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New Adventures in Sound Art



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## Farewell to AIR

**G**oodbyes are rarely easy, and as my date of departure from AIR moves closer I find myself feeling a lot of conflicting emotions. As much as I look forward to pursuing new avenues of work and pleasure, I know I will miss doing what I do for AIR. It's been enormously gratifying to see the organization blossom and to know that I've played a key part in that flowering. When I accepted the Board's appointment to this position in February 1999, I had no idea the job would become as all-consuming as it did. I had no idea I would stay on as long as I have; I often say AIR swallowed me whole. I found talents for organizing and community-building I really had not exercised prior to taking on this role. I truly dared to fan the spark into a flame. In 1999, AIR had 250 members; today, we have 600, and I expect with new leadership that growth will continue. The potential is enormous. And the need for AIR is greater than ever.

In 1999, I knew almost every member, if not personally, at least by reputation. Today, I don't always know who's who among us, although I try to keep my ears open and my eyes on the new member profiles that come in. Conversely, I am pretty sure many of you don't know much about me or what's been accomplished under my watch. That's okay. The important thing is that AIR sustains a reputation as an organization where talented professionals come to find support, opportunity and recognition. Member satisfaction is what drives membership growth; members tell their colleagues about the amazing openness and generosity they feel being a part of AIR, about the contacts they make, the lifeline AIR provides. AIR is a diverse and lively community where newcomers and wannabes get to talk openly and candidly to seasoned stars, legends and movers and shakers in public radio. Members experience AIR as an inclusive community and that makes me very happy.

By way of celebrating my departure, this issue features reports describing highlights of training opportunities we've offered this year. Building an infrastructure that could deliver ongoing training for independents has been a primary focus of mine. Establishing partnerships with organizations like Harvestworks Digital Media Center, Interlochen Public Radio, the Center for Documentary Studies and New Adventures in Sound Art and working with committed, seasoned teacher-practitioners like



John Biewen, George Zarr, Hans Tammen and young comers like Laura Starecheski—people who understand “quality engagement”—gives me reason to believe the dream can come true. It's been a hard row to hoe. Attracting funding to support professional development for independents has never been easy. The good news is, independents themselves are beginning to understand they must share the cost and are beginning to see the value in making an investment in their own futures. There are many more workshops, intensives, clinics and conference opportunities already in the pipeline waiting to be scheduled. I believe AIR is just getting started. Watch for special AIR-sponsored sessions at Third Coast International Festival this November.

In closing, I would be remiss not to single out and express special gratitude to those certain people who have gone more than an extra mile to help me serve you over these last eight years: Steve Rathe, Kathy Gronau, Steve Rowland, Matthew Payne, Joan Rabinowitz, Barry Rueger, Stephen Erickson, Samantha Schongalla, Ernie Sanchez, Jim Russell, Petra Hall, Josef Verbanac, Mike Jung—a bouquet of thanks to each one. I could go on, but suffice it to say many, many, many AIR members have answered the call when I have needed help; you know who you are. Your support is deeply appreciated. To all who have served on the AIR Board with me, thank you for your wisdom and trust. I know for each of you it's been a labor of love. Last but not least, you the membership have been a joy to work for. I wish each and every one a fond and sweet adieu. I've gained as much as I've given. It's time for a change, and I feel confident AIR is about to enter a new phase of adventurous, strong leadership.

— Dolores Brandon  
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AIR's activities are supported by individual and organizational members. Major funding provided by the **New York State Council on the Arts**, the **John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation** and the **National Endowment for the Arts**, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.

### AIR Mission Statement

AIR creates opportunities for and represents the interests of audio producers across various media.  
AIR fosters the development of the producer community in the service of the open exchange of ideas.

# The Great Lakes Environmental Journalism Training Institute

By Sandra Sleight-Brennan  
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It felt a lot like summer camp as the 24 hand-picked journalists from states bordering the Great Lakes piled onto the bus in East Lansing. It was to be our Caravan to Adventure for the next few days. This was the first full day of the five-day Great Lakes Environmental Journalism Training Institute, held each summer by the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University. This year I



was one of only two radio journalists who attended; the rest wrote for newspapers in the Great Lakes states and Canada. Our first stop was CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding Operations), where pigs and turkeys were raised in huge warehouse-style pole barns. Over lunch, a debate erupted between advocates and environmentalists about the pros and cons of such a facility—and we were only four hours into the program!

The next few days were chock-full of presentations by scientists from a wide range of disciplines. We gazed at wind turbines, learned about diatoms—microscopic unicellular water-borne organisms that produce one third of the earth's oxygen—and heard about efforts to save the Piping Plover, an endangered shorebird. For those who liked the hands-on approach, there was an opportunity to wrestle two-foot-long sea lampreys, an invasive eel-like species whose numbers and blood-sucking habits had, at one time, almost destroyed the fish in the Great Lakes. We all silently cheered as later in the day we watched men in moonsuits slip them tail-first into a sterilization machine. We tromped through forests to study the canopy and the soil. We gazed up at wind-testing towers that monitored the amount of carbon dioxide the forests inhaled and exhaled, and more—oh, so much more.

