.54). Within this definition, to be authentically creating soundscapes, so that one can be of most benefit in revealing meaning of the self, environment, society, power structures, or
aesthetics, the soundscape artist must bodily inhabit the places from where and when the recordings are taken because of the important role that only the embodied knowledge of a place imbues on one who has been present; soundscapes reveal to the artist in relation to a particular place in time and within that individual’s perspective and context (Westerkamp 2002); “each soundscape composition emerges out of its own context in place and time, culturally, politically, socially, environmentally and is presented in a new and often entirely different context” (Westerkamp, 2002, p.52).

“Children perhaps work hardest in our society to keep a balance between sound input and sound output.

They are extremely sensitive listeners and will hear what we have learned to ignore.
We know that they hear these sounds because we can hear their imitations of them.

This is their way of getting to know the soundscape, to interact with it and find a relationship to it” (Westerkamp, 1988, 23).

Westerkamp (1988) also suggests that the sounds of urban life decrease our desire to hear nature, and that it reduces our desire to create sounds of our own. “It is, nowadays, a political act to find nature’s voice as well as one’s own. Because in that act, on this continent, one moves in opposition to the dominant political voices who no longer hear nature’s voices, who no longer understand the meaning of nature’s voices, but can only see nature as a place for resource extraction and profit” (Westerkamp, 1988, p.16). There is an important distinction to be made between hi-fi environments, those with quiet sounds such as can be found in the wilderness, and lo-fi environments, those with loud sounds such as are typically found in urban settings, because, it is the hi-fi environments14 that “put us in touch with a desire to make sounds”(Westerkamp, 1988, p.15).

Because “thinking with our ears offers an opportunity to augment our critical imaginations, to comprehend our world and our encounters with it according to

14 Perhaps the not-yet-voiced text desires to respond due to the hi-fi environments around overtly present text.
multiple registers of feeling” (Bull & Back, 2003, p.2), soundscape and soundscape theory are unique pedagogical opportunities with which to discover emergent reverberations and resonances. Soundscape art is a medium ripe with potential for discovery, deep listening into one’s environment is an effective pathway for one to relate, both societally and personally, with one’s environment and with one’s environmental context.

It is abundantly clear that humans effect and affect the whole of the earth’s environment (Carson, 1962), and thus, alter the presence of its many sounds. Nevertheless, it took before R. Murray Schafer asked, “is the soundscape of the world an indeterminate composition over which we have no control, or are we its composers and performers, responsible for giving it form and beauty?” (p.5). Murray’s question remains a vital one, particularly in pedagogical environments: what does it mean to listen; why are we listening; what are we listening to; why does it matter if we listen; and, when you start listening what do you create?

Soundscapes provide the framework in which a deep listening, and then a synthesis of this listening can take place. Deep listening involves wayfinding within sound, searching for layered meanings, attuning to the possible messages packed within (Bull & Back 2003). Further, having students create soundscapes of their own allows them to perform themselves into their sound worlds through active engagement with sound. Westerkamp argues for the need to listen for balance between sound input and sound output, particularly so that dominant voices do not drown out the silenced and unvoiced individuals and ideas; if voices are silenced, dominant political voices work to transform us from a culture of producers of sound to a culture of primarily consuming commercialized sounds.
“To the extent that teaching and learning are informed by complex cycles of change, they call for a vital, full understanding of the body— one that speaks to the constraints as well as freedoms, continuities as well as ruptures, impasses as well as possibilities of human relationships with the earth.

An ecological view of renewal reminds us that our capacities to know and be are possible because of the air we breathe and the trees that solicit our wonder” (Hocking, 2001, p.312).

Sensual perception within sound, ‘to know and be’, acts to bring forth contexts for active engagement with our ecological environments. Active sound engagement in natural settings, in hi-fi environments, presents possibility for a renewal; a renewal of balance between sound input and output, a renewal of contact with our ecology. Through attending to sound in hi-fi environments and working to create soundscapes that use, in part, hi-fi sources, it is possible to discover ecological renewal and reconnection to the earth. It is possible to sound ourselves in relation to the earth. It is possible to establish a new balance between sound input and sound output in our lives. Rather than consume the earth, we can choose to sing with it.
etude two: holistic education and place

“The modern universe became a disenchanted world of scattered material fragments.

This fragmentation led to antagonistic relationships between humans and nature, created various cultural tensions, resulted in disharmony between the inner and outer human world, and promoted a disjointed educational system, which reinforced fragmentary thinking,” (Laroche, 2001, p.254).

“Meaning emerges in context, in experience; holistic education is therefore essentially a responsiveness to the wholeness of experience as we live it in particular times and places” (R. Miller, 2000, p.4). Holism is a philosophical perspective where everything is in relation, and that reductionism, or the understanding of phenomena in isolation, “can only give us a partial view of anything it dissects” (R. Miller, 2000, p.21). Holism extends to individuals as well as to educational approaches, and this perspective will allow educators to “…develop a ‘new’ paradigm for curricula that will make a difference for Life’s Sake. To begin such a process, American education must move from a focus on specialization to holistic knowledge; from a focus on structures to understanding processes, from objective science, to systemic science, and from building to networking” (Cajete, 1994, p.26). Thus, holistic education refers to the efforts to integrate that which is embodied, cognitive and spiritual within a child, within the curriculum, within educators, whole school communities, and the greater cosmos beyond the school walls (J.P. Miller, 2010). Among others, these efforts towards supporting holistic integration are the aspirations of the alternative pedagogic traditions and philosophies of Montessori schools.

A common guiding principle within all of the holistic pedagogic philosophies is a focus on the spiritual development of the child as being that which supports the education of the whole child, as that which supports the child in being and becoming (R. Miller, 2000); “each person has something of the mysterious within. We sometimes call this the soul, the inner life, or the creative spark” (J.P. Miller, 2010, p.8). Further, it is agreed
that holistic education should enable the child to keep his or her natural curiosity as well as have this curiosity nurtured throughout ones educational experiences (J.P. Miller, 2010). With this aim in mind, holistic teaching employs a wide range of pedagogic approaches to best reach students in their own relational contexts.

“The whole curriculum is the connected curriculum. It fosters relationships between subjects and various forms of thinking, and builds community. It also deepens our connection to the earth and its processes, links body and mind, and recognizes the inner life of the child.

If the cosmos and the world are interconnected at every level, the curriculum should reflect this interconnectedness by focusing on relationships so that the child can see and even transform these relationships when necessary,” (J.P. Miller, 2010, p.12).

With the philosophic principles of holistic education informing the activities and processes within this inquiry, I will illustrate how students are able to synthesize and create meaning as they reach out with their ears to connect to their environments in all of their interconnected relational complexity. Therefore, this inquiry is also informed by literature that focuses on place, specifically in relation to identity.

“As places animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them, these same ideas and feelings animate the places on which attention has been bestowed, and the movements of this process - inwards towards the facets of the self, outward toward the aspects of the external world, alternately both together - cannot be known in advance.

When places are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination, and where the mind may lead is anybody’s guess,” (Basso, 1996, p.55).

In 1978, the term ‘place-identity’ was coined, and was defined as “those dimensions of the self that define individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs,
preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to this environment" (Proshansky, p.155). Since, identity has been linked to place by authors such as Lim (2010), who asserts that the interactions between place and a person gained through lived experience create lived and uniquely sensed meanings, and, that “emergent identities require space of their own in which to assert themselves, and are also grounded in (if not tied to) the specificities of particular locations” (Hall, 1999, p.505). Further, identity as informed by the sounds of a place has been explored; “acoustemology, the exploration of sonic sensibilities, brings the ethnographer closer to understanding the significance of sound to experiential truth” (Rice, 2003, p.4). And finally, of particular interest is how identity becomes performed when framed through the lens of soundscape study, through the balancing of sound input and output, used as a tool employed to position the self around dominant oppressive voices within one’s environment.

"Identity politics emerges out of the struggles of oppressed or exploited groups to have a standpoint on which to critique dominant structures, a position that gives purpose and meaning to struggle. Critical pedagogies of liberation respond to these concerns and necessarily embrace experience, confessions and testimony as relevant ways of knowing, as important, vital dimensions of any learning process,” (hooks, 1994, p.88-89).

Cayete (1994), argues that it is sacred to identify with place because landscapes actively turn into ‘inscapes’ and that we then, communally or individually, dialogue with that place.

There is an interaction between the people’s inner and outer realities that comes into play as we live in a place for an extended time. Our physical make-up and the nature of our psyche are formed in direct ways by the distinct climate, soil, geography, and living things of a place.

Over a few generations of human adaptation to a place, certain physical and psychological traits begin to self-select (Cayete, 1994, p.83).
Discovering sense of place is central to the creating of soundscapes within this inquiry. I propose that through deep listening place can reveal itself, allowing ‘inscapes’ to emerge and to be shared performatively through soundscapes.
etude three: arts into inquiry

“The arts have a strong claim to be part of education. They enrich our understanding of the world, challenge prevailing ideologies, widen our perspectives, engage and delight us, and celebrate our humanity” (Fleming, 2012, p. 1).

Arts education offers the opportunity to provide openings into culture and oneself through aesthetic and artistic practices and experiences. To provide opportunities for students and educators to latch on to those art traditions that resonate with their interests, and to provide training in these traditions and to provide the encouragement for the development of voice within and outside of tradition (Fleming 2012). Arts education may provide insights into the lives of individuals and provide insights into understandings of how their worlds are conceived within communities.

Ideally, arts educators model empathy, compassion, and vulnerability, as art is a repository for our cultural and universal moral compasses. Students may come towards knowing themselves, the universal nature of the human condition, and cultural peculiarities through interactions with the arts. Arts students may develop to become more flexible and open to experiencing aesthetics, as well as relating to people and life after their studies.

The arts-based research I employ is a qualitative approach to research that allows researchers to incorporate artistic practices and aesthetic principles into their research, often within the inquiry process as well as in the products of the research (Eisner 2002). Arts-based research provides particular value through bringing aesthetic ways of being into research and having these aesthetic ways of being contribute in unique ways to inform the creation of meaning-making (Eisner 2002); “often, imagination can bring severed parts together, can integrate into the right order, can create wholes” (Greene, 1995, p.38).

I am interested in those often silent voices that can only be voiced through the arts because “many of us are driven, less by ambition or bread than by an insatiable desire
to go beyond ourselves, to be remade by new experiences, reborn in the fires of the new” (Jackson, 2009, p.82). Arts-based research enables researchers, co-researchers and research subjects to come into forms of knowing and identity making through artistic processes (Greene 1995). “The power of creative spontaneity develops into an explosion that liberates us from outmoded frames of reference and from memory that is clogged with old facts and old feelings” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 192).

Of particular importance to this study is to discover how arts based research can connect us to environments and nature. “The only antidote to destruction is creation. The game we are now playing is for keeps; this is an age that may see us either go down the drain or create a whole new civilization” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 182).

“Between closing and beginning lives a gap, a caesura, a discontinuity.

The betweenness
is a hinge that belongs to neither one nor the other.
It is neither poised nor unpoised,
yet it moves both ways... It is the stop.

The arts-based research known as Performative Inquiry (Fels 2002) has been employed in this study. Performative Inquiry is particularly adept at inquiring through interdisciplinary lenses, using a variety of performative artistic practices in the process; “...learning emerges through the interplay of students, teacher, environment, inquiry, and the medium of inquiry...”(Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p.28).

Through Performative Inquiry, emergent issues, questions, relationships, and revelations, are brought to one’s awareness through “stop moments” (Fels, 2013). Stop moments refer to those moments of risk, decision, and opportunity, which come through performative acts, those moments encountered through engaging in creativity.

