"We Live in the Lake": Ecomusicology as Community Pedagogy

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Writing in a recent issue of *Ethnomusicology Review*, Rebecca Dirksen posed an important and challenging question: "As a group of specialists, do we adequately get out into the community and connect with people about our work other than with those around whom we have done our research?"[1] Ecosong is one such attempt to "connect with people" in the local community in order to learn with them, make music and media together, and accomplish a shared goal. Ecosong is a community-based project powered by the collective work of two scientists, four professors, an extension director, four environmental organizations, two accountants, fourteen musicians, a videographer, an audio engineer, video game animators, four college students, festival organizers, and audiences. It has garnered 4 awards and 13 official film festival selections as well as over 3200 viewer-listeners on YouTube (thus far).[2] I provide that long list of participants because it indicates how many people were required to mount the community-based production projects that I will be discussing here. More to the pedagogical point, it has required all those involved to become teachers as well as learners, working in the Freirean tradition of community-based education and activism.[3] This article is designed to provide a set of ideas that might be of use to scholars who are either considering or already involved in community music projects.

From the start, we viewed Ecosong as community pedagogy. Like the Brazilian educator and educational philosopher Paolo Freire, we sought to move beyond the "banking model of education" in these partnerships.[4] We aspired to take part in the co-creation of community. Collective goals and problem solving are placed at the center in a constitutive learning process rather

1. Rebecca Dirksen, "Reconsidering theory and practice in ethnomusicology: Applying, advocating, and engaging beyond academia," *Ethnomusicology Review* 17 (2012): 1-35, http://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/journal/volume/17/piece/602.

2. For more information on this project, see Ecosong.net.

3. Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2000), 74-86.

4. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 74-86.

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than a linear transfer of information from one professional expert to a group of novice "students."

Ecosong has its origins in live performances by the Hypoxic Punks band, starting in 2007, and a full-length documentary released in 2010, *A Neighborhood of Raingardens*, now archived on Vimeo.[5] The first projects released under the Ecosong label, however, were two music videos that we created with partner organizations in Minnesota in 2016: "You Can Build a Garden" and "We Live in the Lake."[6] The first music video, "You Can Build a Garden," is about raingarden installation. The other, "We Live in the Lake," is designed to recruit community members for the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance (LPLA). The LPLA is organizing a massive restoration and reclamation project of their namesake lake. I hope that readers will watch both videos (accessible on Ecosong.net) so that they can familiarize themselves with the subject matter and so that they might draw their own interpretations and better assess the argument laid out here and at the same time see our ongoing work.

The goal of this article is to present what we learned about community pedagogy through both projects. Specifically, Freirean notions of praxis, dialogue, and codification will be used as an explanatory framework, each representing a central lesson learned through working with community partners and Ecosong team members.[7]

During the creation of these videos, we taught each other new skills, advanced our existing abilities, and created new knowledge together about the articulation of community learning, community building, and environmental stewardship as a collective concern. We sought to create one of the "new communities" envisioned by Margaret Ledwith in her essay, "Community work as critical pedagogy: re-envisioning Freire and Gramsci."[8] In that work, Ledwith suggests that we move away from "bemoaning the loss of community," and instead go about the difficult and pleasurable work of creating "new communities." She proposes that we emphasize the "core values" of "conviviality and culture; education; strong democracy; health and well-being; economic equity; and information and communication."[9] I would add conflict, creativity, and

5. Mark Pedelty, *A Neighborhood of Raingardens* (documentary film, 2010: https://vimeo.com/27821233).

6. The videos have garnered ten film festival selections and four awards.

7. Freire argued for educational methods that take social hierarchies and social justice into account. He emphasized methods that help oppressed groups to identify, understand, and resist oppression and argued that education should transform the dominant classes as well. Arguing against capitalist methods focused mainly on individuated credentialing, Freire articulated a pedagogical philosophy designed to promote collective transformation, resist unjust social structures, and create positive alternatives.

8. Margaret Ledwith, "Community work as critical pedagogy: re-envisioning Freire and Gramsci," *Community Development Journal* 36, no. 3 (2001): 175.

9. Ledwith, "Community work as critical pedagogy," 175.

conundrums to that list of community characteristics, because they are inevitable and integral to healthy communities as well.

