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Water Music NY: Listening Adventurously on the Albany Symphony's Journey Along the Erie Canal

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Water Music NY:
Listening Adventurously on the Albany Symphony's Journey Along the Erie Canal

Senior Project
submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
Rachel Eisemann

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY
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Table of Contents

Introduction: Listen Adventurously	1
<i>Water Music NY: Erie Canal Bicentennial</i>	
<i>The Albany Symphony: Orchestra of the Capital</i>	
<i>American Music Festival and Water Music NY</i>	
<i>Choosing This Project</i>	
<i>Composers, Leaders, and A Conductor</i>	
<i>Creating Water Music NY</i>	
<i>Musicking, Collaboration, and Concert Etiquette</i>	
<i>Chapter Organization</i>	
Chapter 1: Water Connects Us: The Launch	18
<i>Handel’s Water Music</i>	
<i>The Albany Symphony’s Water Music NY</i>	
<i>363 Miles of Innovation</i>	
<i>Constructing A Sound Space</i>	
<i>Considerations of Resonance and Balance</i>	
<i>In Rain or in Shine</i>	
<i>Reshaping the Symphony Concert Experience</i>	
Chapter 2: Participation — A New Element of the Symphony Concert Experience	38
<i>Not Your Typical Orchestra Tour</i>	
<i>Musicking Along the Erie Canal</i>	
<i>Composers in Communities</i>	
<i>Audience Relationships Between Each Other and the Albany Symphony</i>	
Chapter 3: Cultivating Relationships Through Community Engagement	56
<i>Playing More Than Just Music</i>	
<i>Importance of Collaboration and Creating New Work</i>	
<i>How Water Music Was Made Possible</i>	
<i>Championing Living, American Composers</i>	
Conclusion: A Revival of Identity	70
Appendix: Program Notes	
Bibliography	

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Disclaimer:

Since identity was such an important of *Water Music NY*, using pseudonyms instead of real names of these composers negates the personal connections that were

These towns were becoming obsolete and having this tour brought them to light again, and I am not conducting an analysis of all symphonies, but rather I chose to specifically write about the Albany Symphony because

Reader's note: italicized quotes are from the interviews with the composers, whereas the non-italicized quotes are borrowed from the composers' program notes.

Introduction:

Listen Adventurously

Water Music NY: Erie Canal Bicentennial

In the Summer of 2017, the Albany Symphony embarked upon their Water Music NY tour along the Erie Canal, beginning in Albany, New York and ending in Lockport— just outside of Buffalo. This tour was a celebration of the Erie Canal’s Bicentennial, as well as a celebration of the people and communities living along the Canal and New York State heritage. The Symphony partnered with seven young composers¹ who collaborated with seven historic canal communities² in Upstate New York on a newly commissioned work that was premiered at different venue in each respective town.³ With this collaborative musical celebration, the Symphony was helping to revitalize the communities of these seven historic, waterfront canal towns, as well as foster economic growth and increase tourism. In this project, I use the Albany Symphony’s 2017 Water Music NY Tour as my central narrative to analyze the relationships and behaviors that were cultivated through the making of the Erie Canal and the creation of this tour, while also examining the social implications of what occurs when the Albany Symphony is taken out of its traditional concert hall environment. Water Music NY was a one-of-a-kind journey and was, in fact, the first official tour that the Albany Symphony has ever done. Throughout this project, I highlight what made this tour so significant and how it emphasized the numerous ways in which the Albany Symphony distinguishes itself from other American orchestras.

¹ Daniel Schlosberg, Annika Socolofsky, Angélica Negrón, Benjamin Wallace, Ryan Chase, Loren Loiacono, and David Mallamud

² Albany, Schenectady, Amsterdam, Little Falls, Baldwinsville, Brockport, and Lockport

³ Albany Corning Preserve-Jennings Landing (Albany), Mabee Farm Historic Site (Schenectady), Riverlink Park (Amsterdam), Little Falls High School, rain location (Little Falls), Paper Mill Island Amphitheater (Baldwinsville), Brockport Welcome Center (Brockport), and Historic Flight of Five Locks (Lockport)

The Albany Symphony: Orchestra of the Capital

The Albany Symphony is one of the country's most innovative orchestras and the leading champion of new American music and living composers. It is a regional non-profit orchestra located in Albany, NY — the capital of New York State — and is the only professional symphony orchestra in the Capital Region of New York. It was originally formed in 1930 as the “People’s Orchestra of Albany” by Professor John F. Carabella (conductor, organist, choirmaster) and consisted of only twenty-four musicians, compared to about eighty-five musicians today. In 1992, David Alan Miller left the Los Angeles Philharmonic as assistant conductor and came to New York’s capital to be the Albany Symphony’s new music director and conductor, bringing with him innovative and creative ideas that have not only transformed the Symphony’s programming and reputation, but also challenged the assumptions of what “classical music” is today.

Today, the Albany Symphony is renowned for its unique programming that focuses on new, and specifically, American, music. It is celebrated nationally and internationally for its mission to perform new works by contemporary, living composers. In 1999, Maestro David Alan Miller and the Albany Symphony received the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers’ (ASCAP) first ever Leonard Bernstein Award for Outstanding Educational Programming, and in 2001, the Symphony won the ASCAP Morton Gould Award for Innovative Programming. The Albany Symphony has won over 25 ASCAP awards for Adventurous Programming, more than any other orchestra in America. These awards would not have been possible without Maestro David Alan Miller who, in 2003, received Columbia University’s Ditson Conductor’s Award, the oldest award that honors conductors for their commitment to American music. According to their website, the Albany Symphony has also recorded more

American music than any other orchestra in the country. In fact, in 2013 and 2014, the Albany Symphony received ASCAP's John S. Edwards Award for Strongest Commitment to New American Music. Most notably, Maestro Miller's commitment to recording the music of our time led to two Grammy nominations and a Grammy Award in 2014 for the Albany Symphony's Naxos recording of John Corigliano's *Conjurer* with percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie.

While the Albany Symphony's first "real" tour was Water Music NY, they have been asked to perform at prestigious events over the years. The Albany Symphony was the only orchestra that was selected twice to perform at "Spring for Music," an annual festival that celebrated "America's most creative orchestras" at Carnegie Hall in New York. In April 2018, the Albany Symphony performed at "SHIFT: A Festival of American Orchestras," which was held at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. The Albany Symphony was one of four orchestras nationwide selected to perform at the 2018 festival, which celebrates orchestras that demonstrate expansive creativity and a deep commitment to collaborative community engagement.

The Albany Symphony's motto is *Listen Adventurously*, an imperative mindframe that encourages the audience to actively engage in the concert experience and expand their listening repertoire. The Albany Symphony is a dynamic and forward-looking organization that has been forging its own unique path for years and defining what it means to be an American symphony today. For the Albany Symphony's regular concert season, new music and older works are programmed together to create innovative and meaningful concert experiences. While Maestro David Alan Miller does program many of the more "classical favorites" (e.g. Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*), he strategically incorporates new music while also bringing new life to the older classics. He finds a way to show that there are connections to be

made between the older pieces and newer pieces, that they speak to each other even though the music might be separated by many years. This approach to programming shows the Albany Symphony's connection to our rich classical music heritage, but also emphasizes its dedication to creating exciting and compelling new music that reflects our current time and place, all to the great benefit the Symphony, its musicians, composers—and the greater community.

American Music Festival and Water Music NY

The American Music Festival was created by Maestro David Alan Miller to present a concert series that exclusively showcases emerging musicians and celebrates new works created by living American composers. This festival embodies everything about who and what the Symphony is. Every year, at the end of the regular concert season, the Albany Symphony hosts its American Music Festival (AMF), a four-day festival dedicated to premiering new American works, often including world premieres with emerging composers and musicians. While many of the pieces are composed for full orchestra, some works are created for smaller ensembles, most notably for the Dogs of Desire, a cutting-edge ensemble comprising 18 musicians from the Albany Symphony. Dogs of Desire primarily performs as part of the American Music Festival and plans are underway for other touring performances throughout the year. A new addition to the 2017 American Music Festival was a special concert where the seven Water Music NY composers presented a preview of their pieces for the Water Music NY tour. Since most audience members at the AMF would not be able to accompany the orchestra on the tour, the preview concert gave them the opportunity to experience 10-12 minutes of all the pieces, along with hearing the composers talk about the particular part of Erie Canal history that inspired them. The preview also served as a promotion for the upcoming tour in July, the tour that would be a

shining expression of the Albany Symphony's mission to perform contemporary works by living composers, engage with the community, and curate visionary programming.

The American Music Festival is not only different from the regular season because it showcases only contemporary American compositions, but also because the Albany Symphony performs at various venues in Troy, NY, primarily at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's (RPI) state-of-the-art multi-venue performance hall, The Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC). Opened in fall 2008, this performing arts center is "where the arts, sciences, and technology meet under one roof and breathe the same air" and was designed to be one of the most acoustically sound concert halls in the world (empac.rpi.edu). EMPAC's exceptional performance venues provide an environment that enables "audiences, artists, and researchers" to explore unique ways of understanding the world around us.⁴ This space supports the Albany Symphony's vision for the creation of innovative projects and inspires new possibilities, making it the perfect place for the orchestra's four-day residency. Additionally, during the American Music Festival the Albany Symphony partners with local businesses, other non-profit organizations, and sponsors for AMF events. This collaboration on exciting cultural events not only presents the creative offerings of the Albany Symphony and the American Music Festival, but also highlights businesses, community members, and all the region has to offer. The American Music Festival helps to generate business and tourism by encouraging people to engage with music in new ways and to explore and interact with the community around them.

Similar to the happenings at the American Music Festivals, Water Music NY had various events scheduled throughout the day that promoted local businesses, including New York craft vendors, food and beverage micro-industries, and natural and historic landmarks, which led to

⁴ With its superior acoustics as a result of innovative design, including convex walls and a fabric ceiling, the main concert hall is one of the mostly acoustically sound halls in the country.

increased tourism and exposure for these communities. There were full-day main street events and activities that locals and visitors alike could enjoy before the main event of the evening. People listened to musicians from the community perform, like Erie Canal balladeer George Ward in Albany; Alex Torres & His Latin Orchestra in Amsterdam⁵; The Brigadiers Drum & Bugle Corps in Baldwinsville; and The Golden Eagle String Band in Brockport. They walked through the street fairs as other local artists and artisans showcased their work, including handmade jewelry, paintings, glassware, photography, and food and craft beverages. Many local breweries and wineries hosted beer and wine tastings, galleries and museums displayed special exhibits, and restaurants, cafes, and ice cream shops welcomed visitors. At the Albany Symphony's final destination in Lockport, NY, Lake Effect ice cream was definitely a favorite spot for everyone. These ancillary events to Water Music NY strengthened the relationships among members of each community, tourists, and the Albany Symphony.

Choosing this Project

I grew up with the Albany Symphony. My sister and I had season subscriptions, along with our parents, since I was a toddler. I loved going to the Albany Symphony concerts because it always felt like such a fancy and special night for me. I was always excited to see our family friends and everyone who was involved with the Symphony. Since my mother was very involved with the Albany Symphony board of directors, I had many opportunities to meet amazing soloists, musicians, and composers, and learned so much from Maestro David Alan Miller. Two of my most memorable moments as a young child are seeing Joshua Bell perform Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto in E minor* and Yo-Yo Ma play Elgar's *Cello Concerto in E minor*. At the time of these two performances, I was a young violinist in awe of and inspired by these renowned

⁵ Amsterdam has a thriving Hispanic population, so the Albany Symphony invited Alex Torres & His Latin Orchestra to provide some lively entertainment that had people dancing their way to their seats in the audience.

musicians. As a child, I was always eager to get an autograph from special artists and even now, meeting and talking with such creative people continues to be exciting and inspiring.

Nonetheless, I had never truly analyzed what was so significant or unique about the work and music of the Albany Symphony. I was not able to see the other aspects and the social implications until I started working in the office as an intern, writing about my observations, and later doing research for my senior project. With my musical background, I had become comfortable and, inevitably, naturalized to this environment. Through this research and close analysis, however, I have been pushed to find and articulate what it is that makes the Albany Symphony stand out amidst other American orchestras.

During the second semester of my junior year, I had been interning with the Albany Symphony and was writing my final ethnography on the Symphony for my anthropology methods class. For this research, I was looking at what makes a small regional symphony noteworthy, how it attempts to maintain its relevance and reputation, and what role it plays in the greater community. I chose to continue my research on the Albany Symphony for my senior project because I was eager to look at the Symphony through another lens and was excited by the opportunity to conduct my fieldwork research during the upcoming Water Music NY: Erie Canal Bicentennial Celebration Tour during the summer of 2017.

Composers, Leaders, and A Conductor

My main interlocutors for this ethnography were the seven composers, Maestro David Alan Miller, Anna Kuwabara, the executive director for the Albany Symphony, and my mom, who was the board chair at the time. I started as a marketing and social media intern with the Albany Symphony in the winter of 2017, and mostly worked with Justin Cook, the marketing and patron services manager. I designed original and creative weekly posts for the Albany

Symphony's social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and the Symphony's website promoting upcoming events and concerts, including the 2017 American Music Festival. I also communicated with AMF guest artists and arranged promotional interviews for the Festival. I helped with patron accounts, facilitated and processed ticket sales, and assisted with new and renewed subscriptions for the upcoming season. These responsibilities gave me a deeper look into the Albany Symphony and its administration.

Throughout the process of analyzing the Albany Symphony and the Water Music NY project, I primarily conducted my research through participant observation and interviews. Being an intern with the Albany Symphony enabled me to have one-on-one conversations with the Albany Symphony staff, patrons, and the composers. Also, through my long history with the Symphony, I had already cultivated relationships with the administration, board members, and musicians, which helped facilitate my research as well. Work as a staff member during the tour allowed me to interact with other staff, the patrons, sponsors, volunteers, as well as the composers and the musicians, and other arts collaborators. During the tour, I worked with two summer interns, Lucia and Liz, to document all of the events happening in every town through photographs, videos, and words, and posted them on the Albany Symphony's social media platforms. After the tour, I was able to conduct official interviews with the Albany Symphony's executive director, the music director, and the seven composers who were the creative force for Water Music NY. These interviews helped me to further understand the significance of these seven composers work with and in the communities to create a unique and tailored piece for each canal town. These interviews also serve to show the vital importance of creating new works, new art, in any community—and that nothing like Water Music NY had ever been done before.

Creating Water Music NY

The idea for this project started about 18 years ago when the Albany Symphony performed a series of pieces that were written about the Erie Canal, as a part of the Symphony's Capital Heritage series, which commissioned new music to celebrate the heritage and context of historic and cultural sites throughout the Capital Region and Upstate New York. Maestro David Alan Miller was inspired to expand upon these commissions and wanted to create a tour of the Albany Symphony, performing on barges, to celebrate the rich history of the Erie Canal.

Unfortunately, it became clear that at that time, the Albany Symphony just did not have the resources needed for such a huge undertaking, so the ideas and the planning for this project were shelved. Then, about three years ago, in 2015, Maestro Miller was meeting with the director of the the New York State Arts Council⁶ (NYSCA) when she told him then that they were actively looking for creative, original new projects. For the past few years, NYSCA had supported the annual American Music Festival through the New York State Regional Economic Development Councils⁷ (REDC) grant, but they no longer wanted to fund the same projects.

