

Research & Creative Achievement Conference Spring 2017

Music & The Environment:  
A Musical Portrayal of The Human Impact  
Composed by Paige Sorensen  
Performed by Paige Sorensen, Mary Teresa Cuzzupe,  
Stephanie Sartori, & AJ Lemarier

Welcome to the Merrimack Labyrinth!

Here a demonstration of sound will be presented to you that considers both physical and ethical elements of the surrounding environment. This piece is inspired by the place-specific work *Reeds* by Emily Doolittle. Music has been used as a medium for countless purposes throughout history, including the expression of emotions, stories, messages, culture, symbolism, and more. Nature has been a topic of musical demonstrations for centuries, but in recent decades the pressing environmental conditions of our planet have created more reflections and calls for action.

The world's present environmental conditions grow increasingly strained. As the earth continuously degrades with every drill, every trash island, and every smog cloud, it is evident that a clear separation lies between humans and the natural world. Oftentimes people consider themselves to be creatures above the evolutionary tree, rather than mere members of the phylum Chordata, class Mammalia, and species *Homo sapiens*. I believe this conscious detachment is the root cause of our current state, for, if our species believed that our place is within the larger order of nature, would we be its cause of destruction?

This demonstration takes the issue of the separation between humans and nature into consideration through a musical lens. Every musical element coincides with an element of nature, a connection you can both see and hear. Some aspects to listen for during this performance include: a cyclical primary melody that directly relates to the cyclical design of the Labyrinth as well as cyclical patterns often found in nature. The drum beat symbolizes the heartbeat of Mother Earth, its duple quality represents the number two commonly seen as biologically significant: we are creatures made up of two halves, our heartbeat has two parts, etc. Additionally, the flute is meant to symbolize creatures of flight – see if you can make out the bird-like quality in the flute's trills.

As the music modulates to a minor key, listen for the growing intensity and erratic quality between instruments. This change symbolizes the end toward which we travel if current environmental practices continue. I hope you enjoy finding the various elements that give this piece its environmental essence. Feel free to wander or walk the Labyrinth during the performance to change your aural perspective throughout the piece.

Thank you for listening!

Paige Sorensen