“Performative inquiry invites us to reflect on our responsibilities, our choices of action, the influences on us that led to these choices, and the consequences of these actions, as well as to consider what we, and those with whom we are working, might have done differently, and how we might now proceed.
Performing our presence in these co-created action sites of inquiry and imagining new possible ways of interacting is a curricular adventure that inquires, questions, and challenges who we are in relationship with others, our environment and ourselves” (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p.37).

“Our lives are filled with performances that have been so woven into our daily routine that the artificial and performative aspect has slipped into invisibility” (Byrne, 2012, p.69). What happens when we pay attention to these daily performances? Performative Inquiry responds to the changing rhythm of the research, the researcher and the research subject/object through an ongoing dialogue with the many ways one can consider the effect and role of performances. “To emphasize the performative element is not to suggest that identities are inauthentic, only that they are situated and accomplished in social interaction” (Riessman 2001).

Performative Inquiry focuses on: how play performs us as individuals and pedagogically (Fels & Belliveau 2008); how stop moments perform us and require us to take actions that inform our sense of identities; how decisions perform us, particularly considering that when one engages in decision making one “is really diving into a strong current that will carry him to places he had never dreamt of when he first made the decision” (Coelho, p.68); how language performs us (Van Manen 1990); how questioning and questing performs us (Irwin & Ricketts 2009); how one is performed by observing and being observed by others (Meyer 2006); how, “the performance unfolds, as each moment requires acceptance, then letting go as the next moment is received” (Fels/Rickets, p. 5); and, how creating and receiving performs “making and sensing” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 34).

Performative Inquiry offers a means to open up wounds, habits, and achievements, to share them and to have others look at who and why we are, and who we are in process of becoming as individuals and collaboratively as communities. Performative Inquiry fuels and dares those actively inquiring to engage with performative actions and to interrupt performative actions so as to bring forth those slivers of insight that grasp at not-yet-known knowledge, revealed through stop moments, bringing the not-yet-known forward into attention, thus, making the not-yet-known available to act upon through
reflection; Performative Inquiry opens the way to come upon a stop moment, a moment to notice what was not always apparent, to recalibrate, to move on, and to document and respect the entirety of the emerging process.

Who do we see? Do our environments perform us differently now? We are no longer what we were. Do we relate to our environment in the same way that we used to? Why do we choose to act, or not act? Why do we choose to hear, or not hear? We are no one that we haven’t already been, but that is not who we are. It is, in part, through Performative Inquiry that one’s lived experience has room to surface its voice and to bring authenticity, community, and rigor to inquiry.

“Sight in fact becomes an addition that is a subtraction, a step backward that is constantly trying to make up for its fundamental lack – the blindness that is its core.

Sight becomes anxiety, grasping, a nervous reaching beyond for what is no longer there, a something wrapped around a void that no beauty or truth can erase.

Sight becomes our flaw, a symbol of the fault of humanity” (Appelbaum, 1995, p.11).
What happens in the moment before I create?  
Well... which moment?  
The hesitation.

What if the hesitation slips by unnoticed,  
or is a dull ache that lasts most of the day?  
What if I am blind to my hesitation?  
What resistance will act to teach me?  
Which resistance will dull me?

How long must I bath in the moments of my own art,  
before they become self-indulgent moments?

If you perform at me,  
is this a form dominance?  
Your beauty may overshadow my will.  
Your art may become my art.

When is this an act of violence?  
When is this an act of sharing?  
When can I emulate you?

When can I create from within?  
Who can tell the difference?

When is the act of making art a living and vital cultural moment?  
Whose moments are these?  
Your definition may act to mute me.  
Who has access to these moments?

Are these moments the stuff of myths?  
When have I been exposed to so much  
that I can no longer see myself?

Now, imagine creating every day.  
Try imagining this everyday.

“...knowledge, like curriculum, becomes a vibrant dynamic state of being, becoming” (Fels 2002, p. 3).

Now create every day.

Is there a statistically relevant difference?
Measure my effort,
to connect
to something
gthat I don’t know of yet.

Did I
win?
etude four: study

What is entailed in creating a soundscape? There could be as many answers to this question as soundscapes created\textsuperscript{15}. I'll describe how I made a soundscape sourced from my backyard in North Burnaby, British Columbia.

Tools:
1) a recording device and microphone (I used a Zoom handheld digital recorder that came equipped with stereo microphones built in); 2) a cable to connect the recording device to a computer; 3) a computer; and 4), sound recording software\textsuperscript{16} (I used Logic Pro but Garage Band, among others, would also do the job).

Collection of sounds to create a soundscape may be exploratory in nature from the outset, involving wandering around with a handheld digital recorder until a sound source is discovered, or the data collection may come a chosen action site of sound. I had a place and source of sound within my backyard that I chose to focus on. I chose to focus on sounds created by the two honeybee hives in my backyard. For a couple of days I listened to the sounds coming from the hives at different times of the day and night so that I could get to know what kinds of sounds were available.

After exploratory listening I was ready to start recording. I brought the handheld digital recording device outside. I created a location within the device, a folder, so that I could store all related soundscape sounds that I was about to start recording in one spot within the recorder. I set the microphone levels at an appropriate\textsuperscript{17} level. Over the next few days I would place the recording device in specific spots, one after another, where I'd hear a sound or sounds that interested me. I started each recording wearing headphones, so that I was able to monitor what was actually being recorded. Listening through the headphones allowed me to adjust the recording level if needed right on

\textsuperscript{15} A selection of several influential soundscape creators: David Byrne; Brian Eno; Bernie Krause; Westerkamp; and David Rothenberg.

\textsuperscript{16} Sound recording software is often termed DAW, which stands for ‘digital audio workstation’.

\textsuperscript{17} I wanted the microphones to be sensitive enough to capture the available sounds clearly, but not so loudly that the level would get too loud and risk becoming distorted.
the spot, which prevented me from recording unusable or undesirable material. Sometimes I would let the recorder run for a couple of hours without moving it at all, and other times I would capture a minute or two of sound and try something new. As a result I accumulated over 6 hours of source sound material.

At this stage, I transferred the files from the recording device onto my computer. I opened up my audio software, Logic Pro, where I created a track for each sound recording. The creation of tracks allowed me the opportunity, through muting or soloing certain tracks one at a time, to hear back all of the sounds that I’d collected one at a time in any order that I found preferable. I listened for disruptions in the sound, like a gust of wind blowing loudly into a microphone causing the recording to distort, or someone yelling from across the alley. I cut out the sections of each recording that I was certain were not going to be of use to me.

But I still had hours of material to sort through! I needed to start making decisions, to improvise.

I looked for good examples of the most typical or common sounds that I’d recorded and I set those potential ‘keeper’ sections aside on a new track to help keep myself organized. Next, I listened for sounds that jumped out as interesting for some reason; I chose interesting tones, interesting rhythms, and interesting unexpected sounds like airplanes flying by or bees bumping into the microphones. I cut each of these sounds out of longer recordings and set these chosen sounds aside onto new separate tracks for later use. At this point I went back and listened to each of the original tracks, which now had silences in them where I’d cut out the sections that I’d intended to keep. I deleted these original tracks after going through them one more time, giving a last listen searching for sounds that I thought I might want to use.

Now that I’d selected the sounds that I thought I might use it was time to start building my soundscape. There were so many possible choices to make, I just needed to try something and see if it turned out.

What I chose to do was to find all of the rhythmic type of sounds. I created a loop, which means that I had the recording program play a certain time period over and over again without stopping, unless I stopped it intentionally.
This allowed me to insert the rhythmic sounds one at a time into the loop, onto new tracks so that I could keep my workflow organized. I had all tracks muted except the ones that I was working with in the loop. I copied and pasted rhythmic sounds onto the new loop tracks. I added several layers of sounds into tracks at different locations within the loop. I created a ‘beat\(^{18}\)’ in this way.

I didn't want my soundscape to simply repeat a beat in the exact same way over and over again, but what the beat that I'd created provided me was a foundation with which to start layering in other sourced sounds. When I started to layer more sounds in I sometimes used a sound that lasted twenty seconds or more and other times I used a sound that lasted for just a small portion of a second. Some sounds were incorporated into the final soundscape only once, while others were used many times over.

What guided me in making decisions about why or where to place sounds? Play. I tried things out of curiosity, and I did not keep every thing that I tried. If it didn't work I could always delete the sound or move it until it worked in a way that I was happy with. I experimented and was led to make decisions because of previous decisions—a context within which the soundscape was taking a life of its own and I was now puzzling sounds together that ‘worked’ in my head in relation to this emerging context.

It was also useful to edit each individual track, each sound section, with effects: I could reverse a sound; manipulate which frequencies resonated; add reverberations; add delays; add modulations into the sounds; manipulate volume; and, much more. Sometimes a sound that seemed unworkable, or perhaps didn't make sense because it was somehow out of context, could be manipulated into a sound that ‘worked.’

For days I kept massaging my work, I kept changing where sounds entered or exited the piece, how they were effected, what their volume was, how many times they repeated, if at all. In this way I composed a soundscape from sounds that I'd sourced myself in context to a specific place. Because I am also a musician, I chose to record a short section of guitar which I added to the soundscape.

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\(^{18}\) Later on I could, and did, delete part so of the beat at different sections within the soundscape
Over a couple of weeks I would listen to the soundscape just once through and decide if any changes were needed. If I chose to edit something I would do it as I noticed and found the offending sound. In this way, through repeated listening, but across an extended period of many days, I had the opportunity to become more familiar with the nuances of the soundscape that I was creating, which in turn, allowed me to make more nuanced decisions as to what I wanted to manipulate within it.

Eventually, like in all of life’s projects, I needed to call the work finished so that I could move on to other work. At this stage I ‘bounced’ a copy of the final soundscape out of the music recording program as a stereo track so that the recording was in wave and mp3 formats. This process allowed me to have the ability to access the finished recording in other platforms such as my phone or from Itunes on my computer.
etude five: study components

1. Creating Soundscapes:

First, I created a soundscape prior to bringing my research into a school setting so that I could gain familiarity with tools and processes involved, and so that I could show the students that I had engaged in the same work that I was asking them to embark upon. Then, I invited the middle school Montessori students where I was working as a classroom educator, on a pedagogical process of inquiry enabling engagement in deep listening within environments through the creation of soundscapes. Together with the students, we studied soundscape artists\(^{19}\) by listening to their works and reading about their processes.

There were five students in the middle school, four of whom gave consent to participate in the study, although, the whole class participated in study related activities because the activities were a part of the regular school curriculum. My aim was to encounter aesthetic experiences, for myself as a researcher, and for the students as co-researchers as well, in order to discover the pedagogical possibilities held within the practice of soundscape creation.

I provided the students with handheld digital recording devices and instructed them to collect their own sonic data, with one specific instruction, that they were to avoid collecting any spoken word. As well, I assisted the students with the use software, Logic Pro, for the editing and producing of their soundscapes.

Throughout the study, we engaged in regular reflective practices, including focus groups, written exercises, interviews, and several sound and visually based activities. I met with my participants weekly, as a group, to discuss their progress and to provide ongoing lessons as needed, as well as to collect reflections. It is of note that I was in the class educating these students on a full time basis throughout the school year.

\(^{19}\) David Byrne; Brian Eno; Bernie Krause; Westerkamp; and David Rothenberg.
2. Performing Soundscapes:
All of the sounds for the soundscapes were collected and the soundscapes created in the fall of 2013. At this time, along with the students, I helped to prepare all of our soundscapes as a collection of works that was presented at the school’s winter concert. The students were asked to order the individual pieces into a collective musical narrative.

