FIELDWORK: sounding inquiries into sites and selves

by

Matthew W Chilton
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Preface: Why “FIELDWORK?”

Music needs fieldwork because being an armchair composer is not enough. The field of anthropology maintains fieldwork as a necessary rite for its adherents, for scholars to immerse themselves in the social and symbolic worlds of their subjects and to build relationships with people, not just texts and archives. Particularly important to anthropology and ethnomusicology has been the study of oral traditions - and intimately connected to this, those elements of culture that cannot be confined to text: The timbre of the voice, the way its pitch rises and falls as people speak to one another and tell their stories. The manners in which people move through physical and emotional space, feeling the site’s history and memory as things of the present. How we listen to each other, to the environment, and of course, to music. Fieldwork is where we confront the slippages between theory and practice, between the life described and the life lived.

In the opening to Shadows in the Field, a collection of writings concerning fieldwork in ethnomusicological practice, Timothy J. Cooley and Michael Barz write that “Music’s ephemeral nature predisposes ethnomusicologists to embrace multiple realities.” They go on to quote Claude Lévi-Strauss, who insinuates that music brings its listeners into an encounter with fleeting, unseen forces that they perceive as “shadows” rather than physical objects. Barz and Cooley continue: “Ethnomusicologists often feel as if they are chasing shadows in the field - striving to perceive and understand the liminal quality of musical meaning” (Barz and Cooley 2008:3). The ephemerality of the musical experience is a key aspect of its power, the way it washes over the mind and dissipates, leaving fragments resonating in memory. Through their reading of Lévi-
Strauss, Cooley and Barz invoke the ideal that music bridges ordinary and non-ordinary realities, with the implication that part of the world always lies beyond our perception.

I am interested in these “shadows” and what they come to signify for us as we listen to music and to the world - do we hear music reveal the truths of selves and spaces, or conceal them with abstraction, or both? Are we listening, playing, and composing to experience non-ordinary realities, or to call our attention to aspects of the seen world that we inhabit? Moreover, what does music offer us of the “otherworldly” within this world - what mythologies does it intersect with and ritually represent? How can our varying degrees of context, from spatial position to sociocultural identity, affect the way we perceive music?

As a student in music and anthropology, I employ this liberal interpretation of “fieldwork” as a way to avoid the trope of the individualized composer working in confined indoor spaces, ideas developing in isolation. Fieldwork hints at collaborative modes of working, where the researcher-composer must build personal relationships with their subjects and associates, and with the breadth and depth of places they create for themselves. It is a constant process of discovering how much relies on collaboration in the production of meaning and understanding – and in the process, to strive toward a beautiful work composed from a multitude of perspectives.

My more “conventional” fieldwork for my anthropology major involves participation in local musical communities who practice New Age forms of kirtan, a traditionally Hindu practice of communally chanting divine names along with music, often in call-and-response form. Their philosophies of sound, while heavily mediated, appropriated, and split from their context, are concerned with music’s ability to deeply affect its experiencers. The people that I have met and talked to throughout the course
of this fieldwork want sound to take them outside themselves, and view what they engage in not as music performances but as part of a wider “spiritual practice.” While I have my misgivings about the pervasive whiteness of these scenes and their inherent problems of representing the musical-cultural “other” that arises from it, I have come to sense that behind the embrace of these practices a desire to locate oneself within a tradition different from one’s upbringing, to collectively create a hybrid mythology to belong to. As I attempted to fairly represent my subjects, these experiences in fieldwork alerted me to the ways in which the academic frames of critique that I brought with me served to dismiss and delegitimize some of the deeply felt experiences of my subjects. This was a key discovery for me – that the tools I used to clarify my production of knowledge could also be blinding, distracting me from the particularity of people’s narratives and the roles that sound played within them.

My FIELDWORK is a performance and a process that explores selves and sites through physical and affective resonance. By affective resonance, I mean the intensities of feeling that cannot quite be qualified in terms of familiar emotions, our experience of the “liminal quality of musical meaning.” People and places – the interactions between these elemental components of performance structure my approach to the composition of this senior thesis, this academic rite of passage. All of the work’s initial melodic material came from “people.” I used a serial technique to sonify my and the performers’ Wesleyan ID numbers, then strung them together to make a melody. I appropriated these mundane institutional identifications, the way that selves are individualized, placed, and regulated in the school bureaucracy, as a means of melodically expressing relationships between individuals and communities. However, this element does not
exist in isolation from the element of place. In my compositional process, I paid attention to how the spaces we moved through affected how personal and communal sonic identities were elaborated, configured and reconfigured. The melodies that were briskly articulated by a combination of voices, winds, brass, and percussion in outdoor spaces such as Andrus Field (FIELDWORK II) could not at all be conceived in the same way in the next station, the reverberant indoor space of the Rehearsal Hall (FIELDWORK III). These practical concerns of musical material and spatial response blended with conceptual ones to inform my decisions – of the symbolisms of the open field vs. the enclosed, multi-platform stairwell, the “natural” vs. the built environment.

Throughout the process, I continually asked myself a mixture of questions concerning the blending of sound and site. Is the space transparent, allowing for the melody to be heard, for each individual sequence to come through? Or is it highly saturated with resonance, allowing for the harmonious blending of separate voices? Moreover, how apparent is the origin of these melodies and their corresponding people to the friendly experiencer? How are “selves” revealed and concealed in improvisation and in space? I elaborate upon these questions in the later sections concerning FIELDWORK I, II, and III.

The element of place is where the name “FIELDWORK” originates - both as a reference to the collaborative, multivocal, and often improvisational processes of anthropological research and writing (Cerwonka and Malikki 2007), and as a pun on the spaces whose resonances and reflections inspired me to take on this project of qualitative sonic research. Throughout my time at Wesleyan, I chased the musical “shadows in the field.” I define these shadows as the subtle musical potentials suggested by spaces, one’s traversal through them, and the acoustic interactions that happen within them as a result
of movements and soundings. Sonic shadows revealed themselves to me as voices called across the CFA field and echoed back, or as my footsteps hinted at hidden tones as I walked between parallel walls (FIELDWORK IV). These small actions, at first merely incidental to my movement through space, revealed the musical possibilities hidden within everyday environments. I began to see that spaces meant simply to be traveled through, between classes and rehearsals, could become transformed through careful musical listening, practice, and play into sites of sound and memory.

**The Space and Place of Performance**

Wesleyan’s Center for the Arts (or CFA), designed by architect Kevin Roche and completed in 1973, has provided an outstanding concentration of resonant spaces for me to work with - replete with sound shadows to chase both from the inside and the outside. His buildings - large, blocky constructions of subtly pitted and patterned grey limestone, are often set against each other in parallel constructions. Their strictly rectangular forms, aligned in this way, provide ideal surfaces and enclosures through which sound can reflect, bounce, and resonate. Flutter echoes, slapbacks, long delays, and pitched standing waves are at home in the in-betweens of these spaces, as sonic potentials realized accidentally.

The most famous of these is the passageway that leads under the Music Studios - it is the only spatial resonance in the complex that has its own “mythology” of sorts. Inside the niche before entering one of the two doors, parallel walls extend all the way up to the third story of the building. Every official university tour that moves through the CFA will mention the acoustic particularity of this space, but no others. Tour guides
claim that it was tuned to an A at 440hz when it was built, but it is now pitched closer to an Ab due to the erosion of the ground below. My tour guide when I was still a prospective student related that this architectural tuning was intentional, so that musicians could perform last-minute adjustments to their instruments on their way to a performance if necessary. Despite the changes of temperature and humidity from the outside to the inside that would certainly render this last-minute tuning useless, the story continues to be told and retold.