We visited the University of Michigan Biological Station in north central Michigan, located on a 10,000 acre preserve on Douglas Lake, a large inland lake near Pellston. The station has been there for 99 years. Each summer it is home to a diverse group of researchers, graduate assistants and undergrads who are studying all things biological. Many of the one-room, tin-sheeted cabins there date back to the early 1900s—a rustic and pristine setting from which to study the environment without the pressures of city life. This was a place to focus on the basics: the land, the sky and the water. The scientists we met were all eager to have their stories told. The environment and how we interact with it was, they felt, *the* story of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We stayed in a less rustic 1960s-era dorm on campus. As you might imagine, over the course of the institute, a great cam-

aderie arose among the journalists; the newspaper reporters shared stories of shrinking newsrooms and increased responsibilities, and several pulled me aside to ask questions about my audio gear, since, once they were back home, they were going to have to start using it to add to their newspapers' online presence.

For an independent radio producer like me, the experience was one of renewal. It was an opportunity to hear from experts about an array of environmental topics and to spend a week in the company of other journalists—to hear about their approaches and the audiences they served. I came back relaxed and full of story ideas.

So, for anyone out there who lives in a Great Lakes state, line up for next year's bus. It's a trip worth taking!



*Sandra Sleight-Brennan produces radio features and documentaries from her passively solar home in Athens County, Ohio. Her new series Going Green will air on Ohio public radio stations beginning in October.*



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## Immersed in Radio: Duke Center for Documentary Studies

### A Week at the Duke Center for Documentary Studies Summer Audio Institute

by Paula Mauro  
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Some people go to the Summer Audio Institute in order to start a career in radio, sound art and/or podcasting; others want more training for a career already underway. I went because I'd been feeling a little stuck lately, and one night I



dreamed that Susan Sarandon, star of *Bull Durham*, said she would help me. A few weeks later, I read about the Summer Audio Institute at Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies, in Durham, North Carolina. I truly never say this kind of thing, but I could not help but see it as a sign.

I arrived at the Audio Institute on a Sunday afternoon in June along with twenty-four other students. We'd all come to produce a short audio documentary in a week, with the help of a group of independent producers led by John Biewen, formerly a correspondent-producer for American RadioWorks and now director of the audio program at the Center for Documentary Studies (CDS).

By Monday we were paired up with a partner and assigned a subject to document. My partner, Jeff Young, was a print journalist for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* who'd come to learn more about audio tools and podcasting.

For the last three years, the Institute has collaborated with the Southwest Central Durham Quality of Life Project, a coalition of committed residents, businesses and activists working to improve life in Durham in terms of housing, economic equality, safety and historic and cultural preservation. The Institute lets the Quality of Life Project weigh in on the stories that are assigned to the students at the Summer Institute. With their help, we received a crash course on life in southwest central Durham: before we arrived, we were assigned reading on the local history, and, once there, we were taken on a bus tour of the six neighborhoods that surround the Center for Documentary Studies.

On our second morning, the class gathered on the front porch of the Center to get ready for the day's interviews. The Audio Institute gave us the opportunity to explore everything we wanted to know about radio. We asked about equipment, technique and ethical issues. We asked if we looked silly in our soundproof headphones. Each question was thoughtfully answered. One thing John Biewen said was, "Get close. Then get closer." He was talking about holding the microphone, but it felt like it could have been a documentary-maker's manifesto.

The Durhamites we recorded generously let us into their homes and places of business. Two students interviewed bus-riders on their way to work. Others recorded an exercise class

at the local YMCA. Jeff and I interviewed people in the Lake-wood Park area of Durham about an historic amusement park that gave the neighborhood its name. We didn't have any trouble getting people to talk, even though most had never heard of the amusement park, nor knew that it had once occupied the same spot where a strip mall now stood. One man had never considered what might've come before the strip mall, but nonetheless became very enthusiastic on the subject of strip malls, and encouraged us to visit several of his favorites.

The Institute was radio-immersion, packed with technical seminars and presentations by guest artists Joe Richman, Ann Heppermann, Kara Oehler and Shea Shackelford. We spent hours in the computer lab, working in pairs, pulling in anyone with a pair of headphones and a few free minutes for a quick impromptu editorial meeting.

The last piece was finished and bounced from ProTools at 5 am Saturday morning, and a few hours later we gathered in the Center's listening room to hear the twelve completed pieces. The people they were about and members of the Southwest Central Durham Quality of Life Project also came to listen.

On Thursday night, we'd knocked off early and went to a Bulls game. A two-run homer to left field in the seventh inning nailed the big wooden bull over the scoreboard. The bull came to life, eyes flashing red and smoke snorting out the nostrils. The crowd, as the sports announcers say, went wild. I remember it as one of the best moments of the week.



John Biewen, Center for Documentary Studies

But Saturday morning, watching people in the act of listening together, seeing in their faces how the voices that came out of the speakers captivated them, I thought that what my new guardian movie star, Susan Sarandon, says in *Bull Durham* about baseball is also true for radio: day in and day out, it feeds the soul.



*Paula Mauro is a freelancer who lives in the village of Greenport, NY, outside New York City. She has most recently contributed to BBC Radio's Classic Singles series.*

## Radio Without Boundaries

by Pamela Renner

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"Anything that carries voices out of the dark will regularly affiliate with the voices of the gods," said radio theatre producer Gregory Whitehead, during his presentation at the Radio Without Boundaries conference in Toronto in May. It's a lovely idea, even for the agnostics among us. There's still something mysterious about the intimacy of radio. Why at this frequency or that do the sounds coalesce into something agitating or beautiful?