3. Research and Documentation with Students:
I utilized the following research practices commonly employed within Teacher Research (Dana 2009), both for my students and for myself, for the purpose of discovering patterns and themes that will help to enlighten and guide our actions throughout the study:

- observation;
- journal writing, and the examination of these journals;
- reflective writings, both during activities as well as looking back on activities at a latter time;
- a daily log of activities; descriptive writing; narrative writing;
- the writing of vignettes; autobiographical writing;
- field notes recorded in a variety of ways, including drawings and audio recordings, which I organized and reflected upon;
- as well as, focus groups.

I ordered and reordered the collected data. Ideas became crystalized as the data became storied and categorized.
chapter three: creating soundscapes to sound our presence

building a bridge

I've asked my students to create music, or sound art, "soundscapes", from non-verbal sounds in their lives. Why?

"Sound, combined with an awareness of sonic presence, is posited as a powerful force in shaping how people interpret their experiences. Acoustemology, the exploration of sonic sensibilities, brings the ethnographer closer to understanding the significance of sound to experiential truth" (Rice, 2003, p.4).

I think that maybe verbal-language\textsuperscript{20} is too close to the concepts that we already have inside of us - having been created through experience or having been taken on through some form of education.

\textsuperscript{20} Changizi (2011) argues that language and music may have evolved in a brain that was attuned to nature’s soundscape (hits, scrapes and rings) as opposed to the brain having evolved specifically for language. That sound and gesture were used together to communicate as language slowly began to evolve, and that the cultural evolution of music and language ensued. As modern humans, we enter the world making sounds, and come to knowing language in time. Do we each live a cultural evolution, moving from sound to language in one lifetime as we become encultured?

"We do not, as children, first enter into language by consciously studying the formalities of syntax and grammar or by memorizing the dictionary definitions of words, but rather by actively making sounds - by crying in pain and laughing in joy, by squealing and babbling and playful mimicking the surrounding soundscape, gradually entering through such mimicry into the specific melodies of the local language, our resonant bodies slowly coming to echo the inflections and accents common to our locale and community. We thus learn our native language not mentally but bodily"(Abram, 1996, p.75).
Maybe without verbal-language we can unlearn and unknow all that surrounds us so as to make room for new understandings and meanings while listening in towards sound?

Can we interrupt what we expect to hear in ways that will help us to listen in, interruptions that will help us inhabit our identities?

“Performative inquiry creates opportunities for students to interact reciprocally, to take creative risks, and to come to an understanding of the ‘real world’ in an interactive and reflective way” (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 43).
I want the students to engage with living in real time sensorial awareness of moments in their life...

to make verbal-language mute

so as to discover a self through sound beyond language's container.

“Thought-thematization may be a problem. Our thought seems to do this foremost because it is good at doing it.

In other words, we use intellect to do what it does best. And doing what it does so well, it has eclipsed other kinds of consciousness” (Burneko, 2003, p.xii).

Do our thoughts oppress us,

having arrived in us as concepts or fragments of concepts inside of language’s container?

“Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1970, p.51).
Do thoughts cloud our reality

or alter our ability
to perceive with a more direct perceptual contact with the world?

How do we learn about our other-than-verbal-language worlds through sound, without language referencing knowledge?

What if we discover direct experiential knowledge through sound?

What artifacts from these experiences do we then bring forward into our language that will open us up to alternative ways of being and sharing?

"Poetizing is thinking on original experience and is thus speaking in a more primal sense. Language that authentically speaks the world rather than abstractly speaking of it is a language that reverberates the world, as Merleau-Ponty says, a language that sings the world.

We must engage language in a primal incantation or poetizing which harkens back to the silence from which the words emanate. What we must do is discover what lies at the ontological core of our being. So that in the words, or perhaps better, in spite of the words, we find ‘memories’ that paradoxically we never thought or felt before” (Van Manen, 1990, p.13).
sound listening

"Man [Woman] must act in nature. He [She] cannot act neutrally as if outside of it. He [she] has no liberty to absent himself [herself] from the outcome of his [her] actions or from the commonality of created things" (Keeble, 1998, p.33).

We're walking the woods through Campbell Valley Regional Park in Langley, melting the morning's dew from around our ankles. I'm walking behind my students, reminding them to be silent – that we are here to explore the woods, to observe, to listening.

"What can be imagined from a particular location is integrally tied to what can be known..." (Andrews, 2014, p.7).

They're excited. They know that this is the start of our soundscape research.

There are little bursts of muffled laughter as they apprehensively tip their ears into this strange new way of approaching our daily walks together. I ask them to work towards walking quietly, listening in21.

"Emergent identities require space of their own in which to assert themselves, and are also grounded in (if not tied to) the specificities of particular locations" (Hall, 1999, p.505).

This is hard work. These adolescents, their parts too large and other parts not yet developed, are stumbling forward at a manic pace into their emerging adult world. Ears forward, leaning into their ongoing, drastic, and exaggerated becoming as they reach out towards their adult selves.

21 Listening in, this is a term that I envision to mean more than an every day casual listening experience. Listening in involves listening through and into one’s own context and place at a particular moment with a certain capacity to observe and discover through listening. Listening in is not static or mechanical act involving only the reception of sound. Listening in allows space for listening anew, for hearing past the sound waves and into one’s emerging self.
“The wood grain (or tree, or rock, or cloud) educes, or draws out of the child, something related to what the child knows, but that is also more or different than what the child knows because the child is both assimilating the outside pattern to her desires and accommodating herself to the outside pattern” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 79).

There are birds and rodents sounding.

Our feet’s movements upon the earth, and our wind breathing in and out,

turns into waves entering the air’s space.

We can’t avoid the sounds of cars and trucks racing past on the local highway just a kilometer away.

A plane flies overhead, maybe heading to the air base, or patrolling the border separating us from the Americans just to our south by a mile.
“As places animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them, these same ideas and feelings animate the places on which attention has been bestowed, and the movements of this process - inwards towards the facets of the self, outward toward the aspects of the external world, alternately both together - cannot be known in advance.

When places are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination, and where the mind may lead is anybody’s guess” (Basso, 1996, p.55).

I wonder if it is strange that I ask my students to be silent, to observe, when the rest of the world is out there making its noise?

They don’t seem to think so. They’ve already adapted.

They stop to close their eyes periodically.

They point towards the trees with their sprouting and strengthening limbs.

They whisper under the rustling leaves when their own quiet is just too much for them to handle.
Back at school,

awake in our bodies,

especially in our ears.

I ask the students to talk

about what they’ve just experienced.

. . . ‘when are we going to record’, a student impatiently asks.

Now!

this is it!

they’re poised

ready to sound off

to jump into waves

sound journey

reaching

towards listening in

towards where they are

towards who they are

into who we are yet to be
sound gathering

It seems like it's been weeks that the students have been asking me every day...

“Did you bring the recorder and microphone with you?”

At last I reply,

“yes!”

“What took you so long?” cries a student.

I take the little recorder out of its protective plastic container. Student hands dash forwards to touch it, to explore this electronic gadget.

Moments later, after a basic tutorial, the students are confident and ready to record. They've got files within the machine to record into. They know how to set the record levels and to select the internal microphones or to use the input that will allow them to record using the shotgun microphone that I've rented.

“Let's go. I want to try it,” replies a student.

“Just wait a minute. You need to be careful with the cable so that you don't break the microphone. Here, wrap it up and hold it in your hand so that it doesn't hang down too loosely where you might trip on it.” I plead.

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22 The unspoken truth is that I’m terrified to teach what is most precious to me. I’ve been stalling. What if I botch this? What if I unduly influence them to lose sight of their own burgeoning passions? What if I don’t know why sound matters or why they should bother to invest in this project?
And that’s it.

They’re off,

running through the field,
electronics in hands,
towards the forest
ready to gather sound.

I stand back, watching them.

They’ve remembered my instruction,
“signal to your classmates that you want to record, to inform when they should stand still, in silence, so that the sound can be captured without our talking or moving around making extra unwanted noise”.

They’re eager, sharing their skills and the gear happily together. The excitement is palpable—so enthusiastic and focused! Yet they respect the need for silence when the situation demands it.

This meeting of nature and technology is second nature to them.

They play in and around sound so effortlessly.

We’ve barely made it 500 meters down the forest path before we stop again...

students capture sounds from the mysteriously dark pond just to our left.

They can hardly contain their joy and excitement as they stalk around the forest looking more than a little bit like Elmer Fudd, microphone held out front of their bodies and with earphones over their ears.
Taking turns no longer than three minutes each, because there is so much competition to use the recorder,

    they point the microphone
    up into the trees, up close into the grass,
    out randomly into the wind,

and into my dog Dexter’s nose
as they dance about and act goofily,

    trying to get the dog
    excited enough

    to sound for them.

Forty five minutes later we head back to school. We upload their files onto my computer and test some of the sounds over the sound system.

    “There’s so much hiss and blowing wind ruining the recordings,”
    one student complains.

    “Hold on. Let’s see what we can do if I open up the sound
    editing program…” I say to the class as I move the files
    into place.

    “Here, press this button and you can change the EQ for the
    track. That means you can add or take away some of the low,
    mid, or high frequencies in the sound that maybe you need
    to adjust so that you hear more of what you’d like to hear
    in the recording. Oh, and you can create loops if you press
    this green button. Just drag the bar to the length that
    you’d like your loop to cover. It’ll repeat until you tell
    it to stop. This way you can keep working on a part of your
    sound. If you really don’t like something you can just cut
    it out,” I tell them.
“One only understands the things that one tames,” said the fox.
“Men have no more time to understand anything.

They buy things ready made at the shops.
But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and
so men have no friends anymore.

If you want a friend, tame me”
(Saint-Exupery, 1943, p. 67).

We go outside to collect and listen to sounds several times
over the next few weeks.

Sometimes I ask the students to draw what they've been
listening to, and sometimes I ask them to write reflections
while out walking or upon returning to the classroom.

...We keep finding mechanical sounds in the forest.

“What's the difference between human-made sounds and
natural sounds23? Are humans not a part of nature?” I ask.

“...there are so many non-natural sounds in the forest: planes; cars; boots... and
they’re very loud. They interrupt what we expect to hear in the forest and make
them hard to hear,” remarks a student.

23 Having created a soundscape the summer before the school year started, I had been
experiencing the difference between human-made and natural sounds myself. The soundscape
that I had created relied on sounds sourced specifically from my back yard in North Burnaby,
most often very close to my two bee hives. I’d noticed that human-made sounds often intruded in
my attempts to capture the sound of bees, not to mention that I was fully aware that the bees’
resonating hive were built by myself, by my students, and by the bees through inhabiting and
fortifying it – so it was not entirely free from being a man-made or purely natural-sounding
environment. What emerged for me from this situation came to me while driving on the highway.
The mechanical hum, the drone of my car’s engine and the rubber resonating on monotonously
along the road, was a constant and exhausting irritation on my daily commutes. Yet, the drone of
my bees was the antidote to this sound related stress. Every day I’d come home, sit a couple feet
away from my bees and listen to their sounds, not entirely dissimilar to the road sounds from my
trip home. The bees were soothing and healing listening experiences for me. The perfect
imperfection, the soft undulations, the life within the sound rejuvenated me.
I'm drawn in,
listening to hear
non-vocal sounds,
hoping to shed
some meaning
on my soundcellar\(^24\),
on our soundcellar.

