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Radio Drama Newsletter

August | September | October | November | December

Welcome to the latest newsletter from BBC Scotland Radio Drama

Ask any programme-maker what they're working on and they will almost certainly respond with enthusiastic detail on their latest project. As the Editor for Radio Drama I confess I sometimes find it difficult to know which programmes to highlight when every producer in our team is so passionate about what they're doing. The newsletter is an extremely useful way of letting me off the hook and allowing you to decide what you might find interesting.

Programmes and audiences are at the heart of what we do. But our activities don't just extend to making plays and readings. We're also constantly looking for suitable ways to engage with the wider arts world. In May, for instance, one of our Radio 4 Afternoon Dramas, *The Apple Tree*, written by Gerda Stevenson and starring Juliet Stevenson and Iain Macrae, was selected as one of three plays to represent BBC drama output at the Polish Radio and TV Festival, held in Sopot near Gdansk. It's part of our remit to reflect Scottish life and culture but it was fascinating to share *The Apple Tree* - about a married couple returning to a Gaelic-speaking island for a funeral - with a Polish audience.

Then, in June, BBC Scotland Radio Drama agreed to become one of the supporters of the Scottish Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland (CATS), held this year in the Tron Theatre in Glasgow. The CATS awards are now in their tenth year but this was the first time BBC Scotland had become involved. In time I hope this partnership will lead to opportunities for some of the best of Scottish theatre becoming available to the UK radio audience.

And, in July, we held a two-day workshop in our drama studio at Pacific Quay in Glasgow for a dozen acting students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The students recorded play scripts under exactly the same conditions as we would do with a professional cast. They all performed with great commitment and professionalism, and it will be fascinating to see which of them become the stars of tomorrow.

Until then, as you read through the Newsletter you will find details on all our current programmes over the coming weeks and months up to Christmas. I hope you'll find something to enjoy.

Bruce Young

Editor, Radio Drama

The Other One

By Oliver Emanuel

Slot: Radio 4, 15 Minute Drama

Date: Monday to Friday 13th - 17th August

Time: 1045 - 1100, repeated at 1945 - 2000

Producer: Kirsty Williams

"...And that's when Dad reaches out and touches Mum's hand. And cos it's the first kind gesture he's made towards her in ages, I know that whatever it is they are going to tell me must be really terrible..."

When twelve-year-old Laura discovers that she is not who she thinks she is, she runs away from home and sets out on an intimate journey of discovery.

Inspired by a set of exceptional true events: a tense and moving drama that explores the nature of identity and the notion of family. Starring one of Scotland's burgeoning young stars, Natasha Watson.

Missed something?

Remember you can **LISTEN AGAIN** to all of our programmes for seven days after broadcast on

BBC iPlayer via the following websites:

bbc.co.uk/radio3

bbc.co.uk/radio4

bbc.co.uk/radio4extra

bbc.co.uk/radioscotland

Gotta Dance

Slot: Radio 4, Friday Reading

Date: Friday 10th, 17th and 24th August

Time: 1545 - 1630

Producer: Patricia Hitchcock

To mark the birth of the legendary Gene Kelly a hundred years ago this August, writers Zoë Strachan, Kapka Kassabova and Hannah McGill explore the lure and magic of moving to music.



Comic Fringes

Slot: Radio 4

Date: Sundays 19th & 26th August and 2nd September

Time: 1945 - 2000

Producer: Kirsteen Cameron

Three of Britain's brightest comic talents, Russell Kane, James Acaster and Mark Watson, write and perform their own short stories in front of an audience, recorded live at this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival.



Thinking In Numbers

By Daniel Tammet

Read by James Anthony Pearson



Slot: Radio 4, Book Of The Week

Date: Monday 20th - Friday 24th August 2012

Time: 0945 - 1000

Abridged and Produced by Kirsteen Cameron

Daniel Tammet is a bestselling author and mathematical savant. In his world, numbers are beautiful and mathematics illuminates our lives and minds. Using anecdotes and everyday examples, Tammet shares his unique insights and delight in the way numbers, fractions and equations underpin all our lives. Inspired by the complexity of snowflakes, Anne Boleyn's sixth finger or his mother's unpredictable behaviour, Tammet explores questions such as why time seems to speed up as we age, whether there is such a thing as an average person and how we can make sense of those we love.



