“IF YOU WANT THE TRUTH, I’LL TELL YOU THE TRUTH. LISTEN TO THE SECRET SOUND, THE REAL SOUND, WHICH IS INSIDE YOU.”

— Kabir

“TO WHATEVER DEGREE YOU LISTEN AND FOLLOW YOUR INTUITION, YOU BECOME A CREATIVE CHANNEL FOR THE HIGHER POWER OF THE UNIVERSE.”

— Shakti Gawain

“LISTENING IS A MAGNETIC AND STRANGE THING, A CREATIVE FORCE. THE FRIENDS WHO LISTEN TO US ARE THE ONES WE MOVE TOWARD. WHEN WE ARE LISTENED TO, IT CREATES US, MAKES US UNFOLD AND EXPAND.”

— Brenda Ueland

“TO LISTEN IS TO CONTINUALLY GIVE UP ALL EXPECTATION AND TO GIVE OUR ATTENTION, COMPLETELY AND FRESHLY, TO WHAT IS BEFORE US, NOT REALLY KNOWING WHAT WE WILL HEAR OR WHAT THAT WILL MEAN. IN THE PRACTICE OF OUR DAYS, TO LISTEN IS TO LEAN IN, SOFTLY, WITH A WILLINGNESS TO BE CHANGED BY WHAT WE HEAR.”

— Mark Nepo
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“WOULD YOU BELIEVE ME IF I TOLD YOU THAT AN IMMINENT RAPE SITUATION, AN ENCOUNTER WITH A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR AND THE FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE OF 9/11 COULD ALL BE RADICALLY TRANSFORMED BY THE ACT OF DEEP, ACCEPTING, ENERGETIC LISTENING?”

EDITOR’S NOTE
SHAHANA DATTAGUPTA

Shirin Subhani and Shahana Dattagupta were inspired to become curators of stories of courageous creativity after experiencing firsthand, the transformative power of creative thinking and expression that involve emotional risk and personal vulnerability in a collective forum. More about Shirin and Shahana: www.flyingchickadee.com/about.html
And connect with us on Facebook/flying chickadee.
Dear Reader,

Would you believe me if I told you that an imminent rape situation, an encounter with a holocaust survivor and the first-hand experience of 9/11 could all be radically transformed by the act of deep, accepting, energetic listening? All those things have indeed happened, and their stories are told right here in this issue on *Creative Listening*.

I remember as far back as age two, when I was able to know things that were not said, seen or even physically present. Things that I didn’t have language for, things that were supposedly adult matters, things that were beyond any cognitive process. Years later, I have understood such knowing to be based on a way of listening, connected to Oneness, which allows access to what rests in the silence. Today I use this gift in all my work in the world, and have also radically benefited from the gift of others’ listening.

Listening isn’t merely the faculty of hearing. It is also not only taking in information from others, but also simultaneously and radically observing oneself in the process. This kind of listening is creative because it transforms and creates anew (others, oneself, situations…). In our ongoing work at Flying Chickadee, we call this *creative listening* or simply, witnessing. For some people, this is their very purpose and vocation – to witness, observe and listen with such deep energetic presence, acceptance and understanding – that those who are listened to (and s/he who listens) are transformed.

This issue is a collection of narratives from such creative listeners from all over the world, no matter what their actual profession may be. Tony Ryan’s photography isn’t about capturing subjects, but really, listening to them through his presence, feelings and lens in a way that liberates them into fully expressive images. Featured contributor and visiting professor at Vassar College, Sangeeta Laura Biagi practices Spider Medicine, which uses the sound of voice – expressed and witnessed – in chanting, singing and storytelling – to heal and liberate creative power. Read also, how Vincent Corneille converted his passion for music as a foundation for relationships into the creative product JukeCase, how young contributor Kamryn Sanchez turned her witnessing of a holocaust story into transformative poetry, how poet and singer-songwriter Sheeba Marie Jacob turned her witness of couples falling in love into songs they couldn’t have imagined, and how artist Ximena Alarcón studied traveling sound via people migrations and connections across the world. Finally, we listen to Dr. Liliana Sacarin speak of the Tomatis Listening Method, through which she teaches the power of deep listening – simultaneously listening to others *and* oneself in any exchange – to facilitate learning and communication in the differently abled.

As Shikha Jain, our photographer for this issue, says, “While one needs ears to hear, listening requires heart.” We do hope you *listen* to these stories and all the possibilities therein, with your heart!

Shahana
“IN MY WORK AS A PHOTOGRAPHER, I HAVE SEEN FIRSTHAND THE BENEFITS OF BEING IN COMPOSED ATTENTION WITH MY SUBJECTS. BY MEDITATING ON THEM WITH GENUINE PASSION AND GRATITUDE, THEY TRANSFORM BEFORE MY EYES...[CREATING] A PHYSICAL APPEARANCE THAT IS LIBERATING TO WITNESS.”

THE APPRECIATION OF LISTENING
TONY RYAN

Tony lives in Melbourne, Australia and has an enormous passion for understanding and enjoying life. He sees himself as a creative person and has had the fortune to make a living from one of his creative passions which is photography. Tony has always felt emotion deeply and for the past 15 years, has dedicated himself to creating a more conscious connection with all he feels.
THE APPRECIATION OF LISTENING

One of my favourite books is called the Presence Process. A few weeks ago, I read a chapter titled Appreciating Appreciation. It suggests that when we really concentrate on something with gratitude and appreciation, it increases in value.

