THE SPREADING GROUND

SEQUENCE: A - B - A - B - C

If at any point you hear or see copper being dropped, drop copper too.

PART A

Each person has their own unique phrase for this section - the libretto is divided into 45 parts.

RESTING
To begin, to separate from a group, or at any point while you are alone:
Pause from singing, rest your voice, catch your breath, listen—but continue to walk along the path at a steady pace. While silent, strike together copper pipes to keep a regular pulse that matches your walking speed—gradually slow down or speed up to avoid synchronizing to anyone else's walking speed. Striking this pulse signals other walkers not to join you.

ALONE
Once you are walking alone at a steady pace, breathing steadily:
Pick any pitch, sing the first word of your phrase for the length of one breath (independent of your walking speed). Keeping the pitch and the length of each word constant, vary the loudness if you like. Repeat the first word 10 times at this pitch, then, walk in silence and listen: Find a new pitch from your surroundings (natural / artificial / voices / recorded sounds, etc). Match this new pitch, and begin singing the next word of your phrase as before, 10 times. (If you don't hear any new pitches, pick any pitch you like). Keep moving through the phrase, pausing to select a new pitch before beginning the next word. If you are still alone when you reach the last word, return to the beginning of phrase and repeat the cycle.

JOINED
While singing, you may join into groups of 2 or 3:
Slow down or speed up your pace to join others. Walking side by side, at the same speed, shoulder to shoulder, each singer continues moving through their phrase, repeating each word 10 times as described above. On reaching the end of your phrase, walk silently with the group until everyone in your group has finished singing. If you are the last person in the group to complete your repetitions—walk silently together for a moment, then teach your phrase as a song to the others in your group: over the length of a breath, sing a part of your phrase (either a single word, or a few words), varying pitch and loudness to invent a soft-shaped melody. After you sing a breath, the other singers echo the melody back. Repeat this process, moving gradually from call and response, to singing as a round, then eventually singing in unison, always singing for the length of a breath. On a signal from the teacher that everyone has successfully learned the melody, everyone in the group returns to RESTING, striking the copper to drift apart.

PART B

FLOOD / CONTROL / SPILL / AWAY / FLOWS / WITHIN / BOUNDARIES / SPREADING / GROUND

At 40 minutes a sustained tone / drone will play from the tiny speakers.
If you are singing when you hear this sound, finish the word you are singing and pause. After a moment of silently walking, begin singing each word of this new phrase ten times, holding each word for the length of one breath, varying the loudness if you like. Choose whether to match / harmonize with the sustained tone, holding one note throughout, or to let your voice drift in pitch around the spectral center, never resting on any one note. Whichever you decide, do this consistently for each repetition of a word. While you sing, you may find yourself walking within a group, or walking alone. After you have completed the phrase, return to Part A RESTING until you are walking by yourself and can no longer hear the sound of the drone, then begin Part A ALONE.

At 80 minutes, the sustained tone / drone will play from the tiny speakers again. Without changing pace, begin walking directly towards the center of the dam, singing the B phrase word-by-word as before. Repeat the phrase until everyone is gathered at the center of the dam and the drone is no longer audible.

**PART C (END)**

--- / CLOUD / FLOW / AWAY / SOAK / FREEWAY / ---- / FLOOD / WORLDS / WATER / YOU

When everyone has gathered at the middle of the dam, the last person has finished singing, and the drone is no longer audible:

This is the time to rest after walking for the entire piece until this point: you can sit, lean, stand still, walk slowly in circles etc. but stay “in character” and silent until everyone finishes singing.

Beginning with the “C” in “CLOUD”, sing each word of the phrase as slowly as possible. Extend each word into as many distinct sounds as possible, moving glacially from one tone or transition edge to the next. Play with the transitions, moving back and forth across diphthongs and fricatives if you like. Breathe naturally, pausing to take a breath, then return to your place inside the word to continue. With each breath, you can enter at any pitch you like, then drift towards the center of all other pitches being sung to end the breath droning with the group. Jumping around octaves / overtones is fine.

After “FREEWAY,” pause until everyone else has finished singing the first part of the phrase, then, as simultaneously as possible without any signal, begin singing the “F” in “FLOOD,” and continue to the end of the phrase as before.

After “YOU,” remain silent and still until the last person has finished singing. This marks the end of the piece.