Max Eilbacher: Interpreting and drawing inspiration from Maryanne Amacher's "Long Distance Music" was difficult not to conduct in an overly romantic and nostalgic way. In a reality where "interconnectedness" is part of our everyday life, making music using technology that connects two different rooms, time zones, and instruments is extremely commonplace. We could have easily used some sort of Ableton link, shared network, or live streaming platform. What effect did avoiding these tools and instead using synchronized meditation, time synced field recording, and short telepathic improvisions add to the project that our current technology would not?

Stefan Maier: Indeed, "interconnectedness" is an all too common fixture of the second decade of the 21st century. The modes of musical production and listening that Amacher anticipated with the "Long Distance Music" pieces appear to have have come to pass. That being said, perhaps that we could have performed an "actual" contemporary iteration of "Long Distance Music" with the given technologies at our disposal is to overestimate their current application. Hasn't contemporary interconnectedness at large catalyzed pronounced geopolitical tribalism and cultural isolationism (consider how our social media feeds are parsed so as to further entrench the behavior of the user)? As Amacher laments, "we have no occasions for interacting with any world (sound or continent) other than our own," yet the very tools which might make a truly "authentic" Long Distance Music possible are so often used to diminish alterity. As she notes, "Long distance music is developing occasions where boundaries of ONE PLACE situations can begin to vanish" — vanish, not further reify! Through the (admittedly artificial) exacerbation of our inability to collaborate over time and space given our geographical separation with mystical practices, I think we point towards the impoverishment of the contemporary iterations of networked tools we have at our disposal.

There seems to be a tension between different conceptualizations of space in our re-interpretation of the Amacher. On one hand, the prompt to make music at a distance is general; there's simply an invitation to explore musical spatiality beyond normative confines. This general conceptualization of space plays out in our telepathic improvisation session. On the other, we've decided to make time sync'd field recordings of highly specific "places" (of work, of

commerce, of leisure, etc.) Why this transition from the general to the specific? What is gained by this interest in "place" as opposed to the generalized "space"? Or are the two co-extensive with one another? Isn't that apart of Amacher's project at large?

ME: I would describe “place” as being beyond our control, a city's actors in a stereo field at a given location. Each location for the time synchronized field recording has a multitude of significance. At the start of each field recording session, I would meditate between listening to the sounds of my location and thinking about your location and the sounds that were possibly unfolding there. I would maybe think about how and why the sounds at each location were different. I could have focused on any number of the personal, political, environmental or socio-economic factors of our locations, but I feel that those aspects are inherent to the place itself. Personally, I decided to focus more on the macro sum mix of the location. I consider this method of thinking to be extremely important to draw from Amacher's work: contemplating the way the disparate sonic elements all contribute to creating a sonic space. The sounds of the Boston harbor in themselves are not interesting, it is their dynamic and interaction with the space and how they are combined with Amacher's mix to create a new space that is important. In this method, I understand “space” as a creation of our own doing. We can decide when and where in a sonic field events unfold. I feel that for this project to be successful, a mix of space and place has to be established. I want this work to be removed from being just field recordings but also abstracted from just being intuitively constructed or algorithmic electronic music pieces. In this way our work should be in a transition between these two types of pieces. Moving between, around, and through the distinct elements that define a place to construct a new space.

The play between parameters and perception is what really draws me to music, electronics, and just just general audio production. In audio work, one really creates a unique space. “New Awareness is developed for the place we are in. With links because of actual acoustic change affecting us.” For this reason, tilizing Victor Shepardson's custom made max patch to convert certain frequency domains to control voltage states in our telepathic improvisations was extremely important for me. We used a music technology to make us

aware of an aspect of a space we are not usually attentive to. These sort of driving background frequencies that make up the field recordings and the way they shift act as a conceptual grounding for our telepathic improvisations. In what manner and mindset did you extend listening and playing when improvising with my field recording? In what way did you prepare and improvise with electronics for our telepathic sessions?