This is not a new concept for me. In my work as a photographer, I have seen firsthand the benefits of being in composed attention with my subjects. By meditating on them with genuine passion and gratitude, they transform before my eyes. I figure that they sense my appreciation of them and let go of their protective walls. This then creates a physical appearance that is liberating to witness.

I have also had my experiences in photography illustrate to me clearly how we humans affect each other often without words or action. That there is another form of communication that is always communicating. That our thoughts and emotions emit a vibration or energy that communicates exactly how we are experiencing our moments. Often the individual is not even aware as to what they are projecting, which is why listening to our own feelings is so important in any relationship.

In my early years of photography, I might have entered a shoot feeling very relaxed, only to realise that at some point I had become intimidated, restricted or depressed. Often, the models I photographed showed no external signs of being in any way stressed. In those days, I was more inclined to take things on surface appearance and as such, often reflected the anxiety that others were feeling. Over the duration of my photographic career, I have become increasingly more aware of the influence of thought and feeling being exchanged. This has allowed me to listen with more attention to my own feelings and provided me with a broader range of reasons when I do feel uncomfortable. Often just by being more relaxed during the shoot, I influence my subjects to accept their anxiety and relax into the shoot.

I believe that every person has the ability to sense the energy of the environment around them. However, only a few of us have been taught about the existence of such a form of communication. We are well aware of the other five senses but mostly sit in ignorance of the shared human sixth sense capability.

“THERE IS ANOTHER FORM OF COMMUNICATION THAT IS ALWAYS COMMUNICATING...OUR THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS EMIT A VIBRATION OR ENERGY...WHICH IS WHY LISTENING TO OUR OWN FEELINGS IS SO IMPORTANT IN ANY RELATIONSHIP.”
We are so conditioned to rush and compete in life that our minds are absorbed and dominated by a variety of needs and consequences that retard what we are sensing from being clearly communicated and understood by our conscious minds. In a sense, we are blocking listening to our deepest senses. This was reflected for me in the tsunami where almost all of the animals reached higher ground before the waters hit the lowland. I believe that humans were likely sensing the same signals as the animals but their minds were so distracted that the warning messages were not acknowledged.

Further, we seem to be consistently encouraged to block anything we judge to be negative, and put on a pedestal that which we perceive to be positive. Until we dedicate ourselves to listen to all feelings with equal attention, we are in reality blocking our most positive potential. There is a saying that I agree with that says what we resist persists. The more we push perceived negatives down and out of our minds, the more they seem to create robotic rather than freely creative behaviour.

As a child, I can remember feeling like my parents would shift from warm to cold consistently. However, being too young to reflect and rationalise, I had no reason or stability with the frequent changes of mood I was sensing. Further, my parents like many other parents, had no idea that what they were feeling was being transferred to their child. As with the models in the photo shoots, they probably thought that if they put up secure fronts that no damage was being done.

I believe that it is this lack of consistent presence and emotional awareness that is at the source of much core human dysfunction. Given that we need each other in relationship, sensing this lack can spark much anxiety and vulnerability.

And, this is why we feel such gratitude and warmth when we encounter a person who is genuinely listening with undivided attention. Their energy encourages us to feel that our needs will be met, allowing us to relax and be

“WE ARE SO CONDITIONED TO RUSH AND COMPETE IN LIFE THAT OUR MINDS ARE ABSORBED AND DOMINATED BY A VARIETY OF NEEDS AND CONSEQUENCES THAT RETARD WHAT WE ARE SENSING...WE ARE BLOCKING LISTENING TO OUR DEEPEST SENSES.”
ourselves. Given that we all exchange energy, the person who allows others to feel secure in this way, is in a way providing themselves with a very pure and high-grade life-enhancing fuel.

A powerful example of the power of listening that comes to my mind is the story a friend of mine shared several times in an empowerment group that we used to run. She talked about how she had been sexually abused a few times before in her life and ended the cycle several years ago just when she was about to be raped yet again. In the moment that her attacker had her stripped and up against a wall, my friend experienced a different state of mind than in the previous occasions.

Instead of rushing to a very natural fear and resistance, she went inside of herself and deeply listened to the man. What she was hearing was that he believed he needed to do what he was doing. With a calm presence, she communicated back to the man in her thoughts that he should do what he needs to do and she will accept him whatever he decides to do. As soon as she had this thought and exchanged it with the man, he began to have tears in his eyes, let her go, and left the scene.

As she reflected later, my friend realized that in previous abuse circumstances, she had been under the influence of alcohol and /or drugs. She wondered whether being fully conscious in the last incident had aided her in connecting to her deeper intuitive self and listening to what it had to say.

When my friend shared her story in group, whilst most were inspired, a few people were triggered to be angry at her for suggesting that people have another avenue in abuse situations. I too was triggered toward greater reflection. Could it be that aggressive and violent people are often acting out of a massive lack of self-acceptance? Was the sort of energy that my friend shared with the man in fact her greatest protection? Did she provide him with the attention and warmth that had maybe been absent in his life for so long? On a wider scale, could listening even be the best antidote for war and terrorism?

“When she was about to be raped... instead of rushing to a very natural fear and resistance, she went inside of herself and deeply listened to the man... as soon as she exchanged...[acceptance energy]...with the man, he began to have tears in his eyes, let her go, and left the scene.”
Another key example of the power of concentrated listening is the way many of us are affected by small children and animals, like dogs. Both seem fascinated by us and are fully attentive to us with a passion and trusting innocence that leaves us feeling fully valued.

