EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: The Bleeding Edge
Subject: Loren Chasse
Discipline: Sound Art

SECTION I - OVERVIEW ...
SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT ...
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Sound artist Loren Chasse recording “found” sounds.
Still image from SPARK story, July 2004.
EPISODE THEME
The Bleeding Edge

SUBJECT
Loren Chasse

GRADE RANGES
K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
Music, Science & Language Arts

OBJECTIVE
To introduce students to sound art as an expressive medium through the work of sound artist Loren Chasse

STORY SYNOPSIS
Loren Chasse activates the sounds of nature and architecture. A sound artist active in both solo and ensemble projects, Chasse seeks out unusual acoustic environments in which to record unique and unlikely sounds. SPARK follows Chasse as he hunts for interesting sources and teaches a class of students about fundamentals of sound.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing as a group
Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance
Hands-on individual projects in which students work independently
Hands-on group projects in which students assist and support one another
Critical reflection on personal expressions and how they are seen and received by others

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES
To introduce students to sound art
To provide context for the understanding of sound art in relation to other forms of art and music
To inspire students to experiment with sound for expressive means

EQUIPMENT NEEDED
SPARK story about sound artist Loren Chasse on DVD or VHS, TV, and appropriate player
Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer
Cassette player, CD player, or computer audio program

MATERIALS NEEDED
Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
Pencils, pens, and paper

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED
Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one’s own body, control in handling objects
Interpersonal - awareness of others’ feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Intrapersonal - awareness of one’s own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems
Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically

See more information on Multiple Intelligences at www.kqed.org/spark/education.
Loren Chasse activates the sounds of nature and architecture. A sound artist active in both solo and ensemble projects, Chasse seeks out unusual acoustic environments in which to record unique and unlikely sounds. In "The Bleeding Edge," Spark follows Chasse as he hunts for interesting sources and teaches a class of students about sound.

Chasse works like a visual artist, creating a palette of unique and interesting sounds from the natural world to create sonic landscapes. In an effort to find strange and evocative sounds, Chasse explores unlikely sources, including industrial ruins and natural environments, using the site as both instrument and studio. With the aid of a microphone and MD recorder, Chasse is able to collect the sounds of these places for later use in his compositions.

At the heart of Chasse's work is an interest in and willingness to listen. He is continuously drawn to seek new acoustic possibilities beyond those of traditional musical forms and instruments. He credits his work with young people for helping him to recognize the importance of listening, a valuable lesson that he passes on to his students as a teacher in the San Francisco Unified School District. Spark follows Chasse and a group of young people from the Julia Morgan Center for the Arts's summer camp as they take a "listening hike"—searching for and exploring of the sounds of the environment.

Chasse has completed many sounds projects and boasts a discography of over twenty recordings as a solo artist and in collaboration with others. He has also worked with bands, such as Thuja and idBattery, adding his found sound to their music. Chasse is also the Director of Education of the sound arts collective 23five, a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the awareness of sound in the public arena.

THE BIG PICTURE

The origin of sound art dates back to the advent of innovative visual and musical works that responded directly to the cacophony of the new urban metropolis in the early 1900s. Embracing the new modern landscape and experimenting with its accompanying mechanical noises, artists and musicians began composing and performing pieces using the sounds of industry and the urban world as their instruments.

In the late 19th century, the German Romantic style of music, with its sweeping orchestral compositions based upon the diatonic scale was very popular. The term diatonic refers to any scale of five tones and two semitones produced by playing the white keys of a keyboard instrument. The diatonic scale is considered important because of all possible seven note scales it has the highest number of consonant intervals—the highest number of tones that are pleasing to ear when played together. The most popular composers of the time, Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner, followed the rules of harmony and the diatonic scale to create consonant music, which was felt to be expressive of the beauty of nature and the romantic ideals of the period.
THE BIG PICTURE (continued)

However, by the end of the century, many artists and composers had rejected Romanticism, seeking instead to embrace the new ideas associated with modernity, at odds with the pastoral idealism of the 19th century. Musical innovations such as the advent of the 12-tone music and the idea of dissonance and atonality effectively eliminated the domination of 19th century traditions, and opened a wide field of possibilities for composers.