In telling this story, I am somewhat self-conscious. Having completed more traditional ethnographic and case study projects, and preferring that form of exposition, I am never certain how to write about projects in which I am intimately involved at the performance level. However, this is the dilemma every action researcher faces. If we are to engage deeply in Freirean praxis and community work, we are never simply writing about others but instead about our intersubjective entanglements with a complex world of others. It is therefore more misleading to ignore our participation than to engage with it reflexively.

Granted, sometimes such writing can become too confessional, reflexive to the point of self-deconstruction. At the other extreme, writing about community pedagogy and engagement can become overly promotional. We write about our most successful projects and exercises because we find them worth sharing. That is my main motivation for discussing these music video projects with fellow music scholars and teachers in this forum. I want to put Ecosong in conversation with fellow instructors' community projects, knowing that there are many scholars who can answer Dirksen's challenge in the affirmative. An increasing number of young scholars, in particular, are engaging in community-based projects and pedagogies.

However, community learning is certainly not new to music scholars. In fact, in the very first article published in this *Journal*, James Davis discussed the importance of community to music education, providing an ethnographic snapshot into the cultural world of music majors.[10] Community pedagogy is also central to the community music movement, applied ethnomusicology, and ecomusicology.[11]

In addition to the theorists and practitioners mentioned above, those involved in the conversation increasingly titled "ecomusicology" have very directly informed this project.[12] Denise Von Glahn's work regarding "skillful listening" is at the center of Ecosong.[13] As will be explained, our most important advances in Ecosong have taken place due to a shift of emphasis from performing to listening. Jeff Todd Titon's conception of a "sound commons" informs

10. James A. Davis, "Classroom Discussion and the Community of Music Majors" this *Journal* vol. 1, no. 1 (2010): 5-17.

11. See especially Lee Higgins, *Community music: In theory and in practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Klisala Harrison, "Epistemologies of applied ethnomusicology," *Ethnomusicology* 56, no. 3 (2012): 505-529; and Tiffany Challe, *Ecomusicology: back to the roots of sound/music and environmental sustainability* (New York: CUNY Academic Works, 2015), available online at http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/883.

12. Aaron Allen and Kevin Dawe, *Current Directions in Ecomusicology: Music, Nature, Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

13. Denise Von Glahn, *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).

Ecosong as well.[14] Titon asks us to think about soundscape as a shared space. This requires not only hearing and listening, but also considering the ethical dimensions of soundscape. The influence of Titon and Von Glahn's perspectives are implicitly threaded throughout this essay and explicitly provide the end framing.

While the virtues of community teaching and learning provide subtext, the point is not that these projects are by any means exceptional: it is quite the opposite. There are environmentally-oriented community music projects scattered throughout the globe. Therefore, there are thousands of such stories to tell. This one begins in 1992 with a six year-old girl and a talking fish.

Community through Dialogue: "We Live in the Lake"

Rylee Main, Executive Director of the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance (LPLA), was only six when she saw an animated fish on the Sesame Street show talking about water pollution. The cartoon character explained water pollution and how everything we do connects to the aquatic world. Sitting on the couch with her mother, young Rylee (in her own words) "became very nervous for the fish that was losing the water in his pond. When the child in the video finally turned off the water," remembers Rylee, "the fish was still alive, but he had to live in this shallow pond, all crunched up."

That animated encounter was real and highly visceral for Rylee, connecting the young girl and would-be-scientist to an ecosystem. Unlike most people, Rylee would no longer ignore the water system beyond her faucet when running a bath or dumping shampoo down the drain. There were animate beings at the other end, directly related to her daily experience. The moment so greatly impacted Rylee that she still remembers it vividly to this day, citing it as an early inspiration for her later decision to become a water specialist. In an act of "ecological imagination" akin to C. Wright Mills's concept of "sociological imagination," Rylee learned to connect her individual reality to larger systems.[15]

Twenty-three years later, Rylee approached Erin Meier, Executive Director of the University of Minnesota Extension's Southeast Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, about working with the University of Minnesota. The LPLA wanted to inform the public about Lake Pepin's severe sedimentation problems and recruit new members. Main and Meier's conversation led Meier to contact my colleague Mark Neuman-Scott, Director of Media Production

14. Jeff Todd Titon, "A Sound Commons for All Living Creatures," *Smithsonian Folkways Magazine* (2012), http://www.folkways.si.edu/magazine-fall-winter-2012-sound-commons-living-creatures/science-and-nature-world/music/article/smithsonian.

15. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

for the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Minnesota. Mark sent Erin to me.

I leapt at the opportunity, but warned Rylee that there was no way we could afford to create animated fish for the video. She persisted and before I knew it Karl Demer, our sound engineer and video editor, had recruited a team of professional animators at Big John Games to make a fish sequence possible. I then wrote "We Live in the Lake," a song inspired by the concept of singing fish, and storyboarded the fish sequence. We would do better than talking fish; they would also dance and sing. Although I was initially convinced that we could not create an animated video, I entered into dialogue with a smart group of people who showed me that animation was indeed possible. I am very glad that I did so. In the process I learned a great deal about the work that professional animators do, about composing music for animation, and about the need to avoid making assumptions about what is and is not possible.

Because we were visitors to Lake Pepin, local residents were essential interlocutors in the dialogue. LPLA founder Mike McKay played a particularly important role in this respect. He spent the final seven years of his life managing the St. James Hotel in Redwing, Minnesota, which overlooked Lake Pepin. I had the privilege of meeting Mike when first pitching "We Live in the Lake." I suggested that we make a music video rather than another talking head mini-documentary. After a series of emails, I met with Mike, Rylee, and Erin Mein, the University of Minnesota Extension's Executive Director of the Southeast Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, at the St. James Hotel.

Mike was very enthusiastic about the project from the start. Arguing that standard documentary forms and organizational biopics are limited, I suggested to Mike and Rylee that a music video might work well in the era of social media. Mike agreed, noting that most water-related media involved "water people talking to water people." He wanted this work to reach new audiences. The LPLA Board agreed that music video could be a welcome complement to their existing, interview-based media.

So we got to work. As I listened to Mike, Rylee, and Erin discuss why the lake matters to so many people, I continually returned to the story of Rylee's talking fish. The phrase, "we live in the lake" popped into my mind. After a few more storyboard pitches and a plea from Rylee to keep her animated fish, we were ready to get started in earnest. I did not know it at the time, Mike was terminally ill and would not see the project to its end. However, his early input and inspiration were felt throughout.

Community through Dialogue: "You Can Build a Garden"

"You Can Build a Garden" is also the product of dialogic learning. My University of Minnesota colleague and bandmate, Tim Gustafson, originally composed "You Can Build a Garden" for an event led by students in my Environmental Communication course. The event—at which Tim performed his song—was a planting party for a large on-campus raingarden that the students themselves had installed. Over a year later, I suggested Tim's song for our garden video. Our grantor, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD), awarded us $7,000. When combined with a University of Minnesota Imagine Grant of $5,000, the total amount allowed us to compensate community singers for their participation ($500 each), to pay for a studio recording, and to cover costs for catering, promotions, distribution, and all of the other expenses that go into producing a music video and executing a release campaign.[16]

I mention financing in part because throughout the process we were reminded of how essential accountants and administrators are to making music and producing media. They are part of the learning community and dialogue as well. It is tempting to fetishize the musical text and performance, but each time we undertake a project like this I understand more fully how making music means far more than creating sound, executing a performance, producing textual notation and so on; music is a form of collective communication (i.e. "making common") that is from the start inextricably linked to community and requires the participation of far more than musicians. As Lee Higgins explains, "community music is an expression of cultural democracy."[17]

As was true for "We Live in the Lake," a Freirean conception of dialogue—egalitarian, critical and reciprocal—played a central role in the making of "You Can Build a Garden." Of course, authentic dialogue is not easy, and many of us are neither well trained nor designed for it. As musicians, we sometimes find it easier to engage with others in song rather than through talk. Yet—and this is a key point—community learning is not about achieving some sort of fractal consensus among undifferentiated members. It is about allowing difference to flourish and actually matter. That is why constant and high-quality dialogue is essential. Every participant contributed to "You Can Build a Garden" where and how we could, some doing a little, some doing more, and each individual doing something different from the rest. Conversely, "consensus" is often fictional and more of a reflection of what Laura Nader refers to as "harmony ideology"

16. We put too few resources into distribution and in our projects and have habitually underestimated the time and money required to effectively launch and "market" music videos via social media. This is an aspect of Ecosong that we are currently attempting to address.