As tour guides relate this tale, they mention that the space is activated by clapping - inevitably resulting in a chorus of colliding hands from the tour participants that never quite succeeds in drawing out the pitch of the space. These repeated incidents have led to numerous humorous campaigns spearheaded by our colleague Hallie Blejewski, the most recent of which consisted of signs in the space that read “NO CLAPPING - as per Experimental Music Ordinance C.3129F.” When I returned to this space as a first-year student, I was determined to work out how to properly utilize it - and quickly found that a loud stomp on the ground did the trick. A deep, clear bass tone ascended from my boot’s point of contact with the ground, its overtones bearing a nearly metallic resonance. Later, I began to sing and play instruments there to trigger these resonances by other means, playing to the space as a means of energizing new approaches to improvisation. What was most refreshing to me about this approach was that it required me to let go of the rote tendencies toward virtuosity that often dominated my expression, requiring me to listen carefully and closely to the architecture so I would not overwhelm its reverberant responses. The place of performance began to fill in the space between the notes that I was often hesitant to leave blank, providing me with a reliable non-human duo partner to practice with.
The element of the “Myth of the Tuning Claps” that interests me most is the assertion of acoustical intentionality behind the construction of the building. While other spaces in the complex have similar effects due to parallel walls - such as the outdoor ‘hallway’ between Art Studios North & South (“FIELDWORK IV”) which resonates at a gorgeous Eb1, there is no musical intention assumed behind their design and construction. The potentials for wondrous sounds abound throughout the whole CFA complex, from the churchlike acoustics of the Rehearsal Hall (“FIELDWORK III”) and Music Studios (“FIELDWORK VI”) to the subterranean droning of power transformers and gargling of pipes in the network of tunnels that connect all of the art and music facilities. What stops these spaces from being recognized as musical places in their own right? The institution of the Wesleyan Office of Admissions is certainly responsible for keeping the small myth of the Music Studios alive as it trains new tour guides each semester, but the most important thing is that the place is marked, identified as somehow special, and that an action is directed within the site with the intention to draw out its characteristic resonances.

Entangling Ritual and Play

FIELDWORK directs intention and attention toward these sorts of spaces and their potentials to inspire deep listening and harmonious, multivalent interactions. Regardless of the intention in their construction, the CFA buildings and their relationships with each other in space create potentials for deep acoustical play. Religious scholar J.Z. Smith writes that “Ritual is, first and foremost, a mode of paying attention. It is a process for marking interest...place directs attention” (Smith 1987:103). As such,
this senior thesis-as-ritual aims to play on this relationship between sound and space - allowing place to direct attention to the sonic experience while shaping it, and to have the sound draw attention to the particularities of place.

Enhancing the ritualistic overtone of the performance is the quality of sounds produced from the spaces – with ricocheting sounds and resonant feedback, they most immediately call to mind the delays used in electronic audio processing. Hearing these sounds coming out of entirely acoustic sources can be a revelatory experience, as it was for me the first time I heard sound travel across the CFA field. Unable to discern the sources of sounds - they seemed to be coming from in front and behind at the same time due to the alignment of the reflecting surfaces - my amazement perhaps hinted at the perception of a “non-ordinary reality” of sonic shadows.

As I came to know the resonances of the CFA’s outdoor spaces through play and experimentation, remaining mystified with the nature of the sounds produced across the soccer field (FIELDWORK IV), I considered what it would mean to take a divergent route towards unlocking the same acoustic effects. If one used equations to calculate the ideal positions, note frequencies, and velocities to be played for certain acoustic effects, how would the experience of sound in the space change? This question led me to define FIELDWORK alternately as “qualitative acoustic research” as well as a “ritual of revealing space.” To do my research, playing, and composition from a quantitative perspective would risk demystifying the experience, taking away the sense of wonder and discovery that I felt when sounding each note across the field. A calculated, scientific perspective to the production of the shadows that I was chasing would demand tight control of performers and their positions, rather than the playful quality of experimentation and discovery that had guided my first engagements with the space. I
decided the preservation of this quality for my audience was vital to the engagement with the space that I was trying to create on the field – something outside the control of a sovereign individual, whose experience could be guided but not curated.

On the field, I wanted to perform an idealized vision of the social world in which individual difference was flattened in the experience of sound, yet with the sounds heard by each person differing in reflection time and rhythmic perception based on their location on the field. In this sense, the sort of ritual I was envisioning took the experience of musical practicing and exploring out of the rehearsal studio, and relocated it into the field, using it to emphasize and “musicalize” the incidental, everyday sound shadows that we hear there.

J.Z. Smith hints at this interplay when he writes:

“Ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are. Ritual relies for its power on the fact that it is concerned with quite ordinary activities placed within an extraordinary setting, that what it describes and displays is, in principle, possible for every occurrence of these acts. But it also relies for its power on the perceived fact that, in actuality, such possibilities cannot be realized” (Smith 1987:109).

The “way things ought to be” of FIELDWORK’s ideal ritual space is a constant state of attunement to the soundscape, a deep listening experience that brings a community of people into a shared place formed in active listening. For our purposes, perhaps we are dealing with extraordinary activities within ordinary spaces, but these spaces become extraordinary through musical intervention – a cyclical process in which both elements become enhanced. We always have access to this depth of listening, but do not always have the community to share it with or the musical sound to draw attention to the space. The idea that the possibilities of ritual cannot be regularly realized fits with the
singularity of the senior thesis performance – though born from a long-term process of conceptualization and rehearsal, it takes the form of a distinct event, a rite of passage that gains its power and significance from the fact that it only happens once.

In this sense, ritual emerges as a mode of framing activity and interaction, calling significance to the occurrences within. In her writing on processional performance, Kathleen Ashley writes of theories contrasting the “ritual frame” with the “play frame.” In the play frame, all statements within appear untrue – a “this is make believe” in contrast to ritual’s “let us believe” (Ashley & Hüsken 2001:14). I interpret these frames of ritual and play as the poles of a spectrum, with the multi-sited performance oscillating between different emotional valences as it moves through space. From the opening moments of solemn communion on Andrus field to the wild play of the Music Studios, the recital explores how the differing musical and spatial contexts, combined with participant-performer interactions and distinctions, shape the depth of ritual and play.

We now move through the recital’s form to track these transforming framings, as well as the processes of conception, collaboration, and reformulation that brought the performance from idea to reality.

**FIELDWORK I: in collective memory**

**Community as Ordering Myth**

The small myths of community permeate Wesleyan’s discourse at many levels from the presidential platitudes of Michael Roth’s emails to ResLife’s goals for student housing, down to the grassroots levels of student activism. These myths exist in tension
with the highly individuated nature of our studies here – we delve into obscure topics and writings because they speak to our inner sensibilities, we acquire the specialized vocabularies of our chosen disciplines, we create a path to our own self-discovery. It is perhaps because of this individualization that community means so much for us as an ideal, as something to be strived for. But at the same time, we see it used as a rhetoric of management and control in schoolwide emails during crisis situations – such as the “molly” incidents of February 2015 - as the administration praised students to come forward and cooperate with law enforcement, according to some, appropriating the social justice discourses of community and bystander intervention to ask students to name names and potentially criminalize their peers (Stevens 2015). This incident - a collapse of Wesleyan’s optimism toward substance use for some, a confirmation of a dangerous culture left unchecked too long for others, fragmented the campus such that a singular community could not be truly spoken of.

