

Deep Listening&,ç Bridge To Collaboration by Pauline Oliveros April 4 1998 Key note address: ArtSci98>>>seeding collaboration A public symposium April 4-5 (Sat/Sun) 1998 Cooper Union, NYC Throughout the 45 year history of my professional career as a composer/performer I have had the pleasure of many diverse collaborations with a wide range of artists, technologists and scientists. Some of the highlights of my collaborations include evening length works in dance with choreographers Merce Cunningham for /Canfield/, Deborah Hay for /Tasting the Blaze/, Susan Marshall for /Contenders/, Paula Josa Jones for /Ghostdance/; in theater with playwright/directors Lee Breuer for /Lear/ and Carole Ione for /Njinga the Queen King/ ; with Performance Artist Linda Montano for /Living Arts/; with composer/performers Stuart Dempster and David Gamper for /Deep Listening Band/ ; with audio engineer Bob Bielecki for numerous sound design projects; with ham radio operator Dave Olean for /Echoes From the Moon/ where sound was sent to the moon on a radio frequency wave; and more to the point of this conference - a ten year study of attention with theoretical physicist and Martial Artist Dr. Lester Ingber from 1971-1981. What is collaboration? For me collaboration is joining or combining forces with another or others in interactions to produce work - a collaboration is a community of effort - preferably an equality of effort. Listening to one another in mutual respect is central to collaboration. Differences in the resources of collaborators are essential to the product. Each of us is the product of two human collaborators whose differences joined an combined in order to bring us into the world as new individuals. With listening and mutual respect becoming parents is probably one of the most rewarding of collaborations! I have been connected through my collaborations with hundreds of artists from many parts of the world. I so enjoy the nature and challenge of collaborations that I am in the midst of a ten year program of collaborations. Beginning in 1991 as a celebration of my forty years of composing, I invited friends in six different cities where I had lived and worked to present something of their own via video telephone to help me celebrate. Each group in each city was connected by a telephone bridge and could see and hear one another through this early form of slow scan distance technology was connected by a telephone bridge and could see and hear one another through this early form of slow scan distance technology. There was curator for each venue with a video telephone, a twenty minute broadcast from each city followed by a six city improvisation with all of the artists who wanted to participate. The three hour celebration was organized by Joe Catalano and documented by his article Electronic Mid-Wifery in Leonardo Music Journal. In 2001 I expect to do another celebration - 50 years of composing. I am looking forward to collaborators from four continents connected by satellite communications with full spectrum audio and video. Collaboration with technologists has been a part of my work throughout my career. I have witnessed 45 years of sweeping accelerating change in the tolls made possible for music making through recording and computing. What we take for granted today in terms of recording and editing was relatively impossible at the beginning of my career. I am enormously grateful for the opportunities I have had to engage with new technologies and with developing technologies of the future. For example - the possibilities now opening to collaborate with other artists in different locations through the INTERNET and INTERNET broadcast. As a composer I have always been fascinated by whatever I hear - I am drawn to listening and have cultivated listening as a practice. An important tool in support of my interest in listening was given to me by my mother in 1953 as a birthday gift - a tape recorder. It was one of the first consumer models to be made available on the home market. For musicians the tape recorder has provided immediate rehearsal feed back as well a documenting performances. The quicker the feedback the faster the learning. Because of this we are enjoying an unprecedented and phenomenal generation of musicians who have benefited from recording technology. Today's first rate musicians play beautifully almost anything in numerous different styles with skills almost unimaginable 50 years ago. I admire the extended musical abilities that have been fostered by the use of tape recorders. Dancers have received similar benefits from video recording. Shortly after receiving the gift of my tape recorder in 1953 I placed the microphone in the window of my San Francisco apartment and recorded the sound environment. little did I realize the extent of the impact this simple act would have on me. Although I thought that I was listening while recording I was surprised to find sounds on the tape that I had not heard consciously. With this discovery I gave myself a meditation: "Listen to everything all the time and remind yourself when you are not listening". Forty five years later I am still doing this meditation as the core of a practice that I call Deep Listening . Sustained listening is quite a task. Though hearing if ears are healthy is a continuous physical phenomenon and happens involuntarily when sound waves enter the ears, listening in intermittent and has to be cultivated voluntarily in its many forms. Though it may be surprising many unenlightened musicians are hearing but not necessarily listening when they perform or compose - at least not to the sound of the music. Listening is processing what we hear - for meaning, understanding and direction or action. Noticing the intermittent nature of listening through my own practice I was more and more drawn to the encouragement and promotion of listening in performers and students through my composing and teaching. Listening is rarely explored or taught even in music schools. Reading and writing skills seem to receive more emphasis by educators than listening skills even though listening is equally important and may be more essential for learning in all disciplines as well as music. I began to rely on listening in order to make music rather than on reading and writing. I gradually released the need to control pitch and rhythm through conventional notation in favor of the freedom to sculpt sound in time. Notation was no longer important to me when I began working on tape with electronic sound in the late 50's. Parallel to this development was my work in solo and group improvisation. Group improvisation was collaboration with a few like minded colleagues. Our concerts of electronic music were liberally laced with free group improvisations - unheard of in

