James Weeks
Signs of Occupation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year/Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Looping Busker Music (2013)</td>
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<td>13:22</td>
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<td></td>
<td>for clarinet, violin, guitar, accordion and tape</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plus-Minus Ensemble (Vicky Wright clarinet, Aisha Orazbayeva violin, Tom Pauwels guitar, Mark Knoop accordion)</td>
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<td>Three Trios (2010-11) for piano trio and tape</td>
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<td>02</td>
<td>July ’10</td>
<td></td>
<td>9:19</td>
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<td>03</td>
<td>February ’11</td>
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<td>9:48</td>
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<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>November ’11</td>
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<td>8:39</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Marcus Barcham Stevens violin, Oliver Coates cello, Mark Knoop piano</td>
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<td>05</td>
<td>Signs of Occupation (2014) for speaker and clarinet</td>
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<td>12:38</td>
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<td></td>
<td>James Wilkes speaker, Andrew Sparling clarinet</td>
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<td>06</td>
<td>Digger (2010) for guitar</td>
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<td>6:07</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alastair Putt guitar</td>
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<td>07</td>
<td>common ground (2014) for string trio</td>
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<td>10:33</td>
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<td>Daniel Pioro violin, Maxine Moore viola, Oliver Coates cello</td>
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**total duration** 70:27
Foreword: Signs of Occupation

‘Occupation’ is a word whose ambiguity allows the music on this CD to be heard in more than one way. We occupy physical space, taking territory, establishing ownership, but we are also occupied by these activities – our occupations occupy our time, and our attention in that time.

James Weeks has occupied the periods of time taken by each of the pieces of music on the CD but in so doing has provided occupation for each of the musicians involved, and it is this latter sense of occupation as a job, as something to do, which seems to characterise the musical work which he has provided for his musicians. They are required to make quite plain, ordinary sounds; no ostentatious virtuosity here but instead a gradual, quite repetitive process of sifting through combinations of notes and rhythms, As this steady occupation takes our time we discover that plainness has its own beauty, that the changing relationship between the different musical activities is more than enough to occupy our attention.

There’s a political significance to occupation too. When Gerard Winstanley and his fellow Diggers occupied St George’s Hill it was an assertion of the right of ordinary people to the ‘common wealth’, the land which they believed God had given to us all. For the landowners who believed in their right to own land this occupation was seen, of course, as a hostile act. In its dogged, unassertive way, James Weeks’s music is also making a political assertion, that in the face of the insidious, yet relentless, occupation of our lives by big business, we need to take back our own time. These seven works, these signs of occupation, are a welcome act of defiance, music that rewards careful listening and insists that the working together of musicians is a proper subject for our attention.

Christopher Fox
The Music

Looping Busker Music

*Inside and outside* (‘the set-up which defines our existence’ – Chris Newman).
*Four musicians facing into the wind.*

There are two sections, suggesting different perspectives, and in each section several layers: two in the first and three in the second. Looping (repetition of short material samples) appears throughout all the materials, but contrapuntally and not always clearly. A feature of the piece is the interaction of processed field recordings (Newcastle city centre) and instrumental materials, setting up interplays of inner/outer, near/far, human/machine, natural/artificial, present/absent, personal/social, private/public, etc.

*Looping Busker Music* was commissioned by Plus-Minus Ensemble and premiered by them at Kings Place, London, in March 2013.

Three Trios

In *Three Trios* my aim was to strip back the material towards a point at which it marks little more than the time passing; a study in pure structure (a canonic motet) and content nearing transparency (a window, nearly).

There are two materials: in the piano trio, lines of equal-pulsed notes are arrayed in a circular canon between the three instruments (the unequalness of the piano against the strings is a feature of all three pieces, particularly *July ’10*). Each piece uses an extremely limited gamut of just three or four pitches, and not many more rhythmic values.
For the tape parts I recorded sounds audible from my desk; the first two pieces in Catford, the third in Gateshead. In July ’10 there is only one tape playback; in February ’11 there are three (each operated by a different player), and in November ’11 there are two: the same material set off at different times during the piece (another canon).

February ’11 was written for the Phoenix Piano Trio, who premiered it at The Forge, London, in April 2011. July ’10 and November ’11 were written for my own group, Kürbis, and premiered in Coventry and Durham Universities respectively, in March 2011 and February 2013.

**Signs of Occupation**

*Signs of Occupation* was written in 2013-14 in response to the poem ‘Approaching Cleavel Point’ by the poet James Wilkes, in which he describes a walk on the Isle of Purbeck (Dorset), exploring the archaeology of landscape and the layered strata of presence left behind by its inhabitants.

The poem is set in its entirety, divided as in the original into paragraphs which are overlapped with paragraphs of music for the clarinet – a counterpart to the sound of the speaking voice (a walking companion) as well as an evocation of terrain.

*Signs of Occupation* was given its live première (after the present recording was made) by members of Plus-Minus Ensemble: Elsa Bradley (voice) and Vicky Wright (clarinet), at Milton Court, London, in June 2016.

