

"Music is moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and a gaiety and life to everything. It is the essence of order and leads to all that is good, true and beautiful." --Plato

Both Sides Now

Music for teaching and learning is powerful, useful and effective in sustainability education.

Last week as I prepared to interact with a hundred pre-schoolers in a program called “Celebrate Earth,” a group of twenty children and their three teachers arrived an hour early. What I thought might be a disruption to my set-up and sound-check time turned into a delightful lesson for me. In a quiet corner of the auditorium, an experienced teacher calmly took the children through a series of songs about the Land Down Under, its animals, oceans and lifeforms. They were clearly well-versed with the idea of habitat. When I approached them with my giant 4-foot blowup globe, they showed me where Australia was, then went on to their next ecosystem, singing joyously as only confident 4-year olds can!

It was not a formal lesson, but clearly showed a teacher who loves the Earth and its diversity of life, sharing that love through music and motion with her charges.

What is it about music that has this magical effect on people of all ages? Why does it strike to the heart of our existence with a power that comforts the aged, lulls children to sleep (thus called a lullaby), tones us into helping find our spiritual center, gets our bodies sweatin’ to the oldies or swaying to a seductive tango? Why does the music during the scariest part of a horror movie intensify our dread of what might happen in the next scene?

At one level, music is only physics, the vibrations of this vast and ancient Universe, echoing in wind blown through a wooden or metal flute, hammered on tuned wires or old metal oil drums. It is only the movements of fingertips on nylon strings, only air pushed through shaped lips to whistle while we work. And yet:

"Music has Charms to soothe a savage Breast" (The phrase was coined by the playwright and poet William Congreve in *The Mourning Bride*, 1697.)

It seems easier to find effective teaching songs for younger children than tweens and teens. As students get older, music often falls to the bottom of the priority list in classrooms, as teachers are pressed to reach testing goals, and because it becomes more difficult to reach all the students with any one style of music, as they grow and individuate.

Older students also respond to music's power as a teaching tool. A few years back, an official with Tennessee Energy Education Network requested help evaluating a project she had developed for eighth grade students at a rural Tennessee school to teach energy conservation and new renewable energy technologies. Among the activity choices for students was writing and performing a contemporary rap or hip-hop song with an energy theme. That afternoon the gymnasium energy fair included several debuts of creative young teens singing and rapping original songs based on their new knowledge of methane production, bio-fuels, and solar energy. I believe that their research will stay with them in a deeper way because of its combination with musical immersion.

Medical educator, Dr. Mehmet Oz, with colleague Dr. Michael Roizen, recently wrote on the updated medical wonders of singing for adults, which include lowering blood pressure, faster recovery from strokes, repairing lung tissue, as well as producing the "bonding endorphin" oxytocin. Indeed, "We do not sing because we're happy, we're happy because we sing!" (Oz, & Roizen, 2011)

It may seem frivolous to focus on music, generally considered entertainment, during limited teaching time. Why play or teach a song about composting while an ecosystem unravels?

We face the greatest extinction rate since the loss of the dinosaurs and much of which can be attributed to the consequences of human actions and what we casually refer to as "progress." The environmental problems we face will require the work and creativity of every available individual and all of our myriad multiple talents to help enact solutions, if we desire life as we know it to continue. So why not include music—tone, melody, harmony, rhythm—in all its glorious combinations, in our menu of tools?

The late cultural historian Thomas Berry named efforts to learn to live in harmony with Earth and all its systems "the Great Work." Berry often spoke of our

need to reinvent the human, thereby changing the consciousness that created this disaster. He wrote that having reached the end of the Cenozoic era, we are now at a fork in the road and choosing either the route of the Technozoic era, where we will count on technology to solve all of our problems, or the Ecozoic era, in which we will learn to live in harmony with Earth's living systems. Which will it be? (Berry, 1999) (Berry, 2006) (see also (Kolbert, 2011)

Philosophers and historians of progressive movements, including Berry, note that once facts are gathered and critical information is known, it is up to the poets and playwrights, the singers and storytellers, movie makers and songwriters and authors to carry the message of the new consciousness of our critical choices into the culture. Encouraging people to find their own Great Work enriches our diversity of learning experiences. Music, for many is another language. We need every language available to translate our actions into a sustainable "Earthic," or ethic for Earth, wherever possible.

