

BARRY ANDERSON, 1935–1987

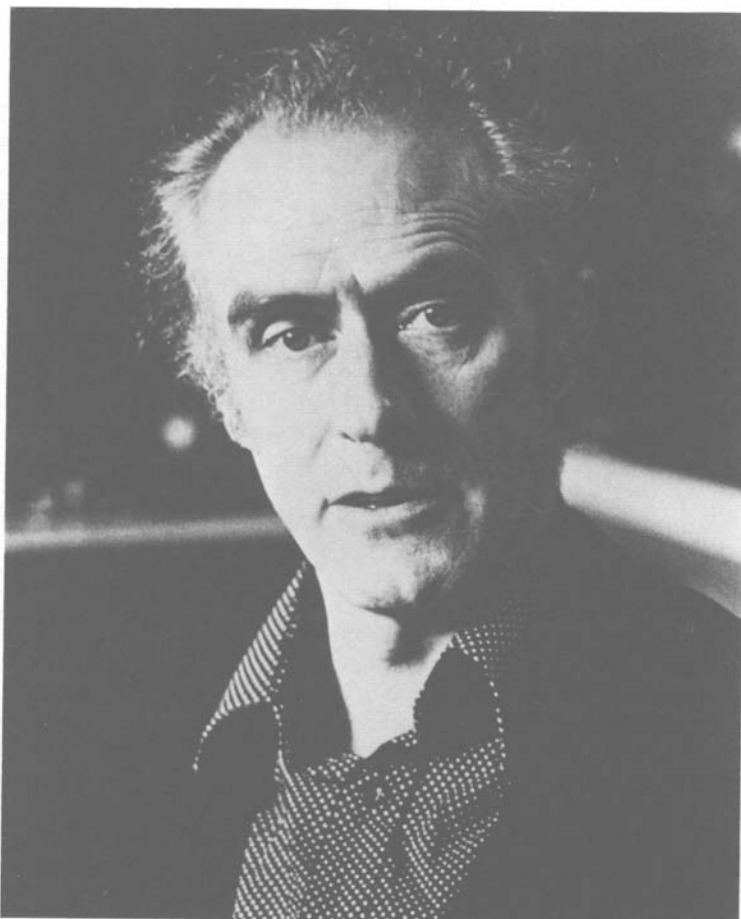
Stephen Montague

BARRY ANDERSON died in Paris on 27 May 1987, a few hours after the first performance of his new chamber work, *ARC*. His hectic life-style with its incessant demands had burned him out. The immediate cause of death was heart failure, but the real cause was exhaustion from years of overwork as a composer, teacher, concert organizer, 'ghost' writer, and pioneer in the dissemination of electro-acoustic music in this country. He was 52 years old and, sadly, just beginning to be recognized as a composer of international stature.

Michael Barrie Gordon Anderson was born on 22 February, 1935 in the town of Stratford, New Zealand, the fifth of six children. His father was a well-known civil engineer who built roads and bridges, eventually becoming the Senior Civil Engineer for the New Zealand Government. His mother was a fine amateur pianist, who once performed the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto with the New Zealand Symphony. It was her interest in music that encouraged the young Anderson to pursue music. He started piano lessons at the age of six and by his early teens was doing small tours of New Zealand, playing the standard concert repertoire.

In 1952, at the age of 17, Anderson won a New Zealand scholarship to spend four years in London studying piano at the Royal Academy of Music in preparation for a concert career. During that time he also spent several summers in Switzerland doing further study with the legendary Edwin Fischer, and masterclasses with Alfred Brendel and Paul Badura-Skoda. Along with his piano studies, however, was an increasing interest in composition. Although he had never studied composition formally, he had been composing and improvising as a kind of extension of his piano studies since his teens. At the R.A.M. the discovery of Bartók's piano music was a revelation which excited him both as a performer and an aspiring composer. Anderson later recalled, in fact, that he was the first pianist to perform the Bartók Sonata at the Academy (a performance that won praise from many of his colleagues, including Richard Rodney Bennett and Cornelius Cardew).

