

# Purposeful Play: Women Radio Artists in Canadian Campus and Community Radio

---

Ellen Waterman, University of Guelph, is a professional flutist specializing in improvisation and contemporary music, and her research is at the intersection of performance studies, ethnomusicology and critical theory. Her anthology *Sonic Geography Imagined and Remembered* (Penumbra 2002) provides the first cultural critique of acoustic ecology and she is founding co-editor of the open access electronic journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études critiques en improvisation*.

---

## Abstract

Studies show that women are under-represented in Canadian campus and community radio. Based on ethnographic research and survey data, this article posits a theory of "purposeful play," a set of strategies employed by women radio artists to create community and find their voices on the air.

## Résumé

Les études démontrent que les femmes sont sous-représentées sur les campus canadiens et à la radio communautaire. Basée sur une recherche ethnographique et des données de sondage, cet article énonce une théorie de "jeu significatif" une série de stratégies employées par les femmes artistes de la radio afin de créer une communauté et de trouver leurs voix sur les ondes.

---

## Introduction

Women radio artists have long maintained a creative voice in campus and community radio; yet within this relatively open broadcast medium, women in general remain under-represented. By examining women radio artists' strategies of purposeful play I develop a model for women's participation in radio that recognizes deep processes involving personal struggle, the need to build a supportive community, and an emerging confidence that leads to entitlement. In coining the term "purposeful play," I am theorizing women's radio art playfully through John Cage's famous description of art as "purposeless play." Purposeful play builds community: it describes a relational sense of the self in creative dialogue with others.

After discussing the current status of women in Canadian campus and community radio and theorizing the role of purposeful play among women radio artists, I present a participant/observation case study of women working at the Full Moon audio art camp (2001) where the interviewed women articulate a variety of practical strategies for purposeful play, including: creating affinity groups, seeking information from peer communities, focusing on limited and specific projects, and dovetailing work and play.

## Finding Her Voice on the Radio

For at least the past decade, the under-representation of women in campus and community radio has been a concern for the National Campus and Community Radio Association (NCRA). With funding from the Status of Women Canada, the NCRA

established a project to "support and enable the improved representation and increased participation of a diversity of women at campus and community radio stations across Canada" (NCRA Women's Hands and Voices 2004). One outcome was a report on The Status of Women in Community-based Radio in Canada written by Eleni Centime Zeleke (2004). The report draws urgent attention to the need to find positive strategies for empowering women to participate in radio. It is important to note that campus and community radio is perceived as an entry-point for women in broadcasting, and in this context the report framed women's under-representation as symptomatic of broader issues of social inequality: "the media is one of the biggest barriers to women's equality as it is one of the most powerful institutions in the development of Canadian culture" (Zeleke 2004, 19).

My research on women radio artists is part of In and Out of the Studio, "a collaborative multimedia project which aims to examine and document the working methods of [...] female sound producers, from a variety of media [...] and in different institutional contexts" ("In and Out of the Studio").<sup>1</sup> Campus and community radio is an umbrella term referring to not-for-profit stations either associated with a post-secondary institution or located in a community, and governed by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Act (CRTC) (Public notices CRTC 2000-13; CRTC 2000-12). Radio artists use techniques such as audio collage, spoken word, music, and drama to work creatively with the medium of radio.

During May and June 2004 I conducted a gender-analysis of the websites of thirty-six campus and community radio stations in English Canada, and surveyed a small sample of nine station managers from across the country. Additional timely data comes from Zeleke's report in which she surveyed seventeen campus and community stations and twenty-six women

programmers. A programmer is someone who presents a show on the radio, the area in which women are least represented. I will argue that women need practical, flexible strategies for self-representation and participation if they are to feel comfortable finding their voices on the radio.

