

§YMP(0)§IUM

§ [outline]

Disaster threatens intellectual experience the more strenuously it ossifies into theory and acts as if it held the philosopher's stone in hand.

Theodor W. Adorno

Facing the ever-growing crowd of digital/digitized archives around the globe, §ympo§ium is a platform enabling a specific study, a speech, a voice to be isolated, scrutinized in monoacoustic slowness. A program of and about lectures, §ympo§ium uses radio as a device of mediation, reproduction, re-contextualization, and critical commentary.

Each episode is an audio-essay, departing from the assumption that the lecture, just as the essay, is an open form, indefinable and worth multiple names. Without providing a comprehensive list, §ympo§ium intends to be a crossroads for all those names.

Once a month, a recorded lecture—or something of the like—is presented, broadcasted, commented upon. The material exists, it may be even available to everybody, it is not exclusive but may be hidden in plain sight—imagine a program about street furniture—information is part of our vital furniture nowadays. Bringing a lecture within a lecture, a fold in discourse with every chapter, a kinder surprise for nerds or hungry passers-by; trying to chart the poetics of recorded speech; contaminating and letting itself contaminate by the specific impulse that drives every piece, such will be the agenda of §ympo§ium.

The materials will come from existing sound archives in cultural institutions, universities, independent organizations, cellars, thrift shops, laptops of generous friends. Yet it appears difficult to provide other selection criteria than our weakness for certain echoes, certain patinas, the atmosphere of the conference room re-imagined as a recording studio, or vice-versa.

A temptation exists as well to consider some lectures as poetry. At times even our program will be written in verse.

§ympo§ium will use the radio as a delocalized amphitheater, inspired by the impossible idea of a receiver playing from the lectern and funneling the overwhelming broadness of the www. Background music and/or noise included. Each program may present a single lecture as part of a larger series, or it may, sometimes, include diverse materials as elements of a radio-specific exhibition of discourse (bringing together exhibition and exposition). In some special cases, an existing lecture, written for radio but never recorded, could be the object of a new production.

And along with some irreducible critics, we may ask: What is a lecture? Where can it happen? Where are its suburbs? Is it a site-specific event? What is the “lecturehood” of such and such recording? If the listener has never attended a lecture in a car, on the beach, or in her own living room, this might be the best chance for it.

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