concert music at the time. Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor were breaking free in Jazz at the same time. Today we have a large world wide interest among musicians in freely improvised music. Boundaries between categories such as Jazz and Classical music are dissolving. Musicians with their phenomenal skills are listening to one another and making music together as never before by creating new sound oriented languages. In this way musicians of different cultural back grounds can play together. In 1970 I began a body of work called Sonic Meditation. Sonic Meditations are recipes for ways of listening and sounding and are scores transmitted orally without conventional musical notation. I found that I could involve all kinds of people in Sonic Meditations whether or not they had any musical training. What mattered was an interest in participation, the cultivation of listening strategies and willingness to explore sound. At the time I was teaching composition and experimental studies in the music department at the University of California at San Diego. My Sonic Meditations flew in the face of traditional harmony and counterpoint and also of the complex written scores of contemporary music. My interests turned to the field of consciousness and the study of attention. I needed support for my work that was now where evident at the time in music theory and proactive. Listening involves the direction of attention. There are two modes of attention: focal which corresponds to an all or nothing state - attention to a point and global which corresponds to an open receptive state - attention expands to a field. Focal attention is sharp and clear. Global attention is warm and fuzzy - the two modes work together as expansion and contraction. I met Dr. Lester Ingber - theoretical physicist and martial artist at a conference on consciousness at UCSD. I recognized in his talk on attention elements that supported my work. He was trying to describe human attention as a theoretical physicist. I was trying to describe listening as a composer musician. Though our respective languages were vastly different we managed through listening to each other to collaborate by sharing our discoveries for the next ten years as I created more and more Sonic Meditations and Lester described attentional processes with complex mathematical calculations. Lester was also a 5th Dan Karate master as well. I studied with him for 8 years and achieved a black belt. My Karate training with Lester was the key discipline which helped me to understand my own Sonic Meditations and the basics of listening. In 1973 at the new Center for Music Experiment and Related Research at UCSD I conducted an experiment with my Sonic Meditations with twenty people four hours a day for nine weeks. I invited guests including Lester Ingber. We explored meditation, relaxation and body disciplines and performed Sonic Meditations. It was clear to me that listening was locked up by more exclusive attention to reading and writing. Simple as the instructions for Sonic Meditations were it seemed necessary to do relaxation as a bridge for people to let go enough to participate. After engagement with sound making most people felt a deeper sense of relaxation and well being. Brain wave measurements and imaginal tests by a clinical psychologist at the beginning and end of the experiment supported the effects that Sonic Meditations seemed to have. In the twenty eight years that have passed since the beginning of my listening work Sonic Meditations have been performed in many parts of the world and musicologists are writing about them with keen understanding. This is very satisfying to me. I feel that I have been heard - that some people are listening. I resigned my professorship in 1981, moved to upstate New York and founded my own non-profit arts organization, Pauline Oliveros Foundation: Anchor for the Arts. Pauline Oliveros Foundation is intended to promote the creation of new works and collaborations. It is a platform to continue my Deep Listening work. Deep Listening Band is a project of Pauline Oliveros Foundation. Deep Listening Band celebrates a decade of collaborative work this year - ten years after recording Deep Listening which is accompanying my talk. The recording was made in an abandoned cistern in Washington State. The reverberation time is forty five seconds. This summer I will lead the Eighth Annual Deep Listening Retreat at Rose Mountain in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in New Mexico. Each summer twenty people come together for a week long intensive devoted to listening as the bridge to creativity and collaboration. There is an advanced retreat, a three year certificate program which qualifies the certificate holder to teach a Deep Listening workshop and a five year apprentice program leading to qualification to lead a Deep Listening Retreat. These programs are intended to help the participant integrate Deep Listening with their own creative interests and professions. In order to invoke the key note and to end my talk I would like to invite you now to try a Sonic Meditation called Sounds From Childhood. This will be the third performance and New York premiere of the piece. It has been done by audiences in Switzerland and in Silicon Valley California. * Sounds From Childhood * Can you imagine a time in your child hood when you loved to make mouth noises? Can you imagine freely making those sounds now? In the next five or more minutes make as many of those sounds as you want in spaces you hear and claim as your own. (c) Copyright 1998 Deep Listening Publications Top of Page <#top> Pauline Oliveros