

Hamstra, Teddy

Joseph Campbell, Multimedia Ritual, and the Multisensorial Sounded Caves of Mickey Hart's *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*

CITATION INFORMATION

Teddy Hamstra

Joseph Campbell, Multimedia Ritual, and the Multisensorial Sounded Caves of Mickey Hart's *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*

Grateful Dead Studies

Volume 5 (2021/2022)

Pages: 125–144

URL: https://gratefuldeadstudies.org/GDSv5_Hamstra.pdf

LICENSE

Download of this Grateful Dead Studies Licensed Content (hereafter Content) constitutes acceptance of the following terms and conditions: Provided they abide by the restrictions below, users may search, view, reproduce, display, download, print, perform, and distribute Content for the following Permitted Uses: research activities; classroom or organizational instruction and related classroom or organizational activities; student assignments; as part of a scholarly, cultural, educational or organizational presentation or workshop, if such use conforms to the customary and usual practice in the field; authors or other Content creators may at their discretion incorporate their Content into unrestricted databases or websites with prior written permission from Grateful Dead Studies.

The portions of Content that have been downloaded or printed out by a User may continue to be used in compliance with these Terms and Conditions even if such license should later terminate or expire.

Users may not: use or authorize the use of the Grateful Dead Studies Licensed Content for commercial purposes or gains, including charging a fee-for-service; undertake any activity such as the use of computer programs that automatically download or export Content, commonly known as web robots, spiders, crawlers, wanderers or accelerators that may interfere with, disrupt or otherwise burden the Grateful Dead Studies server(s) or any third-party server(s) being used or accessed in connection with Grateful Dead Studies; or undertake coordinated or systematic activity between or among two or more individuals and/or entities that, in the aggregate, constitutes downloading and/or distributing a significant portion of the Content; or make any use, display, performance, reproduction, or distribution that exceeds or violates these Terms and Conditions of Use.

Additionally, users may not: modify, obscure, or remove any copyright notice or other attribution included in the Content; incorporate Content into an unrestricted database or website; systematically print out or download Content to stock or replace print holdings; download or print, or attempt to download or print, an entire issue; reproduce or distribute Content in bulk, such as the inclusion of Content in course packs, electronic reserves, repositories, or organizational intranets.

Grateful Dead Studies encourages the use of links to facilitate access to the Content.

Joseph Campbell, Multimedia Ritual,
and the Multisensorial Sounded Caves
of Mickey Hart's *Drumming at the
Edge of Magic*

TEDDY HAMSTRA

Mickey Hart, best known as one of the drummers for the Grateful Dead, produced one of the more unusual and idiosyncratic musical memoirs in *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* (1990¹). Written with Jay Stevens, the volume is best understood as an example of a musician-book, a genre that can be seen as analogous to that of the artist-book, such as the photographer Sally Mann's memoir *Hold Still* (2015) or the painter David Wojnarowicz' *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (1991). These are typically rooted in autobiography but exceed the scope of what that term usually describes. *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* offers a useful example of the musician-book for its contribution to the field of sound studies, specifically for its innovative blending of personal and music history, situating autobiography within a compressed world history of drumming as a percussive instrument of what Hart calls "sacred noise." This paper focuses on how Hart builds on the theories of shamanism proposed by the mythographer Joseph Campbell which

posit that drumming may be understood as a percussive tool for fostering sacrality in the sounded environments of Paleolithic caves. I argue that Campbell's speculations on Paleolithic shamanism can also describe what we today might call "multimedia" performance, and that for Campbell, the multimedia nature of these rituals, incorporating painting, drumming, dancing and singing, is infused with intense multisensorial experience.

Drumming at the Edge of Magic is conversant with this framework: there Hart presents us with a way of considering how the sounded environment of these caves was one where percussion binds the cosmological with the bodily through the capacity of drumming to bring about spaces of rhythmic enchantment. For scholars of the Grateful Dead, the book's ambition and argument merit serious consideration. Not only does *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* place Hart's work squarely in the discourse, it also forces consideration of complex issues that go to the heart of the challenges of interdisciplinarity and the larger scholarly aims of the academic study of the Dead.

Drumming at the Edge of Magic is a product of a decades-long wide-ranging research project funded by Hart, driven by his desire "to know the origin of the drum" and to better understand himself as "a practitioner of an ancient art, perhaps the oldest form of music making on earth," as he puts it. His pursuit of these questions also raised a third, related issue: "yet it was an art form that in my tradition had been fragmented, forgotten, lost in our culture. Why hadn't the ecstatic use of the drum penetrated Western musical tradition?" (Hart 1990, 23). It is a scholarly question, and despite his lack of academic training, Hart pursued it with rigor, impressing academic colleagues; Thomas Vennum Jr. notes that Hart "has nevertheless repeatedly demonstrated the considerable musical knowledge that he has gained from many roles: performer, experimenter, teacher, researcher, field collector, sound engineer, writer, and patron of world music and endangered traditions" (Vennum 1999, 47).

