SUMMARY

Development of Sound Education Menus
Utilizing Characteristics of the Auditory System:
Observations from Workshops on Listening to Ambient Sounds

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This report focuses on “sound education” and introduces ideas I have developed for new sound education menus. The purpose of sound education is, first, to have participants become aware of background sounds that they normally tend to miss, and then to temporarily alter their auditory framework based on this new awareness.

Sound education can be applicable not only to professionals involved with sound or music, but to many other fields concerned with auditory or other physical sensitivity. The criteria for selecting tasks for a menu are: (1) participants can do them alone, (2) the equipment required is readily available, (3) they are simple, (4) they lend themselves to sharing reactions with others, and (5) they are enjoyable, with elements of playing with sound. From October to December 2015, I had students in several university courses that I teach try out sound education menus and write freely about their responses, and I built and tested menus with the aid of these comments.

I propose that in building menus, utilizing the sensory characteristics of the human auditory system, one should arrange the tasks in the following order: external auditory impressions, internal auditory impressions, internal auditory interpretation, external auditory interpretation. In addition, I have constructed a warm-up menu, a menu focused on connections between sound and other physical sensations, a menu using mechanical sound reception, and a hearing protection menu.

I conclude that sound education activities should aim to develop a balanced auditory awareness capable of switching between listening to “foreground sounds,” of which we are conscious, and “background sounds,” which we perceive at a preconscious level. It is to be hoped that sound education menus will be developed in a variety of fields, not only sound engineering and music. Further, I hope that this work will encourage other people who are interested in the new perspectives offered by sound to put sound education menus into practice, and that this will prove stimulating to their current work and will yield new sensory experiences.