

Sound/Path/Field

for

multiple musical ensembles, organ, and outdoor theater

by

Robert Morris

Composed for the
Society for New Music
to celebrate its thirty-fifth anniversary (1971-2006)

Dedicated to the members of the
Setnor School of Music
Syracuse Children's Chorus
Society for New Music
Westhill Singers
Syracuse University Fine Arts Department
and
Open Hand Theater

Ensembles/Organizations/Personae

Syracuse University Chimes Masters (Kerry McDermott)

Syracuse University Women's Choir (Barbara Tagg, conductor)

Syracuse University Singers (John Warren, conductor)

Syracuse University Symphony Orchestra (James Tapia, conductor)

Syracuse University Wind Ensemble (John Laverty, conducting)

Syracuse University Symphony Band (Brad Ethington, conductor)

Westhill Singers, Westhill High School (Joseph Buchmann, conductor)

**Syracuse Children's Chorus (Barbara Tagg, conductor;
Deborah Cunningham, assistant conductor)**

**Society for New Music Ensemble (Neva Pilgrim, director;
Cynthia Johnston Turner, conductor)**

Hendricks Chapel Organ (Olukola Paul Owolabi, organist)

Open Hand Theater (Geoffrey Navias, director)

Description

Sound/Path/Field was written from January to August 2006 on a commission from the *Society for New Music* with funding from the *National Endowment for the Arts*, the *Hanson Institute for American Music*, the *Delmas Foundation*, and Syracuse University. The composition is a multimedia, multiple ensemble piece to be performed outside on the Quadrangle of Syracuse University on Sunday, September 24 at 3 pm. (In conjunction with the performance, a symposium on “Music and Nature,” organized by the Syracuse University Fine Arts Department is held on September 23/24.)

Sound/Path/Field lasts 90 minutes and is scored for four choirs, three instrumental ensembles, contemporary music ensemble, organ, and puppet theater. The ensembles are stationed and play independently at various locations on the Quad, moving from one place to another over the duration of the piece. Two events occur indoors in Hendricks Chapel, a concert piece for organ entitled “Canonical Minutes” and a composition for the *Society for New Music Ensemble*, entitled “Society Sound.” The entire piece is organized and coordinated by a cycle of notes that emanate from the University Chimes in Crouse Hall.

The Audience

The audience is invited to freely move from one event to another as the piece unfolds, and attend the performances of the two concert pieces in the chapel. They may wish to follow guides who provide a musical path through the

piece. At certain times the puppet theater will perform installations that “announce” special musical events here and there in the performance space. The audience will receive programs that contain a list of events giving the times and locations including a map of the quad.

Locations

A map of the quad, labeled by capital letters (sometimes with subscripts) is given in the scores for the piece. The same map with photographs of the locations is available on the internet at

<http://ecmc.rochester.edu/rdm/SPF/spf.html>

Notation in General

Sound/Path/Field is notated in twelve scores: eight are for the ensembles; two are of the concert pieces; one is for the chimes; and one for the puppet theater.

The eight ensemble scores have two kinds of pages: (1) the musical notation for a section of music; (2) directions on how and where to move for the next section. A special musical notation was developed for this piece (also used in my previous outdoor pieces) to facilitate the textures, timbres and activities of the musical events, often involving open choices and improvisation.

The concert music scores are traditional scores, and these pieces may be played alone in future concerts. The chimes and puppet scores are schematic, giving only what is essential for performance.

All eight scores are “in C,” and only the double-bass is transposed by an octave, as usual.

Many passages involve long notes that are held up to a minute or sometimes even longer; in such cases the players and singers should stagger breathing and bowing to produce a uniform effect.

Instrumentation

1. Syracuse Children’s Chorus: SA.
2. Syracuse University Women’s Choir: SA.
3. Syracuse University Singers: SATB.
4. Westhill High School Mixed Chorus: SATB.
5. Syracuse University Symphony Orchestra: Strings and percussion.
6. Syracuse University Wind Ensemble: flutes; oboes; clarinets; bassoons; sop, alto, and ten sax; 2 horn (parts); trumpets; trombones; tuba; percussion.
7. Syracuse University Symphony Band: flutes; oboes; clarinets; bassoons; sop, alto, and ten sax; 2 horn (parts); trumpets; trombones; tuba; percussion.