He left the Academy in 1956, deciding not to return to New Zealand and also deciding that, in spite of his pianistic talent, he did not have the right temperament for the precarious life of an aspiring concert pianist. He settled in England, trying to make ends meet by teaching privately in London, then for three years he lived in Gloucestershire where among other things he made handmade furniture for the sculptor Lynn Chadwick. His interest in composing, however, continued to grow and during that period he began to work on a full scale opera, *Maui*. In 1962 he moved back to London and began trying to establish himself as a composer. The 1960's were the formative years of his compositional development. His image of himself as a pianist waned, his technique as a composer grew. His earlier interest in Stravinsky and Bartók gave way to the complex serialism of Webern, Boulez, and Stockhausen. Part-time jobs teaching piano at the



South Bank Institute, Goldsmiths' College, and City Literary Institute provided sustenance for his development as a composer.

It was during this period that Anderson became associated with The Mouth of Hermes ensemble, and first heard Stockhausen's large electronic work *Kontakte*, which impressed him profoundly. He was excited by the potential of music with electronics, but there was frustratingly little opportunity to pursue such interests in London at that time. In all of Britain only a handful of studios existed. However, in 1971 he was given a full-time appointment at the South Bank Institute (since 1980 part of Morley College) and set up a small studio at West Square, near Elephant & Castle, in a school where Charlie Chaplin was once a student. The original studio consisted of a borrowed EMS Synthi-AKG synthesizer, a microphone, and a couple of tape recorders. His first class had ten students. But by 1975 he felt the quality of student had reached a high enough standard to officially form the West Square Electronic Music Ensemble. Their first large-scale concert was given at St. John's Smith Square that same year and was well received by the press. From that point the ensemble began a regular season of concerts, commissioned numerous works, did a 1983 Arts Council Network Tour, and several BBC recordings. Numerous outstanding performers and composers worked with the WSQ Ensemble, including Jane Manning, Barry Guy, Harry Sparnaay, Robert Saxton, Edwin Roxburgh, Kathryn Lukas, James Fulkerson, Simon Limbrick, and others.

In 1979 Anderson along with several others founded the Electro-Acoustic Music Association of Great Britain (EMAS), the first electro-acoustic music association of its kind in the world and an organization which, in recent years, has served as the model for similar associations in Europe and North America. Barry Anderson was elected its first Chairman. It was about this

time that he began to emerge as a world class composer and an acknowledged expert in electronic music. Numerous composers sought his advice and Anderson often amicably 'ghosted' the electronic parts of their scores (over 20 by his count). He was generous to a flaw with his knowledge and expertise—a trait which, in some cases, led to outright exploitation.

In 1981 Harrison Birtwistle approached Anderson to work on the integral electronic sound elements for his opera, *The Mask of Orpheus*. This was essential as Birtwistle had no experience in dealing first-hand with the complex world of computer music, so it was vital that he collaborate with a composer who did if an electronic component of the opera were to be realized. For the next four years Anderson spent the better part of his time working on this massive project in Paris at IRCAM, the world's largest computer music centre. The result was a great critical success, the opera winning for Birtwistle the prestigious 1986 \$150,000 Grawemeyer Award in the United States. Anderson's contribution was hailed by the *New Yorker* as 'some of the most exciting electronic music composition to have come from IRCAM'.

The collaboration with Birtwistle was a watershed for Anderson, however. It represented the culmination, and the end, of over a decade of working with composers with little or no skill in electronic music, and a role often not properly acknowledged by the media or even by some of the composers he had helped. In Paul Griffith's book *New Sounds, New Personalities*, for instance, Birtwistle talks about the importance of working in an electronic studio but demeans the role of his technical collaborator as '... only the performer'. Anderson found it frustrating that the vital collaborative/compositional/technical role he played in the creation of *The Mask of Orpheus* was not properly acknowledged in the opera's subsequent success, nor in the citation of the Grawemeyer Award.