The Grapes of Wrath

By John Steinbeck,

Dramatised by Donna Franceschild



Slot: Radio 4, Classic Serial

Date: Sundays 2nd and 16th September

Time: 1500 - 1600

Producer: Kirsty Williams

Nobel Laureate, John Steinbeck's seminal novel about economic migration and a search for the promised land. Set against the backdrop of America's Great Depression and Dust Bowl, a family of farmers from Oklahoma head west looking for work only to discover thousands like them are also on the move. A universal drama that explores the hardship of poverty and celebrates the endurance of the human spirit. Starring Michelle Fairley and Robert Sheehan.



Dissolution

By C.J. Sansom

Adapted by Colin Macdonald



Slot: Radio 4, 15 Minute Drama

Date: Monday to Friday 3rd - 14th September

Time: 1045 - 1100, repeated at 1945 - 2000

Producer: Kirsteen Cameron

Atmospheric dramatization of C J Sansom's bestselling crime novel, set in 1537.

As he plots to bring down the abbeys, Thomas Cromwell sends his trusted lawyer-detective, and hunchback, Matthew Shardlake to investigate the murder of a King's Commissioner in a monastery on the south coast of Kent. Which of the terrified monks is the murderer - and can Shardlake catch him before he strikes again? Starring Jason Watkins (pictured above) as Shardlake and Mark Bonnar as Cromwell.



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Oliver Emanuel - playwright

Oliver is currently working on, *The Other One* for Radio 4's **15 Minute Drama** serial slot. *The Other One* is based on true events, but just enough truth to fire his imagination.

Written from the perspective of a twelve year old, it allows developments that 'aren't necessarily logical' but wonderfully unexpected.

The **15 Minute Drama** slot broadcast at 10.45 on weekday mornings and repeated at 7.45 in the evening is a big challenge: five plays that have to make sense as a whole, and yet work as individual listens each day. The writer has to be mindful that not everyone might hear every episode, so keeping the listener up to date with the ongoing story takes skill. 'It's enjoyable having to find a clever way of saying the same thing twice,' says Oliver, 'every day you have to engage with dual aspects of the audience.'

Oliver also recently contributed to Radio 4's *From Fact to Fiction* series. The challenge is to write a unique one off 15 minute drama which delves into the heart of the week's most fascinating news story. The writer has to deliver a script from scratch within one week. Oliver's play, *15 Minutes in Cairo*, was set on the day of the inauguration of the new Egyptian President following the country's recent election.

The remit is simple - take the weeks most distinctive news story and create a stand- alone drama. Against the clock, the writer is given a unique opportunity to work in an immediate, inventive way.

'Intense, challenging and exciting,' is how Oliver Emanuel describes the process. Using a news story as a focus for Drama it is *'tremendous fun to push yourself in that way.'* With *'no time to indulge yourself in worrying about whether you're a good writer.'*

In order to drill down through the masses of information you rely on the team: *'More than any other slot it's collaborative - everyone has to pitch in. The director becomes the researcher and everyone becomes a sounding board.'*



The process involves collating facts, reading papers and consulting with experts. The first draft had so much research and factual content, that the advice from director Kirsty Williams was to focus on the fiction.

So how do you balance portraying a sense of reality and understanding about the subject while writing a drama? Oliver wanted to find the tension, and not get lost within the hugeness of the subject matter. He didn't want the drama to be off kilter, imbalanced with too much research and facts. It was crucial to find the 'unspoken issue' to hook the drama on, when dealing with a subject as complex as Democracy in Egypt. Centring all dialogue on a single scene and 'putting ordinary characters in extra-ordinary situations.' For Oliver the key is to emotionally engage the audience rather than just re-telling the News story.

Robin Brooks - playwright

'THIS GUN IN MY HAND IS LOADED...!'

