

International Symposium »This is Channel Earth'–100 Years of Radio Drama International«

Saturday, September 24, and Sunday, September 25, 2022

Abstracts

María Mercedes Di Benedetto (Argentina): The Radio Drama in Argentina

Continuous and definitive broadcasting, with cultural content, was born in Argentina on August 27, 1920, thanks to a team led by Dr. Enrique Susini, then 29 years old. In that decade radio fiction also began, with plays adapted to radio and texts written especially to be listened to. A new handcrafted profession is also born: the room sound engineer.

The golden age of Argentine radio drama spans a decade between the 1940s and 1950s, coinciding with the presidency of Juan Domingo Perón and the brief life of Eva Duarte, wife of the President and female leader, a well-known and beloved radiodrama actress. These are times when a strong imprint of cultural identity circulates in the cinema, tango, bolero, radio and photonovela. Radio drama thus accompanies the destiny of the masses and social outcasts, who instinctively feel that radio melodrama represents and redeems them.

Finally, the arrival of television and the censorship by de facto military governments in the 60s put an end to this massive genre that disappears from the radio offer, and that is only reborn today thanks to the appearance of the podcast and new technologies.

Dr. Dragoş Carasevici (Romania): The reception of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's radio plays in Romania

Compared to his prose, Friedrich Dürrenmatt's drama has always been a fairly discreet presence on the Romanian book market. In the theater and on the radio, however, the situation was very different: Dürrenmatt was played quite intensively on the Romanian stages in the 1960s and 1970s, but then the Swiss author fell into oblivion in the 1980s - with the exception of the radio medium. Be it by rebroadcasting some of his radio plays, such as »A Dangerous Game« or »Hercules and the Augean Stables« (adapted for Romanian radio in the 1960s), or by rebroadcasting radio adaptations of his plays (such as »The Visit«, 1974) or even through new productions (»Incident at Twilight«, 1983), Dürrenmatt's theatrical work survived the darkest years of Romanian Communism. Along with the decline in the Romanian radio play tradition in the 1990s, Dürrenmatt's radio plays also faded into the background. Fortunately, they were rediscovered in the new century - but this time in book form.

Prof. Tim Crook (UK): R E Jeffrey – Pioneer of Science Fiction in British Broadcasting

R. E. Jeffrey is a forgotten figure in the history of British Broadcasting. He was the BBC's first Director of Dramatic Productions between 1923 and 1929. The BBC's Written Archives has no personal record file on him. Many academics researching and writing about early BBC radio drama has criticised his failings and diminished his contribution to the new art of sound drama.

However, new research by Professor Tim Crook, Emeritus Professor at Goldsmiths, University of London and the author of *Radio Drama: Theory & Practice* (Routledge 1999) and *Audio Drama Modernism* (Palgrave MacMillan 2020) reveals that he was the pioneer of science fiction drama on the radio, commissioning the writing and production of three seminal productions in 1928, including at least one and perhaps two written by himself under nom de plumes.

Professor Crook argues that Jeffrey used science fiction as an artistic and modernist metaphor to provide a vehicle for criticism of some of the key politico-economic issues of the time and this was a survivable mechanism of airing political controversy through contemporary drama.

Prof. Mihaela Gavrilă (Italy): The radio drama tells the story of Italy and the World. A long alliance between Public Service Media and new digital spaces

In the significant context of the Symposium “‘This is Channel Earth’ - 100 Years of Radio Drama International”, this paper aims to analyze Italian radio drama evolution and its ability to put itself always in the middle between radio and other expressive media: theatre, cinema, comics, daily news, books and Internet. To this aim of the research is added that of analyzing the role of radio drama as a vehicle of awareness on internationally relevant issues.

Starting from the analysis of the main evolutionary phases of this complex radio genre, this contribution illustrates the complexity of radio theatre as one of the treasures brought to light by media archeology, which lends itself almost naturally to disciplinary and media crossings. In this expressive format, belonging to media proto history, lurks a deeply complex nature and fervent creativity, which rediscovers in the ether an amplifier of the digital, a new space of expressiveness and diversification of its audience. After an analysis of the main evolutions and the social and cultural functions of radio drama in Italy, the study aims to outline a possible future for such content: from re-use and the change of the business model, depending on the devices used for listening to radio content (traditional radio, to mobile radio, podcasts, listening through the computer or tablet or through television) to a digital renaissance by revival enthusiasts, as well as the transdisciplinary training function that radio drama could offer schools and universities. We are faced with a multitude of expressive opportunities based, above all, and in addition to the tradition and the transmedia adaptation capacity of the radio drama, on the need of the people to listen and create stories.

In order to analyze the international dimension of Italian radio drama, in the interaction with other countries, a quantitative and qualitative research will be done on the radio programs presented and awarded within the PRIZ Italia, from 1948 to today. This International competition, organised by RAI – Italian Public Service Broadcaster, for top quality Radio, TV and Internet programmes and founded in Capri in 1948, was originally only devoted to radio works. In 1957, it was also opened to include television entries and, starting 1998, Web projects¹. The analysis of the radio dramas presented and awarded within the Priz Italia aims to demonstrate the function of this radio genre in the international circulation of relevant ideas and topics at national and global level, also with a view to raising awareness and

combating indifference of the people in front of complex issues such as wars, human rights, migration, etc.

¹Prix Italia Festival offers an opportunity for meetings and discussion among top professionals about the quality of the programmes. Many of the products, even in recent years, are radio dramas, providing information on current events and the potential of this kind at an international and international level.