The academic foundation of Hart's work was shaped by his collaboration with UC Santa Cruz professor Fredric Lieberman, who guided Hart's research and assembled a team of scholars and students whose research informed this book and its companion volume, *Planet Drum*, among others. Lieberman also connected Hart with a number of other

prominent scholars Hart credits as intellectual guides, including Elizabeth Cohen, Sue DeVale, Ken Bilby, and Steven Feld (Vennum 1999, 50). The rich mixture of academic sources and range of disciplines informing the project took on an additional and particularly resonant depth with Joseph Campbell, a mythographer whose ambitious projects were always grounded in and helped to define a comparative and global consideration of mythologies and religions. Campbell offered a perspective that Hart found especially consonant with his own deep appreciation for world music. That bond became personal and important to both men, even if Campbell's occasional and idiosyncratic conservatism could not have been more at odds with Hart's own views. For his part, Hart found Campbell's ideas enormously persuasive, despite the academic controversy they have engendered.²

Campbell personally supported Hart's "drum quest," and encouraged him to compile a genealogy of drumming. That launched Hart's serious scholarly work. At first, James Blades' *Percussion Instruments and their History* (1971) became a kind of "Bible" for Hart, but he eventually realized that "too often [Blades] would skim quickly over the stuff I was particularly interested in. He would mention, for example, that the frame drum was played by North American shamans when they sang their power songs, but then offer no further information about the relationship of drums to shamanic power" (Hart 1990, 28). Hart credits German scholars Curt Sachs, Erich von Hornbostel, and Carl Stumpf for making "the obvious argument that it was impossible to understand the evolution of music as an art, to say nothing about the origins of the instruments in the orchestra, without coming to terms with the astonishing information contained in the ethnographies of the anthropologists" (Hart 1990, 101). However, Hart is a professional musician, so he also looks beyond theory to include practitioners such as Charles Seeger, whom he credits as instrumental in the establishment of comparative musicology, a field that informs what became sound studies.

Where the question of the sounded environment is concerned, it is worth noting that Hart mentions meeting the pioneering theorist of acoustemology, Steven Feld, while he was engaged in his early work of field recordings in the rain forests of Papua New Guinea. Given its

reliance on advanced technology to record indigenous peoples, Feld's project is open to serious critique, but it is significant that Hart, a drummer for a popular rock band, wanted to meet with him as an expert whose insights could help Hart in his research into the spiritual roots of drumming. Although Feld's acoustemological work does not explicitly focus on drumming, it left its mark on Hart, who described what Feld captured on tape as "the Voices of the Forest" (Hart 1990, 109). This animistic, enchanted description of the environment is a small but persuasive clue for the ideas of the sounded environment of the Paleolithic caves explored here. What I find compelling in Hart's text is the desire to extend the explanatory capability of fields such as musicology and even ethnomusicology to account for what he calls the shamanic. While not all sound studies theorists would be sympathetic to Hart's ideas of shamanism and enchantment, I believe that the interdisciplinary scope of the field can be seen as broad enough to yield theoretical insights along the lines that Hart sought.

Interestingly, the scholar whose work points the way to this view is not a sound studies theorist: it is Joseph Campbell. A scholar of comparative mythology and religion, Campbell's influence on *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* is intriguing for several reasons. Hart mentions coming across Campbell's *The Way of the Animals* (1983) while searching for a more spiritually inflected approach to music history. As band historian Dennis McNally recounts, a chance connection between the Grateful Dead and Campbell produced a genuine interest between band members and Campbell, culminating in Campbell attending a Dead concert in 1985 (McNally 2002, 387). Campbell discussed his experience at an academic symposium he participated in with two members of the Grateful Dead called "From Ritual to Rapture, From Dionysus to the Grateful Dead," held at San Francisco's Palace of Fine Arts in 1986. Nancy Reist describes how Campbell's address at the event "recognized the potent, ritualistic nature of a Grateful Dead concert and compared it to a Dionysian festival, saying that he had rarely beheld such innocence as he saw in the 'rapturous' faces of Deadheads as they danced" (Reist 1999, 185). Campbell intuited a new iteration of the shamanic rites of prehistory in the Dead's performance he attended, as Stan Spector (2007) has discussed;³ after

meeting Campbell, Hart recalls:

Joe was convinced that we were about to remythologize ourselves. “A new mythos is coming,” he used to say, “A global one, Mickey. I don’t know how it will come or what it will be, but I do know it will not be unconnected to those mythic structures that preceded it, since the symbolic pattern of myth is at its root a reflection of the brain’s own energy patterns.” (Hart 1990, 45)

