

BOOTS AND CATS AND BOOTS AND CATS AND BOOTS

AND CATS

RUSSTLING

SCREAMING

LU LU LU LU

[illegible]

What does it feel like to speak, with your voice and mouth and your tongue, from your belly into the mouth of the world, like walking on a line crossing from your tongue to the outside? How do you make sonic soundscapes that unfold and press themselves onto the world?

What do you want to say?

How do you want to say it?

What do you SOUND like?

A letter to Radio Club

Pedagogical Soundscapes and Young People's Voices.

What is Radio Club and what have you been doing?

"A club where you are able to speak about how you feel about various different occasions and especially using different devices and different ways of speaking to others".

In 1933, a League of Nations survey of School Broadcasting 'documented the emergence and use of this new sound technology in schools across 25 countries'. 'Children Playing at Wireless', heard young people's short radio programmes for broadcasting in Austrian schools, (Burke and Grosvenor, 2011:330). 'Schools of the Air' in the United States made radio broadcasts for learning from the 1930's until the popularity of watching television overtook listening to radio, (Lamb, 2012). Used as instructive listening pedagogy, School Radio was employed across the 20th Century and continues to reach young people who live too far away to travel to school. School Radio benefits listening in different ways, sharing innovative ways of communicating, organising and developing new relationships with the self and others, (Baltar, Gastaldello and Camelo, 2009).

What is Radio Club and what have you been doing?

"We have been working in Radio Club, we send sounds to Eastside Projects and we have come together to make a lot of sounds, music, poems and interviews and we have been doing a lot of stuff to send to Eastside using the radio and stuff. I have been doing a bunch of stories and voice acting, but sometimes I also do some podcasts to mix it up again".

Ninety years after the League of Nations survey, Radio Club emerged as a different kind of broadcasting, a group of young people connecting Chandos Primary School and Eastside Projects in a way that recognises and celebrates their proximity and possibilities for collective art production. After considering a selection of proposals, the children firmly decided they wanted to work with artist Abbas Zahedi. A series of visits, meetings and Radio Club workshops with children in year five and six have produced soundscapes that respond to the challenge of the project proposal in unexpected ways.

“How to do different challenges with different types of speaking, like speaking fast, speaking backwards, speaking slow”.

Schools tell us they are in our communities through their sonic rhythms in the ‘sound landscape of school’, (Burke and Grosvenor 2011:325). Children’s soundscapes and sudden silences pierce the school environment, pressing on and vibrating against classroom walls and in playground spaces. Teacher voices and sounds are often performed and embodied across school spaces, they are used as a pedagogical tool to help frame and shape what they want children to learn. For a young person in a mainstream school in England, particular kinds of sounds, voice and speech are often expected from them as proof new spaces of knowledge and thinking has been stepped into.

“IF I HAD A CROWN ON MY HEAD, I’D MAKE EVERYTHING £1.99”.

The Reggio Emilia school approach employs social exchange as an essential part of young people’s learning, using: ‘one child’s idea to develop another’s, or to explore a path yet unexplored’, (Gandini, 1998: 170). Radio Club has developed in similar way, using a democratic and exploratory approach with sounds, making an affective encounter the children can share with their peers, artists, teachers and the public.

What have you learnt?

“I learned sonic signals and making different sounds like animals, waterfalling, different noises and how to use different apps like soundtrap on the chromebooks, how to do high pitches and low pitches, how to do different loops using those different words and sounds”.

Once a week across six months, Chandos Primary School was occupied by Radio Club and the artists. Negotiations, disagreements, agreements and decisions were made about what kinds of sounds, speech or dialogue to record to connect the school and the gallery. The children’s intentions would then take them to different parts of the school, to find particular elements, objects, rooms, spaces, privacy and people to record. These kinds of secret soundscapes; stories, conversations, interviews, dedications, poems, jokes, thoughts, languages made in schools bring to mind Annette Krauss’s practice of the Hidden Curriculum examining language and behaviour developed by young people in schools that is out of sight and hearing of adults.

The soundscape of Radio Club has layers, texture, and qualities particular to the children’s democratic decisions and different ways they want to be heard. A sonic curriculum of a richly developed grammar, speech, language, and sound demonstrates aural, verbal and sonic ways of learning that weave themselves in and around and beyond the school.

“A lot of technology things like how to use a microphone. And lots of educational things that some people might not notice”.

At Chandos, different pedagogies found pathways through the sound, in contrast to the noise, in the negotiated moments when recording happened everyone had to be quiet and we listened together. At the Radio Club exhibition, the beanbags designed by the children invited me into a listening space. I thought about what happens when I’m listening and in particular, how hearing the children’s voices re-frames my embodied, sensed experience in the gallery and a new appreciation of the collective imagination of the children.

“I AM GOOD AT BEING KIND”.

On their visit to the gallery, the children excitedly jumped on and off their beanbags. This was also the important moment when they first heard how Radio Club sounded and shaped itself in the gallery. The children’s sounds stretched and wrapped themselves around the gallery, moving backwards and forwards between the speakers. After a break and snacks, some of the group admitted:

“The first time when I went to the gallery and we heard our own voice and it was a little bit embarrassing”.

Through their vibrations, sounds affect our bodies and do this in particular ways in school, (Gallaher, Prior, Needham and Holmes, 2017). Through their theory of expanded listening, these researchers describe how sound is also relational, made between and through embodied human activity. Identity is often formed around sound, vibrations, speech and voice. This tells us who we are, ‘our environment, our relationship to others, and reveals as much about how we understand the world as they convey meanings to us as listeners’, (Gershon, 2011a:76).

What is Radio Club and what have you been doing?

“A club where you are able to speak about how you feel about various different occasions and especially using different devices and different ways of speaking to others”.

To help understand more about why recorded voices sound different, the sounds of our speech are shaped by the human vocal cords but also amplified by the bones of the skull, (Foot, 2023). This is like having and hearing an inside-the-body voice and outside-the-body voice and most audio recording equipment, like that used to capture the soundscape of Radio Club records only the outside voice. This sounds higher pitched and different to what we feel we know and takes time to adjust to.

What is your favourite bit about Radio Club?

“Recording because you get to express your emotions. When I get to do my poems, usually, some people would just say it just normally, like actually talk. Because poems is talking, but it's a fancy way to talk because it rhymes. If you want to make a poem sound good you have to put emotion into it and not just talk, so it's really fun”.

Radio Club raises important questions about how sounds are produced and listening happens, how young people are included and heard in curating and education pedagogies and practice. Radio Club has richly connected children's sounds and speech in school with how they hear and identify themselves in spaces outside school.

“Being at the gallery. Being able to hear yourself, not just hearing it like how you sound to yourself but how other people hear yourself”.

The voices of Radio Club demand to be listened to and make different kinds of sound pedagogies audible and visible. Radio Club and Sonic Signals have established how the artwork can be replicated and shared in other schools and spaces, giving young people the opportunity to learn about new technologies and how they can share their ideas and thoughts. It demonstrates the important ways of finding and taking up sonic and audible space in the world for young people, and that there isn't a right way to make sound or a right way listen.

“Describe Radio Club in 3 words or sounds”

Me ma moo,
Amazing, friendly, noisy.
Creative, fascinating, collaborative.
Unique, teamwork, encouraging.
Loud, fun, interesting.
Imagine, creative and blup-blup-blup.

All text inserts produced and spoken by Radio Club.
Questions by Eastside Projects and Abbas Zahedi.

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