The disjunction here between the “community” referred to by the institution and the tight-knit network of support that arose organically caused me and many of my peers to recognize this everyday myth for what it was, an ambiguous construction between institutional and personal identity, as much a mode of belonging as a discourse of regulation and control. This micro-myth, and the shifting valences between the authoritarian and egalitarian discourses that employ it, made it fertile ground upon which to construct and navigate individual and collective musical identities.

The WesID Sequence and Melodic Identities

These tensions between personal and institutional forms of identification and belonging make up the texture of “FIELDWORK I – in collective memory.” It is
composed from the WesID numbers of each performer in the core ensemble, in a
conge...the WesID alone is a strange thing to be identified by, as it seems to reduce our individuality
to a number for bureaucratic processing. Yet, there is a rich symbolism perceptible in
taking something potentially alienating and making it the seed of personal expression, to
be germinated by the creativity of its bearer.

In our daily experience at Wesleyan, the WesID number is a six-digit sequence
that subtly comes to define our institutional personhood. Printed on our ID cards
opposite our young portraits, it materially embodies access - to spaces, to food, to mail
services, to artistic events and transportation. Working in the university’s box office, I
swam in a constant stream of these sequences. They poured in as familiar and new faces
purchased tickets, charging to their student accounts for convenience. I entered
countless strings of these numbers into the ticketing system over my 3 years in the box,
which revealed patterns, some subtle and some more obvious linking certain beginnings
of the sequences to class years.

I realized the musical capabilities of these ID numbers, and of numeric
sequences in general, taking Neely Bruce’s seminar on 20th Century Compositional
Techniques. As we discussed composition through chance processes, assigning pitches
to randomly-generated numbers came up as a potential use for this technique. I thought
about interpreting the WesID sequence as a kind of numerical cipher notation in the
vein of the Javanese and Chinese systems that I had been exposed through my studies in
“world music” – while this would not necessarily be “random,” it provided a means of
making a simple system of music that could change depending on who played it. For
pitch assignments, I decided to work intuitively – a diatonic scale over an octave
corresponded to the numbers 1 through 8, with 0 and 9 being the steps below and above the tonic (low B and high D in C major, equivalent to 7 and 2 respectively). Musicians would use their numerical sequences to generate melodic ostinati from their numbers within the same diatonic context, creating unplanned melodic and harmonic interactions depending on the players.

When I got around to trying things out, my number, 132154, seemed boringly tonal within a major scale - and the rest of this musical system didn’t seem to suggest many interesting possibilities given the limitations imposed by the strict sequences. How would one direct the development of a piece like this, and keep it from falling into stasis? What methods for variation could there be? I scrapped the idea for the time being, but over the next couple years the WesID numbers that I encountered in my box office work began to sing to me - the melodic contours of some of these sequences stood out as potentially interesting, and I considered the possibilities of rendering them in diatonic modes instead of major/minor scales. This suggested much more interesting possibilities to me, so I chose as my starting point the Lydian mode, or raga kalyani in Carnatic music – a scale that I find to have great emotional power even in simple settings.

**Beginning FIELDWORK – the original conceptualizations**

By this time I knew that I wanted to use the WesID numbers as the basis of melodic material, to have the modes they correspond to refer to the modes of personal identity and institutional belonging. I wanted the performers to improvise from their numbers without deviating from the order of the sequence, using different speeds of interpretation to create interesting interactions and textures. To make the patterns more
flexible and interesting to improvise with, I encouraged my performers to employ serial
techniques – like singing the retrogrades of their sequences, starting in whatever place
they wanted to as long as they maintained the integrity of their row, and alternating
between adjacent notes. I originally intended this to be the melodic system for the entire
piece – I liked the idea of composing from an economy of means, attempting to make
brief scores with as much openness and interpretability as I could.

The original idea of the performance centered around telling a sort of New Age
myth through three different melodic modes, based on some of my favorite ragas of
Carnatic music. These modes were to change along with the narratives of their spaces. In
which what began as a harmonious community in mode 1, “communion” (kalyani,
CDEF#GABC), we took place in the memory-rich grounds of Foss Hill and Andrus
Field. This disintegrated into individual voices in the Rehearsal Hall’s indoor space with
the mode of “introspection” (pantuvarali, CDbEF#GAbBC) increasing dissonance
devolving into combating egos, eventually would be lost in atonal chaos in the Art
Studios courtyards. The Sanctuary (FIELDWORK V) would be the place where we
would “meditate” in the pentatonic mode of “convergence” (amrithavarsbini,
CEF#GBC), using the underlying notes common to both of the previous scales. The
score excerpted below shows each of the three modes and how they are mapped onto
numbers for the sonification of WesID data – the bottom row of the image shows
In its initial conception, the Sanctuary reincorporated us into a cohesive group, through a combination of “ancient” ritual technologies (singing bowls) and intentional listening to the complex drones of the modern mechanical soundscape. I wanted to explore listening to machine sound as something potentially illuminating rather than alienating, appreciating its rich overtones and challenging the harsh separation of the “natural” and “unnatural.” The procession through the tunnels to the Music Studios would emphasize the musical quality of the background noise with pauses at various power transformers along the way, eventually emerging to a collective percussion jam on the handrail tubes in the music studios, primarily using the “universal rhythmic systems” – a series of percussive ostinati based on prime numbers 2 – 17, meant to be applied freely and guiding the treatment of the melody (Appendix II). Finally, we would gather in Crowell Concert Hall for a final, composed portion of the recital featuring works for small ensembles.

The element present in the early conception of the work that remained throughout all its future iterations was the use of the pitched elements of the spaces to determine tonal area, as well as the exploration of sound-able objects as instruments. The
percussion dumpster in the CFA courtyards and the tubular railings in the Music Studios and their pitches organized what we would do in each space. In the early processes of fieldwork, I mostly worked alone in developing techniques for these instruments and discovering sound, but I was also blessed to have a research associate whose sonic curiosity was constantly growing – my housemate Mitch Fehr provided invaluable assistance in trying out various sounds of the spaces with me and helping me to listen to spaces from different angles, perspectives that I could not have while I was playing. This, to me, symbolized the most necessarily collaborative element of the performance – because of how the sonic experience was spatialized, it was impossible to perceive the breadth of potential sounds from a single perspective. While conventional composition can be done in isolation, the form of spatial composition that I was seeking relied on the constant presence of multiple perspectives and their input.