This is something that I have been consistently passionate about in my photography. I endeavour to meditate on the people I photograph like they are the only person important to me in that moment. I make every effort to bring a child- or dog-like excitement and attention to each of them. And then, I note that in most instances, the subject mirrors my level of passion and concentration. Hence in the resultant image, the subject is free from fear and full of inspiring attention and freedom. I have also found in the studio that the more I concentrate, the more excitement I generate and the more inspiring the person I am photographing becomes. This then creates a process of mutual appreciation that just keeps growing.

The world we have been raised in and live in has much pain, fear and need. More than anything, we can strive to be adults who are prepared to listen to self, life and others with the passion, gratitude and trust so often exhibited by children and animals. Perhaps then, we will truly appreciate people and life with a pure power that will liberate us all.

“...WE CAN STRIVE TO BE ADULTS WHO ARE PREPARED TO LISTEN TO SELF, LIFE AND OTHERS WITH THE PASSION, GRATITUDE AND TRUST SO OFTEN EXHIBITED BY CHILDREN AND ANIMALS. PERHAPS THEN, WE WILL TRULY APPRECIATE PEOPLE AND LIFE WITH A PURE POWER THAT WILL LIBERATE US ALL.”
AND SO I BEGAN INTERVIEWING PEOPLE, LISTENING DEEPLY AND WRITING SONGS ABOUT THEIR LOVE STORIES.

SHEEBA MARIE JACOB

After moving out to Seattle from Brooklyn, Sheeba Marie discovered the vibrant arts scene there and began working on writing music and stories and performing whenever she could. She released her first EP, Sing it from Your Soul, in 2012. She’s so thankful to the amazing people who have become her community in the PNW and who continue to push, challenge, and grow her creative soul. More about Sheeba Marie at: thislovesongisforyou.blogspot.com
Verse 1:

She says the quickest way
to her heart is when
he fixes her car
He says the fastest
way to make him smile
is looking over at her when she’s laughing
so hard
She says hopping on a plane
to California sunshine
brings her more light
than she’d ever known
He says calling her
when he’s in D.C.
is the one thing that he dreams for

Chorus:

And we say
we want that kind of
love story
the one that spans
miles and miles
A whirlwind romance
with a backdrop in the clouds
and the best is still to come
Verse 2:

She says his silliness warms her soul and so does his kindness towards all
He says she makes this world a better place and her passion always lights a spark
She says the night they met on Halloween she knew something in her life would change
He says she was dressed like a bumble bee and dazzled him with every word she said

Chorus:

And we say we want that kind of love story the one that spans miles and miles
A whirlwind romance with a backdrop in the clouds and the best is still to come
And we say we want that kind of love story the one that spans miles and miles
A whirlwind romance with a backdrop in the clouds and the best is still to come

Watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5E2_sKKnLQE
SHEEBA MARIE JACOB

THE BACKSTORY

The idea of writing love songs came about a couple of years ago. One night, I shared a couple of songs that I had written with my creative community and said that lately, I was capturing other people’s love stories. In that moment, an idea was born. A few folks who listened to the music and my words asked me: What would happen if I truly captured people’s love songs?

And so I began interviewing people, listening deeply and writing songs about their love stories. What a gift! I had this opportunity to learn about the very nuances that bring people together in deeply loving relationships, the nuances that we don’t get to hear every day. Needless to say, the process was inspiring.

A love song I wrote recently was for Smita, one of my dearest friends and her husband, Aki. When she started dating Aki, I knew that there was something so special between the two of them.

When they got engaged, I decided to surprise them. I interviewed Smita and Aki separately, telling them that I would include this information in a speech I gave, but instead, I wrote them this love song.
Born in Siena, Italy, Sangeeta’s whole life has involved the study and practice of the voice in languages, devotional chanting and singing. In 2013 she co-authored, with her yoga teacher Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani, the book *Saraswathi’s Pearls: Dialogues on the Yoga of Sound* and also helped with the compilation of Dr. Bhavanani’s book on the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali. She is working on her second book, *Spider Medicine: Language Awareness and Well Being.* Sangeeta is currently serving both as a Visiting Professor of Italian at Vassar College, New York, and as a Senior Yoga Teacher in the parampara of Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri.

“...I SAT FACING THE DIRECTION OF GROUND ZERO AND CHANTED. I TAPPED INTO MY CHILD INTUITION AND MOURNED THE PASSING OF SOULS, THE GRIEF OF THEIR BELOVED, THE SCAR OF THE CITY. THIS EXPERIENCE WOKE ME UP TO THE POWER OF SOUND TO KILL AND TO HEAL. LISTENING BECAME A WAY OF LIFE AND NOT SOMETHING TO DO.”
The first memory I have of “play” is sitting on a beach on the coast of the Italian island of Sardinia, creating funeral rituals for dead insects and arachnids. Every time I found a dead spider, a bee, or a little creepy crawler, I was moved from within to search for twigs, little stones, and small sticks. Intuitively, I found the right spot for burial, asked my mom for a small empty juice bottle (she was used to this, and collected bottles for me), placed the critter inside, buried the bottle horizontally half way into the sand, created a funerary architecture with natural elements, and then sat and chanted. The chanting was improvised. It came from a place of listening, of allowing the sounds to emerge from within, after being stirred by unseen winds, whirling within and moving back out through my vocal chords.