Robin Brooks adapted Friedrich Schiller's *Mary Stuart* for Radio 3's *Drama On 3* slot.

Robin is quick to tell me that writing for radio is a joy: 'Radio is a writer's medium, allowing the freedom to delve into the imagination.'

Having tackled Radio 4's recent adaptation of *Ulysses* broadcast in various slots on a Saturday, Robin has turned his attention to Schiller's *Mary Stuart* for Radio 3. The challenge of that work was making the language work for a contemporary performer and listener. As a trained actor Robin used his experience as a performer to assist with characterisation. The most crucial aspect of writing drama is storytelling and putting things across, Robin's tip is to keep it simple, while avoiding telling the audience the obvious, such as, *'this gun in my hand is loaded.'*

The collaborative process in the studio is relished with some enthusiasm: *'Most of the time I sit in a sad lonely little room, staring at a computer screen until my forehead bleeds'* says Robin, *'with radio the writer is always welcomed into the studio.'*

How do you make the sound of...?

Sound effects expert Heather Andrews reveals some of her secrets.

'You've got to close your eyes and play about with things, and work out what they sound like...it's just like being a big kid.'



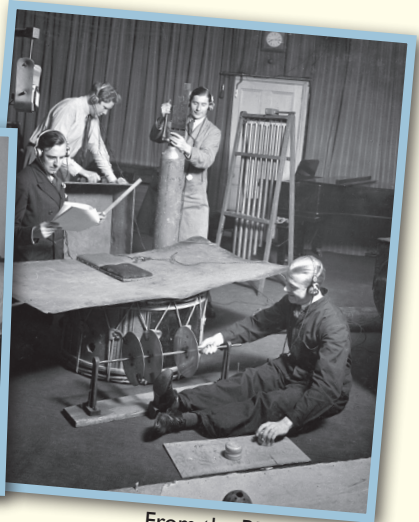
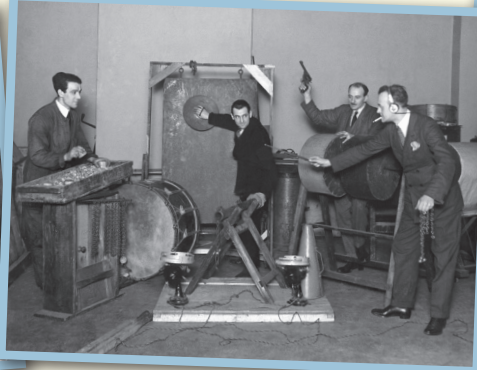
Heather Andrews is a freelance sound engineer, spot effects expert, foley artist, and sound obsessive! She creates a sense of the real using subtle effects to layer atmosphere for radio drama. Building a sense of place and time and adding to the actor's performance.

While boiling and slicing lemons for a cake she discovered an effective substitute for the sound of slaughter and gutting of a deer. *'...in everyday life I'm listening out for useable sounds.'*

I asked Heather how she creates a sense of reality: *'You don't want to over do it, it's not theatrical. In radio you have one stereo microphone to work to. Using the space as well as the prop, you have to think about the room you're in, where the actors are moving and how reverberant it is.'* Positioning is key, Heather stands behind the actor and moves as they are moving. A suit of armour would be bought for film or telly, but radio doesn't have the budget. *'I get a big sheet and put different forms of metal on it, ...so that when the actors are moving I'll move with them. It gives movement and clarity of sound.'*

Working on Mary Stuart, Heather identified that one of the key sounds to focus on should be dress: *'When you listen to anything that's period you want to hear clothing, it's the small sounds, so that the person is actually there.'* Identifying that Queen Elizabeth would have the power, and a big dress, her presence needs to be audibly distinctive within the room. Heather set to work, *'I mucked about with a lot of cloth, but needed to move about with it...so I used an umbrella, a big bed sheet and velvet cloth...so that they would move against each other...and when she was entering the room you could hear the dress before her voice and you knew it was Elizabeth.'*

Heather's position within the production team is unique *'I'm the only member of the technical team in the studio with the actors.'* She silently provides sound *'I have to provide those effects in real time...which incorporates a bit of acting as well as understanding what those things might sound like...lots of folly artists have been dancers, you have to be quite graceful...it takes practice'.*



From the BBC Archives

Mary Stuart

By Friedrich Schiller
Adapted by Robin Brooks



Slot: Radio 3, Drama On 3
Date: Sunday 23rd September
Time: 2030 - 2200

Producer: Gaynor Macfarlane

Mary Stuart - Friedrich Schiller's play is a thrilling account of the extraordinary relationship between England's Elizabeth I and her rival cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. With Meg Fraser and Alexandra Mathie.



