Chapter 19
Noise, soundplay, extended radio: Bugs & Beats & Beasts as an example of resilience in the German Hörspiel
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Abstract
This chapter highlights Bugs & Beats & Beasts (1999) by Andreas Ammer and Console to explore the development of the special German radio art Hörspiel through soundplay and even beyond towards the concept of 'extended radio'. It argues that the unique openness of the Hörspiel as a special kind of radio art makes it possible to respond almost instantaneously to cultural and technological transformations and contributes to the evolution of the medium of radio in doing so. Consequently this soundplay was able to dramatically articulate the rise of the network society, its swarm logic, and the evolution of the medium at a time long before these significant changes were understood by a wider public. It did so by using 'noises' in different meanings and pushed the resilience of the medium of radio forward on three levels, aesthetic, technological and spatial.

Keywords: noise, Hörspiel, extended radio, network society, Germany
Introduction

Bssssshshshshshssss. The noise of an insect in a room. Perhaps a fly trapped in a glass? In parallel with it another track starts with a strange 'boing' sound – the sound of a jew’s harp might come to mind. Next, on a third track, we hear a cello, which slowly, slowly becomes louder and louder, and its tone develops into a more complex melody. Meanwhile the buzzing of the fly fades out into the distance. Suddenly a very, very quiet and deep humming sound underneath the cello can be heard, like an acoustic pad. Then, a track with a male voice starts to describe in German the scenery of a landscape without human beings. The last two words, leise Geräusche (quiet noises) are difficult to understand because they are almost totally faded into the sound of the cello. By then, underneath the cello, there is a track with deep, fat bass beats, which sound like ‘wupp wupp’. Suddenly, the noise of the fly in the glass occurs once again – at first only briefly, then longer and with more intensity, almost desperate. After a while a track starts with a second male voice reciting a text in Latin. On another track, the noise of an insect can be heard that sounds strange, as if it is somehow defamiliarised electronically, somehow echoing and a bit looped. Every now and then the fly in the glass buzzes again. At the end of the Latin recitation, a female voice says ‘natural techno’, followed by a short buzzing of the fly. Then the cello cross-fades into the loud chirping of cicadas.

This is how one could translate the aural experience of the first track Natural Techno of Bugs & Beats & Beasts into words. It is the beginning of that Hörspiel – or perhaps more precisely, ‘soundplay’, as will be explained later – which was the first genuine cooperation between Andreas Ammer, the most successful contemporary Hörspiel writer in Germany, and the well-known electronic musician Martin Gretschmann, who is also known as Console. Bugs & Beats & Beasts was commissioned and finally broadcast on 15 October 1999 by the radio drama department of the Bavarian Broadcasting Station Bayerischer Rundfunk in Munich. It was produced on the laptops of Ammer and Console and mixed at the independent upion-studio in Weilheim, Upper-Saxonia, where most of the voices were also recorded.