As soon as we met for the first time in the basement of the Rehearsal Hall, I was confronted with the sheer inadequacy of these two simple instructional scores to communicate what I was thinking to my performers. About 30 performers, vocalists and instrumentalists from trained and untrained musical backgrounds, came to that rehearsal, in which I talked and walked through the form of the performance. When it came time to go over the melodic systems, we instantly ran into trouble. The system was nowhere near how “intuitive” I thought it was, instead providing a formidable challenge to wrestle with. I took for granted the easy singability of my sequence, neglecting that I was the only one in the entire recital whose sequence began on a tonic (number 1 or 8). I chose a couple volunteers, and played their melodies for them on flute so they could hear them and pick them up, sustaining them so they could be placed at different locations in the Rehearsal Hall stairs.
The volunteers and I alike became frustrated at how quickly these melodies slipped from our minds without an anchor, and all of the ideas that I added to increase flexibility, including the instruction to take the line at any speed, did not seem to help. Moreover, an extremely prevalent pattern in the assignment class of 2019’s ID numbers resulted in almost every single first-year member of the ensemble having a sequence beginning “333,” “334,” or “335.” I had noticed this pattern at the box office as well, the numbers for this class seeming more similar in construction than those of any years I had observed before. This posed a challenge to the “modal” idea I had wanted to explore with these sequences – because so many performers’ sequences emphasized the 3, the effect produced was unlike any of the modes that I derived from ragas – and the character of these ragas would inevitably be lost or transfigured based on the people singing them. Moreover, because of this strong non-tonic emphasis, I found it very difficult to sing my own melody within the group texture. I had been bested by my own system, underestimating its difficulty and expecting things from others that I could not perform myself.

My idealism in constructing this first element of the FIELDWORK, thinking that the discovery and elaboration of people’s personal melodies would be an easy and natural process, cost me many performers for whom the unfamiliarity and seeming difficulty of the systems served as a deterrent to participation. Their individual lives came to take priority over the discovery of their “melodic selves,” the process too abstract and unwieldy to engage in the work of “community-building” through the aggregation of musical identities. As prospective performers continued to drop out of the recital throughout the month of February, I knew that I had to increase my amount of composer oversight and control – I was not working with a team of professional
musicians with flawless ear training, and I was disrespecting the time of other busy
students like myself by not directing enough, by not accurately communicating to people
their roles in the process. The sheer number of people involved at the start of the
process made necessary one-on-one workshops impractical to impossible, so by the
end of the month of February I decided that a reformulation was necessary.

FIELDWORK I is Born

The departure of many prospective performers was a blessing in disguise for the
project, because it allowed me to focus clearly on developing a more clear and concise
way of communicating “community” through a group of interlinked melodies. I knew I
wanted this performance to happen on Foss Hill and Andrus Field, sites of collective
gathering and occasional music performance that signified meetings and movement, a
logical place to start the experience due to its centrality on campus and the layered
sediment of memory built up over many persisting beyond the individual’s four-year life
cycle. It made sense to begin here, at an established place of gathering, before moving
through the other, more liminal spaces that did not have the same history of communal
interaction – the spaces for which we would be creating collective memories.

I identified the performing group, which at the time consisted of 15 people, and
set about arranging their sequences in a way that could maintain a sense of melodic
coherence throughout. I envisioned a development that revealed and concealed
individual identities, with performers singing their sequence and then folding back into a
collective texture by sustaining the last notes of their melody throughout. In the score,
each performer is free to render their melody at any pace that they would like, varying
the durations between notes to emphasize tones in their sequence. In order to represent this freedom of time, I decided to notate each sequence with stemless notes in boxes, bearing the names of the sequence’s owner and their ID numbers from which the melody was derived for clarity. The sustained notes are represented in the spaces between cells, and give the performer the option to shift between the last note of their sequence and its neighboring tones. This was not meant to be entirely precise, but to suggest the gradual accretion of drone texture as the piece developed.

Excerpt (first line) of “FIELDWORK I” (Appendix III)

In the second repetition of the piece, it moves from a one-by-one process of introducing melodic selves to a rendering of the whole sequence-of-sequences as a single, long melody. The name “in collective memory” comes from this part of the piece, as well as its situation in the storied terrain of the campus’s central field. Performers take turns conducting the melody at their own parts, visually marking their choice of timing with their bodies. Performers have the option to take as long as they want to reveal their melody before passing the process on to the next person. In our rehearsals, this melodic embodiment proved to be an extremely effective tool both for conducting the ensemble, as well as for communicating energy and enthusiasm in interpretation that could spread across the whole group. The idea of “collective memory” enters here because each performer knows their own melody, knows their self, but to recall the entire sequence of rhythmically amorphous melodies would be highly difficult for an individual person. As
everyone leads from their personal melodic perspectives, the group is able to work together to recite the entire line from “collective memory.”

Collective Memory in Performance – Moving Toward Procession

Despite my determination to build pieces around the native instruments residing in each space, the most profound and obvious ones on the field did not occur to me until about a week before the performance – the South College bells. With the help of the bell ringing co op, I was able to obtain access to the building for some brief practice sessions on the carillon so that I might accompany my performers remotely. The dense enharmonic overtones of the bells provided exactly the supporting texture I was looking for in the beginning of “FIELDWORK I,” as well as an auspicious beginning to the performance that also functioned as a signaling mechanism, their metallic sounds spreading through space and drawing attention to the events about to transpire. Despite my insistence on site-specificity, logistical and weather issues prevented us from having rehearsals in the spaces of the performance until the very end of the process. Nonetheless, we were able to play with the bells in our dress rehearsal in order to feel through how they would mesh, both musically and symbolically.

As the performance began, I was hyper-conscious of my separation from the space of the field, from my musicians and the ritual participants. This was a powerful element of the performance for me – with nothing but a crackling line of cellphone communication, I had to invest all of my faith in the interpretation of the performers. Across distance, I could not correct, could not micromanage in any way – and I loved that. It was a liberating thing to be able to invest trust in my musicians, to coordinate the
realization of a difficult piece across space with no direct line of vision whatsoever. For me, this part of the performance was situated in the ritual frame – the imperative “let us believe” – let us believe in the work that we have done together, in our ability to communicate across distance to create together. We communicated this ritualistic framing through the arrangements of the performers and audience on the field – in concentric circles, the audience surrounding the musicians, the musicians circled in order of their melodic entrances.

After opening with a brief solo on the bells, I played my WesID melody to begin the process outlined in the composition. Sensitively following along to the fragments of melody I could hear over the phone, I had to imagine the sounds that were perceived on the field, to assure myself that everything was in its right place – and also to simply let it happen, given the inevitable delay between the actions on the field and the response of the cell phone signal. The first section of “FIELDWORK I” proved the most difficult to accompany because of the presence of some quieter voices on the far ends of the circle, but the second was easy to follow due to the loud, collective treatment of the melody. After reaching the dramatic pause at the end, the sound of Anthony hanging up his phone accompanied the bells’ fading resonances. Energized and excited, I grabbed my flute and bag and took to the field, where the procession was already beginning.
FIELDWORK II: procession I

The route and plan of the procession from Andrus to the Rehearsal Hall.

The processional melody came from the same sequence-of-sequences as the preceding section, but incorporates rhythmic and movement elements that lend the once-amorphous field melody a sense of emotional celebration and movement. It employs the same order, but uses the retrogrades of some performers’ sequences to create better melodic flow. It is set over a complementary bass and percussion line, whose main purpose is to generate cross rhythms that the performers and audience feel within their bodies as they move. Though long and winding, it became the principal melodic identity of the recital. Even though it was composed of essentially the same material as the amorphous melody of “FIELDWORK I,” this second movement was far easier for me and my performers to commit to memory. This highlights the role of rhythm in the production of melody, memory, and movement – it is the missing
“identity” of the stationary collective that comes together as we share the experience of affective and physical movement through space.