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) was a violin-player and composer whose body of work connected post-Wagnerian musical traditions with new musical forms, and laid the groundwork for atonal music and sound art. Schoenberg’s innovative compositions were quickly followed by a virtual revolution among composers throughout Europe and the United States, as musicians began to experiment with atonal music, dissonant counterpoint, and an expansion of the classical relationships that bound pitch, color, and form. The effective result of the new musical developments taking place everywhere in the early years of the 20th century was the weakening or elimination of any singular understanding of traditional functional tonality.

New innovations also came through the works of Futurists artists Filippo Marinetti and Luigi Russolo, and Dada artist Hugo Ball, all of whom made large contributions to the creation of sound art. Marinetti was a member of the Italian Futurists, a group of artists who were interested in embracing modernity in their work, exemplified in speed, industry, violence, automation, and pollution. The movement encompassed spoken word as well as visual and performing arts, and their primary focus was on expressing the dynamic and sometimes violent culture of the 20th century. In his sound poem Zang Tumb Tumb (1914), Marinetti imitated and glorified the sounds of the urban landscape and its machines. In 1916, Hugo Ball, a German Dada artist, read a “sound” or “simultaneous” poem at Cabaret Voltaire, an energetic performance of cacophony, including whistling, sighing, grunting, coughing, and singing. Convinced the modern language no longer held meaning thanks to irresponsible journalism, Ball sought to create “verse without words,” reading the pages of his poem from three music stands standing on the three sides of the stage facing the audience.

The work of Ball and Marinetti was further explored by Luigi Russolo, another Futurist artist, who sought to capture the essence of modern urban life with a range of revolutionary musical approaches and techniques. A defining characteristic of Futurist music is the rejection of traditional instruments and their replacement with the sounds of industry–factories, railways, autos, airplanes, and other machines. Although Futurism was short-lived, during its time it had far-reaching influence on many composers and helped to foster new and experimental music.

From the end of World War II to today, more and more electronic and recorded sounds have become part of the technical musical palette, including a variety of genres of sound art and musical composition such as noise art, musique concrete, sound poetry, serialism, minimalist composition, and biofeedback, among others. Composers who used existing or found sounds, such as Edgard Varése, Henry Cowell, John Cage, and Lou Harrison soon had accumulated a vast diversity of new sources, materials, and ideas from which to compose their work. These artists further expanded the exploration of instrumentation, using both traditional and non-traditional instruments, and playing them in new ways, such as strumming, scratching, or scraping the inside of a piano and its strings. New compositional techniques were also used, such as layering multiple recorded and electronically produced sounds together to create new colors.

John Cage was one of the first artists to attach contact microphones to instruments, scratching the microphone heads, and creating electronic distortion and feedback to achieve new sounds. He also worked to take away the “rational” control of the composer, and instead, placed increased importance on the performer. To do this, Cage would present performers with a general graph or road map of the composition, giving them a range of sonic choices to make, but left the actual choices up them, so that there would always be an element of chance and unpredictability in the outcome.
THE BIG PICTURE (continued)
Most of these traditions continue today as many artists around the world such as Loren Chasse seek to create new pieces using every available technique. Further advancements in technology only increase the possibilities for composers of new and experimental music. The inclusion of natural sounds with industrial sounds in re-mixes, alternative, industrial, techno, and hip hop music help to create a rich and layered soundscape, with direct connections to the present context.
### TEXTS

