From Source to Sea:  
A River Thesis  

by  

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In this paper I will make an argument that music can fulfill an aesthetic purpose. I use my thesis concert on March 31, 2012 in Wesleyan University’s Memorial Chapel as an example. For the concert I composed a ten-song cycle about the Connecticut River. The ten songs performed, in order, were “The Source”, “Disjecta”, “Mary Rowlandson”, “Song for Middletown”, “RT9”, “Higganum Mucket”, “The Oxbow”, “Mercury”, and “The Mouth.” The performers in the concert were Mel Hsu, Gemma Smith, Howe Pearson, Jessica Best, and myself. In the paper I will establish the reasons for making art about a local resource, such as the Connecticut River. Overall, I think that art has the ability to engage a community to preserve their local resources by offering inspiration and education.

It is no dream of mine, 
To ornament a line; 
I cannot come nearer to God and Heaven 
Than I live to Walden even. 
I am its stony shore, 
And the breeze that passes o’er; 
In the hollow of my hand 
Are its water and its sand, 
And its deepest resort 
Lies high in my thought.

Henry Thoreau – Walden (210)

1 The lead sheets for all the songs are located in Appendix A.
2 “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present
Celebration  We live in a global community now. We influence people that we were unable to reach in the past. We now know that humans interact with the earth’s atmosphere through the introduction of carbon dioxide and other gases. Our contributions affect people everywhere on the planet through the mechanisms of global climate change. Turning closer to home, here in Connecticut I am able to get raspberries year round and eat bananas which could never grow locally. These fresh fruits come from distant lands with climates suitable for fruit growing in our winter months. Even though we have Internet and can connect with other people more frequently and with greater ease, the farther away that we draw our resources, the more estranged we get from the processes that create and bring the products to us. For instance, I am unable to go to the farm and see the tree where my banana came from. I have no real connection to the people who grow the banana trees or the land on which the tree grows in Guatemala.

I am frustrated with the lack of transparency in the food industry in America. The industrial food system consistently wreaks havoc on our nation’s soil and mistreats the animals that we eat (Walsh). Local farms, especially ones that have made a commitment to ethical treatment of animals and to the land, offer an alternative for consumers. My reasons for choosing local are related to health, the environment, the ethical treatment of animals, and the feeling of connection to the land and the community. Local farms, especially ones that are organic make a commitment to growing food without the use of pesticides and herbicides. Industrial farms use pesticides that, in high quantities, have been
found to be dangerous to humans. Purchasing local also guarantees that the products have limited transportation cost attached to them. Most of the industrial food in America comes from California. Buying locally cuts down on the use of fossil fuels and is ultimately better for the planet. Organic farms also are required to maintain soil quality, a tenet not shared by industrial farms.

I also try to eat meat that has been ethically raised. After reading Eating Animals, by Jonathan Saffron Foer, I decided to stop eating factory farm meat. Foer decides to become a vegetarian after he becomes a father so that he can raise his son in a vegetarian household. In his book he recalls his investigation into the practices of the industrial factory farm. When he finds out the atrocities committed by factory farms in this country he is forced to make an ethical decision as a parent. He asks the reader and himself, “Do you eat chicken because you are familiar with the scientific literature on them and have decided that their suffering doesn’t matter, or do you do it because it tastes good?” (Foer 213). His writing is more argument than scare tactics, and it convinced me to think critically about how my choices were affecting the lives of the animals that I eat.

One of the most important reasons for me to choose local foods is the way that it connects me to my local community and to the land. Four years ago, my family joined a CSA about five minutes from my house in Pennsylvania. CSA stands for “Community Supported Agriculture”. Our CSA is located at Pennypack Farm in Horsham, PA. People from our town join the CSA by contributing funds and work to the farm and, in return, they receive fruits and vegetables. During
the growing season members come to the farm to pick up their farm shares from the farmers who grow the food. Members are also required to work in the fields alongside the farmers as part of their share duty. In this way, members are able to develop a relationship with the farmers who grow the food and participate in the process of food production. Iowa University’s Clare Hinrichs has studied this type of interaction. In her paper about CSAs and farmers markets she says that these types of direct market exchanges “mitigate, however modestly, growing public uneasiness about the social and ecological attributes of food” (Hinrichs 301). For instance, after reading Eating Animals, I convinced my family to stop purchasing conventional chicken meat from the grocery store. We were uneasy, to say the least, about factory farm chicken production. I resonated with Jonathan Safron Foer’s question about chicken quoted in the above paragraph. We decided that the experience of the chicken was more important than the experience of our taste buds. We decided to source our chicken meat from Pennypack Farm so that we could experience where the chickens live, what they eat, and how the farm workers treat them. When we eat the eggs, we know that we are eating healthy and tasty eggs from hens that are raised ethically. We don’t have to worry about the negative consequences of our choice because we understand the process of production. Above all, we know the farmers who take care of the chickens and we trust them because they’re our friends. Also, now that we source much of our produce from Pennypack Farm, we have developed a relationship with the land. We are interested in the health of the soil because it grows the food that we eat. If the soil is healthy, it produces healthy food that
makes healthy people. This makes us invested in the health of the land because we know that we benefit from its healthiness. We are also interested in preserving the land for friends and farmers. They benefit from the land and I feel that I want to protect the land for their sakes, too.

