

In his light-filled Sculpture Studio, Artist Brian Goggin

presents

The latest Project Artaud and Developing Environments Art-talk Salon

November 19, 2022

When: Saturday November 19, 2022, 2-5pm

Where: 401 Alabama St

2-3 - Art-talk (part 1): Thom Blum - Making Music with Found Sound, with piano music played by Hadley McCarroll

3-4 - Art-talk (part 2): Improvisation on and with the natural soundscape of “Jackhammer Park” (outside Brian’s studio)

4-5 - Gramophone music and mingle

Thom Blum (b. 1954, Columbus, Ohio) has been composing abstract electroacoustic and “tape music” since about 1973. He is primarily a self-taught composer but counts as his earliest mentors Curtis Roads, James Tenney, Earl Howard, and Ingram Marshall, all of whom he met while studying classical guitar and composition at California Institute of the Arts, in 1972. He’s lived in San Francisco since 1978 and composes from his studio, *In situ*.

Web: <https://www.thomblum.com>

Bandcamp: <https://thomblum.bandcamp.com>

Pianist **Hadley McCarroll**, hailed for her “... lively and exhilarating ...” pianism (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), is a well-known San Francisco Bay Area-based collaborative and solo pianist. She has performed in the United States and internationally with, among others: Alonzo King's LINES Ballet at the Chaillot Theater, Paris and the Joyce Theater in New York, the Royal Danish Opera, San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, and Utah Festival Opera. She has appeared at Festivals in the Olympic Peninsula and the Napa Festival del Sole. Quite active in the contemporary music scene, she has collaborated with Left Coast Ensemble, Composer’s Inc., and sfSound. Hadley has given solo performances ranging from *Sonatas and Interludes* by John Cage (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) to recitals of Beethoven, Ligeti, Liszt and Schumann at Old First Concerts.

<https://www.facebook.com/HadleyMcCarrollpianist/>

<https://www.youtube.com/thehadpiano>

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About this talk: “For Artaud: Making music with found sound”

I’ve been making concrete and abstract music and sound objects for the past forty-five years. By “concrete”, I mean that I have a predilection for composing music with found sounds, and I’ve embraced the notion introduced by John Cage, Luigi Russolo, Pierre Schaeffer, and others in the late 1930s and early 40s, that any sound can be considered a source for music if that suits the composer’s and listener’s intentions. I often use found sounds that I then edit and process using “tape music” techniques and computer-based tools.

In the 2-to-3 p.m. hour I’ll describe some of the notions and concepts I like to explore in composing, including using found sounds. I’ll play brief excerpts from audio postcards and other works to demonstrate. During this hour I’ll also invite pianist extraordinaire, Hadley McCarroll, to come and offer us some of the more and less traditional music for piano that supports or conveys similar notions.

During the 3-to-4 p.m. hour I’ll conclude the talking presentation, and spend the bulk of the hour gradually conjuring up an improvisation using and refracting the live ambient sound of “Jackhammer Park” adjacent to Brian’s sculpture studio. With luck and some patience we might be able to coax the environmental sounds into something (even more) pleasing to the ear. Joining again will be Hadley who will contribute piano passages when the moment calls out.

Note: Please consider bringing a beverage to share and some cash donation for the musicians (we will be passing the hat). Also, the Art-talk will take place outdoors. Your health is our concern. Please do not come if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID.

Note II: If it rains we will reschedule for December 3

Project Artaud
401 Alabama Street
The Sculpture Studio #123
San Francisco, CA
www.metaphorm.org









PRELUDE MUSIC 8 minutes

Toru Takemitsu "Breeze" 1 min
Chopin Preludes, Op. 28 #13 3 min
Janáček "Our Evenings" 4 min

FIRST SET 60 minutes

Introduction 10 minutes- Defining "Found Sound"

What does it mean, "found sound"?

The term gained prominence in the late 1940s when John Cage and others introduced the idea that any sound found anywhere could be considered music.

In around 1948 Cage wrote his three-movement piece for piano, **4'33**, which consists only and entirely of sounds made by the audience and the environment, while the performer sits in stillness at the silent piano for 4 minutes and 33 seconds. This remains the ultimate concrete music for found sound. This and Luc Ferrari's 1970 tape music composition, *Presque Rien* ("Almost Nothing"). Both works lit the modern musical culture, at the time, on fire; or at least caused it to heat up quite a bit...