These neural “patterns” that Campbell viewed as synchronous to those of mythological systems can be seen in Hart’s exploration of the idea of a rhythmic cosmos. Campbell introduced Hart to the potent connection of shamanic ritual with its sounded performance: as Hart notes, Campbell “knew that you didn’t find a shaman without finding a drum” (Hart 1990, 46), and this association evokes an essential idea from Campbell’s preface to Maya Deren’s *The Divine Horsemen: Living Gods of Haiti* (1953). Extending the multimedia network of Campbell’s sphere of influence, Deren was an artist whose work defied categorization, an avant-garde filmmaker, choreographer and dancer, theorist, poet, photographer, and more. Campbell edited *Divine Horsemen*, and it is not surprising that he took an interest in her work, given that he was married to a similarly experimental choreographer, Jean Erdmann, and that one of Deren’s most influential short films, *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1946), dealt with many of the issues he was exploring through mythology. Deren’s book features an account of her own experience of a trance induced while participating in a Haitian vòdun ritual. Campbell framed this in his preface as speaking to “the power of the drums as they drove the god into the body of the devotee” (Campbell 1953, xiv). Campbell’s triangulation of shamanic ritual, sensorial, bodily experience, and the sounded percussion of the drum provided Hart with a lucid structure for developing these ideas in greater detail in *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*.

The “Prologue” to Hart’s book makes clear that this is not the typical story of how a musician achieved success. Beginning on a cosmological level, Hart writes that “fifteen or twenty billion years ago the blank page of the universe exploded and the beat began, since what emerged from that thick soup of neutrinos and photons were rhythmic pulses vibrating through empty space, keying the formation of galaxies, solar

systems, planets, us” (Hart 1990, 11). The so-called Big Bang is, in Hart’s view, correctly understood as a sounded event on a galactic scale, and this linkage of the cosmic with the rhythmic on the very first page of his book sets the tone for how he approaches drumming. South Asian religions provide the turn to the spiritual, as he notes the Hindu belief that “there is a seed sound at the heart of creation, the *Nada*; a passage from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* describes the essence of reality as ‘reverberating like a thousand distant thunders’” (Hart 1990, 12). Religion, in this context, is a rhythmic, sounded phenomenon at its core that Hart finds in the language of the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was noise. And noise begat rhythm. And rhythm begat everything else” (Hart 1990, 12). In the margins next to this line, Hart puckishly adds, “this is the kind of cosmology a drummer can live with” (1990, 12).

Humor aside, I read this as indicative of *Drumming*’s larger aims to think of percussion as a shamanic act with the potential to align the individual with the cosmic via what Hart later terms “sacred noise.” Charles Hirschkind reminds us in his entry on “Religion” in *Keywords in Sound* that “ideas about the agency of music, drumming, chanting, and general noisemaking—as practices that attune human perceptual faculties and expressive repertoires in accordance with a society’s place in a divinely ordered universe—are found throughout the world, often in conjunction with doctrines of an acoustically ordered cosmology” (Hirschkind 2015, 169). This expansive idea of “agency” in tandem with drumming and truly universal rhythms informs Hart’s book, opening the way to reading *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* through a sound studies lens.

The book opens with the infinite reaches of the universe, but the sounded environment that is the locus of his speculations on percussion and its capacity for enchantment is the Paleolithic cave. The Lascaux cave complex in France is perhaps the most famous of these, though there are similar sites around the world, all of which share certain features, the most prominent of which are painted walls depicting animals and human handprints. Hart argues that the painted caves of the Paleolithic era are uniquely sounded environments; this essay explores that idea by examining the ecology and materiality of these spaces, and the shamanic performances they hosted and made possible. Drums are quite literally

an instrument for enchantment in Hart's schema, and he notes how they "have two voices ... one is technical, having to do with the drum's shape, the material it's made of, its cultural context, and the standard way it's played. Technique gives you this voice ... but once you [have achieved this], the potential arises for contacting the drum's second voice—one I have come to think of as the spirit side of the drum" (Hart 1990, 18). In sound studies, "voice" is a term that has yielded many intriguing avenues of inquiry, as Amanda Weidman (2015) has written; Hart's idea of the drum having a kind of spiritual voice is a useful way to consider what it means for an instrument to be "enchanted."

Yet the enchanted "voice" of the drum is bound up with its very materiality. Hart writes that "scholars believe that the earliest drum membranes were made from fish, snake, and lizard skin. Only much later did humans discover the tanned hides of animals" (Hart 1990, 38). Hart refers throughout his book to the work of Joseph Campbell, notably of the last writings that Campbell published before his death, *The Way of the Animal Powers* (part of his *Historical Atlas of World Mythology* series). To Hart, that titular phrase is illuminating for thinking about the ecological relation between drummers and their drums. Unlike the average contemporary drum set made of wood, metal, and plastic, the ancient drums that interest Hart reflect their animal origins in a visceral, even enchanted way. For Hart, "the discovery of the percussive possibilities of skin ranks right up there with the discovery of fire and the invention of the wheel" (Hart 1990, 38). Scholars may disagree, but the sense of paradigmatic shifts in human culture and implicitly, some form of human consciousness, is a fundamental part of Hart's argument. Harnessing fire, inventing the wheel, and experimenting with animal skins for musical use all occur within a window of time when "our tools became elegant, our communities grew larger and more complex, and we began to make a record of our life in the form of painted images, brilliant portrayals of our emerging sensibilities, revealing a creature with an already highly developed sense of the sacred" (Hart 1990, 68).