I stopped performing these rituals when I came of age and almost forgot about them until the day of 9/11 of 2001. I was in Brooklyn that morning. By the time the day came to pass, the world as I knew it had changed. I was enveloped in the sounds of mourning, rescue, alarms. I could not move from my apartment. I was frozen, unable to allow myself to feel, unable to allow myself to listen deeply. Then, the memory resurfaced. There was something I could do: I sat facing the direction of Ground Zero and chanted. I tapped into my child intuition and mourned the passing of souls, the grief of their beloved, the scar of the city. This experience woke me up to the power of sound to kill and to heal. Listening became a way of life and not something to do.

I studied Deep Listening, extended vocal techniques, sound healing, and wrote my Ph.D. dissertation on the Southern Italian ritual of tarantismo, in which sound healing plays a very important part. In the fall of 2009, I moved to Chinnamudaliarchavady, a small fishermen’s village in the state of Tamil Nadu, in Southern India, to study Raja Yoga. I stayed there for the next eighteen months, immersing myself in the study of hatha yoga, karma yoga, pranayama, mantra laya, study of Sanskrit, Carnatic singing, Bharatanatyam dance, and guru seva.

Spider Medicine is both a sum of all this and its own system. It is a method for the awakening of awareness, a step-by-step path based on the teachings of ancient traditions, a path that supports the development of a sense of contentment, belonging and connectedness. The vehicle for Spider Medicine is the voice, heard or articulated

“The vehicle for Spider Medicine is the voice, heard or articulated in thinking, chanting, singing, writing, and storytelling. Listening is the beginning and the end of this journey, the field on which sounds rise and fall...”
in thinking, chanting, singing, writing, and storytelling. Listening is the beginning and the end of this journey, the field on which sounds rise and fall, emerge and are reabsorbed. *Spider Medicine* consists of a blend of theory and practice: historical studies, theoretical inquiries, personal interviews with “elders in the tradition,” professional training in vocal and instrumental music, dance, ritual, and sound healing, training in raja yoga, field trips to India, Southern Italy and the U.S. Southwest Pueblo indigenous cultures. The method, which I have been sharing with groups and individuals, is articulated in four parts:

1. **Awareness** – use of ritual syllables and prayers to quiet the mind’s vibratory noises;
2. **Expression** – using the model of shamanic movement and chanting to express and release negative feelings, worries, psychic weight from memories or projections; art therapy;
3. **Concentration** – using one’s own voice to its fullest potential to express one’s truth;
4. **Silence** – beginning and end of all, listening is allowing oneself to rest in deep silence, to receive, to tap into the highest realms of intuition.

Since 2012, I have been teaching Spider Medicine at Vassar College, through a grant to bring contemplative practices in academia. I have been teaching two classes a week: one for students and one for faculty, staff and administrators. In the words of some participants, they are finding that the gift of awareness within themselves has given them the strength to accept what has been thrown their way. They are learning that the experience of sound healing reaches deeper places and forms a new community of trust as they chant and sing and twist their voices together. Some participants who suffered from joint and nerve pain, have found relief in my classes.

The results of this research show that lack of awareness and expression can cause physical, emotional, and psychic ailments: depression, inability to focus, sense of loss, misuse of one’s energy, lack of finding a purpose in life. Awareness is the seed of wellbeing. Our minds are often cluttered and distracted by inner chatting. Quieting the mind and learning how to properly think is necessary for a healthy life.

“SINCE 2012, I HAVE BEEN TEACHING *SPIDER MEDICINE* AT VASSAR COLLEGE, THROUGH A GRANT TO BRING CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES IN ACADEMIA. I HAVE BEEN TEACHING TWO CLASSES A WEEK: ONE FOR STUDENTS AND ONE FOR FACULTY, STAFF AND ADMINISTRATORS.”
The benefits of the use of prayer and chanting have now been proved scientifically and have been known spiritually for a much longer time. When the skull vibrates in the sound of AUM, our lymphatic system releases feel-good hormones. When we chant the AUM or another prayer that is meaningful to us, our outbreaths are longer than the in-breaths, lowering our heart beat frequency, and lowering our blood pressure. This new found sense of calm supports a more objective outlook on life’s events and a more balanced attitude.

Fragmentation and isolation are an illusion, so seemingly real that we often mistake them for reality. We can use the illusion of isolation and the fear of abandonment to torment ourselves and others for as long as we are alive. Do we really think that external circumstances can change unless we change how we feel deep within? We are, like the spider, at the center of what we weave without thoughts, words, and deeds.

Arachnids and snakes regularly molt their exoskeletons. While humans do this at the physical level, by renewing our cells, menstruating, losing our hair, teething, and so on, we also need to give ourselves the time and space to “molt” at the emotional and mental levels. Many people give into addictions as a way of molting. Molting is difficult and it requires the capacity to be comfortable with one’s own vulnerability. Crying is a form of molting. Art therapy can help with molting: dancing, singing, drawing, working with our hands in the home and garden, cooking, massaging, weaving. These can all be used to release and to express, to protest and to let go, to renew, to rejuvenate, to share, to connect.

Once we have let go, and expressed ourselves, the mind is quiet, the body alive. Here we listen deeply and become silent. We rest, and allow ourselves to receive intuitive wisdom. We can move from a place of love rather than fear. In this silent awareness, we feel grateful. This is the inner place where healing, of ourselves and our communities, finally starts to take place.