In many respects, campus and community radio offers a positive environment for women. As Anna Levanthal (a programmer at McGill University's CKUT) notes "it's the perfect place for women to come together and have a strong voice, to challenge the status quo and have a say in how they're represented in the media" (2004, 23). Campus and community radio provides an alternative to both the nation-building ideology of public radio, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and the business model of commercial radio (Berland 1998, 140-41). Run largely by volunteers and a few paid staff, and with an emphasis on production rather than on audience, campus and community radio is mandated to build local communities. This is embedded in their CRTC licensing which emphasizes education, a large proportion of foreground or spoken word programming, and the inclusion of community members and students (Public Notice CRTC 2000-12). The CRTC also believes that "campus stations should add diversity to the broadcasting system by providing alternative programming" (Public Notice CRTC 2000-12). Interestingly, 44% of the women sound artists and producers interviewed for In and Out of the Studio "got their start" in campus and community radio. There are two material reasons for this.

First, technical training (everything from operating the sound board to digital audio editing) is available for free or through a minimally priced station membership. At its best this training is quite friendly to women. Tristis Ward, manager of CHSR at the University of New Brunswick Fredericton states that at her station

technical training is geared to the needs of the individual. She notes that "when we train our trainers we teach flexibility so as to accommodate all trainees (cultural, gender, and ability issues are taken into account)" (Ward 2004). While methods and resources vary among stations, the wide availability of technical training was cited in all responses to our survey.

Second, operators often have extended access to the equipment and are encouraged to experiment with it. Sound designer Nancy Tobin told interviewer and radio artist Anna Friz about the joy of working with the equipment at CKRL in Quebec City: "Spending nights in the station, having a show the whole night, having four turntables and three revoxes and open mic and open telephone...that kind of fun" (Tobin 2003). Friz similarly credits campus and community radio with "getting me involved in sound, teaching me my earliest production and technical skills, and giving me an opportunity for self-expression that combines music, politics, and weird noise" (Friz 2003).

But despite seemingly equal opportunities for involvement, women remain reluctant to go on air. Levanthal's article "Making Airwaves" describes a "strange trend" in Venus, her show about women and music at CKUT. "Of the hundreds of calls we've fielded from listeners - some cheering, some jeering, some just plain bewildered - about 90 percent have been from guys" (Levanthal 2004, 24). Levanthal is quick to point out that she applauds the engagement and dialogue fostered by campus and community radio: "...a real conversation is taking place. But it's troubling that, for all our efforts to increase women's visibility in alternative media, the women we're trying to reach are, for the most part, holding their tongues" (24).

While advocates of campus and community radio point to its democratic values, it turns out that the majority of stations in Canada do not explicitly articulate gender policies. Of the thirty-six stations

whose web sites we examined, 75% make no mention of the words women, gender, or sexuality. Of the other 25%, seven stations actively promote and provide a forum for women and alternative sexualities, while five stations explicitly prohibit sexist and homophobic material from being aired. (Of course this doesn't mean that other stations do not share these policies and ideals, but it is significant that they don't choose to foreground them in their public policy statements.) Zeleke notes that staff at some stations who responded to The Status of Women in Community-based Radio in Canada survey seemed "unaware that the CRTC had a staff equity policy. [...] Moreover, station staff failed to understand the notion of equality that they are mandated to follow and that is enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms" (Zeleke 2004, 6).

The proportion of women to men is without doubt uneven throughout campus and community radio in Canada. Zeleke's report confirms our own survey results: "women's participation at stations across Canada hovers at the 30% mark" (2004, 5). For example, in the student populations at both Trent University and the University of Guelph, women outnumber men by 7:3. Yet in their radio stations male programmers outnumber female programmers by the same ratio. Experienced program directors have described the "typical" male volunteer as someone who proposes a show and wants to be on air, whereas many women who volunteer ask to do background support and administrative work, and only move into programming after a significant amount of encouragement (Fenner 2001; Woolner 2002). Barb Woolner, former program director at CFFF Trent Radio in Peterborough, suggested that many women do not feel immediately entitled to be on air even though the opportunity is equally open to them (Woolner 2002).