17. Lee Higgins, *Community Music in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.

than something approximating the rhetorical ideal.[18] Anyone who has been in a community organization knows that consensus-speak can easily become a tool for undemocratic leaders to obfuscate and legitimate their inordinate control of group outcomes. In truth, no complex media production has ever been completed via pure consensus, and I would not want the Freirean framework in this analysis to mask the fact that the production-oriented work of Ecosong was also a product of nested hierarchies and variegated teams.

When people come to community with an appreciation for difference and a willingness to contribute in a manner and to a degree of their own choosing, however, much can be accomplished, and this is the main point. Free association is key. For example, "You Can Build a Garden" took on the sound, look, and personality of three incredibly talented vocalists. They were the winners of a singing contest we held at the Powderhorn Park Community Center. The project would have been far different had another set of musicians been chosen from that very impressive group of contestants who had gathered in a public gym in the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood in the center of Minneapolis, and "You Can Build a Garden" was radically influenced by each new contributor. And in the same way, each new contributor taught us something. For example, I am absolutely certain I learned more about performance from singer Jayanthi Kyle than she learned from taking my direction while on set.

Creative Praxis: "We Live in the Lake"

Biologists have defined ecology in terms of material formations, distributions, and relationships. Ecocriticism, political ecology, and the environmental humanities have expanded materialist definitions to include symbolic (i.e., cultural) contexts (e.g., environments), discourses, and processes. The LPLA is working hard to deal with an overwhelming problem, and that work requires an equally holistic definition of the local ecosystem and problems therein. Silt is entering the lake at ten times historical levels, clouding the water and literally filling up the lake. One-third of the lake will be gone by the end of the century if something is not done to deal with the increased inflow, especially the Minnesota River Valley's increasing erosion and pollution loads. Unsustainable agricultural practices and urban development, together with increased rainfall and more intense "rain events" brought about by climate change, have all played major roles.[19] Lake Pepin's inflow problem is thus the result of material,

18. Laura Nader, *Harmony Ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Village* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

19. Christian Lenhart et al., "The role of hydrologic alteration and riparian vegetation dynamics in channel evolution along the lower Minnesota River," *Trans. ASABE* 56, no. 2 (2013): 549-561.

social, and cultural forces, and any solution to the problem will require serious attention to each of these three aspects.

Such crises often cue predictable genre-specific media practices. For example, musical soundtracks for many environmental documentaries employ heavy-handed sounds of lamentation and/or anxiety-producing drones to signal dystopian decline before predictably switching to upbeat music near the end to underscore calls for action. With that as our intertextual antecedent, we decided to go in a different direction, keeping the entire work incongruently upbeat from the start.

The decision to keep the piece upbeat was also driven by the project's main objective: to recruit new members. The LPLA seeks volunteers to help with restoration projects and outreach efforts. Their hope at present is to convince the Army Corps of Engineers to spend millions on "island building" projects that could help restore structure and habitat at the head of the lake in order to lessen the impact of increased siltation loads. "Stakeholders" range from microscopic benthic organisms on up to tens of thousands of people who live near the lake, and millions more downstream. "We Live in the Lake" took inspiration sonically and visually from Lake Pepin's human and animal residents. Practical engagement with Lake Pepin, as a community, informed the production and reformed theoretical preconceptions we brought to the project initially.

