

A close-up photograph of a honeybee on a branch with white flowers and green buds. The background is a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

# *Singing with a Message: Preparing for & Debriefing the EDEN Experience*

*EDEN Engagement: Princeton  
Seed City Curriculum  
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**JANUARY 2023**



International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC)  
and  
Joyce DiDonato's

## EDEN ENGAGEMENT

### ABOUT

Three-time Grammy Award winning opera superstar Joyce DiDonato has created the global tour of EDEN, her major concert hall performance about environmentalism. Her personal commitment and partnership with ITAC has launched a re-imagining of the impact of a concert experience through teaching artist-led workshops in every city. The International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC) is the world-wide network of artists who work in community and educational settings, who have the skills to bring change to communities. Together ITAC and EDEN Engagement will pilot a new approach to prove that touring can be a legitimate and powerful tool for change in communities.

Cities on the tour are designated either "Root Cities" or "Seed Cities". Seed Cities are a 1-4 day(s) event that engages the youth with one of three specific environmental issues; Urban Gardens, Urban Trees, Food Choices:

- Urban Gardens: They are youth-friendly. Among many social benefits, they bring these environmental benefits: reduce carbon use (reduced food transport); reduce water runoff; help pollinators; plants absorb CO2 and pollutants and produce oxygen; health benefits in the food and the community building (reduced stress and blood pressure).
- Urban Trees: Trees are omnipresent and overlooked in cities—kid friendly. They can plant them, and the EDEN performance encourages that. Trees are powerful answers to heat mitigation (reduce temperatures by 8 to 10 degrees and need for air conditioning), carbon and pollution sequestration and oxygen production, water flow pollution reduction, biodiversity, and food insecurity. Health benefits include healthier air, psychological benefits, lowering blood pressure and stress.
- Food Choices: Scientists have proven that small choices make a big difference. Because many foods with a high health burden, including processed meats or red meats, also have high environmental costs, switching out 10 percent of a person's daily caloric intake can cut a person's food-based environmental footprint by over 30 percent. Between growing it, packaging it, moving it around, cooking it, and often wasting it, food production makes up about one-fifth to one-third of all annual greenhouse gas emissions globally. Eat less red and processed meats, eat more veggies and fruits, reduce food waste, and if you have a way...compost.

Teaching Artist: Emily Eagen

Participants: Princeton Girlchoir

Workshop length: 2 hours





# WORKSHOP

## WARM UP

- Breath – humming – basic grounding
- Singing/breathing/visualization
- The body as an environment – bones/muscles/nerves/organs
- The environment as an organism – moving around the space, different states of motion, spatial awareness
- "Tree" visualization exercise – fruit /tree/leaf/roots/branch/bark/ROOTS Improvisation movement and sound using the words: Sow, grow, drown, chop

## WATCHING THE VIDEOS

- What did you notice in the videos, either about Joyce and her singing or about the choir?
- What are some things that you saw or heard that resonated with you? How are the artists in these clips getting their message across?

## QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

- Partner chats ending in group chat – thinking like artists, thinking like activists
- "Which of your five senses is the most important to you?"
- "Have you ever written a song? Even a little song? How did you start writing it? What was the "spark"?"
- "Are singers artists? How?"
- "What is an example you can think of how art (including music) has made a difference?"

## POPCORN

- All students stand and I ask a question.
- If it applies to them, then they move and change seats. Example: Who is 12 years old?
- Who has a birthday this month? Who is left-handed? Who speaks a second language? Who plays an instrument? Who is a middle child? Who walks to school? Takes a vehicle?
- The goal is for kids to see that they have much in common despite their differences.

## BUILDING A SONG SNIPPET WITH MOVEMENT AND WORD PAINTING

- Grow, Chop, Sow, Drown – another word?
- Hand motions, layers – can we put this in motion? Walking around the room? In a circle?