The main idea for this radio drama, for which Andreas Ammer was able to acquire Martin Gretschmann as his co-writer, was to create a Hörspiel out of ‘bugs’ – a Hörspiel that would consist almost entirely of electronically-remastered original recordings of insect noises. Approximately 95 per cent of the beats in this radio drama are real insect noises, sampled and defamiliarised, which were taken from such CDs as Insect Noise In Stored Foodstuffs, a CD that was produced for ‘sonic warfare’ (Goodman 2010). Its purpose was to help farmers to detect, identify and eliminate parasite infestations in grain silos, such as rice weevil larvae that are invisible but not inaudible due to sensitive microphones with narrow frequency responses. Only five per cent of the beats were generated electronically. The German texts were taken from entomological encyclopedias, as well as a Latin text that even dates back to Pliny the Elder and his famous book Naturalis Historia from the first century AD (Mauruschat 2012a). One could regard Bugs & Beats & Beasts as being merely a modest little pro-faction that is easily missed as it apparently only deals with something as annoying and mundane as insects and their noises. Nevertheless, one ought not to underestimate this Hörspiel – or insects either. What makes the award-winning Bugs & Beats & Beasts so interesting from a media aesthetic perspective, is that it sums up not only Ammer’s achievements and developments in his own Hörspiel oeuvre of around 25 radio plays, which he created in the last 25 years. The piece also sums up the almost 90-year-long debate on the German Hörspiel and fulfills an almost 90-year-old vision of a true soundplay in the very best sense of the term, for which German radio art is well known for all over the world (Cory 1992; Sá Rego Costa et al. 2013). Bugs & Beasts & Beasts even points beyond that, towards media art or maybe more precisely ‘expanded radio art’ and the theoretical concept of something called ‘extended radio’. This concept, as formulated by the media theorist and media historian Bernhard Siegert (2002), argues that there never was and never will be a stable definition of what exactly radio is, because radio is impossible to define due to the permanent evolution of the medium. As Marshall McLuhan and Edmund Carpenter characterised the audio space of the electronic age as being ‘dynamic, always in flux’ (1960: 41) one could say that its primary medium, radio, is dynamic, always in flux, developing and evolving since its beginning, since the invention of gramophone, telephone, telegraphy and short-wave.

By reflecting all of these aspects in an artistic way, Bugs & Beasts & Beasts touches on crucial contemporary aesthetical questions and opens up new spaces of perception, production and distribution. This is why Bugs & Beasts & Beasts could be considered on three levels as an appropriate example to use to demonstrate the resilience of radio on three levels, aesthetic, technological, and spatial. On each level of resilience, the epistemological and aesthetic category of ‘noise’ (Schütz 2003: 15-229; Sigert 2002; Sigert 2004) plays a key role because it is noise which pushes the resilience of a medium. As Michel Serres, the philosopher of The Parasite put it: ‘The noise, through its presence and absence, the intermittence of the signal, produces the new system, that is to say oscillation’ (2007: 52).

Aesthetic resilience

Due to the rise of electronic media from the end of the nineteenth century, Marshall McLuhan predicted a return of the acoustic space, as he called it, adding: ‘We are back in acoustic space. We begin again to structure the primordial feelings and emotions from which 3000 years of literacy divorced us’ (1954: 18). He argued that mass media as ‘extensions of the mechanisms of human perception’ are responsible for how people perceive their environment, how they experience it and how they relate to it. McLuhan regarded the telephone, gramophone, and especially radio as the ‘mechanisation of postliterate acoustic space’. Aural media such as radio and audiovisual media such as television, ‘the omnipresent ear and the moving eye... have abolished writing, the specialised acoustic-visual metaphor which established the dynamics of the Western civilisation’ (1954: 17). In this sense, electronic media have to be regarded as a disturbance of the order that was installed by the linearity of the literary culture. Or as Erhardt Schützpe put it: ‘The dissemination of a new medium... disturbs the modes of perception that were installed by an older network of media, it disturbs the whole modality of a medium and its modes of storage, usage and reflection’ (2003: 20). The point of this observation is that it is not only the new medium that disturbs the order of the old medium, but it is also the order of the older medium that often stands in the way of the breakthrough of the new.
The history of German Hörspiel is an important example first and foremost of an aesthetic struggle in the sense of perception of two different kinds of order that go hand-in-glove with different kinds of media. This example can be especially well traced and investigated by looking at the history and traditions of Ammer’s most important broadcasting station department, the radio drama department of the public Bavarian broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk in Munich, one of the six public broadcasters established in the Federal Republic after World War II by the Allies with the aim of re-educating the German population. One of the Nazis’ ‘most dangerous weapons’, radio, which they centralised and used for their propaganda, had to be turned back into a ‘normal, mass medium. In fact, the editors in charge at Bayerischer Rundfunk responded quite openly to these efforts (Zeyn 1999; 31–39), perhaps also because the history of Bavarian broadcasting was tainted by Nazi ideology. One name to note is Richard Kolb, a deeply committed Nazi from the very beginning. He was Hauptschriftleiter (editor-in-chief) from 1930 to 1932 of the Bayerische Radiozeitung (Bavarian Radio Newspaper) (Hassel 2002; 26) and one of the most important conversational partners for Joseph Goebbels, later the Nazi Minister for Propaganda, when Goebbels was trying to understand the new medium of radio and its challenges and possibilities. Goebbels even once said of Richard Kolb: ‘I am indebted to him for numerous ideas, I am indebted to him for a wealth of thoughts, which were later integrated into works when we were given control of broadcasting’ (Döhl 1992: 39).