Yet, these mechanical sounds are even farther away from
what I was hoping to hear, than voice would be. They're
coded sounds. They scream out intention, a purpose
instilled in them upon creation.

These sounds, these human-made mechanical sounds, shouldn't
we be able to find a place away from hearing them so that
we can have space to hear something not so encoded by
others' intents?

The human-made mechanical sounds are just like a language,
they signify purpose and they communicate action or intent
of action.

They are products of performances being carried out.

With all of this noise,
how is my ability to listen in,
or my ability to discover
the source of my soundcellar,
distorted?

\(^{24}\) Soundcellar is a term that I have envisioned to represent the metaphoric room within
each of us where the value and intent behind listening in resides. Like a root cellar, one's
soundcellar nourishes and is connected to listening in, and then it turns and returns with
an abundant harvest for the nourishing. Or, like a wine cellar, the soundcellar stores what
is valuable, what has aged through experiences in sound and the resulting imaginings that
inevitably flow forth.
“Through listening we get an impression of the world into which we are born, and with soundmaking we express our needs and emotions” (Westerkamp, 1988, p.5).

This is our world with its mechanically constructed sounds. Every second of every day, we hear these sounds over and over in endless variations. Sometimes painfully loud and other times very subtle, perhaps beyond our conscious awareness entirely. They grind us into our culture, acting like subliminal beacons imposing their unintended wills into our minds and implanting our imagination with their sonic seeds.

There is no escaping that we are born into this mechanized polysonic soundscape.

Even in our cribs, we hear the hum of a light bulb, a car passing by, a fan blowing, or the fridge running on and off and on and off before we can possibly understand meaning.

Is it any wonder that we are drawn to electronics and mechanical objects or that wild nature is impossible to come by even in this beautiful lush Langley landscape?

“Despite all the mechanical artifacts that now surround us, the world in which we find ourselves before we set out to calculate and measure it is not an inert or mechanical object but a living field, an open and dynamic landscape subject to its own moods and metamorphoses” (Abrams, 1996, p.32).
How many of my students have ever spent an entire day beyond the reach of mechanical sound? Have I? How has this sound excess affected my ability to listen in? Is my imagination impregnated, colonized, with this industry's performances?
sound practice

I discuss with the students that they will be acting as co-researchers - that I’m not the expert who holds all of the answers— that along with myself, the class will engage in activities geared to push us to thinking about questions regarding sounds in our lives, both individual and communal lives.

Next, we discuss the idea of a sound practice, that we’ll have further discussions and explorations to help us figure out what this might mean to have a culture of sound practice in our classroom.

I turn off the lights, ask my students to close their eyes

and to listen.

I play a track on my computer that I’ve created. It spends 13 minutes moving through all of the modes in the key of ‘c’. I play along on my slide trumpet.

I find that I’m self-critical when I play to the class. I find it hard to practice...this moment has turned into a performance! ²⁵

Nevertheless, I explore finding my pitch and tone in relation to the background track.

²⁵ Of course this moment has become a performance. I’m sitting in a room playing to a room of people. I’ve asked them to attend to the moment. A daily activity, usually performed alone while at home, recast in a new context is obviously a performance. Do I perform to myself at home? Does the location and the audience act to perform me?
About ten minutes into the practice/performance the wires come loose from the computer that is playing the drones, adding a loud electrical sounding buzz to the sound-activity.

I stop, planning to adjust the cable,

but I chose to move on.

After a moment I realize that the buzz is just another sound that I can choose react to, a sound to embrace while I improvise. After all, I may have heard more variations on this buzzing sound in my lifetime than intentional musical sounds.

“Working from impulse to impulse, there is no planned action, no script; the performance unfolds, as each moment requires acceptance, then letting go as the next moment is received” (Fels/Rickets, p. 5).

When I finish playing, the students ask me about the buzz.
I explain that the cable had come half undone.

It is time that I ask them to journal about what they’ve been listening to, what they’re now thinking.

‘Whatever Eric was playing it sounded hard to keep in tune, but it sounded nice. All he was doing was improvising with the notes in the chord. The problem with improv is (that) a beautiful peace you played might be lost if you don’t bother writing it down,’ writes a student in response.
...why don't we worry about the novel we don't write as we speak all through our lives? Is a musical sound more exotic or precious than a spoken word?

“Sadness. The drones when played on both the trumpet and computer, they resonate sadness. Alone they do not have a particular emotion attached to them, but when together they sound sad,” a student writes.

I certainly have sharper ears than I usually do in class right now.

The lights’ buzzing seems very loud, and the stereo wire is still crackling lightly in the background.

The shuffling of a chair, or the movement of a piece of paper...the classroom sounds particularly brittle to my ears today - are there too many hard surfaces in the room?

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26 Sad. My sound betrays me, tells many secrets not divulged to my students. It speaks louder and more precisely than any words I might have shared, leaves my students room to feel for themselves rather than being told how I feel. Yes, there has been a sadness embedded into my music for some years now. Some hurdles I’m yet to recover from: friends dying; betrayals; and, a loss of self and sense of purpose for playing. Does this resonating sadness also betray a sadness in my student, having recently relocated from halfway around the world? What has been left behind? What is the source of a heavy heart? Only together do the sounds sound sad— only together does the music and the listener evoke an emotional response.
sounding off

a sideways riff on the changes
a voicing displayed on becoming
vulnerable, flowing unknown
reincarnations into space
without a sonic boom
to offset a silence emerging
into sounding off

...and not off like out of place
more like compost and kraut
acting as nourishment feeds me

...off like fearless, featherless flying
  beyond what isn’t to be
...off like a slip aside its sounding off
  a journey exposing me

to draw a bull’s-eyearound what cannot be heard
or be embedded in spoken word
simply surrounded by a polyphonic cry
sounding off, ‘it is I’

“Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued
constantly and responsibly.
Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man [woman];
nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather
the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion”
(Freire, 1970, p.47).

I have always been sounding off - a cry as the world opened to my ears
Seated alone at the piano, hands on keys, waiting, listening for a moment
of silence
  Listening for the sound of approval deep within imagination
The bed of becoming booming near - beckoning a sonic mirror
Deafened by overworked listening organs - knowledge gained through
shivering hairs
In canals unseen and obscured by wax - protected from the sound of
pressure
the sound of pressure

the sound of pressure
not from when I push my trumpet onto my face
and not the sound
released from a hose
but the sound of pressure
inside of my head

...what is the sound inside
of a student’s head
is it deafening like that
pressure inside of mine?

and how this sound distracts
pulls me away from a focus
keeps me numb like
tread going around a tire

and I dread the sound
any sound at all does it
I boil over, overloaded
Too much noise in the system

so when a noisy student
builds a quiet room at school
where a desk is set apart
from noisy signals of everyday
does the sound of pressure
find the room to give voice
to surface as signal above
the noise of habit

what is heard
is it that which is left mute?
mute not because it has been
unattended to, no,
because the pressure
has been let go
daring to be vulnerable
to be able to hear
in a quiet room
the sound of pressure

"The creative surprise often takes place
when the pressures come off
in an episode of relaxation or surrender...
it means an alert, poised equilibrium,
attentive, ready to shift
in any direction with the movement of the moment"
sound, I rise I am listener

I stand speechless across the gymnasium - not because I’m afraid
But because I’m listening to the room - to their shuffling feet and their breathing
They slow dance, hands on shoulders - I dance along - rhythm shows the way
Slowly I fade away into recesses absorbing worlds of sounds - far from here, from her
And for years I don’t know why words cannot say, why I cannot say a thing
I’m not alone, but I’m not with her - in a room far away from these lonely dances
And still, so many conversations, coded, embedded with
Song
Tone
A rise and fall
I falter to listen to what the words are meant to mean
I hear realities in your ho hums and clicks and clacks
I fall - what were you saying
Slowly
Cautiously
A rise and fall
Back to what we share, what you’ve shared
Empathetically trying to coerce your stare to transform into moving air - sound
I rise - I am listener

But I don’t hear your messages - desperate to connect, to inform
I’m adrift on the waves coming at me, until I find a quiet room
And in confusion, and love, and wonder - I hear the sound of pressure
And I stand speechless across the gymnasium - not because I’m afraid
But because I love to listen to you - until I find a quiet room where I'll remember that I can't know you
And where I’ll have listened to myself in your voice - in how I absorbed your sounds
This will stand in for love - not because I love how I’ve listened into myself through your voice
But because this is love - years of this love have become the beacon that shines out of me
Alone in a quiet room the sound of pressure reassures me, its sound is its own
I play the album ‘The Happiness Project’ for my students. I turn the lights out and ask them to listen.

Strange, unique, new to our ears, a voice begins becomes fragmented and sometimes repeats itself while a band creeps in behind.

We listen for 15 minutes.

I turn on the lights and then ask the students to journal for the second half of the recording.

Right when I turn the lights on, in The Happiness Project recording, a lady who had received hearing implants is talking about when she first noticed hearing sound...

And then I felt my body moving inside...and then I learned that sound was electricity.

‘Could craving for synchronicity, to feel that there is order in chaos, be why we talk in an almost constant beat? Or maybe our music effects how we talk?’ writes a student.

my heart beats

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27 The Happiness Project (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FA97V-oAJw) is born from noticing a varied sing-song quality within everyday talking voices. Voice has been used as melody, cut-up and re/performed as part of music, along with a band supporting the voice-as-melody.
pushes blood

my body listens
in step with
this cadence

I am electricity
then I breathe

my next breath
sets me off

until I come to rest

where

I can sit and listen

I am no speedy humming bird
nor I am the whole of the universe
moving slowly past all of our lives

I move and live at my own speed

Or do I?

And I am coherent, through and through
I am my own listening post

‘Today’s sound has a lot of kind music,’
remarks a student.

Today, after listening closely, while listening closely, I notice the creak of my chair, sounds drifting into the class from outdoors and across the hallway... sounds that I typically ignore.

__28__ Listening post; a term that I employ to encompass a being in a specific place and time, a body with a context and ability to receive sound and to imagine into sound. The person acting, listening in.
My ears, although they are always on my head, seemingly, are not always awake.
‘I did not enjoy most of the songs, because, even though I enjoyed the beats and tunes I felt there weren’t enough lyrics to make the songs feel complete and that sometimes they interrupted the song’s lyrics too much, so that you’d lose the flow of the song,’ writes one student.

A student asked if I knew what sound practice was, or if I was waiting for them to discover it. It was a question that emerged from a journal entry so I didn’t need to answer immediately.

I let that question rest in our imagination for some time.
sound awareness: easing into presence

I ask the students to join me on a silent walk.

They agree to not talk.

One of them decides to take the lead, guiding us through the forest, eventually choosing a spot where we can stop to journal together.

“As my companions and I walk through these quiet woods we begin to notice the subtle chirps of a bird not far away and the louder croaks of a frog too far away to see among these mighty trees,” writes a student.

We wander through the trails without speaking.

Our clothes rustle,
our feet scratch along the ground,
and our breathing is audible.

I hear a few sighs several minutes into the walk.

Are these the sounds of boredom or of easing into presence?

“It is very quiet and silence...after, take to rest time,” writes another student.
Around fifteen minutes into the walk we are lead to stop in one of my favorite spots – an old stand of cedar trees where there is no underbrush.

The students scatter around finding spots where they can journal in amongst the trees, roots, and fallen branches.

I can hear the cars off in the distance, a constant mechanical drone that undulates as cars and trucks continuously come and go some number of km away from our location.

I notice many distinct birdcalls, although several have stopped singing now that we’ve stopped walking.