We care about the land for other reasons as well. Often overlooked are the emotional components of eating food. I have an emotional connection to raw summer tomatoes. My grandma has grown her own tomatoes every summer since before I was born. I remember sitting on the grass in her back yard with the hot sun on my face and biting down into a bright red tomato. The sweetness of flesh, the slippery seeds on my tongue, and the juiciness as I crunched down through the red skin are memories I will never forget. Now, as an adult, eating a sun-ripened tomato is delicious, but it also offers an emotional experience as well. When I eat a tomato, I’m thinking about the smell of my grandma’s house, the taste of lox and cream cheese on a warm bagel, and running through a sprinkler with my brother while laughing in the summer sun. These feelings make me want to protect summer tomatoes so that I can experience these emotions again. In the future I’d also like to share this experience with my children and even my grandchildren. The experience of eating a tomato has made me more connected to the earth and invested in protecting land that can grow summer tomatoes.

I understand that this is a materialist view. It requires the produce from Pennypack Farm or a fresh tomato to generate feelings that entice me to make
sustainable decisions. In other words, the material incentives create the impetus to preserve resources for present and future generations. I understand that there are many other reasons to protect the environment, but this materialist view is one that I think can translate into art. If we want to source our food locally, why not harvest local art? Art can create emotions similar to my experience at Pennypack Farm and with fresh tomatoes. Art affects us emotionally and can incite laughter, fear, joy, and tears. Artists are able to get us to notice the beauty in everyday things. If artists could focus their talents on local resources, then they could bring out the beauty in the resource. I think that art can entice and excite people to protect our resources for future generations.

The feelings that I get from a music concert are close to the experiences I get from local foods. Local foods can be enjoyed communally at a dinner table just as music can be shared at a concert. Each person connects with the music on an individual level, but the experience is shared among the audience. After the concert, the memories can be recollected among concertgoers. Usually, there isn’t much activism that comes from a concert, while purchasing local foods is inherently an act of local activism. By purchasing local foods we support businesses that we know take care of the land.

There need to be some changes made to concerts for them to be able to generate activism. A good example might be benefit concerts like the globally

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2 “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Lele, 611).
3 Chapter 6 in Aristotle’s Poetics discusses the art form “tragedy” and its ability to affect the audience’s emotions.
televised Live Aid concert in Philadelphia on July 13th, 1985. The concert set out to raise funds to mitigate the effects of the Ethiopian famine. The concert succeeded in collecting over 200 million dollars, but there were close to a billion and a half people who tuned in to the broadcast or were lucky enough to attend the concert. I think that these large benefit concerts aren’t as effective as they can be. First, the focus of the concert is on music and celebrity musicians who sometimes have little connection to the cause. In Live Aid’s case, it was amazing to have Queen, Madonna, and David Bowie share a stage, and people love their pop-hits, but none of this is related to starving Ethiopians. Second, Live Aid and other similar large benefit concerts try to send aid to far off places with little or no connection to the audience. If the concert was on a topic that the audience was affected by, they might be more inclined to donate to the cause, because they would benefit from the donations.

I imagine a new application for a local benefit concert. My idea for my thesis concert was to create a group of songs for a purpose. This purpose was to develop a type of activism similar to engagement associated with being part of a CSA. I wanted to create songs that would connect a community to their own land. I decided to compose a concert here in Middletown about the Connecticut River and play the music to Middletown residents. The Connecticut River is entwined with Middletown’s history and the people who have lived on this land. I wrote ten songs that explore the Connecticut River’s geographical history as well as its biological and chemical components. I have songs that recall human interactions with the river and how they have changed over time. My work is
interdisciplinary in an effort to explore a broad swath of the river from many different perspectives. By creating music with river themes incorporated into the composition, I hoped to engage with Middletown residents in a way that encourages them to appreciate the river and preserve it for themselves and for others.

My idea for the concert draws its inspiration from the feeling that comes from being a member of my CSA. I want to cultivate local music like farmers cultivate local foods. In other words, I would like to make music that connects listeners to the local land and community, just like how local food connects me to Pennypack Farm. I think that my idea of local music is more accessible than CSAs and farmers markets. The CSA model does not work for everyone and it has been criticized for only catering to a limited group of people. Hinrichs writes that, “Some farmers’ markets and CSAs in the US have targeted or ended up serving largely educated, middle-class consumers” (Hinrichs 301). I have to agree that although Pennypack Farm makes an effort to offer discounts to families that are unable to pay full price, most of the members are middle to upper-class white people. Music can be shared much more easily and crosses racial and income boundaries. Anyone who has access to the Internet is able to obtain music for free, and free and open concerts in public space are easily accessible as well.

**Education** Music has the ability to educate in a way that offers an alternative to an academic paper. Last year I took a class called Ecology of Eating in which we studied the American food system through the lens of a multitude of
disciplines. We had professors from across the campus come to teach our classes and talk about their perspectives on the food system. The most exciting part was that we interpreted what we learned with dance. We generated choreography from the words that they said as well as the actions they made while addressing us. This type of learning is different from what I am used to, but it is very powerful. By embodying the material from the class, I was using my whole body to understand the lesson rather than just sitting at a desk and being lectured at. For example, when we were learning from Professor Michael Singer, a biology professor here at Wesleyan, we took a trip to Long Lane Farm. Professor Singer identified different species and helped us understand what their functions were in the ecosystem. To better understand the material, each of us in the class observed a species and then represented it with our bodies. I felt as if I could understand the species from an entirely new vantage point when I engaged my body as well as my mind.

In my thesis, I try to capture this aspect of the class. I want the listener to think about the river from different, and sometimes unconventional, perspectives. In this way, the audience will be more active in connecting with the material and a stronger message can be represented.