One person to ask about this is undoubtedly Steve Wadhams, CBC documentary producer extraordinaire. In person, Wadhams is understated and dry, with a twinkle of humor in his eyes. During a workshop at the conference, he played a few sound clips for our group. We listened to an African ruler's press attaché caught in an adversarial tête-a-tête with a BBC reporter. Each time a question was posed, the response was the same: "I don't wish to comment on that."

By the tenth or eleventh repetition, the reporter finally lost his cool, and everyone in the room smiled in recognition. In those two minutes of audiotape, we'd gotten to know the two men rather well. Wadhams commented, "If you can read a transcript and get the whole story, then it's not a radio program. You have to hear it to get it."

The act of making a radio documentary is about transmitting a picture stream that goes into the brain of the listener—and stays there, according to Wadhams. Unlike film or television, where the pictures are already composed and the viewer is essentially passive, radio requires an act of co-creation between producer and listener.

We also discussed interviewing techniques. Many factors, including the physical positioning of the interviewer, can help lure the subject out. Whether interviewer and subject sit kitty-corner in chairs, or the interviewer actually asks the person being interviewed to recline (like a patient on a psychoanalyst's couch), altering the physical power dynamics of the traditional interview can help ease the storytelling process.

For me personally, one of the most interesting suggestions for interviewing was to ask the subject, "Was there any moment from your past life that comes to mind as you contemplate what this means now? What was it? Can you put it into a clear picture?" The notion of asking your interviewee to participate by unearthing a buried memory is one that I lifted from Wadhams and put into practice as soon as I returned from the conference.

As it happens, I was set to teach my first dramatic writing class in a maximum-security men's prison the Tuesday after Radio Without Boundaries. I was a little nervous, although I already knew most of my students through the non-profit organization Rehabilitation Through the Arts (they'd put on a riveting *West Side Story* this spring at Sing Sing, with a mostly incarcerated cast and a full complement of volunteers who directed, produced and choreographed).

In our classroom, there was no microphone and no recording equipment, just fifteen men in green trousers who wanted to



—Photo by Derek Lang

Sue Mell, Christal Smith, Steve Rowlands, Barry Rueger  
Laura Vitale, Pamela Renner

Not pictured Shekhar Deshpande, Tim Forrest.

spend the spring reading and writing plays. On the first day of class, I looked around at my students' clear, intelligent eyes and faces, striated by old scars. They had notebooks and pens before them; we were doing something even more basic than making radio—writing and telling stories.

I thought of Steve Wadhams and suggested to them that they work in pairs. "I'm asking each of you to describe two moments that are linked in your mind: one from the very recent present, and one from your past, maybe your childhood. Take time to be in the moment again, and to remember what it was like. What were you seeing, tasting, smelling or hearing at the time? What was going through your mind? Then, tell your partner as much as you can about your two moments. Create a picture in his mind. He'll be the one who writes your memory. And you'll write his."

Interviewer and subject meet in telling; each of us is potentially a writer and a storyteller. The stories we tell do not necessarily come from our own autobiographies—some are harvested from the words of those who've entrusted us with bits of their own past.

We journalists are all surrogates, telling stories from the lives of others and making them our own. This is what radio can do so intimately and well. Wadhams calls it "mining the memory bank." It worked that Tuesday at Sing Sing prison. Can it work on the American airwaves as well?



Pamela Renner is an arts reporter whose work is broadcast on Weekend America, Latino USA and Studio 360. Her reviews and essays appear regularly in *The New Yorker's* Goings on About Town and *American Theatre* magazine. Radio Without Boundaries is one of several festivals produced by [New Adventures in Sound Art](#) in Toronto.

## Creative Sound Assemblage Podcast

by Samantha Schongala  
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*In May of this year, AIR partnered with Harvestworks Digital Media Center in New York to present a week-long intensive in Creative Sound Assemblage for Radio Producers. Led by sound artists Michael Schumacher and Hans Tammen, these eight advanced producers were challenged to explore alternative means of storytelling. Below you'll find both their individual reflections on the workshop and a link to the Creative Sound Assemblage Podcast, a compilation of all eight short audio pieces now available for your listening pleasure. Click here to listen to the [Creative Sound Assemblage Podcast](#). (46:59)*

### Microsounds by Carola Cintrón

"The intensive was a great experience. A lot of important information was communicated concerning the more conceptual and structural aspects of sound production. It was also helpful on a technical level, with lots of information about software and formats available to produce sound for radio, audio installations and other compositions.

It was great to be part of a group. I think all skills are best transmitted in a group setting, in which people can learn from others' experiences and questions. It's great to hear different points of view and diverse opinions.

I think the most interesting part was the diversity of the group in terms of background and level of technical experience. I learned a lot about my own creative process and got a great deal of inspiration to keep doing my sound work."

*Carola Cintrón-Moscoso's work has been shown internationally in New York City, at the China Millennium Museum in Beijing, in Brazil and Barcelona, Spain. She's received awards from the DUMBO Arts Center and the Experimental Television Center and has completed a residency at Dyapason in New York City. [carola@velocipedo.com](mailto:carola@velocipedo.com)*

### Mercy, So Much Noise by David Goren

"The intensive instructors, Hans Tammen and Michael Schumacher, were very knowledgeable and provided insightful feedback. It was also valuable to interact with the other audio producers. I felt challenged by the pieces I heard and inspired to try new methods of layering sound and working without narrative."