I hear crickets, or small creaking sounds anyway, and loud frogs.

My dog is next to me, waiting impishly for us to finish writing so that our exploration through the woods can continue – the dog’s listening post has a shorter attention span, or maybe his listening post moves well with him on our walks?

I hear a bird that sounds like a dripping faucet...
there are human voices in the distance
- it is suddenly so easy to hear their sounds as melody
since the directly coded linguistic meaning of their words is being

lost and distorted
due to their filtering through the trees.

All that can be heard are vocal gestures combined,
remixed by the forest itself, into a melody.

“The forest is in like a grey area of sound. Between spring and winter. Only a few
birds sing. Several days ago I heard a Stellar Jay imitating the yell of a red tail
hawk. That amazed me because I’ve never experienced a bird imitating in the
wild. Its like something you’d read in a science journal about birds,”
writes a student.
I’m leaning against
a big tree wishing
that I could hear its voice,
its sounds.

Whatever frequencies this tree emits my ears are not attuned
to receive them.

There must be
sounds as critters crawl
as water flows up through,
reacts
to my leaning upon it,
goes about its day
in its mysterious slow way.

“Surrender
means cultivating a comfortable attitude toward not-knowing,
being nurtured by the mystery of moments that are dependably surprising,
ever fresh”
(Nachmanovich, 1990, p. 21-2).

I look around, some students are engaged in their work, and
others have lost their focus – perhaps it is difficult for modern life to slow down, to surrender in this way.
sound relationships

We have an experimental band in class with us today – as us – it is us!

The students warm up on their trumpet, clarinet, flute, percussion, and guitar.

I catch their attention so that I can describe that we will be playing notes, only from the C concert major scale, along to the modal drones that I had played slide trumpet along with previously during a sound practice session.

The drones begin.

Players sort out,

and in,

and back out of the collective sound.

I sense, or imagine, the desire for ‘music’ among them, for an organized written and orchestrated piece that they can work at. But this work takes our ears and minds on a different path.

To listen and respond

- to take chances

- to not know what to do
  or how to judge what is
good or right
  or how to make our way

through this unpredictable

sound barrier\textsuperscript{29} together.

\textsuperscript{29} A sound barrier signifies a sonic \textit{stop moment}, when one is required to consider how to move forward from a sound that draws one’s attention away from the everyday, towards an emerging active and intentional response to the sound’s disruptive call.
The instruments are sitting out and sprawled across the room as I ask the students to write.

“The sound is good...” writes a student.

Most of the sounds had fit together quite nicely.

“I thought it was cool that we built on what each of us was doing. A mutual understanding without words...each instrument counts, bringing its unique voice to the music,” writes another student.

(The arts), “they lead us in new directions, let us try things on. They often ask questions we might not voluntarily engage with, uncomfortable questions we might not be able to handle in any other way” (Wyman, 2004, p.15).

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30 For years I’d played with a quartet called TIN, The Improvised Network, when I lived in Edmonton. The members in the group all lived in a little three story walk-up apartment building together in different suites. We played once a week for several years, and often played other gigs in different combinations. At our TIN shows we always had at least one guest who’d join us on stage for our sonic explorations. We didn’t play jazz, but we all had that background in common. This music was not formed on any kind of song or structure before the performances began – we just started with a sound and eventually ended with a final sound. Some pieces lasted two hours, others two minutes. We encountered nearly continuous sound barriers that we were required to respond to improvisationally. I always felt that this kind of improvisation was as much about interpersonal or sociological work as much as it was about a music performance; it was like we were personally joined through the music into a communal entity where none of us could hide from one another or fool others into overlooking our own habits. We had to face ourselves in each other through the way we understood each other the most intimately, through sound interactions brought on through a steady stream of sound barriers flowing our way. Some performances, one of us might over play or underplay, leaving the group to adjust, to right the balance. We had to overcome our frustrations, live through them, and come out on the side of generosity and forgiveness in order to make the group work. Working through these issues in a safe environment where there was trust within sound and within a network of close friends, within an abstract setting where there could be no winners or losers, was a fertile training ground for us to deal with the rest of our lives off stage.
sound choices: in the ear of the listener

“We’ve got three choices today.” I write them up on the chalkboard.

1) go someplace silent or quiet and journal
2) dangerous writing (quick group writing practice) about sounds
3) write a short story where sound is central or important

...every student chooses the group activity, number two.

I gather small pieces of paper, and some pens, as the students start ripping the paper into smaller bits.

“Write one word only, one that is a sound or that is about a sound,” I say.

After a moment, one of the students pulls a slip of paper with a sound word out of a hat —

“raindrops”

- is what gets called out.

I tell them that they have two minutes to write.

“Plip plop goes the drop, plip plop goes the drop,”
one student reads out.

Their heads are all down, furiously trying to capture what it is like to write about sounds.

These quiet moments after and during our sound practice sessions are so nice. Our class is usually quite chatty and the students are not usually so settled in their bodies as they are when they reflect on sounds.

And then out of the blue one of the students pipes up,

“...anyways, sound is in the ear of the listener.”
sound attention

“What has school sounded like so far this morning?” I ask the students.

“What do you mean?” a student replies.

“Well, why don’t you make a list of all the sounds that you’ve heard, or pick one and write about it in depth,” I reply. “However it comes to you.”

As often happens,
what one student starts to do,
the rest quickly follow suit.

They’re up
and out of their chairs
searching
around the school
for sounds
to list.

After twenty minutes the class is back together comparing lists.

“Can we combine our lists in some way, to see if we can create a shared picture of what school sounds like today?” I ask after we’ve shared our lists for a few minutes.

“What if we each read our list out loud so that others can cross any doubles off of their lists? By the time we all go there will be no doubles left and then we will have a master list leftover,” suggests a student.

“Sounds like fun to me. Who wants to start?” I ask.
It is distracting going through these lists, we keep stopping to ask each other what a certain sound word means, where it was heard, and if someone else’s use of the same word for a different sound should make it to the master list somehow.

And, there are many different ways to list similar sounds so we all get a bit confused about what is appropriate to cross off our lists.

Words are troubling us.
Stop moment...  

- the words are troubling us...

Yes of course,
I could feel this moment coming from a long way off and it has arrived among us. Words are not clear
they are not precise
they misrepresent
they are easily misunderstood.

There are no best choices to make in selecting which words will remain in our list.

I cannot hear the experience of the students through the words that have been selected, so much of the nuance and meaning are left mute. And even by discussing these gaps in meaning, these gaps in what was meant to be clear communication, brings us no closer to honoring what was intended.

Voices

Meanings

Understanding
Knowledge is abandoned
And this terrifies me

This saddens me
I want to hear these students
I want to be heard
‘It’s like a finger pointing at the moon,’”

— an old adage that my dad used to tell me.

We use words to describe the world, not to replace the world with words. Words are shortcuts used to help us share descriptions of reality, a common ground, so that we can relate readily with one another.

Words can only hint towards what we hear, or point towards how we respond and inscribe ourselves into the sounds around us.

Can this be the gift of soundscape inquiry? Discovering and creating melodies of our world, soundscapes to sound our presence, reveals a depth of experiential reality beyond what can be pointed towards with our accustomed signposts words?
Sounds,
we discover in class,
even these everyday ordinary sounds,
have a life of their own
that can be carefully attended to:

- click, click, click – the clicking of this wonderful pen
- paper flipping
- lockers clanging
- footsteps
- breathing
- bells
- tapping shoes
- sighs
- jangling
- chickens clucking
- fingers
- yelling
- pants
- zippers
- computers
- talking
- bouncing
- crunching
- barking
- bursts of frustration
- celebrations
- markers dropping into mason jars

“Now, each of you have on your paper at least one word on your list that is different from all the rest of the group list. Please write about that one sound,” I say.

‘If I stood there longer more sounds would have presented themselves to my limited hearing,’ writes one student.

What reality do we miss, how is our reality altered, when we mute what could be heard, when we do not attend to a sound?
The lights are turned off. I tell the students that when I turn the lights on we are going to quietly select art materials to draw with, and make art in response to what we’ve listened to. I start playing the first ten minutes of the opera ‘Tosca’.

The lights come on. Most of the students gather materials and begin starting towards their art making, but a couple of the students stay behind and listen from their spots in the lounge area near the stereo. A few more minutes go by before I quietly encourage them to select their drawing materials. Eventually I go off myself and begin making my artwork.

We talk and draw for twenty minutes while listening to more of ‘Tosca’. There is a joy in the room this morning, an ease of social interactions, as the room fills with laughter.

**Figure 1.** drawings

![Drawings](image-url)
absent sound: when nobody knows

We found a dead chicken in our coop at school.

Actually, it was a student who found her and came running to me with an urgent look in his eyes and an intense directness of tone in his voice.

“There’s a dead chicken in the coop. What if it was sick?” he says to me as the rest of the students are transitioning to dance class where they will complete their day at school.

I keep him behind to further investigate the scene with me.

I can’t do much to console him, or to make him feel certain that there isn’t some fatal illness spreading through the coop to the other hens, but I listen to his concerns, usually replying with “I don’t know?” to most of his probing questions.
Attempting to remain calm in the face of a death at school, 
the death of this hen, 

    opens me up, 
    makes me vulnerable, 

and reminds me that I am not in control of so much as I might hope.

I realize that I can’t shield students from the difficult 
realities of life and death, nor do much to comfort them 
when death shows up unannounced. It simply is that what 
once clucked away in our chicken coop is now forever muted.

And, in this moment, now, 

    in her absence, we learn to listen 

    to something much quieter and much harder to listen to.

We decide to work our way through this moment.

We dig a hole and bury the hen far away from school, 
past the gardens, 
past the playground, 
past the compost.
First thing next morning I ask the students to come outside with me, to take note of the hen's grave, and to offer a moment of silence.

We are all silent as we walk out from the school towards the grave, past the chicken coop just outside our classroom door, past our wintering garden, past the now appropriately empty playground, past the compost, where we stop together.

We are all looking down towards where the freshly turned soil signals our attention.
“It was real silence. We are not any talking,” reflects a student.

“Poetic inquiry requires that we pay attention to the absences, the silences, the awkward moments that throw us off-balance.

The learning is revealed in moments that disrupt, interrupt, corrupt” (Fels & Ricketts, 2012, p. 7).

No one even moves - even our breaths are slow and nearly inaudible.

I start to walk after a few minutes pass.

The students quietly follow me as we make our way around the school field before returning to class.

“A moment of stillness in our turbulent lives. Silence is so important because there is so much noise in the world around us...” writes a student.
Perhaps this response is a lot of drama or ceremony to show for a hen, to show her this respect feels both heavy and silly. My body reacts by sinking into a space not often inhabited, certainly not at school.

The air, in class, all around us, still feels heavy.

Life seems to have so many turns
there are times when nobody knows
what can be done to make this right
nobody knows where or how to turn
and when you’re alone, the world is silent
when you decide what will come to be
this is when time, linear ideas
fall off of the edge of the universe
and a gap opens to stop us

this gap could wait forever inside of a blink
poised right before your thoughts, listening
for a sound barrier must be broken
a mood lifts, chemicals surge through
this split second, this eternity, embraces
what couldn’t have been
what wasn’t to be
until the voice in your head bursts free
righting out far beyond
where the sound barrier can see
The students are gathering in the lounge area.

“Today I will play you a soundscape that I’ve created from sounds that I recorded in my backyard last summer. Some of you have heard this before. Still, I’ll play it two times,” I tell them.

The sound creeps out from the stereo.

