

# Toward A Reciprocal Listening

A score for World Listening Day 2020

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This score was made for the New Adventures in Sound Art <https://naisa.ca/> call for participants to make field recordings within their local environments. The shared recordings will be available for listening on a curated sound map on Radio Aporee <https://aporee.org/maps/work/projects.php?project=naisa> on World Listening Day, July 18, 2020 and indefinitely. Anyone, of any experience and from any location, is invited to participate.

World Listening Day is coordinated annually by the World Listening Project <https://www.worldlisteningproject.org/>. The theme for 2020, *The Collective Field*, was suggested by Katherine Krause of Wild Sanctuary:

*There is something new afoot. The field itself is changing.  
The creature world knows. The creative one does too.  
So what does it mean now to listen? How do we express what we know?  
Be alert.  
Individually and in concert,  
There is sanctity in it.  
Amid new conditions, travel the field and explore  
By call and response  
The rhythm within.  
How does your song fit  
Within the collective chorus?*

- Katherine Krause

The score *Toward a Reciprocal Listening* invites a reflection on presence, intention and modes of listening that may have been forgotten or haven't been imagined in field recording practice. It suggests a consideration for reciprocity within environments where recording takes place; making an art of, and to, rather than about.

The score is a meditation that supports connection with direct sensory awareness, bypassing the analytical mind. In brief, it invites participants to:

- Begin a reciprocal relationship with a local place; with its flora and fauna, its dirt and rock, its water and wind, and with its ancestries.
- Tell a story of the process of seeking this relationship, through audio recording, with text and/or image.
- Create a sharable audio piece that best represents the story.
- Create a short text and/or image guide, or score for listeners to witnessing the story.
- Share impressions of the experience with the place recorded.

Reciprocity in this instance refers to a way of attending, listening, and recording that foregrounds one's imagination and sensory and extrasensory perception as a pathway to a more direct relationship with the subjective agency of the lifeforms of a place. This reciprocity is also mindful and respectful of the ancestral lineages of a place, and recognizes the aura brought by one's own ancestries. It embodies an intention of benefit to the place, its lifeforms and people, past, present and future.

The question of how the documenting of this relationship can benefit the place is part of the process, or dilemma, of realizing the score, and is part of a larger question about benefits, privileges and inequities in any art practice.

If the location for realizing the score is not part of one's ancestral lands, the realization process should include considerations for respecting the traditional Indigenous territories of the location.

The score is an invitation to a vulnerable space, where learned patterns of ambition, privilege, acquisition, confidence and analysis can be dissolved toward intimacy, curiosity and discovery; where asking the question, "who benefits?" can shift relationships that might have held elements of trespass, extraction, and exploitation, to ones that are instead rooted in immersion, respect, reciprocity, and care.

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A score for field recording

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**Definitions:** The term “imagination” refers to a kind of sensory imagining that includes all the senses, plus muscle awareness, breath, emotions – a whole body kind of imagining rather than one that is a separate mental one. The term “listen” refers to a listening beyond hearing – a whole and expansive listening that includes perceptions and sensations that are not technically “audible”.

The score is offered as a set of suggestions to support openness and sensing within an environment. Not all suggestions in the **Approach** and **Immersion** sections need to be followed as written, and each suggestion should be paced so that there is ample time to explore. The essence of the score is meant to be integrated and interpreted internally. For this reason, it is suggested that it be read and absorbed in a personal way, rather than memorized.

After the first or second reading of the score, the place for its realization should be invited into one’s imagination. It should be a place in one’s local environment that is relatively familiar, safe, and where it is possible to sense the presence of its biospheric / geological identity. It is possible to realize the score, however, in the middle of a city with the presence of the wind, the sun, dirt, birds and a few blades of grass.

The **Approach** and **Immersion** sections of the score should together take a minimum of 20 minutes, with the understanding that longer sessions yield deeper experiences.

## Approach

After arriving near the chosen place, pause and take a moment for your body to settle.

In stillness, observe your breath cycle.

Allow a pause in the spaces between inhales and exhales to come to a deeper breath rhythm.

Let your attention slowly scan your inner body landscape, from head to fingers to torso to toes.

Allow any needed shifts, sighs, relaxations.

Observe and recognize any sensations and emotions that arise, considering them textures of this inner landscape.

Is it possible to

Listen from your inside your breath rhythm

Listen through your skin

Listen through your eyes

Listen through your hands

Listen through your feet

Listen from below your feet

Listen simultaneously from above your head?

Continuing to be aware of your breath rhythm and your opened sensations,

Let your attention slowly move outward to the elements of the place where you are.

Let your senses, perceptions, and imagination explore the environment’s textures, smells, sounds, colours.

## Immersion

Imagine asking permission to be present in this place.

Listen for a sense of invitation, welcome, recognition.

Begin to move slowly further into the place.

Let your movements and gestures be slow and deliberate.

Let listening and sensing come in the space between footsteps and the space between the foot’s rise from the surface and fall back into ground.

Consider the movements, sounds, smells, textures beneath the surfaces of the ground and the water.

Listen for the breath, voices, movements of the possible lifeforms that dwell here.

Imagine the intricacies of the living systems inside other systems, ones that cannot be seen or heard.

Listen for the ancestors of these living systems, large and small, the lifeforms that came before.

Now and then return to focus on your breath rhythm. Let your movements follow your listening,

Listen for the residues of the people who may have dwelt in this location long ago.

Listen for how they might have listened, and might be listening now.

Consider and sense your own ancestry.

If your ancestry is from a different place, imagine the ways your ancestors listened to their ancestral environments.

Consider ways of attending and ways of listening that your ancestry brings to this place where you are now.

Consider listening from the perspective of a life-form in the environment.

Consider listening from yet another life-form's perspective.

Return to stillness and a focus on your breath rhythm.

Allow any needed shifts, sighs, relaxations.

Observe and recognize any sensations and emotions.

If needed, take time to write or draw impressions.

## **Audio Recording**

Considering reciprocity, ask what needs to be heard, and from what perspective.

It might be the entire soundscape.

It might be a close intimate spot.

Listen for an opening or a request.

Let your imagination discover a place where you will record.

Notice the interface of your recording equipment with the environment.

Notice any impressions of trespass or welcome.

Place your recording equipment slowly and deliberately

When ready to record, allow yourself to continue awareness of your breath.

Notice your body, and its touch on the ground, against the air, and with your equipment.

Record for any duration, staying to listen / monitor, or leaving your recorder to document on its own.

When the recording is finished, take a moment to acknowledge the place and its involvement in the session.

Is there something to offer in return now?

Gather the recorder, retrace your steps.

## **Reflection**

Before listening to your recording, pause to focus on your breath rhythm.

Allow yourself to consider a reciprocity in listening, shifting ambition to curiosity.

Allow your listening to wander through your recorded sounds, finding places that call out for more listening.

Ask what needs to be shared, and what needs to be kept private to guide a mindful editing.

(The recording for sharing to the Aporee site should be between 2 minutes and 10 minutes in duration.)

## **Return**

Return to the recording location, before or after creating a guide / score for listening.

Perform any gesture of reciprocity or gratitude.

## **Sharing: A Guide/Score**

Considering your ideas of reciprocity with, and benefit for, your chosen place, create a guide or score for listeners, using text and/or image. The intention of the guide or score is to assist listeners in witnessing your relational process with respect. The guide / score should accompany your upload to the Aporee site.