## HAND-TRACING WHO-AM-I?

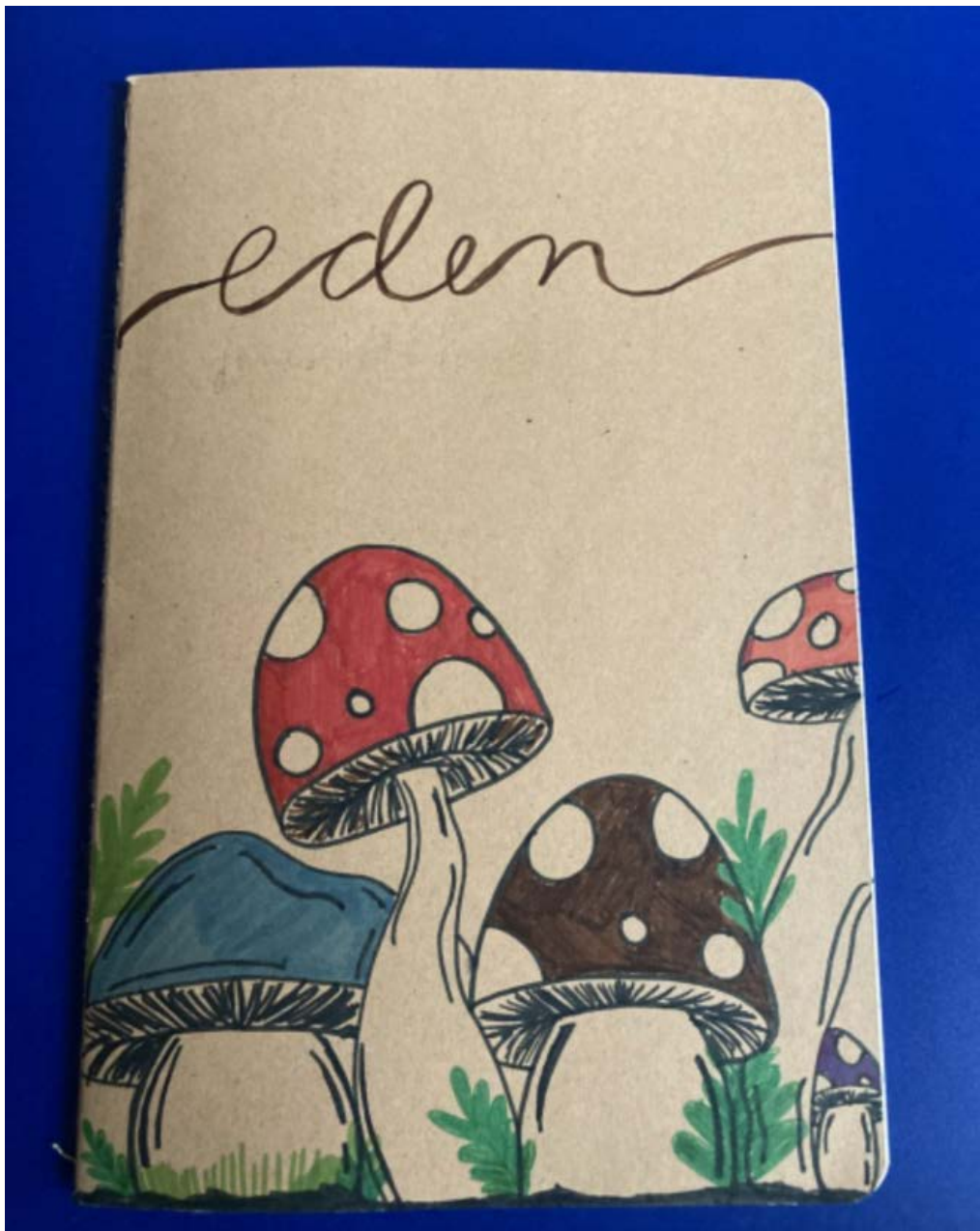
- Trace your hand on a page in your book. In each finger write the answer to the following questions: (pinkie to thumb), and in the middle of the hand write some things that make you YOU.
- 1) Favorite music
- 2) What calms you down?
- 3) Something you feel passionately about in the world – an issue, a cause, etc. 4) Something you think is very funny
- 5) A goal or dream you have for your life
- Walk around, mingle, then freeze and share each answer in small groups. Skipping #3, and do this last in the large group as a full discussion

### WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED – CREATIVE EXTENSION

- Moving from “I” to “We” – what can “We” do?
- Context of Civil Rights Movement – songs for collective action, strength, message Being planted by the water – means what? Your roots are nourished Teach it, share a few verse examples
- How should we change it?