So, Maestro Miller pitched his idea of taking the Albany Symphony on a barge for an orchestral journey down the Erie Canal. Surprisingly, the director was thrilled and immediately supported Maestro Miller's project plan. It was then that the initial planning for what would become Water Music NY began. Soon after, it came to the Symphony's attention that the bicentennial of the Erie Canal was kicking off in 2017 and there might be a search for projects related to the Canal, so the idea of the Albany Symphony traveling from Albany to Buffalo

⁶ The New York State Arts Council (NYSCA) is an arts council serving the state of New York that is "dedicated to preserving and expanding the rich and diverse cultural resources that are and will become the heritage of New York's citizens" (NYSCA:2017). NYSCA provides grants to 2,400 organizations statewide in their fifteen programs and the Regional Economic Development Council initiative.

⁷ New York State Regional Economic Development Council Initiative funds projects that are designed to "enhance and transform the cultural and economic vitality of New York State communities," as well as position "arts, culture and heritage at the core of local economic development and revitalization efforts" (REDC:2017).

performing in a different town every night and presenting seven unique world premieres, all inspired by the people of these different communities, seemed like a great way to celebrate the Erie Canal bicentennial and its enormous impact on the history and success of New York and the country.

The Albany Symphony began meeting with the New York State Canal Corporation. It was in this first meeting that Maestro Miller asked them what the Canal Corporation's plans were for the bicentennial, to which they replied, "We have your project!" Even though Water Music NY was not yet fully planned, the Canal Corporation was so supportive of this project and thought it would be the perfect launch to the bicentennial celebrations that they were on board from the beginning. The New York State Canal Corporation was integral to the success of this tour. They ended up shepherding the whole project and provided support every step of the way, helping to make the project become the great success that it was. They helped with all of the logistics that pertained to navigating the tour down the Erie Canal, finding locations that had canal-side access, and providing the Albany Symphony with any resources or guidance it needed. Important politicians, including Governor Cuomo, Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul, and Congressman Paul Tonko, were also strong supporters of Water Music NY.⁸

In the summer of 2016, David Alan Miller contacted the mayors of towns along the Erie Canal to see which communities were willing to be a part of this project. Through the Regional Economic Development Councils of New York State, the Albany Symphony applied for grants from the NYSCA and Empire State Development/Market NY state agencies. In December of that year, the Symphony was awarded significant funding that would cover approximately 75% of the total cost of the Water Music NY project, and the Symphony worked on fundraising for the

⁸ Congressman Paul Tonko attended four out of the seven Water Music NY concerts and even conducted John Philip Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever* before the fireworks display in his hometown of Amsterdam, NY.

remaining 25%. As part of the process, the Albany Symphony had to demonstrate broad support, and subsequently received glowing letters of recommendation from the canal town communities, New York State officials, and even internationally renowned musicians unanimously endorsing Water Music NY because these people believed in the Albany Symphony and saw the power and impact the project would have. These letters included recommendations from Brian Stratton, director of the New York State Canal Corporation, Jane Malin, executive director of the Mohawk Valley Center for the Arts, and Jerry Golub, then executive vice chairman of the board for the Golub Corporation/Price Chopper Supermarkets and now board chair of the Albany Symphony.⁹ Yo-Yo Ma, one of the world's greatest musicians and a close friend of the Albany Symphony, expressed his strong support for the Water Music NY proposal:

I believe "Water Music NY" has great value, not only for the Capital Region, but also for the entire state of New York and beyond. It has a strong educational component, exploring the rich history of the Canal through storytelling and music; a powerful tourism component, telling the story of the great physical beauty and cultural value of New York State; and an invaluable business development component, including collaborations with statewide industry, local businesses, and local governments to showcase and highlight the many strengths of the people who inhabit the cities and towns along the Erie Canal. Above all, the project confirms my belief in the power of art to celebrate and define our "sense of place," building networks of understanding that link us to each other, just as the Erie Canal has for the past two hundred years.

Since the Albany Symphony is nationally acclaimed for its creative programming and innovative projects that connect people and their communities, many people readily supported the new Water Music NY tour, since they knew the Symphony had the foundation, experience, and artistic talent to make the ambitious project a success.

⁹ Other letters of recommendation were submitted by Michele Vennard, president and CEO of the Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Maggie Mancinelli-Cahill, producing artistic director of the Capital Repertory Theatre, Kelley Hamilton, events coordinator for the Baldwinsville Center for the Arts, Brian Smith, president and CEO of Greater Lockport Development Corporation, Albany Assemblymember Patricia Fahy, Mayor Margaret Blackman from Brockport, etc.

When it came to mapping the journey and selecting the seven towns, Maestro Miller, with a great deal of help from the New York State Canal Corporation, chose towns that had riverfront canal access, were geographically diverse, and that had townspeople who wanted to work together and be a part of this exciting tour. There were four stops on the eastern side of the canal (Albany, Schenectady, Amsterdam, Little Falls) — east of Rome, NY — and three on the western side (Baldwinsville, Brockport, and Lockport). Also in 2016, Maestro Miller communicated with potential composers who would each write a new piece for the Albany Symphony's special thirty-two member orchestra and a specific canal town for Water Music NY. There were seven composers chosen to write a 30-minute collaborative piece that was inspired by the Erie Canal and focused on the history, culture, and heritage of the people and their individual stories from each town. The composers were chosen because they were mostly from the northeast, many with direct ties to New York State. These composers were assigned with creating a new work for orchestra and local performing arts groups as the centerpiece of each night's performance.

While there were some parameters given for the pieces, the composers were given much artistic freedom to take the piece in whatever direction they wanted. The seven composers came from diverse backgrounds and different compositional experience and had varied styles. Maestro David Alan Miller tried to identify "*fairly theatrical composers, multi-arts people who were comfortable writing different kinds of pieces; some of them were a little more traditional than others, [but] basically I was looking for composers who were really into doing multi-arts, multi-media, out-of-the-box sorts of programs .*" Maestro Miller noted that these days most young composers are open to this type of programming, so it did not take much convincing. Additionally, these composers were going to be compensated well for their compositions and for the six-month residencies in the towns, and it was going to give them a lot of visibility, so they

participated enthusiastically. Maestro Miller made a specific effort to match the composers and the towns based on what the communities needed, which local arts/performance organizations were available within those towns, and the kind of project each composer was interested in creating, taking into consideration the different styles of each composer and the character of each town to maximize compatibility.

Musicking, Collaboration, and Concert Etiquette

In my discussion of the Albany Symphony's Water Music NY tour, I focus on the collaborative process composers engaged in to create their pieces, the activity of music-making that involves more people than just the musicians or composers, and the specific etiquette that accompanies the audience at concerts. In taking the Albany Symphony out of its regular concert hall, this tour provided a new context in which to look at how these themes can be analyzed through another lens. Christopher Small's idea of '*musicking*' helps me to consider the other people and aspects of the music-making process that extend beyond just the composers and their music. Christopher Small, a musicologist, wrote a book entitled *Musicking, The Meanings of Performing and Listening* in which he introduces his original concept of *musicking*. In this book, he makes the argument that music is, in fact, an activity, rather than an object. Small is attempting to show the larger implications of all that encompasses music-making and explains that categorizing music as an object can lead to the "trap of reification" (Small 1998:2). He is challenging the norms of music scholarship by drawing attention to what is emphasized and, in turn, what is being obscured by considering music as only an object.

According to Small, "to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performances (what is called composing), or by dancing" (Small 1998:9). Small is interested in

the social relations that make music possible because he believes that music-making is only possible with a wide variety of people. Since I am presenting an analysis of the Albany Symphony and its collaborative musical project, Water Music NY, as opposed to another type of organized music, I draw on Small's own analysis of a symphony which emphasizes how it is precisely in the "classical music" world where the scholarship on music does not consider the other actors in the music-making process, those that also shape the music being produced and the experience being created.

In thinking about the acoustic challenges that arose during Water Music NY, where music was performed on barges and waterfront venues, I relied on Emily Thompson's analysis of *The Soundscape of Modernity*. Thompson's research "explores the cultural history of sound, music, noise, and listening" (princeton.edu). Since the orchestra was traveling to a different venue and canal town for every concert, the Albany Symphony had to construct its own "music hall." Due to this continuous obstacle, the Symphony had to find ways to maximize seating, as well as control the acoustics as much as possible. In her book, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America 1900-1933*, Thompson provides an extensive history of architectural and acoustic developments that transformed concert hall acoustics in the United States. I refer to Emily Thompson's expertise to explain how highly regarded acoustically sound performance spaces are and to point out how the Albany Symphony attempted to uphold a similar standard when cultivating its own temporary "music halls."

Through my analysis of the behavior of the audiences who attended the Water Music NY concerts, I turned to Alex Ross, an American music critic, who gave a lecture at The Royal Philharmonic Society in 2010 entitled, "Hold Your Applause: Inventing and Reinventing the Classical Concert." In this lecture, Ross references the "No-Applause Rule," a practice known to

many modern classical music audiences, and explains how the standards for concert-going behavior have evolved since the Romantic era. This concert etiquette is a learned practice and is passed onto those who attend these classical music performances. I noticed that through taking the Albany Symphony out of its regular concert hall, Water Music NY provided a different concert environment in which everyone, even those who had never seen a professional orchestra perform before, felt comfortable and even welcomed as a part of the audience and community.

Chapter Organization

In Chapter One, *Water Connects Us: The Launch*, I consider Christopher Small's original term and idea of *musicking* to determine which aspects of the tour are best analyzed through this concept of music-making. Christopher Small's *Musicking, The Meanings of Performing and Listening* makes the claim that music is not a thing, but rather an activity, that it is a active verb and not a stagnant noun. He has coined his term of *musicking*, a verb that can be used to describe all who are "contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance" (Small 2011:9). Small is interested in looking at music as a multifaceted activity and an action that places responsibility on those involved in the concert experience. I use *musicking* to examine the unique participatory elements of the Albany Symphony's Water Music NY concerts, while also looking at the audience's relationships to each other and the Albany Symphony staff. These concerts were intended to be inclusive, in a proactive attempt to break down the barriers between audience and musician. There was already active participation before these concerts because the seven composers had each written a piece that the communities actively helped to create. This is important to note because usually composers will write a piece on their own and then have input from the musicians only after the piece is finished. In the case of Water Music NY, the communities were actually the inspiration for and a part of the music writing process. Another

level of participation was added to the concerts because the audience was invited to sing with the musicians for the *Star Spangled Banner* and *Low Bridge (I've Got A Mule, Her Name Is Sal)*. These concerts presented a more welcoming program that merged symphonic music with non-symphonic music (the United States national anthem and famous folk songs) that encouraged the audience to participate. In looking at the the audience's relationships to each other and the Albany Symphony staff and musicians, I noticed that there was more casual interaction that occurred as a result of having these free, outdoor summer concerts.

Chapter Two, *Participation — A New Element of the Symphony Concert Experience*, serves to provide the overall context of where the Albany Symphony traveled and what actually happened on the tour. I explain how the name of the Albany Symphony's tour was inspired by George Frideric Handel's *Water Music* that was composed for King George I's water party down the River Thames in London on July 17, 1777 — exactly three hundred years before the Albany Symphony's *Water Music NY* tour. King George I's water music party was “a spectacle the likes of which they'd never seen” (Huizenga 2017:NPR). The same could be said about the Albany Symphony's *Water Music NY* tour. I provide a background for the Albany Symphony's *Water Music NY* and the general layout for the week-long journey. I include a more in depth history of the Erie Canal and the process of getting the Erie Canal built. The bulk of this chapter really centers on the symphonic acoustics on and off the tour, though, and the obstacles (weather and otherwise) that accompany having an orchestra play in an outdoor venue. But first to introduce some background on the history of architectural and acoustic developments that transformed concert hall acoustics in the United States, I refer to Emily Thompson's book, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America 1900-1933*.

In Chapter Three, *Cultivating Relationships Through Community Engagement*, I explain the importance of creating new art, building communities, community engagement, and the significance of focusing on creating new work with living composers. I assert why the Water Music NY project was necessary and why it is significant that the Albany Symphony created and successfully accomplished its Water Music NY tour.. I draw on a seemingly similar example of the London Philharmonia's 2002 "Re-Rite" warehouse project to compare with what the Albany Symphony was trying to achieve with Water Music NY Furthermore, this chapter aims to emphasize what it is that makes the Albany Symphony such a remarkable organization and how its innovative programming and creative drive for new music can serve as a model for new American orchestras.

Chapter 1: *Water Connects Us: The Launch*

Handel's *Water Music*

This Erie Canal Bicentennial Tour was a commemorative celebration that connected music, history, and society from two hundred years ago to today. This celebration not only marked the bicentennial of the beginning of construction on the Erie Canal, it also marked the tricentennial anniversary of a water party hosted by King George I for which George Frideric Handel had been commissioned to write *Water Music* (Squire 1922:865-866). Playing excerpts from Handel's *Water Music* was appropriate because it too was composed for a concert down a body of water, the River Thames in London. During a politically wrought moment in which he felt threatened by his son's growing popularity, King George I threw this party to strengthen his own status. While it was not a royal conflict that inspired the Erie Canal Bicentennial Tour, the tour did happen during one of the most contentious times in America's political history. King George I's party happened three hundred years ago on July 17, 1717, almost exactly one hundred years before the construction of the Erie Canal. It began "on a Wednesday evening at about 8" with fifty musicians who played on a "City Company's barge" while traveling on the River Thames (Burrows, Hume 1991:333). The Albany Symphony tour concerts also began at about 8:00 pm and they too played on barges on flowing water, this time on the Erie Canal. David Alan Miller's original proposal was "*a romantic sort of Huckleberry Finn idea that we'd put the orchestra on a barge and float it down the Canal from Albany to Buffalo playing music while people smile along the shore.*" However, the plan changed when Miller realized how long it would take the orchestra to travel all the way down the Canal, especially considering there are stretches of the waterway where the speed limit is 5 or 10 miles per hour. As a compromise, and

in a way to almost fulfill Miller's dream, the Albany Symphony performed on two anchored barges, one in Brockport, NY and the other in Lockport, NY. In London, people "lined the banks of the Thames and squeezed boats into the river to hear the music and catch a glimpse of the royals. It was a spectacle the likes of which they'd never seen" (Huizenga 2017:NPR). On the Erie Canal Tour, people crowded together, sitting wherever they could so that they could hear and see the musicians, with some also attending on private boats. Many of these patrons had perhaps seen a symphony perform, but they definitely had never seen the "spectacle" of the Albany Symphony performing on a barge.

