

# Soundings ...

... 2009/10



Sunday 8th November, 2009—6.00pm  
Reid Concert Hall, Bristo Square  
Edinburgh

## Student Composers

|                 |   |                       |
|-----------------|---|-----------------------|
| Jonty Harrison  | - | <i>Klang</i>          |
| Natasha Barrett | - | <i>Little Animals</i> |
| Adrian Moore    | - | <i>Study in Ink</i>   |

### Interval

|                 |   |                        |
|-----------------|---|------------------------|
| Denis Smalley   | - | <i>Wind Chimes</i>     |
| Francis Dhomont | - | <i>Points de Fuite</i> |
| Denis Smalley   | - | <i>Pentes</i>          |

**Diffusion by:** Iain Beattie, Andy Bowden, Mike Candler, Daisy Costello, Niall McCallum and Tom Paton.

## Jonty Harrison

[9' 03"]

## *Klang* (1982)

The title (*Klang* is the German for *sound*) reflects the onomatopoeic nature of the family of sounds providing the raw material for the piece—sharp, metallic attacks with interesting resonances rich in harmonics. The real starting point for *Klang* was the discovery (in Denis Smalley's kitchen!) of two earthenware casseroles, the sounds of which were recorded in the Electroacoustic Music Studio of the University of East Anglia during the summer of 1981. Material of two kinds was recorded—attack/resonance sounds made by tapping the lids on or in the bowls, and continuous rolling sounds made by running the lids around the insides of the bowls. Different pitches resulted from the various combinations of lids and bowls, and different qualities of resonance emerged according to the attack position. The microphones were placed very close to the bowls to maximise the movement within the stereophonic image. Other related material, accumulated over the previous three or four years, was also used. This included both 'concrete' sounds, such as cow-bells, metal rods and aluminium bars, and electronically generated sounds, both analogue and digital. The final impetus to compose the piece came in June 1981 when I was invited by János Décsenyi to work in the Electronic Music Studio of Magyar Rádió in Budapest. As studio time would be limited I was advised to take a certain amount of taped material with me; the two weeks prior to the visit were therefore spent in preliminary work in the Electroacoustic Music Studio of The University of Birmingham. Much of the opening two sections of the piece were composed before going to Hungary.

Although continuous, *Klang* falls into six short, fairly clearly defined sections:

*Introduction*

*Development 1:* duet

*Development 2:* interruption of duet and increase in complexity towards the first climax

*Development 3:* relatively static section

*Development 4:* proliferation of material from *Development 3* into glissando structures, build-up to the second (main) climax, and slow release to:

*Coda*

The listener can trace the development of the material from raw statements of casserole sounds in the *Introduction*, through more complex, highly transformed events in the four *Development* sections, back to the opening sound-world in the *Coda*. The most obvious transformation technique is mixing, using multiple but only slightly transposed versions of simple sounds. Besides mixing and transposition with tape recorders and a harmoniser, the main modifications were achieved by filtering and, most important of all, *montage*. This last technique is the principal means of controlling the timing and rhythmic articulation of the material and its organisation into phrases (which may be a single line or a mix of many layers, edited together into the desired sequence).

*Klang* was commissioned by MAFILM and composed in the Electronic Music Studio of Magyar Rádió in 1982. It was awarded Second Prize in the Analogue Category of the Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Awards in 1983 and in 1992 it was awarded a *Euphonie d'or* as one of the twenty most significant works from two decades of the Bourges Awards. It has been performed and broadcast in many parts of the world, including at the 1984 ISCM World Music Days in Toronto, Canada, and has been released on the UEA record label and on two CD labels, NMC (London) and *empreintes DIGITALes* (Montréal).

**Jonty Harrison** (born 1952) studied with Bernard Rands at the University of York, gaining his DPhil in Composition in 1980 and discovering the electroacoustic studio along the way. Between 1976 and 1980 he worked at the National Theatre and City University in London. In 1980 he joined the Music Department of the University of Birmingham, where he is now Professor of Composition and Electroacoustic Music and Director of the Electroacoustic Music Studios and BEAST (Birmingham ElectroAcoustic Sound Theatre). Over the past 28 years he has taught a number of postgraduate composers from the UK and overseas, many of whom are now themselves leading figures in the composition and teaching of electroacoustic music in many parts of the world. He has made several conducting appearances with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (most notably performing Stockhausen's *Momente*), the University New Music Ensemble and the University Orchestra. He was a Board member of Sonic Arts Network for many years.