### NATURE-BASED WRITING BRAINSTORM

- What is a natural thing in the world you feel connected to? (Draw concentric circles on page, thinking about what is near to you and what is far: go from the plants in your room to the trees on the street to a koala in Australia to the stars in the universe) What does it symbolize to you? What can you learn from it? Ideas? Ok, let’s put those back in! Use “We Shall Not Be Moved” as a “base” to change words and possibly melody









Night-Blooming Jasmine  
By Elise Witt

*In the darkness, we walk with light  
In the darkness, we walk with light  
Light the night-blooming jasmine, we light up the night  
In the darkness, we walk with light*



Round and Round  
Traditional, England/USA

*Round and round the earth is turning  
Turning always into morning  
And from morning into night*

Round and Round We Go  
John Krumm

*Round and round we go, we take each other's hand  
We weave our lives in a circle  
Our love is strong, the dance goes on*

My Roots Go Down  
By Sarah Pirtle

*My roots go down, down to the earth (3x) My roots go down  
I am a pine tree on a mountainside (3x) My roots go down  
I am a flower blowing in the breeze (3x) My roots go down  
I am a willow swaying through the storm (3x) My roots go down*

Turn the World Around  
By Harry Belafonte

*We come from the mountain  
We come from the mountain  
We come from the mountain  
Turn the world around  
We come from the water. . .  
We come from the fire. . .  
We come from the sky. . .*

Nanuma  
Traditional, Ghana

*(As we journey through life, have we done enough?)  
Nanuma, wy ee ay, nanuma*

We Shall Not Be Moved  
Traditional, African-American

*We shall not, we shall not be moved  
We shall not, we shall not be moved  
Like a tree that's planted by the water  
We shall not be moved*

This Pretty Planet  
By John Forster and Tom Chapin

*This pretty planet spinning through space, You're a  
garden, you're a harbor, you're a holy place  
Golden sun going down  
Gentle blue giant, spin us around  
All through the night  
Safe 'til the morning light*









# DEBRIEFING EDEN

## I. Group Discussion

Tom Shelton and I co-led this, and it was so useful to do this with him because he knew which students might have certain responses and he was great about drawing out answers from shy students and prompting certain students to share memories. Below are the questions I/we asked, with some of their answers interspersed:

- Tell me the story of your experience with the rehearsal and performance – what did you do? What do you remember vividly?
- What was your favorite part?
- What was surprising to you?
- What did you learn from Joyce as a singer? As a teacher? As a “curator?” (We discussed this word)

They answered these questions with such enthusiasm and in so much detail – it was so great to hear! First of all, they just loved Joyce. Everything about her was inspiring to them – her warmth, her sense of humor, her down-to-earth approach, her interest in them as singers, and her suggestions for singing and performing. A number of them said they had preconceived notions of what an opera singer would be like, and she broke all of them. We delved into this a little bit and talked about why they might have certain expectations – I think it goes back to age-old stereotypes of opera singers as formal and standoffish, and Joyce was so delightfully neither. One student said “I think of opera singers as, you know, holding their hands like this” (she put her hands in a poised clasp in front of her) and Joyce was more like this!” (she wiggled her arms in front of her, doing one of the fun gestures from the song.) It had a huge impact on all of them to meet Joyce and get to know her as a person. They really were just plain inspired!

Their specific takeaways about what Joyce had to share regarding singing and performing included 1) let “YOU” come through in your singing, 2) don’t be afraid to be expressive and really sing strongly and passionately, 3) Use the verbs, in particular, to get the message across, and 4) use your body to express the song and really really commit to the gestures. (One of their favorite things that Joyce said was, “I’m going to do the moves, and I’ll feel stupid if I’m the only one, so please join me!”