After this experience Anderson decided it was time to start afresh, drop most of his teaching at Morley College, and devote himself to full-time composition of just his own works. It was clear that his star was rising. He was in demand. There were several outstanding commissions including a large one from IRCAM which had been postponed several years because of his work on the opera. In addition he had become a member of the Steering Committee for the National Studio for Electronic Music project on the South Bank, he was making plans for a new season of concerts and tours with his WSQ Electronic Music Ensemble, and was also planning a trip to the USA. He had been invited to be the Guest Editor of the live-electronics issue for *Contemporary Music Review*. But he had probably not sufficiently recovered from the frantic work on *Mask of Orpheus* when he launched headlong into nine months of intensive work on his IRCAM commission, *ARC*. The race to finish by the deadline, symbolically beginning a new chapter in his career, took the ultimate toll on his system.

ARC was completed, but, by all accounts, was given a somewhat shaky première in Paris. Several months later, under better conditions, it was given its British première and recorded for BBC in London at the South Bank's Electric Weekend by the Dutch bass clarinetist Harry Sparnaay, with members of the London Sinfonietta and West Square Electronic Music Ensemble with Stephen Montague conducting.

* * *

Barry Anderson left about 20 works as his creative legacy. His compositional style matured slowly; but while his output was not large, it contains some first-rate compositions and works that should be studied and performed more often.

His first work beyond his early student compositions is an opera, *Maui* (1959–64), which is a series of tableaux woven around stories of the Polynesian peoples of the South Pacific. Maui is a kind of hero-god, represented on stage by a large statue with a loudspeaker inside. The singer is never seen, but his voice booms out over the rest of the cast in appropriate god-like manner. This 'last of his early works'—as he called it—it was very much influenced by Bartók and Stravinsky.

Anderson's first acknowledged work in the stylistic area he was to use for the next two decades is *Sound Frames* (1964–66) for chamber ensemble. From his earliest encounters with Webern's work and the post-Webern movement, he had been intrigued by complex shapes and structures. An early BBC recording of Boulez's *Structures* in 1956 had made quite an impression on Anderson, and *Sound Frames* was his initiation into that camp. It is a complex score of 144 bars of events (or

'sound frames', as he preferred to call them) but, in his own words, perhaps a little too close to the work of Boulez and Stockhausen for complete comfort. Nevertheless it is tightly-structured and carefully thought-out, with some exciting instrumental writing.

The three *Piano Pieces 1,2,3* (1969-74) are the first compositions that Anderson felt entirely comfortable with, and are not only his first substantial pieces, but first-rate works for the instrument. They were conceived as a large composition of three movements—although any one of the three can be performed separately, and often have been. *Piano Piece 2* (1969) was actually the first to be written, and is the only one of the three without electronics. *Piano Piece 1* is scored for piano and tape; evidently it was conceived as the first of the group in the late 1960's, but because of the lack of opportunity to use an electronic studio, not completed until 1974 when he had the WSQ Studio. *Piano Piece 3* is scored for piano with live electronics: a ring modulator performed in tandem with the pianist, and is his first work to use so-called 'live-electronics' in what is still seen as quite an adventurous use of that technology. Between beginning work on *Piano Pieces 1,2,3* in 1969 and their completion in 1974, Anderson wrote *Songs Penyeach*, a setting of James Joyce's *Pomes Penyeach* for mezzo soprano, amplified violin, bass clarinet, and percussion, in 1971. Harmonically it continues further penetration into the post-serial style, but this time there are no bar lines, and the vertical alignment is less strict. The notational system experiments with hollow note heads standing for flats instead of the usual \flat sign (a practice he also used in *Piano Piece 3*, but fortunately dropped in subsequent works). This is his first work to use electronics in an electro-acoustic sense. The violin is amplified not just to make it louder (as had been the case in the voice of Maui) but to change its timbre by magnifying the subtle resonances of the instrument. The voice, significantly, is not amplified.