*David Goren's radio career began in 1974 on WCRP, the Voice of Camp Ramah-in-the-Poconos. He's currently co-producer of Jazz at Lincoln Center. [dbgoren@panix.com](mailto:dbgoren@panix.com)*

### Radio and Dishes by Jennifer Deer

"This workshop was a turning point for me creatively. Everything just started to come together in an almost overwhelming way. Learning to really listen was critically important. After all, listening is the beginning and the end of all the work we do—no matter what style or form or outlet it takes."

*Jennifer Deer's radio work has aired on such national programs as All Things Considered, Day to Day and Weekend America. She is the co-curator of the audio documentary podcast Big Shed ([www.bigshed.org](http://www.bigshed.org)). [jendeer@gmail.com](mailto:jendeer@gmail.com)*

### Immigration: Threshold to a Better Life by Chris Vondrasek

"I learned interesting sound-related ideas from the lectures and, most especially, from listening to the work and comments of the other participants. I benefited from being encouraged to create a piece without a narrator. Listening to and talking about how filmmakers use sound was an excellent lesson in creative listening."

*Chris Vondrasek works as independent radio producer with KBCS and has aired stories on a range of environmental, educational, food security, transportation, peace and justice topics. [chrsv@seanet.com](mailto:chrsv@seanet.com)*

### A-C-E-ntelechy by Natalie Bell

"I was able to learn a great deal about audio editing, as well as the history of music and ambient sound. Most importantly, I was allowed the time necessary to experiment and incorporate the things I had learned, and I feel like I can move my work in new directions."

*Natalie Bell is a writer and multimedia producer based in New York City. Her interests involve experiments with phenomenologies of sound and ontological perspectives. Podcasts and more at [www.nataliebell.org](http://www.nataliebell.org). [natalie.a.bell@gmail.com](mailto:natalie.a.bell@gmail.com)*

### Sleepy Hollow Identifiers by Keith Brand

"The intensive was a very positive experience. I enjoyed listening to the work of my peers, as well as the discussions on various aspects of the use of sound, which got me to think about sound outside of linear narrative. I received many tips and tools that I will be using in my own classroom."

*Keith Brand is an Assistant Professor of Radio, Television and Film at Rowan University in Glassboro, N.J. He is also host and producer of Sleepy Hollow, a popular weekend morning eclectic music program on WXPB FM in Philadelphia. [brandk@rowan.edu](mailto:brandk@rowan.edu)*

### Visiting Aboriginal Australia by Prue Clarke

"The workshop gave me a completely new understanding of sound. I had no idea about the elements of a tone or the various digital programs available to record and store it. Listening to different sounds in different settings has made me more attuned to the sounds available to me in my reporting. I hope to see the results of this awakening in improvements in my work in the months to come."

*Prue Clarke is an independent journalist reporting mostly from Africa. Her work has appeared on CBC Radio, The World, World Vision Report, Voice of America and in The Times, the Globe and Mail and The Australian. [prueclarke@verizon.net](mailto:prueclarke@verizon.net)*

### Guilty as Charged by Quinn Batson

"The instructor, Michael Schumacher, presented a highly diverse selection of film clips selected to demonstrate all the different ways directors work with sound. That really helped expand my thinking about sound design. And the field mic setup he showed us really helped me to realize new field-recording possibilities. Each person in the workshop was using different software and had a personal style of working, which allowed us to bounce things off of each other in refreshing and useful ways. The intensive certainly inspired me to keep going further. My critical listening skills have improved greatly thanks to the thoughtful comments of our instructors."

*Quinn Batson worked as a recording engineer in the days before ProTools and has an active interest in dance ([www.offoffoff.com/dance](http://www.offoffoff.com/dance)) and music for dance. This piece is his first step toward creating sound for dance. [qbatson@nyc.rr.com](mailto:qbatson@nyc.rr.com)*



*This training was made possible in part by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts.*

## The Storytelling Power of Sound: 2007 AIR Interlochen Resident Report

By George Zarr

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Late last January, I temporarily left my Manhattan-based audio production career behind to become AIR's producer-in-residence at the Interlochen Arts Institute in northern Michigan. It was a multi-faceted experience calling upon every aspect of my audio theater expertise as a producer, writer, director, composer, techie and voice-over artist; it challenged me to tailor my audio drama message to provide distinct educational benefits to address multiple academic requirements.

Along with devising a live audio production for ESL (English as a Second Language) students, teaching an evening of audio drama to adults, developing a commercial radio series for a Michigan author and consulting with film students on their project soundtracks, I spent four days a week teaching a full-scale audio theater course. The desired result of the course was an hour of programming suitable for broadcast on Interlochen Public Radio and throughout the state of Michigan.

My class for the Creative Writing department was billed as "Radio/Audio Writing and Production," which pretty much covered the entire spectrum from original idea through finished recording. My students consisted of two distinct groups: Anne-Marie Oomen's Creative Writing majors and [Michael Mittelstaedt's](#) Motion Picture Arts majors. Each required a unique approach.

