

James Weeks

## Meadow (ii)

for a for a large number of performers, vocalising or/and playing, with audio recording devices

2026

*Meadow (ii)* is designed to be produced and performed within a single session of group activity, taking place initially outdoors and then indoors (the performance space). The outdoors space should be a natural environment such as a park, wood, garden, nature reserve, riverbank, etc. It need not be a meadow.

### Outdoors

In the natural environment selected, each participant records a soundscape on their recording devices (phones, portable sound recorder, etc.).

Record at least 5 minutes of material as an unbroken single track, shielding the device from wind as far as possible.

While recording, close your eyes and immerse yourself in the soundscape, attending to each sound individually before listening to their interaction (see *Polyphonic Listening* for a structured approach).

Next, make four lists:

- a) Write down five sounds you hear, adding some brief description of each if you wish (poetic, factual, etc.)
- b) Move to a different location in the space and write down the first five plants (or trees) you see, again adding some brief description of each if you wish. If you don't know the name of the plant, just give a brief description
- c) Move to another location in the space and write down five colours you see. Be as precise as you can in describing the colour (e.g. 'deep blue, spotted with white wisps') but don't attach them to objects or entities ('blue', rather than 'blue sky')
- d) Move to a fourth location and write down five textures – or plants or any other natural substance – that you can touch

If you wish, note down more than five elements in any of the lists.

Now, return to the performance space and create the meadow.

## Indoors

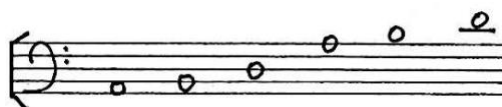
The meadow should last approximately 15 minutes, but can be longer if desired. Agree on a duration together.

The meadow is made up of four sound elements: the recording, and three performed elements, as follows:

**Recording:** each performer turns their recording on and off, independently, at least three times during the course of the performance. The timings can be chosen in performance, or decided (by each performer independently) in advance, in which case a stopwatch will also be required. Set the volume to a medium-low level, such that the overall sound of the playbacks blends with the other elements.

At the same time, independently move between other performed elements as follows:

- 1) Quietly read through one of the lists of **sound descriptions, plants and colours**, pausing *ad lib.* between each item. This soft speech should blend with the other elements, but the words should be discernible to anyone listening close by.
- 2) With your instrument, or voice, or a mixture of both, find a series of unpitched, or noise-based, sounds (i.e. without definite or consistent pitch) that reflect or equate to the five **textures** noted down in list d) above. Play or vocalise these, one after another in the order they appear in the list, pausing *ad lib.* between each one, and repeating them as desired (for example, the sequence of sounds could go 1, 2, 3, 3, 3, 4, 5, 5). The dynamic should be soft to very soft.
- 3) Play, sing or hum, in the range shown below one of the pitches shown (A $\sharp$ , B $\sharp$  or D $\sharp$ ):



Play, sing or hum your chosen single pitch very softly, for a maximum of one minute at a time. These pitches represent the '**fundamental harmony**' of the meadow.

Slight de-tunings of these pitches are also permitted, such that they are almost imperceptible.

Occasionally, you can choose to whistle very softly one of the pitches at a higher octave – this should blend almost completely into the surrounding sounds, so that a listener can't be sure they've heard it.

Move around these three elements – speaking, texture-making, fundamental harmony – at will, while taking care of your recording. Spend time in each element before moving to another, so that you are able to become meditatively absorbed in the performance without constantly thinking about the next move. Elements can be repeated to allow for this absorption, but be sure to perform each element at least twice across the performance. Performers may also take breaks to listen to the overall sound, but should ensure that the overall sound remains dense and never becomes sparse.

Performers should spread out around the performance space. If an audience is present, let them wander quietly among you.

### Variations

*Meadow (ii)* can be performed with fewer elements:

- The layered sound recordings can be performed alone, particularly if there are certain reference sound events (for example, a bell, or people talking) that can be clearly heard recurring across the different recordings
- The recordings can be played along with just one or two of the additional elements

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