I am thankful that I have been able to study at Wesleyan, an institution that celebrates alternative methods of teaching, though I am aware that my experiences are not the norm. Usually in academia we use papers and lectures to teach. It must be acknowledged that there are some people who are cut off from this model of learning. There are some who do not have physical access to
lectures and papers, just like the people who are unable to access a CSA or farmers market. There are those that can’t understand the academic paper because they are illiterate, unfamiliar with the language, or they are untrained in the technical jargon. There are also some people who respond better to alternative methods of teaching. I think music has the capacity to connect with nearly everyone, no matter the background. Of course there are people who will not be able to understand lyrics, but I think that the emotional messages are written into the music. All it takes to understand them are a familiarity with the music tradition, for instance the western art music tradition. This is to say that people from inside the western music tradition are accustomed to the musical cues that correspond to meaning. By learning the western musical system it becomes possible to interpret simple emotional qualities in a song (Becker 342).

Using art in the classroom is effective for many different age groups and across many different disciplines. An article from the Association for Middle Level Education states that, “One of the most effective, enjoyable, and interesting ways to teach social studies to young adolescents is to integrate lessons with music, art, and other disciplines that engage students cognitively and emotionally” (Choy, 405). Music and art are able to make us feel as well as get us to think creatively. They also grab the attention of the students and motivate learning. Music is exciting in the classroom. I remember when I was in middle school and my geology teacher would play us “rock” songs about rocks that he composed. I remember a specific song that taught us about rock formations in caves. The songs offered a much-needed break from our geology textbook, and
we were excited to be able to sing along. As a student I didn’t really realize that I was learning, but now I know the difference between stalactites and stalagmites thanks to his informative and creative songs.

Art can be even more effective when it is integrated into other disciplines. This type of art already contains connections between different disciplines. These connections encourage the person experiencing the art to make similar connections that eventually lead to creativity and learning. Julia Marshall explains this learning process in her paper: “Connecting Art, Learning, and Creativity: A Case for Curriculum Integration”. The paper discusses the ways in which art can be used to teach different disciplines. She uses a variety of examples from post-modern visual artists that incorporate aspects of other subjects into their design. She writes:

Rather than understanding integration as simply using art to explore and communicate ideas from other disciplines, these works suggest that integration is actually a form of cross-disciplinary collage – a juxtaposition of disciplinary elements that reveals or generates connective ideas. (Marshall 240)

In Marshall’s paper, she uses examples of art that incorporate different disciplines into the design to inspire the participant to make connections. One piece she uses is by Thomas Grunfeld, an artist that merges different animals to create fantastic creatures in the style of taxidermy. This collection of artwork serves an aesthetic purpose. Marshall writes, “These animals recall the European tradition of collecting, stuffing, and displaying animals in natural history museums. In this way, they connect the latest technology and research in
genetic engineering to earlier efforts in science to control nature” (Marshall 235). She specifically references a work called *Misfit*. This creature has the body of a St. Bernard and the head of a sheep. She says that Grunfeld, “aligns art with science in ways that capture our attention by disrupting our expectations” (Marshall 235). The observer is jarred by the representation of this bizarre new creation. This immediate reaction startles the observer into the present moment and engages their imagination. The artwork begs the question, “What if this were an actual animal?” The observer is able to imagine where the animal might live and how it might function in its environment. This type of artwork has different disciplines contained within it that engage and teach those that choose to interact with the piece.

Marshall says that a common goal of education and art is to make connections. She explains that, “A central tenet of learning and creativity theory is that learning and creativity are essentially connection-making. Consequently, teaching is a practice of making connections or helping students to make connections” (Marshall 239). By drawing connections between disciplines in a piece of art, the artist is helping in the creative and learning process.

In my concert I try to incorporate many different disciplines into the music and the lyrics to encourage the audience to make connections. For instance, for my concert I chose to incorporate the geography of the river into the structure. I made the first song about the source and the last song about the mouth. By simply integrating geography into the concert’s design I was able to
teach the audience about the path of the Connecticut River. I tried to educate by incorporating many different disciplines into the music, lyrics, and structure of the concert. My analyses of my songs will highlight the ways in which I attempt to educate the audience.

**Ecological Citizen** The ideas of “Celebration” and “Education” that I have established are important in the construction of an ecological citizen. An ecological citizen, defined by Andrew Dobson in his book *Citizenship and the Environment*, is a person who thinks about their ecological footprint and how it affects other people. “An ecological footprint is the land (and water) area required to support a defined human population and material standard indefinitely” (Dobson 100). In order for a person to become an ecological citizen, they must be interested in protecting a resource and they must be able to acknowledge how their footprint affects the resource. He writes that, “the principal ecological citizenship obligation is to ensure that ecological footprints make a sustainable, rather than an unsustainable, impact” (Dobson 119). I’ll use the definition of sustainability as I did before in terms of development: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Lele 611).

Dobson thinks that an ecological citizen will minimize his or her ecological footprint in an effort to do less harm to members of their own community. The community is defined by his or her relationship to the
ecological footprint. He continues, “I do not have ecological citizenly relations with them because they are fellow citizens in the traditional nation-state sense, but because they (may) inhabit the territory created by my ecological footprint” (Dobson 106). The territory that Dobson refers to is spatial as well as temporal. For instance, the banana farmers from Guatemala are part of my community because I use their resources so that I may eat bananas in Connecticut. Since I am using their land and their resources to produce the banana, they exist within my community because of my far-reaching ecological footprint.