To illustrate this point, the book incorporates a reproduction of what has come to be infamously dubbed "The Dancing Sorcerer" of Les Trois Freres, a painting from that cave in southwestern France which was so

named and sketched by the Abbe Breuil, one of the first archaeologists to explore and analyze the images there. Breuil also referred to the dancing figure as the “shaman” of Les Trois Freres, the start of a long-running academic debate over the image, but for this paper, the significance of the image—apparently an upright human wearing an animal hide and playing some sort of instrument—is that it is the earliest known representation of a musician. Hart ventures that the “Sorcerer” is the “first ‘document’ of percussion’s connection with the sacred” (Hart 1990, 70); archaeologists and anthropologists will continue to debate whether this figure is a shaman, but here, the point is that “The Dancing Sorcerer” is one of the earliest known visualizations of sounded performance, a linkage that requires a consideration of sound.

When Hart speaks of the Paleolithic era as characterized by an “already highly developed sense of the sacred,” it frames Hart’s project not as a teleological history of how drumming progressively came to its modern form, but rather as the identification of an enduring, deep continuum that spans millennia. The Paleolithic caves, and the ritualistic performances they potentially hosted, are sounded environments and experiences with an atemporal resonance that can be called their “sacral-ity”; these have the capacity to tether the modern world of Mickey Hart and the Grateful Dead to the deep past of our earliest hominid ancestors. “The Dancing Sorcerer,” thus, becomes a sounded image with an elusive power, or “enchantment,” that is appealing to figures like Campbell and Hart who are attracted to a *rhythmic* cosmology as opposed to a strictly linear, progressive teleology, whether that is Campbell’s mythic level of cultural narratives echoing patterns in the brain, or Hart’s exploration of drumming and percussion somehow aligning with astronomical rhythms ongoing since “The Big Bang.”

Hart’s argument that the Paleolithic cave rituals evince an “already highly developed sense of the sacred” suggests how he considers sacrality in relation to sound and performance: “very early on we began a dialogue with those invisible superior forces—the spirit world—that seemed to govern our lives. The sacred was something we did, like hunting and procreating; the way we approached it was through ritual” (Hart 1990, 68). To think of this communing with the spiritual as a “dialogue” implicitly

raises the notion of the voice, of a conversation occurring in some sounded way, even if it is not immediately comparable to a linguistic, vocalized dialogue between two people. Rituals, in Hart's thinking, are "techniques that attempt to synchronize the three dances—the personal, the cultural, and the cosmic. If the technique works, the reward is a new dimension of rhythm and time—the sacred" (Hart 1990, 123). Hart's conception of the sacred is highly indebted to Joseph Campbell's, wherein sacrality is not a theological abstraction but a quality that is in fact equally *dependent* on multimedia representation, such as painting and drumming, and multisensory experiences like dancing and trance-states. Indeed, as Mary Goodenough notes, Campbell "believed that Grateful Dead shows were a modern Western manifestation of initiation rites from the collective unconscious and, moreover, that the Grateful Dead phenomenon evolved in the latter half of the twentieth century to help Western civilization recover from the spiritual poverty of modern society" (Goodenough 1999, 176).

Additionally, Hart's insistence that "the sacred was something we did" turns sacrality away from conceptual philosophizing and forces us to think through what enacting—articulating—the sacred means. For Hart, that "doing" is the action of ritual, the shamanic performance that blends the sounded percussion of drumming and chanting with the multisensorial aspects of these cave rituals, notably the interplay of sound with the painted images on the walls and the "special effects" created upon those walls with firelight. Performance of ritual involved the "power to manipulate noise rhythmically to use it in our sacred dance" (Hart 1990, 68). "Noise" is a deliberate word choice by Hart and merits explanation.

Noise as a topic of inquiry within sound studies has yielded an array of fascinating ideas, such as David Novak's astute reminder of the etymological relation between "noise" and "nausea." Novak situates noise as "a context of sensory experience, but also a moving subject of circulation, of sound and listening, that emerges in the process of navigating the world and its differences" (Novak 2015, 125). This connection of noise and navigation informs how Hart understands shamanic ritual, and its capacity to initiate travel between realms. Hart's imperative that noise is a *usable* quality of sound, a "navigational" tool, as Novak argues, capable of

rhythmic “manipulation.” Importantly, Hart does not wish to resolve noise into harmony. Rhythmic noise is inherently linked to the performance of sacred ritual, both in the bodily movements of the dance and in the singing and percussive elements of song. Indeed, Hart states that “accompanying our sacred songs was sacred noise, rhythms created from the sounds found in the materials we had at hand—wood, bone, stone, animal skin, assorted gourds and pods, plus the human body itself, which scholars like Blades and Sachs generally assumed was one of the very first instruments” (Hart 1990, 68–70). Again, Hart’s concept of the “percussive possibilities of skin” connects the role of an ecology of sound in the creation of what he terms “sacred noise.”