As a composer he has won several awards (Bourges International Electroacoustic Awards; Prix Ars Electronica, Linz; Musica Nova, Prague; the Lloyds Bank National Composers' Award; the PRS Prize; an Arts Council Composition Bursary; a Leverhulme Research Grant and AHRB/C Research Grants) and received commissions from leading institutions and performers (Ina-GRM; GMEB, Bourges; the International Computer Music Association; MAFILM/Magyar Rádió; Electroacoustic Wales/University of Bangor, IRCAM/Ensemble InterContemporain; BBC; Sonorities Festival, Belfast; Birmingham Contemporary Music Group; Fine Arts Brass Ensemble; Nash Ensemble; Singcircle; Thürmchen Ensemble; John Harle; Harry Sparnaay; and Jos Zwaanenburg).

His music is performed and broadcast worldwide, and several works are available on two 'solo' CDs (*Articles indéfinis* and *Évidence matérielle*) and a DVD-Audio (*Environs*) on the *empreintes DIGITALes* label (Montréal), and on compilation CDs from NMC (London), Mnémosyne Musique Média (Bourges, France), CDCM/Centaur (San Francisco), Asphodel (New York), EMF (New York) and Collins (London).

[http://www.electrocd.com/en/bio/harrison\\_jo/](http://www.electrocd.com/en/bio/harrison_jo/)

<http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/harrison/>

## **Natasha Barrett**

[13' 03"]

## ***Little Animals (1997)***

A forest of small creatures gradually expose their expressive selves through the juxtaposition, transformation and mutual interaction with their surrounding environment. Slowly, sound fragments lose their acoustic source-bond to leave the bare essence of their expressive content, and gradually unfold an abstract musical discourse.

Flow characteristics, both intrinsic to the sound and freely imposed by the listener's own natural sense of time, gradually unfold, leaving an impression of personal interpretation combined with the feeling of being a passenger, carried through the music.

*Little Animals* received first prize in the tape music category in the 1998 International Electroacoustic Music Competition, Bourges.

**Natasha Barrett** (1972) works fore-mostly with composition and creative uses of sound. Performed and commissioned throughout the world Barrett has collaborated with well known ensembles—such as the London Sinfonietta, Oslo Sinfonietta, Cikada and Ars Nova, scientists and designers, electronic performance groups and festivals. Her output spans concert composition

through to sound-art, sound-architecture, installations, interactive works, often incorporates latest technologies and includes a major work for the Norwegian state commission for art in public spaces. Whether writing for instrumental performers or electronic media her compositional aesthetics are derived from acousmatic issues focusing on the aural perception of detail, structure and potential meaning, and an interest in techniques that reveal detail the ear will normally miss. The composition and manipulation of space is a central element in much of this work. As a performer she works with electronics, improvisation and the interpretation of acousmatic works.

Barrett studied in England with Jonty Harrison and Denis Smalley for masters and doctoral degrees in composition. Both degrees were funded by the humanities section of the British Academy. Since 1999 Norway has been her compositional and research base for an international platform.

Her composition has received numerous recognitions, most notably the Giga-Hertz Prize, Germany (2008), Nordic Council Music Prize (Norden/Scandinavia, 2006), Edvard Prize (2004, Norway), Noroit-Leonce Petitot (Arras, France, 2002 & 1998), Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Awards (France 2008, 2006, 2001, 1998 & 1995), Musica Nova, Prague (2001), IV CIMESP (Brazil, 2001), Concours Scime, (France 2000), International Electroacoustic Creation Competition of Ciberart (Italy 2000), Concours Luigi Russolo (Italy 1995 & 1998), Prix Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria 1998), 9th International Rostrum for electroacoustic music (2002).

Her compositions are available on Aurora (ACD5056 and ACD5037), empreintes DIGITALes (IMED 0262), Euridice (EUCD026), Albedo (ALBCD024), CDCM Computer Music Series and Cultures Electroniques Bourges.

For more information: <http://www.natashabarrett.org/>

## **Adrian Moore**

[10' 20"]

## ***Study in Ink (1997)***

*Study in Ink* is a single source piece. The single sound source in question is an improvised recording of a pen against a white board. Whilst teaching in the classroom with a white board and marker pen, I noticed how, as the pen became dry, it began to make interesting noises. For many listeners this class of sounds are noises to avoid. However, it transpired that even a marker pen could create interesting noises that could be used musically. After the initial source recording process, the combination of tones and noises and their movement within the stereo field gave rise to quite complex material.

The majority of the sounds of the marker pen lie in the 1000 to 4000 hertz frequency range; one of the more sensitive regions of the ear. It was a matter of equalisation and simple computer treatment to obtain relationships of pitch, dynamics, speed and gesture. The pen moved from a wispy air-like sound through screeching tones and finally to a slip-grip grating sound.