I’ve forgotten how the soundscape begins. Soon the humor in it is apparent as bees bump into the microphones, sounding a bit like farts.

The students are all giggling.

A student asks me to pause

before we listen again.

He asks his classmates to stop giggling because it is distracting for him.

Another student chimes in saying that it is rude to laugh at someone else’s hard work.
Surprised by all of this concern levied towards my soundscape I say that, 

“maybe the sounds are funny and appropriate to laugh along with, but, since your classmates have asked to listen in another way could we try to listen quietly this next time in a way that allows everyone to concentrate?”

as I’m listening in
so is another
as are the many others
habituated to hear

as I’m listening in
so is another
as are the many others
habituated to hear

what has taught me encoded me with a way

am I listening in

or listening out

towards that which guides my journey

this barrier inhibits me

derails my progress

lost in where I was headed

towards where I didn’t know

there is resistance hiding inside of my blindness
sound mind

I ask the students a provocative question,

“what sounds are you afraid of losing the ability to hear in the future?”

A list of answers:

- breath
- heartbeat
- emptiness
- laughter
- hockey team
- music
- family
- movies
- basketball
- bikes
- cars
- dogs
- tv shows
- friends
- birdsongs
- voice
- trees rustling
- writing sounds
- animal sounds
- water splashing/dripping
- singing
This question about losing of an ability to hear came to me after we'd watched a short documentary in class about the adolescent brain, how the brain at this age either develops in the ways that it gets used or that it prunes areas that are neglected through lack of use.

I sense that the students are stuck in their lists so I ask another question,

“if you could develop super hearing in one area what would you hear?”

This was the question they were waiting to respond to!

“What if there is a secret music in the world around us that can’t be heard?” asks a student.

Stop moment. . .
Wow.
Yes,
a secret music.

A secret music lurking behind what we do attend to
A secret music lurking behind our words, within our words
A secret music sounding in our bodies
A secret music in scales that humans can’t grasp - a song spanning

millions of years, across millions of light years, inside of a tree leaf, within the soil - beyond us but there in waiting
I think that the student has asked a better question in response to mine.

Is the secret music in the trees, in the frequencies I am unable to receive?

Is the secret music stuck in our minds’ isolation sound, and we can only share the simplest of caricatures with each other through music, language, or soundscapes?

What about all of the sounds we simply don’t bother attending to, that go muted throughout our lives, whose capacity to be attended to end up pruned through neglect?

Maybe the secret music around us can only be approached through considering all that we hear individually, collectively gathered, a secret meta-soundscape?

“Something is triggered; a new memory is provoked by the teller and those who witness. When fracturing the signifiers of our everyday(ness) we come to shared understandings thereby creating intersections/nodes of commonalities with the purpose of cultivating spaces of community” (Ricketts, 2011, p.2).
sound recovery
I suddenly notice the sounds of the classroom.

The rain is running off the roof in drops and streams,
the lights' buzzing takes up a lot of my listening attention,
the dog yawns,
  papers and pens are in motion,
and chairs squeak too.
A low thump enters in as someone walks past in the hallway.

Singsong bits of distorted,
yet connected, syllables
wander through the wall from the office
where a paper cutter slices with a metallic grind.
Children talk as they walk past our room.
Someone begins to play the piano from across the hall.
The students are set to listen for five minutes.

I ask them to imagine when and where the sound recording is taking place, to try to create a picture of it in their minds.

I don't tell them that the recording is from a gig that I'd played a couple days previously[^31].

“That music was from present day. It was at a restaurant in New Orleans and it was at a gig and the band was from New Orleans and the song was a classic sailing song that people play on a sailboat with a merry-a-che band for happy events in a restaurant or in a beach so maybe the restaurant was on the beach or in the city. But it was somewhere with a lot of people talking at once,” writes a student.

Well, the gig did not take place on a sailboat.

We were playing the jazz standard ‘All the Things You Are’ in a mansion, where each room had been pre-set with thousands of dollars worth of orchids and other lovely flowers that worked to complement the crystal light fixtures surrounding us. We played to a group of eight, an intimately catered fundraising dinner party.

“It sounds like salon music and I really want to work in a pet salon when I grow up because I really like cutting animal fur and making pets pretty,” writes another student.

Closer to the true setting.

“It would have been in the early to mid 90’s just as jazz was starting to die out – you’re at a party in the middle of the summer,” writes another student.

[^31]: Until recently, I’d taken about a ten-year hiatus from playing jazz. I’d lost the feel, the impetus, the attraction, and an understanding of why to bother. And then, out of the blue, I said, ‘yes, I’ll play this gig’. Now, several months later, I’m playing twice weekly and recovering my lost voice. Like an old friend the music fits easily into my life again. And the music doesn’t just fit, it feels like I’m home. That place, a soundcellar that I’d inhabited so thoughtfully and wholeheartedly when I was younger is inviting me in once again.
sound exploration

Students have begun to edit their soundscapes.

They are largely focusing on mining sound sources for targeted sounds, using the EQ tools to bring out the qualities in each sliver of a sound that they find interesting.

Some choose to wear headphones, sitting at my desk using my computer, working privately.

Others chose to move my computer to the sound system and share the sound work that they are doing with the whole class as they explore possibilities in the sounds that they've collected.

Other students, content to know that their sounds are safely stored on the computer, do not chose to use their time editing at all, content at this stage to know the sounds have been stored away for some later use.
I am ready to play a ten minute video about sound, math, and noise, but first I address the class —

“there will be a lot of information, I'm not asking you to try to memorize it all. I will be asking you to journal about what you find interesting once the video has finished playing.”

Ideas

images

words

fly by us

at a lightening pace.

I wonder who can stay with this seemingly reckless flow of information?

The students, seemingly trying to rise to the challenge, are leaning in towards the screen working hard to keep up.

Will they understand Pythagoras and the overtone series,
or how air is pushed in patterns of waves,
or how the ear absorbs these waves,
or how the mind reacts to these patterns,
or how one note contains many?

Maybe they’ll understand that this is all so complex, that to measure what it means to listen can have many connotations, none of which alone gives a complete picture of what is going on.

“I didn’t really know how sound traveled, but I didn’t think it was that complicated. I guess it’s not that complicated, but there are plenty of complicated words describing it,” writes a student.
I wonder if they’ll make the connection that each of us have different ears, different listening posts, different soundcellars, and that we can’t receive the patterns of waves equally to one another let alone have our minds (hearts?) make sense of the patterns in the same way.

Yet, our ears are all built to accept this sonic information.

All of us are so similar yet so very unique all at the same time.

Is it these tiny variations among our listening posts within us and within our groups that helps to create both bonds and aversions?

How do the sounds of our multiple worlds, as sound enters our listening posts, affect how we behave and interact, how we relate?

“I found it interesting that our brain creates sounds that aren’t there...our ear is a complex thing that is still better at figuring out sound than a computer,” writes a student.

“What people are willing to believe depends to a great extent on their framework of reference. Magic is intricately tied to the social imagination, and what is captivating for a group in one particular place and time may be significantly less so for others.

In this way, one can see that magic operates as a social barometer, providing an indicator not only of what is accepted as fact, but also charts a construction of reality which is potentially acceptable, in other words, the world of the possible, if not-yet-real,” (Andrews, 2014, p.17).

“I learned that some things can go on forever,” writes another student.
Is it so that we must be listening in if we are listening at all can listening be teased apart from listening in?

Can it be that listening in is a sound measure acting to unveil identity with clarity acuity and rigour because attending to sound involves imagination and magic?

Through shared experiences of place, from multiple perspectives in relation to others, the world becomes a more 'stabilized' place embedded with meaning and culture; reality exists only in relation to dialogues between the shared perceptions of relational beings (Abram, 1996).

“…is the human intellect rooted in, an secretly borne by, our forgotten contact with the multiple nonhuman shapes that surround us” (Abram, 1996, p.49)
sound recognition

I play the students recorded sounds from interstellar space

- from a place that I was taught had to be silent when I was in grade school.

I don’t tell the students that the sounds are from space, nor that the playback speed has been changed so that the frequencies are within human hearing range.

“What do you think you are listening to?” I ask the students ahead of time.

After they listen I ask them to write for three minutes about what they’ve heard.

“This soundscape must be in a forest or something, you can hear the water dripping and the birds...” writes one student.

“Rain and birds,” writes another.

“...like bird in a mountain sound,” writes another.

“I think it is raindrops,” writes another.
After their short write the group comes back together to listen again.

I play another clip

- this one is of crickets with a voice over explaining how crickets have a quicker life span than humans and explaining that there are two tracks of sound running together:
  one track at regular speed,
  and another track slowed down so that it is in line with a human time scale.

Once again I ask them to write when they are finished listening.

A fantastic insight comes from an ESL student who must have misunderstood much of the voice over explanation.

“I listen to bird in mountain + choir sound. I think it is good harmony. Probably there is a lot of practice for good harmony,” she writes.
What has been practiced?

Is it our practice at listening in search of organization and harmony within a musical structure, our enculturation?

Maybe we humans are practiced in harmony not at all due to our culturalheritages of organized music? Rather, more fundamentally, maybe we are practiced evolutionarily speaking into listening for harmony and for creating harmony just as others are, in this case the crickets, whom have been performing along with us?

Is practicing for performance, being in harmony, a simple reality of being for all creatures?

When does this practice turn to performance?
Are the crickets performing for a specified audience?
How have we disrupted their intention by listening in on with our own listening posts?

“Many consider learning to be a hallmark of intelligence. It turns out that almost all of the known nine thousand species of birds have a song, but about half of them half to learn how to sing.

If they lack the opportunity to learn, they develop songs different from those heard in nature.
Young birds must listen to adults, then practice on their own.

Birds even appear to practice singing in their dreams.
Research shows that sleeping songbirds fire their neurons in intricate patterns similar to those they produce when singing.
Some songbirds, like canaries, change their repertoires every year.

Scientists correlated this to changes in the birds’ brains and went on to find that adult canaries generate a steady stream of new neurons.
This overturned a century of scientific theory which held that brains in adult animals do not change.
Now it appears that all animals including humans grow new neurons throughout their adult lives.

On this account, our brains are not so different from those of birds – fortunately” (Narby, 2005, p.15-16).
And let us not forget the discovery of interstellar sounds.

Do interstellar entities create sounds practiced in harmony as well?
sound context

We are watching a video created to accompany a soundscape created by David Byrne. The video shows and tells us through recorded slivers of sound where he was for a day, as he sourced the sounds used to create the track.

The sounds and video images have been cut up and spliced together to tell a newly imagined story based on what sounds learning ideas -
emerged while he recorded. Sound
place chance
improvisation editing

David Byrne's listening post

In action

- have acted upon the authorship of the video.

As soon as the video stops—

“I hated it,”
a student says.

“The beautiful is not what pleases, but what falls within that fateful gift of truth which comes to be when that which is eternally non-apparent and therefore invisible attains its most radiantly apparent appearance” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 19).

“Why is it important to like a piece of art?” I ask the students.

We discuss how art acts through us in order for us to respond, not always positively. There is as much to learn while attending to what it is that we don't like as there is while attending to what it is we like in an art work.

I challenge the students to go further, to try to describe and understand what it is that they feel about a piece of art.
“For me it didn’t have enough variety in the sounds,”
writes a student.

We compare pleasing sounds versus harsh sounds, and then few sounds compared to many sounds.

Is there a right balance to be found? Why might an artist make their choices?

We watch the video of the soundscape again.