In 1932, just before the Nazi takeover, Richard Kolb published a collection of his essays on the artistic potential of the new medium of radio under the title Das Hörskop des Hörspiels. In it he declared that his aim was to free the radio drama from ‘noise’ and the dominance of theatre, neither of which, ‘neutral’, Kolb 1932: 69, (260) was not the medium that was the message; rather, it was the neglecting of the medium that was the message. In this sense, Kolb’s radio concept could be regarded as the struggle to keep up the aesthetic ideas and values of the Age of the Press (or the Gutenberg Age). It was this suppression of the medium which implicitly promoted the reason that radio developed into a literary genre (Siegert 2004; 863–65). This notion of radio art as a literary genre was very prominent in Germany up to and including the 1960s, and to a certain extent it is today, following the rise of audio books in recent years. However, under the circumstances of the end of the Weimar Republic, Kolb’s literary radio aesthetics had specific political implications. He propagated the absolute primacy of the word and the human voice as a so-called ‘körperlose Wesenheit’ (‘bodyless essence’ or ‘entity’), as a neutral transmitter of the ideas of the poets (1932: 48–69). Of course, one also could substitute ‘poet’ with ‘spiritual leader’, or maybe even more precisely by ‘Führer’, whose words and ideas should be rearticulated and internalised as purely as possible on the part of the listeners. In this respect Kolb’s radio aesthetics could be regarded as the theoretical foundation of the idea of merging the radio listener with the radio device with the aim of synchronising the audience with the broadcaster and the listening population with the will of the broadcasting management. In this sense Richard Kolb’s rejection of ‘noise’ and his promotion of the literary tradition of the Gutenberg Galaxy within the new medium of radio can also be regarded as a declaration of war on the radio avant-gardists in Berlin and Frankfurt, namely the radiophonic experiments of Hans Flesch, Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill and others (Hagen 2005: 67–120).

Since the very first radio show in Germany on 29 October 1923, broadcasting of any political content was strictly prohibited by the authorities in charge. Due to the social and political confusion following World War I, they feared a revolutionary uprising and therefore allowed the new medium to broadcast only cultural entertainment and education (Hagen 2005: 67–75). Of course, on the one hand this political restriction was viewed by some of the German radio pioneers as a pure provocation, while on the other this restriction was taken up as a challenge to explore the artistic potential of the new medium to its fullest extent. So, for example, the composer Kurt Weill developed his influential ideas of the ‘possibilities of an absolute radio art’ (1925: 264–70). These restrictions also led to highly-advanced, self-reflexive aural experiments, notably Zauberei auf dem Sender: Versuch einer Rundfunkkunstes (‘Wizardry on the Air: An Attempt at a Radio Grotessque’) in 1924 by Hans Flesch, writer of the first German radio drama and later director of the broadcasting station Funk-Stunde AG in Berlin. As perhaps the most advanced radio pioneer of the Weimar Republic, Hans Flesch was especially interested in the technical aspects of the new medium of radio. Inspired by the silent movies of his time, by the first theories of cinema and by Kurt Weill’s considerations of ‘the possibilities of absolute radio art’ Flesch tried to derive for radio from its special technological characteristics and possibilities a genuine new art form. Hans Flesch’s vision was to achieve by the means of radio an artistic impact that neither literature nor theatre, neither cinema nor concert could achieve. This led him to the insight that true radio art has to be derived from the apparatus. Its genuine artistic effects could only come from the mechanics of this electronic, mechanical instrument. In search of this new radiophonic art form, he supported as director of the Berliner Funkstunde the so-called Rundfunkversuchsstelle, that he founded in 1928, a laboratory for the creation of new instruments like the trautonium, new ‘noises’ and eventually new sound, that became part of the Berlin conservatory. This Rundfunkversuchsstelle can be regarded as one of the first studios for electro-acoustic music, an early precursor of Pierre Schaeffer’s estudio d’essai in Paris, Herbert Eimbert’s and Karlheinz Stockhausens’ Studio für elektronische Musik in Cologne or Desmond Briscoe and Daphine Oram’s BBC Radiophonic Workshop in London. Soon after the establishment of the Rundfunkversuchsstelle, for Hans Flesch all experiments came to an end. He was dismissed in August 1932, was accused in two Nazi broadcasting trials and received orders to go to war as a military doctor. Flesch was reported missing in April 1945 (Hagen 2003) and Kurt Weill and many others had to flee Germany. The Nazis won the struggle over the country and the medium, at least in the first round, and so, also over Richard Kolb’s ‘negative radio aesthetics’.