The "crazy fish dance" from "We Live in the Lake" illustrates how community praxis, as reflected in music, is a creative process. When writing that part of the song, I had in mind a Rage Against the Machine-style riff. I imagined a simple downward run of dyads and single notes (GB->F#A#->FA->D#->D), a punk-metal reference to decline, shockingly discordant with the pastoral expectations of an environmental music video. What resulted from our collective creative process was instead a carnivalesque and klezmer-like run of notes more properly befitting a fish dance. Klezmer inflections were brought to the song when Natalie Warren, River Corridor Steward of the St. Croix River Association, recorded a saxophone part in studio. That was then combined with violinist Leon Hsu's improvisation, which he purposely made "rusty" through roughly scraping the bow across well-worn strings, an act that went against everything that Hsu, an accomplished classically-trained musician, had learned in his formative years. When combined with Tim Gustafson's metallic guitar riff and finally mixed by sound engineer Karl Demer, the result was something delightfully new that I, as composer and producer, did not plan when I first entered the studio. When I have showed the video at conferences and in classes I have stood to the side and watched audiences react to it. That moment never fails to make people laugh, and I don't think it is just the dancing fish but rather the audio and visual materials working in tandem. That level of audience engagement might not have become possible had my initial conception

survived. Community creativity results in the unexpected as people, instruments, movement, images, and ideas produce a very different sound than any one member could make or predict.

Creative Praxis: "You Can Build a Garden"

Community inspiration was key to the creation of "You Can Build a Garden" as well. In order to find singers for the video (as I mentioned above), we held a community singing contest at the Powderhorn Park Community Recreation Center, which sits astride Powderhorn Lake. That evening, a talented set of singers competed for three singing roles, and were judged by Sarah Fellows (education coordinator of the MCWD) and volunteer Ann Agrimson.

From among twelve talented participants, the judges chose Jayanthi Kyle, her husband Robin Kyle, and Rosie Jablansky. I did not know it at the time, but I later learned that Jayanthi had composed the song "Hand in Hand," an anthem for the Black Lives Matter movement.[20] Singing with the band Romantica, Jayanthi has been gaining a national reputation as well. We were lucky indeed that Jayanthi, Robin, Rosie, and other singers performed at the community singing contest that night. Granted, there are talented musicians in every community (one of the fundamental principles and revelations of community musicianship), and there are environmental activists in every community. Yet there is far less overlap between the two groups than might be imagined. Both practices—activism and musicianship—are time-consuming, and neither leaves much space for anything else. Thus there are relatively few "environmentalist musicians" or "musical environmentalists" as called for in this project. Perhaps *one* of the potential roles for ecomusicology, therefore, is to widen that space, to encourage more musicians and environmentalists to engage in environmentally relevant music, to support projects through which that is made possible, and to envision ecomusicology as a field of praxis that promises to enrich both the musical experience and ecosystems. Such a goal requires attention to community musics of all forms. Community learning and empowerment reinforces the notion that one does not need formal training to become part of a meaningful musical community. However, despite the relative paucity of environmentalist musicians, twelve talented participants turned out to audition for the three available roles. Next time we hope to provide a space

20. Natalie Daher, "Meet Jayanthi Kyle, whose song 'Hand in Hand' has become an anthem for local protest movements," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 1, 2015, http://www.startribune.com/meet-jayanthi-kyle-whose-song-hand-in-hand-has-become-an-anthem-for-local-protest-movements/330281711/.

for all those interested in taking part so that we can more fully enact the principles of community music and pedagogy.

Codification: "You Can Build a Garden"

Freire used the term "codification" to explain how community values and aspirations can be represented symbolically in order to help people understand how their individual interests relate to the collective desires of a larger community.[21] "You Can Build a Garden" is partly an effort at such a codification. Produced by disparate musicians, scientists, residents, nonprofit partners Metro Blooms and Blue Thumb, and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, the music video does for this intentional community what musical ritual has always done for social groups. It renders culture into communicable form, encourages and expresses affective attachment, and affectively communicates the community's collective purpose. The song's lyrics explain that we install raingardens to clean storm runoff, but more importantly communicates the idea that we do so because raingardening connects us to our neighbors, plants, animals, lakes, and rivers. Beyond the instrumental logic of raingardening is a subtextual argument promoting the collective good, the idea that people install raingardens and make other changes to their residences to enact ethical citizenship within a wider watershed community. Instead of a "how to" video, we decided to create a "why to" video, hoping to create an affective connection between viewers, organization, problem, place, and solution by modeling that community in media. Perhaps nothing is more effective at communicating emotion than music, especially when performed in a ritual context, and in many ways "You Can Build a Garden" is a media ritual, a stylized performance of a shared narrative of stewardship, a ritual reenactment through which community values can be explicitly codified and therefore reproduced.