My first draft of the melody foregrounded the use of duple against triple and symmetrical against asymmetrical meters by alternating 6/4 and 7/4 time signatures, and by switching up the rhythmic relations between the treble and bass lines (Appendix IV). I was so possessed with the symbolic value of these rhythmic contrasts, with the experience of the beat turning around beneath our feet, that I did not consider the absurd difficulty of what I was writing even as it took me hours and hours to compose. This first draft also had a different melodic order than the version that made it to performance. In another case of necessary collaboration, my ensemble shot it down as soon as I brought it into rehearsal. When clarinetist Josh Davidoff, one of the most capable instrumentalists and sight readers of the group told me that it was completely unrealistic, I had no choice but to agree and to put aside my prioritization of musical complexity. I had to make something more comprehensible, more beautiful, while still maintaining some of the cross rhythms between treble and bass that provided a sense of movement within the listener’s body.

From this experience of trial and error, a beautiful and lingering melody was born. I transposed it all into the metric context of 6/4, and also began to recompose its order to minimize melodic disjunctions, create more satisfying and timely melodic resolutions and meanderings, and to give it some of the mystical vocal qualities of Renaissance processional music that seemed to be composed free from the “East-West” musical distinctions (see Ensemble Syntagma 2008). By contrasting units of twos, threes, fives, and sevens between the two parts, I was able to make it communicate some of the same rhythmic contrasts that were over-exaggerated in the original version. With this
revision, I changed the order of personal melodic sequences in both the procession and in “FIELDWORK I.”

The most important role of the processional mode in this performance was to convey the experience of moving through emotional and musical space – the audience and musicians move together, hearing how the music begins to respond to the different environments it comes in contact with. This increases our awareness of the particularity of our surroundings, drawing attention to the way acoustics shape performance, and the ways in music transcends and reflects from the boundaries that limit our movement.

The processional mode drew attention to these boundaries and problems of logistics as we rehearsed several days before the show – how exactly were we making the trip from the field to the Rehearsal Hall, given the architectural boundaries in the way? We decided to split the group around Beckham Hall, which yielded unintentional but interesting effects – each section became relatively independent in its progress of the melody, and by the time we converged at the power station between Usdalan and Fayerweather the group was in two different places. I was flustered at first, before I realized what a stellar effect this caused – the fragmentation of community and interpretation caused me to consider the ways in which spatial distance affects the relations of groups in space. This was an instance of a slippage between intention and performance that deserved to be appreciated and embraced, a situation in which the messiness of the field experience and its deviation from my intention worked to produce new meanings.

The power station as meeting place provided a new anchor with which to orient ourselves after the divergence, using the drone at around a concert B to modulate a half step down from our original key of C Lydian. As we converged here in performance,
there was a profound moment of pause as we made it clear that we were abstracting the
pitch from this electrical drone, clearly drawing in our inspiration from the sounds
around us. Torie and I physically placed our ears on the surface, an act of listening
externalized as a bodily motion that invited our experiencers to listen in a similar way.
The last fragments of the processional melody faded away, becoming a unified drone
within the ensemble over which wind instruments hinted at the shadows of their self-
melodies. We then moved into the Rehearsal Hall, ready to transform the experience of
these already-familiar sequences to meet the demands of a new space.

III: songs of separation - the built environment - processes of individuation

FIELDWORK III uses the space of the Rehearsal Hall stairwells to expose a new form
of relation between the performers and their melodies. In contrast to the transparency of
the outdoor spaces before it, these stairwells are highly reverberant and exhibit a
tendency to blend sounds together as a cohesive whole. The space is prepared by
propping open all of the stair doors in order to make sure that sound can flow out into
the upstairs and downstairs lobbies, and then musicians spatialize themselves across
different platforms between the ground floor and basement. They sing and play their
individual sequences at any pace, employing the modes of variation allowed by the
melodic systems in order to make their elaborations of melodic selves an expression of
“who they are.” Rather than singing all in sequence as a whole community as in
“FIELDWORK I,” individuals create shifting relationships by all singing their sequences
simultaneously. The top and bottom floors are occupied by an instrumental and vocal
soloist respectively, who are not bound to their sequences but instead improvise within
the B Lydian mode – freely interpreting the resonances of massed selves that they hear
reverberating from the mouths of the stairwells. They mediate between themselves and
their communally, melodically reflecting on the process – occasionally picking out and
reproducing fragments of what they hear inside.

FIELDWORK III - songs of separation
for 10 musicians in ad zenyah hall

The score of “FIELDWORK III – songs of separation”

As such, the score of this piece does not reflect an program for the sounds to be
made in the space, but rather a method for the placement of musicians and their
movement. The knowledge of the melody and its elaboration are assumed, making this
score not part of a prescriptive system, but a descriptive one. It reminds us about how to
travel with and interact with the space, of the conceptual valences that our renderings of
the melodies should invoke. The soloist on top is the one who controls the cycling of
performers through the space, after their movement, each player is displaced by one
position farther down into or up out of the stairwells, creating two new soloists who in turn have space to reflect. Once everyone has become a soloist, the piece ends.

When we performed this piece in the performance, the audience cycled through the space constantly, drawn into physical and sonic relations with each performer as they moved past them, hearing fragments of their melodies become distinct with proximity and then dissolve into the space. The audience director, vocalist Torie White, was indispensable to this process with her keen eye for the spaces and her skills for logistical improvisation. As the audience began to clump up at an early point in the process, she said, “Imagine that this space is a river, and you are flowing through it.” This poetic moment seemed completely planned, though it had never been discussed in such terms. The performance truly could not have happened the same way without her, for she was also the most active in asking questions when the rehearsal directions were unclear. The collaborative relationship that developed between us strengthened all aspects of the performance, as she asked clarifying questions that were surely on everyone’s mind – and these questions, in turn, helped me clarify my ideas and their communication. Her intuitive approach, as someone not trained in reading music, helped permeate the process with improvisation and focused me on making the rehearsal process open and informative to my musicians from different backgrounds.
FIELDWORK IV: to put in place

The CFA soccer field was one of the original sites and namesakes for the project. With its distant boundaries – Crowell Concert Hall to the south, and the Art Workshops to the North, Art Studios courtyards to the east, it provides reflective surfaces for the unpredictable and mystifying encounters of sound against boundaries. My formative explorations here involved experimentation with different instruments to see which would reveal sonic reflections and resonances most effectively. It was not until I somehow acquired a baritone horn from eBay that I was truly able to unlock these sounds. The wind instruments I was playing previously here – flute, clarinet, and saxophone, lacked the directionality to fully make the space speak. But with this brass instrument, this heavily directed sound coming from a forward-facing bell, I was able to
sound strong notes against the edges of the field, and to hear the response of each individual wall as the notes rebounded and reflected through the makeshift amphitheatre, producing multiple resonances of different timing. The sound, much like an electronic delay, hinted to me at acoustic properties that I could not fully understand – that I did not want to fully understand. I envisioned a brass band and percussion playing there, using simple interlocking rhythms to showcase the unique and multiple delays inherent to the space.

The perspective of the listeners in this piece is vital. As we left the Rehearsal Hall in performance, two groups separated around Crowell Concert Hall – I led to the right, toward the music studios, with my percussionists Janak and Jay, while my trumpeter and trombonist Isaac and David led the audience to the other side with Bram, the final percussionist. We looped the first two measures of the FIELDWORK II bass/rhythm part, a 3+3+3+3 bar followed by a bar of 7+5. As we traveled through the space, these rhythms generated unpredictable and attention-grabbing resonances and reflections while in transit. Gradually, we all circled in toward the center of the field, finding positions that we had developed in rehearsal because of the organizing power of the echoes as heard from the performer perspective. Bram positioned their snare near crowell, Jay put his in the middle of the field facing the Art Studios, and Janak set up somewhere in between. The brass players came in toward the center from the west, while I circled in from the East.