In each canal town, every concert opened with the national anthem, followed by Handel's *Water Music*. After *Water Music*, the orchestra played the world premiere for that night and then finished the concert with American pops classics that were announced from the stage. For the finale, the Symphony played John Philip Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, which was then followed by fireworks. The Albany Symphony called its tour "Water Music NY" as a gesture to Handel's own *Water Music*, but the name also expressed a central theme of the Symphony's vision: that music, like water, connects people and communities to each other, across space and time. David Alan Miller explained that he had considered performing *Water Music* because it was one of the most famous water-inspired pieces. However, it was when his board chair pointed out that the tricentennial of King George's water party was also going to be in July 2017 that they decided to officially include Handel's *Water Music* in the program. It was almost too good to be true, a sign that led to the Albany Symphony naming their tour in honor of that celebration. However, while the Albany Symphony named their tour "Water Music," inspired by Handel's own, the "New York" was added to adjust to the setting in which the tour was taking place, in the state it was honoring. One of the main differences between these two water-themed events is

that Handel's *Water Music* was written only by Handel for King George I, the highest of the elite, whereas the music for the Albany Symphony's Water Music NY was written in collaboration with seven American composers and the local people of the canal towns, inspired by the common stories within those communities. Additionally, the Albany Symphony programmed patriotic *American* favorites of John Williams and John Philip Sousa and scheduled fireworks that gave the tour a festive summer concert feel.

National Pride

Water Music NY was a celebration of heritage and the many ways in which water connects us across many miles and many years. In 1717, George Frideric Handel composed his *Water Music* in London. One hundred years after Handel's *Water Music* and forty years after the United States' first Independence Day anniversary celebration, construction on the Erie Canal began in Rome, NY on July 4, 1817. Two hundred years later, the Albany Symphony embarked upon its ambitious Water Music NY tour that centered around Fourth of July celebrations in 2017. Handel wrote *Water Music* for King George I's river party on the Thames; it was not intended to be a political piece of music, but the party celebrated the country and its leader. During the Water Music NY tour, *The Star Spangled Banner*, our national anthem, was sung before every concert in honor of the historic Erie Canal's importance to the country and to celebrate independence and democracy (during the week of July 4). Across these three hundred years and around the globe, music, water, and celebration of one's national and cultural pride, continue to connect us across states, countries, and the world.

The Albany Symphony's *Water Music NY*

In the summer of 2017, the Albany Symphony embarked upon *Water Music NY*, a week-long orchestral barge journey, to celebrate the bicentennial of New York State's Erie Canal. The tour started on Albany on July 2 and ended in Lockport on July 8. This tour occurred during the week of July 4 because construction of the Erie Canal began two hundred years ago on July 4, 1817. This long-awaited project was originally developed and presented by the Albany Symphony, but in close collaboration with the New York State Canal Corporation. The other stops along the tour were in Schenectady, Amsterdam, Little Falls, Baldwinsville, and Brockport. David Alan Miller, the music director and conductor of the Albany Symphony, appointed seven emerging American composers to create seven original world premieres. These composers immersed themselves into the culture and history of each of their historic canal towns, working with the community and local arts groups to compose a piece inspired by the people and their heritage. In efforts to engage the masses, these tour concerts and events were free and open to the public. There were VIP events and VIP seating at every site, but their purpose was to honor donors and others who helped to make the tour possible, rather than exclude other patrons. In using this bicentennial tour as my central narrative, I am looking at the relationships and behaviors that were cultivated through the making of the Erie Canal and the making of music on this tour. In this section, I will be focusing on the history of the Erie Canal, the many obstacles that we experienced while on tour, and social behavior in the concert experience.

363 Miles of Innovation

The very first shovel of dirt to start construction on the Erie Canal was dug in Rome, NY on July 4, 1817. This was the most ambitious engineering undertaking of its time; there had never before been a canal of the Erie's proposed length and over such difficult terrains. While

other types of waterways had been constructed over the years, “there was no precedent in all history for a canal of the Erie’s length” (Andrist 1964:35). Gouverneur Morris is credited with the first suggested plan for a waterway that would “extend from the Hudson, through the valley of the Mohawk, all the way to Lake Erie” as early as the summer of 1777 (Andrist 1964:10-11). Morris predicted the potential that this canal would offer, including economic growth, industrial strength, and more efficient transportation (Andrist 1964:11). Decades later, DeWitt Clinton, a New York State legislator, U.S. Senator, mayor of New York City, and future governor of New York State, became the strongest advocate for the Erie Canal. He believed in the Canal and was determined to gather the necessary financial backing. This canal would stretch 363 miles starting in Albany, NY on the east side and ending in Buffalo, NY on the west side. Due to the proposed magnitude, massive supplies, and the potential funds required for such a canal, people were not supportive of the idea and even doubted that the Canal would ever be completed. Even President Thomas Jefferson and his successor, President James Madison, declined the use of federal funds to support this canal (Building a Nation:2017). After seven long and hard fought years, the construction of the Erie Canal was finally approved by the New York State legislature on April 15, 1817. The Erie Canal would start with Lock 1 in Albany, NY and continue west for 363 miles ending in Buffalo, NY. When the Erie Canal was built there were originally 83 locks, but over the years renovations were made and today there are 57 locks.

Strong Arms, Strong Minds

While the Erie Canal workers lacked professional experience and training¹⁰, there was still a great number of men who were eager to make money building this canal. Small contractors

¹⁰ When construction on the Erie Canal began, West Point was the only school in the United States that offered formal engineering instruction (Engineering:2017). New York’s canal system served as an educational model for designers and builders of that generation and led to the founding of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in 1824 in

had agreed to dig parts of the canal for a proportioned price and also had the responsibility of finding workers (Andrist 1964:35). These contractors were also expected to provide their workers with all the necessary tools and supplies, including room and board, and a wage of “eighty cents a day” (Andrist 1964:38). These workers were well taken care and well fed. The initial workforce consisted of Native Americans, however, with the drive for a more speedily construction, immigrants from New York City were later recruited, the majority of them being Irish. The surveyors marked out a “sixty-foot-wide path” and, within this path, set two rows of stakes to outline where the actual channel would be (Andrist 1964:34). Then the axemen came and cleared the trees, many of which were “seven or eight feet in diameter” (Andrist 1964:34). After the axemen came the digging crew — men with their shovels. While these men were trained in surveying, axing, and digging, none of these men had any actual experience in building a canal of this kind.

Perhaps it was the good food and lodging, but these men were creative and found solutions to the construction obstacles they encountered along the way. One man had figured out a technique that would only require one man to pull down a tree and the roots out of the ground. Stumps were another obstacle that impeded construction, until another man devised a “stump-pulling device that was as effective as it was simple” (Andrist 1964:41). As they figured out better and more efficient ways to build the Canal, “the rate of progress improved steadily” (Andrist 1964:42). It is incredible that even though these Erie Canal workers had no formal training, the system of locks they built is still used today after 200 years. Since 1825, “the canal has been enlarged three times to accommodate larger boats and more traffic” (Fast Facts:2017), but the overall layout and lock system has stayed in place since the canal was finished. After

Troy, NY (15 minutes away from Albany, NY) and an introduction of engineering program at Union College in 1845 in Schenectady, NY (30 minutes away from Albany, NY) (Engineering:2017).

seven years of hard work, dedication, and seven million dollars, the Erie Canal was finally completed in 1825 and the opening ceremony was held on October 26, 1825 at City Hall in New York City. The completion of this Canal was a triumph of engineering, industry, and innovation, that, important to note in the today's political climate, involved significant work by immigrants and diverse parts of society.

Constructing A Sound Space

Two hundred years after construction began on the Erie Canal, the inaugural concert of the Albany Symphony's Water Music NY tour on July 2, 2017 launched the bicentennial celebration of the Canal. This first concert was held at the Albany Corning Preserve-Jennings Landing, a unique amphitheater performance space within a green that is located on the Hudson River, near the historic east end of the Erie Canal. In 1797, Albany, NY became the capital of New York State. Twenty years later, when the Erie Canal was approved for construction, it was determined that the Canal would start in Albany, where Lock One stood. The concerts on the tour were outside and waterside to the Erie Canal, which was an obvious change to the typical environment in which the Symphony usually plays. By taking the Albany Symphony out of its traditional and controllable concert halls, it opened up the door for obstacles related to, but not limited to, venues, acoustics, and the weather. Since the Albany Symphony and the orchestra were performing in a different town and venue for every concert, creating a "music hall" was a recurring obstacle. These tour concerts were outdoors and waterfront and, as a result, these new performance spaces had an inevitable effect on the acoustics.

It is useful to look first at how acoustics are constructed and what effect that has on a musical performance, in order to understand one of the major issues that the Albany Symphony and musicians faced when outside the walls of their usual concert venues (the Palace Theater, the

Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, and RPI's Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center). To begin, I look at Emily Thompson's book, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America 1900-1933*, in which she describes the history of the architectural and acoustic developments that transformed concert hall acoustics in the United States. Along with the Capital Region's own Troy Music Hall, the Boston Symphony Hall is recognized as one of the most acoustically perfect halls in the world. When it first opened its doors on October 5, 1900, people entering the orchestra's new home marveled at the beautiful and tasteful decor, but the real test of that night was the quality of the hall's carefully constructed acoustics (Thompson 2002: 13). To aid in designing the music hall's renovation blueprint, Henry Lee Higginson, owner of the Boston Symphony, had encouraged McKim of McKim, Mead & White to visit and study European music halls that were already acclaimed for their sound quality (Thompson 2002:14). To the team working on this project, Higginson also added Wallace Sabine, a young assistant professor of physics at Harvard (Thompson 2002:14). Sabine had been recommended by Harvard's president, Charles Eliot, because of his previous work on improving the acoustics of a lecture hall in the new Fogg Art Museum (Thompson 2002:34).

In 1900, the building was finished and became the first music hall built according to official acoustic laws. Today, Boston Symphony Hall is one of the world's most revered concert halls, a testament to Sabine's ingenious insight and the successful collaboration of Higginson, Sabine, McKim, Otto Norcross, the builder, and Charles Cotting, the financial manager (Thompson 2002:14). The plaque in the lobby of the Symphony Hall, dedicated to Sabine, reads: "Symphony Hall, the first auditorium in the world to be built in known conformity with acoustical laws, was designed in accordance with his specifications and mathematical formulae, the fruit of long and arduous research. Through self-effacing devotion to science, he nobly

served the art of music. Here stands his monument” (Thompson 2002:13). This was not the first time, however, that sound acoustics were considered. In 1762, Count Francesco Algarotti had “petitioned for an acoustically controlled architecture, [pleading] for a new attitude toward listening to accompany the sound” (Thompson 2002:46).

Can You Hear and See Me Now?

In constructing each “music hall,” the Albany Symphony had to be creative in figuring out ways to provide enough seating for everyone and to make sure that people could hear the music during the outdoor concerts. There was no assigned seating for the audience, except for the VIP patrons, so people sat wherever they could in the area surrounding the musicians on stage.¹¹ It was the summer, so most people brought lawn chairs and blankets, and at a few of the venues where there was an amphitheater many people sat on those steps. In a standard concert hall, there are usually very few objects that block the line of sight. The lack of a performance venue with designated levels of seating made it difficult for many some people to see the musicians on the stage. While some of the venues were hilly and provided some naturally “leveled” seating, it was not comparable to a regular concert hall. Some audience members were unable to see the stage because of the trees, shrubs, and/or rocks that obstructed their view. As a result, people were spread out throughout the venue, but still concentrated in numbers.

While the partially or fully obstructed view affected the line of sight for some patrons, it was also sometimes difficult to hear the music during the concert. Instead of an enclosed concert hall, Water Music NY concerts were in an outdoor and open performance space, one even within a deep concrete canal lock, so there was no control over how the sound traveled nor how it

¹¹ Severe thunderstorms days before the concert in Little Falls, NY made it impossible for the Albany Symphony to play on a barge on the Erie Canal so, instead, the orchestra performed in the Little Falls High School Auditorium (the rain location).

resonated. Since the architecture of the “performance” space was different at every location, there were times when the music did not project very far and the sound was almost lost as soon as it left the musicians’ instruments and voices. We enlisted the help of the sound engineers to accompany Water Music NY and help with the concert acoustics. The sound crew was able to amplify the orchestra and other musicians, actors, and singers, but even with a full complement of audio equipment, it remained difficult to influence where and how the sound traveled because of the open, outdoor “halls.”

Additionally, there was the challenge of controlling “outside” noise from entering our venue and interrupting our concerts. For example, at the Riverlink Park in Amsterdam, NY, where Angélica Negrón’s piece was premiered, there were active train tracks on which trains frequently traveled. While the staff and I were setting up for that day, we noticed and heard the trains passing through the park, but did not realize how much of a complication they would be. At the beginning of the concert, when we stood up for the national anthem, a long train came through on the tracks and made it impossible for us to hear people singing and the orchestra playing. While we were waiting for that train to finish passing through, *another* train coming from the other direction barreled through on the other set of tracks. As a result, for the entirety of the national anthem, all we heard were the trains and their whistles. Although the train whistles were covering our singing, they could be interpreted as an unplanned patriotic gesture, rather than a disruptive one. This tour was celebrating the bicentennial of the Erie Canal, whose lasting existence serves as a testament to the technological prowess, vision, and strength of not only the state of New York but also of the United States of America. It was an unplanned moment that served as a message to show the technological advancements that the innovation of the Erie

Canal would lead to and a representation of the strong mission of the Symphony that forges a unique path of performing new contemporary American music.

Considerations of Resonance and Balance

Some of the composers had recognized the potential obstacles of having their piece performed in an outdoor concert setting and how that might affect the sound and acoustics of their pieces, while others relied on the amplification provided by the sound crew. The operations and logistical side of Water Music NY was on a hectic schedule. Every night the Albany Symphony and staff packed up all the staging equipment, music stands, chairs, instruments, etc. after the concert and then unloaded everything the next day in a completely different town. The concert space was set up on the day of each performance, which meant limited time for sound checks and last minute changes. These conditions, along with unknown crowd sizes, made it difficult to assess or adjust acoustics.

For example, Angélica Negron's piece had many delicate and intimate sounds that, unfortunately, were difficult to hear with all of the people in the concert space moving around, talking, and, generally, being loud, as if the trains did not already cause enough commotion. She did mention that her only regret was not considering the acoustics as much as she could have because the musicians worked so hard and the first movement was "*a kind of gentle and subtle piece that opened the whole...but it was really hard to hear, so looking back, I wish I had considered more the space and the limitations of it, in terms of the orchestra.*" The Amsterdam Water Music NY concert was performed on the Fourth of July in the Riverlink Park. While most people in the park were there to hear the Albany Symphony and Angélica's world premiere, there were others who were only at the park to see the July 4th fireworks. Although there was this divide in reasons for attendance, everyone was still at the park while the Albany Symphony

was performing. As a result, the Symphony was able to reach a much more diverse audience that included people who had never before attended a professional orchestra concert.

The piece that composer David Mallamud wrote for Lockport had originally been performed at the 2017 American Music Festival by Dogs of Desire, but was then adapted to a full orchestra version for Water Music NY. Mallamud usually writes for pit orchestras and voice, but Water Music NY was the first time he wrote for voice and full orchestra in an outdoor, waterfront setting. One of his biggest concerns was about maintaining balance and he wondered, “*How do I strike a good balance between the voice and the orchestra?*” Mallamud did not think much about outdoor acoustics at first, but he did realize that amplification of the voice was very important as was having the orchestra amplified. When Mallamud found out that the orchestra would be performing on a barge in the lock, fifty feet below the audience and surrounded by concrete walls, acoustics was the first thing that came to mind. There were microphones on the musicians and speakers for the audience, but no one knew how the sound would reverberate off the concrete lock walls or whether the sound would travel up the walls to reach out into the streets, to the distant bridges filled with people.

