



INTERNATIONAL RADIO DRAMA STUDIES

Works from the
Student Conference on the
International History of Radio Drama
Department of Media and Communication
ELTE, Budapest, December 2022.

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Introduction: Public radio in Vietnam, also known as Voice of Vietnam, is a state-owned radio broadcaster that operates under the Vietnam News Agency. It was founded in 1945, just a few months after Vietnam declared its independence from France (Voice of Vietnam, n.d.). The radio broadcaster plays an important role in providing news and information to the public, as well as promoting the country's cultural heritage and values.

The public radio in Vietnam offers a wide range of programming, including news, current affairs, cultural shows, and music. It broadcasts in multiple languages, including Vietnamese, English, French, and Chinese, to reach a diverse audience. The radio broadcaster also has a strong presence on the internet, with a website and social media accounts that provide live streaming and on-demand access to its content.

Radio drama has always been an important part of Vietnamese voice radio. Since their establishment, they have always sought to convert traditional plays into spoken plays. Each region of Vietnam has different genres of spoken play, the most prominent of which can be mentioned as *Dân ca Quan họ*, *Cải Lương*, *Ca Trù*. At the same time, legal and propaganda contents are always cleverly integrated into spoken plays. The government holds most of the responsibility for checking the information of these new programs, to make sure they are fit with the traditional custom of Vietnam and do not contain false information about religion and politics.

In addition to its regular programming, the public radio in Vietnam also provides emergency information and updates during natural disasters and other crisis situations. It works closely with government agencies and other organizations to provide accurate and timely information to the public. Public radio in Vietnam plays a crucial role in providing news, information, and entertainment to the people of Vietnam. It is a trusted source of information and a valuable contributor to the country's cultural heritage.

On the other hand, in modern society, radio is no longer the primary form of mass media that it once was. While it still has a dedicated audience and serves as a valuable source of information and entertainment for many people, it faces significant limitations in comparison to other forms of media.

One of the main limitations of radio is that it is a one-way form of communication. While listeners can call in to radio shows and interact with hosts, they cannot directly communicate with other listeners or share their own content. This can make it difficult for radio to foster a sense of community or facilitate

discussion and debate in the same way that social media or online forums can.

Another limitation of radio is that it is limited by geography. While the internet allows people to access media from around the world, radio is typically only available within a certain range of a transmitter. This means that people who live in remote or rural areas may not have access to the same variety of radio stations as those who live in more densely populated areas.

Radio also has to compete with online platforms, such as Youtube or Tiktok. These platforms offer a wide range of content, including music, news, and entertainment, and are available on demand, making it easy for users to access the content they want at any time. In contrast, radio stations are typically limited to a specific genre or format and may not offer as much variety.

In order to appeal more to the public, VOV had expanded into the picture broadcasting business with the acquisition of private broadcasting system VTC, and also established their website presence. VOV is now available for people to access through their mobile devices. VOV is less popular among the people due to the lack of creativity and also partly due to the management policy of the government. At the same time, VOV is also used as a tool for political propaganda by the Vietnamese government, which made it less favorable by its audiences.

Current Structure: As a state-owned radio broadcaster, Voice of Vietnam (VOV) operates under the Vietnam News Agency and plays a crucial role in providing news, information, and entertainment to the public. VOV has a strong presence on the airwaves, with a network of transmitters and repeaters that cover the entire country. In addition, VOV has a strong online presence, with a website and social media accounts that provide live streaming and on-demand access to its content.

VOV's main studios are located in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam (Voice of Vietnam, n.d.). The broadcaster has a team of experienced journalists, editors, and producers who work round the clock to produce high-quality content for the public. In addition to its main studios in Hanoi, VOV also has regional studios in major cities across the country, including Ho Chi Minh City, Hue, Da Nang, and Can Tho. These regional studios allow VOV to provide local news and information to the people in their respective areas.

VOV's programming is diverse and caters to a wide range of audiences. The radio broadcaster offers

news, current affairs, cultural shows, and music, and broadcasts in multiple languages, including Vietnamese, English, French, and Chinese. In addition to its regular programming, VOV also provides emergency information and updates during natural disasters and other crisis situations.

In addition to its main channel, Voice of Vietnam (VOV) also operates several specialized radio channels that cater to specific audiences and interests. These include:

VOV1: VOV's main channel, which offers news and current affairs; plus live important national events, parliament meetings, etc. Music, literature and drama are the only fields that largely fall outside its format. Broadcast 20.5 hours a day, with overnight simulcast of VOV3 from midnight to 04:45.

VOV2: culture, sports, leisure, science and education. Broadcast 20.5 hours a day

VOV3: music-oriented. Broadcast 24 hours a day, with co-operative pop music timeslot in early morning (06:00 to 09:00), drivetime (17:00 to 22:00).

VOV4: ethnic languages, broadcasting in 11 languages. Available in MW, SW and FM under five regional feeds (Northwestern, Central, Central Highlands, Ho Chi Minh City, Mekong Delta), 12 hours a day. All five feeds are available online and on VOV apps.

VOV5 (also called *VOV World*): international service. Broadcasting in 13 foreign languages to many parts of the world via analogue and digital shortwave, internet streaming and podcasting. The Vietnamese feed is available from 07:00 to 23:00 (16 hours a day).

VOV6: literature and art programmes, a block on VOV2 with diversal air time.

VOV Transportation: transportation information. Divided into three separate channels: VOV Transportation - Hanoi, VOV Transportation - Ho Chi Minh City and Mekong FM. These channels are all broadcast 24 hours a day.

VOV FM 89 MHz: health, environment and safety consuming programmes, 17 hours a day. Houses Xone FM, a music-oriented programme block, airs during daytime (07:00 to 13:00) and drivetime (17:00 to 21:00). True to its name, this radio station is available on 89.0 FM in Hanoi, HCMC and several areas.

VOV English 24/7: English-language programmes, 18 hours a day. Available on 104.0 FM in Hanoi, Hue and HCMC.

In 2015, with the allowance from the government, VOV acquired the private VTC cable network, which transitioned VOV into both picture and radio broadcasting systems (VnExpress, 2015). Not only that, in order to adapt with the development of technology and society, they have also introduced an official website, where audiences can browse through the news and listen to radio programs online (VOV, n.d.)

The Early History of Radio in Vietnam: It is undeniable that VOV (Voice of Vietnam) is the most important broadcast system nowadays. However, before centralizing as one unified radio system, the Vietnam witness a dispersed history of two radio channels. According to DeWald (2012), the French colony established the first radio stations in Hanoi and Saigon, the *Radio-Club de l'Indochine du Nord* and *Radio Saigon*. These channels are largely purposed for the new technology expansion and broadcasting content orientation without the official interest from the colonial state. The content of radio was restricted to a non-political area, which together with the unique location of many radios in the social geography of cities, facilitated the radio's integration into daily life. Yet, the early Vietnam radio is still notable due to speed of becoming popular. By the end of the 1930s, both organizations extended to a strong public commitment to the 'local interest' radio broadcasting, forming the new networks and social organizations of the radio users. Indeed, Radio-Club de l'Indochine du Nord activities were more restricted and subdued than its Saigon-based counterpart. Yet Radio Saigon was shut down owing to a lack of operational funding less than two years after its official opening, prompting an outpouring of letters of complaint from listeners in several countries (Peterson, 2021). Yet the legal absence of local politics came to an end with the outbreak of the Second World War and the formation of the Vichy administration in Indochina. However, it did not open an era of political information freeform, but rather than increased restrictions for programs that deviated from the colonial state ideology. The languages of the transmissions were varied by mostly French and the 'standard' Hanoi and 'standard' Saigon dialects, yet there was also occasional programming in Chinese and English.

Following Vietnam's independence from France in 1945, the newly created government established its own radio station, the *Voice of Free Vietnam* (later known as the *Voice of Vietnam*, or VOV). VOV was the country's primary source of news and information, and it was critical in the country's war for independence (Tran, 2020). While the U.S. military established the *Armed Forces Vietnam Network* (AFVN) in South Vietnam to give news and entertainment to American soldiers and South Vietnamese people (Bayless, 1969). Vietnam Radio and AFVN both broadcast in Vietnamese, English, and French, among other languages. Vietnam Radio was notorious for its aggressive propaganda, which often glorified the communist cause and denigrated the United States and its allies (Ó Briain, 2021). AFVN, on the other hand, adopted a more balanced approach, broadcasting war-related news and information alongside entertainment and music (Moody, 1970). In addition to the major government-run stations, a number of independent radio stations

formed. These included *Radio Hanoi*, which was operated by the government of North Vietnam but had a more autonomous editorial position, and *Radio Saigon*, which was controlled by the government of South Vietnam but was more critical of the U.S. involvement in the nation (Mark, 2006). Throughout the Vietnam War, radio was an essential source of news and information for both sides.

