Two Thousand + FIFTEEN Symposium
Sonorities Festival of Contemporary Music 2015
Queen’s University Belfast
www.sonorities.org.uk

Fractured Narratives - Improvised sounds and stories

Saturday 25 April 2015
Lanyon Building, Ground Floor Room (0G/074)

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME
Curated by Dr Franziska Schroeder, Koichi Samuels, Tullis Rennie

10.00 - 11.00 KEYNOTE: Cathy Lane

11.00 - 11.30 BREAK

Session 1: Practitioners within Sound (Chair: Tristan Clutterbuck)
11.30 Kevin Logan: Repetitive Reading and Rustling
11.45 Ximena Alarcón: Improvising in the distance: Letters and Bridges
12.00 Jane Dudman: Everyday Discontinuities: refiguring everyday narratives through audio-visual performance
12.15 Tania Rikonen: Perfume, Fetish, and Recorded Memories: The Skin of Radio
12.45 John D’Arcy: Moving Song Improvising Local Literature in Belfast
12.45 Panos Amelides: Exploring Aristotelian methexis: Culture-specific storytelling and recorded sound
13.00 Sara Pinheiro: Staging Sound Fiction

13.15 - 14.30 BREAK
(Sonorities events continue at Queen Street Studios throughout the day)

Session 2: Reflecting on Narrative and Sound (Chair: Tullis Rennie)
14.30 Maria Papadomanolaki: To Begin Is To Follow On From: The Voicing Of Fragments in Tobačna
14.50 James Andean: Narrative Intention vs. Narrative Reception in the Sonic Arts
15.10 Aonghus McEvoy: Stories and Places of Sonic Memory

15.30 - 15.50 BREAK

Session 3: Improvisation (Chair: Juan Manuel Loaiza Restrepo)
15.50 Andrea Zarza: The London Musicians Collective Archive: Historical Narration Through Improvised Traces
16.10 Artur Vidal: Silence and Glossolalia: Vocal Utopias in Improvised Music
16.30 Paul Stapleton: Walking and Falling: performing identity in improvised musics

17.00 – 17.30 ROUND UP (Keynote, Symposium organisers plus all chairs)
17.30 Finish
Session 1: Practitioners within Sound

11.30 Kevin Logan: Repetitive Reading and Rustling
This performative presentation locates and expands my ongoing research, its purpose is to posit an intrinsic ‘performativity’ of the sonic, offering a particular understanding of the agency of audio-works.

This short text relates to my own Sound Art practice and the employment of repetition in form and content as a compositional device. It is a ‘sounding-writing’ that ‘does-something-off-the-page’. The ‘sonic-turn’ has in recent years gained considerable purchase within broad-field Humanities, this performative-writing seeks to ally this model for theorization with a somewhat earlier conceptual paradigm, that of the ‘performative-turn’.

Keywords: Embodied, Performativity, Infra-disciplinary, Sonic-event. Performative-writing.

11.45 Ximena Alarcón: Improvising in the distance: Letters and Bridges
This paper explores forms of fractured narratives that arose in ‘Letters and Bridges’, a telematic sonic performance from the project ‘Networked Migrations’. This event invited migrants (non-performers) based in Mexico City and in Leicester, England to share personal letters through improvisational readings, using real-time, bi-directional, streaming sound (Alarcon, 2014).

Six participants from different countries, speaking in different languages, engaged in a practice of Deep Listening (Oliveros, 2005) to prepare for the improvisation, which was performed first by using a letter sent to them by someone they love, and later by using a new letter written to their distant performance partner in a pen-pal fashion. Repetition, fragmentation, and transformation of words—leading to newly created relations between languages and styles, between authors and recipients, and between historical contexts—all helped participants to cross metaphorical ‘bridges’: bridges to access the memory of the beloved one, and bridges to access that ‘stranger’ who is willing to listen to multiple levels of personal story created in the distance. The bridge, in this context, can be understood as the path that facilitates the flow of feelings and words within the fracture that distance generates. This fracture implies: migration, dislocation, conversation between strangers, and stories from other spaces and times in foreign languages. Technology paradoxically enables and disrupts the narratives. The listening process and the detachment from visual presence focuses one on sound as the only source for interaction.

The paper will analyse the process lived by the participants—from the first pre-performance encounter to the public performance—as well as the new stories and reflections that emerged from the disruptive interaction: reflections about colonised and coloniser countries, witness accounts of sadness and violence, and the desire to migrate again, escaping from ‘broken’ and repetitive landscapes, which signified political instability and stagnant routine.