Since ecological footprints have impact over time, Dobson’s view also includes people from future generations in the ecological citizen’s community. To continue with the banana example, I have to consider the amount of petroleum it takes to grow and then ship the bananas to Connecticut. I have to think about future generations and the fact that if I use up petroleum now, it will not be available for use by future generations. An ecological citizen might choose to eat local food instead of purchasing a banana because the ecological footprint associated with the purchase of a banana is too impactful.

An ecological citizen must have some incentive to act in the best interest of his or her community, as defined by their ecological footprint. If the ecological citizen is emotionally invested in the connection to the resource, then the ecological citizen will be more likely to protect the resource. This is what I mean by “celebration”. An ecological citizen needs to be able to feel compassion for the earth and for members in his or her community. For instance, returning briefly to my experience with my grandmother’s tomatoes, I am emotionally
connected to land that can produce local tomatoes. I would like to preserve local tomatoes and the land that grows them, so others in my community are able to experience a juicy fresh tomato. This means that I will be wary of how my ecological footprint affects the tomato growing land, and the effect it will have on people who eat tomatoes. From this perspective there are many practical choices that I can make to promote tomato growth. I can decide to purchase local tomatoes in an effort to support local tomato growers. I can grow my own tomatoes, and teach my children how to grow tomatoes.

Another important aspect of being an ecological citizen is having an understanding of the parameters of an ecological footprint – particularly how the ecological citizen affects those in the community. Understanding one’s ecological footprint and the intricate relationships that make up an ecological citizen’s community requires education. Due to the complexity of the relationships an interdisciplinary education is necessary. An ecological footprint impacts people in many ways. For instance, the Connecticut River is extremely long and stretches from Northern New Hampshire to Southern Connecticut. People use the river in a variety of ways, and the effects are felt by everyone along the river’s four hundred mile path to the ocean. The web of interactions that connects the community is difficult to understand. It will take knowledge of the river’s geographic history, biological and chemical components, as well as the political and cultural practices of the groups of people that live along the river.
I created the concert with the goal of encouraging the audience to become ecological citizens. In other words, I hoped to help members of the audience appreciate the river and understand how their individual ecological footprints affected the other people who use the river. During the concert, I tried to emotionally engage the audience through the songs. I used musical techniques like lyrics, instrumentation, harmony, and performance to achieve this goal. After they left, I wanted audience members to be able to make sustainable choices in relation to the river. I also envisioned that some people would research about the aspects of the river that I discussed in the songs and become better informed. A small portion of the audience might even be so emotionally engaged and informed that they would go out and be advocates for sustainable use of the Connecticut River.

The next section of my paper will use examples of songs that I wrote for the thesis concert that celebrate the Connecticut River and educate the audience. I will illustrate the musical techniques I used in “Mercury”, “Mary Rowlandson”, and “Higginum Mucket”.

**Mercury**

“Mercury” is about the persistence of mercury in the Connecticut River and its effects on human populations. The song was inspired by current research being performed by Professor Johan C. Varekamp at Wesleyan University. He is researching the mercury (Hg) concentrations in the sediment in Wethersfield Cove, a former bend in the Connecticut River. These small coves are able to tell the history of pollution up the river through the study
of the concentrations of mercury in the cove’s sediment (Balcom 54). Varekamp described Wethersfield Cove’s legacy of pollution during a presentation of his research at two conventions for the Geological Society of America. This fall, Professor Varekamp presented in Minneapolis. He writes in his abstract:

I speculate that the Hg-enriched sediment resulted from a mercury spill from the Dutch Point-South Meadows (HELCO) power plant just north of the cove. This plant (1928) was one of the first to use mercury vapor in a binary cycle with steam as a working fluid, which is thermodynamically advantageous. This type of plant leaked a fair bit of mercury and had to be resupplied periodically. (Varekamp 1)

The plant that Varekamp is referring to is called the Hartford Electric Light Company. In 1928 they used liquid mercury instead of water to power steam turbines. The power plant leaked and the mercury was deposited into the river. As the current washed the mercury down the river, the mercury was swept into relatively undisturbed sediments in small coves like Wethersfield Cove.

Professor Varekamp has found high levels of mercury in the cove (Varekamp 2012).

It is important to understand the dangers of mercury, and in the song “Mercury”, I tried to educate the audience about mercury's toxicity. “Mercury compounds are toxic to humans and animals, but the organic forms, particularly methylmercury and dimethylmercury, have the highest toxicity” (Gochfeld 174). Humans can be poisoned by mercury through the consumption of fish. Due to bio-magnification, a process in which mercury accumulates in fish as they are eaten by other fish higher up on the food chain, “mercury is concentrated roughly a million times between water and piscivorous fish” (Mason, 1835). In
fish, mercury is in the highly toxic form methylmercury. Eating fish is the primary way that human exposure occurs (Gochfeld 174).

In the song, I wanted to do less lyrical storytelling and let the music play the main role in emotionally connecting with the audience. The lyrics are poetic and refrain from explicitly telling a chronological story.

Water will speak in whispered tones
It carves its words with dripping stones
Syllables are bent and slow

Toxic noxious chemicals
Are trapped beneath the silty cove
For energy and warmer homes

Where does it go?
Mercury

Written in mud beneath the lake
They sowed their wealth with their mistakes
Innovation laid to waste

Split the atom turn to dust
The earth still bears the memory of
The {silver shining} future lost

Was it not enough?
Mercury

For how long?