After the war ended, radio in Vietnam continued to play an important role as a medium. The *Voice of Vietnam* (VOV), which is operated by the government, continued to be official source of news and information by emerged with the previous independent radio stations including Radio Hanoi and Radio Saigon (Ó Briain, 2021).

The Official Radio of Vietnam - Voice of Vietnam (VOV): Voice of Vietnam, abbreviated as VOV, is the Vietnamese national radio broadcaster and is directly controlled by the government of Vietnam. It is tasked with propagating the policies of the party and the laws of the state. On September 2, 1945, the first Vietnamese language radio transmission was made, when President Ho Chi Minh read out the Proclamation of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. This Proclamation is considered the first radio broadcast that gave birth to Vietnam Radio. This is considered a very important milestone for the Vietnamese people after more than 60 years of French colonial rule, controlled and banned radio receivers (Tran, 2020). The Declaration of Independence states, “*All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness*” (VietnamNet News, 2021). This is immortalized in the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. And that immortal declaration of independence was like a call for the entire people to resist the French colonial invasion, and fight for freedom, independence, and self-mastery. At 11:30 am on September 7, 1945: The Voice of Vietnam was officially born. The opening of the first broadcast in Vietnamese began with the sentence: “*This is the Voice of Vietnam, broadcast from Hanoi, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam*” on the background of the song “*Destroy the Fascists*” by musician Nguyen Dinh Thi (Bao Tuoi Tre, 2020).

At the beginning of radio programs and at the beginning of each day's broadcast on VOV's radio channels, there is a piece of music without lyrics, it is called *VOV's soundtrack* with a sentence introducing the name and location of the radio station called “vocals” are read by one male and one female announcer in turn. The radio's theme song is the song “*Destroy the Fascists*” by Nguyen Dinh Thi, which has been used since the establishment of Radio until now.

VOV's first chant was used from the first broadcast on the 7th of September 1945 to the 1st of July 1976. With the content “*This is the Voice of Vietnam, broadcasting from Hanoi, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam*”. However, the chant was changed on the 2nd of July 1976, since Vietnam changed its name from the Democratic Republic to the Socialist Republic. And this second one has been used up to now, with the content “*This is the Voice of Vietnam, broadcasting from Hanoi, the capital of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*”.

The History of Radio Drama & Genres: It is challenging to outline the history of Radio Drama in Vietnam due to the absence of international standard studies and the lack of information consistency across local radio stations in the official system. The history of each genre, however, would be summarized via scattered sources as follows.

Radio Plays: When researching radio play genres, we discovered that the history of radio plays is intertwined with music, theater, and other aspects of Vietnamese national culture. According to DeWald (2012), throughout the 1930s, radio dramas were often rebroadcasts of phonograph records and sometimes live studio dramatizations. Under the influence of French culture, the majority of music consists of Western classical and modern popular music, such as jazz. In addition, traditional Vietnamese musical genres such as *tuong* singing and *Cải Lương* theatre are among the most popular radio plays, garnering a great deal of favorable audience feedback. During the 1930s, *Cải Lương* enabled radio and phonograph reach new heights of popularity. Maintaining radio plays with traditional cultural forms has become one of the most essential functions of VOV, particularly for music. For example, from the Vietnam War to the present, *Red Music* is a neotraditional music rejuvenated inside a communist framework, as stated by Ó Brian (2021). Due to its relationship with communist identity, this is not the sort of music performed by traditional instruments, but it is among the modern music broadcast on contemporary radio in Vietnam. According to Ó Brian (2021), *Red Music* is one of the most potent auditory emblems of cultural nationalism, and VOV is in charge of producing this music to promote the notion of an ideal and happy homeland of one party. In addition, VOV helps to the preservation of regional culture in the northern, central, and southern parts of Vietnam, which correspond to the colonial protectorates of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina, respectively (Ó Brian & Ong, 2021). Indeed, VOV3 and VOV6, the music and entertainment channels, broadcast a wide ranges of many folk music and theater programs; for instance, *Dân ca* (folk music) occupied five broadcast time slots on the same day (VOV3, 2022) or *Kịch truyền thanh* (radio plays) have broadcast time slots on two channels, VOV1 and

VOV6 (VOV1, 2021). The majority of these broadcasts are repeats of legendary school-recorded musical performances or plays. In addition, the *Sân khấu Truyền thanh* (radio theater) program of VOH station recorded eight *Cải Lương* plays and live-broadcast plays with many outstanding performers of different genres (Nguoi Lao Dong News, 2022).

Xem ngày khác + 10/01/2022 Xem lịch Lịch phát sóng ngày 10/01/2022

GIỜ PHÁT SÓNG	TÊN CHƯƠNG TRÌNH	CHI TIẾT
04h50-5h05	Nhạc hiệu- Quốc thiều - Logo Ban Âm nhạc VOV3 - Nhạc tập thể dục	
5h05-5h10	Dẫn hệ 1	
5h10-5h15	Bản tin - Thời tiết	
5h15-5h55	Bài ca chiến sĩ	
5h55-6h00	Quảng cáo - Logo Ban Âm nhạc(VOV3)	
6h00-9h00	One FM	
9h00-9h05	Quảng cáo	
9h05-9h07	Dẫn hệ 2	
9h07-9h30	Ca khúc tuyển chọn	
9h30-10h00	Chương trình Dân ca	
10h00-10h05	Bản tin	
10h05-10h30	Ca khúc dân gian	
10h30-11h00	Tác phẩm mới	
11h00-12h00	Nhịp cầu dân ca	
12h00-12h05	Bản tin	
12h05-12h35	Dân ca	
12h35-13h00	Giải đấu bạn bè (Tuần 1 + 3 + 5) Trò chuyện Pop Chat (Tuần 2 + 4)	
13h00-13h05	Quảng cáo	
13h05-13h07	Dẫn hệ 3	
13h07-14h00	Thính phòng giao hưởng	
14h00-14h30	Dân ca	
14h30-15h00	Nhạc Việt Nam	
15h00-15h05	Bản tin	
15h05-15h10	Quảng cáo	
15h10-15h45	Giọng ca vàng	
15h45-16h00	Ca nhạc trẻ	
16h00-16h30	Dân ca	
16h30-17h00	Chương trình Thiểu nhi	
17h00-21h00	ONE FM	
21h00-22h00	Âm nhạc dành cho phái đẹp	
22h00-23h00	ONE FM	
23h00-23h30	Đọc truyện dài kỳ	
23h30-24h00	Ca khúc trữ tình đêm khuya + Dẫn hệ 4	

Five broadcast time slots on the same day for *Dân ca* (folk music) on VOV3.



The VOH crew performed *Sân khấu Truyền thanh* program (Radio Theatre) (Nguoi Lao Dong News, 2021).

Radio Documentaries: Per the materials obtained on the present Vietnamese voice radio, this central channel does not properly categorize the types of media outlets. Yet according to the definition of the documentary genre, which is “document reality, preeminently for the purposes of instruction, education, or maintaining a historical record” (Oxford, 2018), the beginning of this genre may have occurred in 1940 and during the war, when the colonial state and the VietCong attempted to spread war news, opinions and their political ideologies. According to VTV Wiki (2022), radio documentaries are also available on several VOV channels currently,

particularly VOV1 due to the channel's specialized nature. Some shows are referred to as *Đảng trong Đời sống* (Communist Party in Life), *Vì An ninh Tổ Quốc: Kể chuyện cảnh giác* (For National Security: Cautionary Stories). These programs seem to lack innovation in its use of music and sound and is based on traditional radio storytelling via spoken languages.

Radio plays for children: VOV is currently still one of the few stations with a large and diverse number of channels, and it is understandable when they create a children's channel, it is “children's radio program: friend childhood intimacy”. The age that the program is aimed at is from 6-14 years old when writing articles. This is a program written by the children themselves, it does not have a fixed structure but it is like a forum where they can share their feelings, joys, sorrows in life, and reflect on what happened to them. Listening to the program, children across the country can draw lessons for themselves. Besides the children's channel, they also create programs like “Adolescence -- joy and challenges”. This program is specifically for teenagers. One topic each week for teenagers to engage in debate and share their views (Van, 2015).

To encourage children to read books and choose good books to read, the program has cooperated with Kim Dong Publishing House to introduce good books for children on air. The Children's Radio program is broadcast daily at 8:30 am and replayed at 3:45 pm on the VOV2 channel of Vietnam Television.

