

Cascabel Meditation Description

This guided meditation was made with the intention of creating a multi-sensory experience that would metaphorically transport the listener into the intentional community Cascabel, which is located in the San Pedro river valley in southern Arizona. This ~20 minute sonic place-based exploration was formed by weaving together elements of prose and poetry, original instrumental music, and field recordings to tell the story of someone visiting this place for the first time.

The meditation can be divided into three main sections, and begins with a lush and intimate musical introduction that features bird song, ambient sound, and the main thematic line, played on Bb clarinet, that seeks to set an introspective mood and evoke a sense of sacredness.

The listener is then greeted by the narrator who gives the listener a brief introduction to some of the history and geographic features of the region. This is followed by an oboe singing an invocation chant with a Chihuahuan raven, who soars through the open sky above the first location the listener is introduced to—the Cascabel hermitage. The rest of the first half of the meditation takes the listener on a walk through the dry San Pedro riverbed where they find treasures hidden in the sand and relish in the beauty of the landscape.

The adoration of the Earth is then turned into concern, heralded by a crack of monsoon thunder, which then moves to anxiety, and then to mourning. The middle section seeks to speak to some of the many environmental changes that have impacted the region negatively, contemplating the future of this place. This section features a melancholy cry played on English horn through a raging storm—but as many of us who live in the Sonoran Desert know: with these powerful, raging storms comes life, hope, and even joy. The clouds clear with a reminder that there is, in fact, hope.

The third and final part of the meditation features the people, past and present, who have lived in communion with the land and actively fight for its protection. This begins with a jump back in time to visit an ancient Indigenous city, back to a campfire gathering with Cascabel's modern residents. The piece finishes with an abrupt interruption by some of the other inhabitants of the valley, serving as a gentle reminder of humanity's small place in a much larger, living world.