After the performers were placed, however, the audience still moved through the space. While the performers did not hear their sequences as changing, the non-performing members of the ensemble led the audience in sonic explorations across the field. This was at once a ritual of revealing extraordinary sounds in space, the clatter of
the snares seemingly surrounding from all angles, as well as a playful experience for the audience. People laughed, related their experiences of sound, thoroughly enjoying the immersive experience. This sonic experience, decentralized by nature of not having one authoritative viewpoint, hinted at a flattening of individual difference at the same time as a privileging of the individual auditory perspective. No authoritative recording of this piece could exist – even if a microphone was able to pick up the precise reflections of the walls, it would still fail to account for every vantage point of experience – from which the resonances, reflections, and their implied rhythms would have been different. In this sense, the field became the site for an egalitarian experience of play that avoided capture and commodification. While I originally intended to score music for each performer’s station on the field, I realized that this would detract from the improvisational quality of the space, and would not reflect the audience’s auditory perspective – which, in a reversal of traditional interpretive authority, was the most important one.

After developing our rhythmic interactions with the space to a climax in the center, Torie invoked “another river…” that brought the flow of people in toward the new space. We moved into the Art Studios courtyards for the second section of this piece, which began with me pulling my saxophone out of the dumpster. The percussionists began an energetic group drumbeat on the trash receptacle, bringing out the bell-like resonant properties of its side panels as well as the slapping sounds of its plastic lids and metal rods. The adjacent passageway, resonant at Eb, worked perfectly as an accompaniment for the Bb instruments – my tenor saxophone, Josh’s clarinet, and David’s bass trombone. We played here for a while, jamming to the joyful scale of raga *bamsadhwani* (Eb F G Bb D Eb) in communication with the percussionists as the other
ensemble members led the group in loops around the space. The resonances that carried out of the tunnel were most apparent from outside the immediate area, an effect that I would have not discovered without the playing and listening collaboration of others that enabled our movement.

This part of the recital reached its first peak of playfulness before moving toward the most regulated, ritualistic space of them all – the Sanctuary, of the Zilkha Gallery back stairwell. As we moved toward this space, we had a moment of brief sonic pause. I led the way there with my saxophone, and established the new improvisation location between Zilkha Gallery and the Ring Hall. This space has an impressive ricocheting delay, another sound more at home in the world of electronic music than in our acoustic instruments. Isaac, Janak, David, Bram, and Jay set up their instruments there and began playing, as we prepared to lead small groups of participants into the sanctuary.

V: sanctuary - engineering "sacred space" - technologies of healing & hearing - new age narratives - the mystics

The Sanctuary is a space in the far outermost edges of the Center for the Art’s underground tunnel network, separated from the main passage by a closed corridor. A back stairwell connecting the tunnels behind the photography lab to the Zilkha Gallery conference room and CFA offices above, it is a space rarely moved through or experienced by most of the Wesleyan community. I discovered it on an early sojourn through the tunnels, finding its resonant tubes and electrical drone remarkably atmospheric. Because of this drone, I imagined the interactions between different varieties of pure tones within that space, from split multiphonics to the resonances of the singing bowls. For this piece, I wanted to bring in players who were outside the conventional “Wesleyan Community,” not identified by ID numbers, to play mysterious,
unseen hierophantic figures. Joseph Getter, my main contact in my ethnomusicological fieldwork as a main player in local kirtan groups, lended his broad palette of sounds to my FIELDWORK. Terri Hron graced us with her performance as the high priestess, occupying the highest platform in the space with her crystalline multiphonics and stabbing percussive attacks on tenor and great bass recorders.

I wanted to create a ritual space defined in distinction to the egalitarian play of the preceding sections, a space that gained its power from its restriction rather than its openness. We only let in groups of five to ten at a time, wearing blindfolds so as to leave them at the mercy of sound. The deprivation of this sense was one of the most profound factors contributing to the space’s effectiveness as a foreboding ritual scene. Sinister multiphonic grit and blends between Terri’s and my recorders rubbed against Joseph’s pure bowl, gong, and crystal pyramid tones, combining in free improvisations as the blindfolded participants were lead through the space by the non-playing performers, immersed in sound without sight and vulnerable, but trusting in the experience and in each other. Meanwhile, the music from the wind, brass, and percussion band continued throughout the duration of the piece with its lively energy and echoes – two spaces so close together, yet so far apart in their emotional valences.

VI: to (make) believe

The Music Studios constituted another one of the most important, foundational spaces for the recital for me – as a place I would go to practice when the rehearsal rooms of the basement confined the sound too much. However, due to their immense size they were one of the hardest pieces for me to direct and conceptualize. After numerous failed ideas, I decided to make these spaces a site of improvisation and play, like they had always been for me throughout my years exploring them. We processed through the
tunnels to reach there, hinting at the melody of the original procession but in fragments, in different places from across the musical ensemble. As we filtered into the two stairwells, two different approaches developed – the Western stairwell based on the slow elaboration of this original melody at different, diverging paces by the individual musicians, and the Eastern based on free group improvisations.

The spirit of play here explicitly included the audience. With the programs, each audience member received 2 cards that would direct the actions of the performers (Appendix IV), but were not informed about what these cards did. They caused actions from different interpretations of the melody to different movements within the space, to repetitions of listening in the tunnels, to different ways of striking the tubular hand railings to produce percussive sounds and bell tones. As the audience members moved through the space, they engaged with the musicians personally, becoming part of the auditory experience by directing it. The soundscapes between the two stairwells contrasted greatly, creating transitions between tranquility and screaming chaos as card commands built on each other and different performer configurations formed. The audience enjoyed every moment, exploring, laughing, finding the joy that I had left there in my past 4 years.

VIII: deconstructing the concert hall

At the end of the experience, we finally arrived in the only conventional concert space in the performance – Crowell Concert Hall. But we approached from the back. I was interested to see how the audience, undirected, would engage with the space – would they linger in the aisles, or would they sit down? Perhaps because of routine, perhaps because of the exhausting concert experience they chose to sit. We first played my piece “As Katydoes,” an homage to the Common True Katydid, a musical insect
whose song defined an inspired many deep listenings in my early years at Wesleyan – but whose sound had remained absent for too long since then. Bringing the outside inside, We pulsed small groups of threes and twos to give the feeling of an irregular jam session between non-human actors – connected with my experiences of place and memory. After my words of gratitude to the audience, I played a piece showcasing the acoustic failures of Crowell Concert Hall with my baritone horn. A boomy space for amplified music, I highlighted the flutter echoes that remained unconcealed in the architecture by playing from within the audience. Short, loud blasts of the horn gave way to long and lingering sounds that washed over the audience. The reverberations rang out, lingered, and sunk into people’s minds – they were always there as potentials, now revealed.

“People pay millions of dollars to get rid of these sounds,” I said after the last flutter echo fell back to silence. The audience chuckled, sharing in the absurdity of expending such resources to dampen potentially beautiful sounds. This final piece solidified FIELDWORK’s mission: we play music to make these spaces speak, not to fight against them.