Soap operas: As the Documentaries Radio, this central channel does not properly categorize the types of media outlets. However, according to the definition of the soap opera genre, which is “a daily radio series with many characters, most of whom are related to each other or connected in complicated ways. The themes and plots of soap operas are often melodramatic and sentimental” (Vocabulary, n.d). Based on the definition of the soap opera genre, we find out that the show *Đọc Truyện Đêm Khuya* (Reading Late Night Stories) or *Cải Lương* are the two genres most closely related to soap operas. For the program “Reading Stories Late at Night”, each story has its characters and their emotional circuit, each story has its own hidden meanings that make the audience can catch up and focus on that emotional circuit. And especially for topics such as war, in addition to the voice of the host, the background music will make the listener even sad when gradually deepening into the character's storyline. This program is specifically for teenagers. One topic each week for teenagers to engage in debate and share their views (Thanh, 2015).

Case Study: This part is constituted by three well-known programs in VOV radio system which is *Cải Lương Radio* (Traditional Musical Theatre Radio), *Kịch nói* (Radio Spoken Plays), and *Đọc truyện đêm khuya* (Reading Night Stories).

Cải Lương Radio: *Cải Lương* is a traditional kind of opera that originated in the south of Vietnam around the turn of the twentieth century. It combines traditional Vietnamese folk music with classical Chinese and French opera to produce a unique and spirited art form (Nguyen, 2012). *Cải Lương* is performed by a group of musicians playing a variety of instruments, including the đàn nguyệt (moon-shaped lute), the đàn tranh (zither), and the sáo (flute). A small group of musicians provides the opera's music alongside the performers. *Cải Lương* is renowned for its spectacular costumes, elaborate staging, and complex narrative (Tran, 2010). Typically, the opera recounts a narrative of love and ardor, frequently set in rural Vietnam during the country's feudal past. Frequently, the stories are taken from traditional Vietnamese mythology and are replete with fanciful and magical elements. During the French colonial period in Vietnam during the 1920s and 1930s, *Cải Lương* originated as a popular form of entertainment. Initially, it was performed by traveling troupes who toured villages and towns to entertain local audiences (Mai, 2015). Over time, the genre gained popularity and was performed in larger metropolitan theaters and opera houses (Luu, 2014). *Cải Lương* continued to prosper and expand in the decades following the end of French colonial administration. Numerous prominent Vietnamese artists, like the singer and actress Thanh Nga and the composer Nguyen Van Ty, have been honored for their contributions to the *Cải Lương* tradition. *Cải Lương* continues to be performed and adored by audiences in Vietnam and Vietnamese diasporas. *Cải Lương* is a testament to the ingenuity and tenacity of the Vietnamese people, since it has remained a vibrant and enduring art form despite the many changes and difficulties Vietnam has faced over the last century. Nonetheless, the crisis of *Cải Lương* art has been marked by a dearth of talent, which may be related to the migration of *Cải Lương* talents to another creative business. Ineffective talent development is also a contributing factor to the current dearth of talent in the *Cải Lương* theatrical form when compared to its golden age. This is due in part to a lack of singing and acting knowledge sharing between actors and actresses, as well as between theatre directors and playwrights (Luu, 2014).

Cải Lương Radio, which can be arranged in the radio plays or soap operas genres, is a means of conserving this traditional art's priceless cultural values. Due to the fact that the majority of *Cải Lương*'s audience is comprised of senior citizens, this also helps this audience recall their youth and nostalgia. Indeed, *Cải Lương* radio stations often broadcast recordings of live *Cải Lương* opera performances as well as conversations with *Cải Lương* singers and specialists. *Cải Lương* radio stations may be located on both FM and AM

frequencies and can be accessed in several Vietnamese cities. The national radio network operates VOV3 and regional Southern Vietnam radio system, VOH, are popular radio stations in *Cải Lương* (VOV3, 2022). In addition to conventional *Cải Lương* radio stations, there are several internet outlets that broadcast *Cải Lương* content. These platforms, which include streaming services and websites, make it possible for anybody in the globe to listen to *Cải Lương* radio. *Cải Lương* radio plays a vital role in the preservation and promotion of the *Cải Lương* culture in addition to providing pleasure and education. By broadcasting recordings of live performances and talks with artists and experts, *Cải Lương* radio stations maintain the relevance of the art form for adult audiences. *Cải Lương* radio is an essential means for people to engage with Vietnam's rich creative legacy and a vital component of the country's cultural environment.

Lan và Điệp (Lan and Diep) is a well-known radio episode by *Cải Lương* that has become a revered classic in the genre. The program initially aired in the 1960s and has since been recreated several times on radio and on stage (Tien Phong News, 2019). The episode is inspired by the book Turn off the fire of the heart by Nguyen Cong Hoan which first revealed the narrative to the public for the first time in 1933. The episode is about *Lan và Điệp*, two young lovers who are separated by the ruthless and deceitful Lord Tien. Despite the challenges they experience, *Lan và Điệp* stay strong in their love for one another and finally prevail over their foe. Interspersed with narrative and conversation, the tale is delivered via a succession of exquisitely crafted and sung songs. The cast's performances throughout the episode are exceptional, with the actors and actresses providing passionate and poignant portrayals of their characters. The use of sound effects and music to create atmosphere and mood is also brilliant, contributing to the overall impact of the narrative. *Lan và Điệp* is ultimately a compelling and poignant story of love, devotion, and victory over hardship. Its exquisite melody and impassioned performances have made it a classic of the *Cải Lương* style and a must-listen for aficionados of Vietnamese folk opera (VnExpress News, 2019).

Kịch Nói: Radio spoken play or *Kịch Nói* in Vietnam is a popular form of entertainment that has undergone significant changes over the years. In the early days of radio in Vietnam, *Kịch Nói* were mainly used as a means of educating the public about various topics, including history, culture, and social issues. They were also used as a way to entertain and engage listeners, and were often based on traditional folktales and legends.

Over time, *Kịch Nói* in Vietnam have evolved to include a wider range of genres, including comedy, drama, and horror. In the 1980s and 1990s, radio *Kịch*

Nói became increasingly popular in Vietnam, with many people turning to radio for entertainment and information. This popularity continued into the 21st century, with *Kịch Nói* remaining a popular form of entertainment in Vietnam today. *Hồn Trương Ba, Da Hàng Thịt* (The Butcher's Skin) is a popular radio *Kịch Nói* in Vietnam that has gained a large following due to its unique blend of horror, mystery, and comedy. The play, which was a part of a show called *Kịch Cuối Tuần* (Weekend Spoken Play), air on VOV1 every Friday evening, tells the story of Trương Ba, a ghost who haunts a local market and possesses the bodies of various animals in order to solve the mystery of his own death.

One of the key features of *Hồn Trương Ba, da hàng thịt* is its use of humor to balance out the horror elements of the story. Trương Ba is depicted as a mischievous and sarcastic ghost who often makes fun of the humans he encounters and the situations he finds himself in. This humorous approach helps to make the show more accessible and enjoyable for listeners, and has contributed to its popularity.



Hồn Trương Ba, Da Hàng Thịt play in theatre (VOV World, 2013)

Another factor that has contributed to the success of *Hồn Trương Ba, Da Hàng Thịt* is its well-developed characters and plot. Trương Ba is a complex and multi-dimensional character, and his interactions with the other characters in the show are engaging and believable. The mystery of Trương Ba's death is also well-crafted, with a series of twists and turns that keep listeners guessing until the end.

The show has also been praised for its use of sound effects and music, which help to create a more immersive and atmospheric listening experience. The sound effects, which include creaking doors, footsteps, and other spooky noises, help to set the mood and build tension, while the music helps to underscore the emotional moments of the story.

The play was written in 1984 by Lưu Quang Vũ - one of the most famous screen writers in Vietnam, who plays an important role in modern Vietnam literature. "Hồn Trương Ba, da hàng thịt" has received widespread acclaim and has won several awards,

including the Golden Award in the National Stage Academy Award in 1990 and also one of the first Vietnamese plays to ever be brought to international audiences (Vu & Tse, n.d.).

Hồn Trương Ba, Da Hàng Thịt has faced some challenges. One challenge is the limited budget for radio spoken plays in Vietnam, which can make it difficult for the show to maintain its high production values. Another challenge is the increasing competition from other forms of entertainment, such as television and the internet, which can make it harder for the show to attract and retain listeners.

Despite these challenges, *Hồn Trương Ba, Da Hàng Thịt* continues to be a popular and beloved radio *Kịch Nói* in Vietnam. Its combination of horror, mystery, and comedy, as well as its well-developed characters and plot, have made it a standout in the genre and a must-listen for many listeners. *Kịch Nói* in Vietnam face a number of challenges. One challenge is the increasing competition from other forms of entertainment, such as television and the internet. With the proliferation of these platforms, many people are turning to them for entertainment instead of radio spoken plays. As a result, radio stations have had to adapt and come up with new strategies to attract and retain listeners.