“Well, the first time through the song I said that the soundscape sounded empty. But the second time around I noticed many more sounds than before; I liked the way the composer took sounds from the street salesman and then distorted that sound to make a tune that ran through the whole song,”
writes a student.

“I had an extremely slow-dawning insight about creation. That insight is that context largely determines what is written, painted, sculpted, sung, or performed.

That doesn’t sound like much of an insight, but it is actually the opposite of conventional wisdom, which maintains that creation emerges out of some interior emotion, from an upwelling of passion or feeling, and that the creative urge will brook no accommodation, that it simply must find an outlet to be heard, read, or seen,”
(Byrne, 2012, p.13).

Sound comes with a context, as does each act of listening in.

In a *sound context* there are identities, and stories that emerge.

The melody of a soundscape flows in this context. The soundscape’s sound context does not necessarily carry the same lyrical encryption as a musical melody, although there may be musical qualities included.

The interplay between the audience’s listening posts, that or those of the composer’(s), as well as the influences that technology plays in a soundscape’s creation contextualizes the soundscape melody.
sound story

Today the outdoors is foggy, very foggy — muted. My insides are muted as well. I'm short on sleep.

We are listening to a soundscape albumn by Brian Eno. Its composition is highly steeped in intentional musical qualities.

I ask the students to imagine a world that belongs to the soundscapes we listen to
- that there can be no wrong answers
- the students are to create a story after taking down point form notes as they start to imagine their stories.

Some simply dive in and start composing their stories.

“The misty mountains are sharp and tall much like the sharp sound of stones ricketing down the mountains as travelers stumble through the high mountain passes where the rock giants battle,” writes a student.
My insides become unmuted as a story emerges...

On a tiny rock floating through space, in a shadow under this rock, lives a frog. It wanders back and forth only flicking its tongue out from the safety of the shadow. It doesn’t know what is beyond this ancient frog of experiences old. Its tongue is dusty, gazed upon as they are searching the shadowlands. Its eyes, they’ve never been always occupied within looking down searching within the shadowlands.

The frog remembers many shades of grey and many unsettling moments having caused troubling vulnerability underfoot.

And then, one day, a butterfly lands on the frog’s tongue, making it curl up reflexively. The butterfly is drawn towards the frog, wings outstretched and filled with expectation. As the butterfly nears the frog - looks up just for a moment.
a soundscape searching for a melody

“How do I slow this sound down to half speed?” asks a student.

“I’m not sure that we can do that with this program?” I reply.

“This program sucks!”

“Maybe the program doesn’t suck? It just doesn’t perform the way you’d like it to.”

The other
The technological other
Set apart from us biologicals
These binary functions defy and deny
Set apart from the microbes inside each of us
Our own cells outnumbered by the others living within
And all together we are no match for the on/off machines
Set to perform a function, a set of functions set into performances
These functions, whose performances we aspire to repeat in our brains
Yet this on/off world does not outcompute my cellular reactions
My chemistry was set to respond to the world before I was ever
Twinkling on and off in this binary world of distractions
Where refuge from a living other teaches me to be solitarily
Connected to the biologicals performing beyond the binary screen

To be let down by performance, even by a program’s performance, can disappoint.

The student handles the disappointment of a school system, a school, a teacher, a project, a lesson, or a moment, hoping to become resilient.
Stop moment...

A performance that fails to deliver what is expected, does not fail to perform in unintended or unexpected ways, messages emerge and become in transit.

Is this also the case when a performance does deliver what the recipient expects?

To perform is to risk communicating unexpected messages.

“A stop dares us to move beyond our own perceived limitations of engagement; we cannot remain in suspension, commitment is required, a choice of action that embodies its own ethics of engagement, responsibility, integrity. A stop comes to us as a possible moment of revelation, precariously suspended between one breath and the next. A stop requires that we take action, and in doing so reveal ourselves” (Fels & Ricketts, 2012, p.2).
I think of the child disappointing a wizened sage, the adult.

‘No’—the child replies.

‘you’re not delivering - I’ve got ideas, vision— they’re being halted – This program sucks,’ continues the child.

The wizened sage looks to the child.

The adult looking newly upon the newly emerged wizened sage, the child.

“And my song needs a melody.”

“This doesn’t have to be a song you know.”

“But I like the beat. I think I need a melody.”

“What happened to that drying machine sound? Maybe that could play, acting the part of a bit of the melody?”

“This sound? Yeah, I could use bits of it and move them around, I guess.”

“You could always record more sounds, maybe on the clarinet or on the piano?”

“That’s a good idea – I’ll do that later.”
sound revelation: what was to be but is

inside of the last two weeks of the school year
i'm pushing to find more space for the students’ sound work
to work - they've been getting to their soundscapes
it is slow work, it could take them many more months if the year wasn’t running out
yet, it is all coming together, slowly gathering momentum
for our presentation, the performance of our works is only five days away
during the last week of school I discover that a student will be missing, ill
he won’t have time to complete his soundscape

— stop moment. . .

I first think,

“oh no! what a shame. that soundscape was really coming together,”

but I realize that the piece is coherent in its current form

sounds from a basketball
bouncing in the gym
selecting only these sounds
cleanly cut up
into a beat
some effects cleverly discovered
to make a melody from a ball and a room
to sound excitement
for this what was to be but is already a piece
sound reflection

“Before poise can reveal itself, a tension that is the psychological milieu of accomplishment must ease...

Tension is a context. Its primary subtext is that of trying to figure out, plan, and engineer outcomes”

It is the morning before we share soundscapes, before they are performed to the whole school in the gym.

These past couple weeks have left me exhausted and worrying about the student soundscapes — would they finish them on time while so much else was happening in their lives at school?

“to venture causes anxiety, but not to venture is to lose oneself”

(Kierkegaard, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/61725_ren_Kierkegaard)

I am not the first to feel anxiety.

To perform is to venture;

to be performed by some other thing is to accept that one doesn’t always hold the steering wheel or compass directing one’s venturing.

Venturing, performing, are acts in relation.
I am in relation to my *listening post*, to the *listening posts* of the students, to the setting of this school, to a curriculum, to the ideas of teaching and learning, and to not knowing.

This inquiry has lead me on a trail, sniffing out my own past as I've been uncovering and unveiling who I am as a researcher, as I wander into thoughts and experiences surrounded by sound with students at school — together, in relation, we’ve been *listening in* towards sound. Perhaps losing ourselves in the venture, only to find the other side of the sound barrier already inhabited.

“For we are capable of doing only what we are inclined to do. And again, we truly incline only toward something that in turn inclines toward us, toward our essential being, by appealing to our essential being as the keeper who holds us in our essential being” (Heidegger, 1968, p.3).

who shall I listen to
who can say but me
what spins me into motion
what keeps me in motion

shall I surrender the power
shall I live in your container

does this container belong to you?

them
us
me?
“and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time” (Eliot, 1943, p.59).
I spend a few minutes interviewing the students, each alone in the library — I have eight questions for them.

1) What is a soundscape?
   - sound, just make a sound
   - I made a mash-up, then I made it backwards
   - it’s a collection of sounds put into musical or other forms, in order and in a certain order I guess.
   — so you record something, you put (in) different parts of the environment...

2) What is your soundscape about?
   — well, I kind of got a rhythm into it with all of these sounds, and...
   — I guess it has a lot of birds in it. . . and also how you can make beats with parts of your house. . . I used those and mixed them with nature sounds... to see how nature and machines could kind of integrate.
   — my soundscape is really short... soundscape rule is no TALKING, right?

3) What is your soundscape called?
   - nothing
   - house-scape
   - the backwards song

4) What is your soundscape about?
   - backwards sound

5) Why do you think soundscapes are important?
— because people are listening, if you can’t hear the sound you have to put (on) the earphone and listen to sounds... if you’re not listen... you don’t understand any people

— the human ear doesn’t pick up everything but a microphone does. So, a soundscape kind of shows you how sounds in the environment that you’d normally maybe not hear are special sounds that you’ve collected, things that you don’t hear a lot (why is that important?) — because it makes you hear new sounds and it makes you wonder oh what’s that sound and it makes you want to go outside and collect sounds and maybe listen more now that you’ve heard someone who’s actually collected sounds that they like. Maybe you’ll go outside and try to find sounds and listen out more

— because it has good memories, you remember the sounds that you recorded

“In historical research, as well as in academic teaching, the silence of history is usually taken for granted.

Historians do not seem to require in their daily tasks the human capacity of hearing, because the object of their work does not offer anything that one might hear — yet we do not only abstain from straining our ears for sounds of the past, we also ignore the role which listening plays in specific historical situations. This is a self-imposed deafness with serious consequences for historical cognition and interpretation”

(Muller, 2012, p.444–5).

6) What did you learn by making a soundscape?

— that soundscapes make beautiful noises

— its pretty tough, like all the background sounds, its never one sound that you can collect on a microphone. Maybe your ears could hear one sound, and you’re like I want to record that. When you actually record it you’re going to hear the wind and leaves and birds, but if you go in the program you can sometimes isolate the sounds which is pretty special.

- understanding sound

7) What did you learn about yourself by making a soundscape?

— I learned about myself, that I’m good at making backwards songs
— at one point I kind of trashed my soundscape and started again, so I learned that starting over could make something better sometimes if you don’t feel that you’re satisfied.

8) What surprised you the most?

— you can’t really get a melody easily without using an instrument...
— I mean a birdsong could be a melody but catching a whole one is kind of difficult...

— also trying not having all those interferences with all the industrial machines and people talking

— I wanted to really be wilder
I'm ready to play our soundscapes, mine and those of the students, to our audience in the gym.

This situation forces me into the role of mediator. I do my best to explain to the school assembly what the students have been doing these past months:

- collecting sounds,
- writing,
- responding,
- discovering
- listening posts,
- listening in,
- questioning into sound,

and then bringing these experiences to a head by manipulating sounds that have been recorded inside of a digital forum to create soundscapes.

I ask the assembly,

"please do your best to listen to these sounds. This is not a time for you to make sounds, it is a time for you to carefully listen to the sounds coming your way."

The stage is set.

Teachers,
office staff,
maintenance staff,
teacher aids,
and students - from pre-school through grade nine,

have been primed.

We are all poised, about to journey through sound together.
As the soundscapes play over the sound system I try to observe how our soundscape exhibit performs in this room, to this audience. As well, I try to grasp how I’m being performed by my listening post in these moments.

What do I hear when I listen in now? An incomplete listing:

- Humility
- wonder
- surprise
- achievement
- anxiety
- groove
- generosity
- confusion
- delight
- vulnerability
- strength
- honesty
- transparency
- joy
- calculating
- comforting
- enabling
- authenticity
- mysteriousness
- voiced
- gifted
- process
- received
- coherent
- heard
“Now he realized that he had nothing to gain and nothing to lose. He sat down and played the same tune he had played so many times for his teacher in the past. When he finished, there was silence for a long moment” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.3).
Chapter Four: Coda – Does Listening Matter?

“All artists are shaped by their times and their individual circumstances. But the reverse can also be true” (Wyman, 2004, p.43).

why does sound in curriculum matter?

We live bathed in sound, at home, en route, in location, and of course in schools. We perceive our location in the world, in part, through our sense of sound. We remember sound, we hear sound in the moment, and we project not-yet-heard sounds into our futures. We imagine ourselves into our collective and individual realities, by listening, and then by constructing and inscribing meaning into what is heard, through listening in. Sound in curriculum matters because sound is already in the curriculum; schools are noisy! Schools sound literally, for those of us who can hear, and they sound in the sense of shaping concepts of our perceived realities.