The notion of the potential for any sound to become a musical one came even earlier in the 1930s when Luigi Russolo introduced a small corner of the world's cultures to the idea of "noise music". And of course Edgard Varèse in the 1920s quieted his critics, who claimed his work was not music, by choosing to refer to his compositions as "organized sound".

But returning to the term "found sound", when I hear that term I tend to translate it as, "found [FOR MUSICAL PURPOSES] sound".

So my definition of "found sound" is any sound you encounter in the world and interpret as music or in a musical way. And found sound compositions are pieces created using found sound, either live, like Cage's **4'33**, or that has been recorded and later made into a music composition, like, Ferrari's *Presque Rien*.

In a John Cage sense, **found sound is encountered by chance. But it's by intention that you hear it as music.**

There is a spectrum of music for found sound

+ On one end you have **the pure or concrete use of the found sound.** The surf found is what you hear in the music, with no or only minor alterations. This is the end of the spectrum where you find **MUSIQUE CONCRETE.**

+ On the other end of this spectrum you have **abstract or interpreted references** to the found sound. Found sound is a source of inspiration. The composition models or symbolizes the sound of the forest, but the source itself isn't present or, if it is, it isn't recognizable in the result.

+ In about the middle of the spectrum you get a **kind of hybrid.** For example the found sound may provide an initial input to a process but the output of that process is an altered or "impure" version of the original found sound, the source. And this output becomes a note or a sound in the resulting composition.

This afternoon we'll be hearing examples that range across this spectrum of music for found sound.

INTRODUCE HADLEY HERE – She will be playing some pieces for piano that demonstrates the more abstract, interpretive end of the “Found Sound” spectrum, where found sounds also served to inspire the composer.

*** Hadley says something here on the subject, if desired.

Abstract travelogues 30 minutes

Starting in the '90s I began writing what I called “audio postcards” or “abstract travelogues,” built from indigenous sounds that I recorded on location around the world, interpreted & modified in an attempt to construct music that conveys an essence of a place, so that the sounds of that place are nestled or sculpted into a musical structure. Bending the sounds through the lens of my experience, each of these postcard pieces is experiential while also being abstractions of a specific place.

An opening and closing form that I adopted for the first two of my audio postcards was based on the travel experience, beginning with my entry into the places and ending with my exits from them. In these travelogues, recordings of the transportation I used into and out of the places proved to be an effective way to the advance story line. SAY A BIT

ABOUT OPENING OF *JAPANESE POSTCARD* AND THE FUSING OF THE JET ENGINE WITH THE GAGAKU'S SHO (WIND) INSTRUMENT.

Japanese Postcard 2 minutes (excerpt - ~1:10 to 3:15)

AND ABOUT THE OPENING OF *MAROC* – THE POET/MADMAN ON THE TRAIN OUT AND LAST CALL FROM THE MINARETS.

Maroc 2 minutes (excerpt, last minute or so)

Bartók Night Music 5 minutes

The postcard pieces are travelogues for the ear – taken from the musical genre known as acousmatic music or, “cinema for the ear”. These pieces sometimes use folkloric found sound - specific sounds that not only indigenous but emblematic of the place they're captured. This is true of my brief 4-minute India sound journal called *Post from Rajasthan*.

Post from Rajasthan 4 minutes

Reena Esmail Rang de Basant 7 minutes

Abstract work 13 minutes

Purely abstract pieces: challenges or musical problems I'd like to solve so that I can actually hear how they work out- they are more experimental than experiential. I modify and manipulate source recordings to an extreme, leaving the original source unrecognizable. Sounds reference nothing outside the composition; each sound relates only to itself and to the other sounds.

Cascade and Couplings excerpts

Lachenmann Bell Tower + Shadow Dance (7 minutes)

Extramusical work **7 minutes**

Other inspirations that have fueled my composing are **extra-musical**: some physical phenomenon (combustion), Using tiny bits and pieces drawn from both found and purely synthesized sounds, I modeled sounds of gasses/fuels, oxygen and sparks/ignitions. Then I combined these in sequences that either fail to combust, or instead cause a continuous chain reaction... for a while.

Combustible 4 minutes (excerpt)

SECOND SET 60 minutes

PRELUDE

Spanish Panoramas 2 minutes (excerpt)

Chopin *Prelude op. 28/15 "Raindrop"* 6 minutes

BRIEF INTRO TO THE IMPROV - MAKING MUSIC WITH PURE AND ALTERED FOUND SOUND

Improvisation **30 minutes** (to include John Cage "Dream")

Q&A **15 minutes**