Topograph, written in 1973 for three percussion groups, filters, and ring modulators, is graphically notated, not unlike some of the Stockhausen scores of that period. A couple of years later, in fact, the Stockhausen influence continued when Anderson did the first of six realizations of Stockhausen's *Solo* for melody instrument and complex tape delay system: these served almost as etudes in the development of his own work. But his first real masterwork of that period is *Mask* (1976, rev. 1985) for flutes, 2 percussion, electronics, speaker, tape, and a large Northwest American Indian mask painted in bright primary colours. As the piece unfolds, the lights on the mask change, transforming the facial features dramatically. It is a large work in every sense—over half an hour long with its focal point the 10-foot mask standing centre-stage in the darkened hall. A large multi-channel sound system is required (the original tape having been completely re-mixed in 1985 at IRCAM); the solo flautist uses bass, alto, C, and piccolo flutes; two large percussion batteries are demanded as well as several additional personnel to run the electronics, and near the end a storyteller appears (reciting the text, by Paul Hyland). It is one of Anderson's most powerful and effective creations.

Anderson collaborated again with the poet Paul Hyland two years later, in a BBC commission to realize his poem cycle *Domingus* in a gripping electronic setting for radio. Anderson's only non-electronic pieces after the *Piano Piece 2* of 1969 are *En Face De...1* commissioned by Jane Manning and Barry Guy in 1976 (although he later did a second version, adding electronics), and *Colla Voce*, a commission from Jane Manning for a solo vocal composition.

His other major work of this period is *Proscenium* (1978/79, rev. 1983) for solo percussionist, live electronics, tape delay, and computer-generated tape. Like many of his works, this was forever being revised as further performances were booked, and it was revised to its present form for the 1983 Arts Council Tour, when the tape was redone on the superior facilities at IRCAM. It was recorded by Simon Limbrick and the WSQ Ensemble for the BBC and remains, with *Mask*, as one of Anderson's best scores from the 1970's.

His trombone and tape piece, *Sound the Tucket Sonance and the Note to Mount* (1980)—the title taken from Shakespeare's *Henry V*—was the last composition he did before embarking on his extended work at IRCAM in 1982. However, during that next period, he did produce two more works: *Electro-Acoustic Fanfare* (1983), a short, (96-second) fanfare for the SPNM's 40th anniversary gala at the Barbican Centre, London; and an elegant collaborative piece, *Windows* (1984), which is an electronic tape work incorporating multiple slide projections by Adrian Bartlett, an artist teaching at Morley College.

From 1982 to 1986, however, Anderson spent most of his time working on the electronic

Handwritten musical score for Barry Anderson's Piano Piece 2, measures 14-20. The score is written on five staves, with the top two staves for the right hand and the bottom three for the left hand. Measure numbers 14 through 20 are indicated at the bottom of the staves. The score includes various dynamics such as *mf*, *ff*, *pp*, and *sffz*. Performance instructions include "Senza ped" (without pedal) and "ben marcato" (well marked). Specific annotations include "touch 5th harmonic node on G flat string with R.H. strike key with L.H." and "partially dampen sound by drawing hand across strings - bass upwards." There are also markings for "ped" (pedal) and "Senza ped" with arrows indicating when to use or not use the pedal. The score shows complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, with some notes marked with 'x' for accents or specific articulation. The bottom of the page has a note: "the player may release time sound at these two points - some of the early bass resonance should remain to the final pedal release".

A page from Barry Anderson's Piano Piece 2, in the composer's autograph.

elements for *Mask of Orpheus*, a collaborative role with Birtwistle which needs some explanation: his role in the creation of the opera still seems to be a difficult concept for both the public and press to grasp, and was never satisfactorily explained in print during Anderson's lifetime. Traditionally, of course, a composer writes music without assistance. Composers like Gershwin, true, had help orchestrating their works, but before the advent of electronic technology the concept of composition as a true collaboration of two composers was rare. The world of electronic music, however, has changed that. IRCAM, in fact, is predicated on the principle that a visiting composer working in the centre has the help of a collaborative/compositional assistant for the duration of his visit. The assistant is a composer who has spent years working with complex computer systems and knows the IRCAM systems well. As Stephen MacAdams at IRCAM explains:*