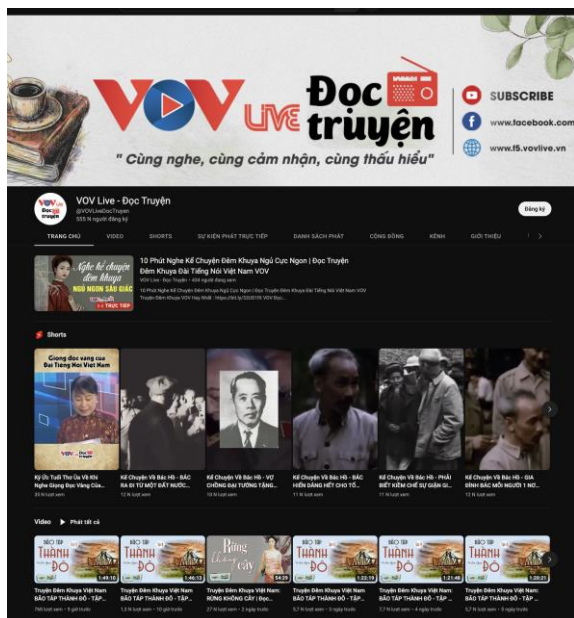
Another challenge facing *Kịch Nói* in Vietnam is the lack of funding. Many radio stations in Vietnam rely on advertising to generate revenue, but the amount of advertising available is often limited. This can make it difficult for radio stations to afford to produce high-quality radio spoken plays, which can lead to a decline in the quality of the shows.

With the Fall of Saigon in 1975 and the control of the Vietnamese Communist Party, heavy censorship was placed. Every new play has to undergo inspections, and propaganda would be cleverly put into them.

Độc truyện đêm khuya (Reading Late Night Stories): It is a popular radio show in Vietnam airs every night from 10pm to 11pm on VOV6. The show is well-known for its distinctive stories, which consists of a presenter narrating a series of tales ranging from folklore to personal experiences and historical records, especially contemporary Vietnamese literature during the war period. *Độc truyện đêm khuya* is a program dates back to the first years of Vietnam's independence in the 1960s (Vu, 2009). It was first played on a tiny, local radio station in Hanoi with the intention of entertaining listeners during the long, dark evenings. The show grew in popularity over time and was ultimately picked up by national radio stations, allowing it to reach a larger audience throughout the nation. One of the reasons *Độc truyện đêm khuya* is so famous is the manner in which the tales are recounted. The host is a talented storyteller, capable of capturing the audience's attention with a beautiful, inspiring voice every time they tell a story and that immerses the audience in the

world of the narrative. Whether it is a heartbreaking tale of love and loss, an exciting adventure narrative, or a strange and mystical legend, the host is able to bring the story to life in a manner that keeps the audience interested and wanting more. However, *Độc truyện đêm khuya* do not include a variety of musical interludes and sound effects that assist to establish the atmosphere and enrich the entire listening experience. It reflects a limited techniques and creativeness of VOV. The ignorance for radio system not only exist in the past but also in the current term. *Độc truyện đêm khuya* is one of the most innovated and well-known mostly thanks to the stories themselves and the storytellers.

Still, before the Doi Moi period when Viet Nam open its economy and began to acknowledge the mass culture, *Độc truyện đêm khuya* was an integral part of Vietnam's cultural landscape, with a large audience tuning in each evening to hear the current episode. It used to gain a significant and devoted audience of listeners who tune in regularly, regardless of where they are. What makes this storytelling program able to maintain a certain audience, as well as attract new listeners is the variety of topics. For now, *Độc truyện đêm khuya* has been adapted for several media, including television and podcasts, social media. For example, after a full year of launching the VOV Live - Read Stories Youtube channel has so far had 25.1 million views of the story, with a total of 5.8 million hours of listening/watching hours. On average, there are 68,800 daily listens/views on the channel (VOV, 2021).



VOV Live Channel on YouTube (YouTube, 2022)

It might be said that the diversity of genres has led to the success of the show as it is today. From stories about rural life, love counseling, or psychosocial to war topics, the Vietnam War. And especially, the topic that attracts people the most is the stories about

the war, the heroic history of the Vietnamese nation, and the soldiers who sacrificed to bring back peace and independence life for the Vietnamese people today. One of the most successful episode is "Khi người lính trở về" (When the soldier returns) is a heartwarming and poignant story that was featured on *Độc truyện đêm khuya*. The story follows the journey of a young soldier named Nam who has been away at war for many years. As Nam fights on the front lines, he often thinks about his family back home and the life he left behind. He misses his parents, his sister, and his childhood sweetheart, Lan, who he promised to marry when he returned. After years of fighting and sacrificing for his country, Nam finally receives word that the war has ended and he is able to return home. He is overjoyed at the thought of seeing his loved ones again and can't wait to embrace them. Nam is also eager to see Lan, but he finds out that she has moved on and married someone else. He is heartbroken and feels like he has lost everything he fought for. Despite his disappointment, Nam decides to move on and make a new life for himself. He starts a small business and works hard to provide for his family. Years pass, and Nam's business flourishes. He becomes a successful and respected member of the community. One day, he is approached by Lan, who has recently divorced and is in need of help. Nam agrees to help her and they rekindle their old flame. In the end, Nam and Lan marry and live happily ever after. Nam is grateful for the second chance at love and realizes that although his journey home was not easy, it was worth it in the end. *Khi người lính trở về* is a touching and emotional story that highlights the sacrifices and challenges that soldiers face when they return home after serving their country. It is a reminder of the importance of family and the power of love to overcome all obstacles.

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History of Turkish radio. The first broadcast belongs to Istanbul Radio. On May 6, 1927, the first announcement of Istanbul Radio echoed. In October 1938, Istanbul Radio suspended its broadcasts. It returned to broadcasting life on 19 November 1949. The history of Istanbul Radio began at the post office in Sirkeci. Later, it continued its broadcasts in the Radio House Building built in Harbiye.

After 1960, “Provincial Radios” were established in 8 provinces. In accordance with the 1961 Constitution, which stipulates that the management of radio broadcasts be regulated as an autonomous and impartial public economic institution, the radio broadcasts that have been continuing under TRT since 1964 reached a wider audience and area with the strengthening of their transmitters. TRT Radio 2, as it is now known, made its first broadcast in 1964.

The fact that visibility is at the forefront in terms of audiences and the dominance of popular culture in mass media has been a transformative factor in Turkey [1]. For these reasons, it has led to the loss of importance of radio theaters in Turkey. It is the radio that broadcasts music, programs and programs performed alternately from Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir studios. With the law enacted in 1964, “*Turkish Radio and Television Corporation*” was established to gather TRT radios under a single roof. As a result of the renovation of the technical infrastructure, the restructuring of the radio channels, the establishment of regional radios and the linking of program planning to the central system for the following decades, more than one TRT radio station that appeals to styles and segments has been broadcast. Its publications include news, interviews, advertisements and radio programs.

In 1974, TRT-1, TRT-2 and TRT-3 radio broadcasts were created by combining the central and regional radios of TRT. TRT now continues its broadcasts with 14 television channels, 16 radio channels and digital platforms.

Radio Drama in Turkey: Radio theater became widespread in Turkey between 1940 and 1946. Since the 1940s, radio theater in Turkey was produced, broadcast and listened to in high numbers on TRT, which is a state institution. At that time, *radio theater* programs were between 50 and 80 percent of culture and art broadcasts. Famous novelists and poets such as *Ekrem Reşit Rey*, *Haldun Taner*, and *Behçet Necatigil* were among the first to write radio plays. *Son Tren*, *Gaz*, *Pencere*, *Üç Turunçlar*, *Süslü Karakol Durağı* and *Altın Beşik* are examples of Necatigil’s radio plays.

However, with the widespread use of television, the rate of listening to these programs dropped significantly after the 1980s. Mass media have transformed their main functions into entertainment, especially after the commercialization of the field of

communication in Turkey. Radio theater programs usually featured classical world literature, Turkish novels, drama, tragedy, comedy [2].