Zeleke states that "it was impossible to find a correlation between a high number of women staff

members [or board members] and a high number of women programmers" (Zelege 2004, 6). More positively, responses to her survey suggest that "stations with direct training programs for women, proactive recruitment as well as mandated or specially designated women's programming achieved some of the highest numbers of women programmers" (6). One of our responses, however, suggests that the same under-representation of women may occur even in stations where women programmers are actively recruited. CFUV at the University of Victoria funds a part-time position, the Women's Collective Coordinator "to help recruit, train, and produce women's programming." In addition, they have a "committed policy to maintaining two women-focused, [and women-]produced programs on the schedule" (Gelling 2004). With a gender equity policy in place the station has ample female representation on staff: two out of three full-time staff, and two out of four technical trainers, are women (Gelling 2004). Yet these efforts have only produced a slight increase in women's participation at the station. Of 127 programmers 32% are women, and from 2002 to 2004 the overall percentage of women involved at CFUV increased only slightly: from 26% to 33% of the active membership (Gelling 2004).

Given the many attempts to make campus and community radio accessible to women, why are so many women reluctant to add their voices to the airwaves? One of Zelege's surveys targeted the experiences of women programmers who identify barriers such as: "security, harassment, techno phobia, a 'hipster' environment [which discouraged older women], and a boy's club environment" (Zelege 2004, 5). She also notes the high turnover rate, which makes it difficult to maintain a long-term institutional memory of the "how and why of instituted equity policies" (12). Finally, while most stations provide technical training to their

volunteers it is not always done under the ideal conditions described above at CHSR. For example, radio stations typically have no accommodation for the presence of children; that and rigid training schedules can make it difficult for people with family responsibilities to participate (10). Many women were intimidated by an environment in which they were trained exclusively by men, while others found that men "often refused to take them seriously as knowledgeable radio producers" (10). Women who did persist in gaining the skills necessary to go on-air did so only by "sheer determination" (10), so that women who were "shy or intimidated by technology would not find adequate encouragement or resources so as to participate in the life of the station" (11).

There may be more deep-seated reasons for many women's reluctance to become radio programmers. In a 1994 essay, Frances Dyson writes about "The Genealogy of the Radio Voice." She argues that the radio voice is "traditionally male, having a timbre and intonation that suggests a belief in what it is saying and a degree of authority in saying it" (Dyson 1994, 167). Even radio's "fundamental technology, the microphone, was designed for the male vocal range" (181). Dyson traces the voice of authority back to the genesis of the Judeo-Christian tradition where the "guidelines for 'proper speech' - speech which is authoritative, meaningful, gendered as masculine and representative of a particular worldview - were first set in stone" (167). In contrast to the idea of authoritative voice, Dyson posits a more playful stance for radio artists of "flux" ("the serendipity of the production process-occurring when one improvises in the studio or collaborates with friends") and "rumour" ("noise [...] talk-back, participation radio, pirate radio") (183). The purpose of this sort of play is made very clear in Dyson's argument - the recovery of multiple Other voices: "Apart from being paradigmatically masculine,

the radio voice is also singular. There is only room for one speech at a time; other voices are reduced to background noise or ambiance, and the voice in a crowd is either singled out (the cult of the individual) or rendered meaningless" (181). Since women are evidently reluctant to take their place on the air, it appears that the singular, authoritative male voice is still implicitly privileged in Canadian campus and community radio.

#### Women Radio Artists and Purposeful Play

While Dyson seems to recommend radio art as an ideal medium for women, Zeleke's bleak assessment indicates that radio art "is the preserve of nerdy, technically savvy boys" (Zeleke 2004, 11). But radio art is, itself, a marginalized genre. United States radio artist Jacki Apple states that "radio art has operated on the aesthetic, perceptual, and conceptual frontier, marginalized not only within all the art disciplines it encompasses, but inside the system of distribution it has infiltrated" (Apple 2005). (Within the typically bureaucratic Canadian context of CRTC-controlled campus and community radio, there is no official category for "radio art," since all of the criteria for programming are divided into spoken word and music. In its last public review the CRTC received many briefs about the role of radio art as a distinct genre, but decided "not to recognize [...] performers of radio art as artists for the purpose of [Canadian Content]" (Public Notice CRTC 2002-12).

