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Aquariums for Ears

March 20, 2007

Scientists are using sound to make public aquariums accessible to the visually impaired.

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TRANSCRIPT

BOB HIRSHON (host):

A symphony of fish. I'm Bob Hirshon and this is Science Update.

[Aquarium version of The Blue Danube]

HIRSHON:

If this version of The Blue Danube seems strange, it's because it's being played by fish. It's part of a new project to make public aquariums more accessible to the blind. Psychologist Bruce Walker of Georgia Tech says his team assigned each fish in a virtual demo to a different instrument in the song. The instruments get louder and pan right or left as the fish move around the tank. Walker says it can convey where the fish are, and a whole lot more.

BRUCE WALKER (Georgia Tech):

We want to make sure that the "ooh" and the "aah" experience that a sighted person has when they stand in front of a massive wall of glass and see fish behind is communicated to our visually impaired visitors. So choosing the right kind of music is crucial to sharing that emotional experience.

HIRSHON:

Walker hopes that it will also enhance the experience of sighted people. I'm Bob Hirshon, for AAAS, the science society.

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