Ryan Chase, composer for Baldwinsville, likes to compose pieces with intimate sounds, sounds that are “almost impossible to hear outside of an acoustically perfect place” and often takes on a visual approach to consider, “*what sort of ensemble is playing this and what will that look like, where is that being performed and what will that look like, and what sort of music would best benefit that sort of circumstance,*” but, of course, it is much easier to define those parameters in a concert hall. Since Ryan likes “*quiet music,*” writing for Water Music NY was “*a trial for me to make something that was a bit more bombastic or loud without seeming cliché or*

overwrought.” For this project, however, Ryan placed less of an emphasis on the visual aspects and more on the actual context of the space, which was a more difficult compositional challenge.

When composing, Annika Socolofsky, composer for Schenectady, tends to write music that is “*quiet and slow*” and her first step is always to develop a “*deep and emotional connection to the piece.*”. Since the Water Music NY concerts were to be performed outside, David Alan Miller had advised her to write a project that was “*loud and fast as possible,*” which was not the style she was used to following. Annika did, however, have the advantage of her outdoor waterfront, performance space being on the open land at Mabee Farm Historic Site, with more predictable acoustic parameters. Even so, Annika did consider the acoustics and other sound challenges and noticed that “*different things are acceptable in an outdoor concert...when people are more in their element*” and in a performance atmosphere that feels “*less stuffy and artificial.*” During the concert, for example, there were children who were playing and making noise to the point that a woman turned around and asked them to be quiet. While it was wonderful that people felt more comfortable, this type of concert environment allowed for more disruption. Nonetheless, this kind of disruption was welcomed by the Symphony, since they valued far more the success of bringing children and people of all ages to a symphony concert.

Loren Loiacono, composer for Brockport, explained that, in the more technical sense of orchestration, writing for different performance spaces should definitely have an effect on what is composed. So much of what composers are taught to write for orchestra is based on considerations of acoustics, however, “*any knowledge you have related to that completely goes out the window when you’re outdoors.*” Often, we can take for granted how an orchestra sounds in an acoustically sound concert hall. For Loren, one of the bigger challenges of this project was “*figuring out how to best handle the orchestra knowing that there was [no] hall there to smooth*

over certain aspects” of the performance. While she did much research and planned a great deal for this project, as did the other composers, one aspect that Loren could not control was the weather. There had been impending thunderstorms during the week of Water Music NY, and there was particular concern for the Brockport concert. As a result, dress rehearsals were held in the back-up “rain location” and adjustments to the performance piece were considered. To everyone’s delight, the call was made late in the day for the concert to happen outside after all. This was quite a stroke of luck, but it meant that the orchestra did not have time to do a complete sound check and the piece was never run in the space before the concert. Loren was anxious since she had not been able to hear the piece with amplification, but the orchestration and the dance piece ended up being a great success, received well by the audience.

In Rain or Shine

The Albany Symphony and the orchestra had realized that a consequence of hosting free outdoor and waterside concerts was that there would be many uncontrollable variables, including the weather. Whereas the climate conditions are controllable in the Palace Theater, Troy Music Hall, and EMPAC, managing the weather during Water Music NY was completely out of our hands. It was a sunny Sunday morning on July 2 when I first arrived at Jennings Landing to help set up for the first official concert of the Albany Symphony’s Erie Canal Bicentennial Celebration Week-Long Tour/Water Music NY. Jennings Landing is a completely open and exposed space, with no covered structures, except for the surrounding trees. I wondered how we—and later the audience and musicians—were going to withstand the sweltering heat.

Before the Albany concert, the weather was warm and perfect for a summer night concert. However, twenty minutes before 8:00 pm, the start time for the concert, it suddenly became windy and we were stuck in the middle of a torrential downpour. The first concert had

not even started and we were already facing our first and very real obstacle of the tour. The orchestra and the other musicians were huddled underneath the stage, protecting their instruments from the rain. People were starting to leave and there was concern that the storm would leave no one in the audience for the concert. It had been a beautiful, though hot, day earlier, so the original decision had been made for the concert to happen outside. The Albany Symphony was prepared and had designated rain locations for every venue, but since the weather changed so close to the start of concert there was no time to relocate to the Palace Theatre. When I looked over the balcony above the amphitheater, I was actually surprised by how many people had stayed, sitting under their umbrellas in the rain and waiting out the storm for the concert. This dedication on the part of the audience showed their commitment to the Albany Symphony and resilience to unexpected weather. Eventually the storm ended but the rows of concrete seating in the amphitheater were soaked, along with the grass surrounding it. Despite the rainstorm, though, people actually came back, and even new audience members showed up, as we went on to have an incredible, albeit slightly damp, first concert. After the concert, everyone enjoyed colorful fireworks in the now clear night sky.

Thunderstorms, Thunderstorms, and More Thunderstorms

While Dan Schlosberg was not the only composer whose concert was affected by the weather, his concert was the first of the entire Water Music NY tour and it started with a downpour. It was yet another example of how the aquatic elements of Water Music NY found its way into every aspect of the tour. Throughout the tour week, there were various weather obstacles including blistering heat, changing winds, torrential rainstorms, and extensive flooding. However, there was nothing that could rain on our Water Music NY parade. Before the concert in Little Falls, there had been intense thunderstorms and, as a result, the Erie Canal flooded and

the eastern portion had to be closed to watercraft for a few days. The Albany Symphony had originally been scheduled to perform on a barge in Little Falls, but due to the weather and a tragic accident, the performance was moved inside to the rain location at Little Falls High School. Composer Ben Wallace went on a site visit to the school with Albany Symphony staff and Little Falls officials and had to completely readjust to the new performance space, the high school auditorium. Although it was not in sync with the vision for the Water Music NY tour, Ben was the only composer with the advantage of having his piece performed in a covered and controlled performance hall.

As I mentioned earlier, Loren faced challenges with the acoustics of this project as well as with the weather. The morning of the Brockport concert, the Symphony staff was concerned about the potential of a thunderstorm and had to make a decision about moving the performance to the rain location at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. With this *"huge experience that's all over the place and with all these musicians and with the additional band,"* Loren and Mariah, the collaborating choreographer of Mariah Maloney Dance, wondered how they would translate this piece into the space. There were enough seats for the expected audience, but there was no room for the dancers to move within the narrow aisles of the church. Even though the dress rehearsals proceeded inside the church and everyone thought the performance would be inside, Loren and Mariah kept saying, *"This better happen inside because we have no idea if we can make this work inside!"*

The call was postponed as late as possible in the day, and after all that worry, the weather finally improved and the final call was made that the concert could indeed be outside with the Albany Symphony and the Golden Eagle String Band performing on a docked barge, floating on the Canal. To an enthusiastic audience, the music, choreography, and singing took place as

planned, canalside, in a beautiful expansive natural space. Then, just when David Alan Miller lifted his baton to end the orchestra's performance of *Stars and Stripes*, the fireworks started. Or so we thought. When we looked into the sky, we realized that it was actually a thunderstorm starting. The weather during the concert had been perfect and there was plenty of time to pack up everything and get it safely into the car, but once the rain came, it really poured.

Reshaping the Symphony Concert Experience

While a concert hall might present a conservative and controlled atmosphere, Water Music NY offered a more friendly and inviting environment that made people who had never seen a professional orchestra perform feel welcomed and valued. At the tour venues, people were not sitting upright in their concert chairs, but instead were reclining in their lawn chairs and on their blankets, and were more free to talk and move about the space. In a regular concert, it is expected that the audience be silent while listening attentively to the music being performed. In a concert hall, when all eyes and ears are focused on the performance, there is a silence that is created within the music being played. Audience members who disturb that peace, for example by talking or unwrapping a candy, are often scorned and criticized by the audience. The changes from the Symphony's usual concert environment had a relaxing effect on the behavior of the everyone present, a the traditionally accepted practices of the concert hall and seemed to enhance the symphony concert experience for not just first-time symphony-goers, but for regular patrons, as well.

In 1852, the charter for the new Academy of Music in Philadelphia stated that, "it cannot have escaped the observation of the merely casual observer, that the taste for and cultivation of music have rapidly increased among us within the last ten years, and we believe such an establishment as we are now laboring to obtain, would do more than anything else in guiding,

fostering and sustaining a love for the most refining and humanizing of all the arts” (Thompson 2002:46). The Academy of Music was instilling a questionable ideal that the arts should be for the refined, to separate the cultured from the uncultured. This discourse was, of course, just another way for the upper class to differentiate themselves from the lower class. At the same time, “romantic notions of the ennobling nature of music were heard, and these new ideas ... were increasingly attached to both the performance and audition of music,” an attitude towards music that had already been adopted much earlier in Europe (Thompson 2002:46). While Algarotti probably would have enjoyed the traditional concert season of the Albany Symphony, he mostly likely would not have approved of Water Music NY. Although the tour celebrated history, tradition, and music, it was a free and outdoor concert series that was intended for anyone and everyone. There was no permanent “acoustically controlled architecture,” in some of the locations a “tumultuous assembly” was a perfect description; the audiences definitely would not have been described as “solemn” (Thompson 2002:46).

Would You Like A Program?

All the accoutrements of the concert experience that create and cultivate tasteful listening were altered during this tour. The change in the relationship between patron, ticket, and program was particularly noticeable, even from the beginning of the tour at our first concert in Albany. Since Jennings Landing is an open public space, people could enter from the multiple entrances located throughout the green. The main entrance, though, was the at the end of the pedestrian bridge that extends over the I-787 highway. Our table was set up so that we were the first people that patrons would see after walking across the bridge. However, since the concert was free and there were no tickets, people did not necessarily know whether they needed to stop by the Symphony’s welcome table. Since there were no tickets to collect, we had to take the initiative to

hand out programs and invite people to visit our table to check out our brochures and to enter the ticket raffle for a chance to win two free tickets to a concert for next season. When people approached the Symphony table, we handed them a program, offered them a chance to enter the Symphony's free ticket raffle (in order to collect patron information), and answered any questions they had. Even though this tour presented a different concert-going experience from the Albany Symphony's regular season, we still distributed programs to give people more information on the pieces and composers, to help patrons better appreciate the music.

At the Symphony's concerts during the regular season, patrons arrive, present their tickets, enter the hall where ushers offer them a program, find their seats, and then often socialize with neighboring patrons while they wait for the music to begin. The programs include a message from the conductor, the Albany Symphony board chair, and the Albany Symphony's executive director. The program also includes a list of all the musicians in the orchestras, the program for that evening's concerts (as well as the programs for the upcoming concerts), biographies of the composers and guest artists, a list of the Albany Symphony Board of Directors, and a list of the Albany Symphony donors. Additionally, there are some advertisements throughout the program, promoting local businesses and organizations, some of which are sponsors of the Symphony.

The Water Music NY programs were similar to the regular season programs, but they were slightly abbreviated. These programs opened with a short background on the Albany Symphony, including the Symphony's mission. The rest of the program included a biography of the Music Director and Conductor, a list of the Water Music NY Task Force, a list of the Board of Directors, a list of the musicians playing in the smaller "tour orchestra," and the individual programs for every concert, including the biographies of the composers and guests

artists/ensembles. There were still a few advertisements throughout the program, but not as many as the regular Symphony programs. Additionally, the actual concert format was different from that in the Symphony's regular season. Even though we tried to make our tent noticeable at every tour location, the Albany Symphony staff realized that since our Water Music NY venues had multiple entrances, many people did not know to stop by our table to pick up a program or to enter our raffle. To remedy this problem, we decided to provide patrons with programs from our staff table and also walked by the audience distributing them throughout the audience. The informality of the performance venue allowed for more casual interaction with the audience.

Programs and tickets are two integral components of any Albany Symphony concert. The tickets are what allow entry and determine seating, while the programs provide information about the repertoire, composers, and musicians, to provide greater understanding and appreciation of the music. The improvisatory and constantly changing nature of the Water Music NY tour broke down the demand for this kind of discipline and allowed for a looser interpretation of what is expected at a symphony concert.

Chapter 2:

Participation — A New Element of the Symphony Concert Experience

Not Your Typical Orchestra Tour

One of the main goals of the Albany Symphony's Water Music NY tour was to showcase new composers and ideas, while celebrating the history and renaissance of each canal town. With an innovative spirit similar to that required two hundred years ago to build the Erie Canal, the Albany Symphony and its composers ventured across the state and created seven original world premieres to celebrate the canal and its people. This had been an idea of Music Director David Alan Miller for almost two decades, and all the puzzle pieces finally fell into place for a remarkable summer tour in July 2017.

The Albany Symphony's Water Music NY tour was a unique project because this summer concert series focused more on collaborating with the canal towns and the local arts organizations within them, rather than promoting the orchestra itself. While all of the Albany Symphony's concerts and events require much planning and organization, the process for creating Water Music NY was much more elaborate and required the engaging of a dedicated project manager and public relations firm. The project manager and Albany Symphony staff had to coordinate months of planning and publicity before the events, choreograph the entire week of Water Music NY with all the complicated logistics that accompany the process of taking a professional orchestra down the Erie Canal, working with composers and collaborating arts groups, and hosting VIP events during the tour. The schedule was hectic and compressed with seven towns in seven days, and needed precise mapping and coordination, as well as significant collaboration with other towns and their arts and culture organizations.

Why Is This Summer Concert Different From All Other Summer Concerts?

While talking with Ryan Chase, composer for Baldwinsville, he pointed out some similarities between Water Music New York and the New York Philharmonic's summer concert series in Central Park. He noticed that both these concerts were free events and were about "bringing the community together." However, Ryan later said that there was something different about Water Music NY, which speaks to some of the aspects that made this tour so unique. "*I think it's the ambition of it,*" Ryan noted, "*the fact that it's not in a place where you expect things to just go right, there was always this element of potential disaster at every turn.*" Water Music NY was the single most ambitious project that the Albany Symphony had ever engineered in its history and, arguably, one of the most ambitious projects than any American orchestra has ever attempted. There was so much constantly happening during the tour week and there were endless risk factors, but since this was a collaborative project, everyone was working towards a shared goal of making this tour a success.

Ryan remarked that he was "*concentrated on making something that not only satisfied creative intent but also was... something that an orchestra could ... read with a group that they've never played with before and be able to pull it off almost immediately.*" The Water Music NY composers immersed themselves within their communities and worked with the local performing arts groups to create their own piece. Due to logistics, like time, money, and distance, the local performing arts groups and the Albany Symphony musicians were only able to rehearse on the day of the concert. As a result of this type of schedule and process, this collaborative musical project required flexibility, enthusiasm, and dedication on the part of the composers, the musicians, and the Albany Symphony staff.