Today, radio theater pieces are broadcast via *TRT Dinle*. TRT Dinle, which aims to gather TRT’s long-standing rich archive on a single platform, is broadcast free of charge. *Fig. 1.* shows the photo of the site. Radio theaters reach listeners through this site. In the site, there are selections from Turkish literature and world literature (Hamlet, Madame Bovary, One hundred years of solitude, The little prince, etc.). Apart from these, there are also original radio plays. Comedy, family, history, drama, detective, romantic genres are covered. Apart from these, organizations or individuals broadcast their own radio theater shows in YouTube and Spotify applications, except for TRT Listen, as in *Fig. 2.*

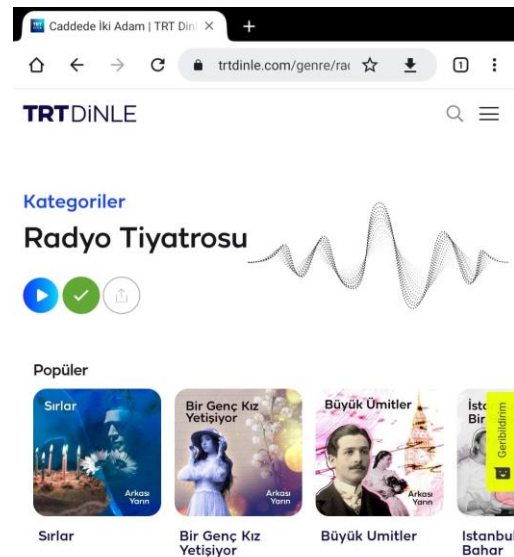


Fig. 1. TRT Dinle website front page.

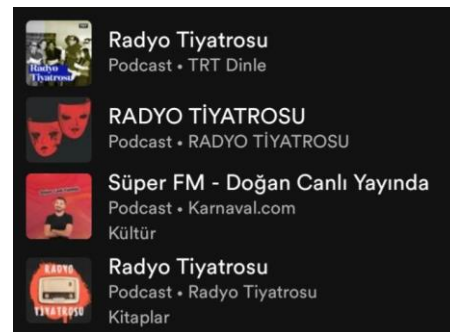


Fig. 2. Examples of online radio theater shows

Case study - The Tenant: The radio theater program I chose is *The Tenant*, written by *Neşe Çeyiz*, directed by *Serpil Tamur*. The genre is detective. At first, a great human noise is heard in the street. The

manager and his employee greet us. It takes place in the pharmacy. There has been a theft in the street. A manager is someone who treats his employee badly but treats his customers well. Then we listen to the speech of Ayten and Hayri. Ayten is considering renting out her house and asks Hayri for help. Hayri agrees to help. Another time, Ayten stops by the pharmacy again. Hayri talks about the fact that he was looking for a tenant for the house when his house was destroyed.

Then we are guests at the house of Ayten. We listen to her conversations with her daughter Gülşen at home. Then the doorbell rings. At the door, Feyza, Ayten's friend comes. They talk about the house they rented. Meanwhile, Hayri Bey calls on the phone and says that a young man has come for the house. Ayten says she wants to meet with the young man. After a while, the young man who came for the rental apartment arrives. Ayten then starts asking questions about the house. The young man says he is a student and wants to keep the house. His name is Ayhan. Ayten and Feyza say that they will help with the furniture. Ayten goes to Hayri and Feyza goes to her house. Ayhan and Gülşen start to talk. After a while, Ayten comes back and says that she gave the house.

Then we can listen to Pınar and Gülşen's conversations about Ayhan. The conversations come to talk about Hayri and their mother Ayten. Pınar is very curious about Ayhan and goes to his. Ayhan painted and renovated the house. In the next scene, Ayten invites Ayhan to dinner. Ayten says she has a land and wants to sell it. Ayhan says he will help her. In the other scene, we listen to Ayhan and Gülşen flirting. They make plans to meet the next day. In the other scene, Ayten tells her daughters that she couldn't find their gold.

Ayhan helps Pınar with her lessons. They also became lovers with Gülşen. Ayten is unaware of the events. One day, Ayten and Feyza meet. Feyza tells Ayhan that they are dating her own daughter. Ayhan deceived both Gülşen and Feyza's daughter. Ayten told her daughters the next day and Gülşen was very surprised. Because Gülşen is pregnant. Pınar and Gülşen go to the doctor to confirm the pregnancy. Gulsen had an abortion. Pınar and Gülşen go home. Ayten says she couldn't find their gold and money. Meanwhile, Feyza comes and says that their money was stolen. Meanwhile, there is only one suspect. Ayhan. Ayhan fell in love with the daughters of Ayten and Feyza. She made Gülşen pregnant. He also stole coins and gold. They go to the police station last. The commissioner asks for a photograph of the tenant. They show the photo and the commissioner says that Ayhan has a criminal record. He tells people that he lied, cheated. Later, Hayri calls and says that he also gave a loan. Thus, Ayhan defrauded the entire neighborhood. Fig. 3. shows the cover of the radio drama.

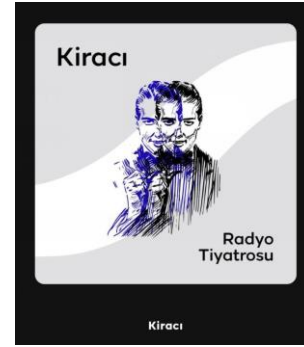


Fig. 3. Cover of the radio drama The Tenant.

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- [3] The Tenant, <https://www.trtdinle.com/show/kiraci>

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Introduction. Marshall McLuhan once said: “*Radio affects most intimately, person-to-person, offering a world of unspoken communication between writer, speaker and the listener*” (Milewski 2022) – it provides us with an important connection to reality and fiction. With the variety of established radio broadcasters nowadays, one can freely choose a channel that fits best into their daily life and interests. Its many forms of entertainment such as music, documentaries and radio dramas helped radio broadcasting to become an integrated auditive medium popular all over the world, yet regulations concerning radio differ from country to country and sometimes even from state to state.

Radio broadcasters in Germany. In Germany there is a mix of commercial and state-run broadcasters, although the most important ones are state-run. The country is divided into nine broadcasting regions with their own broadcasters which in turn all belong to the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (ARD, Society of Public Service Broadcasters of Germany). The broadcaster concerned in this abstract is the *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk* (MDR, Central German Radio) – the broadcaster for the federal states of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia.

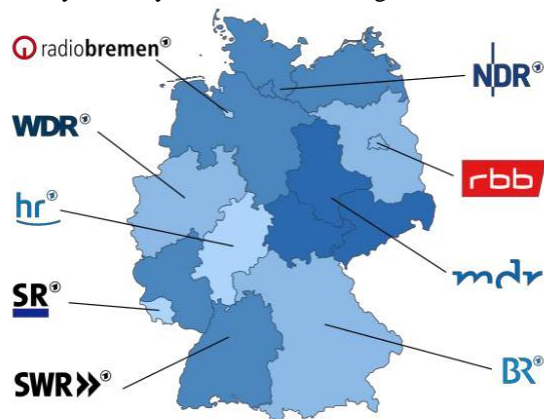


Fig. 1: Nine broadcasting regions of Germany. (Wikipedia, ARD_Karte.svg)

The early history of broadcasting in Central Germany. Regular radio broadcasting in Central Germany had its beginning on October 29th 1923 by the *Sendestelle Berlin Voxhaus* with an hour-long opening concert. In 1924 the *Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk-A.-G. MIRAG* (Central German Broadcasting Cooperation) was founded in the city of Leipzig and started its first broadcasting with the words (translated): “*Hello, hello – This is Leipzig, this is the Leipzig measuring office transmitter of the Reich Telegraph Administration for Central Germany. We are broadcasting on wave 450.*” (MDR-Redaktion 2022a)

About a decade later, in 1933, radio broadcasting was equalized by the National Socialist Government

which used radio as an instrument of power and to bring their ideology and propaganda to every German household – this aspiration resulted in an increase of radio usage and popularity. Under the control of the *Reich Ministry of Propaganda*, the independent broadcaster MIRAG was transformed into the *Reichssender Leipzig*. By 1939 National Socialist radio had gathered around twelve million listeners who were strictly forbidden from listening to foreign broadcasts. During the Second World War, radio concentrated on the military and so productions were down to a minimum (MDR-Redaktion 2009).

Radio dramas in Central Germany after WWII.

After the Second World War, the Soviet occupants of the East German Bloc restarted radio and thus the production of radio dramas. The first radio drama under Soviet occupation aired on July 5th 1945 under the title “*Hypnose*” by Josef Pelz von Felinau – a crime drama about an ominous magician who hypnotizes the attendees of his show into pure horror, while visiting Naples.

Since the foundation of the German Democratic Republic GDR in 1949, (radio) broadcasting was controlled by the state and its leading party the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). Due to the centralization of radio broadcasters into the *Staatliche Rundfunkkomitee* (Federal Broadcasting Committee) of the GDR, most regional broadcasters were absorbed into the committee or were terminated.