Recent neurological studies with sensitive sensors found that music "lit up" more portions of the brain than any other activity. Music engages us in a way that only music can. (Science News Staff, 2010)

The majority of us learned our ABC's by singing them to the tune of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, and as adults sometimes we *still* sing them under our breath while searching for a word in the dictionary. *Twinkle, Twinkle*, is a German folk song predating records, which Mozart learned as a small child and wrote into one of his early compositions. The simple ditty has survived and thrived, reworded to become the ideal song to teach the basic building blocks of our written language to the English speaking world—a clear example of the power of song!

If we want to develop the same level of literacy for the Earth that we have achieved for reading and writing, we need to be more effective in teaching the basics—the ABC's—of ecology.

There is an expanding body of music supporting sustainable education and lifestyle, with individuals and organizations grouping songs about the environment into lists and searchable data bases by topic. A group of professional wildlife biologists recently compiled one such list of songs that are specific to climate change. Teachers, I suspect, have been collecting and sharing lists of teaching songs at conferences since the term Environmental Education was coined. An internet search finds numerous other collections of songs about ecology,

environment, Earth Day, or on more limited topics like water conservation or habitat. Most of this writer's work as a composer and songwriter address some aspect of Earth Literacy. There are many resource songs like mine that have never been commercial hits but continue in sustainability use via word of mouth, compact discs and internet, including eco song listings. There are also lists that include universally known, popular songs such as Joni Mitchell's *Big Yellow Taxi*, John Denver songs, Marvin Gaye's *Mercy Me*, and many more contemporary works.

Two West Virginia colleagues have begun cataloging and digitizing their vast collection of more than 5,000 ecology songs, music for Earth and eco- tunes, in a variety of genres. Many are rare, some may be the only examples of songs or variations recorded from an earlier time. Knowing the decades-old recordings from a variety of rich ethnic backgrounds would be of interest to other **educators**, activists and music lovers, the collection must be lovingly protected. Database and references will be available on the web as a means to preserve these "rare species" for generations to come, enriching musical diversity, parallel to efforts to preserve and protect threatened and endangered species in the wild.

American folk musician, songwriter, and cultural icon Pete Seeger tells audiences that singing together strengthens the bonds of community. Singing helps to inspire and educate. Whether sung in part or entirely, in march time or waltz time, major or minor key, matters not. Some have singalong choruses; others cry for joining in on just a phrase or two. Some use a call-and-response structure, inviting participation, others zip a new phrase into each verse. Who can say that multiple strands of music *do not*, in some way, enhance efforts to care for Earth? Why not encourage a note of hope, compelling the listener to add a strand of her own voice—melody or harmony—to the fabric of song, helping grow the sustainability movement exponentially.

Seeger's insight on community may **reference** a chemistry principle in which the stronger the bonds in any element, the more stable and resilient is that element. It does not take much of a leap to see that communities with strong bonds between and among members appear to be more stable and resilient.

We cannot deny the historic power of blended, diverse voices singing *We Shall Overcome*, *If I Had a Hammer*, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, *Marching to Pretoria*, *John Henry*. Every major social movement has marched to the beat of its own songs to inspire, encourage, mourn, and celebrate. The environmental

challenges of our era are no different. A body of significant musical work expressing the energy of that movement is emerging, not unlike the songs which grew out of the abolitionist, labor, women's suffrage, the Civil Rights movement and the Great Depression.

Since the perfection of the human voice box, *circa* 50,000-100,00 BC, upright walkers with opposable thumbs have been expressing all manner of history, emotion, and **lessons** with music. For thousands of years, clans and cultures, tribes and nations, clubs and schools, churches and lonely hikers have used targeted tunes and words to invoke the gods and reach deeply into the human spirit, as well as to teach, explain, soothe and transform. Our challenges in forging a sustainable future are also inspiring new art and musical works which are chronicling the movement.