Another distinct way in which Water Music NY differentiates itself from other summer concert series is that the Albany Symphony does not have a permanent summer residency,

separate from their home in Albany, NY. Other American symphonies host summer concert series, however, they each have their own permanent summer residency in an established venue. The Boston Symphony Orchestra has been performing at Tanglewood since 1937, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra has been hosted by the Ravinia Festival since 1936, and the Blossom Music Festival has welcomed the Cleveland Orchestra since 1968. While the New York Philharmonic does not have a separate summer residency location, it performs free concerts in Central Park during the summer, which is just down the street from their home at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Given these residencies, these orchestras are able to stay in the same area for the duration of their concert series, whereas during Water Music NY, the Albany Symphony was in a new town every day. Ryan remarked that, during Water Music NY, the Albany Symphony was on the move and on-the-go, so everything needed to be as foolproof as possible. The Albany Symphony and its musicians had to constantly adapt to their new surroundings since they performed in a different venue every night and then packed up and made way to the following town to prepare for the next day's concert.

Musicking Along the Erie Canal

I use Christopher Small book, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, to analyze the relationships and behaviors that I observed during the Erie Canal tour, as well as and the Albany Symphony's regular concert season. I draw on Small's original concept of *musicking* to examine the unique participatory elements of these tour concerts and analyze the audience's relationships to one another. Since "musicking" is not an actual English word, Small proposes a definition: "to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performances (what is called composing), or by dancing" (Small 1998:9). He explains that musicking can be

used to describe all who are “contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance” (Small 2011:9). These Albany Symphony Tour concerts should not be seen solely as an exchange between the musicians and the audience, instead we must consider the various implications of the concert experience and the different roles that many people play. Small is interested in looking at music as a multifaceted activity rather than as a stagnant object, an action that includes all people and that places responsibility on all those involved in the concert experience.

The Albany Symphony’s Water Music NY tour distinguished itself from the Symphony’s regular season concerts—and from other orchestras’—through the unique participatory environment facilitated by transforming the traditional symphony concert audience. In 1852, the new Academy of Music was promoting the ideal that the arts should only be for the elite. The Albany Symphony’s Water Music NY challenged this notion by presenting free concerts, open to the public, creating a more welcoming concert environment, and inviting all people in these canal towns to participate in the concert experience. The overall participatory aspect of these Albany Symphony concerts not only included the audience’s participation during the concert, but also the townspeople’s participation with the composers-in-residence.. Over a period of months, the composers worked with the canal towns and the local arts organization before the start of the tour to compose a new piece that was unique to each community. The concerts were also free and open to the public; no one was excluded because they were unable to purchase a ticket.

As Small argues, “Music is not a thing at all but an activity” (Small 1998:2), and the tour concerts made it possible for the audience to participate in the activity of music-making and music appreciation. As Small described, music, for the participants of the Water Music NY tour, was seen as a verb, an action that one does and experiences—rather than noun, a singular object.

Small emphasizes that the action of music must occur before valuation because the process of categorizing music leads to the “trap of reification” (Small 2011:2). Reification is another way of saying “thing-ifying” or “objectifying.” It is the process of finding a way to understand that which might be seen as abstract in a more concrete or relatable context. Small writes “trap of reification” because often with reification comes the ignorance of classifying something without consideration or awareness of what is being ignored. He is challenging the norms of music scholarship by drawing attention to what is emphasized and, in turn, what is being obscured by considering music as only an object. Small is interested in the social relations that make music possible because the making of music is only possible with a wide variety of people.

Many musicology scholars have a narrow focus of analyzing music because they are only looking at the music itself and the composer — although, sometimes this scholarship includes the musicians, but usually in accompaniment to their fame. This approach dehumanizes music and restricts the ability to consider the other aspects at play within the world of music-making. Additionally, it tends to overlook the context that is shaping what is being done and the experience that is being created. This is why Small is trying to expand the range of what scholars consider when studying music. Music is created by someone and performed by someone, but once that music becomes a mere thing, those people and their efforts are often forgotten. In order to better understand music, we must consider other aspects of the music-making process, in addition to the purely notational content. The Albany Symphony’s Water Music tour cannot only be analyzed through a one-dimensional lens that only examines the music because the context is just as—if not more— important as the notes themselves, because the historic context, challenging logistics, and collaborative social interactions of Water Music NY was what made the tour so meaningful. We can analyze the music, and we should study the notation, but it does

not benefit us to look only at the music without also considering the larger framework that influenced the composition.

In my analysis of the Albany Symphony and its collaborative musical project Water Music NY, I draw on Small whose own analysis is of a symphony, as opposed to another type of organized music. Small's observations emphasize how it is precisely in the "classical music" world where the scholarship on music does not consider the other actors in the music-making process, those that also shape the music being produced and the experience being created. This classical setting is where music is the most "thing-ified," and therefore the universalization of these narrow-minded texts makes it difficult to see all of the components that are part of the process of making music. In this chapter, I draw on Small's observations because the Albany Symphony's tour specifically begs the analyst to look critically at the relationships that were formed through music-making during this unique orchestral project. Small explains that looking at music and the practice of music as only an object, rather than thinking of it as an activity, immediately restricts what can be discovered when analyzing the music-making process.

Musicking is an inclusive term because it is an activity "in which all those present are involved and ... everyone present bears some responsibility" (Small 1998:10). Small suggests that everyone at a concert has a role in the concert experience and places the responsibility of creating a concert on the audience at a performance. He is expanding the range of what scholars look at when studying the music-making process.

By including the people of the town in the program, not only through the piece inspired by their stories, but also through participatory activities and singing during the concert, the Albany Symphony created a more inclusive community in which to experience symphonic music. As a result, the welcoming environment invited the audience to participate. I cannot

remember the last time I was at a regular symphony concert where the audience was invited to participate with or sing with the orchestra, other than when the audience was invited to sing *Happy Birthday* to the Albany Symphony's most distinguished board member and donor, the late Dr. Heinrich Medicus.¹² In addition, people actively participated in all-day fun family events and short pre-concert programs that served to draw them in more closely to the evening's concert.

I've Got A Mule, and So Do You

These Water Music NY concerts presented a program that merged symphonic music and non-symphonic music, in this case, the United States national anthem and the folksong *Low Bridge*. Each concert began with everyone singing the national anthem and later Thomas S. Allen's *Low Bridge* (more commonly known as *I've Got A Mule, Her Name Is Sal*). Allen's *Low Bridge* memorializes when mule power was used to move barges, from 1825-1880, but was written in 1905 after traffic on the Erie Canal had switched from mule power to engine power. These are the original lyrics:

¹² However, the Albany Symphony does present Sunday Symphony Family Concerts that are engaging and participatory and they do Monday School Concerts where students from the surrounding area are invited to hear the Symphony play. Although this is usually a different program, catered to the children, it still shows an example of participation within Albany Symphony concerts.

I've Got A Mule, Her Name Is Sal

I've got a mule and her name is Sal
 Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal
 She's a good old worker and a good old pal
 Fifteen years on the Erie Canal

Get up there Sal, we've passed that lock,
 Fifteen years on the Erie Canal
 And we'll make Rome before six o'clock
 Fifteen years on the Erie Canal

—
 We've hauled some barges in our day
 Filled with lumber, coal, and hay
 And every inch of the way I (we) know
 From Albany to Buffalo

—
 One more trip and back we'll go
 Through the rain and sleet and snow
 And every inch of the way I (we) know
 From Albany to Buffalo

Chorus:

—
 Low bridge, everybody down
 Low bridge cause we're coming to a town
 And you'll always know your neighbor
 And you'll always know your pal
 If you've ever navigated on the Erie Canal

—
 Low bridge, everybody down
 Low bridge for we're coming to a town
 And you'll always know your neighbor
 And you'll always know your pal
 If you've ever navigated on the Erie Canal

Over the years, slight edits have been made to the lyrics of *Low Bridge*, but this folk song has remained a proud staple of New York State heritage. The most well-known edit to this song is the change from “fifteen years” to “fifteen miles.” Allen wrote “fifteen years” to commemorate the fifteen years that Sal, the mule, worked for the Erie Canal, while “fifteen years” serves as a reminder of the average time a mule could pull a barge before resting. To facilitate the participatory nature of these tour concerts, we inserted into every program a New York State Canal Corporation bookmark that had the lyrics of *I've Got A Mule Her Name Is Sal* printed on them. During the concert, I observed that there were many people who did not even need the lyrics because they already knew them. While not everyone remembers the full lyrics to this folk song, most people in New York (and surrounding states) seem to be familiar with the song itself. *I've Got A Mule, Her Name Is Sal* is sometimes taught in schools, but not all, so it is interesting that there is something about the song that enables it to remain in people's memories, even those who do not know the rich history of the Erie Canal.

Composers in Communities

The Albany Symphony's Water Music NY tour presented a concert series that was a musical, historical, and overall enlightening experience. These collaborative musical project was intended to connect the canal towns and the express in new ways the role that these people and communities played in the history of the Erie Canal. One of the main stipulations of this tour was that each composer would serve as a composer-in-residence in his or her respective town to create a new work that not only expressed an element of the community's heritage and culture, as well as its role in the Erie Canal's history. Some of the Water Music NY composers had previous experience working on collaborative projects, however, they all noted that they had never worked on a project that was comparable to Water Music NY. Even though the composers had varying compositional styles, their own interpretations of what the mission of the tour was, and, therefore, created such diverse and fascinating pieces, showcasing the people and their communities was consistently the central focus of each composer's project. "Musicking is about relationships," writes Small, "not so much about those which actually exist in our lives as about those that we desire to exist and long to experience: relationships among people" (Small 183:2011). Indeed, one of the Albany Symphony's main goals of Water Music NY was to form and cultivate these kinds of relationships, not only with the people in the canal town communities but also with the composers, the local arts organizations, and patrons. The composers had a six-month residency in each of their towns, which helped them to immerse themselves within the community and create strong connections with the people. This tour was not just for the Albany Symphony; it was a collaborative project put forth by the Symphony that celebrated the marvel that is the Erie Canal, but also showcased the canal towns alongside it, and the music created by the seven living American composers.

David Alan Miller tried to best fit the towns and the composers based on the project each composer was interested in creating and which local arts organizations were a good fit for that idea. For example, Loren Loiacono, composer for Brockport, was eager to incorporate dance into her piece so she was matched with the Mariah Maloney Dance Company in Brockport, NY. Dan Schlosberg, composer for Albany, was eager to work with the Saratoga storyteller group and since Albany, NY was the closest city (on the tour) to Saratoga, so he was chosen to be the composer for Albany. Annika Socolofsky, composer for Schenectady, was interested in using a theater group so she was paired with Maggie Cahill and Capital Repertory Theatre near Schenectady. David Alan Miller inundated the composers with materials and suggestions for different books about the history and heritage of the canal towns, folktales, as well as songs of the Erie Canal. While some of these resources were included in the composers' pieces, David's recommendations served more as a way of giving these composers an orientation to the breadth of available information.

A Refreshing and Collaborative Approach to Composing

For the composers, their process for creating a new piece was influenced by the unique aspects of the Water Music NY project. Many of the composers noted that their approach to a new work and the inspiration for that work depends on the piece. For Water Music, however, these composers shared a collective inspiration from the Erie Canal, but their added challenge was to collaborate with the local arts organizations to create a project telling their unique stories. The composers began their process by obtaining as much research as possible about the rich histories of the Erie Canal and these canal towns. By watching numerous documentaries, Annika Socolofsky, composer for Schenectady, found many "*parallels [between] what was happening back when the Canal was constructed and today's world,*" and from that structured her project

around the immigration and immigrant labor narrative. Annika's piece recounted the journey of Irish immigrants to America and the harsh working conditions that these workers faced while digging the Erie Canal (Socolofsky:2017).

Ben Wallace, composer for Little Falls, remembers Jane Malin handing him a large dossier that included a general history about the town, newspaper clippings, photographs, and stories about particular notable people. From the materials in the dossier and through conversations with people from Little Falls, Ben decided to tell the story of the 1912 Little Falls textile workers strike and the Herkimer Quartz (Little Falls Diamond). Ben was "immediately struck and fascinated by" a letter to the New York Times written by Helen Schloss in 1908, expressing her "impassioned defense of women's intellectual rights, arguing in a time of oppression that women should be treated as equals alongside men" (Wallace: 2017). This letter, along with Schloss' other op-ed pieces, provided Ben with a theoretical framework for his movement about the strike, as most of the factory workers were women (Wallace: 2017).

Some of the composers expressed that working within this six-month timeframe and collaborating with these local arts organizations invited them to approach composing from a refreshing perspective. Angélica's writing process was intense because she had a short amount of time to collaborate with the youth chorale and the bell choir of Amsterdam to create a 30-minute piece. She wanted to write something that would be challenging, but also resonate with them and be meaningful for the people of Amsterdam. Through her own recordings, inspired by nature and nostalgia, of the space and of instruments she built, Angélica created an amplification of the sounds that exist in Riverlink Park. Her piece explored "*connection: across geographical and cultural borders, between community and geography, and among people that have never met yet share so much in common*" (Negrón:2017). These connections are what the Albany Symphony

and Water Music NY were attempting to create and strengthen. Angélica reflected that since she often works with professional musicians, *“it can be easy sometimes to lose perspective of why you’re doing this in the first place,”* but working with these non-professional musicians who were so excited about the piece reminded Angélica of the *“pure joy of music-making and of playing music with other people.”*

What Is A Composer’s Responsibility to the Audience?

While there was some concern about appropriateness and the composer’s responsibility to the music and to the audience, many of the composers expressed that it did not influence their process. Since these composers were writing about these communities *with* these communities, the people were helping the composers tell their story. For many of the composers they did not have to worry about it because it was not a component of the music-making. However, it often is for regular symphony concerts. Loren pointed out that with a *“project like this where there are so many different components happening ... it could’ve been easy to lose focus and ... when you starting throwing in the question of ‘well, what’s my responsibility?’ to the audience here, my only responsibility to the audience is to give them my best work.”* Angélica shares this philosophy, as well, and shared that *“there was a clear shift in my music about 8 or 9 years ago when I stopped caring about those things and, in my case, that meant being a little bit more true to who I was as a person and (ever since) I feel like I’ve been quite happier with the music I’m writing and also people are listening more.”* It is virtually impossible to create a composition or project that will appeal to everyone, however, when a composer writes a piece into which they put so much of themselves and it clearly shows their personal connection to the piece, that is what makes the most powerful and meaningful projects.

Many of these communities never had an orchestra, let alone a professional orchestra, visit and perform in their town, most of the composers said that this didn't influence their composing. If anything, because they were writing the piece *with* people from the community, the project was created *by* the people of each town, and *for* the community, it seems less likely that the audience wouldn't like it. People were so excited to share their stories and they wanted to make something that would make themselves and the town proud of their culture, history, and heritage. They wanted to highlight the aspects of their town that make them unique.

Appropriateness and Responsibility

It is important to have a dialogue about the music being performed, today, by symphony orchestras, and it is inevitable that this conversation will continue for years to come within the classical music world. From a composer's perspective: "*I can't take it upon myself to make assumptions,*" Loren stated, "*about what they may or may not be comfortable listening to. I don't think that's my job. My job is to put the music that I think best suits the project out there and let people approach it in their own way.*" This astute observation emphasizes that we should no longer dictate what is 'appropriate' in our concert halls, but perhaps should instead generate a dialogue and respond. There are some patrons who only attend the Albany Symphony's concerts to hear the familiar pieces and are not interested in the newer works included on the program. Keeping this in mind, David Alan Miller purposefully integrates the new music with the famous pieces so that he can introduce the audience to the exciting and innovative new art that is being created by living American composers today. David entices people with the music they want to hear but also adds something fresh with the hope that someone in the audience who hears the new piece might enjoy it just as much or perhaps more than the pieces they came to hear in the first place.

