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Soundhouse: Intimacy and Distance

Available online from 28 October 2020 – 17 January 2021

Today, the Barbican launches [Soundhouse: Intimacy and Distance](#), a collaboration with audio-makers **Nina Garthwaite** (In The Dark) and **Eleanor McDowall** (Falling Tree Productions) that explores audio culture in a physically distanced world caused by the ongoing pandemic. The free online showcase consists of experimental audio works and specially commissioned writing.

Three bespoke online 'listening rooms' have been guest-curated by the audio producer **Arlie Adlington**; multimedia artist and audio-maker **Ariana Martinez**; and award-winning sound designer **Axel Kacoutié**. In these rooms each curator examines a part of the listening experience which was meaningful to them - from the political power of personal storytelling to the sculptural qualities of sound - drawing together audio from traditional speech-led narratives to more abstract, sound-focussed works.

Alongside the listening rooms, Soundhouse features specially commissioned writing on radio and podcasting by authors including educator and award-winning poet **Raymond Antrobus**; race, equity and justice reporter at KQED Public Radio in San Francisco **Sandhya Dirks**; lecturer in psychology at the UCL Institute of Education **Jessica Hayton**; as well as award-winning artist and journalist **Sayre Quevedo**. They reflect on subjects ranging from the relationship between listening and loneliness; how we can translate audio work to make it more accessible across a spectrum of hearing; and the uneasy imbalances in collecting and sharing personal stories to an unseen audience.

Soundhouse also explores how increased isolation and social distancing have affected our psychological relationship with audio and sound. The project included a survey of around 200 audio-makers and listeners, which revealed that 75% of respondents' listening habits had changed since the pandemic began. They found themselves particularly drawn to presenters they considered familiar, comforting or friendly, and to podcasts and radio programmes that offered humour and escape from the anxiety-inducing news cycle.

Co-producers Nina Garthwaite and Eleanor McDowall said: '*Soundhouse is a platform for creative radio making and podcasting, and provides a space for critical analysis of contemporary audio culture. We've always thought of radio and podcasting as an invisible artform - something that people tend to listen to in private, alone - in their bedrooms and kitchens, on long walks or drives. Unlike a cinema for film or a concert hall for music - radio and podcasting don't visibly occupy public space. Would we treat them differently if they did? Soundhouse as a project grew out of a desire to make the artform visible, to spark conversations around how work was made and to enjoy communal listening experiences.*'

Razia Jordan, Producer, Barbican, said: '*Rather than letting people listen to programmes on demand, we've adopted a 'live listening' approach. That means whenever you tune-in, from wherever in the world, you'll be having a communal listening experience. We wanted to reflect the particular intimacy of radio at a moment when so many are seeking solace in it. We're excited to have collaborated with three guest curators for this online iteration of Soundhouse, and the breadth of work chosen by them offers something for everybody, whether they're new to this kind of work or avid listeners.*'

Soundhouse: Intimacy and Distance is commissioned by the Barbican's Level G programme, an experimental platform and series of installations, artist residencies and public events for people to explore art and ideas about the forces shaping our lives today. This is the second edition of Soundhouse. The first, [Soundhouse: The Listening Body](#), was conceived in 2018 and included a pop-up venue at the Barbican, and a series of alternative visions for public listening events.

Soundhouse is generously supported by Wellcome.

The Barbican believes in creating space for people and ideas to connect through its international arts programme, community events and learning activity. To keep its programme accessible to everyone, and to keep investing in the artists it works with, the Barbican needs to raise more than 60% of its income through ticket sales, commercial activities and fundraising every year. Donations can be made here: barbican.org.uk/join-support/support-us/for-individuals/make-a-donation

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Notes to Editors

Soundhouse was co-created and produced by Falling Tree Productions, In The Dark , and the Barbican.

Press Information

For any further information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact the Barbican's communications team:

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About the Participants

Co-creators / producers

Nina Garthwaite

In 2010, Nina Garthwaite set up In The Dark, a media arts organisation best known for its gathered listening events. Run by a collective of audio producers and enthusiasts, In The Dark has gone on to gain a reputation around the world for curating, commissioning and celebrating creative audio.

Eleanor McDowall

Eleanor McDowall is a Director at Falling Tree Productions, which creates features and documentaries for the BBC and high-profile cultural institutions. Eleanor is also the founder of Radio Atlas - an online platform and podcast for subtitled audio documentaries, and the series producer of Short Cuts - a home for new, adventurous audio documentaries on BBC Radio 4.

Guest Curators

Arlie Adlington

Arlie Adlington is an audio producer based in London. He has made things for BBC Radio 3 and 4, BBC Sounds, Tate, VICE, The Allusionist, Scottee and others. Arlie started out as an independent podcaster, teaching himself how to edit by making a show with a friend. Later, he completed an MA in radio and started working as a freelance producer in 2018.

Axel Kacoutié

Axel Kacoutié is an award-winning sound designer who's been working with sound, music and words to challenge the familiar and revive the magic in the mundane. His work has featured on BBC Radio 3 & 4, Channel 4's Random Acts (Series 2018 and 2019), and NOWNESS. He is also the Sound Designer and theme composer for the Guardian's daily news podcast, Today in Focus.

Ariana Martinez

Based in New York City, Ariana Martinez is a multimedia artist and radio maker working with sound, video, drawing, and sculptural objects. Guided by training in both the fine arts and in urban studies, their practice investigates the impact of geography, infrastructure, space, and place on individual and collective experience. Ariana has produced stories for BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 3, KCRW's The Organist, among others. Ariana believes in sound's unique potential as a physical presence--as something that can be felt in our surroundings and in our bodies--to tell us about where we are and how we're going to move through it.

Writing

Raymond Antrobus

Raymond Antrobus was born in London, Hackney to an English mother and Jamaican father. In 2019 he was a recipient of the Ted Hughes Award and won the Sunday Times/University of Warwick Young Writer of the Year Award. He became the first poet to be awarded the Rathbone Folio Prize. His next publications are children's picture book 'Can Bears Ski?' published by Walkers Books and illustrated by Polly Dunbar, and poetry collection, 'All The Names Given' published by Picador in 2021.

Sandhya Dirks

Sandhya Dirks is a race, equity and justice reporter at KQED Public Radio in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is the host and reporter of the podcast American Suburb, about the transformation of suburbia from white space to the most diverse geographic place in American life. She helped create the show Truth Be Told, an advice podcast for and by people of color. Currently she is working on an investigative podcast about what really happens when police abuse their power. She believes in telling stories about systems, and that all stories are stories about power.

Jessica Hayton

Dr Jessica Hayton is a lecturer in psychology and the Programme leader for the Graduate Diploma in Habilitation and Disabilities of Sight at UCL Institute of Education. Her research focus is in maximising independence skills in children and young people with vision impairment and considering practical solutions to supporting people with vision impairment in accessing the environment.

Sayre Quevedo

Sayre Quevedo is an artist and journalist. He works across mediums to tell stories about intimacy, identity, and human relationships. In 2018 his piece '[Espera](#)' received the Third Coast/RHDF Directors' Choice Award and his other piece '[The Quevedos](#)' was nominated for a Best Audio Documentary award by the International Documentary Association (IDA). The following year he won the 2019 Third Coast/RHDF Gold Award for Best Documentary for '[The Return](#)'. It was also nominated for a Best Audio Documentary award by the IDA, his second nomination two years in a row.

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over a million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas 1, 2 and 3, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, public spaces, a library, the Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and

[Michael Clark Company](#). The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court, and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble.

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