In developing this material, I turned to frequency shifting to provide longer gestures over a wider frequency bandwidth. This hierarchy of gestures formed the basis of the work: long tones underpinning or overhanging smaller combinations of gestures.

The form of the work is centred on moments of tension and relaxation, moments of joy and moments of sadness, but always tinged with a little humour. The fleeting gestures of the pen are contrasted with sections of imposed rigidity including pulsed structures (6' 11" onwards). The natural pitch contour of the pen gives rise to some very human qualities such as sighing (descending gestures) and questioning (quick ascending gestures).

**Adrian Moore** is a composer of electroacoustic music. He mainly composes music for fixed formats (CD, DVD), music intended for ‘sound diffusion’ over multiple loudspeaker systems. He also writes for instruments, often with a live processing element using Max-MSP and custom built software. He directs the University of Sheffield Sound Studios (USSS) where researchers and composers collaborate on new musical projects. Adrian Moore’s research interests are focused towards the development of the acousmatic tradition in electroacoustic music, the performance of electroacoustic music, signal processing, and human-computer interaction in music. His music has been commissioned by the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM), the Institute International de Musique Electroacoustique de Bourges (IMEB) and the Arts Council of England. A significant proportion of his music is available on 2 discs, ‘Traces’ and ‘Rêve de l’aube’ on the Empreintes DIGITALes label (<http://www.electrocd.com/>).

**Denis Smalley**  
[15’ 10”]

## ***Wind Chimes (1987)***

The main sound source for *Wind Chimes* is a set of ceramic chimes found in a pottery during a visit to New Zealand in 1984. It was not so much the ringing pitches which were attractive but rather the bright, gritty, rich, almost metallic qualities of a single struck pipe or a pair of scraped pipes. These qualities proved a very fruitful basis for many transformations which prised apart and reconstituted their interior spectral design. Taking a single sound source and getting as much out of it as possible has always been one of my key methods for developing sonic coherence in a piece. Not that the listener is supposed to or can always recognize the source, but in this case the source is audible in its natural state near the beginning of the piece, and that ceramic quality is never far away throughout. Eventually, complementary materials were gathered in as the piece’s sound-families began to expand, among them a bass drum, very high metallic Japanese wind chimes, resonant metal bars, interior piano sounds, and some digital synthesis. The piece is centred on strong attacking gestures, types of real and imaginary physical motion (spinning, rotating objects, resonances which sound as if scraped or bowed, for example), contrasted with layered, more spacious, sustained textures whose poignant dips hint at a certain melancholy.

*Wind Chimes* was composed in the Electroacoustic Music Studio of the University of East Anglia (UK) in 1987, with computer sound transformations carried out on the digital system of Studio 123 of the Groupe de recherches musicales (GRM) in Paris (France) in 1986. It was premiered during the Electric Weekend at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London in September, 1987. This piece was first released in 1990 on the *Computer Music Current #5* compact disc on the Wergo label (WER 2025-2). *Wind Chimes* was commissioned by the South Bank Centre, London (UK).

**Denis Smalley** studied music at the University of Canterbury (New Zealand)—Diploma in organ performance, and MusB—and the Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand)—BMus honours in composition. He then taught music at Wellington College for three years prior to gaining a French Government bursary which enabled him to study in Paris (France) in 1971. He spent a year in Olivier Messiaen’s composition class at the Conservatoire de Paris (France), and at the same time took the electroacoustic music course run by the Groupe de recherches musicales (Ina-GRM). He was among the first composers to complete the newly established “Diplôme de musique électroacoustique et de recherche musicale.” He then moved to the UK, where he completed the DPhil in composition at the University of York. In 1975 he took up a Composition Fellowship at the University of East Anglia (Norwich, UK) and was appointed Lecturer in 1976 (Senior Lecturer from 1988), with special responsibility for electroacoustic composition activities and courses. In 1994 he was appointed Professor of Music and Head of the Department of Music at City University (London, UK).

His music has received a number of international awards: the Fylkingen Prize (Stockholm, Sweden, 1975), Bourges Electroacoustic Awards (France, 1977, 1983, 1992), the Special Prize of the International Confederation of Electroacoustic Music (CIME, 1983), Newcomp (USA, 1984), and the Golden Nica of Prix Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria, 1988).

He has taken a keen interest in the performance of electroacoustic music, and pioneered the concept of sound diffusion in the UK, developing the first sound diffusion system from 1976 at the University of East Anglia (Norwich, UK). For ten years from 1976 he was very active in promoting electroacoustic music in a number of concert tours for the Arts Council Contemporary Music Network, working with such composers as Sarah Walker (voice), John Tilbury (piano), Singcircle (with Trevor Wishart), John Wallace (trumpet; with Tim Souster). He has been responsible for the sound production for some key electroacoustic events, such as the *Electric Weekend on the South Bank* in London in 1987, and the BBC *Promenade* concert celebrating the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Electroacoustic Music Association of Great Britain—now Sonic Arts Network (SAN).