The Audience and The Symphony

While there is a traditionally understood code of conduct that people are expected to follow for “classical music” concerts, these Water Music NY tour concerts did not require the audience to uphold those rules. There is no official handbook with rules that dictates how patrons should act and dress, however, there is an unspoken accepted practice of how one should behave at a classical music concert.¹³ This decorum is either taught or learned through experience (and potential embarrassment from faux pas). During the Albany Symphony’s regular season, concerts can serve as a social event, but there are designated times for people to interact and talk with each other.

Was That the Last Movement?

People are expected to be quiet during a symphony concert, unless they are applauding because ‘Appropriate applause is [seen as] the only acceptable audible response from the audience’ (Ross 2010:1). However, the ‘No-Appause Rule’ dictates that, additionally, the audience “must refrain from clapping until all movements of a work have sounded (Ross 2010:1). This is not to say that there is no participation in the regular concert hall, but rather that the audience’s behavior is a more scripted or choreographed event. Ross believes that the Rule should only be observed when keeping with the style of a musical work, particularly those with a mournful or melancholic theme. He references Emanuel Ax who finds it “disconcerting” when the first movement of a concerto “which is supposed to be full of excitement, passion, and virtuoso display” is followed by stiff silence rather than uproarious applause (Ross 2010:4).

Ross, himself, would prefer to hear “a smattering of applause than be subjected to that distinctly

¹³ Alex Ross mentions that in some concert programs there is a small list of rules that commands the audience: ‘Thou shalt not applaud between movements of symphonies or other multisectional works listed on the program’ (Ross 2010:1).

un-beautiful, un-musical, coughing, shuffling, rustling noise” because these are the sounds of people “suppressing their instincts” (Ross 2010:1). When people applaud in the “seemingly” wrong place, they are often immediately hushed and scorned as newcomers to the symphony concert scene. While those who hush believe that they are helping to maintain the quiet, Ross points out the irony that “shushing is itself noise” and these people have “made themselves more of a nuisance than those whom they are righteously reprimanding” (Ross 2010:4). For many people, classical music concerts make them feel anxious and stifled, restricted by rules and regulations that accompany these concerts. While there should always been a sense of respect for the musicians and their performance, but Ross noted how etiquette expectations can inhibit an audience member’s concert behavior and experience. Ironically, it is precisely first-time concertgoers that orchestras value: a major audience development goal of most orchestras is to attract new patrons and make them feel *welcome*.

Ross’ observations draw attention to the distinction that is made between what sounds are allowed during a symphony concert and who is allowed to make them. The musicians, on stage, are allowed to make sound for they are the main attraction for the evening. Those who speak on stage (e.g. the chair of the Albany Symphony Board, Maestro David Alan Miller, or the guest composer) are allowed to make sound. However, the audience is traditionally limited by strict norms, reinforced by the structure of the music hall that houses these symphony concerts. The Albany Symphony’s Water Music concerts were outside and waterside, an obvious change to the typical performance environment, which presented the opportunity for a change in audience behavior. Since many of the Water Music NY concert venues attracted such diverse groups of people from towns far from major urban centers, it was possible that many of the people in the audience had never a professional orchestra play or been to a symphony concert. These concerts

presented a performance environment that was inviting and comfortable, which allowed people to experience the concerts—and express their reactions to the music—more freely. This might be a key to broader participation in the future.

Thank You For Calling the Albany Symphony

On a daily basis, the Albany Symphony makes a concerted effort to engage with patrons and build personal relationships. As a small regional symphony, it is important that the Symphony cultivates meaningful relationships, listens to feedback, and creates personal experiences for all of its patrons. As a result, many people feel comfortable calling into the office and sharing their experiences. During the tour, we encountered some instances in which patrons shared their personal advice and stories about their Water Music NY concert experience. I remember I was sitting in the office the day after the Albany concert when I got a call from a man who had been at the concert the night before. He suggested that the the Albany Symphony install bug lamps to keep insects from flying around the musicians. I thanked him, hung up the phone, and mentioned the phone call to the Albany Symphony's operations manager, who explained that bug zappers were not a viable option, because they interfered with the sound system. Later, another person who had been at the concert called, but this time it was a woman who wanted to express her dislike for the program and performance. I decided to transfer that call to the Albany Symphony's executive director, Anna Kuwabara. Afterwards, Anna and I were discussing the intentions behind and the consequences of putting on a tour like Water Music NY. Through our conversation, we realized that although the woman might not have enjoyed the concert, these Water Music NY concerts were about more than just playing beautiful music for a free summer concert. In experiencing the stories of these canal towns through a musical context, these projects were intended to educate, facilitate dialogue about, and celebrate

the Erie Canal's history and culture. Most importantly, they also were meant to draw visitors, promote businesses, and enhance the profiles of the canal communities.

Chapter 3:

Cultivating Relationships Through Community Engagement

Playing More Than Just Music

In Tina K. Ramnarine's article "The Orchestration of Civil Society: Community and Conscience in Symphony Orchestras," she looks at the role that symphony orchestras can play in society and how the structures within the orchestral scene can translate into civic engagement in society. While Christopher Small writes that there is seemingly a separation between the performers and the audience, Ramnarine presents examples of orchestras who have attempted to create musical projects that engage the community.

In 2009, London's Philharmonia Orchestra created an installation called 'Re-Rite,' using Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, for a digital residency at the Bargehouse Warehouse at Oxo Tower Wharf, London (Ramnarine 2011:343). To create this installation, "each orchestral section was laid out in separate spaces over three floors ... (and) audience members could imagine being part of a section as they wandered around the installation" (Ramnarine 2011: 343). This exhibit allowed the music to be heard from "the perspective of the section within which the listener was located at any one moment in the performance, and a music stand with the relevant orchestral part was placed in front of a video film so that the listener could follow it" (Ramnarine 2011:343). The Philharmonia orchestra altered the listening experience as well as the concert-going experience. They took the music out of the concert hall and created an exhibit within a warehouse not a traditional venue in which classical music is performed.

The Albany Symphony also took itself out of its regular concert halls and presented a moving "installation," which completely transformed the idea of what can be expected at a symphony concert, similar to Philharmonia's project. Water Music NY was a project designed to

challenge what people think of classical music today, and how it can be presented. Ramnarine writes that, “In virtual spaces today, the symphony orchestra expresses renewed ambitions to develop local links — marketing itself in relation to local identities, seeking social relevance through interaction with its neighbourhood’s inhabitants and participating in local civic causes” (Ramnarine 2011:345). Through Water Music NY, the Albany Symphony showed its own ambitions to cultivate relationships with local New York organizations, new towns, local businesses, various musicians, and artists at all levels to establish a more expansive relevance to the greater community. Water Music NY produced the most concentrated example of the Symphony’s effort in engagement, especially on social media platforms, expressing the character of a community, and promoting economic development. In Albany, we went “live” on Facebook to record the Canal Corporation’s close up, small-scale demonstration of how boats travel through a lock. In Amsterdam, we launched another Facebook live stream with Angélica Negrón, the guest composer that night, who explained her water synthesizer: six acrylic vases, each filled with colorful water, played as an electronic musical instrument. Throughout the tour, “going live” on Facebook was a way for the Symphony to stay connected not only with those attending Water Music NY events, but also with those who could not join us in person, but still followed the Symphony and its social media accounts.

The ‘Re-Rite’ installation similarly showed that “digital technologies can encourage innovative orchestral interactions” and they also “highlight that the orchestra has always been a changing institution” (Ramnarine 2011:345). The Symphony’s tour showed that the role of a symphony in its community can and should be more than just about performing music, and that, as an organization, its role in the community is always evolving. Ramnarine asks, “Does musical experience of itself have the capacity to change social circumstance?” (Ramnarine 2011:347)

The Albany Symphony seems to think so. These seven free, outdoor, waterside concerts featured world premieres of new commissions that celebrated the history and renaissance of these canal communities and transformed the concert series experience into one that was inclusive, welcoming, and participatory.

Ramnarine writes that, “One way of interpreting the kind of civic collaboration in these orchestral interactions is based on notions of self-contained communities or on alterities of citizenship within a multicultural society” (Ramnarine 2011:336). Following Ramnarine, I see Water Music NY as a form of civic collaboration through music. The focus of the Symphony’s tour was to collaborate with each town to highlight their unique history, but also to connect different kinds of people across New York through the celebration of the Erie Canal. The Symphony was not playing a role in every town only by engaging with the communities and celebrating history, but also by showing the greater music community the importance of smaller orchestras in connecting with people. If the Albany Symphony traveled down the Erie Canal playing concerts with the exact same program every night, there would be nothing new and interesting. The most distinctive aspect of Water Music NY was that, for seven nights, the Albany Symphony presented a world premiere of a half an hour (or longer) piece that was composed in collaboration with a local arts organization in each different canal town. Basically, the Philharmonia was not actually creating anything new (no new art was being made), but the Albany Symphony was with Water Music NY.

The Albany Symphony’s tour and the London Philharmonia’s installation might appear to be more similar than they actually were. In analyzing the “Re-Rite” event to show the differences from Water Music NY, I found that there is not much that is novel about the London Philharmonia’s project. They were able to present a different listening experience, but they

programmed this installation with an older classic that is found in many other orchestras' seasons. This "Re-Rite" project was not a collaboratively created project and, therefore, did not allow for as much of a meaningful, personal connection to the community as Water Music NY did. It might seem that this was a creative approach to "new music," but *Rite of Spring* is not considered "new music" anymore and has not been for quite some time. It was premiered in 1913 for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes company in Paris, and "Re-Rite" was created 96 years after that first concert. There was no collaboration with the people of the community in creating this project and while it definitely provided a different type of exposure to *Rite of Spring*, it was not as innovative as Water Music NY. While the London Philharmonia imagined collaboration as new ways of listening, the Albany Symphony imagined collaboration as both new listening spaces and new ways to approach music-making itself.

Importance of Collaboration and Creating New Work

Water Music NY was the single most ambitious project that the Albany Symphony engineered in the history of the orchestra. The summer before the tour, it was doubtful whether this project would actually happen, considering there was no financial backing yet, the composers had not officially committed yet, and the canal towns had not yet decided to participate. However, once the composers agreed to participate, the communities and their arts organizations confirmed their interest, and the Albany Symphony received its funding, the project could finally go forward. Some of the Albany Symphony board members still thought that creating Water Music NY was irresponsible and a waste of the orchestra's resources and staff time because of the endless risk factors, the expense, and the logistical challenges. However, there were more people, including those in the community, in the orchestra, and on the board, who fervently supported the unique opportunity and were anxious for this project to

become a reality. One of those people was the chair of the Albany Symphony Board, to whom Maestro Miller pays tribute because she very easily could have shut down the project but, instead, ambitiously rallied everyone to make Water Music NY happen. The collective opinion was that this tour was a huge expression of who the Albany Symphony is and what they do, as well as a real endorsement of the Albany Symphony's mission to "*connect living music to community.*" Water Music NY presented the best way to do just that.

In my interview with David Alan Miller he emphasized that, "*sometimes you have to be really daring and do big, dramatic things because those are the projects that, even though they seem almost insurmountable, people will come together and make them happen.*" Water Music NY was one of those projects where, once the boulder starts rolling down the hill, the momentum increases to the point where there is no stopping it. This kind of project had never been done before, especially in the way that art was "*new and freshly conceived*" (Socolofsky:2017). From an orchestral perspective, "*the idea of putting on, essentially, a different show every night with a brand new world premiere is ... unprecedented*" (Miller:2017). There were many wonderful aspects of these concerts, but the true uniqueness of this project was the creation and performance of seven world premieres inspired by the canal towns and written by bold new composers in collaboration with a local arts groups within each community. Annika Socolofsky, composer for Schenectady, expressed a similar philosophy: "*There's no point in doing what's been done before. This was new music about old things, a tour about the Erie Canal in a new context.*" For many of the composers, it was the novelty, challenge, and the craziness of this project that drew them in and, ultimately, convinced them to be a part of this tour. Loren Loiacono, composer for Brockport, realized that she will never encounter a project exactly this

again and “*at the end of the day, I think that’s kind of the point ... What’s the point of being a composer if you’re not going to do unusual things?*”

There was a wonderful sense of American storytelling by virtue of the collaborative work between the townspeople and the young American composers. David intentionally advocated for working with smaller communities along the Erie Canal that were excited to have the Albany Symphony orchestra, to host them, and to collaborate with them. The Albany Symphony did not play in Syracuse, Rochester, or Buffalo directly, but rather in the small towns outside of those cities. This tour was about bringing classical music to these peripheral towns while also commemorating the Erie Canal. Many of these smaller canal towns had never or almost never had a professional orchestra in their community and were so eager to be a part of this collaborative musical project for Water Music NY. Knowing this, Dan Schlosberg felt that this tour was about “*bringing the orchestra to places that might not always get exposed to that kind of high quality orchestral music.*” The Albany Symphony was attempting to break down barriers by providing these towns with the opportunity to collaborate with professional musicians, to give them exposure to this musical world and to bring them the realization that they, too, can be a part of that community.

When the Albany Symphony board chair and David Alan Miller were visiting the Water Music NY canal towns, they stopped in Little Falls along the way. As they walked into the Mohawk Center for the Arts, they were greeted by a welcoming group, organized by Jane Malin, director of the arts center, that included board members, people from the community newspaper, and local officials. David remembers, “*There was a sense in the communities that they were really excited to have us and then there was this other sense, which was the most touching part of it, that they (or we with them) were telling stories about their town, about their community.*”

The people in the canal towns were so enthusiastic about being a part of Water Music NY and having the opportunity to share their stories and celebrate their town's own unique heritage. No matter how economically challenged some of these towns were, they wanted to commemorate their history and legacy in a positive way. While these communities were once bustling industrial canal towns, in the post-industrial age, now their wealth and economic success can only be celebrated as "history." Fortunately, some of these towns are finding new industries, innovative small businesses, and lucrative crafts, which the Symphony's full-day main street celebrations were also determined to highlight.

During my interviews, I noticed that even though all of these composers ended up creating such different projects from one another, they still sometimes gave similar responses or seemed to share certain experiences. There seemed to be the most overlap in answers when I asked the composers what, from their perspective, was the mission of Water Music NY. I was particularly interested in the answers for this question because, as I mentioned in my introduction, the composers were given some basic requirements and general guidance for the piece, but then it was really left up to each of them and their community to determine what the piece would become. David's initial idea was to have these seven newly created pieces of art tell the story of the Erie Canal and its history. While all of the composers' pieces were thematically related, the stories did not necessarily start at the beginning or follow in chronological order, but they were all about issues related to the "*history and heritage and culture of the regions and the towns.*" These projects all told very specific stories that were individual to each canal town and its community. It is noteworthy that with this artistic freedom and agency with what they were creating that all of the composers were able to produce such diverse and wonderfully interesting projects that centered around each of the communities, the people, and the people's heritage.