James Wilkes’ poem ‘Approaching Cleavel Point’, from the collection *Weather A System* is used in the piece by kind permission of the publisher, Penned in the Margins.
Digger

*Digger* is the first of several pieces based on the writings of Gerard Winstanley, leader of the Diggers, or True Levellers, a group of landless poor that occupied common land on St George’s Hill near Weybridge in Surrey in 1649, attempting to become self-sufficient by growing crops in the meagre soil: ‘working together, and eating the fruits of their own labours’. The guitarist plays repetitive ‘action’ motifs, sometimes breaking out into speech taken from Winstanley’s pamphlet ‘The True Levellers Standard Advanced’ (1649).

*Digger* was written in response to an invitation from Stephen Chase, and premiered by him at Bank St Arts, Sheffield, in April 2010. It is dedicated to John Habron and Bethan James on the occasion of their wedding.

common ground

*common ground* describes a scenario in which three people move across an imaginary, shared space, each independent of the other, with their own route, purpose and thoughts.

Written in 2013-14, *common ground* develops further some of the ideas of the other pieces on this disc. Each player is given the same music: fourteen pieces of rhythmic material with only an outline of the available pitch space (within the range of a fifth). Each player chooses for themselves the order of materials and the precise pitch to play for each one. So there is again an element of canon here, and of music and musical space shared, the ground over which we pass.

James Weeks
PLUS-MINUS ENSEMBLE

**Plus-Minus Ensemble** is a London-based collective committed to commissioning new work and placing it alongside recent and landmark modern repertoire.

Formed in 2003 by Joanna Bailie and Matthew Shlomowitz, +− is distinguished by its interest in performative, electroacoustic and conceptual pieces, and experimental open works such as Stockhausen’s 1963 classic, from which the group takes its name.

+− has regularly performed in London at Kammer Klang (Cafe OTO) and City University; has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and Deutschlandradio Kultur; and has performed at the Borealis (Bergen), Cut and Splice (London), Fundación BBVA (Bilbao), Huddersfield, MaerzMusik (Berlin), Spor (Aarhus), Transit (Leuven) and Ultima (Oslo) festivals/series.

+− also works with student composers and has given workshops and concerts at Bath Spa University, City University London, Durham University, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Huddersfield University, Stanford University and the University of Southampton.

In addition to performing works by Bailie and Shlomowitz, +− has recently worked with composers such as Peter Ablinger, Laurence Crane, Bernhard Lang, James Saunders, Alex Schubert and Jennifer Walshe.

www.plusminusensemble.com
James Weeks’s music is performed and broadcast worldwide; recent works have been completed for Plus-Minus, Quatuor Bozzini, London Sinfonietta, New London Chamber Choir, Phoenix Piano Trio, EXAUDI, Alison Balsom, Apartment House and Anton Lukoszevieze.

His work is typically focused on music for soloists or small ensembles, exploring pared-down, 'primary' musical syntaxes and systems, with particular interests in modality, microtonality, modularity and indeterminacy. Major works include Schilderkonst (mixed ensemble, 2003-4), TIDE (ensemble and electronics, 2007-10), the South London Harmonies series (various ensembles, 2008-11), Mala punica/Walled Garden (eight voices and ensemble, 2008-9/2015), The Freedom of the Earth (chorus and instruments, 2011), Three Trios (piano trio and tapes, 2010-11) and Radical Road (voices with stones, 2014). A disc of TIDE performed by Apartment House was released on Métier in 2013, and mural, for two vocal quartets (2012-13), was released on Confront Recordings in Autumn 2015. His work can also be heard on the HCR and Wandelweiser labels.

In 2002 he founded EXAUDI Vocal Ensemble with soprano Juliet Fraser. As well as maintaining a busy international touring and recording schedule with EXAUDI, he is in great demand as a guest conductor, working regularly with instrumental ensembles and orchestras such as Royal Northern Sinfonia, BBCSSO, London Sinfonietta, musikFabrik, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, L’Instant Donné, Ensemble 7Bridges and Endymion. He was Musical Director of the New London Chamber Choir from 2007-2011. He is Associate Head of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London.

www.jamesweeks.org
SIGN OF OCCUPATION

Track 1 recorded at City University, London on 27 November 2014
Recording Engineer: Rick Campion
Producer: James Weeks
Tracks 2-4 recorded at Red Gables Studio, London on 22 February 2013
Recording Engineer: Dick Hammett
Producer: James Weeks
Tracks 5-7 recorded at City University, London on 20th January 2015
Recording Engineer: Rick Campion
Producer: James Weeks
All tracks edited and mastered by Mark Knoop
All tracks are published by University of York Music Press  www.uymp.co.uk

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This recording was produced with support from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.
Also by James Weeks on Métier:

**TIDE** (msv 28532)
Burnham Air : Tide : Sky

Apartment House:
Anton Lukoszevieze (cello)
Christopher Redgate (oboe)
Andrew Sparling (clarinet)

“Tide is a beguiling and impressively conceived and performed collection” – Stephen Graham (Tempo)
“Music that feels original but in some way also primeval.” – Christian Morris (Composition Today)

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