_____ In 2011 the Republic of Singapore holds the second annual national Eco Music Challenge. The 2010 Challenge garnered hundreds of original songs as entries, many with accompanying videos. Music abounds to infuse our population and our culture with creative melodies and lyrics to build a more eco-literate future. We need only open our minds and ears. (National Environment Agency Singapore, 2011)

Overload and Antidote

We are bombarded daily with information, statistics, advertising, news and entertainment. Many of us are numbed from information overload. The frightening and bleak picture of inevitable ecological consequences from nineteenth, twentieth, and 21st century technology and lifestyle keep many individuals from scratching the surface for deeper information, or oddly enough, from taking action.

There is before us new understanding of both the task and the tools for needed Environmental Education (EE). The task of education is daunting, as each day brings new signs of unraveling in the web of life, loss or threat to keystone species, assaults on oceans and forests.

Encouragingly, number and diversity of instruments in our collective tool bag is growing also. Great strides are being made in educational theory and practice, in brain research, community action, sustainable economics, and the sciences. (Gardner, 1999)

Local food supply, and Farmers Markets are a rapidly growing movement throughout North America. Often present at Farmers Markets, local bands or

musicians perform original songs or environmental tunes, like a soundtrack supporting the action, or an artisan systems approach!

How can we best and most convincingly support the information and remedial behaviors needed to stop and reverse ecological devastation? Music can help.

This lyric, using the wisdom of Chief Seattle, a Motown beat and Supremes-style backup singers is one example of a call to action:

Pay Attention

Pay attention to the trees, pay attention to the river

Pay attention to the bees...

Pay attention to the clouds, pay attention to the weather

Pay attention to everything you do to the Mother

 We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestor

 We are just borrowing it from our children,

Pay attention to the hills, pay attention to the water

Pay attention to the breeze...

Pay attention to the dreams, pay attention to the Wisdom

To the sisters and brother living close to the Earth

 Whatever befalls the Earth befalls our sons and daughters

 Whatever we do to the Earth, we do to ourselves.

Pay Attention to the birds, pay attention to the forests

Pay attention to the streams...

Pay attention to the snow, Pay attention to the glaciers

To the frostline and coastline, and coral beneath the sea

 This we know: The Earth does not belong to us

 We belong to the Earth.

Pay attention to the waves, pay attention to the ocean

Pay attention to the reefs.....

Pay attention to the heart, beating steady in the Mother

Or generations will pay for your ways.

We did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it
Whatever we do to the Web, we do to ourselves.

Joyce J Rouse© Rouse House Music (ASCAP)

Whole brain learning, that which nourishes both the left and right hemispheres of the brain, reaches learners more efficiently than a single style of instruction.

The seven billion inhabitants of our planet learn and absorb information in very different ways. Educators, scientists, and human development specialists are increasingly noting the benefits of experiential learning and the critical need to accommodate diverse learning styles involving multiple intelligences. Attention is also needed in honoring the emotional and social context in which learning takes place. (Gardner, 1999)

Of particular interest is the growing body of information and research concerning the affective domain. (Miller, 2005) (Koballa, 2006)

The affective domain, the realm of feeling and values, refers to a taxonomy developed to organize levels of learning with the following attributes: Receiving, Responding, Valuing, Organizing, and Characterizing. Each is presumed to build upon the previous level.

Affective learning is considered the “heart” or sensitivity realm of learning. Historically, it is the neglected domain of learning—particularly in the sciences. It is primarily started in the right side of the brain, where emotions are engaged and the deepest level of learning occurs. Whole brain learning, that which nourishes both the left and right hemispheres of the brain, reaches learners more efficiently than a single style of presenting ideas and facts. It also leads learners to care and feel responsibility for the subject.