Many of the visiting composers at IRCAM have no working knowledge of a computer at all, so they rely totally on an assigned composer/collaborator to create sounds they can perhaps only verbally describe, as, for example, 'Something that sounds like "the voice of God"'. It is like standing in front of a massive orchestra of instruments they have never heard or seen and finding it can only understand a language they don't know. The sounds are limitless but nothing can be done without help. Help from a computer technician who is not a composer, however, would be a disaster since he would probably only do exactly what the composer asked. The result, undoubtedly primitive and unsatisfactory. What ideally happens, however, is that help comes from a composer/collaborator who enters into the compositional process by using the visiting composer's general verbal analogies as triggers for his own creative ideas and imagination. The process should be called 'realization by successive approximations'. He may experiment and work on various ideas and complex sound realizations for a 'voice of God' for weeks or months before presenting them to the composer, usually in several versions. The composer listens, deciding how close they are to what he had in mind, then they work together in periods, the composer continuing to verbally describe or write out what he thinks he wants, his collaborator going away to the computer interpreting, modifying, and creating sounds and structures that seem to work. Often during this process new sounds and ideas created by the collaborator emerge which lead the composer in completely new directions.

This is an apt description of the process of the Birtwistle/Anderson collaboration. From its beginnings in the 1970's Birtwistle had planned to use electronics at certain points in the opera, but it was an area in which he was always going to need help. When work began on *Mask of Orpheus* at IRCAM in 1982 there was no score for the nearly one hour of electronic elements that ultimately found their way into the opera. Birtwistle's ideas for the sounds he wanted were expressed only in the form of vague verbal analogies. So, after an initial period with Birtwistle, Anderson spent months of intensive work, experimentation, and composition, combining these ideas with his own keen creative senses, ultimately creating the fantastic sound-world in which *Orpheus* grew. Over the next few years Anderson and Birtwistle worked on these areas, feeding off each other's inspiration, and developing one of the most outstanding collaborations in recent times.

In addition to the satisfaction of completing this large project, the years of intense work on the opera also gave Anderson a solid mastery of IRCAM's resources, and a great deal of international attention. *ARC* was to be the beginning of his fully mature period. This quintet for bass clarinet and string quartet was a final attempt at exploring one of the areas that had always interested Anderson: the difficulty of blending the worlds of acoustic (live instruments) and electro-acoustic sound. In *Sound the Tucket...* he felt that he had gotten close, but in *ARC* his full energies went into trying to get this idea to work. He wanted a unified sound world in which the live instruments were as easily at home in an electro-acoustic environment as the reverse. To this end the computer-generated tapes took as their source material sounds from the instruments of the ensemble: bass clarinet, and strings. The instruments were amplified and sent through reverberation to give them compatibility with the electronic sounds. It was convincing and worked beautifully.

Since his death, an appreciation of the tremendous contribution Barry Anderson made to electro-acoustic music in this country seems to be growing, and the interest in his music continues to keep pace. *ARC* has been given a second performance in London, and is scheduled for several further ones. The BBC is devoting a couple of programmes to his music, and two CD's of it are being planned for Continuum Records. A Barry Anderson Memorial Trust has been set up to encourage young composers to work in electro-acoustic music, and a cassette of

*In an interview with the present writer conducted on 10 September 1987 for the memorial concert for Barry Anderson broadcast on BBC Radio 3's 'Music in Our Time'. The passage quoted here was not in fact used in the programme as finally edited.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "TEMPO". The score is organized into a grid with eight columns, each representing a different instrument or audio channel. The columns are labeled as follows:

- violin 1**: Contains a violin staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. It features various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *f* and *g/tra*.
- violin 2**: Similar to violin 1, with a violin staff and musical notation.
- viola**: Contains a viola staff with a C-clef and musical notation.
- cello**: Contains a cello staff with a C-clef and musical notation.
- brass, clarinet**: A combined staff for brass and clarinet instruments, featuring a treble clef and musical notation.
- amp**: An empty staff, likely representing an amplifier channel.
- reverb**: An empty staff, likely representing a reverb effect.
- tape 4 ch**: A staff representing a 4-channel tape recording, showing a dense, textured waveform.