In fact, women have long been active as radio artists, if not very visible. To be sure, the few histories of radio art (Kahn and Whitehead 1992; Lander 1994) trace exclusively masculine narratives featuring such historical avant-garde figures as Brecht, Artaud, and Marinetti. But if we consider the more recent history of radio art we find prominent women radio artists throughout North America and Europe. These include the

many women (including Jacki Apple and Helen Thorington) who took part in the New American Radio project between 1988 and 1998. Sabine Breitsameter has a prominent radio art show and web-casting project at SWR2 in Köln, Germany. Lidia Camacho founded the Laboratory of Artistic Sound Experimentation at Radio Educación in Mexico. In Canada, the influential audio artist Hildegard Westerkamp was a founding member (1975) of the pioneering Vancouver Co-operative Radio. Westerkamp's long-term involvement with Co-op Radio gave her the "opportunity to consider radio as an artistically expressive medium" (Westerkamp 1994, 88). Other prominent Canadian radio artists include Chantal Dumas, Victoria Fenner, Anna Friz, Kathy Kennedy and Hélène Prévost, while Kim Sawchuk founded PoMoCoMo, a Montréal-based performance and radio collective. These women radio artists have embraced Dyson's playful strategies of flux and rumour to articulate a plurality of Other voices in radio.

John Cage famously described his approach to experimental music as "purposeless play," a statement that encapsulated his iconoclastic approach to making music by chance operations. A closer reading of the context (a short essay "Experimental Music" written in 1955), shows that the phrase encapsulates a paradox: "And what is the purpose of writing music? One is, of course, not dealing with purposes but dealing with sounds. Or the answer must take the form of paradox: a purposeful purposelessness or a purposeless play. This play, however, is an affirmation of life - not an attempt to bring order out of chaos [...]" (Cage 1973, 12). Cage's wordplay invites me to consider both "play" and "purpose" more closely. As McCartney has pointed out, there is more at stake here than "simply a contrast of purpose and purposelessness" (McCartney 2004). Beginning in 1952, Cage, who was an early advocate of radio art, used chance procedures to determine the parameters of his music (such as pitch, duration, and

dynamics), but most often with the definite purpose of creating a particular work for a particular context.

I want to propose a slightly different metaphor for the self-representation of women in radio: purposeful play. Here "purposeful" denotes self-determination, a D.I.Y. aesthetic, and a willingness to grapple with the unfamiliar in order to achieve a particular goal - that of making one's voice heard. When expressed as chaotic, multi-layered, "noisy" radio art, purposeful play empowers multiple, contradictory, and subversive voices in radio. But before further exploring strategies of purposeful play it seems useful to grapple with the complex concept of play itself.

According to Marvin Carlson, an important early theorist of play, Roger Caillois, identified four distinct qualities of play. According to Caillois, play may encompass agon (competition), and mimesis (mimicry). As represented in Cage's work, play may also involve alea (chance) (Carlson 1996, 25-26). Significantly, Caillois saw competitive play as the opposite of chance. In competitive play, "the emphasis is upon clever planning, logic, ingenuity, and control" while in leaving things up to chance we find "the freedom and spontaneity of the play instinct" (26). A fourth category ilinx or "vertigo" is similarly subversive. The emphasis here is on risk-taking: a "foregrounding of physical sensation, an awareness of the body set free from the normal structures of control and meaning" (Caillois 1961, 23 in Carlson 1996, 26). Whether expressed in competition, mimicry, leaving things up to chance, or a sensual pleasure in taking risks, play is conceived as the freedom to imagine, a necessary precondition for creativity.

For Jacques Ehrmann (1968), Caillois problematically set the "free phenomena" of play against a normative, stable concept of seriousness linked to concepts of "consciousness, utility, and reality" (Carlson 1996, 29). And, as Carlson notes, this resonates

with Derrida's (1978) critique of the "strategy of creating a false 'grounding' of a binary by making one of its terms the axiomatic base for the other" (29). For example, if we consider the role of play for professional musicians (for whom play means rehearsal and performance - paid work), then we can easily see that play is sometimes a very serious (purposeful) business, indeed. Yet, because of its link to the imagination and risk-taking, even rule-bound, serious play retains the potential for subversiveness: the eruption of the unexpected, rule-breaking, unruly voice. Clearly, the interplay of play and purpose must be examined within site-specific contexts.

