



BOUNTY
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Autumn leaves, summertime sunshine. Heaps of books, conversational counterpoint at meals, a vast archive of ideas collected while sitting and listening. Pages and pages of my own polished prose and doodled (excited!) new ideas. Quiet reflection, urban stimulation. Inquisitive staff, visitors, and colleagues who astound with unexpected curiosity and

generosity. These are the undeniable bounties that flash through my mind as I remember the last ten months. The gifts of and from Wiko feel palpable and countable. But to narrate them in some kind of coherent work, journey, or product feels difficult. Not because I haven't had time (courtesy of the Wissenschaftskolleg) to analyze and digest: to take stock so that I might (re-)enter my other lives fortified and clear-minded. Or because I am too intimidated to share a grand narrative. But because I am confident that – to use a weary turn of phrase – “only time will tell” the story of my year in Grunewald. When I set my keys down on the spacious desk in my office that peered over the trees that flank Halensee to leave them behind, I didn't feel the weight of an exit but the excitement of a bounty.

Like many Wiko Fellows, I began the year with grand dreams. But lagging deadlines to finish off looked like they might keep me from digging into the project I had laid out for myself, a study of home recording in the People's Republic of Poland. I got to work, determined to make the most of my transplantation to Berlin, a city I knew well and now know better. It's an urban space that makes my work as an ethnographer and historian of music, sound, and politics in Central Europe easier – and seem more relevant – than my professional haunts in the United States. In fact, my projects looped me into contact with institutions and people nearby. And the deadlines that felt like hurdles soon shaped new paths toward big (hopefully) ideas. As I finished up an edited special issue of *Twentieth-Century Music* about tape and tape recording, I formed first musical bridges at Wiko with the Fellows there who worked with knowledge written in sound. Steve Beissinger's September recollections about learning bird calls would eventually set us loose to record Grunewald's nightingales in the spring, taking advantage of smartphones and a four-channel field recorder to map our way along their nests on the forest's edge. I strolled the vintage record shops of the city looking for old mixtapes and chatting with small-shop owners who cultivate personal relationships with record collectors in the city. Intimate stories (the little love letters and bootlegs on the tapes themselves) begat more intimate stories (about collectors and their care for the legacy of their music) and a research idea for my Wiko project was born. To give the simple objects at the base of my study human proportions, I would take my stash of 1960s and '70s home recordings from Poland – mostly flexidiscs, but also tapes – through the meeting places (bars, cafes, bookshops, and homes) of the Polish community in Berlin. Through strolls to the small businesses and unofficial concert venues in the city, I also met the technician I would ultimately trust to “fix” an old record player built out of leftover components in 1980s Warsaw. Conversations

with Fellows about all kinds of networks (those of academics and those of social insects to name a few important ones) pushed me to put the tape work into conversation with the archives – of instruments and sounds – at the Ethnographic Museum in Dahlem and in the Media Studies Department at the Humboldt. I also wrote letters to send to old clubs, collectors, ethnographers, and studio technicians in Poland. I digested catalogs and tinkered with surfaces and wires. These are details that seemed quite unremarkable at the time – more like errands and due diligence than intellectual forays – but that colored the first presentations of this new research at Oxford University, the Humboldt University, and King’s College London, as well as at Wiko itself. Another way to measure this work on my Wiko project is that I have four chapters loosely drafted of what I imagine might be a book and a handful of new pen pals. But my immediate takeaway is more abstract. I plan to keep my finger hovering above and frequently deploying the pause button on these stories. The digressions, pushback, and broad ambitions that I observed through conversations with and around me revealed the bounty of taking time while keeping work in motion.

Sometimes over the course of the year, I really felt like a collector. I listened hard and noted down off-hand remarks that I heard across the Wiko campus. These were fuel as I focused on a different book manuscript: one on sound, protest, and 1980s Poland that I submitted at the end of the fellowship year. It is shaped most strongly by the little provocations I heard over lunch and in the flow of the “question” barrage that characterized our cohort’s colloquium discussions. Some concrete provocations that led me to rewrite a whole chapter: poetry about rivers, an afternoon listening to contemporary Greek Orthodox chant, a story about a lost bicycle, a question about war and translation, a beet salad. If I collected modes of questioning and observed styles of listening on Tuesday morning, lunch made way for another kind of collective experience. We shared our fierce worries and sorrowful concerns about the politics of the present through disciplinary, institutional, and geographic biases. When I returned to my desk after these often difficult conversations, I noticed the text that flowed out of my hands change tone. The volume was turned up, notch by notch, through the critiques of Eurocentrism and American insularity. My writing was also tempered by the joy I experienced unpacking music, especially popular musics and abstract experimental practices, and insisting on listening’s fundamental importance to intellectual thought to my fellow Fellows. Our heated debates about comparative methodologies challenged me and challenge me most. As I leave, I am committed to rethink that assumption about Central Europe as the basin for my research

material – even if I have a committed scholarly engagement with music and migration and work hard against assumptions of musical belonging or music’s belonging. As I leave behind the generative repository of ideas, the mind-blowing library, the challenging questions, and the community of interested listeners, I know I will hear particular voices echo in delightful cacophony and I will continue to aspire toward the disciplinary disregard a place like the Wissenschaftskolleg fosters.

The gift of time at Wiko is something I cannot hold onto, though it certainly defines the Wiko bounty. Everything and everyone made space for me to write a handful of articles across disparate topics; to travel to Frankfurt, Basel, Warsaw, Bremen, Bucharest, back to North Carolina, and twice to Dahlem in Berlin to give papers and meet new colleagues; and to read, read, read. As many Fellows know from my lunchtime appetite, I also built a luxurious bicycle commute of 32 km round trip – some 100 minutes total – around my daily stint in Grunewald. That, too, was time to think, my body setting a pulse at which to make progress. My challenge is to not experience time after Wiko as a loss, but to cling to the bounty and to reimagine back in my everyday life.