



Linda's Tai Chi Weekly Handout May 2, 2021

A Moment of Awe: The Sound of Silence



Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence

This is one of my all-time favorite songs and duo. “*Sounds of Silence* is the second studio album by Simon & Garfunkel, released on January 17, 1966. The song had earlier been released in an acoustic version on the album *Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.* and later on the soundtrack to the movie *The Graduate*. Without the knowledge of Paul Simon or Art Garfunkel, electric guitars, bass and drums were overdubbed by Columbia Records staff producer Tom Wilson on June 15, 1965. This new version was released as a single in September 1965, and opens the album. (Wikipedia). When asked about the meaning of the song, Garfunkel is reported to have said that the song is about “people’s inability to communicate with each other and to connect emotionally.”

If I may, I will take literary license here to present the Sound of Silence not as intended by Simon and Garfunkel but from the perspective that the silence we experience from nature and the natural world is inspiring, uplifting, and improves our health and wellbeing. Sometimes, silence is golden.

When I write about “Moments of Awe”, I usually share images of stars, nature, full moons, clouds, like lenticular clouds, rare comets, rivers, waterfalls and the international space station. These are all visual images that have the capacity to invoke awe. But what I invite us to consider in the Sound of Silence is the absolute joy in the sounds of the natural world, free from the noise of our modern way of life. We experience noise in our daily life- machinery, trucks, leaf blowers, vehicles on the freeway and roads, music in elevators, malls, restaurants. We often think of this kind of sound as noise pollution.

Have you noticed that one of the positive outcomes of the pandemic is the return of the wonderful sounds of chirping birds, the wind in the trees, rustling leaves, babbling brooks and the water fall in Whatcom Park? Like the awe we experience from the visual world, the auditory world is as calming, joyful and good for our health.



Please know that this is not a political statement on my part. My purpose is to acknowledge the intrinsic benefits of quiet. When quiet is defined, it is associated with words such as calm, tranquility, gentleness, easygoing, unobtrusive. Quiet is central to meditation, (T'ai Chi) which has been shown to improve health and overall well-being. The phrase "peace and quiet" is often used to reflect what so many of us seek after a hectic day at home or at work and suggests that one cannot have peace without quiet. (CHC*)

When noise is limited, we not only reduce the negative effects associated with noise, but add the richness of quiet to our lives. Perhaps you can find yourself in the woods, at the shore line, someplace free from the noise of the modern world to bask in the Sounds of Silence.

This is your moment of awe.

Peace, Linda



Contemporary Japanese artist Sawako Utsumi,

Of Note: if noise pollution is of interest to you and you wish to learn more, one of our member students who most of you know, Karl, is active in the Right to Quiet. He would love to hear from you. Ask him at the start of Shibashi class or contact him at Karl Raab info@quiet.org 1-778-737-2454. Karl lives in Vancouver, BC and was an active member of the Library Shibashi and Chair Tai Chi (until the pandemic) and joins us currently each week from his home in Vancouver BC.

*You can also find information at The Center for Hearing and Communication (CHC) website whose mission includes raising worldwide awareness of the deleterious effect of noise on our hearing, health and wellbeing. Founded in 1910, the Center for Hearing and Communication (CHC) is a not-for-profit human services agency committed to high-quality hearing health services and public education about the importance of healthy hearing practices. (CHC website)