

Fall 2023: Music, Sound, and the Environment

Reflection Questions

Overview:

- These were a graded assignment completed in class in the last week of the semester.
- Explanation offered:
- Why are we reflecting?
 - Typical worksheet, drill-and-memorize, and test preparation approach to classroom teaching actually makes it difficult to retain the myriad bits of information you encounter during the school year. More effective is an instructional method that requires you to use important information repeatedly in complex and meaningful ways such as writing papers or completing projects.
 - articulate and verbalize what you are learning—helps better digest and apply what you are learning in the course.
 - self-reflection enhances learning and deepens connections and understanding with and between you & your colleagues.
 - helps ME get descriptive feedback that I can use to improve my practice and the course itself.
- The questions were as follows (I asked for a hearty sentence for each):
 1. Reflect on how you thought about **music/sound/environment** before you took this course and how you think about it now that the course is (almost!) over. What's **ONE** thing that changed for you?
 2. Name one thing that surprised you about our course topics.
 3. Which of the subjects we covered was most thought-provoking for you and why
 4. If you could pick one musical example to add to this curriculum, what would you pick and why?
 5. What is one thing that you learned in this class (or at least thought about in relation to this class) that connects with other **musicking** that you do? (this might include performing, teaching, scholarship in other disciplines, etc)

Anonymized student responses:

Responses to Question #1:

1. I mainly thought about bird song and how we find music in nature which is still very much true after taking this course, but I really enjoyed learning about musical

responses to disasters, climate change, and especially noise and how that effects human and animal response.

2. One thing that I had not realized before this course was how many aspects of music in the environment there are. Previously I had thought that it was strictly nature and some current day issues in music, but never did I think about topics like glacier music or animal music.
3. Taking this course made me reflect on the sounds that I hear in everyday life. It's also made me more aware of the sounds that are around me.
4. I thought music and the environment would be mostly looking at data sonification of different natural sounds/things. I didn't expect there to be so much conversation about social and political topics, which I really enjoyed and I found very thought provoking. I now see that "music and the environment" is much more than just the "natural" environment.
5. Before I took this course I thought that Music was unrelated to the Environment and that there was no correlation between them besides what the old composers of the western canon heard and transposed from birds and such. Now I know there is more than just a connection, the two need each other to survive in the aspect of the truth. Something I did with this is the creative project for this class was a composition called "One with Wings". I wrote this to show how we as people build connections to nature through the sounds it gives us.
6. One thing that changed for me is my deeper appreciation of the sounds and nature that are always happening around me. After doing our soundwalks and our project on soundwalks, I came to really enjoy doing these and now like to do them in my free time.
7. I wasn't exactly sure what this class was going to be about. I assumed it would have to do with how nature sounds are used in music or how music mimics nature sounds, but past that I had no idea. The course ended up being so much more than that. It included what I originally thought, but it also included soundwalks, musical responses to disasters, climate change, indigenous peoples, sonic meditations, sound vs noise, and so much more!
8. I think this is very cool and I think a lot of scores and repertoire that are related or written for the environment.
9. To be honest, I thought we would only be talking about nature itself, however, we expanded on so much more than I expected. Our first sound walk changed it for me really, being able to shut my brain off and just experience the world around me was really comforting.
10. All I can say is--WOW! I never really thought hard about the sounds of nature around us, but it really made me think about what we are losing, how people expressed themselves using nature and disasters as inspiration, and honestly very outlandish ways of making music (THE ROCKS)

11. I was always passionate about the environment, especially more recently, but I never knew specifics on how I could help, how music is involved, and how popular it is to use music as a vehicle for change and storytelling. One thing that changed for me and impacted me is how many different kinds of music about the environment there are, whether its about climate change, natural disaster, noise, plant music, etc.
12. One thing that changed for me was my view of how things in nature and in my environment can become music.
13. I think about music from wider perspectives now! This course introduced me to a variety of new music, genres, composers, and pieces, that has really expanded my viewpoints on music. There is so much to music that I never have really thought about before, mostly industry-wise, that I find fascinating.