They also loved being on stage for Ombra Mai Fu, and how Joyce sang directly to them, making eye contact, giving each of them a little moment with her. They could really feel her interest in connecting with them, both in a serious “we’re performing together” kind of way, and in a more playful way, as if to say “isn’t this fun!” One of them said Joyce gave them a little wink during the show, and another said Joyce told them “I’ll be looking right at you before your solo!” or something of that ilk. They really loved these moments.





They also just loved the orchestra, the lights, the hall, the feeling of being part of a huge production, and the energy of it all. It was such a meaningful experience for them in so many ways, and they really felt like they were an integral part of it. It gave them a taste of how exciting a grand performance can be, and I think having them sing a song that had a strong message within this context really resonated with them. They also felt very proud of getting to sing their own song during the concert – I believe it was a song from Ukraine or for Ukraine? – and singing this song gave them another example of singing a “message” song that they could really express.

Tom Shelton is so good at honoring their comments and letting each of them shine as individuals during the discussion and by giving them opportunities in the performance for solos or small ensemble moments, and the way he knows the students well and could help pull out details from them or recall special, funny, performative moments was really affirming and helpful. I loved the dynamic energy in the room, and the way the chorus seems to cultivate both the students as individuals and a supportive, shared group energy at the same time. I felt it really fit with the idea of EDEN in general, and with what our workshops cover with the idea of having both an individual “voice” and connecting this to a community.

## II. Partner Activity

Based on what we just discussed, how would you answer the questions “Are singers artists?” “Can singers be activists?” and “If you were to create a concert around an issue you care about, what would it be?”

We discussed what “activist” means – their answer, which I really liked, was “someone who feels passionate about something that should change in the world and wants to do something about it.” We also pondered whether the word really fits, or if a phrase is better – although we are exploring the ideas of art and activism, you could also use a description like “someone fighting for a change” or “someone who believes in something” or “someone with a cause.” We talked about this.

They all felt that you don’t need to be a songwriter, per se, to be an artist. You can be an artist by having a vision, by “curating” a concert, by seeing the big picture of how an art form works (i.e. how Joyce talks about singing and shares her ideas), and you can express yourself. In other words, you don’t have to create things from scratch to be an artist – it’s more a way of being a creative person in the world.

Their ideas for concerts hearkened back to the ideas we explored in the first workshop: animal rights, environmental issues, and gender equality. Some of them talked about how you could host an open-mic night at your school to feature different singers, or write your own songs to perform, or have a concert that would serve as a fundraiser. I’m glad we got to this question because it connected back to the songwriting activity of our first workshop, and if they go further as songwriters or community-minded curators, I hope they take up some of these ideas!

## III. Performing “Seeds of Hope”

They sang the song for me, with full energy and great gestures and expressions. So delightful! I had a front row seat 😊

#### IV. Final Discussion Question

I asked them to give me the inside scoop on something. I said, "If I were to work with another choir for EDEN, what do you think I should do to help them get prepared for a concert, similar to the way I worked with you?" Their answers were great – they said things like "Tell them it will be really FUN!" "Have them write their own song again so they know how it happens" "Practice Seeds of Hope with them doing the movements and singing with a lot of expression" and "Tell them that they're really going to love meeting Joyce!"

#### V. Sharing Songwriting Extension Activity

I copied a songwriting exercise from *I am Your Songwriting Journal* by Danny Tieger, and shared this with the students. The exercise is to write a "message" song. I wanted them to have a way to continue writing, and a suggestion of a terrific book they could get if they want to keep going.

We couldn't do the survey in class because any links/emails that they receive get sent to their parents' email address, so Tom planned to send it out later instead.

