Center for Integrated Media Project Proposal

I. Artist: Jewl Mosteller, MFA 2: Vocal Performance / Integrated Media

Project Name: "Singing Circles I: Community Resonance"
-An Interactive Group-Singing and Movement Activity, utilizing Biofeedback

Technical Support: David Rosenboom, Clay Chaplin, Mark Bobak, Beth McMullan
(Experimental Sound Practices, CalArts - Herb Alpert School of Music)

IM Mentor: Francesca Penzani

Date of Project: February 20th - February 26th, 2009

II. Artist Abstract

In a series of performances, participants will have the opportunity to explore the notion of community resonance through the practice of improvisational group singing. Each event will begin with a vocal workshop, designed to set participants at ease and provide methods for engagement. Masks will be distributed which allow participants to sit comfortably with their eyes open yet in total darkness, creating anonymousness and a greater sense of freedom to make sound. Jewl will have an EEG monitoring her brain waves, triggering samples to provide background support drones for the singing. An emotional feedback loop will thus be created between artist and audience.

III. Project Description

Jewl Mosteller will create a series of performances over one week's time in which participants will have the opportunity to explore the notion of community resonance and relationship building through sonic connection by engaging in improvisational group singing.

Each event will begin with a "tools and training" session, or a brief vocal and movement workshop, designed to set participants at ease and provide methods for approaching the piece. Because singing by nature creates a situation of vulnerability, efforts will be made to create a comfortable atmosphere where participation parameters are clearly defined; assuring individuals will not be placed in a position of discomfort or confusion.

The formal performance will be executed by the participants, as everyone will be invited to engage in structured improvisational group vocalizing. Eye-masks will be distributed allowing participants to be engulfed in darkness with their eyes open, creating anonymousness and a greater sense of freedom to make sound plus providing the opportunity for deeper listening resulting from the absence of sight. Participants will sit comfortably around the carpeted space on cushions while Jewl leads group vocal exploration, supported by drones coming from 5.1 surround speakers. The drones will be generated by samplers loaded with recorded acoustic sounds, including recorded vocalizations by Jewl. Her live singing into a microphone will be added to the surround mix along with slight vocal processing, creating further drones out of her voice using sample and hold functions. The mix will contain moveable panning so that the soundscape is dynamic and constantly changing. The sounds themselves will be organized in modal patterns, giving the participants opportunity to react emotionally to modes as musical archetypes. There will be three seven-minute movements of improvised singing with breaks for silence in between movements, plus a silent fourth movement, giving the total performance a length of 28 minutes.