Denis Smalley is also notable as a writer on the aesthetics of electroacoustic music. In particular, he has developed the notion of “spectromorphology” (the shaping of sound spectra through time), expanding concepts initially articulated by Pierre Schaeffer in order to explain sonic relationships in their musical context. The most widely read article—*Spectromorphology: Explaining Sound-Shapes*—has been published in English, French and Italian. With Lelio Camilleri he conceived and edited the first publication in English devoted to the analysis of electroacoustic music. With Simon Emmerson he has been responsible for the entry on Electroacoustic Music in the new edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

## **Franics Dhomont** [12' 21"]

## ***Points de fuite* (1982)**

To Jean-Louis Ostrowski.

Term of perspective. The point of convergence of parallel lines.

Audition/reading on many levels:

1. technical (kinetic study: glides in tessitura, mutations of masses, of densities; modifications of timbre; energetic eruption/dispersion; spatial mobility);
2. impressionistic (encounters, crossings, fusion of heterogeneous events which carry similar connotations; trajectories, velocities, displacements; the near and the distant; the passage);
3. symbolic (flight: running away; departure, wandering, lapse, obliteration. The horizon, Kafka: *Disappearing—America*);
4. ad libitum...

*Points de fuite* (Vanishing Points) was realized at the composer's studio in Montréal in 1981-82 and was premiered on June 13th, 1982, at the 12th Bourges International Experimental Music Festival (France).

*Points de fuite* was awarded 2nd Prize at the 12th Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Competition (France, 1984), 1st Prize at the Brock University Tape Music Competition (St Catharines, Ontario, 1985), and was selected by the international jury of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) for the 1984 World Music Days in Montréal.

**Francis Dhomont** studied under Ginette Waldmeier, Charles Koechlin and Nadia Boulanger. In the late 40's, in Paris (France), he intuitively discovered with magnetic wire what Schaeffer would later call 'musique concrète' and consequently conducted solitary experiments with the musical possibilities of sound recording. Later, leaving behind instrumental writing, he dedicated himself exclusively to electroacoustic composition.

An ardent proponent of acousmatics, his work (since 1963) is comprised exclusively of works for tape bearing witness to his continued interest in morphological interplay and ambiguities between sound and the images it may create.

The Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec has awarded him a prestigious career grant. In 1999, he was awarded five first prizes for four of his recent works at international competition (Brazil, Spain, Italy, Hungary and Czech Republic). In 1997, as the winner of the Canada Council for the Arts' Lynch-Staunton Prize, he was also supported by the DAAD for a residence in Berlin (Germany). Five-time winner at the Bourges International Electroacoustic Music Competition (France)—the Magisterium Prize in 1988—and 2nd Prize at Prix Ars Electronica 1992 (Linz, Austria), he has received numerous other awards.

He is the editor of special issues published by Musiques & Recherches (Belgium) and of "Électroacoustique Québec: l'essor" (Québec Electroacoustics: The Expansion)—for Circuit (Montréal). Musical coeditor of the Dictionnaire des arts médiatiques (published by UQAM), he is also lecturer and has produced many radio programs for Radio-Canada and Radio-France.

In 1978-2005, he has divided his time between France and Québec, where he has taught at the Université de Montréal from 1980 to 1996. He now lives in Avignon (France) and regularly presents his works in France and abroad. Great traveller, he participates in several juries.

He is an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre (CMC, 1989) and a Founding Member (1986) and Honorary Member (1989) of the Canadian Electroacoustic Community (CEC).

He now focuses on composition and theory.

## **Denis Smalley**

[12' 51"]

## ***Pentes* (1974)**

The title *Pentes* (both French and Latin, meaning slopes, inclines, ascents) was suggested by the outlines of the broad stretches of the piece, which evoke the spaciousness of landscape. Most of the music was created by transforming instrumental sounds, but there are also synthesized sounds. However, the only recognizable sound source is the Northumbrian Pipes, whose drone is responsible for the slowly evolving harmonies out of which its haunting traditional melody appears.

*Pentes* was composed in 1974 in the studios of the Groupe de recherches musicales (Ina-GRM) and was premiered in 1975 in Paris (France). The piece was commissioned by the Groupe de recherches musicales (Ina-GRM).

With thanks to Jean-François Denis at DIFFUSION i MéDIA (<http://www.electrocd.com/>) for permission to reproduce some of the programme notes and biographies included in this programme.

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