Music, movement, and all facets of the arts are clear channels to affective learning. Earth Literacy through music is a powerful tool for sustainable change. For many professionals and activists, music in any form helps to overcome the discouragement inherent in this work, which can be overwhelming at times. Music, appropriate anger, and action are natural antidotes to despair. Repeating lyrics of songs that inspire and encourage, using them like a mantra, can help us reach congruence between what we teach and how we live. “Musi-versity” is a path to cultural diversity and helps refocus our worldview for sustainability.

This modern neuroscience tells us that learning which takes place connected to an emotion or to multiple sensory modes occurs in a deeper, longer lasting, more meaningful way, in the affective domain of the brain.

If through music and movement we are able to inspire students to see the rich biological, psychological, spiritual and cultural value of concepts like biodiversity, carrying capacity, climate change, and the hydrologic cycle, we can reach learners in a way more likely to affect their deep understanding and behavior outside of the classroom.

My husband worked in construction for many years. As job superintendent, after working months on big building jobs—schools, factories, and industrial buildings, he would instruct workers to pick up the office work shanty on the job and turn it 180 degrees. It served to give everyone involved a fresh perspective, another view, and often inspired new solutions to problems. “Turning the shanty” is our family term for looking with new eyes, another angle, a new perspective. Appropriate music in, out and between class time can have the same effect, because it reaches into different neuropathways of the brain.

to the future of all life on Earth

Early twentieth century physician and educator Maria Montessori advocated for the education of the whole child, using all the senses to immerse a child in learning. Music was a solid component of that whole child world, in a system of education which continues to grow and flourish today.

(Olaf, 2010)

Montessori education is emulated in myriad curricula, using all the senses and a giant dollop of music in early childhood education and on up through the higher grades. She advocated hands-on activities long before formal research pointed to its effectiveness.

Teachers should be encouraged to use songs, rhythms, and creative melody resources in background music, introducing a concept, or deepening and reviewing information. Teachers who are not knowledgeable about the array of sustainability music can work with music faculty to explore the lists of great recordings available, not only in popular music, but also in classical, jazz, blues, opera,

Hum a little of *Both Sides Now*

By teaching to both sides of the brain we increase the chances of all students to learn foundations of sustainable lifestyles. Singing, tapping, and rapping out lines that include examples of reduce, reuse, recycle, respect for forests and waterways, and new understanding of renewable energy will create and strengthen neurological pathways for a sustainable future. These words play on in the brain beyond schooling years, to remind learners of concepts and ideas critical

symphonic, Cajun, Native American and more. Think of it as music therapy for the Earth.

Outdoor education is powerful. There are many times when we can not be outdoors, but we can bring the outdoors inside with music, art, and visioning for when we can again be outdoors. I have been wandering meadows and mountains since I first learned the song “The Happy Wanderer” (Remember “Val-deri, Val-dera”?) as a child at 4-H camp.

Perhaps through our shared love of melody and harmony we can create a musical genre to coax “I-deaology” closer to “We-deaology” to better understand and share with our neighbors on our rapidly shrinking planet. Not just melody, but also metaphor and simile, alliteration and onomatopoeia, the secret magical devices of poets, urged on with major, minor and suspended chords, melodic lifts and descending bass lines, can connect us.

Why would we not use this rich, diverse cultural vehicle we call music, for its transformative and transformational lessons for the future of Planet Earth?

Molokai Music (Should this be a sidebar?)

Inspired and inspiring teachers on the island of Molokai, Hawaii have taught me volumes with their classroom use of music. With grant funds and inventive fundraising, pioneering teachers, Dara Lukonen and Vicki Newberry, have brought this songwriter on island more than once to work with their students. They creatively weave a variety of “green” music throughout the school day. Whether by habit, training, or culture, students seem to absorb lyrical intent, musical nuance and a sense of community as they work.