In their work on women's relationships to sound technologies McCartney and Gasior see play as a performative construction of identity that encompasses many of the aspects of play listed above. For example, their interviews with women sound professionals (technicians, producers, artists) revealed common strategies of competition and mimicry:

As an outsider, either "as a woman" or "as a composer" a woman producer or composer may "play" being the exceptional woman, or the stereotypical woman, and/or the "genderless" composer, the technical expert, the audio engineer, the macho technologist. This role-playing can allow much greater flexibility and freedom in the definition of roles, if it is a consciously chosen strategy. At the same time, not all roles are freely chosen. Sometimes a woman may play these roles unconsciously, as a defense, alienating herself from parts of her life experience, as well as from other women creators.

(Gasior and McCartney 2004, 7)

This formulation suggests that play may have negative

consequences if it is enforced by regulatory discourses. In an unequal and highly competitive playing field such as sound engineering, women may be forced to play roles that mimic male authority. However, mimesis may also be strategically deployed by some women (for example to further one's career in a male-dominated environment), while other women may relish the competitive aspects of making their way as sound professionals.

Some women radiomakers express a delight in embracing chance and taking risks. For example, Nancy Tobin expressed the unalloyed pleasure of "making open mixes, not serious, really playing, experimenting, splicing tape, throwing it all on the floor and picking it up again, putting it together to see what it does" (Tobin 2003). Kim Sawchuk, who has proposed the playful persona of the "pirate" for women radiomakers, dramatized the relationship between chance and embodied risk-taking:

We are on the air.

You realize that the best way to guard against dead air is to load everything up. Every piece of equipment in the control room. That way if you hit a button, something is bound to happen, though it may not be what you intended. This could be interesting.

You apologize to your listeners for your clumsiness, for the gaps and missed cues, the silences. In radio there can be no silence. Silence equals death - a sign of your ineptness with technology. "Just like a girl" they will think.

By the end of your first hour you are more familiar with the space, with the buttons, the procedures. You are making transitions. You fade in and out. You compose

and improvise on the radio, although you can't yet speak. It's not simply a technology to transmit sound. You must play the space. (Sawchuk 1994, 211)

"Playing the space" means taking chances, but it also means taking bodily pleasure in manipulating the technological environment.

Purposeful play encompasses qualities inherent to play such as competition, chance, mimicry, and a sensual delight in taking risks, but it can also describe a number of practical strategies for women to engage with radio. Purposeful play, I'd like to suggest, is a supple strategy, adaptable to the different conditions in which women find themselves learning audio technologies and creating radio art.

#### Practical Strategies of Purposeful Play

In this section I consider some specific strategies of purposeful play adopted by women at an audio art camp in their approaches to learning sound technologies and making radio art. Following both Dyson and Zeleke, my interviews suggest that a common factor in women's empowerment in radio is the building of a community which encourages diversity of expression and accommodates a variety of learning styles.

In August 2001, I attended the Full Moon audio art camp at Killaloe, Ontario where I interviewed all of the women participants and a few of the men. The women ranged in age from 21 to 53 and came from a number of different educational and experiential backgrounds; however, all were white, middle class, and English speaking. The majority of my consultants were involved in campus and community radio in Canada or the United States. The camp was also my first introduction to learning audio technologies, and I have included my own responses and strategies for purposeful play here.

I am sensitive to the danger of extrapolating from this limited and relatively privileged sample. Clearly this case study cannot speak to the experiences of particular groups of women (for example women of colour, or differently abled women), nor can it speak to issues of sexuality or more nuanced conceptions of gender. It is important not to represent these findings in any way as women's normative experience. Indeed, at the 2005 NCRA conference, many workshops focused on the need to expand research on women in campus and community radio to consider cross-cutting issues of sexuality, gender-identification, ethnicity, accessibility, and class. By paying close attention to what individual women say about their work, motivations, and experiences, however, I can begin to articulate some useful strategies of purposeful play.