Everything Between Us

By David Ireland



Slot: Radio 3, The Wire
Date: Saturday 13th October 2012
Time: 2100 - 2200

Producer: Kirsty Williams

A bold and original comic drama adapted from David Ireland's award-winning stage play for Tinderbox Theatre Company, Belfast.

Sandra Richardson is a politician and Member of Northern Ireland's Legislative Assembly. She's about to take her place on a new Truth and Reconciliation Commission when her baby sister, Teeni, turns up in a crazed mood and attacks the South African chairperson.

Sandra drags her into a private room and, with the press and Stormont's security guards waiting at the other side of the door, the sisters talk about their shared and painful past for the very first time.

Dover and the Smoking Gun

by Paul Mendelson
Based on characters by Joyce Porter



Slot: Radio 4, Afternoon Drama
Date: Wednesday 26th September
Time: 1415 - 1500

Producer: David Ian Neville

A new adventure for Chief Inspector Dover, Scotland Yard's most unwanted man - and his long-suffering 'gofer', Sergeant MacGregor. MacGregor takes leave to return to Glasgow for the funeral of an old flame. But was her death a tragic accident or foul play? Reluctant to leave London as usual, Dover heads north to help his grief-stricken colleague find out the truth.

The Strange Case of Dr Hyde

By Chris Dolan



Slot: Radio Scotland, Radio Scotland Drama
Date: Monday - Thursday 28th - 31st October
Time: 1405 - 1433 (Repeat date to be confirmed)

Producer: Bruce Young

A powerful and fast-moving crime thriller broadcast in four episodes daily across the week, offering a modern re-working of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic novel, The Strange Case Of Dr Jekyll And Mr Hyde. David Rintoul stars as DI Newman, a veteran police detective haunted by the failures of his past as he investigates two brutal murders on the streets of Edinburgh. As the hunt for the killer intensifies, Newman reluctantly begins to consider the eccentric police pathologist, Dr Hyde, as one of his prime suspects.

Madge

By Colin Hough



Sort: Radio 4, Afternoon Drama
Date: Friday 28th September
Time: 1415 - 1500

Producer: Gaynor Macfarlane

The early days of Stan Laurel in Glasgow. Stan's father is keen for Stan to have a proper job but his mother, Madge, an alcoholic failed actress, has other ideas.

The Other Simonon: Series 2

Three new dramatisations by Ronald Frame of stories by Georges Simonon.



Slot: Radio 4, Afternoon Drama
 Dates: Tuesday 1st November: Teddy Bear
 Tuesday 8th November: The Neighbours
 Tuesday 15th November: The Venice Train
 Time: 1415 - 1500
 Producer: David Ian Neville

When he wasn't writing Maigret, Georges Simonon produced a huge body of novels, often tough, gripping and psychologically-penetrating dissections of lives confounded by fate. In The Other Simonon we explore three more of his dark tales of human misfortune!

Teddy Bear is the story of Chabot - a successful society gynaecologist who seems to have it all until his infatuation with a young girl in his clinic throws his life into freefall.

The Neighbours focuses on Emile Jovis, the director of a Paris travel agency - his peace of mind is shattered when he overhears a series of blunt and brusque conversations coming from his neighbours' flat.

The Venice Train is a classic Simonon study of anxiety. Justin Calmar agrees to deliver a briefcase for a stranger he meets on a train. A favour that leads to a life of guilt and deception.

