

Composition: Imagining Sonic Praxis in Contingent Community

Mitchell Akiyama & Bethany Ides

m@mitchellakiyama.com / bethany.ides@gmail.com

Sound is the envelope for community. Or so suggested R. Murray Schafer, who was enamoured with Plato's proposal that the ideal size of the Republic should be no more than 5,040 people—the supposed number of listeners capable of hearing an unamplified orator. But to the extent that sonic practice must engender a unity—what Benedict Anderson critically refers to as “unisonance”—it would seem that such a technique should be implicitly unwelcoming to difference. Sound, no doubt, is a binding force. In its idealized, pastoral mode of propagation, it supposedly holds and nourishes a common identity by virtue of its ability to demarcate a locale. Electrically, it binds differently, by standardizing and storing and making messages of solidarity available everywhere to all on demand. But the effect is the same: territorialize a stable identity and *sustain* it.

We are interested in imagining alternative forms of sonic composition that might occasion convocation, but that diffract, as Donna Haraway would say, impulses towards unity or hegemonic solidarity. We take composition to be a provisional, but *resilient*, means of recognizing difference; a form of bringing-together of sounds and affects that anticipates its eventually becoming something and somewhere else. In this sense we are indebted to Michael Hardt's call to imagine love as the basis for political action and constitution. How might we imagine a sonic praxis of love that engenders composition just as it prefigures its own decomposition? We propose to discuss a variety of insights into the interruption of ubiquitous techno-sonic forms of coercion arrived at during our recent experiences at the *Almost Although* experiment in provisional-conditional community in Shandaken, NY.