

around – past – away

An album-length field recording project focused on creating the perception of progression through a natural, sonic environment permeated by flute sounds.

Philip Snyder, field recordist, flutist



Faculty Advisor – Greg Stuart



Dear Spark Committee,

Please accept this proposal for a “Creativity in Music Award” for the creation of a field recording album titled *around – past – away*. I am inspired by the sound worlds I have encountered during my time spent backpacking and being in nature. This album aims to capture the progression of a natural sonic environment as one travels through it and to present the aural landscapes from different and changing perspectives.

Project Description, Creative Elements

The album will consist of three projects: “around”, “past”, and “away”. “around” calls for one continuous recording during which an instrumentalist moves around the recording device while playing sustained tones. The location of the realization of this work will be a secluded lake at a camp I attended regularly throughout grade school and college. The recording device will be placed at the side of the lake and will record continuously while I move around the lake playing sustained notes on a Native American-style flute. The goal of this project is to capture in sound the effect of movement as well as the depth of the field through which the flutist is moving. The aural landscape will change as the flute sounds change to being further away, closer, amplified across the lake surface, and influenced by the natural field. The ear will be drawn around the field of the recording as the flutist moves.

“past” requires that several field recordings be made in relation to some central object. A certain number of recordings are made each moving closer to the object and a certain number are made each moving farther away from the object. The recordings are then cross-faded from one to another to create the sonic effect of passing by the target object. I have chosen as the object of this realization a waterfall named Foster Falls on the “Fiery Gizzard” trail in Sevannee, Tennessee. I first encountered this particular area while working at a festival in the nearby town and was inspired by it to write the instructions for this project. A trail descends to the secluded grotto where the falls erupt and then climbs away from it while the falls are in earshot. The recordings called for in the instructions will be made along this trail.

“away” aims at capturing a progression from nature to city center. Three field recordings are taken: one each in nature, in the middle of a city, and somewhere in between. The field recordings are cross-faded together such that the progression of sound follows from natural to man-made. This is superimposed upon a separate recording of a flute playing a simple melody while processing effects are gradually added to it.

Benefits

The recordings which are a part of this album are named “projects” rather than “compositions” because the goal is not to create specific sounds but rather to specify boundaries and then to discover what can be created within them. The recording is itself a type of boundary which will frame the works. This is a prevalent philosophy of experimental music traditions and this album marks a foray into the creation of experimental music for me.

In some ways, the specifications which I have laid out are more detailed than other “scores” which consist mostly of prose instructions. This is because I am aiming toward a sense of something which I experience every time I go for a hike and thus for something perhaps specific. I am aiming, in fact, to distill certain aspects of the experience I have had being among nature. The goal is to create the affect of the sonic field as it is perceived around, past, and away from the listener.

The idea of a field recording framed as a performance of music is not original to this project. Many musicians have utilized single recordings as well as multiple recordings from nature edited together as a means of creating works of art. The use of pure instrument sounds in conjunction with the field recordings is perhaps unique to this project. The goal of using these instrument sounds is to illuminate certain aspects of the field. In some ways, the flutes in the outer projects represent the person in nature. They are meant to represent an unchanging constant in an aural world which consists of infinite and ever-changing variety.

One of my personal goals as a musician is to bring natural sound worlds to listeners. I am incredibly inspired by my time performing and playing outdoors and I want to bring this experience to others. This album would be the first of many steps toward realizing that goal. I have already begun pairing classical music with field recordings in performance and this type of combination may turn out to be my creative contribution to the art world. This album would help promulgate this type of medium to a wider audience via digital downloads and distribution online.

Timeline

October 19, 2015 – “Creativity in Music Award” application deadline

February 1, 2016 – Travel plans made, music composition finished, sound designer contracted

Spring Break 2016 – Travel, recording

April 2016 – Editing

May 1, 2016 – Album Release

Budget

The goal is to use “Creativity in Music Award” funds to finance costs of this project.

The goal for this project is to release the album digitally using the free service at www.bandcamp.com so all costs reflect the recording process only. Future printing may be possible but is not included in the scope of the current submission.

Figure 1: Budget

Travel <i>*See figure 2</i>	1,064 miles x \$0.12/mile (University lowest standard reimbursement)	\$127.68
Lodging	1 night in Sewanee, TN (“past” recording)	\$150
Sound Designer/Editor <i>*see figure 3</i>		\$250

Total Budget: \$527.20

Figure 2: Mileage Details

Trip # 1: Camp Durant, NC (“around” recording)	Columbia, SC – Carthage, NC 152 miles	Total Miles: 304
Trip # 2: Fiery Gizard Trail (“past” recording)	Columbia, SC – Sewanee, TN 380 miles	Total Miles: 760

Total Miles: 1064