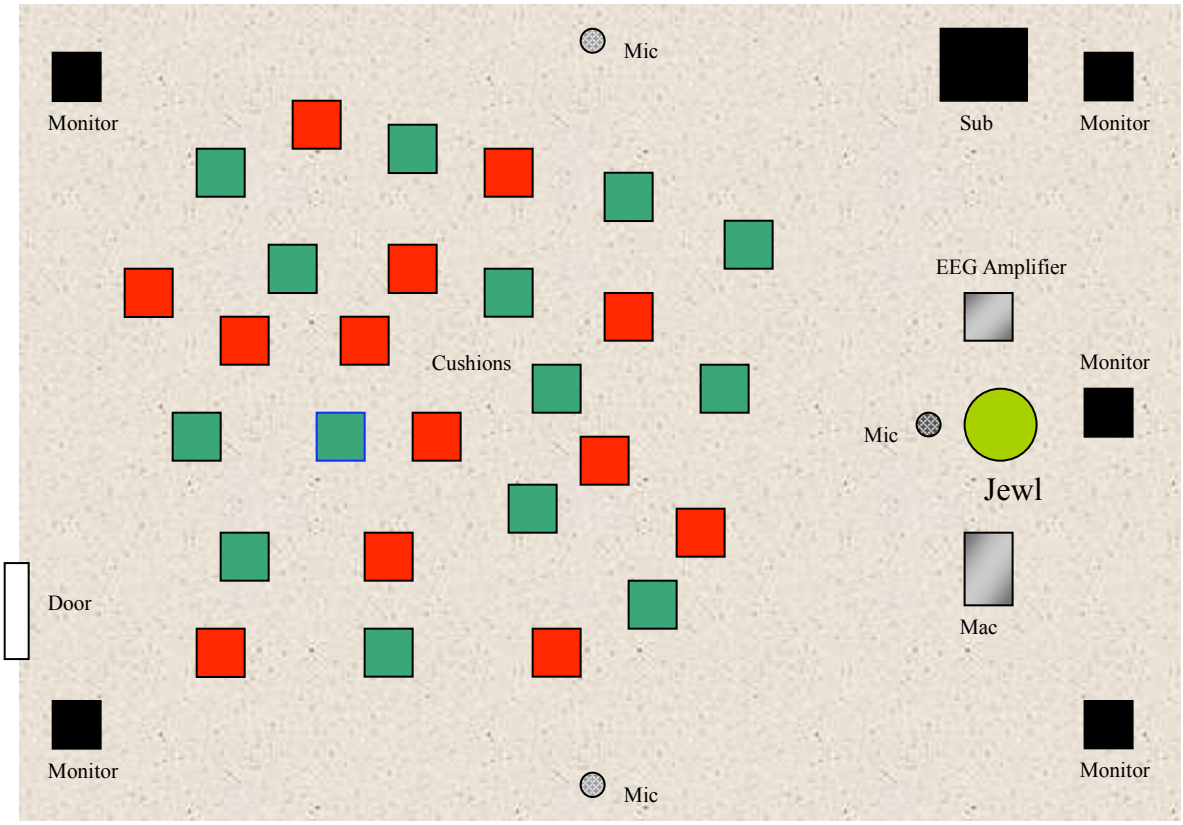
Jewl will be hooked up to an EEG which will monitor her brain waves. An amplifier box will send signals to a computer which will analyze them, generating midi signals that will trigger different musical modes based on her dominant and changing brain wave patterns. This will create an emotional feedback loop between the singing participants and Jewl, with her brain activity influencing musical modes: influencing the group's singing: influencing Jewl's mental state: influencing her brain activity. An intimacy will be created between performer and audience that will transcend words and rational thought.

The group singing will be recorded. Towards the end of the performance, the participants will be asked to take off their masks and will be led in a "reintegration dance": combining slow movements loosely based on sign language, T'ai Chi, and Mudras - which will be easy to follow and repetitious. During this 'dance', a portion of the recorded group-singing will be played back. The participants will silently listen to what they just created, with the movement creating a focused attention.

In closing the participants will be asked to keep silent until they have left the space.

A website will be created for this project and each night the recorded audio will be uploaded to the site, available for streaming and downloading.

IV. Preliminary Visual Diagram with Installation Concept



- Floor covered in rug carpeting
- Cushions on floor throughout room
- Jewl seated at front of room on the floor
- Audio equipment set upon floor in front of Jewl:
    - Mac Powerbook: running Max/MSP
    - stereo mics running through XLR cables into Mbox, connected via USB to Mac through Protools
    - EEG electrodes connected to battery-powered Amplifier Box connected to Mac with audio in cable
    - Jewl's solo Microphone connected to audio interface in
    - Surround Sound Monitor connected to audio interface out

V. List of Equipment Needed (if require technical assistance, outline nature of support)

25 Eye-masks: constructed out of black bendable plastic, soft foam, and Velcro
25 floor cushions (provided by IM)
Floor rug (borrowed from the Music School)
Colored Gels for room lights (Theater School)
5.1 surround sound monitors (provided by IM)
Mac with Max patches and sound samples installed (for brainwave tracking and sound generation)
Mac with Protools (provided by Jewl)
Audio Interface with firewire and multiple channels (at least 6 channels of I/O)
Mbox (for recording)
Stereo pair recording microphones, XLR cables, mic stand
Medical-Grade Electrodes (supplied as a loan from David Rosenboom for this project)
Instrumentation Amplifier Box which converts information from electrodes into analogue waves (construction based on EEG schematics from plusIplusIplus.org, created by Adam Overton)

Technical Assistance with electronics construction will be provided by Beth McMullan, overseen by David Rosenboom.

Technical Assistance with Max/MSP programming will be provided by Mark Bobak and Clay Chaplin.

Technical Assistance with room/performance set-up and general troubleshooting will be needed from Sarah Ibrahiem (IM lab assistant), with further support from Mark Bobak and Clay Chaplin.

February 19th and 20th during the day will be used to set up and test out the surround sound and recording capabilities in the room. Preparations will be made in advance and tested in the music studios to insure all the electronics involved function and interact properly.