I tried to compose into the music the lengthy period of time that mercury persists in the environment. I did this by incorporating different time signatures into the piece as well as added measures. The song starts in 4/4, but adds 2/4 measures after measure seven and measure eleven. I intended for these measures to extend phrases to make them feel like they are longer than they
should be. This is similar to how mercury lasts in the environment longer than it should.

The chorus is where I wanted the audience to think about the effects of mercury. In the chorus lines I also use a 2/4 measure to extend the phrase. Counting half notes as beats, the phrase is an unconventional seven beats. The seven beats feel awkward and seem to collapse on each other. I wrote the chorus this way to emphasize the corrosive qualities of mercury. I also used swirling open harmonies in the cello and vocals that surround the main vocals. Their descending quality was used to embody mercury seeping in to fish populations and eventually affecting humans. It descends from A to E and is supported by a parallel fourth harmony. The parallel fourth harmony is meant to feel sinister and cold, like shining liquid mercury.

The outro is a long, building section where the words “for how long?” are sung over and over again. The outro is in a 3/4 time that rolls along as the chords descend through B minor, A major, and G major. The section starts with just cello and guitar. I slowly incorporated more instruments until a climax is reached with all the instruments playing with their greatest intensity. The length of the outro and the persistence of the words are meant to connect the audience to the persistence of mercury in the Connecticut River.

In this song I tried to emphasize the value of a healthy river and teach about the negative effects of mercury. I used musical techniques to help the audience feel the corrosiveness and persistence of mercury. The music emotionally connected with the audience and encouraged them to feel
compassion for the health of the river. I also taught about the persistence of mercury through the same techniques, which were complemented by the lyrics. This collaboration between music and lyrics is easily seen in the outro. The audience was engaged with the length and intensity of the outro, and the lyrics “For how long?” taught about the persistence of mercury in the Connecticut River. In this way, I celebrated the river's health and I educated the audience about mercury in Wethersfield Cove.

**Mary Rowlandson** I chose this story because it showcases the conflict between Native Americans and colonists. Mary Rowlandson was a woman who lived in Lancaster, Massachusetts in the late seventeenth century. She is famous for writing one of the first captivity narratives after she was taken by Native Americans from her home and spent nearly three months among Native Americans before her husband paid her ransom. Her story is telling of how colonists viewed Native American culture, and the importance of religion in the shaping of this perspective. I wanted to transplant audience members back to a time when living on this land, near the Connecticut River was much more dangerous.

Mary Rowlandson was the wife of John Rowlandson, a minister in Lancaster. At the time of the incident John was on a trip to Boston to secure better protection for their town. This was during King Phillip’s War and Native Americans were attacking many towns. It seems cruelly ironic that Mary’s house was attacked while her husband was away. The raid is a gruesome tale. The
warriors approached at sunrise, shot at residents and burnt down houses. When Mary's house caught fire, she was forced to go outside to avoid the smoke and the heat. What she witnessed during her escape were many of her relatives bodies lying on the ground. She writes in *The Soveraignty & Goodness of God*:

"When we are in prosperity, Oh, the little that we think of such dreadfull sights, and to see our dear Friends and Relations ly bleeding out their heart-blood upon the ground" (Rowlandson 5). Also, soon after leaving the house she was struck by a bullet while holding her young daughter. She and her daughter both were wounded. At the end of the skirmish, there were thirteen killed and twenty-four taken captive. During Mary Rowlandson’s three months in captivity she travelled, mostly on foot, north along the Connecticut River. Her wounded child passed away early on in her journey and she was separated from many of her other children.

I was struck by how horrifying this must have been for her and her family. I wanted to be able to relate her feelings to the audience and help them connect with Mary emotionally. I wanted to get the audience to put themselves in Mary's place and think about how terrifying it must have been to live next to the Connecticut River in the late seventeenth century. I decided it would be powerful to take on Mary Rowlandson’s voice and incorporate her own words into the song. While she was in captivity, she found a bible and she quotes many verses throughout her writing. I decided to use a passage from *Jeremiah*: 31.16. for the chorus. I have cited where each of the lines comes from in her captivity narrative:
Oh the wonderfull power of God that mine eyes have seen,
Now when others are sleeping mine eyes are weeping.
I have seen the extreme vanity of this world
One hour I have been in health, and wealth, but the next hour in sickness
and wounds. (64).

For my poor children and I in 1675 were stole away from our home in
Lancaster by Indian raiders.
I was shot and my babe was done the same as I, their weapons; they were
glittering and I felt myself trembling with fear. (5)

So with my spirit and my child I descend on foot to fend for the time into
the wilderness.

Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work
shall
be rewarded, and they shall come again from the land of the Enemy (18).

Thus nine dayes I went with my moaning wounded child, until she passed
away
She’s buried on the hill her little body resting still in some unnamed
forest.
Whither I go, I go mourning all the day long. But God sent me blessing –
it’s a torn and tattered bible and it teaches me lessons.

So with my spirit and my bible - I descend - on foot again, I pray to find
providence

Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work
shall
be rewarded, and they shall come again from the land of the Enemy (18).

In this story I tried to engage the audience by affecting them emotionally.
I specifically wanted them to appreciate the efforts of people that lived along the
river in the seventeenth century. They struggled just to live peacefully. I created
this feeling through the lyrics and the music. In the lyrics, I tried to emphasize
Mary’s perspective so that the audience could connect with how she felt and
empathize with her struggles. I also tried to do this in the music. For the verse I
used a chromatic chord structure with a melody that weaves through every
chord change. Also, the words are sung to emphasize off-beats. This creates an eerie effect that resembles the feeling of being captured. In addition, I composed a cello part as a break between the first two verses that uses a tritone between Ab in the bass of the guitar and D natural in the cello. I composed this cello line to accentuate the terror that Mary must have felt when she was abducted by the Native Americans. The verse creates the overall effect of trepidation and sorrow.