#### GENERAL


**Site of Sound: of Architecture & the Ear.** Brandon LaBelle, Steve Roden, Smart Art Press, 1998.


#### TEXTS (continued)

**PUBLISHED WRITINGS BY LOREN CHASSE**


#### WEB SITES

- All Music - A comprehensive database with information on bands, individual artists, music reviews, descriptions of genres such as avant-garde, movies, plus much more. - [http://www.allmusic.com](http://www.allmusic.com)


- Loren Chasse’s Web site, including a list of works, biography, approach, and performances. - [http://www.23five.org/lchasse](http://www.23five.org/lchasse)

- New American Radio – A project of more than 300 commissioned or distributed work by sound artists and composer, including on-line listening capability. - [http://www.somewhere.org/NAR/NAR_home.htm](http://www.somewhere.org/NAR/NAR_home.htm)

- Reverberant – Website by artists Iain Mott, Marc Raszewski, Jim Sosnin, and Tim Barrass exploring the physical relationship between sound and the public with sculpture, audio electronics, and video. - [http://www.reverberant.com](http://www.reverberant.com)
WEB SITES (continued)
Scaruffi – Scaruffi is a massive music database containing music reviews, historical information about the history of rock music, artist profiles and a great links to all kinds of other music sites. Piero Scaruffi is a cognitive scientist who has been a visiting scholar at Harvard and Stanford Universities, has written three books on Artificial Intelligence and Theories of the Mind, published hundreds of articles on magazines, and is a member of the Cognitive Science Society. As a music critic, he has written six books on rock and roll and two books on avant-garde music. – http://www.scaruffi.com/vol5/chasse.html

Sound Art at Mass MOCA – Sound art exhibitions (ongoing) at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Massachusetts. - http://www.massmoca.org/visual_arts/sound_art.html#top

Sound Culture – The International sound art festival “focused on the creative use of sound outside of the field of music by practitioners based in the Pacific region.” The site includes links to individual festival Web sites and articles on Sound Culture 96. - http://www.soundculture.org

Sound Site – Educational website about sound sponsored by IBM as part of The Sound Project, a collaboration between the Minnesota Orchestral Association and the Science Museum of Minnesota. Sound Site was created with the assistance and input of elementary school classes at the Franklin Music Magnet and the Linwood A+ Elementary Schools in Saint Paul and the Armitage and Barton Elementary Schools in Minneapolis. Site includes activities, discussions, performance, and audio files. - http://www.smm.org/sound

Sound Travels – A gateway and information site about different events, programs, and opportunities in sound art. - http://www.soundtravels.ca/soundtravels/index.html

SoundPlay – An annual event that puts sound art in context with visual art and words. - http://www.soundplay.ca/index.html

MEDIA

AUDIO

LOREN CHASSE DISCOGRAPHY
Solo Work ~
Exfolia Motors, Unique Ancient Tavern, CD 2000.
Coelacanth (with Jim Haynes), Blessed/Cursed, CD 2001.
Fantasy Apparition, S'agitarecordings, 2002.

Compilations ~
"lily's remains", Halana #4 (Magazine w/CD), 1999.

With Brandon LaBelle (with musical/sound group id Battery) ~
Lily Events, Unique Ancient Tavern CD, 1996.
Inferno From an Occult Diary, S.I.W.A. LP, 1999.

With musical/sound group Thuja ~

With the musical/sound group Blithe Sons ~
We Walk The Young Earth, Family Vineyard, 2003.
MEDIA (continued)

AUDIO
Other Suggested Listening ~
Luigi Russolo, Risveglio di una Città, Futurism and Dada Reviewed, Les Temps Moderne.
Edgard Varèse; Poème Électronique, Music of Edgard Varèse, Sony Music.
Karlheinz Stockhausen; Studie II, Stockhausen (3); Elektronique Music, Stockhausen Verlag; Kontakte.
John Cage; Cartridge Music, John Cage: Music for Merce Cunningham, Mode Records

