



Beatrice Gibson

'if the route': The Great Learning of London [a taxi opera]

Friday 9 March 2007, 7.30pm

A collaboration between artist Beatrice Gibson and musician Jamie McCarthy, *The Great Learning* is a live performance piece and radio work in seven parts based on the tradition of calling over in The Knowledge (the infamous London cabbie navigation system and mnemonic device).

A complex and fascinating mathematics of the everyday, The Knowledge involves learning 320 routes or runs mapped within a six-mile radius of Charing Cross. On completing the knowledge a total of 26,000 miles will have been travelled and a total of 30,000 streets memorized as a networked configuration in the mind.

Calling over entails that after the completion of the days run[s], students must call them out, reciting them out loud. Partners form to call over runs to one another, using recital and repetition in preparation for 'appearances' [tests] at the Public Carriage Office. Knowledge Point on Caledonian road, one of several taxi universities students may attend, whose curriculum includes a series of mnemonic devices to aid learning is filled with pairs of men and increasingly the odd woman aurally reciting sets of directions to one another. Entering it is to be surrounded by the city fragmented and auralized into sets of sentences and street names, a veritable symphony, performing the city as text.

Using calling over as the principle sound source for the piece and working collaboratively with taxi drivers from Knowledge Point, the performance of *The Great Learning* celebrates and elaborates this formidable everyday system and poetic re-contextualizing it within in the space of the gallery.

The Great Learning plays on the title of the influential score of the same name by the radical 60's composer and musician Cornelius Cardew. Cardew's work was rooted in belief of the democratic potential of music as a social platform. His version of the *Great Learning* was a score in seven paragraphs, rooted in and acoustically generated by the Confucian text of the same name. In keeping with and paying homage to the spirit of Cardew's original score and the political gesture of experimental composition, Gibson and McCarthy have used both aural and non aural elements of research into The Knowledge as the generative principle behind composition. The score for the piece has been developed for implementation by musicians and non musicians alike, providing the basis for realisation of both the live performance and the radio works. Seven practitioners from differing fields have been invited to use and translate the score according to their own personal and varying interpretations. Participants include architect Celine Condorelli, artist Beatrice Gibson, musician and composer Kaffe Matthews, musician Jamie McCarthy, artist and writer, Tom McCarthy, taxi driver, Simon Phillips, and architect and theorist, Eyal Weizman,



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The Great Learning Radio work will be broadcast on Resonance FM 104.4 from the 15 March to the 26 April.

thegreatlearning.org