Responses to Question #2:

1. I never thought about how noise and industrialization affects our daily life and the privilege of quiet.
2. I was surprised at how much research and information there was on some of these topics. That of noise vs. sound, plant music, and all of these other categories contain so much information by scholars and musicians that I never would have thought.
3. It was interesting to see how groups are reviving indigenous traditions and cultures today and making them more relevant with political issues.
4. The subject of music as a response to disaster surprised me. Less of the actual topic of it, but more about the political and social debates surrounding it.
5. I thought the topic of natural disasters being connected to music was interesting and it surprised me to know that composers often make works around tragedies that happen.
6. One thing that surprised me about our topics was the amount of disrespect that happens towards indigenous people and their appreciation for music linking to their environment.
7. This may be more specific than what you were looking for, but I was so shocked about all of the information involving whales and whale songs! That was so crazy! They are sentient beings and we still didn't care about them until we heard their songs.
8. I was amazed by the music that are written for the environment. They are so beautiful.
9. One thing that stuck out was when we had a professor come in (I forgot his name, please forgive me) and attach these pads to a plant that then made music all on its own, simply incredible.
10. I was very surprised that people used plants to make music– like actually wiring them and hooking them up to synthesizers to self-compose.

11. One thing that surprised me was how deep we could dive into certain topics such as noise, animal music, and soundwalking. These are things you never really think about until you have to, and they were extremely interesting.
12. The plant sonification for sure. I found that really fun and intriguing.
13. When I came in I thought this course was going to be mostly about naturey environmentalist stuff and how we see music in the physical environment. Researching and exploring topics about music industry and "noise vs. sound" and stuff really was not what I was expecting, but it was a great surprise!

Responses to Question #3:

1. Definitely noise and the social.racial implications of it, as well as the music industry and how we make more music sustainable as well as the concerts/instruments we make.
2. Personally, I really thought the topic of whale song and music was very interesting. It is really cool to hear at first, but then brings up a bigger point of, do we only care because it can make "music". I think of so many other things that we ignore because we do not acknowledge them as living beings.
3. Music because of natural disaster because it has made me reflect on what music has been made because of disaster that did not happen naturally.
4. Noise complaints in manhattan - music vs noise.
5. The most thought provoking topic for me was the reading we did about the Whales songs in the ocean. We couldn't get the recordings initially because at the time the information was classified, yet the people who cared most about this fought to make it public knowledge and did a study to prove that whales are in fact more intelligent than we thought, and deserve to be preserved.
6. I really enjoyed talking about music with interspecies, because I had some knowledge of songs and artists reacting to animal cruelty, but I didn't realize that there were compositions written about saving whales, and how they tried to imitate the sound of whales underwater.
7. I thought the musical responses to disaster was so intriguing (hence why I did my final project on it). The ethics behind making that type of music, the money raised, the people involved, the way it impacted people listening to it, and of course the long history of it is fascinating.
8. I think the deep listening concept is very interesting to me. As I realize a lot of interesting sounds that I don't usually recognize in daily life.
9. Definitely the discussion of noise and sound. Everyone had their own personal opinion on the subject which made for really great and thought provoking discussion!

10. Mainly why those who have money enjoy the silence. With all of that money to move to the city, don't you think that they would enjoy the soundscape for how it is? Why change what's there?
11. I think that the two most thought-provoking topics for me were our unit about noise and our unit about soundwalking. Noise versus sound was an idea I had never really thought about before, and I had a lot of fun noticing what differences there were when comparing the two ideas. Soundwalking was very intriguing and meaningful for me, especially being able to take quiet time and focus on the small sounds around me.
12. The topic of Noise vs music was an eye opener, things that I consider to just be noise in my environment that could be considered more than just noise. If we didn't discuss it, I'm sure I would have just kept considering stuff like that just noise.
13. I really thought about the genrefication and music in urban areas topic of this course. I really never have thought about that before and it was so so fascinating.

