

Lungs of the Earth: English Transcript

0:00: The soundscape begins inside of the Amazon river, where water gushes rapidly.

0:10: Amazonian dolphins whistle as they swim. It seems they are communicating with each other. The river recording is meant to be interpreted as being from the Amazon River, but this particular field recording is actually taken inside a river in Québec, drawing a unique connection between Canada and Brazil.

0:55: A gong vibrates softly. The gong vibrates a second time, this time more boldly.

1:00 - 2:45: The first poem begins as gentle rainfall gradually builds to a storm. Cacique, Tinamou, and Piha birds chirp overhead. "They cast me away, blindfolded me, and took me to the other side of the great ocean river. They made me turn on myself seventeen times and nineteen times more. One of them prophesied, It won't be the last time you'll get lost. They'll make me forget my past as I try to grab my present. I'll lose count of the macaw feathers I

gathered and the scales of the anaconda will become patterns I won't be able to weave no more. When I memorise the ripples of the water, I'll become a woman, forgetting that I was once a fish. But in the strength of the rope, I'll unearth a stronger twist. I'll discover mazes that need to be drawn, maps that want to be imagined, threads that need to be wrenched and stretched. I'll finally recognise the cry of the Piha bird. In her scream, I will learn again how to call for my mothers and my sisters. Through the storm, I'll hear their voices. Thunders won't scare me anymore. And I will wear raindrops as necklace pearls."

2:45: End of first poem. Rain pours heavily. A gong vibrates, and the sensation circles across the forest.

2:55: A few birds stay put through the rain. A gong continues to vibrate, circling the forest.

3:20: A piha bird chirps boldly and their vibrations turn into thunder, trembling the ground. The rain intensifies. Thunder continues to tremble throughout.

3:40: Thunder trembles a few more times and then dissipates with the rain, finding a momentary calm.

3:55: Winds begin to stir.

4:00 - 5:35: The second poem begins as a forest fire sparks. It is soft at first, and then rapidly spreads. "I am in the middle of the jungle. I am in the middle of two worlds, crossing subterranean borders where tribes live in isolation to protect their vulnerability. I am a mile away from the river, haunted by traumatic visions, mirroring shadows on black waters. I am dancing to the beat of ancestral shamans. We are under an ayahuasca trance. They are telling me forbidden stories of fragile bodies and human remains. Their words are too violent to translate. I walk backwards, possessed by Curupira's spirit, among illegal plantations, patches of dead trees and mud. I burn with fury for the deceptive traces of destructive intruders. There is a dense cloud of smoke coming in my direction. It irritates my nostrils and my eyes. I can't stop coughing. I am dizzy. The sky is dark and red. I don't know where I'm going. Where is the forest? There is only fire, fire everywhere. My lungs are

suffocated. My vocal cords are asphyxiated. I am being burned alive.” The second poem ends.

5:35: The forest fire continues to escalate and toucans and zog zog monkeys panic as they flee the fire. While the underlying field recording of a forest fire is meant to evoke the experience of a burning event in the Amazon rainforest, this particular recording is actually taken from a forest fire near Yellowknife, once again drawing a unique connection between loss and damage experienced in Canadian ecosystems compared to Brazil. These stories are linked, even though we often consider them as separate.

6:15: Toucans and zog zog monkeys continue to cry as they attempt to escape the fire. The fire feels all-consuming, as if reaching a point of no return. Fire sparks across the forest floor and reaches as high as the tree tops.

6:45: Eventually, the fire dissipates, and all that remains is an ominous calm.

7:00 - 8:50: The third poem begins from the sky and winds carry a piha bird’s call from a great distance. “São Paulo is dense, smoke carries

darkness into day. Clouds erupt with ash, hovering, like a canopy. I watch the Tiête River flee as its waters turn black. What is the difference between day and night? Grief grabs hold of the sky, releases ash, it sinks into my skin. Suddenly I am coated. I whisper rain into polluted air, join clouds as they mourn and wait for a new morning. From the distance, I begin to hear echoes. A Piha bird bellows her cry. She must be 3,000 km from here, yet her voice drums across this city in protest. This barren city where the trees that once guided us here are long gone. I follow the Piha as she guides me back into the forest. I witness ancient trees break from great heights. All this will burn and burn and burn darker still. What will be left, dear sister? What stories will we tell our children?"

8:50: The third poem ends as winds continue to blow. There is a distant, muffled call from the piha bird, travelling miles through cloudy skies to reach the city.

9:00: The ominous calm returns. The space feels nearly empty. Light vibrations trickle across the sky in harmony with the distant piha bird's call.

9:30: There is nothing but a calm wind left, as if a soft breeze over a still lake.

9:40: Slowly, cicadas, crickets, toads and frogs begin to emerge from the forest floor, as if waking up from a long sleep. Their presence becomes more prominent and eventually takes over the space.

10:10: A gentle drum beats from behind the trees, as if nervous to emerge. Then another drum beats behind a different tree. Then another, until there are multiple soft drums beating, although not in unison. The cicadas, crickets, toads and frogs continue to gather.

11:00 - 12:50: The fourth poem begins. "If the defiant Piha bird could speak – or rather, if I could understand the urgency of her cry, would she still sing of the earth's story, or would all I hear is the lament of her warning? If the great kapok trees could talk – or rather, if I were capable of slowing down enough to listen, would they still have oxygen left to recite their poems, or will all I find are the bones of bodies burnt? If the final forest could breathe - or rather, if we paused to hear the people living within her lungs,

would she still teach us how to save ourselves, or will the smoke have choked her so relentlessly that all we'll have left is a graveyard? And if our earth unleashed her rage, her fire - or rather, if we stopped gouging out her soil and watering her with blood, would she still allow us to grow food in her belly, or will she be too sick and dust-filled to let us feed our children? And if those children heard the echoes of what we once had - or rather, if they discovered what we destroyed before they came, would they forgive us, would they replant all the life we stole, or will the colour green have lost all meaning?"

12:50: The fourth poem ends. The forest feels desolate. Birds chirp ominously in the background, as if lost. Someone shakes a shaker following no particular rhythm.

13:25: All four poets unite their voices in a chorus. "I hear the cry of the Piha. Sister, do you hear her cry? Sister, do you hear her call?"

13:37: The poets breathe in deeply, then breathe out in unison. Their exhalations build and become rushing winds.

14:00: Wind circulates the forest. Slowly, the forest begins to regenerate. The Cacique, Tinamou, and piha birds as well as the cicadas, crickets, toads, frogs, and other animals return. The forest feels relaxed, as if enjoying a sunny day.

15:15: A flautist plays a soft melody that sways with the trees. The forest fauna seem to be in harmony. There is a feeling of ease and calm.

16:15: A creek trickles softly in the background. Eventually, the sound intensifies and we are brought back into the Amazon river, which rushes with flowing water, and the soundscape loops from the beginning.