Reflections

“What was your goal in the performance?” My mother asked me after I had packed everything up after its conclusion. We stood outside Crowell Concert Hall with my father and housemate Mitch, the streaked blue sky still fading from the vibrant day. It was a question that, when asked at different points in the process, yielded different answers for me each time. Was it about opening up our ears to listen in a new way? Was it about subverting the norms of concert performance, was it about rethinking the spaces around us as performative spaces? Or was it just to create a sort of celebratory rite for us all to enjoy? I gave the simplest, most vague answer I had up until that point. “I just
wanted to create an experience for people to share together,” I said. Communicating so little of my goals for the performance in this situation turned out to be a good idea, because it opened space for the interpretations of my parents - two of the most important non-musicians in my life - to come through. They, and many of the other participants in the experience, thought that it provided a clear and powerful alternative to the passive experience of music in the concert hall setting. They foregrounded the “active” nature of the performance in contrast to normative concert forms, and located this activeness as a source of its power. People had to be moving, staying engaged physically as well as mentally.

The permeability of the unconventional musical sites also allowed for participants to travel in and out of the music freely, resulting in a wide variety of different experiences. Warren’s recording, made with binaural microphones generously lent by Paula Matthusen, stands as the most complete document of the performance but by no means the authoritative one. It does not encapsulate the whole of FIELDWORK, but it beautifully conveys Warren’s movement through it. Coming from Cleek Schrey’s graduate recital, he missed the first piece and came upon the procession while it was already underway. As I listened back to the recording, this beginning stood out as a highlight – the way that the distant melody lilted to him over distance, over the crunch of his footsteps. Each participant moved into, out of, and through the spaces with different timings and placements, dictating their own experiences within the broader structure of the work. No recording within available means could capture the full reflections of the spaces, the small nuances of the sound shadows that spread through the sites and immersed the audience. These most vital elements of FIELDWORK
avoided containment, retaining their status as elusive resonances just beyond our comprehension, to be chased but never fully captured.

As the recital settles into the collective memory, I have been interested in the shadows it left resonating with its experiencers. Which ideas came through from conception to reception, which ones didn’t? Which sites, pieces, and moments did people connect with the most? For some, unexpected approaches to the sites were the most important - the Sanctuary emerged as a favorite of many, with its focus on the unfamiliarity of the place, listening and blindly trusting the experience. For others, it was the element of surprise – when I pulled my saxophone out of the Art Studios dumpster, and had the percussion ensemble re-envision the trash receptacle as a percussion instrument. While I originally conceived the project as a ritual, it was clear in my conversations that this was not the primary frame through which my friends interpreted the performance. It came through most strongly as an experience of radical play, with its entreaty to make believe and escape the mundane. Several of my thesis and essay-writing peers who were in attendance identified the recital as a turning point in their moods, lifting them briefly above the clouds of anxiety that cluttered their minds before our shared deadlines.

I was pleased at how nicely these aspects of the piece came across, even though I didn’t attempt to directly communicate them. FIELDWORK arrived at the middle ground of play and ritual, an experience that transformed its participants in collective joy and exploration rather than in solemnity. Reflecting on the concert’s flow, I recognize that its greatest successes were in its flexibility, its malleable intention that adapted to the individual experience regardless of whether or not the authorial vision was perfectly realized.
Some of the pieces were not performed to the “completion” specified in their scores - for example, the constant cycling of performers through the Rehearsal Hall in “FIELDWORK III” did not seem to result in the proper changes of positions, and as a result not everyone got a chance to be a soloist in the lobby or basement of the hall. However, the performance of this piece clearly made the intended impression on the audience as they moved through the space, engaging with each performer from different perspectives and hearing how they elaborated their sequential melodies.

What prevailed through the realizations of FIELDWORK’s individual pieces, and especially their transitions, was a spirit of improvisation both musical and logistical. The scores of the pieces, perhaps excepting “FIELDWORK I & II,” were not absolute by any means - they were to communicate a concept, structure, or organizing principle for interacting with a space, and little to nothing more. Some pieces were fully unscored, instead existing as itineraries and verbal constructions. In the process of realization, the relations between performer, audience, and space took precedence over the strict adherence to the score.

I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the participants as they moved through the space, an interplay of bright eyes and smiles, my lips pursed into a smile above my flute. By the time “FIELDWORK III” fell into disorganization, we knew that these sorts of connections between performers and participants had fulfilled the purpose of the piece, even if the score was not fully obeyed. The interactivity of the experience made it truly special for everyone involved. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to develop these works for these spaces, adding to their sited memories and hopefully inspiring their own musical micro-mythologies.
Acknowledgements

As I designed the concert program (Appendix VII), I became confronted with the sheer magnitude of the thanks due – to so many people, who contributed in such a variety of ways, my gratitude for whom could not all fit within the page. I take this space to elaborate on those present and those missing. I thank my family for ceaselessly nurturing my musical development from one rebellious stage to another – from black metal to free jazz they always knew that I do something worthwhile with the resources that I had. And as part of this, I thank them for the belonging I’ve been able to experience through music throughout my young adult life – the cornerstone of so many important friendships, partnerships, and loves that clustered together to form FIELDWORK.

I thank you, Paula Matthusen, for your tireless engagement with your students, somehow managing to devote yourself to every advisee with the utmost engagement and enthusiasm, determined to bring out our best. When my best was reluctant to come out, you showed me the patience and faith necessary for it to bloom. The conversations we had, both topical and peripheral, were always illuminating, and you work with different spaces continues to inspire and guide my own.

Thank you, Ron Ebrecht, for your reading of this work and your encouragement of your students to seek out what resonates for them in the Western tradition. Your deep engagement with the music guides me and your other students toward a bright enthusiasm for music and research.

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clarify the ideal of the work, and made me reflect deeply on what I wanted people to take away from it – a simple process that often got lost in rehearsal and planning.

Thank you to Harim Jung for your early jams in the spaces, and for the consistent mutual support we developed between each others work – to Matthew Stein for the always-illuminating discussions of our processes and concepts that helped us form our ideas out of nebulosity, and for your staunch direction of Veeblefetzer over the past years.

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Thank you to Kyle Beaudette, my supervisor at the box office for the past three years for constantly taking interest in and supporting my work, even if you were creeped out by me using the box office computers after closing to research our database of WesID sequences.

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to David Nelson for the tough love, the brutal honesty that encourages me and your other students to exceed and excel.

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Thank you to Eric Lonergan, Rama Nakib, Andrew Olson, and Abhi Janamanchi for your deep friendships that persist among separation. Our experiences together and apart irrevocably shaped my musical and emotional experience of this place.

Thank you to Jane Alden for your early encouragement of my musical ideas, to Neely Bruce for the techniques and neverending anecdotes, to Sandy and Deb for your tireless and compassionate place at the backbone of the Music Department.

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Thank you to Sam Friedman, Sam Friedman, and Rachel Savage for making the last minute dream of the South College Bells a reality. Thank you to my best friend and sometime collaborator Aya Abdelaziz for the neverending inspiration and support in
tough times, the reflection of what I give to you. Thank you Hashmita Agarwal for reawakening my emotional sensitivities, and with them a heartfelt music. Thank you Mitch Fehr, for your invaluable assistance and enthusiasm in exploring these spaces with me in their initial conceptions, and thank you to all my performers who stuck with me through ambiguity to craft something truly wonderful – while enjoying yourselves in the process.