How is a curriculum of sound formally attended to – a curriculum that listens? Do teachers or schools regularly provide time or space or opportunity for students or teachers to listen in? Is there a fostering of the development of listening in or of the discovering of soundcellars, either for individuals in schools or whole school communities? Is it best to leave such things unattended to? What dangers lurk when we do not listen in at school?

We can listen in to sound our presences when we relate to our sound environment and act upon it by creating soundscapes, capturing, manipulating, altering, mixing sound input with our own sound output, allowing us to construct opportunities for the work of our meaning making to reflect our presence back upon us and out beyond us into the broader community.

32 “Knowing that we live not in a single linear one-dimensional world but multiple temporal dynamic world(s) of actions and interactions, possibilities, and multi-dimensional relationships” (Fels, 1999, p.29).
The act of creating of soundscape allows us to attend carefully to sound through creative and active interactions with sound, revealing how we collectively, and individually, has been listening in as the soundscape reflects back into the environment and back towards those who have created it, ultimately uncovering our collective and individual sound cellar.

One can be heard\(^{33}\) in the world, heard within communities, and within oneself. One can be hearing the world, within communities, and within oneself. One can lean forward into hearing the not-yet-sounded sound in the world, within communities, and within oneself\(^{34}\).

It is true that anyone can listen in, intentionally setting aside time and effort to do so, to attend through sound. But to listen in is no easy task, even if we already sound our presence without prompting. How do we sound our presence newly after we listen in? Are we more in tune with ourselves and our environments?

The students in this study, after having listened to nature in hi-fi settings, after discovering the omnipresent sounds of machines and technology, after listening to the sounds of interstellar space, after listening to the sound of crickets, after listening to soundscape artists, after listening to someone discover sound as an adult, after listening to the sources that they'd recorded, and after hearing their final soundscapes, have a new relationship to and perspective on sound. The students have become “wide awake” (Greene 1995) within their worlds of sound as they have recalibrated the balance between their sound input and sound output (Westerkamp 1988). The students have sounded their presence through the creation of their soundscapes. They have sounded their presence in their world(s) and

\(^{33}\) I mean being heard by oneself when one is listening in, and by hearing out towards others through listening in. Can we become open to listening in so that we can hear each other listening in towards sound, so that we can voice?

\(^{34}\) In bell hooks (1994) in her book Teaching to Transgress, writes “in the section of Strangers in Paradise entitled “Balancing Class Locations,” Jane Ellen Wilson shares the way an emphasis on personal voice strengthened her: “only by coming to terms with my own past, my own background, and seeing that in the context of the world at large, have I begun to find my true voice and to understand that, since it is my own voice, that no pre-cut niche exists for it; that part of the work to be done is making a place, with others, where my and our voices can stand clear of the background noise and voice our concerns as part of a larger song” (177).
within themselves through discovering their *listening posts*, through *listening in*, and through coming into contact with their *soundcellars*. In what ways have they, having become ‘wide-awake’ to sound, discovered and trusted in *isolation sound*? Have they made contact with and heard their ever-shifting and newly attuned inner reality of self?

The students have *sounded their presence*, their identities have been voiced. They have been truly heard. In their presence we have been attuned.

Are students often truly heard in schools?

What distraction, social setting, school curriculum, parental expectation, or daily struggle keeps students and educators from *listening in*, and which activities promote *listening in*? Can we truly hear the polyphonic potential among us? Are we all individually and communally heard or do dominant voices act to make us muted receptors rather than active creators? How might our dialogues shift if we were to pause to welcome, to offer and receive, to *listen in* that we might hear ourselves and each other?

“Will we receive with care this new arrival’s willingness to engage in an emergent world, one that we have not yet imagined?

Will we be willing to imagine new narratives of possible encounter and engagement?

Or shall the old narratives, the ongoing narratives, and those narratives yet to be written—those that break our sons (and daughters) of their innocence—prevail?”

*(Fels, 2004, n.p.)*

While there are techniques that can be learned that may assist those who work with sound, there is not a way to engage in capturing sound or in acting upon these captured sounds; to create meaning from sound one must engage in a cascading flow of decision making, not decisions of right or wrong, rather decisions that emerge from not knowing, or decisions that emerge when one forges a path where there was none before. Identities emerge out of silence.
Where does this path we lay down\textsuperscript{35} in sounding our presence lead us?

How do we continue invite contact with sound, with hi-fi sound, to help us discover our connection to our environment, to support holistically centered ecological renewal in our collective lives?

"The cure involves reaching down into ourselves and pulling out a new kind of person" (Kingsolver, 2007, p.345).

By creating soundscapes at school, through creating a sound curriculum, voices from within have invited new kinds of persons to surface. Voices have emerged to meet us in our newly repositioned listening posts. Our soundcellars have become highlighted and enriched. We have reclaimed isolation sound.

\textsuperscript{35} "Wanderer, path there is none, only tracks on ocean foam" – excerpt from a poem by Antonio Machado, from Proverbios y Cantares (1930) as translated by F. Varela, 1987: 63, as cited by Fels (1999, p.20).
listening in towards sound

As a sound artist, educator, academic, and citizen of the world, where am I locating myself? In what environments do I pursue hearing, listening in? What silences or not-yet-heard or not-yet-discovered sounds will call me into presence? What is left unresolved, unsettled in my soundcellar, that which draws me out of myself searching out beyond...

Listening in, attending to and searching to uncover the soundcellars of broader communities beyond the walls of educational institutions holds tremendous opportunity for new learning and connections. Can soundscapes be brought out of the classroom into our everyday lives to create opportunities for us to listen in within the media or social media? Can the creation and sharing of soundscapes become a platform for people to report on their lived, embodied, and contextually situated experience of listening in? What happens if we can listen in together all around the world?

I imagine citizens around the world reporting and reflecting upon their situations through sound, specifically through creating soundscapes\(^{36}\). I imagine turning on my computer, surfing the internet, at times turning off the often dehumanizing news providers in favour of listening to citizen created soundscapes that serve to report real human responses reflections discoveries voiced from within lived experiences in relation to place and sound. I imagine listening to soundscapes, reaching to meet the listening post of a stranger across the globe. I imagine experiencing and hearing another's soundcellar. I imagine a new bridge emerging that recognizes the harmonics that bring us closer together. I imagine soundscapes calling out towards each of us, inviting our responses to sound in return. I imagine us sharing our meaning making in

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\(^{36}\) I imagine machines sounding from a factory, the sounds of feet shuffling, the wind blowing, and a dog barking. I imagine a chicken calling, the ocean waves rolling, leaves rustling, and conch shells buzzing. I imagine gun-shots, whips slapping, tears dropping, and children marching. I imagine sand shifting, mud cracking, insects crawling, and birds eating. I imagine stories, scenes and experiences.
what is uniquely individual and humanly recognizable, soundscapes.

When I think back about the soundscape that I created at school as part of this inquiry, when I listen to it months later, I am drawn back into intimate moments and memories. I hear chicks frantically fluttering around in a box, caged in and terrified. I also hear the scuffling sneakers from students who have escaped the classroom’s stillness, and the ring of a basketball clanging off of the backboard. I hear water running into a metal tray and I remember the expression of joy and the playful smirk spontaneously jumping off of a student’s face as she stuck her face under the tap to slurp up water as loudly as she could. I hear trucks and cars streaming by, interrupting my efforts to hear nature in what I had imagined to be a park filled with wilderness in the forest behind our school. I hear loneliness in solitary footsteps booming in my ears. The plucked string of a student’s guitar practice enters in, reminding me that soundscapes and music intersect deeply within me.

Why have musical elements entered my own soundscapes when verbal-language has remained muted?

“...music breaches our experience with something new, something that introduces new responses to the world that cannot be reduced to categories we already hold.

As the listener is always within a social world, musical experience also involves relationships beyond just oneself and the music. We listen to music in a world shared with others, and the responsibilities we have to others place limitations on the ways that we experience music. Musical experience changes us and influences our relationships with others” (Warren, 2014, p.2).

Musical influences appear in my soundscapes. Is this inevitable considering that I have a strong background as a musician?

Sounds that I have collected sort themselves into position, ready for the conductor in my imagination to cue them into locations in the improvised score that exists in my mind. Yes, very much like a musical composition I create organized and orchestrated moments of sound. There are
layers and textures of sounds, rhythms that interact to create movement and form. There are melodies and counter melodies, like the way sneakers sounding in a gym act as a sonic backdrop or countermelody acting to highlight or foreground the melody of water hitting a tray held under a tap. And musical influences don’t only appear in the minute sound moments described above, the soundscape as a whole reminds me of a symphonic work. Themes emerge and disappear before they emerge again in a new context with slight alterations, like theme and variations acting to add complexity of emotional content to the theme. And much the same way I hear music, there are emotional responses bubbling up from within me as I listen to my soundscape that are difficult to pin down, difficult to locate or describe. As I listen again my gut responses, my embodied experience of listening, is never the same twice. I catch moments, like looking up at the sky and seeing a picture in the clouds, I know that any given moment will pass, that the picture will shift. When I listen to my soundscape, I hear myself shift into new locations. I hear that I am a shifting location. My ears are wandering intently; I listen in.

What is lost if we invite language into our soundscapes? What is lost when language is left mute in our soundscapes?

I yearn for meaningful contact through sound that supports individuals and communities to voice and to be heard, to revolutionize communication out beyond what can be contained by language. And yes, I imagine communication without the use of verbal language, meaningful communication incorporated into soundscapes. I want to reach out and to hear beyond the boundaries of listening to the verbal languages that define our limits and so often drown out the sounds of our embodied presence.

And yet, I wonder, might it be possible to invite language into future soundscapes? Or would spoken words simply overpower our ability to hear beyond concepts that have been contained and codified within language’s framework? Will words distract us from listening into the sound alchemy that is a soundscape?

Would our listening in sound-based experiences play second fiddle to our linguistic fluency? Could words sound in soundscapes as sound elements? Could we learn to listen to the tones, rhythms, cadences, and melodies of speech? Might
it be possible to learn to listen to language anew through soundscapes?

With our new awareness of our *listening posts*, can we learn to listen to the soundscapes of our daily lives? What might we hear, what dreams, hopes, desires, yearnings, ambiguities, not-yet knowns will be voiced, when we *listen in towards sound*? Can we renew a balance between our sound output and our sound input? Will this sonic shift, from consuming sounds to the inclusion of producing sounds, sound us into a renewed harmony with the earth?

When our *listening post* is interrupted, when we hear the sounds of machines within our environments, when nature's presence is obscured by human-made mechanized sounds, will our habits of attending to what matters within the ecology of our lives be disrupted? Without stopping to *listen in*, can we come to know that our soundcellars have been distorted by the sounds and communications from human-made endeavors of industry that are constantly bombarding us? These sounds perform us.

Let's listen…

- can you hear the soundcellar within you, within all of us crying out?

We are connected to our worlds, our environments, and to everything sounding in them. We emerge from silence, from listening to sounding and then back again. We reciprocate—sounding in response to being. We are embodied sound input and sound output.

Soundscapes reveal and create our identity; soundscapes perform us. Our identities emerge and reverberate from within soundscapes, internally as we *listen in* and externally from our *listening posts*: From habitual moments and novel moments of attending to sound, my students and I
are discovering through listening, our accoustmatic paths unfolding as we journey together, sound by sound, leading us home to our individual soundcellar.

From this location, from our soundcellar, we are revealed. Our lives’ experiences reverberate and resonate deep within our soundcellars. For those who listen into their journeys, and for those who sound along their emerging path, there awaits us soundscapes as yet to be sung to announce our presence.
References