The Creative Writing seniors had already tackled prose, poetry, playwriting and screenwriting. For them, I felt the value of my course would lie in guiding them through the many collaborative stages of audio production. If you are writing a poem or a book, you, as an author, communicate directly with your audience. When creating an audio script (or one for theater or film), however, you must contend with an additional layer of input; you will need to provide a group of craftspeople with script instructions that allow them to fashion a finished performance to your specifications. Only through the accurate efforts of these producers, actors, directors and technicians will you be able to reach an audience with your intended message. Essentially, you need to realize that you aren't the one baking a cake—you are writing a *recipe* that in turn will lead to others baking the cake you had in mind. The clarity of your recipe will directly affect the outcome of the final cake. By working through the various links in the audio production chain, the Creative Writing majors learned firsthand the needs and expectations of each group of craftspeople. They also saw that writing a coherent and straightforward script results in effective implementation of each production stage on the road to the accurate realization of an idea.

I approached my Motion Picture Arts students differently. These students were more comfortable with technical topics than their text-only brethren had been. Additionally, they had more experience in taking a project from an idea to a script to a performance to a post-produced piece. So how could they benefit from my course? In their case, I stressed the storytelling power of sound by taking away their pictures. For many filmmakers, a soundtrack is a tacked-on appendage to the visual component of cinema. If the actors' voices aren't distorted in the recording process, many consider it to be a magnificent soundtrack. I attempted to reveal the myriad possibilities presented by telling a story entirely in sound, using only the three building blocks of audio drama—voices, sound effects and music. Although the visuals in a film present a story in concrete terms, a soundtrack can tap into an audience's imagination, adding richness and magic to a production. As an additional bonus, certain dramatic thrusts can be made more cheaply (and, in many cases, more effectively) with sound than with its strictly visual analog.



*Ting-Chia Hsu (Taiwan), George Zarr, Marvine Stamatakis, Bahar Annadurdyeva (Turkmenistan)*

After an enjoyable and challenging semester working with exceptional students and teachers, I've been invited to return as the first "Interdisciplinary Resident" at Interlochen, this time for the entire 2007-2008 school year. I'll be adding a specific voice-over class for the Drama majors and a soundtrack class for the Motion Picture Arts majors to the courses I've already been teaching.

And I'm glad to report that in the up-and-coming generation, imaginations are alive and active.



## Radio Drama Motivates High School Art Students to Learn English

by *Marvine Stamatakis*  
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Teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) can be a very challenging yet creative profession. This spring, thanks to the presence of AIR's producer-in-residence at Interlochen, my students and I had the opportunity to work with a professional audio producer to develop an original radio drama with a storyline based on a topic that my students had studied. This was a decidedly atypical project for us, given that the students here are aspiring visual artists. I am happy to say I've discovered that radio drama is a fantastic medium for stimulating my class to actively participate in the learning process. The outcomes for my students go well beyond what I ever could have imagined.

I was introduced to radio drama while tuned to Michigan Public Radio in my car. As I listened to Frank Stasio, a nationally-known broadcaster, being interviewed about his passion for producing radio drama in school classrooms, a light went on in my head—what a great way for students to practice a second language! Language-learners need a great deal of work in reading, writing, comprehension, vocabulary and pronunciation—every one of which is a large part of radio drama production.

I contacted Frank, who bravely agreed to work in my classroom for one week. He led my class in creating an original audio program called *The Sapphire Mummy*, a story of romance and time travel. As the week progressed, I noticed some remarkable changes taking place in my students, who hailed from countries such as China, Turkmenistan, Japan, Ukraine and Korea. All of these young people were gifted in music, dance or the arts, but had only rudimentary English language skills. Participating in writing, acting, directing, recording and editing allowed them to become proficient in a medium not dependent on their dominant artistic talent, but rather on their emerging ability to communicate and project their message and personalities through radio drama.

A beginning student from China became the director of our first production. She suddenly demonstrated leadership skills that I had never seen her exhibit. As the week progressed, I watched my class gain confidence and develop pride in learning English. The added bonus? They had a good time doing it.

This year my teaching colleague Laurie Gabel and I worked with independent radio producer George Zarr on our fifth and most ambitious radio drama. We received a grant from the Michigan Humanities Council to work on a topic related to labor. As my colleague and I researched the issue, we discovered the Flint Sit-Down Strike of 1937 and realized that our students could develop a radio drama around this event that included great characters and sound effects such as the factory machinery, the union organizer and music from the era. We were certain that the class would learn about an important piece of labor history by actually inhabiting the lives of the central characters. George Zarr, in his role as mentor, treated the students as fellow artists and professionals, respecting their opinions and abilities and communicating with them through their developing language skills.

Augmenting the process was a unique interdisciplinary element: we invited two students from the Creative Writing and Motion Picture Arts programs to collaborate with the ESL students by writing the script. Our students related the timeline of events and information about the participants and actions to the two writers, who digested the material and literally overnight produced a 25-minute script. Casting and rehearsals began the following day.

Once again, previously unknown abilities emerged from the group: a dancer became our director; a quiet girl decided the crowd scenes needed her active coordination; and a clarinet major volunteered to sing the title song. In a two-week time-frame, we had a unique play containing original music ready for live radio performance before an audience. The story had all the elements that intrigue teenagers: a love story, a fight scene and a triumphant ending tinged with tragedy. After rehearsing as much as possible, the kids were ready. As they performed, the teachers in the audience were amazed at the hidden gifts the students displayed — and their achievements were professionally recorded for later airplay throughout Michigan.

As teachers, the greatest reward was to read the reflections of the students after the conclusion of the radio project. One noted, "I learned much more about the strike from acting the story than I did from reading a book." Another student said, "I understood the workers much better after playing a worker." A third decided, "I'm going to study hard so that I don't have to work in a factory." These comments, as well as the accolades for the performance, have given us the most satisfaction as educators.