The incorporation of noise into musical performance to promote states of enchantment is encapsulated by Hart’s imaginative projection of how “we clapped our hands and sang our sacred songs, which were probably simple vocalized syllables like *AhhhhhhhNaaaaaaahhhhhh* or *Baaaaaaadddddinnnnnn*” (Hart 1990, 70).⁴ Voice, in this mode, becomes a percussive instrument in its own right, capable of generating a sacred noise to accompany the drums in the caves. And it is Campbell who provides Hart with the example of the !Kung tribe of the San community in South Africa (sometimes referred to as “Bushmen”), whom Campbell viewed as employing a unique form of “body percussion” during their rituals. He tells Hart of the !Kung’s “clapping and stamping ... of such precision that they give the effect of a well-played battery of percussion instruments producing a solid structure of intricate rhythm” (Hart 1990, 70). The bodily rhythms thus allow for “the voices of the men and women [to] weave together in parts, singing the medicine songs. The curing dance draws people of a Bushmen band together into concerted action as nothing else does. They stamp and clap and sing with such precision that they become like an organic being” (Hart 1990, 70).

In this ritual, percussion, even if it is created merely by hands and feet and lungs, fosters a sound that cannot be separated from the bodily movements it respond to and instigates. Campbell’s description of the !Kung ritual is particularly instructive for a sound studies approach, given how inseparably he views dancing and singing as *being*; this is a way of considering percussion’s ability to open a space for truly embodied

sounds. The sounded body, for Hart, is always echoing and responding to the space it finds itself inhabiting.

The cave as a sounded environment, the performance of a ritual within an ecology of sound; these concepts are central to *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*, and Hart is abundantly clear about the intellectual debt he owes Campbell, whom he credits for laying the groundwork for how he conceives of rhythm and percussion in relation to the sacred. As he notes, “Campbell believed that the cave itself functioned as a kind of percussion instrument during sacred ceremonies. He thought that at certain moments in the ritual early percussionists would whack the stalactites, sending a resounding *booong* echoing throughout the cavern” (Hart 1990, 71).

Campbell’s speculation that the caves functioned as instruments in their own right during shamanic rituals is foundational for what I am proposing about sounded environments. The Paleolithic caves in Campbell’s framework were the original sites of multimedia performance, and spaces of overwhelming multisensorial experience (to use contemporary terminology). In the book version of Campbell’s widely viewed PBS series with Bill Moyers *The Power of Myth* (1988), he writes about visiting the painted cave complex of Lascaux, which he describes as a place where “You don’t want to leave”:

Here you come into an enormous chamber, like a great cathedral, with all these painted animals. The darkness is inconceivable. We were there with electric lights, but in a couple of instances the man who was showing us through turned off the lights, and you were never in darker darkness in your life. It was—I don’t know, just a complete knockout. You don’t know where you are, whether you are looking north, south, east, or west. All orientation is gone, and you are in a darkness that never saw the sun. Then they turn the lights on again, and you see these gloriously painted animals. And they are painted with the vitality of ink on silk in a Japanese painting. A bull that will be twenty feet long and painted so that its haunches will be represented by a swelling in the rock. They take account of the whole thing. (Campbell 1988, 100)

The sensory deprivation encountered in Paleolithic caves such as Lascaux present a highly intriguing and provocative way to contemplate

the shamanic rituals so important to Mickey Hart's quest for the spiritual roots of drumming. Campbell's emphasis here on the darkened cave's power to wholly disorient and occlude all sense of directionality will become even more essential when we turn to the belief in shamanic travels to other realms, but for now I want to linger on how the absence of light contributes to the sounded environment of the caves.

Implicit in Campbell's description of visual disorientation is how this leads to an intensification of sensorial experience, particularly auditory. Furthermore, Campbell's multisensorial conception of the caves is about sensory fluctuation, in this case how the deprivation of sight amplifies the aural, which is intricately linked to his theory of shamanic ritual as a multimedia performance. After Campbell relates this story of the Lascaux darkness, Moyers asks why Campbell calls them temple caves, prompting Campbell to explain:

A temple is a landscape of the soul. When you walk into a cathedral, you move into a world of spiritual images. It is the mother womb of your spiritual life ... now, in a cathedral, the imagery is in anthropomorphic form. God and Jesus and the saints are all in human form. And in the caves the images are in animal form. But it's the same thing, the form is secondary. The message is what is important ... that of a relationship of time to eternal powers that is somehow to be experienced in that place. (Campbell 1988, 101)

Of course, the Paleolithic caves contain more than just spiritual "images," as the speculations on shamanic ritual that Campbell imparted to Hart incorporate dancing along with the "sacred noise" that Hart views as anchored by the performance of drumming.