SM: I totally agree that this "new awareness" of spatiality we're after made using Victor's patch imperative. Here, software facilitates sensitivities to the sonic constitution of a space that aren't native to you or I. The software listens differently than us and that's the key! This machinic listening-relation offered by computation subsequently becomes manifest in our synths through the patch. To me this use of software is really about "augmented listening." Even if we can't listen as Victor's patch listens (e.g. we don't have the same sensitivities as the computer), it becomes manifest in the work through voltage modulation. Through this intrusion into my electronics set-up, it breaks me out of my habituated improvisational practice (and "native" listening-relation), and facilitates a different kind of engagement with the specificity of the field recordings (even if it be subliminal). It makes me accountable to the acoustic specificity of a space in a manner unique to the technologies used. In all, I see Victor's patch as being a strategy of "new awareness" that parallels the meditation practice we've been employing. I'm think about the meditation and the computational system as being different kinds of listening aids, in essence.

Due to my conviction that the meditation and technology are two different forms of "augmented" listening, I didn't feel I needed to completely leave the telepathic improv sessions up to the output of the patch. It didn't need to be a matter of letting the output of Victor's system just do it's own thing without my intervention. I tried to have a balance between my intuitions (which were hopefully increasingly sensitized by our mind-melding meditations), and the output of the computer listener. To what degree I either followed my intuitions or let the patch unfold on its own varied largely from session to session.

I'm interested in the different technologies used to encourage this "New Awareness" we're speaking of. On one hand, we're using

custom software which was specifically made for this project. On the other, we're using an ancient technology of mindfulness to engage the acoustic specificity of the spaces we're listening in, and project that awareness far beyond the apparent "givenness" of a space. Then, of course, we're using microphones and interfaces. How do these technologies (computational, mechanical, cognitive) work together? How do they affect our listening?

ME: It is my belief that all these different technologies lend themselves to cover territories that the other is not fully aware of. When we were making field recordings of the harbor I had an interesting sonic experience of walking from an area where a group of school children were getting on idling diesel buses to walking by the entrance of the aquarium. It was a late winter/early spring day in Baltimore and loud speakers just outside the aquarium were playing sounds of tropical birds and jungle waterfalls. The technology of the microphone picks up the sounds of the speakers outside the aquarium, the yelling kids in the distance, and the light wind whipping off the harbor. The field recorder converts this information to digital information and then the Shepardson program scans that digital information and converts its fluctuations to voltages going to analog and digital synthesis patches. The technology of the max patch does not care about the artificial placement of birds that are not native to the Baltimore region. The patch scans for fluctuations in a digital signal, the synthesizer is only looking for voltage changes, and the ear is looking for an interesting sound. Each piece of technology that we utilize works together to unpack sonic information in a cohesive manner. Even our “mindfulness” technology is working to help us perceive an audio scene in a new manner. We may be working with processes we are not fully cognitive of, but at the very least the technology of being mindful kept me focused on the long distant collaborative aspect of the project.

Since I am listening for different outcomes at each stage of this project, each technology is giving me different feedback to work with. Therefore at each stage of the process I am listening for very different reasons. When making the field recording I am not listening for certain spectral peaks or frequency bands. Instead I am trying to make the most interesting field recording in a given location. When creating an electronics patch to improvise on I am listening for and

creating an electronic palate that adds to the field recording you gave me. I may listen and match frequencies or try to create a juxtaposing element. At every step, the different listening required with each technology defines certain goals. If a field recording is not dynamic and flat in content, then my goal for the our telepathic improvisation may be to create a more compelling electronics piece that adds to the listening experience of the field recording. When mixing all of the audio content together, I may be listening to cover up a little too much muzak in a field recording, or mixing to avoid a lull in one of my improvisational recordings. Each technology provides a new and different type of feedback to respond to.

Improvisation with electronics is not a normal part of my practice. When I was younger I was interested in improvising with groups on acoustic instruments and crude electronics but early in college I got very interested in composition and hyper control, automation and sequencing of a sound work. More recently I have begun to relinquish control with generative systems and more computer-based work. This project is an interesting mix for me, as we are using conceptual frameworks to improvise compositions. This is an aspect of Amacher's work that I really admire: the mix of precise control of frequency and presenting work in a live mixing environment. What place does improvisation and composition play in your normal practice? Was this project a stretch on any of these areas?