In the above my use of codification has strayed a bit from Freire's more narrowly tailored instructions. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is filled with proscriptions and prescriptions that might not apply to all communities and conditions. There are many "should" and "should not" phrases peppered throughout the book that might at times even contradict Freire's goals of critical awareness, community creativity, and adaptation. However, if one moves past the sometimes overly directive rhetoric, one sees the value of codification as an organizing and educational principle. "Codifications are not slogans," warns Freire, "they are cognizable objects, challenges towards which the critical reflection of the decoders should be directed."[22] Rather than to create groupthink or prefigured ideologies, the goal is to think critically about social reality, to reimagine

21. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 114-121.
22. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 115.

that reality, and to codify new possibilities, in other words, to instantiate values rather than merely to speak about them.

This concept of codification brings us back to the theme of change. As Freire argued, codification is not about simply re-representing what already is, but also about ways to articulate (in the semiotic sense) problems and possibilities in order to create something new. Hegel's ideational and Marx's materialist dialectics clearly influenced Freire's concept of codification. Creative articulation is how semiotic theory provides the possibility for change through making new and sometimes surprisingly enlightening connections. Such articulations leave open the possibility for fundamental cultural change. Through "We Live in the Lake," we made new connections in both the conventional sense—new relationships between individuals and groups—but also in terms of conceptual and perceptual changes as we thought anew about the relationship of city to suburb, lawn to park, house to lake, ethics to equity, public to private, and so on. Codification, in this case instantiating values in the form of musical media, assisted in that ongoing process of discovery and creation.

Codification: "We Live in the Lake"

Creative articulation and change were key to "We Live in the Lake" as well. Nothing that the Ecosong team initially brought to the "We Live in the Lake" project was retained in its original form. The video and song that I brought in demo form to the St. James Hotel was far different than the one that eventually emerged as "We Live in the Lake." For example, the five singers involved sounded surprisingly like the Andrews Sisters when blended. I could have never planned or predicted that. The result motivated a change in musical texture when Karl and I mixed instrumental tracks in the verses. That led, in turn, to radical modifications in the look and theme of the video. The initial plan was to film "found groups" around the lake in action, such as asking a group of sailors to sing or shout the chorus "We Live in the Lake!" Once the vocal blend lent itself to a sister-group vibe, we decided to instead have three group leaders, Natalie Warren (St. Croix River Association), Rylee Main (LPLA), and Erin Mein (UMN Extension), perform the entire song and story against a green screen, with props. Only Natalie sang and also acted in the video. New voices begot new visuals and thus new meanings were created.[23]

In that same spirit, Freirean codification is about crafting a collective voice. Unfortunately, in much of the humanities and social sciences, "voice"

23. I am not making an absolute distinction here between music video and other film formats. There are examples where films have been scripted, directed, and edited in response to music, but the far more common practice in both shorts and full-length filmmaking is to match ambient sound and music to the dominant visual narrative.

is reduced to an individuated metaphor, and that is true of most pedagogical uses of the term as well. Voice becomes a stand-in for agency and little more. That is problematic in ways that go beyond the purpose here, so I will point the reader to Mikko Keskinen's critique of feminist theorists' "insistence of voice in texts that otherwise muzzle the essentialized body."[24] Keskinen is not singling out feminist theorists *per se*, but rather he is using that body of literature to note that even where "voice" might ostensibly reach beyond liberal individualist arguments for metaphoric agency and extend into actual, embodied voices, voice is still reduced to a metaphoric tool that one uses to achieve agency. Keskinen reminds us that voice is both metaphor and something more, a visceral, embodied phenomenon.

Similarly, we cannot understand lead singer Natalie Warren's voice in "We Live in the Lake" merely in terms of her denotative call for action, "Join the LPLA crew!" Her voice is not just the words she mouths but also her rich timbre, inflection, and projection. Joined with the voices of other singers on the soundtrack and actors in studio, Natalie and the "crew" created a collective voice, codifying collective goals in sound as well as in character, image, words, plot, movement, costuming, setting, and so on. Not only were ideals "given voice" in the video or represented "in voice," voice is part of the argument. This is perhaps the hardest element to characterize or explain in print. Among the vocal characteristics representing community in the video are a sense of close rhythmic entrainment and the timbral blending reminiscent of the Andrews Sisters that I mentioned above. The fact that the Andrews Sisters were from Minnesota connects the project to a specific people and place. The rich vocal harmonies and sense of rhythmic entrainment represent an idealized and aspirational form of social harmony that might further the argument for concerted stewardship when sung in this context. The hope is that through listening to and watching the performance, a local viewer might want—figuratively speaking—to add his or her voice to the LPLA's community effort.