From its inception in 1999 until 2001, the Full Moon audio art camp was produced by Victoria Fenner. Fenner co-founded the Canadian Society for Independent Radio Production (CSIRP), and through her highly successful grant-writing efforts created both Full Moon and a series of radio workshops held throughout the year at different campus and community stations.<sup>2</sup> Fenner stated that Full Moon provides "extra resources for radio people [...] to be able to upgrade their skills and to think about radio in new ways" (Fenner 2001).

I see Fenner's approach to producing Full Moon as articulating a strategy of purposeful play developed over thirty years of experience in radio. Fenner's first radio experience was at the University of Windsor where she was a student from 1976 to 1980. This led to a job as a CBC technician in 1977 (where she received in-house training) followed by stints at Vancouver Co-op radio (where she discovered the work of Hildegard Westerkamp), as a station-manager at McMaster University, and as a freelance producer. She was inspired to act upon her idea of creating an audio art camp during a period of time when she was working

as an independent producer, without institutional support, and desired a community in which she could locate her own artistic voice (Fenner 2003). Andra McCartney, an audio-artist-in-residence at Full Moon in 2000 and 2001, felt that the inclusive atmosphere was due in part to Fenner's awareness of gender issues (McCartney 2001).

In many ways Full Moon 2001 was an ideal situation for learning sound technologies. The sixteen participants (ten women, six men) designed their own agenda for the week, with access to two audio artists in residence (one woman, one man), three guest workshop leaders (all male), a professional producer (female), and a professional technician (male). In my interviews both men and women described the camp as a gender-positive space. The setting was a pleasant old farmhouse around which participants camped, walking in the surrounding woods and swimming at a nearby lake. The house was equipped with many computer stations using different platforms and set up with mixers, microphones, and monitors. The equipment was accessible 24 hours a day. Food was provided by a caterer so that participants were free from most domestic responsibilities. One of the most significant aspects of the camp was the opportunity to share knowledge, skills, and gear amongst participants who ranged from those fairly new to audio technologies (myself included) to professionals (including a CBC television sound technician). My field notes record my relief at being able to ask basic questions about the gear and get straight answers. "Because I could ask all these dumb questions[...] by the end of the week I felt like I 'owned' my equipment."

Play was specifically articulated as a gendered working method by one of my male consultants. Darren Copeland, one of the artists-in-residence at Full Moon in 2001, suggested that in his experience men's approach to technology is unstructured: "They just jump into it

and fiddle around with the technology. Whereas women's roles outside of the studio have held them back; they are more calculated in their approach to a piece, they consider what they want to do with the equipment before starting. They have a specific goal, whereas men interact with the gear and then produce" (Copeland 2001). Interestingly, Copeland reports having a mentor as a teenager who helped teach him how to operate technical gear and encouraged him in his composition. This suggests that community was important to his formation as an audio artist.

Some of my other consultants also observed the "purposefulness" in many women's approaches to technology. Heather Majaury mentioned "just watching how many men are doing so much in the experimentation area with the technology and not necessarily relating it to content. And then watching a lot of women going, 'o.k., now how can I make that work so that I can incorporate it in this over here?'" (Majaury 2001). It is not clear, however, that a "purposeful" approach "holds women back;" rather, as I have argued above, I think that we could usefully view such purposefulness as a kind of self-structured play.

In making my own first piece of audio art at Full Moon (amidst a busy schedule of interviews and childcare) I gave myself a set time limit - one day - with the explicit goal of making a piece. This strategy limited my options for playing with the equipment, but it also lent a sense of purpose to the activity. I played to my strengths as a musician, by recording a live improvisational flute track and building upon that. It was a great source of satisfaction to "finish" something in the end and to hear it broadcast on community radio the next day. Filmmaker Alison McAlpine spent the entire week in a systematic exploration of particular pieces of recording equipment - trying out each microphone in a variety of locations, ensuring that she knew exactly how each unit worked through repeated

assembly, operation, and disassembly. For McAlpine, the most important thing was to know that she would remember how to use the equipment later on. "The more hands on I do, the less [the technology is mystified]. It's just a tool [...] I used to get so panicked about it, you know. So, that's the real thing, just to play with it" (McAlpine 2001). For both McAlpine and myself, a purposeful approach to exploring audio technologies created the necessary focus needed to make the best use of our time and opportunities in the studio, allowing us to leave the Full Moon audio art camp with tangible results from our investment of time and energy.

