

# MAP

<http://mapmagazine.co.uk/9945/where-art-interwoven-spaces-radiophrenia/>

## **...where the art is: the interwoven spaces of Radiophrenia...**

**Anna McLauchlan channels 'Radiophrenia', a fortnight of live broadcast sound and transmission arts**



Maya Dunietz, live-to-air performance of 'Round Structure', CCA 5, Monday 29 August 2016, image courtesy: Vilte Vaitkute

### **...the benches outside Argos, a flyer.**

There're no racks on Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow so I ask someone if I can chain my bike to the other side of the bench they're sat on—'yes'. When back from buying a Rubik's cube we chat, I ask: 'are you Antipodean', she misunderstands and says, 'no, I'm from Australia'. She's looking for things to do in the city, I give her a flyer designed by Oliver Pitt for *Radiophrenia*. Later she turns up at...

### **...Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) 5, the Theatre space.**

A large oblong box room with black vinyl floor and wooden slatted walls: stage to the right, seating to the left. We sit, watching the first of six live-to-air performance events taking place at 7pm on Mondays and Wednesday each week, in the second week also on Saturday

and Sunday. I hear a female voice, distressed, discordant. To my right Cara Tolmie travels awkwardly along the wall—slow angular movements interspersed with repeated tiny shuffling steps take her to the stage. She sings and poses in ways other than pervasive repeated imagery (X Factor) trains us to expect, disrupting the processes that define ‘talent’. Maya Dunietz similarly draws attention to formulaic understandings of the female singer, the diva, but her contrasting piece is hugely physical: proficiency and exuberance...

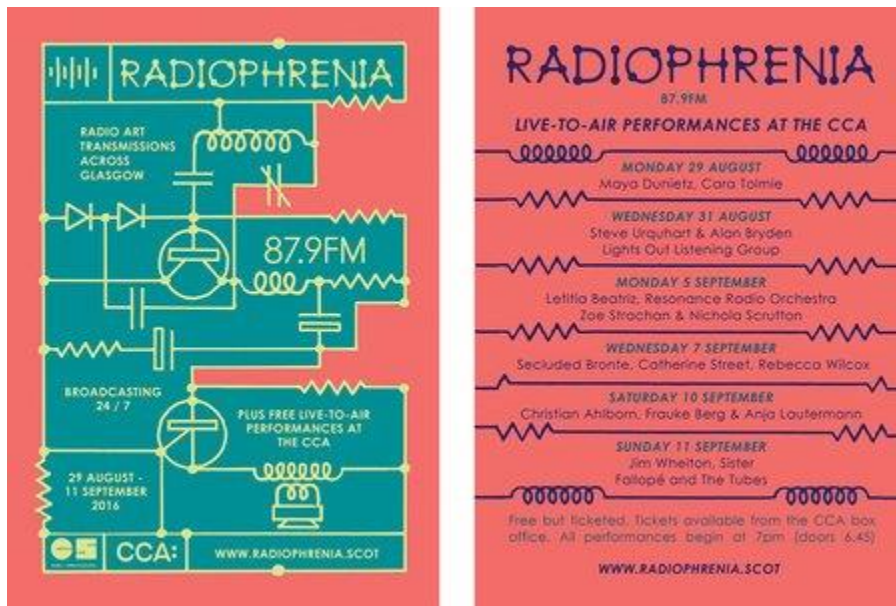


Cara Tolmie, live-to-air performance of ‘Cancamon’, CCA 5, Monday 29 August 2016, image courtesy: Vilte Vaitkute

These performances are visual; they, and the crowd, are being filmed. The audience is aware that the recording is simultaneously broadcast. What does this sound like on radio? Online? I close my eyes and recollect that listening generates images. Alone in Toronto 20 years earlier I watch someone (Paul Dutton of CCMC) barking into a microphone. I think, ‘what the fuck.’ ...What is the visitor from Australia thinking? In my thoughts...