In making codification central to his pedagogical methodology and publications, Freire reminds us that it is important to instantiate community dialogue and praxis in something relatively tangible. In this case, we hope that a music video might effectively codify our interests as an overlapping set of local communities: media producers, musicians, environmentalists, and the broader community.

This is just one example of what ecomusicologists can bring to community engagement. It is not an example that I would expect most scholars to emulate. Each of us brings a different set of skills, interests, and community connections to the task, and that is the main point. Much of what I have written about the

24. Mikko Keskinen, "Her mistress's voice: Gynophonocentrism in feminist discourses," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1-15.

Ecosong collective would apply equally well to community choral ensembles, rock festivals, dance troupes, or any other form of creative engagement, including genres, styles, and taste cultures undervalued in the academy.[25] Connected to the "crisis disciplines" of environmental science and environmental studies, ecomusicology may help to widen the space for community-oriented art and public music scholarship.[26]

Conclusion

This discussion has been framed with the Freirean ideals of dialogue, praxis, and codification. Each of these concepts is simultaneously a cultural value and pedagogical technique. The ability to listen is key to operationalizing each of them. Denise Von Glahn's perspective on listening is exceedingly helpful in this regard, not just as an elevated ethic but also as a practical skill for one to develop in a community learning context. Inspired in part by composer Pauline Oliveros, literary scholar Tina Gianquitto, and poet John Vance Cheney, Von Glahn presents rich and carefully drawn case studies of model listener-composers. In each case, Von Glahn shows how listening is essential to discovering the subtle and nuanced realities of our surroundings. For the same reason, skillful listening is essential if we are to understand, value, and actualize community. Von Glahn's work reminds us that community is not just about people, but also about place, including all of the living beings that make a place live, breath, and sound. We listen to each other and we listen together. Activists often refer to "speaking out" as the key to resistance and voicing concerns is certainly necessary, but skillful listening is no less essential and is equally subversive as speech in an increasingly loud world.

As for where skillful listening might lead, Jeff Todd Titon's "sound commons" provides a sense of what can be gained—or at least glimpsed—through community-level work. Community, commons, and communication are derived from a common Latin prefix meaning "together." Progressive political and musical traditions work to imagine and to foster communities wherein healthy cooperation and coexistence take the place of selfish acquisition of, and competition over, resources. Titon expands the concept to sound, a domain where destructive libertarian values are even more fully expressed than they are on the visual landscape. Even while walking around relatively biodiverse

25. Pierre Bourdieu, trans. Richard Nice, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984); Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

26. M. Nils Peterson, M., Markus J. Peterson, and Tarla Rai Peterson, "Environmental communication: Why this crisis discipline should facilitate environmental democracy," *Environmental Communication* 1, no. 1 (2007): 74-86.

preserves and public lands, one is still bombarded by the sounds of motorized vehicles, planes, amplified music, and other machines that crowd the soundscape. As humans we suffer severe consequences from noise pollution, ranging from endless annoyance to poor health.[27] Many animals suffer much worse from unregulated noise.[28]

However, regulation of noise would only go so far to producing more pleasurable, healthy, and equitable soundscapes. The production of new sound communities is also essential, and this means connecting local, place-based identities to meaningful action, collective efforts that might foster biodiversity, improve health and create more just communities and ecosystems. Music is integral to all such efforts. This is the main premise of Ecosong, an attempt to actualize the sound commons wherever we might live. In Minnesota, "We Live in the Lake."

27. Lisa Goines and Louis Hagler, "Noise pollution: a modern plague," *Southern Medical Journal*. 100, no. 3 (2007): 287.

28. Graeme Shannon et al., "A synthesis of two decades of research documenting the effects of noise on wildlife," *Biological Reviews*, 91, no. 4 (2015): 982-1005.