

# RADIO DRAMA



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# MEANING

The radio medium has a long and distinguished history of turning thoughts, words and actions into satisfying pictures with the listener's mind by using the techniques of drama. But there is no need for the producer to think only in terms of the Shakespeare play- the principles of radio drama apply to the well-made commercial, a programme trail, dramatized reading or two minute teaching point in a programme for schools.



# ADOPTING FOR RADIO

- Rewriting an existing work for radio sets a special kind of challenge
- Staying faithful to the original so as not to upset those who already know and love the book or play, yet conveying it in this different medium, and probably compressing it in time, requires a distinctive writing skill.
- The adopting writer should care for the original while analysing it, still in copyright the original publisher will need to be consulted for permission to adopt, and may well have views regarding a radio treatment.



- Radio works well with speech in dialogue form, but if there is little conversation, will a narrator do?
- Radio also effectively conveys ‘internal’ thoughts, thinking and talking to oneself.



# THE IDEA

- Before committing anything to paper, it is essential to think through the basic ideas of plot and form-once theses are decided, a great deal follows naturally.
- The first question is to do with the material's suitability for the target audience.
- The second with its technical feasibility.
- To do something simple and well is preferable to failing with something complicated.



# STORY CONSTRUCTION

➤ The simplest way of telling a story is to:

- Explain the situation.
- Introduce ‘conflict’.
- Develop the action
- Resolve the conflict



- In radio, scenes can be much shorter than in the theatre, and intercutting between different situations is a simple matter of keeping the listener informed more about where we are at one time.
- The ability to move quickly in terms of location should be used positively to achieve a variety and contrast which itself adds interest.



# THE SETTING

- Situation comedy drama often begins with a setting- an office, prison, hospital, shop or even a radio station-which then becomes animated with characters.
- The storyline comes later, driven by the circumstances, generally a series of predicaments in which the characters find themselves,
- Changes of location are very effective when run in parallel with changes in disposition or mood.



# CHARACTERIZATION

- One of Britain's best-known advisers in this area, Bart often referred to as a 'script doctor'- says that there are three questions to be answered for a compelling story:
- Who is the hero or heroine?
- What does he or she want?
- Why should I care?



# DIALOGUE

- ‘Look out, he’s got a gun.’ Lines like this, unnecessary in film, television or theatre, where the audience can see that he has a gunfire essential in radio as a means of conveying information.



# RADIO AS STORY

- ‘This is about converting virtually any aspect of radio presentation into “story”, i.e. into an evocative presentation of material in such a way that the listener becomes engaged in the experience of dealing with the human conflicts inherent in it.
- The presentation here will go through examples based on writing and producing be enough to get you started.



# GET THE EVOCATIVE BITS

- 'Pick a topic which will trigger strong memories that will evoke feelings and images.
- The key thing is that the event triggered emotion and grabbed your attention at the time.
- The jot down whatever bits you remember.
- Don't try to edit or organise or make a story out of them.
- Remember where you were, what you are doing, who was doing it with you, what scared you, surprised you, made you feel sad, what was rattling round your head.



# ROUGH OF THE DRAMA

- ‘After you’ve got several of these bits, eight or ten of them, read them over and see what they suggest for possible “stories”.
- Most people have a tough time with this at first, that is with making story where there was none.
- It helps to bring in someone who’s done this before and who’s outside the original experience, and whose focus will be on developing the drama.



# PRUNE AND POLISH

- ‘Now we’ve go the makings of short evocative piece of drama.
- No general narrative- “one of my earliest memories...” scene setting leads straight into the conflict-“soon there’ll be the marshmallows-“in final draft.
- Told from the point of view of the narrator as she is experiencing the story, with a flux of information and emotion in her words after she screams in final drafts.
- No asides. Everything is written so as to pull us into the drams through the use of dialogue and active verbs.



# TRUTH VS DRAMA

- The focus here is on creating radio that grabs the listener, not communicating an accurate account of what actually happened.
- What is important here concerning “truth” is that the core emotional experience is communicated.
- It is a process that can work well writing dialogue for a factual documentary where no actual record exists of what was said.
- The outcome in each case will obviously depend on what “truth” you are trying to communicate.



# SCRIPT LAYOUT

- The page should be typed on one side only to minimise handling noise, the paper being a fire 'non-rustle' type.
- The lines should be triple spaced to allow room for alterations and actors' notes, and each speed numbered for easy reference.
- The reproduction of scripts should be absolutely clear and there should be plenty of copies so that spares are available.



# THE ACTORS

- Casting a radio drama, whether it is a one hour play or short illustration, will nearly always end by being a compromise between who is suitable and who is available.
- Actors new to radio have to recognise the limitations of the promoted page, which is designed to place words clearly lines.



# THE ACOUSTIC

- The producer must always know where the listener is placed relative to overall picture.
- Generally, but necessarily, 'with' the microphone, the listener placed in a busily dynamic scene will need some information which helps in following the action by moving through the scene rather than simply watching it from a static position.



# SOUND EFFECTS

- Passage of time -clock ticking .
- Night time-owl hooting .
- On the coast- seagulls and seawash .
- On board sailing ship- creaking of ropes.
- Early morning - cock crowing.
- Urban night time- distant clock chime, dog barking.
- Out of doors, rural-birdsong,



# MUSIC

- An ally to the resourceful producer, music can add greatly to the radio play.
- The drama producer must not only search the shelves of a music library, but should sometimes consider the use of specially written material.
- There are considerable advantages in designing the musical style to suit the play, and having the music durations exactly to fit the various introductions and voice-overs.



# PRODUCTION TECHNIQUE

- The producer works with the writer or on the script alone rewriting for the medium, and making alterations to suit the transmission time available .
- Cast the play, issue contracts, distribute copies of the script, arrange rehearsal or recording times.
- The programme is placed in the transmission system and the remaining paperwork completed.



# REFERENCES

- *Image Courtesy- Google*
- *Wikipedia*
- *Radio Production-Rober Mcliesh*
- *Self notes*



THANKYOU