Radio drama productions became increasingly more ideologic and propagandistic, because production was controlled by the *Abteilung Agitation und Propaganda* (Department of Agitation and Propaganda). During the 1950s however, radio drama productions turned towards representing the reality of living in the GDR including more authors in the making and adapting stories from literature. In 1953, *Radio DDR* (Radio GDR) re-established the regional channels in the cities Dresden, Erfurt and Leipzig – the then-largest cities in Central Germany. By 1970 radio dramas had become evolved into an artistic form of social criticism with realistic stories and characters. Productions included radio dramas for adults and children, as structured radio drama series, crime dramas and international dramas. From 1945 to 1991, the radio of the GDR, *Radio DDR* produced around 8500 radio dramas, which were mostly broadcasted on the channel DDR 2, one of the two radio channels in the GDR (Obermanns 2022). The biggest radio drama produced in the GDR was the series called *Neumann – Zweimal Klingeln* – a story about an ordinary family in East Germany. The episodic stories were about everyday occurrences in a family.

Family Neumann consists of the father Hans Neumann (spoken by Herbert Köfer), the mother Marianne (Evamaria Bath, later Brigitte Krause) and their children Brigitte (Helga Piur) and Jan Neumann (Mario Müller). Hans works as a car mechanic, Marianne as a teacher – both stereotypical dream jobs of East Germans. What made this radio drama series so popular was its authenticity and relatability. The characters lived through events that practically every GDR-citizen recognized from his or her own life. The children Brigitte and Jan for example, like almost every child in the country, were members of the communist youth organization *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ). Their father Hans complained about conflicts with the work brigade, as it was called in the GDR, and Marianne complained about marriage problems and the ever-lasting race for rare foods like bananas. The series included subtle criticism about the planned economy of East Germany, the unfair distribution of goods and governmental espionage and oppression. The first episode aired on February 3rd 1968, the last episode aired on January 12th 1983 – with a total of 678 episodes, it is the longest running radio drama series of the country. The stories were written by around 20 writers, most frequently by Joachim Witte, Sabine Fischer and Sybill Mehnert. The majority of episodes were directed by Joachim Gürtner and sound management was led by Siegfried Schäfer (Anonymous 2021) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: From left to write: Evamaria Bath, Helga Piur, Mario Müller, Brigitte Krause, Herbert Köfer (http://www.rias1.de/sound4/ddr/_hoerspiel/neumann2x/neumann2xklingeln.html.)

This radio drama is still beloved today by people who grew up in the former GDR – fortunately episodes can be listened to at the website [hoerspiele.dra.de], which is the radio drama database of the ARD.

Public broadcasting after the unification. Germany was reunified in 1990 as the still existent Federal Republic of Germany. In the region of *Bundesland Sachsen* (Federal State of Saxony), Radio DDR was transformed into *Sachsen Radio*, which had three channels Sachsen 1, 2 and 3. Sachsen 1 broadcasted only in the area of Saxony while the other two channels transmitted to the whole area of former East Germany. Sachsen Radio was brought into the *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk* (MDR, Central German Broadcasting) in 1991. In fact, on May 30th 1991, the prime ministers of

Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia signed a state contract that put all television and radio channels of the three states into the state-run Central German Broadcasting cooperation MDR.

Later that year MDR itself was added to the Society of public service broadcasters of Germany ARD. As part of the ARD, MDR is financed by Germany's broadcasting fee for all households, which guarantees a neutral coverage of politics, culture and economy. The organizations order is to provide information, education, counselling and entertainment. It is led by the main director Prof. Dr. Karola Wille since 2011; controlled by the board of directors and the broadcasting council. MDR has its radio headquarters in the cities of Dresden, Magdeburg and Erfurt (Fig. 3) – the capital cities of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia – their directors are responsible for the radio programs, regional television and the corresponding online offers. While the offices for the radio channels and cross-media content of each state reside at the respective capitals, the offices for the channels of the tri-state broadcasting region reside at the city of Halle – channels include *MDR Kultur* (the channel that broadcasts radio dramas, musicals and more), *MDR Jump*, *MDR Sputnik* (both are pop music channels), *MDR tweens* (contents for children between eight and thirteen years old) plus three other channels and their cross-media offerings. The Halle headquarters also house the main editorial of tri-medial culture and new offers as well as the MDR's own symphony orchestra, the radio choir and the children's radio choir. The main news channel for the three states is MDR aktuell – das Nachrichtenradio, which has its offices at Leipzig (MDR-Redaktion 2022b).



Fig. 3: Tri-state broadcasting region. <https://deref-gmx.net/mail/client/ysUr6zz5hyY/dereferer/?redirectUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mdr.de%2Funternehmen%2Fartikel-348.html>.

Case study – Timothy Truckle. A radio drama currently produced by and for MDR Kultur is a series called *Timothy Truckle* – a science-fiction radio drama series based on the short-story collection by Gert Prokop (1977) entitled *Who steals lower legs anyways? And other unbelievable crime stories and criminal cases from the 21st century* (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: *Who steals lower legs anyways?*
<https://www.mdr.de/unternehmen/informatio nen/standorte-programme/index.html>.

The author Gert Prokop wrote detective stories, science-fiction and children’s books. Especially in his science-fiction works he included social criticism and forms of dystopia, which earned him the German Science-Fiction Prize in 1990. After his studies he worked at the DEFA (state-run film and tv production company of GDR) studios in Berlin for the Heynowski & Scheumann Group. But from 1971 until his suicide in spring 1994, he was a freelance writer. He spent his life in East Germany and thus started criticizing state socialism in his works, which was to a certain extent bait for censorship to reflect the situation of many writers in the GDR under the control of state authority (Eulenspiegel Verlagsgruppe 2022).

The radio drama consists of 8 short stories about dwarf detective Timothy “Tiny” Truckle – the best private investigator in Chicago, in the capitalist dystopia – the USA, at the end of the 21st century. Together with his advanced computer, which he calls Napoleon, Truckle usually solves his criminal cases from his apartment. Napoleon has 17 mega data and can network with other computers if necessary. He draws on sources that we now call Wikipedia, search engines, hacking or algorithms. The commissions Truckle has to work on usually have something to do with the structures and institutions of a society corroded by privilege, exploitation and inequality. The country is ruled by the big bosses and their trusts. The privileged live in skyscrapers above the smog line or on country estates with skies tinted blue especially for them. Government surveillance is pervasive, staple foods are scarce, even water is rationed. Truckle’s opponents are mostly mad

scientists. One of them wants to make artificial intelligence creative by downloading people’s souls for them, another one breeds twins to trick a security system. Excitement is not only provided by the riddles that the reader has to solve alongside the detective, but also by the themes that are integrated into the riddles (Ria 2021).



Fig. 5. *Timothy Truckle investigates.*
<https://books.google.de/books/publisher/content?id=X414DwAAQBAJ&hl=de&pg=PP1&img=1&zoom=3&bul=1&sig=ACfU3UOCqNkF1RPnvrH7wxCJ1rE7KEW0hA&w=1280>

The characters of the radio drama are spoken by established German voice-over actors. The main character Timothy ‘Tiny’ Truckle is spoken by Matthias Matschke (as seen in Fig. 5). Other important characters are: Truckle’s partner, which is the computer Napoleon (spoken by Jens Wawrczeck), his friend Smiley Hepburn (Aljoscha Stadelmann), and all episodes are narrated by Bernhard Schütz. The episodes are written by Katrin Wenzel, realized by Holger König, Christian Grund and directed by Wolfgang Seesko. The first episode aired on November 27th 2022, a new episode airs every Sunday at 8 P.M. on MDR Kultur and all episodes can be listened to on the website [hoerspiele.dra.de] or in the ARD audio library (MDR-Redaktion 2022c).

Public radio today. The importance of German radio shifted from news and information to entertainment and little news, depending on the channel. Nowadays there are designated channels for news and education, while most channels focus on entertainment by playing music, talking about topics of interest and providing urgent information like traffic changes. Looking at German radio history, radio is now very free and made for and with the people instead of being controlled and made to indoctrinate them. Today’s channels often have a description of their main contents in their title like the “MDR aktuell – Der Nachrichtensender”, which broadcasts news from all over the world. Listeners can choose freely to switch the channel from a news broadcast to a radio drama or a pop music broadcast – the possibilities are many. Radio brings people of all ages together and can be seen as a form of socializing. In Germany, radio is an important

connection to the outside world especially for elder people who can not leave their houses as frequently as they used to. Everyone can interact by calling into the radio station and make song suggestion, share experiences on a topic or send out greetings, which is a very beloved tradition in German radio. Phone numbers are mentioned frequently and interaction is explicitly very welcome. German radio grew bigger, better and more liberal throughout its history and is now able to provide the positive impact that Marshall McLuhan had in mind.

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Introduction. The public radio in Bavaria is known as the *Bayerischer Rundfunk*. It is part of the German federal media network ARD that consists of nine state broadcasting corporations which belong to different regions of the country or federal states, besides the *Bayerischer Rundfunk* (BR) there is also *Hessischer Rundfunk* (hr), *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk* (mdr), *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* (NDR), *Radio Bremen*, *Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg* (rbb), *Saarländischer Rundfunk* (SR), *Südwestrundfunk* (SWR) and *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* (WDR) [1].