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

Aquarius Records – San Francisco – Great source for experimental music as well as everything else.
Address: 1055 Valencia Street, San Francisco 94110.
Phone: 415/647.2272, fax 415/647.3447, and email: store@aquariusrecords.org. Web site: http://www.aquariusrecords.org

Bay Improviser – Web site offering links to local artists, concert schedules, music reviews, and other improvisational music resources. –
http://www.bayimproviser.com

Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College – Oakland – One of the country’s foremost contemporary music programs, including regular performances for the public. –
http://www.mills.edu/academics/undergraduate/music/center_contemporary_music.php


Acoustic
Of or pertaining to sound, hearing, or the science of sound; a term for music not amplified electronically

Ambient Sound
A term referring to the sounds that surround or encircle any particular environment

Anarchy
The absence of any form of political authority; in music, the absence of common guidelines or cohering principle

Cacophony
Harsh, dissonant, or jarring sounds

Contact Mike
A microphone placed in direct contact with an object

Decrepit
Broken down and weakened from age or hard use

Debris
Scattered remains of something broken or in ruin

Edit
To put together different parts of a piece of music, writing, or film by cutting, splicing, and combining together to create a whole

Environment
The physical surroundings of any location

Experimental music
A term used to describe music that is highly free in form, and employs the use of non-traditional objects as instruments to create unique sounds and compositions

Evoke
To call forth, as in a memory; to bring to mind

Flanging effect
A delay effect that has been available in recording studios since at least the 1960s, described as a kind of “whoosh” passing subtly through the sound

Incorporate
To combine or merge into one entity

Inspire
To stimulate to creativity or action

John Cage
20th century American composer who wrote many new works using avant-garde or experimental musical techniques and concepts

Listening
The act of hearing but with special attention place on comprehension of what is being spoken or played

Literacy
The ability to read and write

Manipulation
To handle or operate by skilled use of the hands

Microphone
A technical instrument used to convert acoustical waves into an electric current, that is then fed into an amplifier, recorder or broadcast transmitter.

Palette
A flat piece of wood or metal on which an artist places different colors of paint before painting

Punk Rock
A musical movement that sprang up in the 1970’s, characterized by loud, hard-driving rhythms on percussion, electric guitar, and bass, and usually associated with the expression of alienation, social unrest, and anarchy
Reflected
The instance of sound, light or heat being thrown or bent back from an image

Ruins
The remains of something destroyed, decayed or disintegrated

Self-expression
The act of expressing one’s own personality or emotions, as is often done through art

The “field”
In areas of study like music or anthropology, musicians and scientists go directly into the environment in which they are conducting research in order to understand it better. Sometimes stated as “going into the field,” it can sometimes literally be a field or other natural environmental space, or it can be an urban or other setting as well.

Trajectory
The path of a moving particle, object, or historical development
SECTION V – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Listening to the Environment
Ask the class to sit quietly with their eyes closed for one to two minutes and listen to the ambient sounds of their immediate environment. Ask each student to note the different sounds they hear, from the faintest to the loudest. Afterwards, ask students to name the sounds they heard and make a list. Assign this same exercise for students to do at their homes, while walking to school, or at another location (such as a class, sporting event, etc).

Talk as a group with students about how much of their world they understand through hearing and listening. Pose the following questions to develop the range of the discussion:

- How does hearing affect the rest of the senses?
- How does hearing impact and shape the way we apprehend information and process stimuli?

After discussion, invite students to undertake the listening exercise independently again (in a different location), this time paying close attention to how the sounds of the environment affected their understanding of where they were. Ask students to report back to the class about their experience.

Create a Sound Environment.
Have students create an environment of their choosing using sound effects alone. Break the class up into teams of four to six and ask each group to decide on what place they will create. Then, using only sounds (no verbal language) have the students create their environment. Suggest different locations, like a metro or train station, school bus, jungle, shipyard, factory, etc. In addition to using voice to create sounds (vocalizations), invite students to use found objects or those objects available in the classroom to create sounds, such as metal objects (spoons, paperclips), paper (crinkled, folded, torn), straws, water (dripping or running).