“DO WE REALLY THINK THAT EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES CAN CHANGE UNLESS WE CHANGE HOW WE FEEL DEEP WITHIN? WE ARE, LIKE THE SPIDER, AT THE CENTER OF WHAT WE WEAVE WITHOUT THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND DEEDS.”
“I WAS NOT STARING AT A COMPUTER SCREEN OR READING A BOOK ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST, I WAS SITTING FACE-TO-FACE WITH A SURVIVOR WHOSE LIFE WAS TORN TO PIECES AS A CHILD. AS HER LIPS MOVED, MY HEART PAID ATTENTION TO HOW A WORN-OUT CHILD CAN BECOME AN INDESCRIBABLE WOMAN.”

TIMELESS WORDS
KAMRYN SANCHEZ

Kamryn is a sophomore at Canyon High School in Anaheim Hills, CA. She enjoys running with her cross country teammates, acting with her Theatre Arts classmates, and writing, poetry especially.
Chapman University’s Holocaust Art and Writing contest is a well-respected opportunity to let children commemorate the survivors of those tragic events. The prompt given to me was to paint a picture, create a film, or write an essay or a poem on a specific event that you could relate to or reflect on, in a Holocaust survivor’s testimony. I chose Esther Stern’s testimony and wrote a poem titled ‘Restored Hope’ on her experience with The Death March.

My poetry was submitted by my English teacher at the time, Ms. Deloyola. I will forever be grateful to her, because she gave my work of art a chance to be shared, which then led me to a life-changing moment. During the awards ceremony, my name was mentioned due to my poem being a finalist in the competition. Although I did not win, I was able to experience something much greater. Picking up on the intensity in the room, listening to the ceremony, I found myself very distracted. I felt a strong presence in the room with me. I looked in the first few rows and I just knew Esther was there. I did not even need to see her face; I just knew it was her.

After the awards ceremony, we moved on to the lawn, so we were able to speak with Holocaust survivors and mingle amongst others who had participated in the contest. While walking around and getting signatures from survivors, a lady came looking for me. When she told me that Esther was indeed here and was looking for me, I was stunned. Soon, the hype exceeded the capacity the tent was meant to hold and I was seated right next to the courageous woman who was the inspiration of my poem. I shared one look with her and we connected immediately. I could not stop smiling at her, it was absolutely breathtaking. A cameraman soon came to record this awe-striking moment, and many people began to surround us, but I was too captivated by the words she was beginning to say ever so softly.

As I took in each word she spoke, in a tone just above audible, I could not believe my ears. Words hitting me with such strength, tears began to well up in my eyes, along with my mom by my side and my teacher standing

“PICKING UP ON THE INTENSITY IN THE ROOM, LISTENING TO THE CEREMONY, I FOUND MYSELF VERY DISTRACTED. I FELT A STRONG PRESENCE IN THE ROOM WITH ME. I LOOKED IN THE FIRST FEW ROWS AND I JUST KNEW ESTHER WAS THERE. I DID NOT EVEN NEED TO SEE HER FACE; I JUST KNEW IT WAS HER.”
across the table from us. I grasped on to Esther’s words, never leaving me; I listened ever so closely, and I can never forget what she said to me.

She spoke with praise for my poem describing her experience with The Death March. She complimented me, calling me beautiful; I only wished I could be even slightly as beautiful as her. My smile never left my face as she described her family to me, not like we had just met, but like two old friends beginning to catch up again with one another. I listened as she told me all about her life now. She seemed so well put together, I know I shall admire her for a lifetime. I began to wonder how such a spectacular person who had been through the worst, could have so much life and hold such a high amount of exuberance.

I listened as she spoke words that will impact my life forever. I was not staring at a computer screen or reading a book about the Holocaust, I was sitting face-to-face with a survivor whose life was torn to pieces as a child. As her lips moved, my heart paid attention to how a worn-out child can become an indescribable woman. A woman whose future had turned out bright, with a family, living in a lovely home in Los Angeles. I will forever be changed, due to one incredible woman’s words, words spoken to me with such care, words which held important life lessons within them. These testimonies will be passed on for generations, because we all need to listen to what surrounds us, and listen to beyond what is said.

“AS I TOOK IN EACH WORD SHE SPOKE, IN A TONE JUST ABOVE AUDIBLE, I COULDN’T BELIEVE MY EARS. WORDS HITTING ME WITH SUCH STRENGTH, TEARS BEGAN TO WELL UP IN MY EYES...”
“With love and curiosity of sonic spaces that are born in the distance, and with the desire of establishing connections in real time with those spaces, I evolved my listening into a bi-directional experience mediated through the Internet: Networked Migrations.”

Networked Migrations
Ximena Alarcón

Ximena is a Colombian born artist who engages in listening to migratory spaces, connecting this to individual and collective memories. Her practice involves Deep Listening, sonic improvisation, and networking technologies, which help to expand our sense of belonging. She is a Research Fellow at Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice (CRiSAP) in London. More about Ximena’s work at http://networkedmigrations.org
NETWORKED MIGRATIONS

“Migratory Dreams” between London and Bogotá, at Resonance FM and Plataforma Bogotá

“Letters and Bridges” between Leicester and Mexico City, at Interact Gallery and CENART (Centro Nacional de las Artes)
For my Deep Listening studies I decided to listen to my own migration. I was not conscious of where this assertion would lead me. My memory universe populated with sounds of my childhood: the voice of my father in the middle of television and radio sounds of news and sports. I situated myself in the acoustic space that was daily created by using domestic radios turning them on and off in the way that people turn on and off the lights indicating they are no longer there.

Did I turn myself off there in the domestic environment of my home country?