Elsewhere in their *Power of Myth* conversations, Moyers asks, "You write in *The Mythic Image* about the center of transformation, the idea of a sacred place where the temporal walls may dissolve to reveal a wonder. What does it mean to have a sacred place?" (Campbell 1988, 114-115). Campbell responds by citing a number of examples of how people in the modern world can create sacred spaces, but he succinctly points out that "this is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation"

(Campbell 1988, 115). Campbell's use of "incubation" here resonates with his evocation of the temple caves as a "womb" space for the spiritual life. Interestingly, in this spatial description he stresses the need to fill it with music, asking "Where is your bliss station?" (Campbell 1988, 115). Hart's own phrasing of sacred space as a "bliss station" is to think of "the cave itself ... as a resonating chamber" (Hart 1990, 71). Both Campbell and Hart use an acoustical metaphor for describing sacred space, and that is a defining aspect of *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*, one that expands the concept of sounded environments and indeed the very foundational idea of the "soundscape" itself. (Hart includes R. Murray Schafer's seminal 1977 work *The Tuning of the World* among his "Selected Readings" [259] at the end of the book, demonstrating his awareness of the soundscape concept.)

Campbell's twin ideas of temple caves and sacred spaces as sounded environments elucidates how Hart views the capacity for shamanism to create sacred noise and percussive enchantment. In addition to sound theorists like Steven Feld, Hart credits Andrew Neher's "A Physiological Explanation of Unusual Behavior in Ceremonies Involving Drums" (1962). What intrigued Hart was that:

Neher theorized that percussion, particularly drumming, fulfilled the role of 'driver' because drums produced a sound that was so dense, so inharmonic, so fast-decaying and scattered across the frequency band that it overloaded the hearing mechanism. And it was this overloading that helped induce trance. (Hart 1990, 114)

Hart quotes the famous critique of Neher leveled by Gilbert Rouget, that "if Neher were right, half of Africa would be in a trance from the beginning of the year to the end" (1990, 114), but the debate is a reminder of the challenges of interdisciplinarity in sound studies: Neher's approach as a psychologist clashes with Rouget's approach as an ethnomusicologist. Yet the debate also makes sound studies even more interesting as a field of inquiry, and for this study, Neher's triangulation of percussion, sensory overload, and the psychological state of being in a "trance," despite Rouget's cogent criticism of its widespread applicability, provides an ideal pivot to the performance of shamanic ritual.

The terms "shaman" and "shamanism" remain contested, but "shamanism" as used by Campbell directly informs Hart's use—a use,

it should be noted, that went through the kind of scholarly vetting that Lieberman's research apparatus provided. Hart's reading of this wide body of literature allows him to conclude that "the word *shaman* comes from the culture of the pastoral herding peoples of the Asian steppes, where it is used to describe individuals in the tribute who can enter into a trance in order to commune with the spirit world" (Hart 1990, 161). Hart further notes that "Joseph Campbell thought shamans were probably the first spiritual figures we had, the first mystics. He also thought it likely that they were the first artists, the first musicians, and the first storytellers" (Hart 1990, 163).

The litany of "firsts" that Hart reads from Campbell's concept of the shaman is what we might call "multimedia" art in contemporary parlance. As with the image of the "Dancing Sorcerer" of *Les Trois Freres*, part of the conceptual allure of shamanism, especially in Campbell's framing, is its promise of an originary encounter with humanity's representational and spiritual yearnings. Campbell's insistence on shamans as "the first" is less persuasive than what that conception offers for how we might describe contemporary multimedia artists and their performances. Campbell insists that "the healing of the shaman is achieved through art: i.e., mythology and song ... and the practice of the shaman is also by way of art: an imitation or presentation in the field of time and space of the visionary world of his spiritual 'seizure'" (Campbell 1959, 265). For Campbell, the realms of the spiritual, of sacrality and enchantment, are indissolubly bound with artistic representation and performance. He goes on to claim that it is "practically certain that in that remote period of our species the arts of the wizard, shaman, or magician were already well developed. In fact, the paintings themselves clearly were an adjunct of those arts, perhaps even the central sacrament" (Campbell 1959, 305). Campbell's sensorially rooted ideas of healing through song, and painting as sacrament, are essential for informing Hart's concepts of percussive enchantment in the sounded environments of shamanic ritual.

Trance is where Hart's understanding of shamanism (via Campbell) reaches its fullest expression of melding the multimedia arts with the multisensorial. Hart expands Campbell's notion of the shaman "healing through song" by stating that "shamans are drummers—they're rhyth-

mists, they're trance masters" (Hart 1990, 163). Drawing on anthropology, Hart outlines how the state of "percussive trance" can be divided broadly into two categories. First is "possession trance," wherein "drumming was used to summon the spirits or the gods down into the body of someone other than the drummer, usually a dancer ... the classic example is vòdun, where the spirits—called the *loa*—are said to descend and mount the bodies of the dancers and ride them like horses" (Hart 1990, 163). Simply understood, possession trance uses percussion to bring supranormal powers or deities into this realm (what is meant in the Wicca tradition by "bringing the new moon down"). The second category is "shamanic or 'communion trance,'" where, as Hart explains, "the spirit or soul of the drummer is said to ride his drumbeat like a horse up to the spirit world, where he transacts his business in an active rather than a passive way" (Hart 1990, 163). Both forms of trance are equally concerned with the bodily, and by extension, the sensorial. Hart reminds that "when the rhythm is right you feel it with all your senses" (Hart 1990, 117), a point that connects to the sounded environment of the cave that Campbell describes so evocatively.

