

# Soundings ...

... 2009/10



Saturday 7th November, 2009—6.00pm  
Reid Concert Hall, Bristo Square  
Edinburgh

Joseph Anderson, Nick Virgo, Matthew Barnard

Joseph Anderson	-	<i>Loch Lomond</i>
Nick Virgo	-	<i>Fall•Drop•Sink</i>
Walter Ruttmann	-	<i>Weekend</i>
Matthew Barnard	-	<i>Woche ...</i>

## Joseph Anderson

[8' 30"]

## *Loch Lomond* (1995)

Benny Goodman swings an old and familiar tune Carnegie Hall, New York (16 Jan 1938). *Loch Lomond* is my first and last 'total serial' work—serializing the tune and then acting on the Goodman recording. Don't worry if you miss all the rhythmic complexes, which you should know are tied up with the harmonic and melodic cells. It is easiest to hear the tonal zones—but these do stamp on by as dictated. So now it's the Reid Hall, Edinburgh (7 Nov 2009). Do try to refrain from standing up and dancing in the aisles—that was 71 years ago. After all, we're in the 21st century.

Realized in the Electroacoustic Music Studios of the University of Birmingham.

As an adolescent, **Joseph Anderson** (b. 1970, OH, USA) was inadvertently exposed to Edgar Varèse's *Poem Électronique* and the dangerous 'music' and writings of anarchist John Cage. Since then he has been under the misguided impression that all sounds are likely music. Study with Russell Pinkston failed to disabuse him of this notion—which later led to his exile in the UK for a number of years, where he studied the art with a Jonty Harrison. During these four years, Anderson was a member of the Birmingham Electroacoustic Sound Theatre (BEAST).

Returning to the US in 1998, he was active in the San Francisco Bay Area promoting this questionable 'art of sound'—through the auspices of a collective of like-minded artists calling themselves the New San Francisco Tape Music Center.

Recognitions for his efforts have included the 'Grand Prix' from the 1997 Bourges Electroacoustic Music Competition for *Change's Music*, and he has been commissioned by organizations such as BBC Radio 3 and the Society for the Promotion of New Music.

Having in recent years left employment with Analog Devices' Audio Rendering Technology Center in San Jose, California as a signal processing engineer, he now finds himself re-expatriated as a lecturer at the University of Hull.

## **Nick Virgo**

[10' 56"]

## ***Fall•Drop•Sink* (2009)**

*Fall•Drop•Sink* is the blunt-edged description of the music's point of departure: quite simply, drops of water cascading into a highly resonant metal sink. The sink inflects droplets, splashes and bubbles and these, in turn, are accentuated by the treatment of sound within the computer.

The music yields to a contemplative section where the density of activity is suspended. This is the transition from a 'formal' world of sound for sound's sake, to one which hints at another narrative. We emerge onto the flat horizon and brooding North Sea of the Norfolk coast on a grey day in late October. The 'drips' remain as hints of rain, rock pools and ethereal electronica suspended above the opening seascape. *Eau naturel?*

**Nick Virgo** lives in Glasgow, dividing his time between composing, gardening and teaching.

## **Walter Ruttmann**

[11' 10"]

## ***Weekend* (1930)**

*Weekend* is a pioneering work from the early days of radio, commissioned in 1928 by Berlin Radio Hour. In a collage of words, music fragments and sounds, the filmmaker and media artist Walter Ruttmann presented on 13 June 1930 a radically innovative radio piece: an acoustic picture of a Berlin weekend urban landscape.

Before making *Weekend*, Ruttmann had produced the experimental documentary *Berlin-Symphony of a Great City* (1927) as well as a number of short, experimental abstract animations. After his experience with his films, Ruttmann deliberately sought possibilities for producing an audio-film for radio. 'Everything audible in the world becomes material,' he wrote in a manifesto in 1929, prefiguring Schaeffer, Varèse, Cage and the other giants of the musical avant-garde.

Tones and sounds should exist in their own right. For *Weekend* they were recorded as arbitrary and intentional elements on the soundtrack of an optical sound film using the so-called Tri-Ergon process. For the first time an artistic radio production was created whose material could be assembled and designed according to rhythmic, musical principles.

The original of *Weekend* was long considered lost. A copy was only rediscovered in New York in 1978.

With a background as a painter, and cellist/violinist, **Walter Ruttmann** (Frankfurt, Germany 1887 - Berlin, Germany, 1941) found his way to making experimental abstract animations in the 1920s, and later, feature length documentary films. Ruttmann was in a milieu of painters, poets and musicians who saw in the new media a possibility to expand the limits of the fine arts. They described their abstract films as visual music, seeking to achieve a similar experience in the visual as in music. The overall idea of their works was also linked to the concept of the absolute film; the idea of a universal language of abstract images.

Ruttmann's most well-known film is *Berlin-Symphony of a Great City*, which utilized the Kino-Eye or Cinematic-Eye technique of Dziga Vertov. This is documentary filmmaking at its most poetic and expressive. His later *World Melodies* expanded on the synthesis of the visual and the musical with scenes taken from all over the world.

During the late 1930s Ruttmann delved deeper into documentary filmmaking, which likely led to his work on various propaganda films. As Germany moved towards World War II, Ruttmann worked with Leni Riefenstahl in the writing of the famous Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* (1934), and later the editing of *Olympia* (1938). Whether or not Ruttmann would have suffered the same lapse in reputation that Riefenstahl did after the war will never be known, as he was killed on the war front making a newsreel just three short years later.

JA

**Matthew Barnard** *Woche (with apologies to Ruttmann and Brock)* (2009)  
[26' 37"]

'Ruttmann's film could scarcely be used to guide a stranger arriving in Berlin for the first time. It summarises far more the memories and residual moods of a traveller leaving that city. If nevertheless the film contains a characterisation of the city, it is not in the shots themselves, but through their montage and rhythm.'

—OR—

'Barnard's piece could scarcely be used to guide a stranger arriving in London for the first time. It summarises far more the memories and residual moods of a traveller leaving that city. If nevertheless the piece contains a characterisation of the city, it is not in the sounds themselves, but through their montage and rhythm.'

Using material recorded binaurally over a week long visit to London, *Woche...* aims, with reference to Walter Ruttmann's *Weekend* (1930) and *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927), and Timothy Brock's 1995 soundtrack for *Berlin:...*, to communicate on some level the pace and rhythm of the city, and the fleeting experiences of a visitor.

- Greenwich I
- Musical Chairs
- City Symphony
- Slides
- A Soundwalk I
- Too Many People I
- Brock and the Escalator
- Greenwich II
- Toilet Break
- A Ruttmann
- A Soundwalk II
- Too many People II

**Matthew Barnard** is currently studying towards a PhD in Composition at the University of Hull, Scarborough Campus under the supervision of Joseph Anderson. Research interests revolve around binaural method of recording and reproduction; its aesthetic implications, advantages and employment in the composition process.





# Soundings

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