

## PAPERS 8 Contemporary theatre practice through sound

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Chair – Ross Brown  
THUR 12.00-13.30 | RR4

### ***Hearing the scene*** John Downie

As a theatre maker, working between live and mediated performance, John Downie is particularly stimulated by the scenographic energy provided by aurality as a central principle within dramaturgical structure, within a context of sustained narrative /montage. His interest is in dense and extended verbal text and how it tests and dilates performers, and perpetually shifts representational performance towards the rhetorical and the cinematic.

This paper will be illustrated with reference to three or four pieces generated from a New Zealand/Pacific context: Fire, an extended image of the burning of the New Zealand bush by European settlement in the 1880s; Innocence of Light, which follows the experience of silent film-makers encountering the Pacific in the 1920s and The Fifth Voyage of Gulliver, a scrambled, mobile voice of the ageing voyager, confronted by a suicidal society of giant flightless birds, on which Downie worked with composer Dugal McKinnon on how to retain the coherence of narrative within a disintegrating vocal and environmental experience.

### ***Theatre making and real-time sound composition*** Barry Edwards

An account of Edwards' experiments in making theatre performance that works with a sound score composed in real-time.

A key principle that underpins the rules of engagement for this collaboration between sound and theatre is that all the sound to be used in the composition and the processing must be sourced during the performance itself. The performance (and that includes the sound) takes place in a diegetic world, in which there are the sounds of the performance itself but also a thick texture of non-performance noise.

Edwards recounts his early experiments with the granular synthesiser Granulab through to the more sophisticated possibilities offered by MaxMSP and explains how sound came to be used in more and more complex ways (percussive, pitch, harmonics). He will illustrate this with video examples from some of his recent performances, showing how this approach to theatre sound composition has worked with traffic noise, with virtuoso musicians, with voice and with words.

### ***There's something out there! The transposition of visual style into sonic stimuli for a stage adaptation of The Evil Dead*** Robert Dean, Rob Smith and Ben Challis

In February 2009 the Atrium Theatre in Cardiff presented a stage adaptation of Sam Raimi's cult horror film The Evil Dead in which an evil presence – represented through a series of demon's-eye-view low dolly shots – approaches and withdraws from its unwitting victims. This visual motif, combined with rapid edits, innovative camera angles and frenetic tilt-panning created a disorienting rollercoaster ride for the audience.

The challenge for adapting these films for theatre was developing alternative means of generating the atmosphere by creating a sonic atmosphere consisting of live sound effects, a 'deadite' choir, and a semi-improvised musical score employing a variety of electronic instruments and sound generators. This paper discusses the sonic techniques the team developed to transpose the sensations of tension, movement, relentlessness, menace and danger into a live performance.