The BR in its current legal form was founded in 1949; the radio station's head office is located in Munich. Currently the BR runs ten different radio channels all over Bavaria, but also provides TV channels and online services [2].

Background. Radio drama and narrative radio shows always played a big role in Germany, and for many broadcasting stations, they still do.

The public news medium radio has a complex and particularly historically relevant background in Germany, because of how closely it is tied to the National Socialism's past. Radio was one of the most important mediums for Hitler's propaganda before and during the Second World War. The Nazis used it to spread their nationalist ideas and therefore pushed the mass production of home radios [3]. Due to this accessibility, the radio remained the primary source of news and entertainment in the post-war period.

Moreover, there was a great need for cultural backlog among the population. Many theaters were destroyed in the Second World War and even if the publishing production has started up again after the war, many people did not have enough money to buy books. Therefore, they fell back on radios as a form of entertainment and especially radio dramas got more and more popular [4].

To reflect on the nationalist past, it then became an important space to spread democratic ideas throughout the 1950s [3]. Some of the first radio dramas back in those years are the best example for that. There is for instance the author Alfred Andersch, who wrote many radio dramas for the *Bayerischer Rundfunk*. His first radio drama *Biologie und Tennis* (Biology and Tennis) from 1951 deals with the question of moral in times of resistance and complicity in the Nazi dictatorship. Other authors that wrote pieces in the first years since the founding of the BR are for example Leopold Ahlsen with *Die Zeit und der Herr Adular Lehmann* (The time and Mr. Adular Lehmann, 1951, *Bayerischer Rundfunk*) or *Nicki und das Paradies in Gelb* (Nicki and the paradise in yellow, 1952, *Bayerischer Rundfunk*). Also for example Friedrich Dürrenmatt with *Romulus der Große* (Romulus the Great, 1951, *Bayerischer*

Rundfunk) or *Der Prozeß um des Esels Schatten* (The process of the donkey's shadow, 1952, *Bayerischer Rundfunk*) [4].

Broadcasting fees. One of the most significant aspects in the federal structure of broadcasting systems in Germany is the sponsorship of the state, which also resulted from the post-war era where the radio was rebuilt as an independent news medium for the public [3]. This allows it to still form and spread democratic and liberal ideas until today.

The financing of the public service broadcasting is a unique way to ensure an independent, unbiased and trustworthy reporting without any influence of the state. It is not included in taxes but through broadcasting fees that are directly paid by every citizen, the so called *Rundfunkgebühren* [5].

Radio Drama at Bayern 2. Especially the radio station Bayern 2 is known for producing complex audio formats and radio dramas at the BR. Nowadays one can find numerous different genres, radio dramas and other productions on the website of the radio station. They have a large archive of new and old radio dramas that is publicly available (see more on the website of Bayern 2 [6]).

Furthermore, they have an own podcast series, which is called the *Hörspiel Pool* (radio drama pool). It includes numerous radio dramas and something they call media art in all different genres: literature, documentary, pop culture, crime or sound art [7].

Case study. In the followings I present one of the radio dramas from *Bayerischer Rundfunk* in detail. For this, I chose the piece *Die, die besser sind als wir* (Those who are better than us) by Ayeda Alavie.

Alavie is an Iranian author, poet and translator who has lived in Germany since 2000. In her home country she has written and illustrated numerous literary texts for children and young people. She studies German linguistics, modern German literature and European ethnology [8].

Her piece *Die, die besser sind als wir* was broadcasted on the 28th of August 2022 and can be found in the archive of the podcast series *Hörspiel Pool* of Bayern 2 [9].

The radio drama tells the story of a little girl and her mother who are seeking refuge in a women's shelter after they were abused and traumatised by the mother's partner. Haunted by nightmares they try to find peace and safety in their new home, but the little girl wishes nothing more than to become invisible. Even though her wishes are not granted, she realizes that she is not alone with her traumatic past and that other's in the shelter have experienced similarly bad things.



Fig. 1.: «Die, die besser sind als wir». Cover photo.
<https://www.br.de/mediathek/podcast/hoerspiel-pool/die-die-besser-sind-als-wir-von-ayeda-alavie/1861159>

The whole drama is told from the perspective of a child and shows her wishes, her fears and how abuse is affecting a child's perception of the world. For that the producer of the radio drama uses a combination of speech and sounds – on the one hand the inner monologue of the child, on the other hand conversation between her and other people around her. The narration includes many metaphors that first seem to be childish stories but show much more depth if you contrast them with the abusive past of the little girl.

Even if the child cannot seem to understand a lot of things that happened to her and her mother, and her story is told in her personal, naïve kind of way, the narrative is extremely intriguing.

In my opinion, the radio drama tackles the terrible subject of abuse of women and children in a very loving way. It gives a (fictional) child a voice to talk about such a heavy topic, which is particularly important because these children rarely get a voice and an opportunity to speak up.

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RADIO DRAMA IN BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG AND RHEINLAND-PFALZ, GERMANY.

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Introduction. The medium of radio broadcasting underwent a myriad of transformations in the past decades since its inception. From the different socio-political turmoil in the 20th century to the cultural shift to visual mass-media in the form of TV. Yet, despite its more niche existence in today's highly digital age of streaming it remained a medium with unique characteristics in the way it conveys information and the rich culture that surrounds it. The following abstract reports on and gives an overview on the history and current state of radio drama culture in Germany with a special focus on the public radio station SWR, which covers the south-western regions Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Pfalz. Furthermore, I would like to specify on the example of the SWR production “*Der Termin*” (Volckmer, 2022) in a case study of the recent critically acclaimed radio drama.

The structure of public radio. Since the SWR – an abbreviation that translates to south-western-broadcasting – is a tax-funded public radio station, it is part of the Federal Union of Public Broadcasting of Germany called ARD that consists of all nine major public broadcasting stations of the country. The SWR was established and started operating in 1998 after the fusion of Süddeutscher Rundfunk (SDR) and Südwestfunk (SWF) to determine redundancies in their broadcasting programs due to their overlapping territories. These former stations started their broadcasting after World War II for the American and French occupied zones. Because of this unification the SWR today is the second largest public radios as it operates three broadcasting stations in Baden-Baden, Mainz, and Stuttgart, along ten smaller studios which are located in other major cities of the regions for example Freiburg, Karlsruhe or Tübingen. Twenty additional regional bureaus distributed all over the territory contribute to the broadcasting of independent content for the broader public, as well as the coverage of regional matters and special interests. In doing so, the station focusses on the distribution of information, education, advice, entertainment, and cultural topics. As previously mentioned, the SWR is funded through the payment of the broadcasting license fees and thereby able to operate without their independence being compromised by any external influence. In the station supporting the free and democratic formation and distribution of opinion and speech, they follow the SWR Interstate Treaty that binds them to the diversity of opinions they render as they represent the interest of the broader public. This mechanism is secured by committees that regularly check the stations compliance with their own principles. To

cover the broad area of subjects their content is split over different sub-programs of which each has a distinctive thematic focus. Named numerically from one to four, with the additional youth centered program *DASDING*, the TV-station *SWR Fernsehen*, and seven more specific programs from sports to purely classical music and science, the programs offer a huge variety of topics. To this abstract most relevant and worth pointing out is most popular public radio station in Germany that is *SWR3*. Due to its popularity it attends to a more general subject area to reach as many listeners as possible in their everyday lives with pop music, comedy, information, weather as well as traffic news. On the other side of this spectrum is the highly specified program of *SWR2*. The programming specializes on more sophisticated music like classic and jazz, the broadcasting of cultural matters, current topics, knowledge, concerts and spoken programs like essays, cabaret, and radio dramas. [1] Due to its specific character and smaller number of listeners the program suffered the biggest budget cuts and lost almost 25% of its funding from 2010 to 2020. [2]

Subsequent to this brief overview of the current state of public radio in this region and the availability of radio dramas in it, I would like to give an insight into the previous history and dive deeper into the topic of radio dramas in Germany itself.

Radio dramas - history. The first radio drama in the country's history was broadcasted on October 24th 1924 and called “*Zauberei auf dem Sender*” (Magic on the Broadcast). It was written and conducted by *Hans Flesch* the then artistic director of the *Südwestdeutschen Rundfunkdienst AG (SÜWRAG)* who established himself as a reformist by his forward thinking and progressive understanding of the medium and conceptualizing the idea of Montage before it was technically possible to edit recording tape. The initial broadcasting startled listeners and critics alike and made a lasting impression on the public as they were unfamiliar with the previously unheard and unannounced presentation of sound. [3] In the following years the medium slowly evolved and the production of radio dramas increased as the listening behavior of the public adapted. During the times of the NS regime and World War II the production of radio dramas shifted to a new purpose: the broadcast of propaganda. [4] With the economic growth and prosperity in the 1950s production increased to new highs and so did the popularity of radio dramas. The next decades were shaped by steady popularity and discussion of the medium by critics, in literature, and academia. The technical possibility of sale in form of cassette tapes and the

start of serial radio dramas like a production of Umberto Eco's "Il nome della rosa" the Bavarian Broadcast (BR) in 1986 expanded the range of the sonic art form. Another example for serial radio drama production is the still ongoing non-public radio series "Die Drei ???" that started in 1979. The story follows three teenage boys solving crime cases and had a big cultural impact on the generation spanning audience.