8. SNM ensemble flute, oboe, clarinet, piano, violin, cello. (The piano and cello only play in the inside composition, “Society Sound.”)

Note that the scores for the Wind Ensemble and Symphony Band may call for the instruments to be divided into high, medium high, medium low, and low categories. Here are the instruments in each registral category:

high	medium high	medium low	low
piccolo flute oboe clarinet (high) sop sax	clarinet (lower) alto sax trumpet horn I	bassoon (high) tenor sax horn II tenor trombone	bassoon (low) bari sax bass trombone tuba

Note, where an instrument is assigned to different categories (e. g., the trumpet), each player for that instrument must be pre-assigned to his/her own category by the conductor.

Percussion

The percussion used in **Sound/Path/Field** does not move from location to location; the percussionist(s) assigned to each ensemble move.

The percussion instruments are located in four locations. If an ensemble is to play a section that is not at or near one of these locations, that section is not scored for percussion. Thus, many sections do not use percussion and percussionists can double as conductor assistants (see below).

The four locations and their percussion instruments are given by the following chart.

locations:	E ₁	F	J	L
instruments:	3 cymbals 3 temple blocks tam-tam 3 rattles	bass drum 2 tom-toms clash cymbals triangle 2 conga drums	3 wood blocks 3 cymbals 2 tom-toms 2 bongos 2 cow balls triangle snare drum crotales on G#6	bass drum 2 tom-toms clash cymbals triangle low snare drum

All four locations have alcoves or porches that can house the percussion instruments when they are not in use.

Special Equipment

In addition to teach player's instrument, a player will have an instrument cases and a music stand. The flute, oboe, clarinet, and alto sax players of the Wind Ensemble will need to have portable music holders that attach to their instruments when they are asked to move and play at once in the section "Sound paths," from 0:53-57. The players transport these when they are instructed to move to a new location. Each player should have a watch. All the

watches and other time pieces will have to be synchronized before the performance. Only the conductors need to keep an eye on the time during the performance of a section or in between sections. For them, portable digital clocks may be useful. Conductor assistants can help keeping time as well. Only the cellos are in need of seats during the performance, all other players stand. Sometimes the cellists (and perhaps other instrumentalists) can sit on stairs or benches at some locations. Of course, between section, when not moving to a new section, musicians may sit down to rest.

Singers may want to use pitch pipes for use before and during the performance of a section. The conductor assistants of the choirs should be in charge of giving opening pitches when needed, just before the onset of a section.

Conductors may need or want podia to conduct from. A few cinder blocks securely piled together or a moveable bench (with music stand) can be placed ahead of time at the locations for conductors given in the scores. The conductor assistants might be assigned to work out these details.

Conductor Assistants.

Each conductor should assign a member of his or her ensemble to function as an assistant. These conductors' assistants might be asked to:

edit and prepare parts

assist in rehearsals

give pitches to chorus members before a section begins

arrange for conductors' podia to be transported and corrected placed in the performance space

to help lead players from one location to another during the performance

to mark time during the performance of a section

to assist in conducting certain sections

Rehearsal Issues

Before the first rehearsal, the conductor and his/her assistant(s) should assign the parts to the musicians, editing them as necessary; for instance, leaders of canons, the order of the followers, and the places where the musicians start “cyclic canons,” should be set up before rehearsals. See notation instructions for more on canons.

The musicians might be taught the basic notation system used before they rehearse the piece. Copies of the notation instructions are downloadable from
<http://ecmc.rochester.edu/rdm/SPF/spf.html>

The rehearsals can be made more efficient if long durations and notes are shortened to save time.

I will make every effort to be available in person as necessary to discuss the music and attend rehearsals.

No Dress Rehearsal

Since there will be no dress rehearsal of the entire piece, the conductors and assistants are encouraged to inspect and walk through the performance space before the conductors run through on the day of the performance.

In some cases, the conductors may want to rehearse a section in its place on the quad. This is possible as there will be no scheduling conflicts outside. In any case, it may be useful to rehearse the ensemble outside or in an open space.

Immediately before the performance all conductors and players (and bell ringers) will need to synchronize their watches and clocks.

You can email me at mris@mail.rochester.edu if you have questions or comments.

—Robert Morris, Rochester NY, July 1, 2006.

Good luck!