It was not until 1961 that the Austrian-born German media researcher Friedrich Knill published his book Das Hörspiel: Mittel und Möglichkeiten eines totalen Schallspiels (The Hörspiel: Means and Possibilities of a Total Soundplay) as an intervention into the acoustic self-limitations propagated by Richard Kolb’s influential tradition of German literary radio drama. Knillis’ prescription was: ‘The Hörspiel writer today can only free himself from the narrowness of the verbal Hörspiel (Worthörspiel) by expanding the
sonic dimension of the traditional Hörspiel and by experimenting with the means and possibilities of both electronic music (Meyer-Eppler, Eimert) and musique concrète (Pierre Schaeffer) (Cory 1992: 352). It was Knill's achievement to take up the pre-War ideas of Hans Flesch and Kurt Weill, for example, and thereby to challenge the entire establishment of the radio drama scene in the young Federal Republic. Knill's vision was 'Ein echtes Schallspiel', meaning a true soundplay instead of a literary radio drama, just as Hans Flesch speculated around 1930 regarding the possible aesthetic effects of electromagnetic and acoustic waves. Knill's ideas were taken up at first by the German author Paul Pörnner, who in 1965 created his first Schallspielstudie, literally a 'soundplay study'. Pörnner's experiments were supported by the radio drama department of the Bavarian broadcasting station in Munich, notably by its open-minded editor Hansjörg Schmitthenner. As Mark E. Cory put it: '...the Hörspiel became accessible and interesting again to the avant-garde through the constellation of Knill, Pörnner, and Schmitthenner' (1992: 355).

By then it was possible once more for artists to regard and use text, sound and noise as equally important elements in their experimental and avantgardistic radio art. In addition to that, the electronic studio and its equipment became their instruments, while stereophonic made it possible for them to choreograph acoustic space. Thus, some of the radio drama departments in Germany became important collaborators in the avant-garde experiments of writers, musicians and artists like Peter Handke, Ernst Jandl, Friederike Mayröcker, John Cage, Mauricio Kagel and Ferdinand Kriwet, to name but a few of the most famous ones (Schönig 1982). Of course, this re-invention or rejuvenation of the German Hörspiel brought forth much criticism, too. For example, these soundplays, that became well known as what Klaus Schönig termed 'Neues Hörspiel', were called 'empty experimentalism' at best, and 'anti-humanistic verbal acrobatics' at worst. Anxiety developed around a 'suicidal flight away from plot, theme, and character...poised for surrender to peripheral areas such as electronic music and sound poetry' (Cory 1992: 332). Such objections could not stop avant-garde artists experimenting with new media, looking and longing for new artistic means, possibilities of expression and perception and a contemporary re-invention and understanding of their own identity as artists. In this respect Paul Pörnter stated: 'I trade the desk of a writer for the studio of the sound engineer, my new syntax is the cut, my product is recorded on microphones, mixers, and filters on magnetic tape, the principal of montage creates a playful composition out of a hundred particles' (Cory 1992: 331).

