

Perspectives on Global Issues Workshop: Sustainability 2017

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Germany (especially the Saarland Region) was the ideal location to study sustainability issues. Europe in general has had to grapple with the issues of diminished resources, over population, environment pollution, emissions control and renewable energy sources. Our workshop included numerous guest lectures from experts in the field from both the academic and the private business sectors, which provided much needed context for our field trips to a fully sustainable organic farm, wind energy sites, and others.

I found the history of the sustainability movement to be extremely useful for my personal reference but also for the classroom. I've slowly begun to integrate references to these issues into my music history courses. Learning this context further highlights the urgency of global change in the face of public and governmental resistance. The remaining twenty-year window for effective change is frightening, and I've initiated fruitful (well, mostly fruitful) discussions with family, neighbors, colleagues and students in order to increase awareness of this window.

Upon returning from the workshop, I immediately began to investigate composting techniques and the best indoor and outdoor receptacles. After purchasing a kitchen counter bin and the actual composter for the back yard. Our outdoor receptacle was full by summer's end. And we began using the compost for fall planting.

A crucial component of protecting the resources of our earth is the preservation of its human cultures. Next to the European Academy Otzenhausen (EAO) stands one of the largest Celtic circular wall forts (5th century BC) ever constructed. At the foot of the mountain is a Celtic village that is staffed almost exclusively by local volunteers, who aim to represent this ancient tradition. One hour from Otzenhausen is the city of Trier, one of the earliest Ancient Roman settlements in Germany and Germany's oldest city. Strasbourg, Alsace, formerly a German province, and Luxembourg are also in close proximity, which adds to the multicultural fabric of the region. More recently, the city of Saarbrücken has received a large number of Syrian refugees, and the city's residential districts are becoming segregated. This provided a valuable opportunity to observe how the arrival of a new culture in the region will affect how each will preserve their own cultural and especially musical traditions. In his article "Music and Sustainability", Jeff Titon refers to "worlds of music as ecological systems" (Titon, 2009). He further proposes that cultural policy towards music preservation should be guided by components of conservation ecology such as diversity, limits to growth, and stewardship. Thus the concepts addressed at this workshop can be applied to preservation of musical cultures as well, which was the main reason applied for the workshop.

In short, it is people who sustain musical traditions, which in turn sustains people (Titon, 2009). Music connects and creates communities, cultural "ecosystems" that contribute to the adaptive potential of humankind. It is one of earth's precious resources that must continue.