The teachers invited me to co-create something musical and personal for the students. Working with the entire class, students shared all the things they identified as special and unique about their island; natural history and cultural treasures, flora and fauna that could be found nowhere else on Earth. They debated special Hawaiian words they would like to hear in a song about their island. They spoke deeply and passionately about their ancient heritage. We made lists and discussed pictures they could paint with words and melody about their home in the Pacific Ocean. Over time and across the miles we created a song celebrating the unique ecological qualities of their island, worthy of study and conservation. They have now sung “Wind Wing and Wave” for global audiences, including the International Recycling Coalition in Tokyo. (The song title came as a suggestion

from teachers, because every living thing on their volcanic island got there by Wind, Wing or Wave.)

Like having a state song, or a college fight song, we take pride in our home through regional music. In writing lyrics with the students I learned much about their island home from their descriptions and shining eyes. The French poet Stendhal wrote, “The purpose of home is to make the heart leap.” I could almost see hearts leap as students spoke of watching giant sea turtles swim in the moonlight. Singing of these images with pride is a powerful strategy for preserving a future for giant sea turtles.

**Affective domain relates to:
emotions, attitudes, appreciations,
and values, such as:**

**enjoying
conserving
respecting
supporting.**

Wind, Wing and Wave

I come from a place called Moloka'i,
Born of Pele's fire and shaped by the sea.
Tiny seeds dropped by a passing bird
Brought ferns and forest, fruit and mystery.

Wind, wing and wave
We all got here the same way
Led by spirit to this paradise.
Hula and leis, Warm aloha is our way
Honihoni (big kisses!) from our Moloka'i

Rhythms of the ancient tides
Brought na kupuna (ancestors) to our sands
In canoes from distant isles—
New ohana to life's circle in our land.

Chorus
Seacliffs rise, the highest in the world
Watching over Kalaupapa (village) from above,
Native birds sing their island songs
Beside the ancient ponds we tend with love.

Chorus
Winds in the trees, rumble of the surf
You can even hear the great whales breathe

Honu (turtles) swims underneath the moon

We will work to keep this majesty!

Chorus

Written by Joyce Johnson Rouse and the children of PRISM program of Aka'ula School,

students of Ms. Dara Lukonen and Ms. Vicki Newbury

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Power of humor, music --different heading

Where are we going as a species? Could it be, as Woody Allen posits, that the flaw in the human species is that everyone wants to build and no one wants to do maintenance? Will the future humanoid species be a product of our lifestyles on Earth? I think so. Will humans carry music with them on the evolutionary journey? No doubt, music in some form. In the meantime we can lift up all the principles of healthy ecosystems, sustainable living, and greater understanding of our rich surroundings and use the power of music as we create a new “Earthic” for a sustainable future.

A friend says that North America is not a melting pot, where all the cultures and flavors melt into one. He claims that we are more like a gumbo, where each ingredient and culture retains its own flavor and identity, but adds to the rich complexity and makes the end product greater than the sum of its parts. Likewise, writer Barry Lopez suggests in *Arctic Dreams* that no one culture owns wisdom. This writer would add we need the wisdom and experience of every culture on the planet to be a wholistic planetary community. (**One of many lessons we might learn from indigenous or more Earth literate cultures is the integration of art, music and self-expression into every aspect of daily life.**) From tribal chants honoring Earth's wisdom to the Monty Python songbook with *Expanding Universe*, to Aaron Copeland's symphonic Grand Canyon Suite, let's embrace the whole spectrum. Why not treat our students, children or adults, to a smorgasbord of rich, diverse music that sparks the neurons to make connections to the natural world which might not happen with an experiment, lecture, worksheet or field trip?

Less “either/or,” more “both/and.”

Music playing as students enter the classroom, or quietly during work time can set a positive tone if it does not distract. An underlying rhythm and melody that enhances learners understanding of earth science and expands their hearts for all life is the music of the ages, distant echoes of the tones that reverberated from the initial flaring forth. It has been blossoming forth from day one, even to now, on

this tiny speck of the timeline of history on which we perch. So let the music play in tones and forms that catalyze actions of respect for Earth, encourage love, yes, love for our habitat. Only by that love will passion for conservation and preservation of wilderness forge on. There at the edges of wilderness and tameness is where life creeps forward in new adaptations and forms that might just survive as future specks on that time line of history.