As my students left for summer break, many of them wanted to know if we could do an audio project again next year. Laurie and I will soon be back on the grant-writing trail, hoping this time to collaborate with a labor museum, to develop another terrific radio drama.



L to R: *Ting-Chia Hsu (Taiwan)*, *Emiliano Ramniceanu (Venezuela)*,

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## Talking Music Rights with Entertainment Lawyer Ernest Sanchez

Compiled by Samantha Schongala  
[airblast@airmedia.org](mailto:airblast@airmedia.org)

Q: What do you call a sick eagle?

A: An ill-eagle!

*Talking music rights isn't for the birds. You've had some questions—now we have some answers. This June, AIR hosted an online legal discussion at [airmedia.org](http://airmedia.org) with Ernest Sanchez to address questions concerning the use of music in podcasts and other web-based distribution formats. The discussion provoked an array of valuable queries and comments regarding music rights, public domain, web distribution, Creative Commons and more. You'll find a handful of the highlights below.*

*Before you start perusing, I recommend that you take the time to read Mr. Sanchez's Copyright and Fair Use Primer, available online as a PDF: [Copyright and Fair Use Primer\\_06182007.pdf](#). It's guaranteed to answer many of your Fair Use questions. For the complete online legal discussion, follow this link to AIR Interact: <http://interact.airmedia.org/48>.*

### Cases of Podcast Copyright Litigation

Submitted by Lydia Wilson

**Question:** Have there been any concrete cases of web and podcast uses being challenged by copyright holders?

*Sanchez responds:* While there has not yet been a lot of copyright litigation in connection with web and podcast uses, that certainly doesn't preclude such litigation in the future. At the same time, copyright owners are generally smart enough to recognize that until an industry is making significant revenue, it does not make sense to press that industry very hard for royalty fees or to pursue aggressive litigation. Certainly copyright holders want revenues from the use of their works, but they also have a vested interest in not killing an industry before it has a reasonably robust business model and meaningful revenues worth arguing about. Although I don't expect the copyright community to acknowledge this, many copyright holders are also fearful of making deals with users prematurely for fear of setting bad precedents that will impact the copyright holder adversely in the long term. In general, patience probably makes pretty good sense, for copyright owners and producers have to understand that early leniency by copyright holders should not be misinterpreted as a willingness to give producers a permanent free ride. Sooner or later, broadly based industry precedents will be negotiated and producers will either pay the required copyright fees or be prepared to face painful litigation which will heavily favor the copyright owners.

### Podcasting a Broadcast Radio Show

Submitted by Francesca Rheannon

**Question:** If you podcast a show that airs on a rights-paying radio station and use snatches of music no more than 30 seconds in length for theme, bridges and bumpers, is that legal?

*Sanchez responds:* The music rights that are necessary for podcasting are legally separate and different from those that have traditionally been included in the public performance

rights music licenses which radio stations have secured from the major music performing rights societies, such as ASCAP, BMI and SESAC. If by "rights-paying radio station" you mean a station that has secured a blanket license from one of the music performance societies, it would be necessary to carefully check the license to see if its coverage includes podcasting rights as well as the traditional over-the-air broadcasting rights. For those public radio stations which get financial support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the news may be somewhat better: CPB, in cooperation with National Public Radio (NPR), has conducted periodic negotiations with representatives of major music copyright organizations in an effort to add podcasting rights to the bundle of rights already existing under the public radio blanket music copyright licenses. To some degree, CPB and NPR have been successful in closing some of the "podcast gap" faced by stations not covered by the public radio blanket licenses. The specifics of those arrangements are a bit complex and subject to periodic renewal. If you are involved with an NPR member station or a station supported by CPB, I would suggest getting in touch with either organization for specifics about the current coverage in force. In general, independent producers who are providing content to NPR/CPB stations are also covered by the blanket public radio licenses.

Those stations which are not covered by the NPR/CPB arrangements can seek the assistance of their own station membership organizations or deal directly with the individual music performance rights societies. Legally, the podcasting copyright obligations of larger noncommercial stations do not differ from those of smaller stations. Nevertheless, it is a practical reality that the copyright owners are probably prepared to spend more resources to try and bring the larger stations into compliance before they worry so much about the smaller stations. That does not mean that smaller non-NPR/CPB stations should ignore their obligations, but only that it may take a little longer before the copyright holders become very aggressive in their licensing and collection efforts. Past experience suggests that the copyright holders will concentrate their initial efforts on high-profile stations (i.e., bigger-budget stations) in major markets and then work their way toward the smaller stations.

### YouTube and MySpace Licensing Concerns

Submitted by Barry Rueger

**Question:** A member of a group that I work with just posted one of our finished videos on YouTube. They see it as "good publicity." I looked at the license that was agreed to and am not too pleased by what YouTube demands. You can find the license at <http://www.youtube.com/t/terms>. As I read this, YouTube can take our content and do pretty much anything it likes with it. Given the proliferation of content-sharing sites like YouTube, MySpace and even PRX.org, can we get your interpretation of exactly which rights a producer is giving up when he or she accepts an agreement like this?