How Water Music NY Was Made Possible

Water Music NY was one of the most inspired tours created by any orchestra and the most ambitious project that the Albany Symphony has ever produced. As I mentioned in my introduction, the Albany Symphony has traveled for smaller-scale “tours,” like the Spring for Music Festival at Carnegie Hall and SHIFT: A Festival of American Orchestras,” but had never before orchestrated a project of such a large scope. Many factors made Water Music NY possible, including the financial support that the Albany Symphony received from New York State, the partnership formed between the Albany Symphony and the New York State Canal Corporation, the fact that this tour was the launch for the Erie Canal’s bicentennial celebration, and widespread support. In David’s words: *“Fate was smiling on the whole project ... all of the things we wished for and hoped for really came to pass ... sometimes when you do a project like that and it feels really good, you just know it all along.”*

Water Music NY would not have been possible without the dedication and enthusiasm of everyone involved. However, the Albany Symphony would not have been able to move forward with this project without grant funding from New York State Council on the Arts and the Empire Development Corporation/Market NY (NY state agencies), and without the extensive resources and skilled guidance from the staff of the New York State Canal Corporation. NYSCA and the New York Canal Corporation were the state-run organizations who were so enthusiastic about Water Music NY that once they started backing the project and, in some ways, taking ownership of it, pushed the Albany Symphony to make it a reality. In 2000, David Alan Miller had the original idea to have the orchestra perform music on barges down the Erie Canal as people listened along the shore. However, at that time, the Albany Symphony did not have the financial resources or the political connections to make that tour happen and, as a result, planning for this

project was postponed. Over the years, the Symphony demonstrated success with its innovative programming, creative artistic events, and cultivating important supportive relationships; these undoubtedly were considered in the grant awards eventually bestowed by New York State through the Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC).

There are parallels between the political roles at play when the Erie Canal was built and when Water Music NY was being planned.. Prior to 1817 when construction the Erie Canal began, Governor DeWitt Clinton was its biggest supporter and advocate. His passion and persistence for getting the Erie Canal built is what helped the project gain financial backing — without Clinton, there would be no Erie Canal. DeWitt Clinton was a prominent political figure who advocated for the Erie Canal because he believed in its potential. As an important person in government, Clinton’s validation of the project of the Erie Canal had more of an impact. While Clinton was well-known, he still struggled to gain support from other politicians. As I explained in Chapter 1: *Water Connects US: The Launch*, President Thomas Jefferson and President James Madison both rejected Clinton’s call for action and request for federal funds for the construction of the Erie Canal. With the proposed magnitude for the Erie Canal and the tremendous amount of money and resources needed, people were not convinced that this waterway was worth the expense and the risks.. In many ways, David Alan Miller was like DeWitt Clinton with his drive to develop this elaborate and enterprising project for Albany Symphony and for New York State, and he also met with a great deal of resistance for financial and logistical reasons.

By 2017, the project had broad support from all constituents, including Symphony board, staff, and donors, leaders; musicians, composers, and collaborating artists; and importantly, statewide government officials. Additionally, the Albany Symphony’s Water Music Tour received coverage from one the most influential newspapers worldwide. Michael Cooper, a

reporter for The New York Times, spent two days along the Erie Canal with the Albany Symphony during Water Music NY, observing the inner workings of the tour and highlighting the importance of the Symphony's ambitious project. Cooper's article, entitled "Hell or High Water: An Orchestra Celebrates the Erie Canal," told the story of the Albany Symphony's journey along the Erie Canal and provided more validation for the Symphony's plans to undertake ongoing beyond-the-concert-hall collaborative community projects.

The prominent political presence emphasized their commitment to preserving the history, culture, and heritage of New York State, celebrating the bicentennial of the Erie Canal, and supporting the Albany Symphony and the arts. Before Water Music NY, the Albany Symphony and the seven composers were outsiders to these communities but, after hearing David Alan Miller's proposal, the people, their businesses, and the local arts organizations of these canal towns were thrilled to have the Albany Symphony perform, as well as host them and the composers, and collaborate on this one-of-a-kind musical project. By selecting smaller communities, David Alan Miller and the Albany Symphony and, especially, the composers were welcomed, enthusiastically, and they quickly became a part of the community. Everyone was so excited by the opportunity to work with a professional orchestra and a chance to share their individual stories. Having these seven composers work with their respective communities to produce a performance piece commemorating the people and their heritage was fundamental to Water Music NY's mission, however, the overall collaborative objective was also present throughout every aspect of the tour.

Even though the Albany Symphony and David Alan Miller were outsiders visiting these canal towns, they had political ambassadors who advocated for them and for Water Music NY, which further validated the Symphony and its presence in these communities. At the beginning

of every concert, the mayor of the town welcomed the audience and expressed how proud and honored he/she was that the Albany Symphony, along with the local arts groups, was performing that night. There were different people who spoke in each town, but they were all respected members of the community. Gaining the approval of the people in these canal towns made the Albany Symphony and its musicians feel included in the community and made the experience that much more meaningful. This political presence of government officials not only endorsed the Albany Symphony and its mission of Water Music NY, but also emphasized the celebration of the Erie Canal Bicentennial as part of New York State history.

Championing Living American Composers

The Albany Symphony is committed to championing the work of living composers, and providing opportunities for emerging composers to flourish and create compelling new art. Water Music NY furthered that commitment, as the Symphony challenged seven composers to create a collaborative music project through a process that was unlike anything any of them had ever encountered. No matter how crazy and ambitious this tour originally sounded, in the end all of the composers were so happy that they had agreed to come aboard the Water Music NY barge and thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this once-in-a-lifetime project. In reflecting on this tour, there was an overwhelming sense of gratitude, appreciation, and pride. All of the stories and experiences that these composers shared emphasized how much more meaningful and productive music-making is when it is created through a collaborative process. Without the comprehensive vision of Water Music NY, these stories, these lessons learned, these original and diverse pieces would not have had as much impact on the composers and others involved.

Many of the composers expressed that working on Water Music NY helped them to gain new skills as composers. Dan Schlosberg thought that the project challenged his “compositional

sense of cohesion” because he was trying to create “something really coherent as a piece of music that had to involve so many disparate elements ... and so many different artistic forces.” This compositional process comes with the collaborative framework but, as many of the composers mentioned, working with these historic canal towns for Water Music NY pushed them to a much greater degree. Ben Wallace learned a valuable lesson in multi-genre collaboration when he discovered that his “*piano/vocal score wasn’t quite giving [the singers] the information that they needed*” because it was not as detailed as the full orchestral score and the voice leading could have been improved. Before Water Music NY, Ben had not written much choral music, but after this experience, he has learned how to write more mindful vocal music with scores that help singers better understand how their parts fit within the larger ensemble.

Although Annika Socolofsky had previous experience working with texts within her compositions, she had never worked with actors, so writing for Water Music NY encouraged her to work in a new genre and create something that she had not done before in this large of a scope. Annika writes for her own voice, which allows her receive immediate feedback on the music. She explained that, oftentimes, when writing a piece that is not explicitly collaborative, composers “*write on their own to have total control, autonomy, and agency.*” Water Music NY was different, though, because this time Annika was working alongside Maggie Mancinelli-Cahill, artistic director of the Capital Repertory Theatre, which led her to think more critically about the people and their stories that shaped her piece. Annika and Maggie had different ideas, but in working together on this collaborative project they were able to compromise and agree on a shared vision of the overall project.

Angélica Negrón noted that one of the many things she gained was learning to trust the process and not to feel like she had to have a “*master plan for mapping out the piece beforehand*”

and knowing exactly what it was going to sound like.” Negrón spent much time in Amsterdam and really immersed herself into the community. Since she did not necessarily know what the piece would become, Negrón took this as an opportunity to really get to know the people and just be there with them, *“listening to them rehearsing, listening to their conversations in between songs, looking at how they move, and what things they respond to well from their rep, seeing the interaction between the conductor and the students.”* Allowing all of those observations and interactions to be an important part of the process helped inform Angélica’s piece and gave her confidence that this would all lead to something amazing. Sometimes when composers are rushed for a deadline, they want to have complete control over the process to ensure that their piece will get finished in time. However, Angélica pointed out that, during the creative process, it is important to open yourself to *“anything as inspiration and anything as potential...for a musical idea or concept.”*

Water Music NY was about celebrating the culture and heritage of New York State while highlighting these seven historic canal towns whose identities were shaped and reshaped by the Erie Canal. The world premieres, written by living American composers in collaboration with the local arts organizations, told individual stories about each town and showcased what makes each community special. Because these pieces were written *by* people from the community and *for* people in the community, they had a much more meaningful impact. Ben Wallace recounted the many interactions he had with people after his concert who enjoyed his piece but who, more importantly, emphasized how much the music meant to them and resonated with their own personal stories. For the people of Little Falls, Ben’s musical interpretation of the historic local workers’ strike seemed *“to put to rest a troubled part of the town’s history”* which, to him, was *“really meaningful and impactful for that to be the result of this project.”* Annika Socolofsky

shared a memorable moment from conversations she had with an actor from Capital Repertory Theatre, who was “*really emotionally invested in the piece,*” which brought “*a heavy, emotional weight to the performance.*” Even though the people in these canal towns were excited and proud to tell their stories, this project created an environment for further personal and emotional reflection. Ryan Chase commented that when working with others on collaborative projects, “*the process is more organic and more personal.*” Annika said that working with others for her Water Music composition improved the music-making process and made the piece more meaningful. Talking with this actor made Annika realize that, “*it’s moments like this when you realize that what you’re doing means something.*” One of the many aspects that attracted people to this project was the chance to reinterpret such a meaningful and monumental time in New York State history and to be part of a new, bold project celebrating the “living musical heritage” mentioned in the Albany Symphony’s mission statement (Our Mission:2017).

Conclusion: A Revival of Identity

After eight years of construction, the Erie Canal was finally completed in 1825, and the canalside towns were transformed into thriving trade and commerce centers. Barges and boats carrying goods and travelers would pass through the town's locks or dock so that people could come onto land to visit the community. The Erie Canal not only facilitated the transportation of goods and textiles, but also people and their innovative ideas. During the mid-19th century, the identities of these towns along the Erie Canal were shaped by the role that they played as a result of the country's newest and most impressive engineering marvel. Not only did the Erie Canal bring commerce and progress to all of the canal communities, to and from the Midwest, it also made New York City the great city it remains today. When the Erie Canal was being built, it gave the thousands of diverse people who built it a sense of pride and strong sense of shared accomplishment and identity. The people in these canal towns were the direct beneficiaries and participants of this great engineering and technological achievement. However, with the later development of other modes of transportation, as well as shifts in the economy away from industry into a service economy, the Erie Canal fell to the wayside as the main mode of travel and transportation and, as a result, these towns suffered economically and culturally. Today, the Erie Canal and its locks are still used and fully functioning but not to the extent it was in the 19th century.

Water Music NY provided an environment that enhanced the canal towns' identity as historic communities along the Erie Canal. By providing an outlet for these people to tell their stories and celebrate their heritage, Water Music NY reminded people that Upstate and Western New York have a deep history and complex cultural heritage. Thousands and thousands of

different people who came to these tour concerts, many of whom had a personal connection because they played an active role in creating the piece and because spotlighting their identity was a part of this overall celebration. One of the main objectives of Water Music NY was to highlight these unique towns, revitalize their waterfront communities, and increase their economic and tourism development. These communities gained an industrial identity when the Erie Canal was finally completed and transformed these towns to booming trade areas. Water Music NY allowed the communities to re-imagine their identity and featured them, again, as important towns along the Erie Canal, but this time through a cultural heritage and artistic lens.

As part of the State's Erie Canal bicentennial celebration, Water Music NY drew attention back to these canal towns, highlighted the people within these communities, and helped to express each community's identity in new ways. As Ryan Chase, composer for Baldwinsville and professor at Colgate University, pointed out, this celebration of Upstate and Western New York was a welcome reminder that, "*there is a really rich history up here and a really rich community that appreciates the arts, supports the arts*" and has its own arts groups worthy of recognition. To some extent, these Erie Canal towns might have a "*sense of feeling left out compared to New York City or other parts of the state that are maybe more frequented by tourism or travel,*" so Water Music NY helped to remind people that these towns are still relevant, intriguing, with stories of their own that need to be retold and heard. (Chase:2017)

While it might be obvious to those living in or around these canal towns that these people and communities have so much to offer, many people still think of Upstate and Western New York as a "*nebulous zone,*" which it is not (Wallace:2017). Anna Kuwabara, the Albany Symphony's executive director, shared a story about a woman who approached her at the concert in Brockport, NY and said, "*I can't tell you how important and valuable it was having the*

Albany Symphony come to our community ... and how respected and honored it made us feel.”

For many of the communities, hosting a professional orchestra—and living American composer who not only wanted to tell their story but also wanted to collaborate with them to create a new work of art—made a powerful and positive impact on their self-identity and sense of pride. Ben Wallace, composer for Little Falls, believed that, “*one of the hallmarks [of Water Music NY] was being able to put a magnifying lens to all these towns and communities and look at what’s actually going on and celebrate their culture and what they have to offer.*” In addition, Ben relied on two questions, in particular, during his composition process: “*What is special about this community?*” and “*What do they have that no one else has?*” Water Music NY was about learning the history of these canal towns and discovering what makes them unique and, for everyone, that is what made this project so exciting.

There was a community engagement component to this collaborative musical project through which meeting and working with the people in these towns across New York helped to “*foster a sense of statewide collaboration*” (Schlosberg:2017). Dan Schlosberg noticed that, although one of the obvious goals of Water Music NY was to commemorate the Canal, this tour went beyond being something just historical. Dan, himself, presented a musical composition that spanned across many years and gave an overview of the progression of the Erie Canal, while at the same time was looking at the Erie Canal from today’s perspective. Annika Socolofsky, composer for Schenectady, saw Water Music NY as an outlet for forging relationships and local collaborations with entirely new communities, noting that “*the Albany Symphony was forming relationships with towns and communities of people who were over 300 miles away from Albany NY....Water Music NY was about connecting with the larger state region.*”

Though They Are Small, They Are Able

Water Music NY showed what the Albany Symphony is truly capable of achieving and, in turn, helped these seven historic canal towns reclaim their identity and purpose. For the communities who have had minimal exposure to a professional orchestra, Water Music NY challenged these canal towns to attempt an ambitious and collaborative musical project. By working with these towns and showcasing their non-professional local dance, choral, and theater organizations, the Albany Symphony was bringing attention back to small towns and helping to celebrate the each community's unique character. David Alan Miller is hopeful that through Water Music NY, the Albany Symphony has "*seeded this idea of artistic collaboration*" in all of the towns. This tour really made the people in these communities reconsider what their potential is and how they can approach more dramatic and exciting ideas in the future, as well as continue the traditions that were created through this tour. Baldwinsville hosted its first full-scale arts and artisan festival, and told the Albany Symphony staff that they were so touched and inspired by Water Music NY that this artisan and music festival is now going to be an annual occurrence. Many of the local arts organizations that were part of Water Music NY have expressed interest in collaborating with the Albany Symphony on other similar projects. Anna Kuwabara believes that Water Music NY showcased what the Albany Symphony is capable of achieving while also acting as an impetus for future ambitious projects.