Last but not least, thank you to Kevin Roche for building some of the best sonic canvasses a musician never asked for.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX
I. “FIELDWORK Modes & Codes” – original melodic systems (unused)

FIELDWORK
field guide - melodic systems

Example Melodies - Generating ideas
start on any note of the sequence - play in any direction - repeat notes, or shift between adjacent notes

Change registers of numbers to smooth out the sequence

Example Sequences - using my WestID
better!

Free Space - If it will help you, write out your sequences / ideas here
II. “FIELDWORK Rhythmic Systems” – original rhythmic systems (unused)
III. “FIELDWORK I – in collective memory” (final draft)

FIELDWORK I: in collective memory

C Part

placing ancestral melody

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**Coda (all, in unison)**

your melody is you. Not absolute in pitch or rhythm, only fixed in its order.
you transform yourself in interactions with environments, with other groups and individuals,
while maintaining your sense of who you are - your melody is no different.
we gather in a closed circle, weaving together our community of sounds before spreading it to the world.

**Part I**

from a common pitch (1, C) we sing 'our selves' in the above order, building a collective texture.
take any amount of time to sing your boxed sequence. free it, ornament it, make it beautiful. make it you.
after completing your line, **sustain the last note throughout.**
you should always be sustaining a note if you have already sung your line.
you may **shift the drone note** to one of the pitches written outside your box, in order to accompany the other singers.

**Part II**

after the first repeat, the whole group sings the ordered sequence of melodies in unison, as one long melody.
each performer "conducts" their part of the melody, visually marking note duration and expression.
the group works together to piece the melody together and create coherence through collective memory.
after this repetition, the unison melody becomes the **processional theme** (onto FIELDWORK II)
IV. FIELDWORK II – procession I (first version, not used)

FIELDWORK II: procession I
pilgrimage to the cross (rhythms)

quarter note = 90  M Chilton

Embody the primeval tension between duplet and triple rhythms, symmetrical and asymmetrical meters.
Walk in time with the quarter note of the original melodic line, clearly maintaining this pace throughout.
Feel the contrasts between your physical movement and the music’s melodic movement - play and walk them.

This piece accompanies the transit from FIELDWORK I - toss hill to FIELDWORK III - rehearsal hall.
Footfalls are notated between the staves as L or R, denoting which foot steps on the first beat.
Repeat the piece until we reach the end of the field. This should take 2-3 repetitions.
Cross through the narrow passage between Usdan and Poynterweather, and adopt the machine drone of the power station.
Hold this drone at around concert B natural as we pass to the rehearsal hall. This becomes the new pitch standard.

onto FIELDWORK III
V. FIELDWORK II – procession I (final version)

C Part

FIELDWORK II: procession I

spreading sound in space - toward the interior environment

M. Chilton

\[ J = 90 \]

the ancestral circle breaks and begins to travel, spreading the flowering of sound through space.

embody the contrasts between duple and triple, symmetrical and asymmetrical rhythms as you walk.

this piece accompanies the transit from FIELDWORK I - foss hill to FIELDWORK III - rehearsal hall.

walk in time with the quarter note tempo, clearly maintaining this pace throughout.

treble instruments and voices play the top line, bass instruments and percussion interpret the bottom.

repeat the piece until we reach the end of the field. this should take 2-3 repetitions.

cross through the narrow passage between Usdan and Fayerweather, and sing the machine drone of the power station.
hold this drone (at around concert B natural) as we pass to the rehearsal hall. this becomes the new pitch 1.

onto FIELDWORK III
VI. FIELDWORK VI – let us (make) believe

VII. The Program
FIELDWORK

a senior recital
by Matt Chilton and friends

on our

FIELDWORK

“Ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are. Ritual relies on its power on the fact that it is concerned with quite ordinary activities placed within an extraordinary setting, not what it describes and displays; it's possible for every occurrence of these acts. But it also relies for its power on the perceived fact that, in actuality, such possibilities cannot be realized.”

-Jonathan Z. Smith, “To Take Place Toward Theory in Ritual” (1987)

we come together today to celebrate the resonances that are always present within ourselves and the spaces we inhabit our minds, our everyday transcendence

from the six digits that individualize and organize us we find the raw material of melody in spaces that enclose and separate we can find freedom and belonging

Matt Chilton - direction, bells, voice, contra-alto clarinet, alto flute, baritone horn, tenor saxophone, bass recorder with

Isaac Butler-Brown - voice, trumpet, percussion
Josh Davidoff - clarinet, voice
Anthony Dean - voice, bass
Joseph Getter - mystic of earth and steel
Mimi Goldstein - voice, direction
Terri Hron - mystic of wood and air
Matthew Klug - flute, percussion
Ona Lepeska-True - voice
David Peck - voice, percussion
Janak Preston - voice, percussion
Jay Sharma - voice, percussion
Torie White - voice, direction
David Whitchurch - bass trombone, voice
Bram Wollowitz - voice, percussion
Zoe Zeeman - voice, violin
and you

Special Thanks to (in no particular order)
my biological family - my musical families
Paula Matthesen - Ron Ehrlich - Spencer Topel
The Experimental Music Group - Vespers - Veeblefetzer
Harin Jung - Warren Engstrom - Matthew Stein
Hanna Gravel, Katie Beaudette & the CFA Staff
Chris Chemier - Melissa Joskow
Eric Lerner - Ramon Nadel - Andrew Olson
Jay Anthony - Sandy Deh
Jane Allen - Neddy Bruce - Kevin Roche
Gillian Givens - Gina Luske - Anu Sharma
Alvin Lucier - Anthony Brazo - Abraham Zvonar
both Sam Friedmans - Rachel Savage
Aya Abdelaziz - Hishnmita Agarwall

please refrain from talking
instead, listen
to the conversations around you
as the spaces speak
their muted memories

trans.dufe.tumblr.com
FIELDWORK IV - to take place
*follow the leaders out onto the field*
*reflect on their echoes*
we reflect upon the spaces we move through
revealing their unseen magic to you
your place is your perspective
you compose this experience

FIELDWORK V - seeking sanctuary
*wait to be led into the space*
*be as silent as possible inside*
without sight, at the mercy of sacred sound
we walk between fear and awe
the forbidden summit
that we can sense but never reach

FIELDWORK VI - let us (make) believe
*after tunnel transit, take to the stairs*
*explore the space as directed*
the colorful cards you hold are keys
to unlocking new sounds
give one to a player to change their actions
you are the composers now

FIELDWORK VII - memories and offerings
we move into the concert space
bringing memories of the soundscape inside
exposing our failures to contain sound
sound expressing the emotions we cannot contain

notes & audience score
FIELDWORK I - in collective memory
*form a circle around the performers*
the south college bells hint at strange harmonics,
the primeval density from which we emerge.
the performers introduce themselves
by their self-melodies, stringing them all together
through an act of collective memorization.

FIELDWORK II - procession I
*cross the field with the performers*
*split into two groups as they do*
our selves become a melody that moves us
our way toward new spaces of collective discovery
we learn of self and other
through divergence and convergence

FIELDWORK III - songs of separation
*separate into two groups*
*cycle through the stairwells as directed*
from the blend of melodic identities
separate consciousness arises
to understand itself
it improvises

adzenyah rehearsal hall

audience paths (1)
performer paths (1)
audience paths (2)
performer paths (2)
audience paths (3)
performer paths (3)

(1) end - matt's 5/8 cue
(2) end - person moves onto field
(3) jam in yellow circle
others blindfold & lead