### **...spaces from the past merge with the present.**

The first project was *Radio Tuesday* (1999)—a collaboration between Mark Vernon, Duncan Campbell and Alex Frost. Beginning as a series of broadcasts, it then appeared in a gallery in Helsinki and had its third iteration at Transmission Gallery, Glasgow. [1] The venue drew in visual artists where many had formative experiences of audio recording and editing, often using the purpose built studio. People can now easily access and use technology, studio support became unnecessary. What remains, is the need to air what is perhaps too experimental or contentious for a conventional station, to maintain an expanded understanding of what radio, and art, can be.



'Radiophrenia' flyer (from left front then back), design: Oliver Pitt

*Radiophrenia* first happened a year ago in 2015. Organised by Mark Vernon and Barry Burns (with assistance from Thomas Leyland-Collins), they have—both collectively as Vernon & Burns and solo—made work for radio projects or stations based in Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, England, Finland, Germany, Northern Ireland, The Netherlands, US ...They wanted to extend the opportunity of reaching broad audiences to others. Pieces are drawn from lots of places but *Radiophrenia* is very much situated...

### ...in Glasgow, Scotland.

As such, it represents but also celebrates this city, with links to Scotland reinforced by the facebook unfriendly [.scot](http://www.radiophrenia.scot) web domain. The voices, the accents are varied, reflecting who chooses to send in material, and the announcers, with the station also existing through conversation and chance encounter. Trying on tracky tops in Greaves Sport the assistant asks, 'what are you up to this afternoon?'. I say, 'I'm doing some announcing, introducing programmes, for a radio station in the CCA, the Centre for Contemporary Arts up the road: it's a project, it's on 24 hours a day, for two weeks. There're only two days left of the programme—if you search *Radiophrenia* you can find it...

### ...online.

Radio, a medium made to broadcast seamlessly translates to an online platform. David Fulford's website houses the radio player together with the schedule providing overviews of what's been, what's happening, and what's proposed—links made to fleeting, ephemeral audio. Submissions are gathered in, then redistributed; associations build networks of listeners, perhaps (or perhaps not) proximate in their interests but geographically dispersed among 39 countries. Submissions engage with boundaries and borders, both literally and figuratively, as with Meira Asher's 'One blanket lost', documenting the trafficking of Nigerian girls for prostitution in Spain. However, the broadcast is channelled through a

specific place,

### **the studio.**

The flat upstairs in the CCA, used for artists' residencies, slightly separate from the rest of the centre, still gallery like but also domestic. Last year *Radiophrenia's* week long programme featured nightly live-to-air performances and so they inhabited the Theatre's green room. Technology, the new CAT5 network, allows media to infiltrate from the Cinema or Theatre, into the Flat, through the antenna then into the city or streaming through the internet. Glasgow's been humid, the studio is warm. We overlook the reconstruction after May 2014's fire in The Glasgow School of Art's Mackintosh building; there's lots of noise. It's RADIO and some of the time, particularly during live broadcasts, the windows are shut.



Anthony Autumn & Christopher MacInnes with Sofie Fischer-Rasmussen, live studio performance of 'Illogical Core', CCA Artists' Flat (the site from which Radiophrenia broadcast), image courtesy: Mark Vernon

Daily rituals provide continuity and rhythm: Stephen Hurrell and Nerea Bello's signature time check of Howler Monkeys in Mexico at noon and midnight; commissions first played at just after noon then repeated at 6pm; Carrie Skinner's presence every day (except one) at 3.30pm—dressed in a dinner(esq) suit, dress shirt with white chrysanthemum on her left lapel—playing the Australian radio production of *Frankenstein* originally broadcast in 13 parts but often with interruption, 'Victor, is there anyone there?' The rest is less ordered, programming free from scheduling conventions.

I'm typing quietly so as not to interfere with the live performance of '[Illogical Core](#)' by Anthony Autumn and Christopher MacInnes with Sofie Fischer-Rasmussen. The visual elements of their practice are stripped away: all I can hear is the text being performed, the

space of live soundscaping drawing from their trip to the Devil's Arse in Derbyshire eludes those in the studio without headphones. There's uncertainty about exactly who the audience is, as recitals end there's little cathartic clapping. Feedback delayed until the post-performance texts and conversations. But, it's there...