*Sanchez responds:* The specific legal conditions that apply to any given content-sharing site are set by the individual site operators. The quotation you have offered from the YouTube  
*(continued next page)*

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license is very explicit in requiring the content provider to give up all ownership rights except the right to use the content on a nonexclusive basis for your own purposes. Although the language in the license does not say so, you are in effect giving up the practical right to make money from your content, because who will pay you for a nonexclusive license to the content when anyone can get the same thing from YouTube for free? If you want to make money from your content or control who makes use of it, you do not want to forfeit your rights by posting that content on a sharing site such as YouTube.

### Securing the Extended Life of Broadcast Work

Submitted by Lydia Wilson

*Question:* It's the \$64,000 question, I know. But, what legal and ethical steps, if any, should a producer take to give his or her broadcast work extended life on CD and the internet after broadcast?

*Sanchez responds:* In order to make a long-term living from your produced content, you need to be able to account, from a rights and ownership standpoint, for every element included in your produced piece. To the degree that you are using any elements that you did not personally create (third party elements), this means that you need to have an internal paper trail for each element that helps you keep track of where the element came from, who the original rights holder is, and what uses you may legally make of the element.

In addition, when you secure the initial permission for use from the rights holder, I think it is prudent to either arrange an all-inclusive acquisition of rights for further uses, or, in the alternative, to at the very least set up option arrangements which will allow you to make specified future rights uses in return for clearly defined compensation, without having to come back in the future and renegotiate the possibility of using those rights. If you don't have a clear mechanism for future use rights, you risk the possibility that the rights holder may be unwilling to grant needed rights in the future or that the rights will be priced at a level that is beyond your financial reach. Either possibility will greatly devalue your production and possibly limit its use to a fraction of its potential ultimate uses. I cannot stress too strongly that if you want to make a long-term living from material you produce, you have to control or have easy access to the content rights for the elements contained in your productions. It is the rare production that is a significant money-maker based on the original use for which it may have been produced. On the other hand, if you are free to reversion your production and are able to use it over extended periods of time, you will greatly enhance the prospect of turning your production into a long-term money-maker.

### Copyright of Sound Recordings Prior to 1972

Submitted by Lydia Wilson

*Question:* Are music and/or sound recordings produced prior to 1972 not protected under copyright law and therefore open for reproduction or use in web or podcast applications? *Background:* An attorney for the university we work for made this statement at a Q&A session. I was surprised to hear this from a colleague who attended, thinking surely at least the words to the music would be protected by copyright and would therefore require permission unless otherwise usable under fair use.

*Sanchez responds:* Prior to February 15, 1972, existing sound recordings were not covered by U.S. copyright protection. That lack of protection, however, related only to the sound recording itself, not to the content of the recording, such as music, lyrics or any literary content which would generally have independent copyright protection. What that means is that for pre-February 15, 1972 sound recordings, the owner of the sound recording did not have the legal right to stop reproduction of the sound recording if the content was in the public domain or if the reproducing party had secured the permission of the copyright owner of the content. On a practical level, you would only be able to freely use pre-1972 recordings if you were certain that the content itself was already in the public domain, which ends up making for a fairly narrow exception. In addition, even if you licensed the content rights from the copyright owner, there are federal and state laws which could still make it illegal for you sell copies of the sound recording if the copies gave the impression that they were being issued by the performer or with the authorization of the performer. It's not impossible that you will find a pre-1972 sound recording with public domain content, but they're probably more rare than you might think.

### Reading Books on a Podcast

Submitted by Sandra Sleight-Brennan

*Question:* Can you legally read books as podcasts? Say, for example, you wanted to have a podcast of bedtime books for children. Could you do that?

*Sanchez responds:* Except for public domain books not under copyright, I don't know of any exception to the copyright law which would allow reading of books on a podcast without the permission of the author. Nevertheless, there is a vast amount of content no longer under copyright, even under the current international standard of protection, which is the life of the author plus 70 years. In addition, with podcasting still an emerging business, there are probably many authors and publishers who would be willing to grant some kind of limited permission to a podcaster if they are asked nicely. Check the copyright page of the book you are interested in for permissions contact information.

For more answers to your music use questions, visit <http://interact.airmedia.org>. That's where you'll find the complete online legal discussion and Mr. Sanchez's comprehensive resource article on Copyright and Fair Use.



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## Getting into the Game: AIR's Spring 2007 Beginning Producer Clinics

### A Report on AIR's Spring 2007 Beginning Producer Clinics

by Laura Starecheski

This spring AIR offered a series of three beginning producer clinics: interviewing, writing and digital editing. Our participants ranged widely in experience—some had never picked up a microphone before, while several others had finished pieces under their belts. Most were gung-ho novices who'd leaped fearlessly into radio production, but then faltered when their enthusiasm led them into the uncharted wilderness of tape gathering, story structure and technical obstacles.

The lack of specialized training for public radio producers makes it hard to figure out how to go from enthused beginner to professional producer. Journalism programs are pricey and not always a good fit, and technical sound production courses don't usually give much guidance in crafting a story. So, what were our beginning producers looking for?

### Interviewing

Ah, so many ways for a first interview to go wrong. You might come home to find that you didn't actually record anything, or that you didn't mike your interviewee correctly. Even if the sound quality is good, you might not have asked the right questions; you might not have even known what the right questions were until the interview was over! Our participants had made all of these beginner gaffes, and they craved a little guidance on equipment and mic placement. I emphasized finding a way to be comfortable during your interview—meaning if you're confident in your equipment (no matter what it is) and can find a way to sit comfortably, your interviewee is going to relax a lot more. I also encouraged participants to manipulate and rearrange a space if necessary, and to explain to their interviewees that they are dedicated to capturing the best possible sound quality. If your subject knows you're serious about your craft, they'll be more comfortable opening up to you.

