

## SONG OF THE SYCAMORE

When a large branch from a sycamore tree broke in our woods, I found it mostly intact on the ground, with its pods still attached. I had never noticed the pods up close before, and was immediately attracted to their shape. I cut the branch into segments and brought them into the studio, beginning my usual dance of experimenting and looking for what I might want to express with these objects.

Stringing the segments on the floor in sequence, I began to see their similarity to notes on a musical scale, and I imagined the pods as being played on strings. I contacted local cellist Zon Eastes and asked if he'd like to collaborate with me on this project. He said an enthusiastic "Yes!"

I made individual photographs of all 17 segments of pods, and printed several of each on transparent media for viewing forward or backward. I sent the printed images to Zon along with blank sheets of the 5-line musical staff, made in relative size to the pods. Zon placed the images on the staff, scoring a composition using the pods as notes. Then he'd take a picture of his placement and text it to me, and I'd made a digital layout that corresponded to the score. We went back and forth till it looked right.

Zon scored a beautiful composition based on arranging and repeating the "pod notes" in a repetitive, meditative 3-minute suite. The piece was recorded by Billy Straus, with Zon playing all 4 cello parts. In the exhibition, the recorded piece is accompanied by a printed scroll of the staff to give viewers a sense of the underlying musical structure.

Now whenever I notice a sycamore tree with its pods revealed, I see them as musical notes waiting to be played.