It is in this tradition of German Hörspiel, (or better, soundplay avantgardists from Hans Flesch and Kurt Weill to Paul Pörnter,) that Andreas Ammer and his musical collaborators, such as FM Einheit and Console, are situated. It is in soundplays like the Hörspiel Bugs & Beasts & Beasts that the struggle of old and new media, of the old order that stands in the way of the breakthrough of the new order, to evoke McLuhan and Schüttpelz, is summed up in a 'radiophonic nutshell'. To express his criticism of the centuries-long institutionalised hierarchy of word over sound, all of the radiophonic art of Ammer and his colleague stand under a special licence, which promotes the equality of text and sound, author and musician. This is written in the artists' contract with the broadcasting stations, so that the musician gets the same repeat fees as the writer and therefore can better afford to invest time and energy in the creation of such a subtle, noisy symphony as Bugs & Beasts & Beasts (Mauruschat 2012a).

Technological Resilience

The aesthetic resilience of the Hörspiel Bugs & Beasts & Beasts is very much related to electricity and its artistic consequences. Its technological resilience is especially related to the consequences of digitalisation and the rise of home electronics. Since Radio Inferno, the first major Hörspiel collaboration of Andreas Ammer and FM Einheit in 1992, Ammer and his musical partners use digital tools extensively for their productions. As they always aimed at producing Hörspiel by using the latest technologies, they were often confronted with programming bugs that even the software engineers could not resolve. Trying to solve the problems they were confronted with, they had to respond creatively to them. In this sense the term "bug" always had a double meaning for Ammer and Console. It stands for the insects but also for the technological mistakes, the glitches, that can be regarded either as disturbing noise or as a challenge for creativity. It just depends on the point of view of the observer (Mauruschat 2012a/b).

In the case of Bugs & Beasts & Beasts, Ammer and Console also relied on the advanced technologies of bio-acoustic engineers, namely on the highly sensitive microphones that allowed recording even noises of insects with such deep or low frequencies that a human ear normally cannot hear them. 95 per cent of the beats in this Hörspiel were such insect noises and were recorded for scientific reasons. Only the characteristic starting noise of the fly trapped in a glass at the beginning was recorded by Console himself, and only five per cent of the beats were created purely electronically by him. All of these noises were finally edited with the help of the audio-software Logic and the hardware sampler Kurzweil K2000, a synthesizer with a sampling option that could be controlled via MIDI and that was so cheap that even an independent electronic musician like Console could afford one. Most of the voices and the cello were recorded at the small, independent music studio uphon-Studio in Weilheim, Upper Bavaria. Once the material was set, Ammer and Console arranged it on their laptops into the kind of symphony they had in mind and mailed the files to and fro between their 'bedroom production studios' until they decided they were ready to go to the uphone-Studio again for the final mix and mastering. The whole production was far removed from the traditional high standards of a classic studio at a broadcasting station, and it was also free of its restrictions. In this respect Bugs & Beasts & Beasts can be regarded as being paradigmatic or a significant example of the vanishing of the radio studio as we know it: the traditional radio studio as a laboratory for the creation of new noises or sounds has been dissolved by digitisation. The old monopoly and authority of broadcasting stations in the realm of electroacoustic aesthetics has not only been disturbed but in some respects, it has even been destroyed and abolished and substituted to some extent by the 'network studio' as a virtual 'non-place' and 'non-space' (Théberge 2004: 773).