The prechorus and chorus emphasize a different feel. In the chorus, the lyrics are from *Jeremiah*: 31.16. These are words in which Mary Rowlandson found solace during her captivity. I use a descending melody line that I thought sounded like the words of God coming down to comfort Mary Rowlandson. This melody line is over a frantic chord pattern that passes through different keys and uses complex rhythms. The instrumentation in this section is cello, violin, guitar, drums, and voice. The cello and violin play countermelodies around the vocals, creating more chaos. If God is the consoling descending line, Mary is the tortured and confused chord structure beneath. As the chorus continues to the C#, the melody and the chords become entwined and the instrumentation changes to just guitar, vocals and drums. This brings the level down and it seems as if Mary has relaxed while hearing the words from the bible. This feeling is disrupted by the change to the dissonant C#69 chord that propels the song back into another verse.

“Mary Rowlandson” as a song advocates for audience members to become ecological citizens through “celebration” and “education”. By engaging the audience emotionally I *celebrate* the life of Mary Rowlandson and her experience
on the river. With the threat of Native American attack, the seventeenth century was a scary time for settlers to live through. Mary’s captivity was a struggle and the audience is able to imagine what it would have been like through the lyrics and the music. I also educate the audience by telling them about Mary's story. The audience is able to understand the difficulties that existed for settlers living along the Connecticut River. By placing the importance on empathy, I encourage the audience to reflect on how their lives are similar and different to Mary Rowlandson’s life. From this reflection they can come to the conclusion that they should not take what they have for granted. They might be enticed to make sustainable decisions regarding the Connecticut River and other resources.

**Higganum Mucket**  “Higganum Mucket” is a song that celebrates our local community and teaches about a local legendary fish species. This song was inspired by the writings of Higganum resident, Art Wiknik. The mucket is a fictional fish that lives in Candlewood Hill Brook behind the old firehouse in Higganum. Apparently, the legend has its origins in the 1950s. The firemen would sit out back next to the brook and imagine what kinds of animals live beneath the water. They thought up a new type of fish called a mucket and started describing it. Their descriptions developed into a kind of “fish-tale” in which the firemen would compete for stranger and stranger descriptions of the fish. They would talk about its appearance, where it came from, and how to catch it. As time passed the mucket developed a mythic quality surrounding it. When younger firemen came to volunteer the older members would initiate the new firemen by having them dress up in sports pads and hunt for muckets by
flashlight in the night.

Art Wiknik heard about the mucket after returning from the Vietnam War. He wrote three articles in 1987, 1989, and 1990 for *Heading Out: Connecticut’s Outdoor Magazine*. I focused on the first article for my song because it describes the mucket’s appearance and attributes. I took it upon myself to expand on the story and take part in the reshaping of the mucket legend: a process that has developed through oral history for over fifty years.

These are the lyrics that I ended up using for the concert. They tell the tale of a boy who discovers that his dad caught a mucket. The father describes the mucket in the way that I thought the firemen might speak about the fish.

I found a trophy in my attic while cleaning for the spring
On it sat a kind of fish - One I’d never seen
I showed it to my dad and asked him what it meant
His head turned quick his eyes went dark and this is what he said

This trophy is a relic, son, from when I was your age.
In Higganum I caught a fish no man before could cage
The fish has horns and warts and three eyes on its head
Plus teeth that cut like daggers - Nearly killed your uncle Jed
We had to keep his pinky in a bucket
So never ever try to catch a mucket

Now growing up I can’t remember hearing of this fish.
My dad’s a vegetarian - raw kale’s his favorite dish
SO I was caught and curious I wanted to learn more
I asked him where it came from but he wasn’t really sure

Some say they jumped the river’s falls - some say they’re alien waste
Go and ask your Uncle Jed, they seemed to like the taste!
Me I couldn’t care less - I just wanted the flesh
See their meat’s an aphrodisiac, but only when it’s fresh
You beat it to a mush and start suckin
Thats why I went to catch a mucket
So how’d you catch the mucket, pa? - You don’t wanna know Please? - Fine, but I was going to wait ‘til you were fully grown 
Now everybody knows muckets spawn in the spring 
But I learned a secret - they surface when you sing 
I followed the fish past a trail of fresh mucket scat 
and focused all my senses for the oncoming attack 
I hummed a solemn tune in the key of E Flat 
And I got my line ready - I pulled out my baseball bat 
I turned it on its back and then I struck it 
And thats how I caught the Higganum mucket 
and thanks to that aphrodisiac 
you came into this world - You can be proud of that 

This story engages the audience by using a variety of techniques. The story connects the audience to our land. The idea of a fish with a “Loch Ness Monster” type of persona that lives in a small brook in a nearby town makes me proud to live here in Middletown. The music that I composed uses simple chord structures and rhythms that allow for the focus to be on the lyrics. The chord structure to the verse never reaches a dominant chord. The chords are:

IV---I---IV---I---IV/bVII---bVII---IV---I

The rolling, never-resolving quality to these chords made it easy to fit the lyrics to the music. The performer could take liberties with the rhythms of the notes and really emphasize the storytelling. This is especially true for when the father tells his side of the story. I chose to make these parts spoken rather than sung and use a sparse guitar and cello line to underscore the words. The performer playing the father is able to use a different tone than the son. In the performance on March 31, Howe Pearson made the choice to yell many of the words. This added humor and established the character as kooky and fun.
I also engaged the audience by incorporating humor into the piece. I achieved this by using ridiculous, though plausible scenarios. The lines get progressively stranger as the story continues. They keep the audience engaged by continually breaking the audience’s expectations. The absurdity of the lyrics is a central tenet in the mucket legend. The people who created the mucket myth made up the creature for fun. I wanted to share this enjoyment with the listener, and connect them to the people who created the mucket legend. This was meant to inspire the audience to value their local community.