References:

12.00 Jane Dudman: Everyday Discontinuities: refiguring everyday narratives through audio-visual performance
This presentation discusses the development of my recent performance series ‘Domestic Spaces’ which is the result of an exploratory process working with donated video and audio from participants’ private lives. The work examines and reworks diaristic commentary through a combination of my live and others’ recorded voices. Sampling and repetition illuminate glimpses of an inner narrative that runs in parallel to the practical business of survival. Film and sound of everyday activity forms a backdrop to the inconspicuous moments that go by un-noticed but which once considered, become exposed as extraordinary.

12.15 Tania Riikonen: Perfume, Fetish, and Recorded Memories: The Skin of Radio
This performative text/paper/vocal emission experiments film scholar Laura U. Marks’s concept “the skin of film” – cinema understood as extreme tactile, organic and immersive medium – to radio in its post-Burroughsian and post-McLuhanian era. The “skin of radio” is understood as a contagious visceral sound/voice flow that resists the dualisms meaning/jouissance and subject/object. The concept foregrounds the intra-action between the radio listener, the gas-like non-linear storytelling of sound, and the time-space potential of the memories. The theoretical basis of the paper combines sound studies, film studies and artistic research. The particular emphasis is put on the epistemology of the senses, language in artistic research and the cultural meaning of the embodied and narrative sound.

12.30 John D’Arcy: Moving Song Improvising Local Literature in Belfast
In 2013 and 2014 a newly formed musical collective Belfast City Choir performed a series of site-specific improvisatory participative public performances - Moving Song, On the Move, and Literary Lunchtime.

The performances aim to offer alternative means of access to literature, provoking a number of compositional strategies for group vocalisation and improvisation amongst participants of all skill levels. These strategies include the curation of site-specific oral histories and local literatures as lyrical material, free melodic improvisation, games, parody, and faux tour guides.

This talk addresses key issues surrounding Belfast City Choir’s improvised reworkings of local narratives, and their importance as opportunities for exploration, expression and critique within the city.

12.45 Panos Amelides: Exploring Aristotelian methexis: Culture-specific storytelling and recorded sound
This paper investigates the methodology and results of a sound installation, with restricted visual elements, created and presented in a rural village in Southern Greece. The project’s aim was to explore ways that an object of nature and symbol to a local community (be that the olive tree) can be transformed into a storytelling agent, utilizing the possibilities of acousmatic practice, provided as a starting point for artistic creation embodied and relayed through recording media and especially recorded sound. Based on Truax (1991) classification of soundscape elements, I will present different approaches of collecting the sonic material as well as the process of interacting with the local residents by including them
in the work making their local history and way of life the central theme of the project. John Young (2009) argued for the potential and “capacity for sound recording to function as a mirror held up to lived experience”. An ‘acousmatic’ work by default provides a unique opportunity towards the use of this capacity. The creative practice of sound recording can include not only absolute, neutral sounds but also culture-specific sounds and soundscape elements of a local community as well as recordings of stories and sound manipulations of all the above. Leigh Landy (1994) coined a very important term for the studies of acousmatics: the something to hold on to factor. Audience engagement leading to methexis can be created by combining and expanding the range of the ‘something to hold on to’ factor, the ‘mirror’ of lived experience and the cultural sonic elements of a community, together with recordings of voices of community members telling stories related to that community.

References

13.00 Sara Pinheiro: Staging Sound Fiction
Staging Sound Fiction
Narrative is a transversal category, it can be used in many different medium. However, too often it is used to refer to the representation of an objective reference, as a story. Yet, representation represses the signifiers (the sounds) in benefit of something else. Often, this happens for the sake of the communicative value, which Altman (1992) identifies as the nominative falacy. In a sonic context, that nomination invalidates the sound to be what it is, becoming the “instead of” the real thing. A recorded sound does not replace the experience of listening to its source, it is an experience per se.
Narrative, within this context, can only be proposal. The experience of sound is based on suggestions. In a sound-story, there is no objective confirmation of the piece as a narration, for such sense of narrative is of an intersubjective character (Bal, 2002). A sound-story is an event, instead of a concept. Therefore, it should be addressed as a dramaturgic practice, involving the notion of stage (with a mise-en-scène) and its characters. It requires a model of narration based on presentational strategies. Presenting the sounds is the actual moment that the story may happen, or is given a chance to happen. Thus, to ‘stage fiction’ requires investigating a method of sonic mediation.
This presentation will take into consideration three elements of sound performativity: the loudspeakers as stage advocates, the sounds as actors and, consequently, the listener as the final extremity of these articulations. I will draw on the piece treatise of a purr, towards an approach of sound narration.

