

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
Interactive Presentations - IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (IP)

Author: Mrs. Lauren Knight  
University of Toronto, Canada

SOUNDWALKING THROUGH SPACE: EXPLORING THE SONIC INTERPLANETARY AND  
COSMIC IMAGINARY

**Abstract**

Sounds can inspire and unsettle through their ability to open new sensorial relations; for example, the sonification of a black hole might evoke unease for some and calmness for others, shifting an individual's understanding of this galactic mass. Listening from the terrestrial, our interactions with the sonic interstellar emerge primarily through modes of translation (sonification, frequency manipulation) and transmission (mission audio). 'Soundwalking through Space' is an audio project in the early stages of development. The work aims to address the question: How might deep listening and soundwalking be enacted beyond the boundaries of terrestrial perception, to uncover the real and imaginary relationships between space and sound?

Deep listening, as coined by Pauline Oliveros, suggests that one closely attend to the acoustic environment by focusing on dissolving their limiting boundaries of perception. I pair this theoretical approach with the method of soundwalking, as outlined by Hildegard Westerkamp, to be "any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are." (Westerkamp, 2001, p.1). Utilizing facets of deep listening through forms of imaginary interplanetary soundwalking, I aim to develop a link between space, culture, and humanities as artistic practice rooted in public engagement.

The project invites listeners of all ages to embark on a mediated soundwalk with headphones to consider our sonic relationship to interstellar exploration and possible cosmic futures. The audio piece will be designed as a guided narrated soundscape depicting one's transition from earth to space, and back again. This experience will be accompanied by various sonic cues (sonification of space data, recordings from previous missions, VLF – very low frequencies – radio waves from space). The goal of this piece, in essence, is to invite a form of sensory ethnography and deep situated listening practice to the interstellar, to open cosmic sonic research as an invitation to listen. I intend to finish this audio piece early fall 2024, with the hope that individuals or groups may be able to embark on their own soundwalk during the conference itself.

As a transient disruptive deep listening audio piece, the project has potential to become an international invitation to shared listening practice, while garnering interest and engagement in the sonic dimension of space.