**Conclusion** The ten-song cycle that I composed was meant to capture aspects of “Celebration” and “Education” to encourage listeners to become “Ecological Citizens”. The songs emotionally engage and educate the audience about the Connecticut River. The songs were composed for the local Middletown community, and all those who live along the Connecticut River. They intend to help the audience realize their appreciation for the river and inspire them to preserve this precious resource.

There are many other musicians and artists that have used their talents to celebrate and educate people about a resource. Pete Seeger’s Clearwater Festival is a terrific example. The festival started in the mid 1960’s with the intention of saving the polluted Hudson River. Seeger played small shows along the Hudson River to fund a scoop called “Clearwater”. The Clearwater Festival’s website explains that, “the sloop was among the first vessels in the U.S. to conduct science-based environmental education aboard a sailing ship, virtually
creating the template by which such programs are conducted around the world today” (“About Clearwater”). The festival does not specifically use songs about the Hudson River, but the intention is to celebrate the river as well as educate about conservation.

There are also bands that are encouraging their listeners to become ecological citizens. One such group is composed of Ben Sollee and Daniel Martin Moore. They released an album in 2009 called *Dear Companion* on Sub Pop Records. “*Dear Companion* explores their ties to the place they love and aims to draw attention to the problem of Mountaintop Removal coal mining (MTR) and its impact on the people and heritage of central Appalachia” (“Sub Pop”). Their album focuses on the issue of mountaintop removal and they seek to emotionally engage and inform their listeners about the destruction of local resources. In an interview with the band, Sarah Novak writes: “*Dear Companion* is a simple and emotional plea. In the end, Sollee and Moore want listeners to understand that actions speak louder than music. They are urging individuals to find value in Appalachia and to take action to preserve this culturally rich area” (Novak). Novak outlines the ways that Sollee and Moore engage with their listeners. First, she says that *Dear Companion* tries to help the audience realize that their actions affect the resources that are the Appalachian Mountains. This is similar to my idea of “Education”. She also thinks that Sollee and Moore urge their listeners to “find value” in their resource. It follows that if the listener values the Appalachian Mountains, they will take steps to preserve them. In this way *Dear Companion* encourages its listeners to become “Ecological Citizens”.
In this paper I make the case that art can engage and educate the audience in a way that inspires the community to preserve their local resources. I use my thesis concert as an example of art that “educates” the audience and “celebrates” the Connecticut River. I hope that the music has served its intended aesthetic purpose and made individual audience members think critically about their choices as ecological citizens living next to the Connecticut River.
References


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To all who attended the performance or read my paper, thank you for taking the time to celebrate and learn. I hope this project encourages you to make decisions that effect the Connecticut River and our planet.
Appendix A:

The Source / The Mouth 36-38
Disjecta 39-40
Paradise Valley 41-43
Mary Rowlandson 44-45
Song for Middletown 46-48
RT 9 49-50
Higganum Mucket 51-52
The Oxbow 53-55
Mercury 56-57
The Source/ The Mouth

Sam Long

I washed all my things in the river watched them float on down down the

I washed all my things in the river watched them float on down down the

I washed all my things in the river watched them float on down down the

I washed all my things in the river watched them float on down down the

I washed all my things in the river thawed out in the sun

I washed all my things in the river thawed out in the sun

I washed all my things in the river thawed out in the sun

I washed all my things in the river thawed out in the sun

I washed all my things in the river thawed out in the sun
38

ho-ney and the sting wash a-way wash me clean ohh... water runs free and

clear wash a-way ob-sta-cles fears wash a-way wash a-way ohh...
DISJECTA

INTRO

A) MELODY OVER INTRO FIGURE

1) Come to together

Carve a path to themouth

2) Like the Jesus do A flowing forth

3) O O O A Fill

on on dissect
2nd verse: 'AncientTake - are you proud of the progress you have made -
You retreated - set in motion eleven thousand years of performance -'

unfinished and flawed - oh dissect
the river is - the river was
PARADISE VALLEY

INTRO
B13

VOCALS

\textit{\textbf{take what you want from me I bring it willingly to paradise\textit{}}}

A Maj

\textit{\textbf{Hey I'd give it all for free to someone dear}}

A Maj 7

\textit{\textbf{Whatever you desire}}

F# 6

\textit{\textbf{waves crash on the shore}}

E

\textit{\textbf{And spill over the lip of the bank as the flood begins swell to the bank it surrounds the city streets}}
Verse 2: So you'll have to hold me down
Could you just hold me down
Build the love a little higher

I will come these bounds
So you'll have to hold me down
Build the love a little higher
We dent cut all these

Chorus 3: The spring will come with the floods
The blooms and the early buds
In the past I lay out on the sand

She put my legs into my chest expand
If we could float together some day
Then we will float away
MARY ROWLANDSON

Intro:

A♭6    G6

Vocals

A♭6

"...and the hand of God that mine eyes have seen..."

A♭6 when others are sleeping...