SM: Up until fairly recently, my work has primarily operated within the domain of highly-controlled (e.g. through-composed and strictly-notated) chamber-music. Gradually, this gave way to a free improvisatory practice which I continue to this day. At present, however, compositional work varies largely from project to project. I'm of the opinion that different compositional strategies, real-time (e.g. dynamic and improvisatory) or predetermined ("composition"-proper), have different strengths and weakness and foreground different parameters of a work — even with the same material they create distinct listening experiences that vary in sound wildly. Whatever compositional strategy is employed should be congruous with the desired outcome and match the intention of the work, so that it's actually audible as such! With the difficult mandate to co-author a work about space without being in the same place, and the fact that we had never worked together (nor did we know about how the other

worked), I felt we found an interesting (and extremely counterintuitive) strategy to address both the dynamism and indeterminacy, and the strict specificity that the concept of the work suggested. Like you, I also admire Amacher's attendance to extreme sonic/acoustic specificity alongside her radical openness to different forms of listening, and felt this was what motivated my thinking for project at large. On one hand, I felt it was important that we hold one another accountable to the specificity of the distances we found ourselves apart at — this is where the time-sync'd field recordings of similar locations (e.g. financial district, harbour, stadium) came in. Conversely, given that we weren't in the same place, and that we couldn't listen as the other could at any given time (no, the telepathy didn't work after all), I found the introduction of time sync'd improvisation sessions a nice counter-point. Importantly, it became a way which we could inflect the work with our own personalities and listening habits (both locally, when we recorded, and to one another, as we imagined what the other was listening to). This tension between the dynamic/indeterminate and the precise/specific became most pronounced during our tele-jams for me. Usually, I like to have a lot of control when I improvise. However, with Victor's software influencing my patch, I was really forced into some very foreign territory (and often felt simply along for the ride, so to speak). At times I was thinking "man, this is so bad I'm embarrassed to send this to Max." But, honestly, I think it generated some really interesting results when inleaved with all the other recordings and takes — results that I would never have come up with on my own.

Over the course of this project we experienced some logistical difficulties in making the work happen. Bad wifi, phones dying, the two of us continually traveling, trying to organize sessions despite time differences, day-jobs, competing projects etc. — even despite the banal and pervasive "interconnectedness" that you mentioned in your first question. Despite the optimistic utopianism suggested by Amacher in the original text-scores of Long Distance Music, making collaborative music at a distance is kind of hard/frustrating. To finish these questions off (and this is something both of us can answer): what's gained by the long-distance "awareness" we attempted to cultivate over the course of this project?

ME: For me, the “awareness” we brought to this piece accentuated the lack of control we had over the creation of the work and the way in which we constructed the piece. In a medium where I am used to having complete oversight of an audio work, this method of working relinquished more control over the work than just a normal collaboration between us. By having to make decisions in advance of when and where we were making the field recording we had to generally accept the field recordings and electronic improvisions we captured. In this way, the “awareness” evoked in this piece made me evaluate what I value in working “in only one room...or in one building between rooms with loudspeakers…” In the end this piece will be experienced by people in one room on a set of stereo speakers. So when we were working on this project I was constantly asking myself, how do I conceptualize and create a multiplace audio recording? How do I do this with the recordings we made? How do I “communicate outside our own structure?” Basically, the “interconnectedness” I worked with for this piece acted as a question mark driving the work. I interpreted Amacher’s use of the word “structure” to mean more my own structure or my own artistic process. We could have layered two field recordings, put some third ear tones on top, and called it a day. But for me the addition of electronics, improvising, and dynamic mixing in the piece acted as an extension of bringing “awareness” to the piece. In a sense, being “interconnected” at every step of the way continually meant asking what I wanted to get out of our work. If we knew we wanted to make a micro edit tape work, a graphic score or a computer music system, we could have checked into our normal modes and not created any sort of new structure. The difficulties of this method of working and the conceptualization of being connected over a long distance acted in a manner that made me listen more deeply to the material that was created with chance and randomness, and then create a coherent work that I was happy with.