When calling from England, I used to listen to my own voice recorded in the answering machine of my father’s house, as he decided to leave it even if I was no longer living there: “At the moment, we cannot answer your call; please leave your name and telephone number and we will contact you shortly”… I was there, not at the moment, but I was there in the expectation of someone who can return and call back. I was leaving a recorded message to be heard there too.

With love and curiosity of sonic spaces that are born in the distance, and with the desire of establishing connections in real time with those spaces, I evolved my listening into a bi-directional experience mediated through the Internet: *Networked Migrations*. If questions of space and time were powerful enough when performing alone or with The Migratory Band, my first Deep Listening study group, I thought that telematic performance exploring the migratory sonic space would be a great experiment to strengthen the experience of dislocation and to find lost and new connections with others and ourselves.

A space ‘in-between’ composed by voices, sound environments, memories and the body that permeates the experience, has been the focus of three telematic improvisatory performances that I have created involving migrants: “Letters and Bridges” (Leicester UK – Mexico City) where they read letters that have been sent by someone they love, and play sonically with the connections established in a variety of languages; “Migratory...”
Networked Migrations

“Dreams” (London – Bogotá) where Colombians explored dream spaces overlapping with physical ones as reflection and expansion of their migrations; and “Tasting Sound and Listening to Taste” (Troy US – London) focused on the memory of tasting a sound made by foreign ingredients, and food that is familiar but uprooted as we all migrants might feel.

My creative listening continues identifying connections between the self and the places where I go. Technologies act as intermediaries to intervene with the perceptions of time and space in a counterpoint with memories, sensations, feelings and intuition. Real time improvisatory performance offers the dimension of the present, the reaction from the one who is there, deeply listening in the distance.
“FOR ME, MUSIC DISCOVERY IS AN ENDLESS PURSUIT... MUSIC IS THE FOUNDATION OF MY RELATIONSHIPS. IT BRINGS INFECTIOUS JOY AND ALLOWS US TO EXPRESS OURSELVES FREELY. SHARING MUSICAL EXPERIENCES CREATES A BOND BETWEEN PEOPLE THAT CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THIS AUDIBLE MEDIUM.”

JUKECASE
VINCENT CORNEILLE

Music has been a defining part of Vincent’s life. Four years ago, whilst working as a cancer research scientist, he started a passion project making portable speakers out of vintage suitcases, which he called “JukeCases”. When demand for the JukeCase grew, Vincent quit his job and embarked on starting a business in manufacturing audio systems. More about JukeCase at: www.jukecase.com
It all started four years ago, one balmy summer evening when my friends and I took my handmade portable speaker to the Fitzroy gardens for a picnic. The speaker, which I later called a “Jukecase,” was made from upcycling a vintage suitcase into a functional portable speaker with a focus on high quality sound.

We spent the day amongst the trees taking turns sharing our favourite songs, each track creating a new atmosphere. It was such a simple idea, and yet so powerful. In the months following, I took this portable speaker with me to the beach, camping in the forest and out on a boat. Each environment was transformed by the soundtrack and provided another layer of memories. I found myself wanting other people to enjoy these experiences.

Around this time, the iPhone was becoming commonplace and we all had a whole world of music available to us at any given time, but I felt that we didn’t have competent speakers to bring the music to life.

I grew up in a house where audio quality was paramount. My father, an inventive audiophile, has been making and collecting hi-fi my whole life. He cast half-ton speaker boxes out of concrete just to reduce resonance, designed 6ft tall flat panel speakers for ultra-sensitive response and powered them through an amplifier that required four people just to lift it — all in the name of sound quality. After dinner parties, my parents and their friends would sit in front of these behemoth speakers and listen to the likes of The Doors, Pink Floyd and Tim Buckley. Through this speaker set, each song had a richness and vibrancy that truly transported you into the music.

You can imagine that I naturally became a bit of a snob when it came to audio quality. I would cringe when people listened to music through the speakers built into their laptop or when they would purchase a small cheap set-up that lacked full-range audio output. In my mind, it just didn’t do the songs justice, they deserved more. Artists put countless amounts of hours into their craft, perfecting every element of their songs. So much of their talent and vision can be lost when you listen to music through incapable systems.

“ARTISTS PUT COUNTLESS AMOUNTS OF HOURS INTO THEIR CRAFT, PERFECTING EVERY ELEMENT OF THEIR SONGS. SO MUCH OF THEIR TALENT AND VISION CAN BE LOST WHEN YOU LISTEN TO MUSIC THROUGH INCAPABLE SYSTEMS.”
For me, music discovery is an endless pursuit. We live in a time where music is being released at a higher rate than ever and with an evolving pace that can only be described as dizzying. New genres appear every day, trends can last a week or years.

Our listening habits have changed drastically too. We used to purchase an album and make time to sit down and absorb the music track by track. Now, music is a part of our every moment and is readily becoming part of the background noise. We seem to spend more time listening to music, but less time appreciating it.

With the invention of streaming programs like Spotify, we now have access to nearly every song ever created on demand. It can sometimes be overwhelming trying to sift through this near-endless resource trying to discover new tracks. I sometimes find it easier to listen to services like Spotify radio which provide an intuitive mix of songs based upon your listening habits. In a similar vein, many musicians are releasing mix-tapes of songs that they are currently listening to, giving you an insight into their inspirations and interests.

Music is the foundation of my relationships. It brings infectious joy and allows us to express ourselves freely. Sharing musical experiences creates a bond between people that can only be achieved through this audible medium. I know what each of my friends’ likes to listen to and can explore this further when we catch up.