Technical details aside, participants struggled with knowing who to talk to, how to focus their interview and how to go into an interview with a clear goal in mind. Almost all of these difficulties can be remedied with some production planning and a pre-interview, and almost none of our beginners were familiar with these strategies. Dolores Brandon was instrumental in sharing both skills, encouraging participants to write clear focus statements and to pre-interview before spending their valuable time and tape hours on a sit-down interview.

### Writing

Perhaps the most invisible skill of the public radio producer, writing is also one of the most essential. Even the most luminous, surprising tape in the world can sound mediocre when paired with bad writing. Every producer has a different strategy for writing a piece, but a few general guidelines proved useful during our clinic.

Most importantly, as the narrator, you're a guide. A quick and easy way to bore listeners is to let your interviewee drone on about statistics or background information. You can explain

facts and back-story succinctly, but let your tape relate emotion and texture. Generally, you want to listen for moments when your subject comes alive, when you can hear their personality and emotion most strongly. If you can set up these moments with solid writing, they'll stand out clearly and affect listeners that much more deeply. Letting listeners in on your involvement with your story can also help to draw them in, whether that means letting them hear one of your questions on tape or illuminating



Laura Starecheski

your own moments of surprise and discovery. Our participants were struck by how easy it is to hear overly written narration by speaking your script out loud, and by how useful simple, clear language and short sentences proved to be in writing for radio.

### Digital Editing with ProTools

Some of our participants were well-versed in digital editing, and some had barely had a chance to try it before the clinic. All of the participants wanted to go over basic ProTools skills, and we ended up focusing on file organization, loading and logging tape, monitoring levels, basic editing tools, use of multiple tracks and basic mixing concepts. The range of previous knowledge made tailoring the material to each participant a challenging endeavor, and in the future it might be useful to allot an entire day to this clinic, or to split it into two sessions. The biggest challenge in teaching the software proved to be how to make the clinic useful for beginning producers who might not be ready to invest in the software or be able to practice using it regularly. Hopefully, gaining a basic familiarity with digital editing will be a stepping stone for our participants on the way to becoming skilled and efficient editors.



Laura Starecheski is an award-winning independent producer based in Brooklyn, NY. She teaches sound production at CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College and is a mentor at CUNY for NPR's Next Generation Radio training program. Laura is also a teaching artist with the Student Press Initiative at Columbia University's Teachers College and at the Davis Museum in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

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- Kyle Norris

## Farewell, Dolores

Sid Selvidge, AIR Board President  
[sidsel@bealestreetcaravan.com](mailto:sidsel@bealestreetcaravan.com)

I first met Dolores Brandon at one of the PRPD meetings, probably not too long after she assumed the position of Executive Director of AIR. Back in 1999, I don't think I really knew anything at all about AIR. I remember thinking Dolores was bright and engaging and I would imagine she presented a pretty good case for joining AIR, because all of a sudden I was a member. My outfit, Beale Street Caravan, is independently produced and distributed, and there were some radio friends whose opinions I respected who were members, so it seemed like a good idea to give the organization some support. Over the years I've watched the organization grow from something that seemed to be a good idea to something that became a concrete entity that advocated for a real constituency. I've watched AIR grow not only in numbers of members but in the professionalism these members have brought along with them. I witnessed AIR grow from something that was barely acknowledged by the radio community to an organization that currently has a place at all the major tables where public radio policy is discussed. Dolores has made this happen with a grace and style that would almost appear effortless if I didn't know the tenaciousness and dedication she has applied to grow AIR into a truly professional organization.

When Dolores became ED of AIR, the annual income of the organization was under \$5,000. Through her efforts she secured funding from grant organizations such as the McArthur Foundation, NEA, CPB and the New York State Council on the Arts that placed AIR on much more secure financial ground. During Dolores' tenure, the membership grew by 250%, with a 95% retention rate in spite of a substantial dues increase. Not only did Dolores grow the membership and financial health of AIR, she grew the members. Under her leadership AIR became a training ground for true professionalism for independent producers. The mentor program instituted on her watch has provided professional training to hundreds of independent producers. Under her leadership, AIR has advocated for higher rates of pay for independent producers, and she instituted and helped author AIR's Code of Fair Practices, which has been disseminated to stations, networks and programmers throughout the system. One of the problems of a national organization is keeping the membership in touch; Dolores has constantly sought creative ways to bind the AIR community together. She instituted *AIRspace* as a professional quarterly journal and hired the best and brightest to construct a website that enables AIR to foster a true sense of community and exchange of ideas.



While I would like to think Dolores has put together a smart, hard working board of directors, it is really her energy and ideas that have driven AIR over these past eight years. She leaves AIR poised to move strongly and boldly into the world of emerging media. Her tirelessness, professionalism, grace and good spirits will be truly missed by this community.

Dolores, we wish you smooth sailing wherever the wind takes you, and we thank you for all that you have done to give independent audio producers a true place at the table both now and in the future.



### Are You on the AIRdaily?

AIR maintains a private daily e-mail list for our members. Moderated by Host Emeritus Jay Allison, the AIRdaily is a great way to keep up with what's going on. Read about everything from politics to equipment, gigs to gossip. More than 400 members stay in touch this way every day. Many producers feel it's one of the most useful benefits of membership.

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