Following are the responses of traditional and nontraditional educators invited to comment on their own experiences of using music in sustainability education.

Verbs applicable to the affective domain include

accepts
attempts
challenges
defends
disputes
joins
judges
praises
questions
shares
supports
volunteers.
shares supports
volunteers.

Music stimulates the deep taproot of human passion and motivation. Hymns motivate us to reflection. Anthems motivate us to celebration. Work songs stimulate us to buckle down and do what needs to be done. We need equal parts reflection, celebration and hard work to achieve environmental sustainability. Let us therefore use music to help us get there.

—Craig Wagner, Chairman, Musicians United to Sustain the Environment (MUSE www.musemusic.org)

Often the ‘message’ of my all-day programs on Earth themes is beautifully summarized in musical form, so I use CDs, usually prior to a ‘reflection period.’ Many times it has lightened a heavy day on our planet’s many challenges ... to help us realize what Rabbi Heschel means when he says, “We are the cantors of the Universe.”

—Sister Paul Gonzales, retired biology professor, OH
namer of our species *Homo Consumerensus*

Environmental music celebrates and appreciates connection to place and every living thing; it calls for a community of people to rise in defense of rivers, oceans, forests, and the diversity of life. Musicians from all walks of life, from Nashville to the Black Hills, from the Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame to Pete Seagar's Hudson River Sloop, remind us that we are not alone, many people care and are seeking solutions. This music calls us to be mindful of our own actions, to take less, destroy less, consume less, and appreciate the gifts of the earth.

—Traci Hickson and Dennis Hendricks, founders

Somebody's Habitat

A long time ago before Columbus got found
A squirrel could run without touching the ground
From the coast of Carolina to the Mississippi
Just living and loving and flying through the trees
Living and loving and high fiving in the trees

Then progress came along with axes and saws
They cut the big timber for a pretty good cause
Houses and churches and schools and such
Nobody thought they were cutting too much
Maybe its time to say, "Hey, baby, we're cutting too much."

chorus: Whoa -oh! Oo-ee! That thing is more than a tree!
Its sponge and its filter, and climate control,
Its biodiversity and part of your soul.
Its home and its shelter for eagles and cats.
And we're writing our future off on habitat.

Now the sawmills and chips mills are grinding away
A billion tons or so every day
Clear cutting old growth in no time flat
To print Hollywood gossip and somebody's stats,
And political baloney on Habitat

Now we're grinding up little teenage trees
To catch a snoutful of snot when we sneeze.
The land is left degraded and cracked
And we're wrapping our burgers in habitat,
And blowing our noses on somebody's habitat.

chorus

Sending holiday greetings on habitat
What do the eagles think of that?

Wiping our butt—ons off with habitat

Shining out booties with habitat

Credit card offers and paper sacks

Wally World flyers and baseball bats

Pallets and crates and birthday hats,

We're diapering our babies with Habitat

Diapering our babies with some other baby's habitat

Maybe its not too late to be,

Living and loving in harmony

Instead of writing our future off on habitat.

We could be Lovin' our babies by saving some other babies' habitat

©2004 Rouse House Music (ASCAP) As recorded by Earth Mama on *Under the Rainbow* CD

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Song Lists:

<https://linktr.ee/EarthMamamusic>

[Albums of Earth Songs - Planet Patriot](http://planetpatriot.net/songs/) [https://planetpatriot.net/songs/](http://planetpatriot.net/songs/)

Artists with multiple eco-music resources:

Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Peter, Paul and Mary, John Denver, Joan Baez, Malvina Reynolds, Raffi, Green Day, Utah Phillips, Marvin Gaye, Bruce Springsteen

Search Words:

affective domain

Earthic

Earth literacy

ecomusic

Eco Music Challenge

ecosystem

environmental music

habitat

Maria Montessori

Molokai

multi-sensory learning

music and health

sustainability music

The Great Work

Thomas Berry

whole brain learning

wholistic culture