In all, just a super detailed and useful debrief session. I learned a LOT, as a teaching artist, about how to possibly tweak the design workshops in the future. I also just learned more about EDEN itself and about Joyce, through the students' eyes. This was probably my favorite part 😊

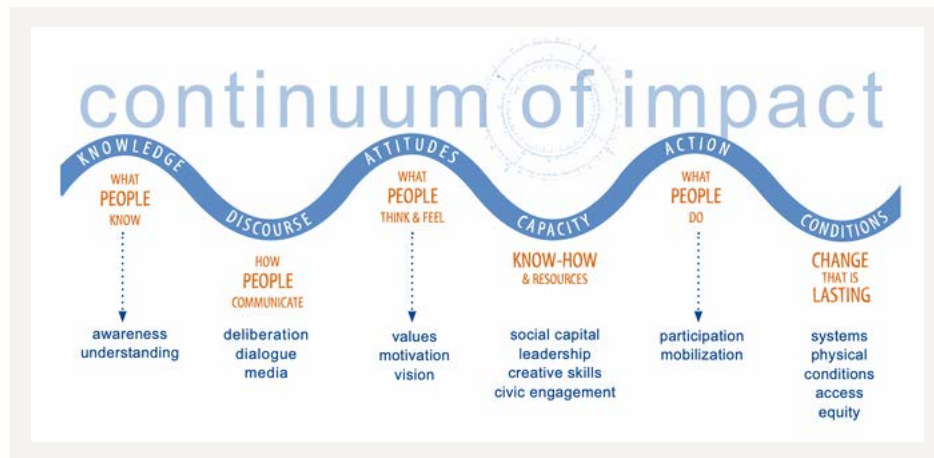




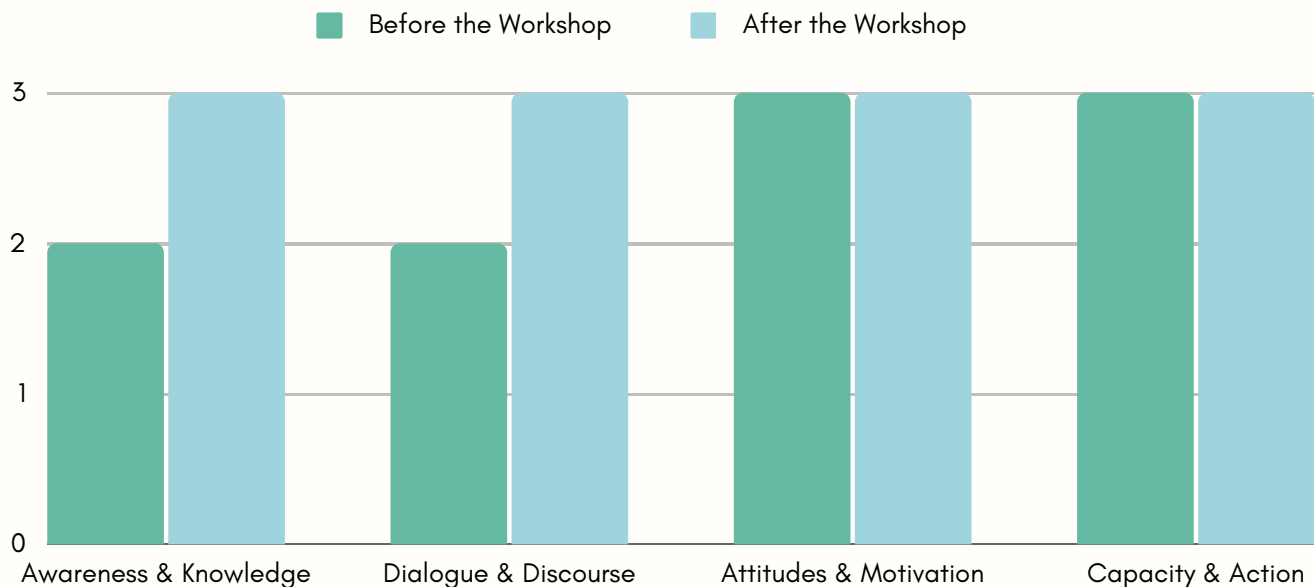
# IMPACT & EVALUATION

The goal of this effort is to learn about the impact that the activities have on participants. We are especially curious to learn if there is any evidence that they have the impulse to take action and/or feel they can make a difference—this is the high goal of the arts-for-climate field, and we believe teaching artists have a particularly strong contribution to the field.