1.15pm - 2.30pm BREAK
Sonorities events at Queen Street Studios
Session 2: Reflecting on Narrative and Sound

14.30 Maria Papadomanolaki: To Begin Is To Follow On From: The Voicing Of Fragments in Tobačna
The paper takes as its starting point my two week residency in Tobačna, the old tobacco factory in Lubljana, Slovenia which due to financial instability is currently in a state of fragmentation, divided into different zones run by private businesses and municipal services. By referencing different samples from the processes undertaken and the works produced, the paper will attempt to define the notion of the fragment in relation to ideas such as the multiplicity of the self, the ambivalences and fictions of memory and the importance of using voice and conversation in the process of contesting, unlocking and blurring the hard lines of the site. More specifically, an emphasis will be given on how the consistency of the role of the artist as a mediator in this fragmented sociocultural structure is affected by these contiguous physical and verbal interactions and how these are consequently embedded in the actual practice and the creation of work. The ideas of dialogue and reciprocity will serve both as a necessary means of “mediumship” and methodological tools for countering, opening up or even re-inventing existing narratives.

14.50 James Andean: Narrative Intention vs. Narrative Reception in the Sonic Arts
As an artist, my activities are evenly split between acousmatic composition, and sonic improvisation; however, my focus on narrative appears, upon first glance, to be limited to my acousmatic output, seeming somewhat more distanced from my improvisation activities. On closer examination, however, this is perhaps simply a question of how we define or describe the term ‘narrative’. Where do we look for narrative in these disparate sonic practices? What qualities, characteristics, or content do we recognize and utilize in constructing an evolving sense of narrative when listening to these two musical spheres? Perhaps more importantly, what can these two practices – acousmatic music and sonic improvisation – tell us about possible connections or rifts between narrative intention, and narrative reception?

15.10 Aonghus McEvoy: Stories and Places of Sonic Memory
Accounts of sound memories construct narratives built upon the transmission of individual experience, self or group identity and intersubjectively constructed histories of space and place. Stories and oral histories also act as situated acoustic performances establishing individual and communal notions of place. For my proposed paper I will explore two distinct forms of narrative documented from my time in the field attempting a sound ethnography of Belfast City. These narratives include those which utilize memories of sound to construct individual or communal histories and places of memory, and stories situated in the field which attempted to transpose individual or communal notions of place unto wider notions of space. Narratives concerning auditory experience sound out representations of past experience into the present, while stories and oral histories transmitted in situ act as a sounding element of the environment transmitting histories, concepts of and relationships to, place. This paper will move from ethnographic accounts through to an analysis of how perception is recounted and becomes intermingled with wider personal and cultural narratives. It also looks at personal or cultural narratives as a voiced and sounded utterance, a performed element of the sound environment projecting individual and intersubjective ideas of place onto the open field of perceived space, drawing from de Certeau’s concept of spatial stories.

15.30 - 15.50pm BREAK
Session 3: Improvisation

15.50 Andrea Zarza: The London Musicians Collective Archive: Historical Narration Through Improvised Traces
This paper will explore the history of experimental and improvised music in London through the archival traces found in the London Musicians Collective archive and related collections of sound recordings at the British Library Sound Archive. Drawing on this fragmentary archival material, it will illustrate the interplay between improvisation as a musical practice and the LMC’s functioning as a collective and examine the political, social and economic conditions of improvised music and sonic arts activity in the UK during the three decades of the its activity. It will also attempt to conceptualise the different ways in which members of the collective used the term ‘improvisation’.

Although the paper will rely on archival material to build a narrative of the London Musicians Collective history, it will also question the deficiencies that archival material and sound recordings have in documenting ephemeral artistic practices such as improvised music and performance art. The London Musicians Collective and its archival traces will ultimately serve as a case study to reflect upon broader issues such as the limitations of archives for documenting improvised music and avant-garde performance, the ontological difference between recordings and events and finally how the fragmentary and nonlinear nature of archival material can animate historical narrative through an ethnohistorical approach.

16.10 Artur Vidal: Silence and Glossolalia: Vocal Utopias in Improvised Music
Two main influences have shaped the musical practice known as improvised music that started to develop in the Western world during the middle of the last century: free jazz initiated by the afro-american community and experimental music as developed by the composer John Cage. These two inspirations have never been completely isolated from each other. For instance one of the first bands dedicated to this musical approach (AMM) was formed by musicians with a jazz background like Eddie Prevost, and musicians familiar with the work of John Cage or Karlheinz Stockhausen like Cornelius Cardew. However, the musical narratives on which relies this musical practice are shaped by a confrontation between these two influences: on the one side there is the idea of a mode of expression that overcome social boundaries (free jazz), and on the other side the idea of a pure sound that requires to dismiss musicians' intentionality (John Cage). In this presentation I will propose a new narrative that overcomes traditional oppositions by borrowing Michel de Certeau definition of glossolalia (what resembles a language but lacks its structure) in which the detachment from sounds of the producer remains the expression of a social critique. Within this new framework I would like to show how the social and spiritual implications resulting from the discourses around musicians’ expression and 'sounds for themselves' do not anymore oppose but converge.