A strange consequence of the popularity of portable MP3 players was that it had encouraged isolation from our peers. Headphones on, we would sink into our own universe of music and comfortably shy away from the world.

The JukeCase was our answer: portable music that is social!

“A STRANGE CONSEQUENCE OF THE POPULARITY OF PORTABLE MP3 PLAYERS WAS THAT IT HAD ENCOURAGED ISOLATION FROM OUR PEERS. HEADPHONES ON, WE WOULD SINK INTO OUR OWN UNIVERSE OF MUSIC AND COMFORTABLY SHY AWAY FROM THE WORLD.”
Since that first day in the Fitzroy gardens, I spent one year developing the portable speaker concept, and with the positive support from friends and family, launched the JukeCase as a business venture. My long-time friend, Rubin Utama, jumped onboard when demand grew greater than I was able to handle on my own. We spent the first year selling at design markets and getting our online store set up. The positive feedback from customers was generous and sometimes overwhelming, it kept us inspired to continue on this path.

Two years into the business, we opened up a retail store/workshop which allowed us to set our sights on expanding our idea further. As our JukeCases grew in popularity, we worked hard to find a new direction for our business and were very excited to recently announce the launch of a standardized version of our product called the “JukeCase Mini”. Made from locally manufactured cases, the JukeCase Mini captures the essence of our brand: high quality sound, modern functionality and classic styling.

In the end, it is all about creating experiences and memories that will stay with you forever. We hope that every JukeCase will help with spreading joy around the world. That is the most important part of our job.

“THE JUKECASE WAS OUR ANSWER: PORTABLE MUSIC THAT IS SOCIAL!... IT IS ALL ABOUT CREATING EXPERIENCES AND MEMORIES THAT WILL STAY WITH YOU FOREVER. WE HOPE THAT EVERY JUKECASE WILL HELP WITH SPREADING JOY AROUND THE WORLD.”
“A GOOD LISTENER IS FULLY AWARE OF WHAT SOMEONE SHARES, NOT ONLY THEIR WORDS BUT ALSO THEIR CONVEYED EMOTIONS... AT THE SAME TIME, A GOOD LISTENER ALSO NOTICES WHAT IS GOING ON IN THEMSELVES, THEIR OWN SELF-TALK... A GOOD LISTENER HAS THE CHOICE TO DECIDE WHERE HE WANTS TO FOCUS MOST ATTENTION ON...”

IN DIALOGUE WITH
DR. LILIANA SACARIN

Liliana is the founder of the Sacarin Listening & Development Center, in Seattle & Bellevue, WA. She is an expert in training the listening function to facilitate learning and communication in those diagnosed with AD/HD, Dyslexia, LD, Sensory Integration or communication issues (ASD). Others have worked with the Tomatis Listening Method at her Center to attain peak performance in academic learning, music, sports or in their profession. As a researcher she investigated changes in attention, processing speed, phonological processing, phonemic decoding when reading and brain activity in a controlled research: “Early Effects of the Tomatis Listening Method in Children with Attention Deficit.” More at: www.sacarin.com and www.tomatis-seattle.com
Shirin – Hi Liliana; Thank you so much for talking with Courageous Creativity! Please tell us about the role that listening has played in your life.

Liliana – Looking back, listening has played a key role in my life because without the ability to listen, I would not have been able to live and study/work in two other cultures: German and American, besides my own native culture, Romanian. While learning a mother-tongue seems natural for most of us, learning a foreign language is a whole other thing – one needs well-developed listening abilities to learn foreign languages including the new accents with ease. And I am talking about being proficient, confident and well integrated in another culture.

Listening, however, plays a much broader role in our lives including my own. It stands at the core of our relationships and our ability to learn. Many of us think that we can listen just because we hear, but if you look around, the people who can listen are few and far between; most of us like to be listened to. Listening is an active, voluntary act and needs to be cultivated – similar to meditation, it needs to be practiced. People who are said to have charisma are exceptionally good listeners. They are capable of giving their full attention and listening with great presence to the speaker. Simply put: being listened to makes us feel good.

Shirin – What are some of the things you observe about listening as you converse with people speaking English, a language that is not your first language?

Liliana – The first thing one learns when living in a different culture is to get used to often saying: “could you please repeat?” or “sorry I did not understand you.” Often the speaker then politely repeats what they just said without slowing down, but instead with just a bit more volume in their voice, as if I did not hear what they said. It all comes down to listening. I heard them, but they were either too fast or used words I did not know. However, often the speaker does not realize my short-comings when asked to function at the intricacy level close or equal to that of a native speaker. I used to get frustrated with having to ask these questions time and time again. Now I am mostly amused about my own imperfection.

“LISTENING, HOWEVER, PLAYS A MUCH BROADER ROLE IN OUR LIVES... IT STANDS AT THE CORE OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS AND OUR ABILITY TO LEARN. MANY OF US THINK THAT WE CAN LISTEN JUST BECAUSE WE HEAR...THE PEOPLE WHO CAN LISTEN ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.”
IN DIALOGUE WITH...

Shirin – Can you tell us about the Tomatis Listening Therapy that you use with your clients?

Liliana – I am very fortunate to work with wonderful children, dedicated families and adults who are committed to making a difference in their lives. After I moved here from Germany, this alone gave me the energy I needed to pioneer both intervention and research using the Tomatis Method in the greater Seattle area.

The Tomatis listening program uses a customized combination of music and spoken word presented through headphones, along with a vibrational and temporal component. As a result of the maturing of the auditory and vestibular perception with the Tomatis treatment, other treatments, like OT or speech, and tutoring, can be dramatically shortened and progress can be significantly improved.