The resilient effects of digital technology are obvious, not only on the production side, but also in respect of archiving and distributing content. Due to the mp3 format and the internet, Ammer and Console offer their productions online as a webstream for free and as a cheap download. Thus, instead of only being broadcast once and then perhaps only every now and again, (but most of the time being locked away in the archives of broadcasting stations,) this radiophonic art work remains accessible after its transmission. This transgression of the traditional limitations of the Hörspiel to create acoustic art at a certain, ephemeral moment by a radio station, and its immediate
reception via a radio receiver, was an idea that Andreas Ammer and FM Einheit took up even before the breakthrough of digital technology and the internet. Inspired by the general trend of multimedia art in the early 1990s and in the spirit of an expanded radio art as promoted, for example, by the Kunstraum department of the ORF in Vienna since 1987 (Grundmann 2006), Ammer came up with an idea of a so-called ‘radio opera’. Their Hörspiel Apocalypse Live in 1994 was a complex multimedia installation with screens and all different kinds of technological gadgets that was performed in front of an audience at the municipal Marstall Theater in Munich and a few weeks later a recording of it was broadcast on radio (Bachmann 2013). This new format of a ‘radio opera’ in the sense of a classical Hörspiel that contains scenic elements and is performed in front of an audience, was taken up by Ammer and his co-authors a few times since then. For example, Have you ever heard of Wilhelm Reich? (2009) and Die Vögel nach OSCAR SALA (2010), are two further collaborations between Andreas Ammer and Martin Greitschmann. Both plays could easily be called ‘radio operas’ due to their huge amount of musical and scenic elements, although they do not have very much in common with the idea of a traditional bourgeois opera. As FM Einheit used to be the drummer of German post-industrial noise band Einstürzende Neubauten, and as Martin Greitschmann, alias Console, is responsible for the electronic part of the Bavarian independent band The Notwist, these radio operas sound more like technop performances than like operas, and their sound, of course, might be regarded from the point of view of certain bourgeois concepts of music as – noise.

Spatial Resilience

In many respects, the noises of Bugs & Beats & Beasts do open up new spaces, in a concrete as well as an abstract sense, and therefore do also demonstrate the spatial resilience of the medium of radio. Due to its modes of production and distribution, this Hörspiel overcomes the classical radiophonic spaces of the broadcasting station and the radio set as a receiver and player. Bugs & Beats & Beasts is in some respects a true digital production of the age of ‘social networking’ (Bonini 2014). Its home is not the infrastructure of a large broadcasting institution but the ‘network studio’ of contemporary independent producers. Its destiny is not the institutional archive but the permanent accessibility of the internet. Its audience is not only the realm of the more or less contingent number of radio listeners at a certain moment in time when this Hörspiel is broadcast, but also a kind of a global community of fans who share a special interest in the works of Ammer and Console. Due to its electronic aesthetics, this ‘natural techno symphony’ also opens up the realm of pop culture. Thus, Console plays some of the tracks either as a warm-up before concerts of his band The Notwist or as a chill-out track at one of his DJ sets. In this respect, it is the club and the concert hall as subcultural spaces that are opened up by this kind of radio art (Maurschütz 2012b). However, that which Andreas Ammer and the radio drama department of the Bavarian radio station declared as their aim in the early 1990s, ‘Hörspiel in die Hitparade!, or ‘Hörspiel in the charts!’ (Krug 2008: 126), has not yet come to pass. The club is perhaps an even better place to reach the community of actual and potential fans.

Finally, Bugs & Beats & Beasts opens up a very special space that is not easy to name as it can be understood as opening up a new space of perception (Holl 2012). The fact that bio acoustic engineers developed such highly sensitive microphones that are able even to record and make audible noises that human ears alone cannot hear, such as the sound of rice weevil larvae, was the premise for this very specific artistic experiment, one that arranged different tracks and the mutual interference of different noises in such a way that listeners, who can hear and perceive it all, get thrown out of their anthropocentrism. The noises of the insects interact with the male and female voices, the dialogue of the cello and the electronic beats with the Latin and German texts and the noises of ‘sonic warfare’ were turned into a ‘natural techno symphony’. The artistic, skilful arrangement of insect noises challenges the listener and questions the idea of human superiority, not in an anti-humanistic way but rather in a post-humanist way that might in the best case mean more modesty of mankind. This is probably the highest art of disturbance that noises can achieve, or in other words, after truly hearing Bugs & Beats & Beasts, anyone will look very differently at all insects.

