

# **Alma Ma**

*for any number of  
instruments and  
performers*

# **Mark Vaughn**

2021

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*for any number of  
instruments and  
performers on the University of  
North Texas campus at  
noon on the first Wednesday  
of the month*

Approximately 5-8 minutes

Denton, TX

2021

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## Prefatory Notes

*Alma Ma* is a composition written for a specific time and place, this time and place being noon on the first Wednesday of any month on the campus of the University of North Texas. There are three musical events that typically occur at this day and time. The first event, beginning around noon, sometimes a couple minutes early, is the sounding of the McConnell Tower Carillon, which signals the noon hour with a six-note melody followed by twelve chimes. The second musical event follows the twelfth chime and varies from day to day. This event is a song played on the carillon, which could theoretically be any song. The third sonic event that occurs at this time, is the testing of the tornado sirens, which is conducted by the City of Denton Fire Department on the first Wednesday of the month. This can occur at any point around this time, either during the sounding of the carillon or directly after. I have heard both.

This gives anyone who chooses to perform it, the opportunity to interact with sonic events unique to the University of North Texas. These events have important symbolic functions at UNT and when they occur they make audible the particular space and place of the campus to any student, staff, faculty, administrator, or member of the public who happen to be on campus at this time. This composition invites any of those people to freely improvise and/or listen to the sounds of this environment.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If the weather is overcast the siren test will not occur so a false tornado warning is not implied. The performance should occur on a sunny day without the threat of storm. This may cause difficulty in planning, but the Denton County Fire Department can be contacted to ask whether the test will occur that day.

## Notes for Performance

The performance begins with the onset of the first sound and ends with the last sound produced by the siren or carillon.

Any instrument or sound may be used in the performance of this work.

This work may be performed solo or by as many musicians as can be organized to perform. Though it may be played solo or by a small number of musicians, the greater the number of musicians, the greater the opportunity to explore the element of space during the performance will be.

Musicians may move as freely as they wish during the performance.

The work must be performed on the UNT campus in a place where both the carillon and sirens can be heard.

This work is meant to sound differently to everybody who experiences it, depending on where they are and how they move during the performance, but the siren in particular is quite loud, so in order to be heard over it, it may be desirable to play as loud as possible. However, this is entirely up to the individual performer.

Though there are no requirements as to where the musicians position themselves during performance, a particularly interesting acoustic location for this performance is between the east wall of McConnell Tower and the Student Union Building. Arrangement along the sidewalk and around the common area of the Student Union Building would offer interesting acoustic reflections and opportunities for sound concentration.

If there are a large number of musicians present, approximately thirty or more, the Library Mall offers a great deal of space for the arrangement of musicians or the musicians could spread out into other areas of campus as they desire.

Musicians may operate entirely independently and freely, but also they may wish to coordinate with each other to determine the most interesting arrangement and plans for performance. They may also wish to make a plan for interaction prior to performance by looking over the score.

## Notation

This work may be entirely improvised, but the three sound events that structure the piece are represented visually in order to provide structure for any performer who may want it. These representations may be disregarded entirely or used to plan sonic events, to synchronize with the sounds, to harmonize, etc. Additionally, there are suggestions for interaction provided in the score for anyone who may want them. These are written in dashed boxes. Again, these may also be entirely disregarded.

# Alma Ma

## Event 1: Carillon Noon Melody (Begins at noon, interact freely)

$\bullet = \text{ca. } 90$



## Event 2: Song Following Noon Melody (May be any song, interact freely)

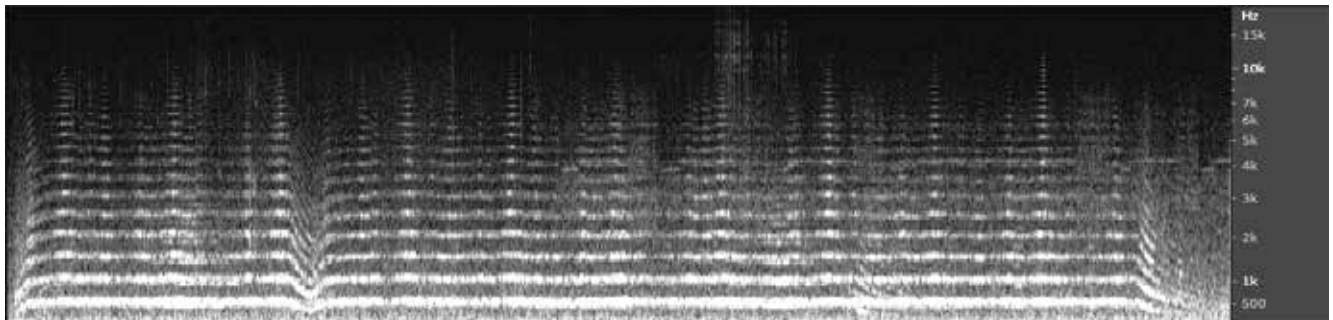
### Some Potential Actions

- |                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Follow along with song          | Play audio from your phone |
| Play a different piece of music | Sing/Whistle               |
| Replay the previous music       | Do nothing                 |
| Make sound of any kind          | etc.                       |

## Event 3: Warning Siren

(May occur at any time, approximately 5 minutes, interact freely)

Drones, glissandi, swells, and microtones are some potential actions



*Spectrogram of the siren recorded on October 7, 2020*