### **...in the air around 'us', these spaces of reception.**

You might have chosen to listen, or just see what's on, but either case requires 'reception'. If you have a receiver, and you know to seek it out and take the chance, radio waves can be picked up anywhere within broadcast range. You might be listening in the CCA foyer, in Aye Aye Books or the Creative Lab, or perhaps in your flat or at work, then texting supportive comments into the studio (Mark Briggs and Darren Rhymes), or, sitting in the library listening online through headphones (Katherine Murphy), reposting information about the programmes on twitter or facebook, [manymanywomen.com](http://manymanywomen.com). Connecting the domestic and personal with the social and international. [2]

Reception can be thought about in many ways. How do you listen to it? Is it out loud, merging with the air, or through headphones, isolated and in you? How do you, how do people receive the programme? What do they 'make' or think of it?

### **Regulation**

Over 400 hours of material came from an open call; despite openness it's regulated through the process of selection based on how recordings 'work' for radio, what they contribute to this medium. Several pieces directly engage with broadcasting: Ralph Lewis' 'Drive to the Edge' invites listeners to seek the edge of the broadcast's signal strength; Catriona Shaw's '[Aerial Holding Hands](#)' comes in two parts, one for fm and the other live streamed—they 'can be played simultaneously, or individually, depending on your listening circumstances.' [3]

Pieces of (almost) any length were accepted, some lasting for one minute, others, such as 'State of Slumber' by DinahBird & Jean-Phillipe Renoult, 11 hours. Lengthier recordings play through the night. Radio producers, artists, musicians, poets, writers, whoever wanted to, prepared submissions; experienced practitioners and those making their first work in this (or any) medium. Ryan Frame describes himself as 'an office worker and lo-fi field recording enthusiast'. He culled his 30 minute 'The Life of an iPod' from 'over 1200 recordings, derived from conversations in pubs, late night improvised snatches of songs, drunken musings, snippets from foreign news channels plus random sounds and noise.' [4]

BBC 6 Music deemed Frame's piece, together with Angharad Williams' compelling drug and drink infused confessional 'Sloppy', 'too tricky' for a feature. But there's a broader form of regulation pertaining to all radio. Ofcom police the airways, licensing the use of particular frequencies. Listeners can report interference of 'mainstream' licensed broadcasters. Unlicensed 'pirates' can end up in court, potentially incurring unlimited fines or up to two



years imprisonment. [5]

### Remains

A broadcast is an event rarely repeated on *Radiophrenia*: the British Library Sound Archive may come to hold the collection, but there's no place to 'listen again'. The absence of web archiving ties the project together—if you want to experience a specific piece you have to be listening. However, the schedule links to the artists and they determine what happens with their work. Some have made recordings available, such as Phantom Chips '[Ghost Hunt](#)' or Stuart Gurden's '[Arena on Energy on Tape](#)', others are more elusive. Material has already been rebroadcast on Resonance FM, and it will be played at Radio Revolten in Halle, Wave Farm in Upper state New York and other yet to be determined stations.

*Radiophrenia* is an accumulation, rather than an overarching theme or idea, brought together through a common medium: live events, produced commissions, live studio performances, compilations of short works, long form works, documentaries, field recordings, experimental music, sound art, drama, poetry and (perhaps mostly) lots of material that lies in between or beyond. At times recordings blend together, at others they are punctuated by an announcer's voice. Ongoing and literally refreshing, becoming anew with each work, each space of reception.

*Anna McLaughlan*

*Radiophrenia: Broadcasting across Glasgow on 87.9FM, 24 hours a day, 29 August – 11 September 2016. [Radiophrenia.scot](http://radiophrenia.scot)*

*Thanks to Barry Burns and Mark Vernon for providing information together with Barry Burns, Katherine MacBride, Sarah Tripp and Rebecca Wilcox for commenting on an earlier version of this text.*

[1] Meagreresource Productions, *Radio Broadcasts* (2016) <<http://www.meagreresource.com/about/transmissions.html>> [accessed 28 September 2016]

[2] Thanks to Sarah Tripp for this observation.

[3] Information about this and all other pieces broadcast can be found at Radiophrenia. *Schedule* (2016) <<http://radiophrenia.scot/schedule/schedule-list/>> [accessed 28 September 2016]

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ofcom, *Tackling pirate radio* (2016) <<http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio/radio/tackling-pirate-radio/>> [accessed 28 September 2016]