Responses to Question #4:

1. I would pick maybe more pop music because it is so relevant and accessible to the mass majority of music listeners, whereas orchestral and western classical forms of music are still prevalent but very much not mainstream.
2. I would choose to add more current day songs and artists, on if their music actually makes the radio or not. This can be interesting to look into because the radio typically will censor certain topics that they do not agree with.
3. Bee Gees – 'New York Mining Disaster 1941'. While there wasn't a mining disaster in New York in 1941 (there was one in 1939, however) the Gibb brothers wrote this song in 1967, based on a mining disaster in Wales in 1966, called the Aberfan mining disaster. The song tells the story of two fictional men trapped underground while waiting for a rescue. One man shows the other a picture of his wife, Mrs. Jones.
4. I would pick data sonification. I think especially now, and especially with the topic of climate change becoming something necessary to teach, it is important to show the music and research going along with that.
5. I would pick John Cage's "Child of Tree" to study in this course. The reasoning behind this choice is because it uses aspects of nature to create music that if we continue with deforestation and other resource driven means of excavation we will no longer hear.
6. I would pick the Earth song by Lil Dicky because not only is the song kind of funny, but he brought a bunch of artists together to talk about global warming and gave them features in his song about how we should appreciate the world more.

7. There was one week we were talking about music relating to volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. In our assignment that week we had to find a piece that directly correlated to it. We shared a couple in class, but I wish we had listened to more because I thought they were very exciting.
8. I will pick Dusk by Anna Lockwood, as i think this is a very new way of compositions.
9. I don't really have anything that I would add to the curriculum.
10. Using fungi for data sonification! We used plants, but mushrooms are awesome.
11. I think that it could be fun for the noise section to talk about some different depictions of noise in different musical styles like "The Girl in 14G" and "Harlem Airshaft"
12. One music example that I would add would be maybe some data sonifications from the arctic
13. I think this course could explore more music and fixed media! Check out the piece "go to the garden" by Eris DeJarnett!! Really really cool!

Response to Question #5:

1. That the ways we consume music is important, as well as using music to convey important topics like disaster and climate change. I would love to foster this in a music classroom with student competitions in topics they find important to them, and I love the research aspect of it as well.
2. Personally, the thought about the use of wood for instruments was very eye opening, especially being a string player. This directly correlates to me and other string musicians, and I am interested to learn more and how I can help this situation.
3. This class made me reflect on the meaning of the repertoire that I have chosen over the years. It has also inspired me to play more contemporary works based on real-world issues.
4. I think it would really connect to teaching. Environment is not just natural, it is also people's homes and culture. Taking into consideration my students "environment" will also be very important in teaching.
5. I thought about how to use these topics in my music and after writing "One with Wings" I can say it will become a focus of study for me to further develop how I write my music in relation to preserving the things in nature I care for.
6. I learned how I can make connections between music and real-world issues, in a way that I actually want to teach about this to my future students. I would like to think that offering an elective like this for students to take would be really great because then students can be more informed about the environment, as well as find songs that they may even know and can bring into class for discussion.
7. We did the rock meditation (I'm not sure if that's the right name for it) and we talked about more sonic meditations. I pulled some of them and tried them within my

acapella group and everyone enjoyed it and I got to see how it worked in a real crowd I was a part of. I plan to incorporate more in the future!

8. I learned a lot about different composers and different compositions writing for environment or related to environment.
9. I think our discussions on the state of the world resonated well with me; learning more about the environment and what we can do as musicians and future educators to help better the situation. We can perform powerful music with meaning beyond a simple tune.
10. That sound and music are objective. What one may consider noise can be music to another.
11. One thing I took away from this class that has to do with my own musicking and teaching is how to create music about the environment, or any topic that is of interest. How to use music for change and how to make a difference with it. I think that almost every discussion we had in the course will help me create lessons for my future general music students.
12. One thing that I learned is that sound and music doesn't have to just be in the classroom, all of these sounds are all around us. I may even take my future students on a sound walk through the school to see what different sounds they hear.
13. This class widened my western view of music. I am really more appreciative on different types of music because of this course!