A♭6

"...more eyes are weeping..."

A♭6

"...I have seen the extreme vanity of this world..."

G6

"...one hour I have been in health and wealth, but the next hour..."

G6

Cello Solo

G6
(2) B♭c  B♭♭  C♭maj7

so with my spirit and my child—

I descend on pentecost for the time into

A♭maj7

the wilderness

F♭m9  G♭  C (A♭D♭9)

...from weeping and thine exaction

F♭m9  G♭

...for thy walk shall be

C (A♭D♭9)  F♭m9  C♭

...and they shall come again

E♭  C♭maj7  C

...from the Lord of the

C♭m9  A♭♭  C

enemy

Note: full lyrics included in paper
SONG FOR MIDDLETOWN

C  AM  Gmaj

He was a wide-eyed sailor making rounds on boxes of tobacco.

C  AM

She owned a little diner.

Gmaj

Selling slim cups of brandy.

Gmaj

Coffee

C  Am

Saying find

Gmaj7

Me home saying
Bm  C  Am

Find my home

Good morning

We were finding hallowed ground here

Bm  Em  D  C

Blessed bold into your ruined eyes Where is their hell

Bm  C

Before some motel be melted down we’reMotel for empty

Em  D  C

Cango turned to boxcars

Bm  Em  D  C

Handed up the dines after Sundays never come
Verse 1: They lived on sheer paycheck, building makeshift homes along the seaside,
leaving these windows staring in the windows in a hazy letter.

Verse 2: I am a student attending the fine detail, the idea in the room,
struggling without any light, daydreaming of fingers,
imagine a bouquet of roses on the ordinary mantle.
But all eggshell homes are turned invisible.

Verse 3: We live through passing omens in a hilly town, a barely highway,
Reading the glories stone above, a bank of light from the river.
They used to trace lines on the mornings and write across the main street.

To find these waters resting, every sun set on a golden hill.

Chorus: There were echoes of
There were ghosts on the
Intro: C

F

C F
road follows the river like I have followed

F

C F

you

C F

opening into the white cropped

Am7 A7 Dimm G C Cmaj7

confused confluence smiling inside

Fmaj7

Instrumental Bridge

G

Am

Am9&5

Gsus4/B
Verse: this road follows the river like I have followed you
up against the ridge, into
Swallowing and trying to

This road is a cavern, I dive down to your mouth
your mouth down an ocean and a bridge that we built
out of secrets we can’t share

Will the fishermen find their answers, they return?

The shed run up the river up near Poyark
The people try with ladders to fix just what they broke
Every year less have come back up stream.
Higganum Mucket

Verse 1: I found a trophy in my attic while cleaning for the spring. On it sat a kind of fish one I'd never seen before. It was full of dust and it looked old and worn. I showed it to my dad and asked him what it meant. His brow turned quick his eyes went dark and this is what he said:

Chorus: This trophy is a relic from when I was your age! It belonged to Higganum!

I caught a fish no man before could catch. The fish had long and ugly teeth and thorns on its head. The touch that cut the daggers nearly killed your Uncle Ted! We had to keep his bloody mackerel in a bucket to preserve it and catch a mackerel.

Verse 2: Now grown up I can remember hearing of this fish. My dad's a vegetable and I was his favorite. Also, I was caught and cunning. I dont know more; I asked him where it came from but he wasn't really sure.

Chorus: Some say they jumped the river docks poring on their altar. To ask your Uncle Ted, they deemed it was fitting. We had to keep the trophy safe. They were cut on a piece of skin, but only when fresh. Fresh blood on a mackerel turns brown, and so I went to rest it.
Chorus: So what did you catch, the mucker, pa? You don't wanna know, please?

But I wasn't gonna do what till you were fully grown. Now everybody knows muckers spawn in the spring, but I looked in the water, they didn't surface with you. Oh.

Chorus:

I followed the fish past a trail of fresh mucker scent, and focused all my senses for the oncoming attack. I knew theOLUMN in the key of Eflat and got my line ready. I pulled out my backbone, but I turned to call back, and then I struck. And that's how I caught the thing, and we parted and thanks to that, I've made it to the world. You can be proud of that.
Ox Bow

INTRO: D/A C/G

D/A

C/G D/F# Em

cause Jim the ox bow and your tire over its phindarility just and row my
C c/B Am C c/B Am

U shaped band is cure the area but you
C c/B Am D sus 4

dug me out but I just don't know why don't know
C

C

Why don't know why don't know

Why don't know why
Verse 1: When I meet with you every so often, I trust my heart to touch the warmth of your love. Since the day we were young, you have been the one I love with all my heart. Even as the day comes and goes, you are still in my heart.

Verse 2: At first, it was broken, but today, I see the world as it should be. Now my heart is full of love, and you are my one true love. Your happiness is my happiness, and my sorrow is your sorrow. But when I need you by my side, you are always there to give me light and cause me to smile.
MERCURY

F♯m          G       A       G

Verse: Will speak in hushed tones.

Dmand        G

Then moves his hands with dropping

G      Dmand       G

Stones syllables are bound

G      Em       A

Now where has it gone enough?

Em      Em      A       G

Time mercury

Em      Em      A       G

Time mercury

For now
Verse 2: Toxic, noxious chemicals
Are trapped here in the silly cove
For energy and warmer homes

Verse 3: Written in mud between the lake
They blamed their failure with their mistakes
Innovation laid to waste

Verse 4: Split the atom, turn to dust
The earth still bears the memory of
The Silver Shining future lost...