Fortuitous encounters shaped my path in dedicating many years to this work with the listening function and the Tomatis Method. After meeting and training with Dr. Alfred Tomatis, and years of working with the Tomatis Method including almost all other technologies inspired by Dr. Tomatis around the world for the past two decades, I came to the conclusion that his understanding of listening and the method as I learned it from him remain the most powerful avenue when it comes to training the listening function as it relates to attention/focus, processing speed, phonological processing, phonemic decoding when reading, one’s behavior and brain electro-physiology.

Over the past twenty years, we have helped children and adults with a variety of presentations from sound sensitivity (Misophonia) to developmental speech and learning challenges such as AD/HD, Dyslexia, Sensory Integration Disorder, Fine and Gross Motor control issues, LD, Language and Auditory Processing Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder. Others have come to us to simply attain peak performance. In the US, the Tomatis Method is considered to be an experimental intervention; however, a wealth of research and articles are establishing its effects on learning, behavior, communication, cognition and attention, and sensory processing.

Shirin – In your role as a therapist/counselor, how do you view listening?

“The Tomatis Listening Program uses a customized combination of music and spoken word presented through headphones, along with a vibrational and temporal component.”
Liliana – A good listener is fully aware of what someone shares, not only their words but also their conveyed emotions (the melody, the amount of sound energy there is in one’s voice, whether the voice flows with ease and is modulated – pitch, volume, resonance, etc.) and of course their body language.

At the same time, a good listener also notices what is going on in themselves, their own self-talk (be it observation of self or of the speaker, judgments, emotions, etc.). A good listener has the choice to decide where he wants to focus most attention on, when flowing between listening to the speaker and his or her internal dialogue/listening.

As a counselor/psychologist, I had the unique opportunity to train both these forms of listening and sharpen my own awareness. To me, it seemed more natural to focus and listen to others. I had to put in some effort into learning to check in with what is going on inside me while others are sharing concerns, needs of their child and family. I found that good listening is challenging for many individuals even in the mother-tongue; hence, listening in a second or third language context posed a challenge for me - it reduced my ability to shift easily between listening to the speaker and listening to my internal dialogue. I had less time to follow what the person I was working with was sharing. I noticed how sometimes it took me a bit longer to decode what someone said, be it because of language directly or because of cultural differences. So, I was fully focused on what was being said and making sure I understood what was being conveyed. This left little time for checking in with the other aspects of my internal dialogue. I am still working on this one.

Shirin – You do several workshops and self-care groups for parents. Can you talk a little bit about the importance of Listening in the life of a parent?

Liliana – A parent is usually focused on listening, anticipating, sensing the child’s needs from the first moments of their child’s birth, hence parents “listen with all their senses” to the signals and needs of their child. This becomes “modus operandi” for parents. They are often listening over 100% to their children all the time with no time and energy left to listen to themselves.

“TO ME, IT SEEMED MORE NATURAL TO FOCUS AND LISTEN TO OTHERS. I HAD TO PUT IN SOME EFFORT INTO LEARNING TO CHECK IN WITH WHAT IS GOING ON INSIDE ME WHILE OTHERS ARE SHARING CONCERNS...”
In the *Mothers Self-Care Classes* (6 weekly sessions of 1h15 min each) that I facilitate, we work on regaining some of the balance and re-learning how to also listen to ourselves so that we can feel nourished instead of starved in the self-care department. Listening to oneself equates with honoring one’s dreams, desires, and needs by at first acknowledging them. It also allows one to re-access their sources of creativity and find small avenues to engage it. This in turn influences one’s vitality, changing the interactions with every member of one’s family: children and partner alike. A well-nourished and filled with vitality parent benefits ultimately the child and the entire family.

**Shirin** – How has your work shifted for you what kind of listener you are?

**Liliana** – This is a wonderful question: I consider myself very fortunate to have focused on my ability to listen in my profession which also benefited me in my entire being – It all began with having to complete the three Phases of the Tomatis Listening Program before entering the training with Dr. Tomatis, over twenty years ago. The Tomatis Listening Program shifted completely the way in which I listened.

To my surprise, even the developmental pediatrician I worked with in Berlin at the time and the other colleagues at the clinic noticed the change in the manner in which I began to listen and communicate and observed that I was going through a transformation. I believe that without that “shift” in maturation, I would not have had the tools and strength to venture into a new culture and climb yet another mountain including completing a doctorate with the focus on the listening function.

I am still learning and practicing new ways of listening: Being aware, generous and creative when using our listening is what attracted me to contribute to your magazine in the first place. When listening is well developed or practiced we can have fun with it in any endeavor whether this is learning (including academic learning) or in relationships. After twenty years of focusing on listening I am more aware than ever how listening can affect our relationships with others be it with our children, our partner, our parents, our siblings, our friends or anyone else.

“**LISTENING TO ONESELF EQUATES WITH HONORING ONE’S DREAMS, DESIRES, AND NEEDS BY AT FIRST ACKNOWLEDGING THEM. IT ALSO ALLOWS ONE TO RE-ACCESS THEIR SOURCES OF CREATIVITY AND FIND SMALL AVENUES TO ENGAGE IT.”**
PHOTOGRAPHY
SHIKHA JAIN

Shikha’s photography is a witness to what she observes and listens to during her travels. She believes that while one needs ears to hear, listening requires heart.
Curators and Executive Editors: Shirin Subhani and Shahana Dattagupta
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