A Slow Air

By David Harrower



Slot: Radio 4, Saturday Drama
 Date: Saturday 1st December
 Time: 1430 - 1530
 Producer: Gaynor Macfarlane

Ubykh

By Simon Scardifield



Slot: Radio 4, Afternoon Drama
 Date: Tuesday 4th December
 Time: 1415 - 1500
 Producer: Gaynor Macfarlane

Rebus - The Black Book

by Ian Rankin, dramatised by Chris Dolan



Slot: Radio 4, Classic Serial
 Date: Sundays, 11th and 18th November
 (Repeated Saturdays, 17th and 24th November)
 Time: 1500 - 1600 (Repeats: 2100 - 2200)
 Producer Bruce Young

Ian Rankin's maverick detective, Inspector John Rebus, descends into the criminal underworld of Edinburgh with the help of a notebook full of coded clues. When DS Brian Holmes is severely beaten up, Rebus discovers his colleague's black notebook contains new information on an old case involving arson and a long-forgotten night of terror and murder. Five years before, a mysterious fire burned down Edinburgh's seedy Central Hotel. All the staff and customers were accounted for - but an unidentified body was found in the rubble. As Holmes lies in a coma in hospital, the secrets of the black book lead Rebus ever deeper into danger - for himself and those around him. Starring Ron Donachie as Inspector Rebus.

McLevy: Series 9

New four-part series by David Ashton
 Starring Brian Cox and Siobhan Redmond



Slot: Radio 4, Afternoon Drama
 Date:
 Monday, November 26, Episode 1: A Dangerous Remedy
 Monday, December 3, Episode 2: No Looking Back
 Monday, December 10, Episode 3: A Pearl In the Oyster
 Monday, December 17, Episode 4: The Cross-Roads
 Time: 1415 - 1500
 Producer: Bruce Young

There are more than a few surprises and dangers in store for Inspector McLevy as the popular Victorian detective drama, set in Leith and Edinburgh, returns for a new series. In a gripping finale, McLevy is kidnapped and faces a lingering, isolated death at the hands of the most formidable foe he has ever encountered.

On the Skids

By Anita Gallo



Slot: Radio Scotland Drama, Radio Scotland

Date: Monday 17th December

Time: 1405

Producer: David Ian Neville

When a Glasgow bound train is forced to terminate its journey in harsh winter conditions, resources are stretched and passengers stranded. Jamal, a mini-cab driver, comes to the aid of two passengers desperate to reach Glasgow before nightfall. But as conditions deteriorate further his 'good deed' threatens to lead to dire consequences.

Strummer

By Colin Macdonald



Slot: Radio 4, Afternoon Drama

Date: Friday 21st December

Time: 1415 - 1500

Director: Kirsteen Cameron

To mark the tenth anniversary of Joe Strummer's untimely death, a drama which goes to the heart of a complex man and his music.

In 1982, The Clash frontman went missing. Feeling pressured by his record company, and increasingly alienated from the music he was making, Joe did a runner and was only discovered, by chance, in Paris three weeks later. Colin MacDonald imagines what might have taken place during two of those lost Parisian nights; and investigates Joe Strummer's Highland roots.

Apocalypse Now

Working title



Slot: Radio 4, Friday Reading

Date: Fridays 21st and 28th December

Time: 1545

Producer: Kirsteen Cameron

According to the Mayan calendar, Friday 21st December 2012 is the date on which the world will end. How about a nice short story to see us out? We will invite a leading writer to tackle the apocalyptic theme and then, one week later (if we're spared), commission them to also write a non-apocalyptic antidote.

The Sensitive: The Queen of Death



Slot: Radio 4, Afternoon Drama

Date: Wednesday 26th December

Time: 1415 - 1500

Producer: Bruce Young

Glasgow's psychic detective, Thomas Soutar, investigates a young woman's obsession for a married Professor of English Literature. Over many years the woman has sent hundreds of tapes to the academic in which she reads out poems and shares her innermost feelings. After the Professor's death his daughter discovers the tapes for the first time and decides to track down the mystery woman. It's a job for the Sensitive - who uncovers a fatal crime that has lain secret for thirty years.