Opening Night Gala and Thematic Programming

Every year at the beginning of each concert season, the Albany Symphony presents its Opening Night Concert and hosts a celebratory gala, which marks the beginning of another exciting year of innovative programming and creative projects. These galas are an accompaniment to the Albany Symphony's opening concert, provide a festive feel to the launch

of the season, and celebrate a vibrant orchestra embarking upon another year of creative music-making. The Albany Symphony's Opening Night Concert and Gala for the 2017-2018 season was held on October 14, 2017 and the program for the night, conducted by David Alan Miller, opened with a world premiere of *Bossa Shift* by Loren Loiacono, followed by Simone Porter playing Erich Wolfgang Korngold's *Violin Concerto in D Major*, and ending with excerpts from John William's *Star Wars Suite*. While the Albany Symphony was back home for the opening night of its new season, the programming for this concert shared some parallels to the music performed during Water Music NY. The program for the tour included Handel's *Water Music*, a world premiere of each canal town, and excerpts from American classics by John Williams. *Bossa Shift* was a world premiere like the seven piece written for the tour, the Korngold violin concerto was like the more traditional *Water Music*, and the John Williams *Star Wars Suite* was like the American favorites played at the end of each tour concert. Loren Loiacono was one of the premiere composers who wrote for Water Music NY and collaborated with the Mariah Maloney Dance Company and the Golden Eagle String Band in Brockport, NY. Her *Bossa Shift* connects with the other world premieres from the Erie Canal Bicentennial Tour because it, too, is new, American work inspired by water. By programming Loiacono's *Bossa Shift* at the Opening Night Gala concert, the Albany Symphony was reminding the audience of Water Music NY, but also making a statement about the orchestra's continued dedication to playing new music by contemporary composers. Korngold's violin concerto and Handel's *Water Music* were the "classics" on these two programs, the music that people knew and attracted them to the concerts. The John William's *Star Wars Suite* and the American pop favorites (also written by John Williams) both signaled the finale of the concerts. Whereas John Williams' American pop favorites were played to give Water Music NY a Fourth of July summer concert feel, the *Star*

Wars Suite was providing a fanfare for the Albany Symphony in celebration of its new season. These links point out the synergy between bold, creative new initiatives and the core season programming of the Albany Symphony, which they believe is key to the future success of new American orchestras.

Music of Our Time and the Future

The relationships between the canal towns and the musicians and the Albany Symphony were built through collaboration and community engagement. The seven composers composed their works with the canal towns so that Water Music NY was not only about the Albany Symphony's story, but about each community's story as well. "*As the orchestra of the capital of the state of New York,*" David explained, "*for us to be telling these New York stories about the Erie Canal...there's something very powerful about that because, in a way, we do think of ourselves as an orchestra that belongs not just to Albany but to the whole state....*"

Water Music NY celebrated the bicentennial of the beginning of construction on the Erie Canal, however, the waterway was not finished until 1825. David Alan Miller is hoping that, in seven years, the Albany Symphony will embark on a second trip commemorating the completion of the Canal. "*When DeWitt Clinton did his famous 'wedding of the waters,'*" David explained, "*he started in Buffalo and sailed ... across the Erie Canal [to Albany] and then ... down the Hudson to New York Harbor where he poured Lake Erie water into the Atlantic Ocean.*" David expressed that he would "*love to replicate that project*" by starting in Buffalo, NY and traveling eastward, towards the home of the Albany Symphony and the future.

This tour created connections with events and places that spanned centuries, land and waterways. Water can separate us, but it also connects us and inspires us.. While the Albany Symphony visited seven distinct communities and traveled along the Erie Canal across the

diverse geographic and social landscape of New York State, what united us was the vision of the Water Music NY project, connecting all of us across space and time through the powerful and innovative spirit embodied in the Erie Canal—and the Albany Symphony.

Appendix

In this appendix, I included each of the composer's program notes from the Water Music NY concerts and photographs that were taken during the tour. The program notes provide a personal note from the composers about their visions and inspirations for their individual pieces, while the photographs give visual context to the places in which the Albany Symphony performed.

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Program Notes from Water Music NY (in order of performance)

Dan Schlosberg, *Canal Songs*

The Erie Canal is unique among America's waterways in that it gave birth to an inordinate amount of music. Canallers would sing tunes to pass time on their five-mile-an-hour journey, to provide a distraction from the fabled onslaught of heat and mosquitoes. Modernization contributed to the canal's obsolescence, and with it, that wonderful oral tradition diminished, along with a vast repository for cultural memory. As they recreate the journey of a canaller, the Albany Symphony become the new minstrels of the canal and I thought it appropriate to kick off their journey with four Canal Songs for the present day. Audio montages created by faculty and students from the Skidmore College Documentary and Storytelling Program punctuate the music throughout—from DeWitt Clinton envisioning and planning the canal, to Judge Richardson speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony, to Clinton again presiding over the official opening.

Annika Socolofsky, *Beyond The Pines*

This piece was created in honor of the bicentennial of the Erie Canal, which began construction on July 4, 1817 in Rome, New York. The canal was built by immigrants, many from Ireland. In that time, the journey from Ireland to New York took twelve weeks by sailing ship. The immigrant laborers worked around the clock in extremely tough conditions for very little pay. Many lost their lives to cholera and malaria, which spread rapidly in the stagnant water of the canal and the marshes through which they were digging. Life on the canal was hard, especially for workers who were thousands of miles from their native lands. But the canal and its dedicated workers made tremendous changes to the nation, connecting New York City with the Great Lakes and making New York the financial capital of the country. And just as we have been propelled into the 21st century by the internet, the Erie canal accelerated the pace of life in ways that had never before been known.

Angélica Negrón, *Mapping*

Mapping is a new piece for the Albany Symphony, the Mohawk Valley Chorus Youth & Junior Chorales, and the River Valley Ringers Bell Choir. The piece is inspired by commonalities between folks from seemingly disparate places: somewhere so new to me (Amsterdam, NY) and the somewheres I call home (Carolina, Puerto Rico and Brooklyn, NY). All share a deep attachment to their land and waterways as well as a common disposition—Mapping is a testament to the honesty, effortless charm, and warmth of the people I've met during my time in Amsterdam. It captures the spirit and history of the region as defined by its people: its Native American roots, the immigrants who led its rapid expansion, as well as all the stories and players leading up to this very moment.

The piece was written for the Albany Symphony's Water Music project, a cross-regional celebration of the bicentennial of New York's Erie Canal. Mapping features a Water Synthesizer: six acrylic vases, each filled with colorful water, are played as an electronic musical instrument. The audio source materials are, almost entirely, field recordings and recorded audio from my visits to Amsterdam and rehearsals with the collaborating ensembles.

Inspired by nostalgia, nature, and a hyperawareness of our surroundings, Mapping explores connection: across geographical and cultural borders, between community and geography, and among people that have never met yet share so much in common.

Ben Wallace, *The Little Falls Lock*

During my first visit to Little Falls back in March, Nan Ressue handed me a large dossier of materials documenting the history of the town. Amongst the myriad of photos, essays, and newspaper clippings was a short letter by Helen Schloss, a physician and activist in Little Falls in the 1920s, written to the New York Times in 1908. I was immediately struck and fascinated by this woman's impassioned defense of women's intellectual rights, arguing in a time of oppression that women should be treated as equals alongside men, and not as household servants. This seemed a fitting frame for a musical recounting of the 1912 Little Falls textile workers strike since a majority of the striking workers were female. With this dossier, as well as additional opened pieces by Schloss detailing the living conditions of immigrant workers provided to me by Matt Powers, I was able to write music using the two things I love doing: setting historical documents as they are through narration, and re-appropriating existing music, in this case, the fast movement from J.S. Bach's A minor violin sonata.

The other focus of the work is the Herkimer Quartz, or, The Little Falls Diamond, which can be found only here in the Mohawk Valley! Though not technically diamonds, these large quartzes are impeccably clear, and many of them contain water that has been trapped in the stone for millennia. As in the movement detailing the textile workers strike, I combined a little bit of my own re-harmonization of the Bach sonata with geological survey data about the quartz itself. This data, which outlines the various locations across the valley from which the quartz may be mined, is spoken, narrated, and sung by the choir.

While there were many other facets of the town that I would have loved to write music about (particularly the food, the cheese festival, and specifically the poutine at the Copper Moose Alehouse...) the Herkimer Quartz and Textile Strike were the two subjects that spoke to me the loudest.

Ryan Chase, *The Current Home*

The story of the Erie Canal is not just one of technological and economic progress, but also the story of countless families who call this region home as a result of its impact. My family is one of them. Of all the towns visited on this epic project, this is the only one that takes its name from one such family. Dr. Jonas and Betsy Baldwin settled the land, building a dam as well as a private canal before it was incorporated into the larger Erie Canal network.

When I first spoke about this project with Lou Lemos, the music director of the Syracuse Pops Chorus, and his wife Kathy; they showed me a stained glass window of a canal lock in their home. We spoke in detail about their respective families' background: Lou, whose family hails

from Portugal; and Kathy, whose family has lived by the canal for generations. Because all of us have such a deeply personal relationship with places that grew out of the canal's success, *The Current Home* is not only an ode to Baldwinsville and the surrounding area, but a celebration of the incomparable spirit and pride of its inhabitants.

The piece is in two movements. The first is a vigorous exultation of the canal using text of a 19th century song, "The Meeting of the Waters," written by Samuel Woodworth to commemorate the canal's completion. The orchestra strikes a fanfare as the choir boldly proclaims the technological wonder of the canal, accolading the ingenuity and ambition of a fledgling democracy. The text speaks to the promise of our newly free nation; the hope that this triumph would be a tangible example of the endless possibilities a more enlightened future could hold.

The second movement is more intimate, turning to the local impact of the canal's realization. It begins with an extended orchestral interlude that sonically depicts the great frost of Baldwinsville in 1817 and the gradual thawing of the river. For me, repetition in music carries the connotation of "time-lapse." In addition to illustrating this natural event, this textural, slow unfolding represents a two-century jump to the present day where the choir then sings Emerson's "The River," in which an older man nostalgically contemplates how his home has changed over time, but still does not lose its wondrous, almost paternal, quality.

Loren Loiacono, *Canal Tales*

Who decides the story of a place? Is it those who built it, or those who followed? Is it those who call that place home, or those who can observe it from the outside? "Canal Tales" tells three stories: The first is of laboring immigrants, toiling for a better life that may never come. The second is of travelers touring the unknown, and learning to enjoy the experience on its own terms. The third is of a group of remarkable women, and the impact they made on the world around them. These three stories all share one place: the Canal by which you are currently sitting. Each story is intertwined with folk music and poetry from the Erie Canal's golden age, ranging from faux-heroic sailors' ballads to cautionary tales of canal-side romance, from playground-style singsong taunts to odes to particularly hardy mules.

The first tale, "Canawlers", tells the story of the canal workers, both those who built the canal, and those who operated the barges and packet-boats that traversed it. The Erie Canal is both a technological and economic marvel, transforming the young New York into the Empire State. This is a hard-won prosperity, born of years digging through gravel and swamps. The lives of the canal-workers (many of whom are newly-arrived Irish immigrants) are arduous and tedious, guiding mule-towed boats through a Canal that alternates between dangerous crossings and laughably shallow beds of mud. As the workers go about their daily drudgery, the local children taunt them from the low bridges:

"Canawler, canawler, you'll never get rich
You work on Sunday, you'll die in the ditch
Canawler, canawler, you sonuvabitch
You'll die on the towpath, you'll be buried in the ditch"

The second tale, "Long Level", portrays a muggy, summer evening (perhaps much like this one) on one of the passenger vessels ("packet boats") that cruise the canal. Tourists, mostly from coastal cities or Europe, flock to the Erie Canal as a glamorous, novel way to experience wild,

little-known inland America. They view this unfamiliar landscape at a snail's pace, drifting along at barely 4 mph, experiencing open skies and ancient hills alongside mosquitoes and muck. As the packet boat is slowly pulled along, strains of a canaller's song float through the heavy summer air. Some of the passengers feel stifled; others are enchanted.

The third tale, "...and musing, I scarcely know of what," shows the village of Brockport itself, born of the canal workers' labor, and nourished by those early passers-through. Though the canal's heyday has passed, its legacy can be seen in the illustrious lives of the townspeople. Among them are shipwrights and inventors, missionaries and merchants. Some are artists, like author Mary Jane Holmes (1825-1907), whose words set the scene:

"In the deep shadow of those woods I have sat along for many an hour, watching the white feathery clouds as they glimmered through the dense foliage which hung above my head, and musing, I scarcely know of what."

Some of them step into the national spotlight, like Fannie Barrier Williams (1855-1944), who tirelessly crusaded for African American and women's rights. Some become local legends, like "Calico Jack", the wealthy eccentric often seen on horseback, who sank her every last dime into an ever-expanding, never-finished house. All of them are part of the tapestry of the village. Their lives are interwoven with their fellow townspeople, past and future, who call Brockport home; with the canal workers and travelers who have passed through; and with the Canal itself. Together, they begin to define a Place.

Much like Brockport itself, "Canal Tales" wouldn't have happened without the contributions of many wonderful, helpful, thoughtful people. The canal songs and texts used in this piece were collected by Bill Hullfish, of the Golden Eagle String Band, who guided me in my search for local folk songs. Additional historical materials and anecdotes were provided by Bill Andrews and George Ward. The many moving pieces of this project were coordinated by Jacqui Davis; and of course, this project wouldn't have been possible without wonderful creative partners like Mariah Maloney, David Alan Miller, the Albany Symphony Orchestra, all of the dancers you are about to watch, among many others who have contributed to the sounds and sights of this production.

David Mallamud, *Spittoonia on the Erie*

At a remove of 200 years, the Erie Canal has shifted from technological marvel to American legend, part of the same landscape as Plymouth Rock and the Wild West. When looking for a story to inhabit this mythic world, it seemed appropriate to make it a fairy tale. We started with the Cinderella story, called Aschenputtel in the Grimm Brothers' original German, and transplanted it to Ashenpuddle, NY, during the glory days of the Canal. Once we populated it with the archetypes, tricksters and unexpected horrors of the 19th century, even we were surprised by some of the new twists in the tale. We wanted it to be a romp. Not for any historical reason, we're just a bit rompy when we write together.

Musically, although the initial idea was that the piece be strongly influenced by American roots music - and the composer went on a 6 day venture to the desert where he smoked peyote, lived on a diet of grilled sour cheddars and cactus root, and listened to nothing but Earl Compton and The Merry Banjoliers - the piece wound up being influenced by everything from T-bone Foster

(Stephen's estranged but prolific nephew) to The Who. All of that said, the true goal of this venture was to find the answer to the age old question that has plagued far too many for far too long: What happens when a Mormon and Jew set out to write a write An-Absolutely-Historically- Accurate-Except-Where-It's-Not folk opera based on Cinderella, but set by the Erie Canal. Tonight, you will be the first to find out. We hope you enjoy Spittoonia and her unexpected adventures as much as we enjoyed writing it...them...it.

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