As one group initiates their sounds, ask all other students to close their eyes. Challenge the class to guess the environment/location. If the right technology is available, record the sounds and then play them back to the class, asking each group to evaluate their “performance.”

Listening to Loren Chasse
Buy one of Loren Chasse’s solo recordings (see Resources) and (after watching SPARK) play one or two selections for the class. Encourage students to allow the sounds to evoke images – let their minds wander.

Challenge students to create ideas about where they might think a sound originated. Ask students to:

- Identify the different natural objects used to create the sounds
- Whether the sound piece conjures images of another place? A dream?
- How Chasse uses noises/sounds as means of artistic expression.
- How is sound shaped?
- How can it be described texturally?
- What are the dramatic effects of the sounds?
- Do the sounds imitate nature? Technology? Machines?

RELATED STANDARDS
MUSIC
Grade 1
5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS
Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Music to Learning in Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers
5.1 Recognize and explain how people respond to their world through music.

Grade 3
5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS
Connections and Applications
5.1 Identify the use of similar elements in music and other art forms (e.g., form, pattern, rhythm).
Listening to Loren Chasse (continued)
As a writing assignment, have students write poems or short stories based on what they hear in the sound works, referring to the place, location, or how the sounds were recorded.

Develop this activity by using poetry, spoken word, or visual images for inspiration, and encouraging students to create a piece of experimental music or sound art, of say 15-20 notes or seconds or sounds, in response to the images they see in their minds. Remind students that despite what it sounds like, every piece of music or sound art has a beginning, middle and end, including silence, which is an important part of music.

SPARKLERS:
* What transforms sound into art? Is sound in everyday life art? Is Chasse’s work “art”? Does it achieve the status of “art” because it is labeled such by the art world? Debate these issues with students.

Recording Project (continued)
To build on this experience, after listening to the larger piece, students could plan a second piece, making different decisions about layering and sequence based on some kind of criteria. For instance, the group decides that in the second piece only sounds must alternate from hard to soft, creating a wave or peak-and-trough effect. Or, students could decide that scratchy sounds should never follow watery sounds, etc.

Scoring Sounds (11 or 12th grade students)
Visit the following Web site on Edgard Varèse, a composer who described himself as “not a musician, but a worker in rhythms, frequencies and intensities.” (http://www.zakros.com/mica/soundart/f02/varese.htm) Listen to his sound work Poeme Electronique, and look at its accompanying written score. When writing scores for new music, composers had to be quite creative when scoring notes for non-traditional instruments and electronic sounds.

Suggest that students create a score for a sampling of sound art works. Using the recordings listed in the Resources section, or others available on CD or on-line, challenge students to devise their own notation system to express:
- length or duration of notes (how many seconds something takes place),
- volume,
- texture,
- other sound qualities (i.e. watery, metallic, how rocks sounds when struck, wind, etc.).

Composers often create a “key” that explains the kinds of symbols he/she is using, and what they mean. Have students create a key that describes the symbols for their different “instruments” or sounds or notes.
SPARKLERS:
* Sound Writing - Write a short essay or free verse poem describing a walk home from school or in the woods by sound - an audio journey or diary.

* In the SPARK episode, Loren demonstrates a metal bowl called a singing bowl. Once struck, the bowl rings for a very long time. Experiment with a variety of found objects in the classroom. What sorts of objects resonate longer? What sorts resonate shorter? Why? Fill the objects with water and test how sound travels through liquids. How does sound travel through solids? The air?

Discuss the concepts of dissonance and consonance. What is a dissonant sound? What is a consonant sound? Using the standard definitions for the terms from a dictionary, ask students to cite examples of each. Talk about popular attitudes towards both types of sound and how these might bias a listener.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at http://www.kqed.org/spark/education.

For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/