During the EDEN project, teaching artists were encouraged to use the Continuum of Impact Guide as a model when thinking about impact and assessment in their workshops.

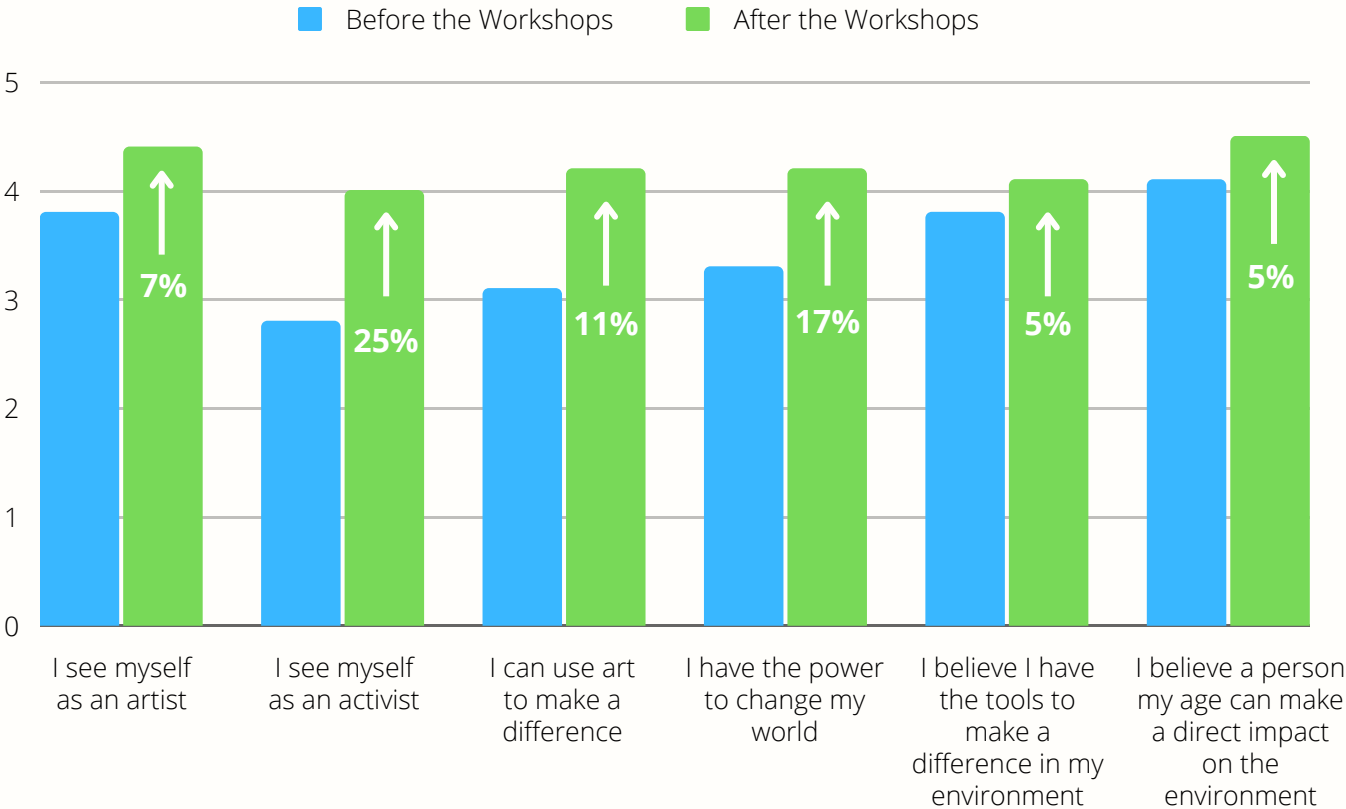


We tasked each teaching artist with evaluating their students based on the Continuum of Impact Guide. They rated their students on a scale from 1 (no knowledge of the subject) to 4 (extremely knowledgeable about the subject). The following graph reflects Dee & Joanna's observations of their students.