Prof. Christiane Heibach (Germany): The contemporary radio play and the digital: Cultural dimensions of media self-reflection

Radio plays have always been self-referential - this applies to the first German-language radio play "Zauberei auf dem Sender" from 1924 as well as to many subsequent radio plays, which reflect on their own technological conditions in different ways. This 'predisposition' to media reflection has been substantially studied for the early days of acoustic experiments (cf. Ottmann 2013, Rothe 2012). Yet, with the rise of digital technologies the self referentiality of the radio play has significantly been modified and expanded without having been systematically analyzed so far: Starting with Georges Perec's cybernetic radio play farce "Die Maschine" from 1968, which today could pass as the ironic agenda of the Digital Humanities avant la lettre, digital technologies are increasingly being addressed in recent radio plays. This counts for quite a significant number of acoustic science fiction, in which digital world designs are made audible. Aesthetically even more challenging are radio plays that explicitly address and reflect acoustic production methods and which search for a new sophisticated acoustic experience. Such self-referential strategies are an explicit invitation to investigate the relationship between thematic reflection, digital change and its interweaving with new acoustic representation possibilities, which leads to the center of media-aesthetic radio play research. My contribution aims to trace such tendencies in recent radio plays and to work out their media-cultural dimensions.

Ottmann, Solveig (2013): Im Anfang war das Experiment. Das Weimarer Radion bei Hans Flesch und Ernst Schön. Berlin: Kadmos.

Rothe, Katja (2012): Katastrophen hören. Experimente im frühen europäischen Radio. Berlin: Kadmos.

Assoc. Prof. Jina Eleanor Kim (USA): Radio Dramas and Dramatology in Early 20th Century Korea

This essay traces the ways early radio dramas and dramatology enable us to investigate the history of modern Korean radio productions more clearly as an intermedial production that significantly combined both the oral and aural with the written language. The radio broadcasting stations, newspapers, and other print media became important stages through which literature could be published, read, performed, and heard. I analyze an early Korean radio drama that was written and produced just as the newly established all Korean language radio station had opened in 1933: Yu Ch'ijin's (1905-1974) "Lumpen Int'elli" (Lumpen Intelligentsia, *Chosun ilbo* May 23-1933). My analysis dovetails the various debates and

discussion around radio dramatology among Korean writers and theorists taking place at that time. What is apparent in their discussions is the recognition and need for a more precise method of writing for the radio and producing auditory texts that are not simply a recording or replication of stage dramas, which were also mostly adaptations of traditional Korean works or translations of foreign texts.

Dr. Daniel Schümann (Germany): Counterclockwise Osmosis of Democracy: Radio Adaptations of E.I. Zamyatin's »We« in Great Britain and Germany

With his dystopian novel »We« (1920), Evgeny Ivanovich Zamyatin created a manifesto of skepticism towards totalitarian ideologies and modernist technology craze against the backdrop of the Russian Revolution and the ensuing civil war. Unsurprisingly, the novel was banned by Soviet censorship for decades. Inspired by H.G. Wells's science fiction, but also by E.T.A. Hoffmann's tales, the anglophile Zamyatin became a mentor of the short-lived Serapion Fraternity of Petrograd-based writers but was increasingly denied access to official publication channels. For a long time, the reception of »We« was limited to the 'West', and his political doomsaying was particularly well received in England. In the present contribution, audio adaptations of »We« by the BBC and (West) German broadcasters are to be compared with respect to the following questions:

- What makes »We« particularly suitable for audio adaptations?
- Was the direction of reception primarily from East to West and / or vice versa?
- How is the Zamyatin's constant code-switching between pathos and bathos rendered in auditory performance?
- How do the British and German perspectives on plot and characters differ from one another?

Asst. Prof. Neil Verma (USA): What is a Sound Effect: The Revenge of »The Revenge«

In 1978, BBC Radio aired Andrew Sachs' »The Revenge«, a thriller without words, relying instead on sound effects and atmospheres. Forgoing language, the radio play aimed to be universally available to any audience, as indeed it has been aired in many other contexts and become a legendary "solution" to the "problem" of making an international radio drama. Yet, four decades later, few dramatists have followed Sachs's lead – while many have experimented with sound-forward audio dramas, there is no international canon of them. To understand why, in this paper, I will return to Sachs's play to question what we mean by "sound effects" and "atmospheres," explaining how this oft-cited basic element of radio drama has in fact evolved considerably over its history. Sachs didn't so much *use* sound effects as redefine them. If this is right, then creating more international style of radio dramas with sound effects may depend not just on using this element but rethinking it.

Asst. Prof. Kerim Yasar (USA): Japanese Radio Drama in Transcultural Context

The earliest radio drama broadcast in Japan was a translation of Richard Hughes's *A Comedy of Danger*, the first dramatic work commissioned by the BBC specifically for radio broadcast. This would be the first, but far from the last, instance of Japan's eager participation in transnational and transcultural networks of dramatic production for the radio. These exchanges, furthermore, were not one-sided: In 1964, Manfred Hubricht translated seven Japanese radio plays into German, which were published with an afterword by the radio drama theorist and head of the NDR Hörspielabteilung, Heinz Schwitzke, an endorsement that would bring Japanese radio drama to the attention of a wider audience throughout central and eastern Europe. In this presentation I discuss these and other examples of transcultural flows between Japan and other countries, and how we might understand these transfers in the context of a medium and a genre that is at once intensely linguistic (and therefore raises many issues of translation) but also paralinguistic and extralinguistic.