Caitlin Perkins came to Full Moon from her community radio station in Madison, Wisconsin, where her job fundraising made it difficult to find uninterrupted time to gain access to the station's production studio. Purposeful play meant finding a way to dovetail her work responsibilities with her creative needs. "We have to do 60 hours of service a year [as part of a fundraising arrangement we have]. I was thinking 'what's the perfect way for me to have time to learn the [audio] software, and still get my hours done and work for the station?'" (Perkins 2001). Volunteering to do digital sound editing for the station gave Perkins the mandate to learn a particular sound editing program.

While differences in age and experience played a major role in women's approaches to learning audio technologies, community was always expressed as an important value. Heather Majaury, a 35-year old single mother with a communications degree who at the time of writing is station manager at CKMS at the University of Waterloo, cited the importance of "community wealth," by which she meant being able to draw on a pool of resources. She noted that, while confident with the sound technologies she had learned through her degree and subsequent radio experience, she didn't feel

the need to be an expert on everything. "I feel lucky in a sense that because I have the Communications degree and went through a lot of that when I was 19 and 20 [...] I'm quite fine with going, 'How does that work? I don't understand that'" (Majaury 2001).

Janna Graham, a woman in her mid-twenties who at that time had just become station manager at CHMA in Sackville, New Brunswick and who is now active in CSIRP, had early experience in asking for information about audio technologies. As a teenager in a punk rock group, Graham felt "intimidated at first because all of the boys could play instruments and knew the equipment, while the girls just watched." It seemed to her that boys just "magically had this knowledge and girls didn't" (Graham 2001). Graham's solution was to find the answers from other women musicians, by writing letters to riot grrl bands she admired (such as Bikini Kill) and asking them technical questions. She reports that they would write her back with tips (Graham 2001).

For the participants at the Full Moon audio art camp in 2001, then, purposeful play emphasized the idea of personal artistic creation in dialogue with a community. Such a strategy resists the notion of art as the authoritative creation of a single person. As Graham noted, the value of Full Moon was "not about [making] a finished product, but about sharing process, experiences at community radio" (Graham 2001). Similarly, Full Moon gave Caitlin Perkins the luxury to "listen to things like space and silence," and the sense of community at the camp inspired her to go back to her station and create a monthly forum for people to listen to and critique each others' audio creations (Perkins 2001). Clearly, purposeful play resonates with Frances Dyson's concepts of flux and rumour which "gesture towards a speaking and listening practice which is antithetical to the voice of authority" (Dyson 1994, 168).

## The Purposeful Community - Beyond Radio

Purposeful play has resonance both for individual radio artists and as a strategy for creating community, and as such it goes a long way to addressing the concerns expressed in *The Status of Women in Community-based Radio in Canada*. For radio artists, purposeful play describes the strategic deployment of competition, mimicry, chance, and risk-taking. But Dyson's radio art concepts of flux and rumour point towards the need for radio to abandon the single, authoritative voice in favour of plurality of expression. Purposeful play usefully includes community-building strategies such as creating affinity groups, seeking information from peer communities, focusing on limited and specific projects, and dovetailing work and play. It's not difficult to see that the wider values expressed by purposeful play may have applications for feminist creative work well beyond campus and community radio.

## Endnotes

1. Directed by Andra McCartney (Concordia), *In and Out of the Studio* is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Other participants include Beverley Diamond (Memorial), and Karen Pegley (Queen's). I am deeply indebted to all three for their constructive criticism and support for my work in this project. Anna Friz and Tegan Ceschi-Smith provided valuable research assistance.