# STUDENT EVALUATIONS

During this second round of EDEN, we performed a more in-depth student evaluation and made sure their voices were heard during this process. We wanted to know how students felt both as an artist and activist, and how EDEN Engagement affected those feelings. Students were asked to rate themselves before and after the workshops on a scale of 1 [Strongly Disagree] to 5 [Strongly Agree] according to the prompts below.



Increase in student interest about varying climate crises

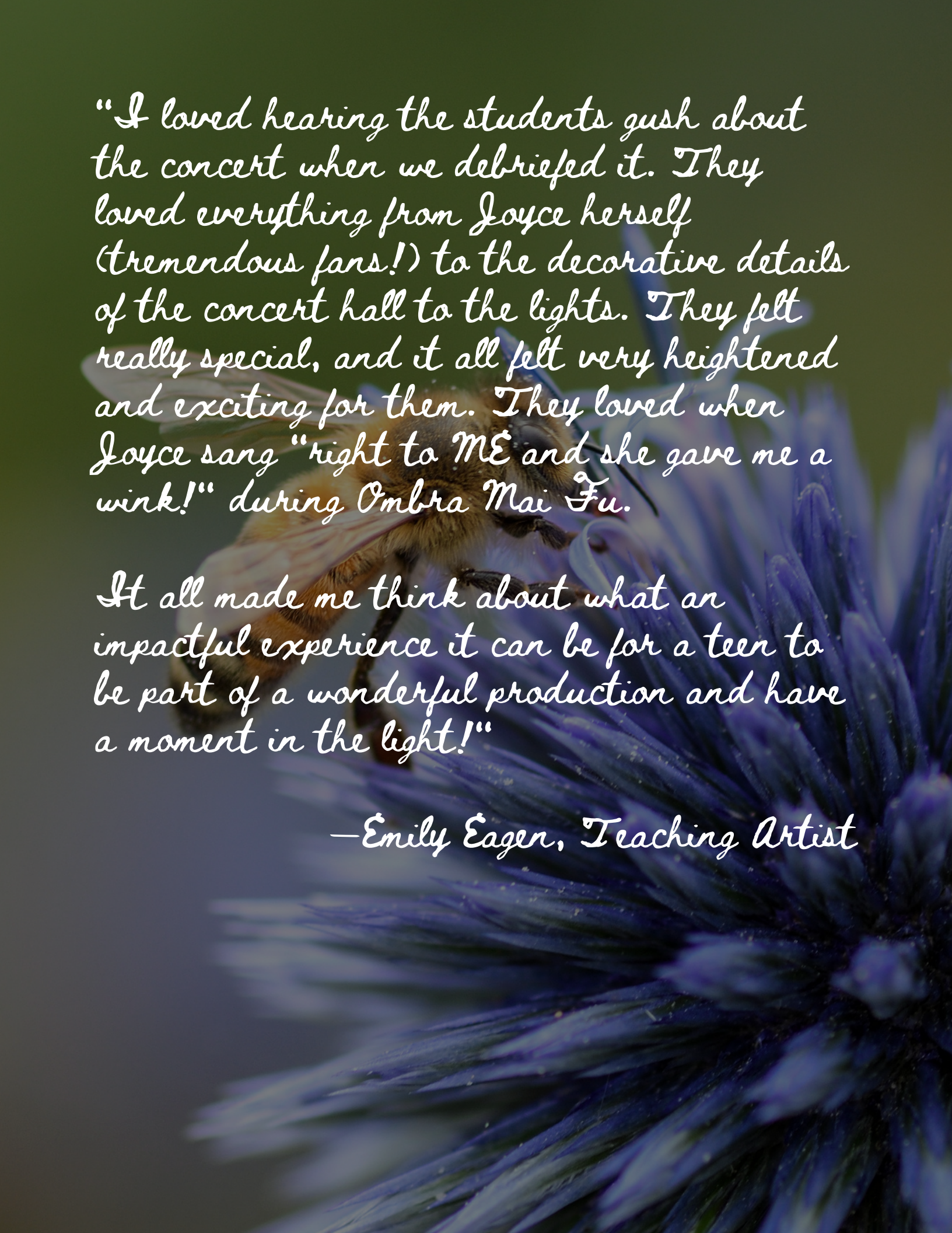


Increase in student belief that art can make an impact on the world



Increase in student belief that there is a climate crisis



A close-up photograph of a bee on a purple flower. The bee is positioned in the center-left of the frame, facing right. Its body is brown and fuzzy, and its wings are translucent with visible veins. The flower is a vibrant purple with many pointed petals. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