16.30 Paul Stapleton: Walking and Falling: performing identity in improvised musics
For myself, falling is an inescapable part of performing improvised music: falling away from my own expectations; falling in love with the unknown; falling towards the other; free falling and then catching myself from falling.

In her performance of “Walking & Falling”, Laurie Anderson describes the continuous danger of losing one's balance while walking, while embodying both the social address of the other and the risk of self-transformation in movement:
I wanted you. And I was looking for you. But I couldn’t find you.

I wanted you. And I was looking for you. But I couldn’t find you. I couldn’t find you. You’re walking. And you don’t always realize it, but you’re always falling. With each step, you fall forward slightly and then catch yourself from falling.

Over and over, you’re falling. And then catching yourself from falling.

And this is how you can be walking and falling at the same time.

The prosaic fact that falling is a necessary part of bipedal locomotion is hardly what is communicated. ’By turning language into a sound gesture, the piece explores the interdependence of movement, perception and conceptual interpretation.’ Anderson’s patiently timed voice marks the form of her motion across a cyclical electronic soundscape, bringing into sharp relief ‘…the simultaneous presence and absence of ourselves in the course of our events.’

It is through this looking, or listening, while falling that the improvising musician shapes her discipline and her self. It is a response: ‘to be addressed, claimed, bound to what is not me, but also to be moved, to be prompted to act, to address myself elsewhere, and so to vacate the self-sufficient “I” as a kind of possession.’ This is not a poetic metaphor but a real risk that is demanded in performance, be it the performance of gender, personal identity or music.

Ultimately, in this paper I would like to further explore how improvisation can offer the possibility to transgress established personal and cultural identities: how when I collaborate with different people in different places my musical identity shifts in new directions; how my story remains the same and how it changes; how I reinvent myself in new performance situations, walking and falling at the same time.

1 United States, 1981 and Big Science, 1982
3 Ainhoa Kaiero Claver, 2010. Technological fiction, recorded time and ‘replicants’ in the concerts of Laurie Anderson, in Trans. Revista Transcultural de Música 14, p10
Speakers

**Cathy Lane** is Professor of Sound Arts at University of the Arts London. Cathy established the department of Sound Arts and Design at London College of Communication. She is the co-director of the Creative Research in Sound Arts Practice (CRiSAP).

**Kevin Logan**’s cross-disciplinary practice spans over two decades, comprising performance, installation, digital media and sound composition/design. His current work explores the performative nature of the sonic through gesture and event, engaging contested notions of agency and ‘liveness’. This practice-led research makes use of low-key and low-fi sequences of performed tasks, re-constructed, re-purposed and ‘re-punked’. He is currently a PhD student with the CRiSAP research centre, University of the Arts London. He is also a founder member of the collective thickear.

**Ximena Alarcón** is an artist who engages in listening to migratory spaces, connecting this to individual and collective memories. Since 2011 she has been a Research Fellow at Creative Research in Sound Arts Practice (CRiSAP), LCC-University of the Arts London. Her practice involves Deep Listening, sonic improvisation, and networking technologies, for the expansion of our sense of belonging and identity. She has a PhD in Music, Technology and Innovation, from De Montfort University, and received a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship 2007-2009, which led to the creation of ‘Sounding Underground’. In 2012 she obtained a Deep Listening certificate.

**Jane Dudman** is an artist/researcher based in Cumbria in the UK and is currently pursuing her practice lead PhD ‘Experience and Re-presentation’ at Newcastle University. She began her artistic life as a sculptor working to commission making life sized figurative work. Her work has since developed into sound and performance, and is often participatory or collaborative. Her interest in sound based work developed in a residency for the National Trust in 2008 where she worked with local residents to record their everyday experience of living and working in a lakeland valley. The stories became a sound installation which was exhibited in a barn in Ennerdale and began a love of everyday stories and the spoken word.

**PhD Taina Riikonen** is a Helsinki-based sound artist and sound explorer who will begin a first post doctoral fellowship in arts in Finland in Collegium of Advanced Studies in Helsinki University (HCAS) at January 2015. Her artistic research project ‘Philosopher’s Voice as Experimental Radiophony’ will investigate the text/sound/touch/visceral/radio/de-acousmatization issues through three philosophical books as radiophonies.