At the bottom of the grid, there are several horizontal lines and a small box containing the number "1". A handwritten note "Tape 2 insert" is located at the bottom right of the grid. The score is filled with intricate musical notation, including notes, rests, and various performance instructions.

One system from Barry Anderson's ARC, in the composer's autograph.

his works is available through EMAS at 10 Stratford Place, London W1A 9AE. Anderson's complete works will shortly be available at the British Music Information Centre along with recordings of most of his works.

Complete Work-List

MAUI	1959-64	full length opera based on Polynesian legends of the Pacific
SOUND FRAMES	1964-66	for instrumental ensemble (10 players) first performed Camden Festival, May '69
SONGS PENYEACH	1971	setting of two James Joyce's <i>Pomes Penyeach</i> , for mezzo-soprano, amplified violin, bass clarinet, and percussion first performed New Zealand House, Feb. '71
PIANO PIECES 1,2,3	1969-74	for piano, tape mix, and sine tone ring modulation first performed (in entirety) St. John's Smith Sq., London, June '75
TOPOGRAPH	1973	for 3 percussion groups, filters, and ring modulators first performed Nettlefold Hall, London, May, '73
SYNTAXIS-MIX	1973	<i>The Menace of the Flower</i> for 8-channel tape mix first performed Nettlefold Hall, London, May, '73
SUNTAMER	1974	setting of Maori creation myths for storyteller, tape mix, electronics, piano, and percussion first performed Morley College, London, April, '74
MASK	1976 (revised 85)	for solo flautist (bass, alto, and piccolo), electronic modulation, percussion, speaker, and 5 tape channels, stage and lighting schedule; text by Paul Hyland first performed St. John's Smith Sq., London, May, '76
EN FACE DE.... 1	1976	for soprano and double bass first performed Birmingham Arts Lab, Dec. '76
EN FACE DE.... 2	1977	for soprano and double bass with tape delay, electronic modulation, and 4-channel tape first performed Round House, London, June, '77
COLLA VOCE	1978	for solo soprano first performed Sonic Arts Circus, Auckland, April, '78
DOMINGUS	1978	BBC commission—electro-acoustic tape realization of poem cycle, <i>Domingus</i> , by Paul Hyland first broadcast BBC Radio 3 Dec. '79
PROSCENIUM	1978-79 (revised -83)	for solo percussion, electronic modulation, tape delay, and 2-channel tape original version first performed St. John's Smith Sq., London, Jan. '79 revised version first performed Bloomsbury Theatre, London, Dec. '83
SOUND THE TUCKET SONANCE AND THE NOTE TO MOUNT	1980	for solo trombone and 2-channel tape first performed Park Lane Group, Purcell Room, London, Jan. '80
ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC FANFARE	1983	for 2-channel tape first performed, SPNM 40th anniversary Gala, Barbican, London, May, '83

WINDOWS	1984	for sound and vision—2-channel tape and slide projections (Adrian Bartlett) <i>first performance, Morley College, May, '84</i>
THE MASK OF ORPHEUS (Harrison Birtwistle)	1982–86	realization of the electronic elements for the opera <i>first performed, ENO, London, May, 1986</i>
ARC	1987	for string quartet, bass clarinet, computer generated and processed sound tapes <i>first performed by Harry Sparnaay and Ars Viva Quartet, French Radio, Paris, May, 1987</i>

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	2) for double bass (Barry Guy)	St. John's 9.5.76
	3) for voice (Jane Manning)	Round House 20.6.77
	4) for oboe (Edwin Roxburgh)	St. John's 19.1.79
	5) for bass clarinet (Harry Sparnaay)	St. John's 31.10.81
	6) for trombone (James Fulkerson)	St. John's 12.12.81

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