

Listening questions

by Pauline Oliveiros

(Deep listening: a composer's sound practice)

1. What is your earliest memory of sound? How do you feel about it now?
2. When do you notice your breath?
3. What is attention?
4. Can you imagine composing or improvising a piece based on breath rhythms?
5. What sound reminds you of home?
6. Do you listen for sound in your dreams? What do you hear? How does it affect you?
7. The distinguished historian, William H. McNeil, has recently argued in his book *Keeping Together in Time* that “coordinated rhythmical activity is fundamental to life in society.” Can you imagine tracking a rhythm pattern in your daily life and writing about it?
8. Can you imagine a rhythm pattern for the rhythm circle with your own form of notation?
9. Can you imagine composing or improvising a piece for voices using attention patterns?
10. What is sound?
11. What is listening?
12. What action(s) is usually synchronized with sound?
13. When do you feel sound in your body?
14. What sound fascinates you?
15. What is a soundscape?
16. What are you hearing right now? How is it changing?
17. How many sounds can you hear all at once?
18. How far away can you hear sounds?
19. Are you sure that you are hearing everything that there is to hear?
20. What more could you hear if you had bigger ears? (or smaller)
21. Can you hear more sounds if you are quiet? How many more?
22. How long can you listen?
23. When are you not listening?
24. Can you not listen when something is sounding?
25. Try not listening to anything. What happens?
26. How can you not listen if your ears never close?
27. What meaning does any sound have for you?
28. What is your favorite sound? How is it made? When can you hear it? Are you hearing it now?
29. What is the soundscape of the space you are now occupying?
30. How is the soundscape shaped? Or what makes a soundscape?
31. What is the soundscape of your neighbourhood?
32. What is the soundscape of your city?
33. How many different soundscapes can you imagine?
34. What would you like to have in your own soundscape?
35. What would you record to represent your soundscape?
36. What sound makes you speculative?
37. What sound gives you chills?
38. What sound ruffles your scalp?
39. What sound changes your breathing?
40. What sound would you like whispered in your ear?