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| Ruttmann, Walter (1889–1941) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Born in Frankfurt, Ruttmann studied architecture and design, and started his career as a painter and lithographer before turning to film. His earliest films, *Lichtspiel*: *Opus I-IV* (1921–1925) were composed of animated shapes made of cardboard, wood, and plasticine. Some of these films were hand-coloured. They are quite close in conception and execution to the experiments in ‘absolute film’ — or ‘optical music’ — developed by Hans Richter (the *Rhythmus* series) and Viking Eggeling (*Diagonal Symphony*, 1922) in the early 1920s. The success of the *Lichtspiel* series earned Ruttmann commercial film commissions. He designed some special effects for Lotte Reiniger’s silhouette animation *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926) and made an animated sequence for Fritz Lang’s *Die Nibelungen* (1924).  Ruttman’s fame, however, rests on his participation in *Berlin: Symphonie of a Great City* (*Berlin: Simphonie der Grossstadt*, 1927), an emblematic city film scripted by Carl Mayer and filmed mostly by Karl Freund, which Ruttmann himself edited. Occasionally criticized for its detached, superficial rendition of urban life, the film was successful with audiences and immensely influential on subsequent filmmakers. |
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| Further reading:  (Cowan) |