Drugs can play a role in this conception. Hart informs us that "classical shamanism was no stranger to the potential of botanical allies to amplify trance. Plants such as the vine *ayahuasca*, the psilocybin mushroom, and the fly agaric mushroom have long histories of shamanic use" (Hart 1990, 175–176). Hart is personally familiar with these botanical allies, and there is an obvious connection between this form of hallucinogenic shamanism and the psychedelic experiences of many fans at Grateful Dead concerts, but Campbell's work offers another link. In a 1970 essay entitled "Schizophrenia—the Inward Journey," Campbell describes being introduced to studies on LSD by a fellow lecturer at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California. After mentioning shamanism in the context of hallucinogens, Campbell notes that LSD's effects represent "an intentionally achieved schizophrenia, with the expectation of a spontaneous remission ... Yoga, too, is an intentional schizophrenia: one breaks away from the world, plunging inward, and the ranges of vision experienced are in fact the same as those of a psychosis" (Campbell 1970, 209). Yoga, as Campbell discussed elsewhere, is a unique interplay of silence,

breath, and bodily alignment, opening fascinating lines of inquiry for its relation to shamanism and psychedelic experience. He was acutely aware of the multisensorial extremes that shamanic ritual could create. Likewise, a sensorial environment might induce a psychological state that appears to be a trance, particularly if close-proximity drumming in a compressed acoustical space like a cave was unfolding in seemingly endless volleys. Percussion, for Hart, is not just aligned with cosmological rhythms; it also has the power to profoundly alter and heighten bodily experience, to send the body into a trance—in short, to *enchant*.

A final aspect of Hart's theory of percussion and its relation to the sounded environment is one of the most provocative ideas in *Drumming*. For Campbell, as for Hart, the ultimate goal of shamanism is not merely the curation of multimedia, multisensorial performances in the here and now. What the sounded environment of the cave ultimately *enacts* is the utilization of those forms of media, and those extremes of sensory perception, to send the shaman and/or the whole of the ceremonial participants into another realm entirely, the supranormal "environment" of the spirit world. Hart argues that "for the shaman, the drum is not so much a musical instrument as a vehicle for transportation. Most frequently in Siberia, it is characterized as a horse that the shaman rides to the World Tree, though it can also be a boat (with the drumstick becoming an oar) or a bow (with the drumstick doubling as the arrow)" (Hart 1990, 171). In the sounded environment of the cave, the shaman, in Hart's view, can sonically travel to another environment outside of this world and return to their community with healing and wisdom.

Anthropologists are not alone in finding fanciful that claim, but it makes *Drumming At the Edge of Magic* a compelling text for considering the capaciousness of sound studies, especially the role of sound in creating spaces of enchantment. However preposterous on its face, the idea that the "communion trance" that allows the shaman to travel to the World Tree via a drum is a notion of the agency that sound, and sounding objects like a drum, can possess. For Hart, that is the truly cosmic quality of sound: "The rhythms set up a ripple in time, ensuring that the shaman can find his way back from the timelessness that is mentioned in almost all accounts of the other world" (Hart 1990, 177).

Both the cosmological and the sensorial are thickly intertwined in Hart's and Campbell's concept of shamanic ritual. Hart speculates that "the drum functions as an extension of the heart that is beating in the shaman's empty body, back here in human time. An instrument of time travel. A beacon when he is out of his body" (Hart 1990, 177). The sacred noise of percussion is thus the sound that tethers the cave to the World Tree, and in the process, takes the sounded body to states of extremity and deprivation that are *enchanted*, if we take that term to mean an improvisatory, conversational relation between the bodily and the cosmic.

Hart made that clear with his contribution to the memorial service for Campbell. Thomas Vennum explained that Hart "searched for the largest Japanese taiko drum in New York City. Its powerful sounds, he felt, would most befit the memory of this intellectual giant" (Vennum 1999, 44). It was an expression of a point Hart made to Campbell, roughly nine months before the scholar's death. Requesting Campbell's participation in a World Music in Schools benefit concert he was organizing, Hart explained:

The myths and legends transported in the music must be preserved to be explored, examined and enjoyed for all time ...
[Music and the arts] are our mirror. Our soul integrated into a language that transcends the tongue which is so feeble and without nuance. (Hart 1987)

Such a linguistics of music is part of the great mythological song that Campbell thought began in the cave complexes of prehistory and transmogrified through millennia to include the Grateful Dead concerts where Mickey Hart drummed for a dancing audience.

That span of time and range of conception will likely give pause to some scholars, and they certainly challenge some disciplinary approaches. Yet that is part of Hart's unabashed enthusiasm, and it is a hallmark of the book's achievement. Campbell famously ended his public lectures with his mantra, "Follow your bliss!" *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* documents more than just Hart's acknowledgment of Campbell's scholarship, it reflects his honoring of that mantra. More than just a musical atlas of Hart's forays into the far reaches of percussion, the book chronicles a

drummer's quest to understand the capacity of sound to align the body with the oldest rhythms of the universe.