**John D’Arcy** is a composer and performer whose work with voice attempts to intersect various disciplines within an intermedia practice. These works often attempt to offer an alternative aural means of accessing literature. Recent projects include participative choral performances, audiovisual installations and radiophonics, as well as collaborations in theatre, film and mobile applications. D’Arcy is currently completing doctoral research at the Sonic Arts Research Centre, Belfast. http://johndarcy.com

**Panos Amelides** is working with the recorded sound, focusing on soundscape elements and speech. His work focuses on the representation of political and cultural memory by combining digital storytelling and the creative use of recorded sound. Outputs include compositions, radio podcasts, sound installations, music for dance and live performances. Panos studied music and sound in Corfu and Manchester and he is a PhD candidate at the
Music, Technology and Innovation Research Centre, De Montfort University, Leicester. He lives in London, UK.

Sara Pinheiro (1985) is a sound-maker. She holds a B.A. in Cinema and a Master in Sonology. She is a guest lecturer at The Institute of Sonology and at the Center of Audiovisual Studies, in Famu. Currently, "Acousmatic Foley" is the subject of her work, with the kind support of Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Maria Papadomanolaki is a Greek artist who works within the fields of sound design for dance and film, exploratory workshops, installation and transmission art. She has presented her work and research at galleries, conferences and festivals in Europe, UK and the US with highlights being IMT Gallery (London, 2008), Ontological-Hysteric Theater (NY, 2009), Cabinet Magazine (NY, 2010), Issue Project Room (NY, 2012), Decibel Festival (Seattle, WA, 2012), The British Library (London, 2013), Athens Biennale AGORA (Athens, 2013), Parasol Unit (London, 2014), Kino Šiška (Ljubljana, 2014). She is the co-editor of Transmission Arts: Artists & Airwaves (2011, PAJ Publications) and co-founder of soundCamp. Papadomanolaki is a PhD candidate at CRiSAP, UAL, London.

James Andean is a musician and sound artist. He is active as both a composer and a performer in a range of fields, including electroacoustic composition and performance, improvisation, sound installation, and sound recording. He is a founding member of improvisation and new music quartet Rank Ensemble and interdisciplinary improvisation ensemble The Tuesday Group, and one half of audiovisual performance art duo Plucie/DesAndes. He has performed throughout Europe and North America, and his works have been presented around the world. He is a lecturer at the Centre for Music & Technology of the Sibelius Academy/University of the Arts Helsinki.

Aonghus McEvoy is a musician and sound artist currently pursuing a PHD at Queens University Belfast. Aonghus' work and research focus on auditory experience and it's relationship to behavior in, and experience of, space, employing theories and techniques drawn from sound art and ethnomusicology.

Andrea Zarza: Archivist and artist. Raised between Spain and the U.S.A., she currently lives in London where she works as Curator of World & Traditional Music at the British Library Sound Archive. She is the archivist for the London Musicians Collective Archive housed at CRiSAP, London College of Communication. Andrea Zarza has an undergraduate degree in Philosophy and is currently undertaking postgraduate studies in Records and Archives Management at University College London. She has worked at the Pacifica Radio Archives, the Deep Listening Institute and taught workshops about sound and listening to children at the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (Free Institute of Education) in Spain.

Artur Vidal is a Spanish-born saxophone player and sound artist who grew up in Paris and currently resides in London. As such, he has performed in Europe, Asia and America. His work is interested in the possibilities of improvisation as well as in its implications within the social field. As an active member of the improvised music scene, he has been playing and recording with musicians who including Eddie Prévost, Phil Durrant, Jennifer Allum, Roger Turner and Sébastien Branche, with whom he makes up the improvising saxophone duo ‘Relentless’. He has currently completed an MA in Sound Arts and started in 2013 an Mphil/PhD research at London College of Communication about the notions of silence and sociality in Improvised Music. http://www.arturvidal.com/
Paul Stapleton: I'm an improviser, sound artist, inventor and writer originally from Southern California, currently based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. I design and perform with a variety of modular metallic sound sculptures, custom made electronics, found objects and electric guitars in locations ranging from experimental music clubs in Berlin to remote beaches on Vancouver Island. Since 2007, I have been lecturing at the Sonic Arts Research Centre (SARC), where I teach and supervise MA & PhD research in performance technologies, interaction design and site-specific art. My recent album ‘FAUNA’ with saxophonist Simon Rose has received acclaim from music critics such as Ken Waxman (Jazzword), Jean-Michel Van Schouwburg (Orynx), Mark Corroto (All About Jazz), Marc Medwin (New York City Jazz Record) and others.