Conclusion

If Bugs & Beats & Beasts by Andreas Ammer and Console is a Hörspiel in the broadest sense, we must conclude with the famous definition of a Hörspiel that was coined by the writer and radio producer Helmut Heissenbüttel in 1968: ‘Hörspiel ist eine offene Form’, or Hörspiel is an open form in which everything is possible, everything is allowed (1968: 222-3). This openness makes this acoustic art form able to respond almost instantaneously to crucial changes in technology and society by making them audible and presenting them to a broader public. It is the perfect tool, not least because it is funded through fees for artistic research at the forefront of medial, technological, cultural and political changes, artistic research in the sense of a seismographic articulation of the disturbing noises of the new, of the unknown to come. It was the aim of this chapter to show how resilient the medium of radio has always been, still is and probably always will be, as envisioned in the theoretical concept of ‘extended radio’. The historical investigation on the aesthetical level showed how even conventional radio was always able to open up to new technologies to make new sounds heard, despite different, mainly political hindrances. The investigations at the technological level focused on the changes of the last few decades, including the development of highly sensitive microphones that make new aesthetic experiences possible, the network studio with its hybrid equipment that implicates other forms of collaborative artistic work as well as more independence from broadcasting stations, and finally the internet. It is both a platform where, at least theoretically, content is always accessible instead of being broadcast only once and, with luck, afterwards being locked away in an archive, and a platform where a global network of fans can be established in addition to a local community of listeners. These technological examples of the resilience of radio form the premise of its spatial resilience. Digital technology and the internet are the prerequisites for contemporary radio to be unconstrained by time and space. But these technological premises on their own are not enough to open up new spaces of understanding and consciousness, therefore one needs art and reflection, especially about something as subtle and ephemeral as sound.

In this respect, the fact that the main subject of the natural techno symphony, Bugs & Beats & Beasts, is the noise of bugs with the inherent double entendre there of insects and errors, makes even more sense. Insects have in the last few decades been of significant interest to many researchers and media theorists in parallel with the rise of
digital technology, the internet, and the network society (Castells 2010). Through listening one acquires an aesthetic experience of something that cannot yet be fully understood with all its consequences. Or as Eugene Thacker put it: ‘What is interesting in the case of sonic swarms is the way in which the incorporeality of the swarm as a phenomenal entity in itself is tied to a materiality that is unseen, unbodyed, and only reductively localisable’ (Thacker 2007). We can hear the swarm way before we can see it and then finally we also can start to investigate the phenomenon systematically with our eyes in our urge to tame it. However, at the beginning we only have our ears and the opportunity to listen if we want to understand. Listen to the noises of bugs, of insects, as uncanny as they may be, uncanny as any disturbing noise which heralds the new. Bsh.

References


Mauruschat, A (2012a), Transcript of an interview with Andreas Ammer.

Mauruschat, A (2012b) Transcript of an interview with Martin Gretschmann, alias Console.


Chapter 20

Breaking the taboo of avisuality: When pure audio theatre is not enough

Karolina Albińska

Abstract

The tendency to compare and contrast visual and non-visual means of artistic expression is as old as radio itself. This is clearly visible when one analyses the history and the directions of the development of this ‘music box’ and the genres that were, (and still are,) broadcast through it – particularly a phenomenon called the ‘Theatre of the Imagination’ or the ‘Theatre of the Mind’. Hence even in the times when radio drama was not treated as an independent form of art, practitioners and theoreticians who created and examined radio plays tried to find elements that were common to this kind of radio programme and film – for example their methods of creation and perception. In the twenty-first century this trend has become even stronger because pictures have been physically added to the radio content. As a result the demarcation line between visual and non-visual media is very hazy.

This chapter describes the forms and existence of radio drama in both the pre-convergence and convergence eras. It discusses concepts of full and partial visualisation of the audio theatre and presents the examples of different methods that have recently been used to give Polish and British media users new media products that can not only be heard, but also seen.

Keywords: audio theatre, radio drama, visualised radio, radio with pictures, Poland
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