NOTES

1. Stevens is also the author of *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream* (1987), which provides a helpful reminder of the flavor of Hart's book and its psychedelically tinged view of percussion and shamanism.
2. Scholars in Grateful Dead studies have also found Campbell's work to be useful as well as controversial. Smith (2007) and Goodenough (2007) also make the case for Campbell's utility; Eric Silverman (2010) provides the anthropological critique of Campbell and its relevance for Grateful Dead studies specifically.
3. As Spector elaborately details: "When asked about the Dead concert he had recently attended, Joseph Campbell, the foremost scholar of world mythology of his day, remarked: 'it is an experience of rapture, which is what a religious experience is. It reminded me of the Dionysian festivals.' Although Campbell's remarks here are brief, he actually asserted three different relationships. First, he defined religious experience in terms of rapture. Second, he suggested that this sense of rapture is to be understood in terms of the Dionysian festivals of ancient Greece, and third, he implied that a Grateful Dead concert was similar to the life-affirming religious celebrations of the Dionysian festivals precisely because they did invoke an experience of rapture. This experience of rapture is one in which a participant loses all sense of himself as a discrete object; as he is transported out of a particular time and space, he moves into an experience that cannot be characterized in terms of time or space" (2007, 198).
4. Interestingly, this echoes the opening page of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) with its outstretched syllabic howl: "The fall (bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronntonner-ronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntooohooor-denenthurnuk!)." Joseph Campbell, it should be noted, began his career with *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* (1944), coauthored with Henry Morton Robinson, and the affinity between Hart's description of Paleolithic chanting and the Joycean exclamation is striking.

WORKS CITED

- Campbell, Joseph. 1953. "Editor's Foreword." In *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, by Maya Deren, 1–3. London: Thames and Hudson.
- . 1959. *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*. New York: Penguin Books.

- . 1972. “Schizophrenia—The Inward Journey.” *Myths to Live By*, 201–232. New York: Viking Press.
- Campbell, Joseph, and Robinson, Henry Morton. 1944. *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Campbell, Joseph, with Bill Moyers. 1988. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Goodenough, Mary. 1999. “Grateful Dead: Manifestations from the Collective Unconscious.” In Weiner 1999, 175–182.
- . 2007. “Grateful Rites, Dead Initiation.” In Meriwether 2007, 157–176.
- Hart, Mickey. 1987. “Letter to Joseph Campbell, January 21, 1987.” The Joseph Campbell Papers, Box 169: “Correspondence: Mickey Hart,” Special Collections, New York Public Library.
- Hart, Mickey, with Jay Stevens. 1990. *Drumming at the Edge of Magic: A Journey into the Spirit of Percussion*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Hart, Mickey, Fredric Lieberman, with D. A. Sonneborn. 1991. *Planet Drum: A Celebration of Percussion and Rhythm*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Hirschkind, Charles. 2015. “Religion.” In Novak and Sakakeeny 2015, 165–174.
- Joyce, James. 1939. *Finnegans Wake*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Kapchan, Deborah. 2015. “Body.” In Novak and Sakakeeny 2015, 33–44.
- McNally, Dennis. 2002. *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Mann, Sally. 2015. *Hold Still: A Memoir With Photographs*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Meriwether, Nicholas G., ed. 2007. *All Graceful Instruments: The Contexts of the Grateful Dead Phenomenon*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Novak, David, and Matt Sakakeeny, eds. 2015. *Keywords in Sound*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Novak, David. 2015. “Noise.” In Novak and Sakakeeny 2015, 125–138.
- Reist, Nancy. 1999. “Clinging to the Edge of Magic: Shamanic Aspects of the Grateful Dead.” In Weiner 1999, 183–190.
- Silverman, Eric K. 2010. “‘Mysteries Dark and Vast’: Grateful Dead Concerts and Initiation into the Sublime.” In *The Grateful Dead in Concert: Essays on Live Improvisation*, edited by Jim Tuedio and Stan Spector, 214–231. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company.
- Smith, Lans. 2007. “An American Nekyia: Terrapin Station and the Descent to the Underworld.” In Meriwether 2007, 92–98.

- Spector, Stanley J. 2007. "'It All Rolls Into One': Rapture, Dionysus, Nietzsche, and the Grateful Dead." In Meriwether 2007, 196–207.
- Stevens, Jay. 1987. *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Vennum, Thomas, Jr. 1999. "The Grateful Dead Onstage in 'World Music'." In Weiner 1999, 41–54.
- Weidman, Amanda. 2015. "Voice." In Novak and Sakakeeny 2015, 232–245.
- Weiner, Robert G., ed. 1999. *Perspectives on the Grateful Dead: Critical Writings*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Wojnarowicz, David. 1991. *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*. New York: Vintage Books.

TEDDY HAMSTRA is a PhD candidate in English at the University of Southern California, where he is also the Research Assistant for the Visual Studies Research Institute. In addition to his work on Hart, he has published on the novelist William Gaddis and the visual artists Lenore Tawney and Julie Mehretu. He has been awarded several research grants to study the Joseph Campbell Papers and the Jean Erdman Papers at the New York Public Library, which informed his work on this essay.