2. The Full Moon audio art camp was funded by a three-year grant from the Canada Council for the Arts. Founded in 1999, it was originally called Full Moon Over Killaloe, in homage to the village north of Ottawa in which it was held each August. In latter years the camp has been held in different provinces including Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland. <http://www.fmok.org>

## References

---

- Apple, Jacki. "New American Radio Art." [Retrieved September 30, 2005 from the New American Radio website, Writings, Artist's. online: <http://somewhere.org/NAR/index.htm>.]
- Berland, Jody. "Locating Listening: Technological Space, Popular Music, and Canadian Mediations," *The Place of Music*, Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Reville, eds. London: The Guilford Press, 1998, 129-50.
- Breitsameter, Sabine. *Audiohyperspace*. [online: <http://www.swr.de/swr2/audiohyperspace>.]
- Cage, John. *Silence*. Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.
- Caillois, Roger. *Man, Play, and Games*, Meyer Brash, trans. New York: Free Press, 1961.
- Canadian Society for Independent Radio Production. [online: <http://www.radiosite.ca>.]
- Carlson, Marvin. *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Copeland, Darren. Personal interview. August 2001.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass, trans. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978, 278-94.
- Dyson, Frances. "The Genealogy of the Radio Voice," *Radio Rethink*, Daina Augaitis and Dan Lander, eds. Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1994, 167-88.
- Ehrmann, Jacques. "Homo Ludens Revisited," *Game, Play, Literature*, Jacques Ehrmann, ed. Cathy and Phil Lewis, trans. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968.
- Fenner, Victoria. Personal interview. August 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Personal interview. April 2003.
- Friz, Anna. Interview with *In and Out of the Studio*. April 2003.
- Full Moon Audio Art Camp. [online: <http://www.fmok.org>.]
- Gasior, Lisa and Andra McCartney. "Commentary: In and Out of the Studio," *Musicworks* 90(2004): 7-9.
- Gelling, Randy. Personal interview. June 2004.
- Graham, Janna. Personal interview. August 2001.
- "In And Out of the Studio." ([www.andrasound.org](http://www.andrasound.org))
- Kahn, Douglas and Gregory Whitehead, eds. *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-garde*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992.
- Lander, Dan. "Radiocastings: Musings on Radio and Art," *Radio Rethink*, Daina Augaitis and Dan Lander, eds. Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1994, 11-32.
- Levanthal, Anna. "Making Airwaves," *Shameless, Summer*(2004): 23-25.
- Majaury, Heather. Personal interview. August 2001.
- McAlpine, Alison. Personal interview. August 2001.

McCartney, Andra. Personal interview. August 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_. Email communication. August 2004.

National Campus and Community Radio Association/L'Association nationale des radio étudiantes et communautaires. [online: <http://www.ncra.ca/>.]

NCRA Women's Hands and Voices, 2004. [online: <http://www.ncra.ca/women/background.cfm>.]

New American Radio. [online: <http://someswhere.org/NAR/index.htm>.]

Perkins, Caitlin. Personal interview. August 2001.

Public Notice CRTC 2002-12. "Campus Radio Policy." Ottawa, 28 January 2000. [Available from the website of the National Campus and Community Radio Association. <http://www.ncra.ca/>.]

Public Notice CRTC 2002-13. "Community Radio Policy." Ottawa, 28 January 2000. [Available from the website of the National Campus and Community Radio Association. <http://www.ncra.ca/>.]

Radio Educación. [online: <http://www.radioeducacion.edu.mx/>.]

Sawchuk, Kim. "Pirate Writing," Radio Rethink, Daina Augaitis and Dan Lander eds. Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1994, 201-22.

Tobin, Nancy. Interview with Anna Friz, In and Out of the Studio. May 2003.

Ward, Tristis. Personal interview. June 2004.

Westerkamp, Hildegard. "The Soundscape on Radio," Radio Rethink, Daina Augaitis and Dan Lander eds. Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1994, 87-94.

Woolner, Barb. Personal interview. September 2002.

Zelege, Elleni Centime. The Status of Women in Community-based radio in Canada, Prepared for Women's Hands and Voices in collaboration with the National Campus and Community Radio Association, 2004. [Retrieved February 24, 2005 from the website of the National Campus and Community Radio Association. online: <http://www.ncra.ca/women/stratPlan.cfm>.]