"I loved hearing the students gush about the concert when we debriefed it. They loved everything from Joyce herself (tremendous fans!) to the decorative details of the concert hall to the lights. They felt really special, and it all felt very heightened and exciting for them. They loved when Joyce sang "right to ME and she gave me a wink!" during Ombra Mai Fu.

It all made me think about what an impactful experience it can be for a teen to be part of a wonderful production and have a moment in the light!"

—Emily Eagen, Teaching Artist

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE TEACHING ARTIST

In what ways did you observe change in your participants understanding and engagement of the environmental issue you chose?

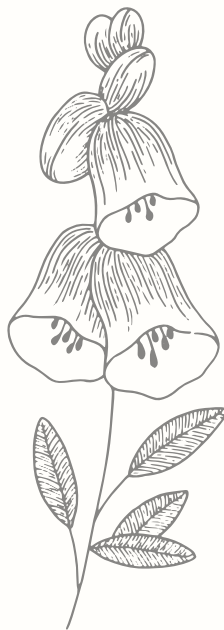
*"They developed a stronger understanding of how messaging about an issue works - i.e. "Don't kill trees. . .we need them for oxygen" In other words, having to turn ideas related to the issue into singable/sayable phrases seemed to really help them clarify the thoughts themselves. In a fun way! They enjoyed the creativity of writing songs and thinking about singing as something that could convey a messages, a la what Joyce is doing with EDEN."*

What challenges did you face in creating and facilitating your workshop?

*"The only challenge this time was that we only had one session before the workshop, so I had to think a lot about how to condense things and what to really highlight to help frame the EDEN experience."*

Did your EDEN experience expand your work or skills as a teaching artist in any specific ways?

*"HUGELY! It taught me how to create a series of workshops around a new set of topics (environmentalism, message-based songwriting in general), and how to coordinate with a choral director to help make the experience smooth and feel connected to the choral experience of the group. It also helped me a lot to debrief with the students and hear what they found meaningful. Working with Joyce really changed their perception of what an "opera singer" is, and they loved the way she was so spirited, open, and encouraging, and how she invited them to move and express. I will really hang on to their feedback for any future EDEN workshops. . .and in thinking about how I engage with students, too!"*





# ABOUT THE TEACHING ARTIST



## **EMILY EAGEN**

Emily Eagen is a NYC-based singer, instrumentalist, songwriter, and teacher. She recently completed a Doctorate in Vocal Performance at the CUNY Graduate Center, and performs as a freelance singer in the New York City area. Emily sings with the M6: Meredith Monk Music Third Generation, toured for several years with singer Moira Smiley and her vocal quartet, and sang with the Bang on a Can All-Stars in staged performances of Julia Wolfe's *Steel Hammer*. Emily is a teaching artist for Carnegie Hall's community engagement programs, including the Lullaby Project for expectant and new mothers. Lullabies that Emily co-wrote can be heard on the Lullaby Project's Album *Hopes and Dreams* (2018), sung by Roseanne Cash, Rhiannon Giddens, and Angélique Kidjo. She is the host and co-creator of *Sing with Carnegie Hall*, a video series for families with young children. Emily is a co-founder of Moving Star, a "collaborative vocal lab" in residence at Carnegie Hall, and co-wrote and performed in *Nooma* (2019), an opera for babies ages 0-2. Emily also teaches music through the Brooklyn Conservatory and at the Jalopy Theatre in Brooklyn, as well as at various summer festivals including the Amherst Early Music Festival and the Augusta Heritage Center. She has a special interest in American vernacular music, where she combines singing and her skills as a two-time International Whistling champion.



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