Radio dramas today. Nowadays, as previously discussed on the example of SWR, the broadcasting of radio dramas has almost completely vanished from popular mainstream stations and can solely be found on more special interest programming like SWR2. The audience of these stations merely make out two to three percent of the steadily declining audience in Germany. Moreover, the broadcast of radio dramas on stations like SWR2 takes place only on slots with low ratings like nightly hours or on weekends. Despite these negative developments happening synchronized to the rise of the digital age, there are still around 640 new productions being made every year as of 2019. This number only slightly decreased compared to the 750 productions in 1999. With the change to streaming and less people following linear listening habits, it became more and more common for public broadcasting stations to digitalize their radio drama productions and make it publicly accessible by offering them on their websites. As of 2022 all productions funded by broadcasting license fees, as well as archives, can be found on the responsible station's websites. This applies to SWR as well as all their counterparts in other regions of the broadcasting union. This databank is centralized on the website of ARD and free to download. [5] [6] In addition to that, the ARD established the German radio drama award (*Deutscher Hörspielpreis der ARD*) in 2006, which takes place annually in November and celebrates German radio drama culture. The price of 5000€ is awarded to the best radio drama by an independent jury consisting of five persons. In 2016 there was a category for best voice actor added. [7]

Case study: Der Termin. The winner of the 2022 edition of the German radio drama award was the SWR production "Der Termin". Based on a novel written by Katharina Volckmer in English language under the title "The Appointment" it was translated to German by Milena Adam and directed by Rebekka David in 2022. The small cast of voice actors consists of Hannah Schutsch, Tilman Strauß, Franziska Machens, Dor Aloni and Camill Jammal. Because of the daring way the book tackled certain topics, Volckmer temporarily had problems finding a publishing agency in Germany.

The radio drama tells the story of a German woman in London visiting a plastic surgeon of Jewish descent called Dr. Seligmann. While in his doctor's office a dreamlike, meandering inner monologue

unfolds, split between different voice actors of all genders and ages, as the female protagonist discusses delicate contemporary topics such as misogyny, sexuality and gender in sometimes provocatively bold language. The nonlinear narrative intertwines themes like her being German and the generational guilt that comes along with that with the topic of transition, which the woman yearns for. It is a fast-paced, grotesque, funny stream of consciousness challenges the listeners with its radical depiction of current discussions and experimental structure that only lets the viewer see the real story in the sub-text of the ruthlessly honest thoughts of the protagonist. [8]

Conclusion. It could be said that despite radio dramas - and German radio culture in general - faces various difficulties like a declining active audience, it cannot be declined that the medium and the way it is operating inherits an urgent importance in today's age. If topics such as discussed in "Der Termin" have trouble finding a platform to be heard and seen publicly, in fear of financial risk, the tax funded broadcast is still a relevant tool to uphold democratic values and equality in 2022.

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Introduction: Before this paper focuses on the public state radio from the western part of Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia) and its connection to radio drama, it is necessary to examine the general media system and its history. The German media system is embossed by its history.

History of German public broadcasting. The first radio program in Germany was broadcasted in 1923. Due to World War II and the Nazi regime, the Nationalist Socialists took over the whole media system (including the broadcast system) ten years later. The Nazis used the media power to manipulate and instrumentalize the people with their ideology. After World War II, the Allies and their occupation zones shaped the media system. In the Soviet occupation zone, the media supported the system of socialism. Meanwhile, in the three Western occupation zones, the press was seen as a neutral and independent entity. It was intended to act alongside the legislative, executive, and judicial branches as a kind of fourth power in the state – controlling the government, its organs, and authorities. [1:349]

Therefore, Western Allies created a broadcast system with the NWDR (Northwestern Broadcasting) in North Rhine-Westphalia (the British zone), SWF (Southwestern Broadcasting) in South-Western Germany (the French zone), and four stations in the American zone: for Bavaria (BR - Bavarian Broadcasting), Southern Germany (SDR – South German Broadcasting), Hessen (HR – Broadcasting in Hessen), and Bremen (RB – Radio Bremen). Those stations were designed to be independent of the state and the private market. In 1950, these six broadcasters formed the ARD (“Working Group of the Public Service Broadcasters of the Federal Republic of Germany”). The ARD aims to represent the common interests of the new decentralized broadcasting service. Together with the broadcaster ZDF (*Second German Television*) and the nationwide *Deutschlandradio* (Radio Germany), the ARD forms the public broadcasting service. The broadcast system is subject to the requirement of state neutrality and has the mandate to contribute to the free formation of individual and public opinion. [2:103-116] The public broadcasting system’s objective is to contribute to the free formation of individual and public opinion (regulated by the so-called *Rundfunkstaatsvertrag*, “Interstate Broadcasting Treaty”), thereby meeting the democratic, social, and cultural needs of society. The public broadcasting system is obliged to provide a comprehensive overview of what is happening in all major areas of life. To preserve independence, the public broadcast

system is financed by a broadcast contribution (18,36 Euros per month in 2023), which every household in Germany is obligated to pay.

Public radio in North Rhine-Westphalia. Besides the private broadcast system, the public broadcast system forms 21 TV channels and 83 radio stations as an important part of the complex dual media system in Germany. As the biggest broadcaster of the ARD, the WDR (West German Broadcasting) belongs to that system, too. It is the public broadcaster (with radio and TV channels) especially for North Rhine-Westphalia. In 1955, the NWDR was split into NDR (for Northern Germany) and WDR (for Western Germany). Today, the WDR is famous for its various radio and TV programs and its internet presence. Since 1955, the WDR has diversified with various radio programs to cover political, cultural, and pop culture topics. Excluding the 14 web channels, the WDR has six radio programs with different specializations (*Table 1*). [3:26]

Table 1: WDR’s radio programs [4]

Name	specialization
1 LIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Originally the information program of WDR, additionally entertainment, and pop music ○ Special-interest programs, a high proportion of words and a targeted regional focus
WDR 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Combination of news, music, contributions, service, and entertainment ○ 25- to 59-year-old listeners
WDR 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cultural radio, a high proportion of classical music, jazz, word programs ○ No advertising
WDR 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focuses on entertainment ○ Target group of people over 50 years ○ No advertising ○ Oldie and hit music
WDR 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High word content with cultural, scientific, and current focal points ○ Folk, Soul, Chanson, Latin ○ Radio plays, features, service programs, and a program for children
COSMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ International and intercultural radio program ○ Diverse music styles

Radio Drama in Germany: The following part deals with the history of radio dramas in Germany. The history of radio dramas run parallel to the

emergence of today's plural media system and can be taken as a good starting point to understand the still strong demand for radio dramas in Germany.

After the first technical prerequisites for radio broadcasting were created in Germany in October 1917 and after the start of regular broadcasting in October 1923, the first German radio play was produced one year later. In general, radio stations in Europe expanded to play with the new technical possibilities – for example, the 15th of January 1924 is considered the birth of the first European radio drama “A comedy of danger” by *Richard Hughes*, broadcasted by the BBC. The first German radio play followed on the 24th of October 1924. The play “Zauberei auf dem Sender” (Magic on the Radio Station) by *Hans Flesch* is thus considered the first German radio play and was broadcasted on a Frankfurt radio station. Flesch, who was also the station manager, wrote the drama and made his first attempt to play with the technical realities of the new media. The radio play is about how the original radio operation is disturbed by a fairy tale girl. Hans Flesch's idea is underpinned by dance music, and other acoustic content like numbers that give sounds, which steers the audience into a new listening environment. [5:26-32] (The state media center from Baden-Württemberg offers the audio sample: <https://www.lmz-bw.de/medienbildung/themen-von-a-bis-f/audio-arbeit/hoerspiel/zauberei-auf-dem-sender/>.)

The first play by Hans Flesch laid the foundation stone in the history of radio dramas – the years 1929 to 1932 are seen as the first high point in German radio drama history. Authors such as *Hans Bodenstedt*, *Friedrich Bischoff*, and *Walter Ruttmann* are said to have played especially much with the new technical possibilities. Productions by authors such as *Ernst Johannsen*, *Erich Kästner*, *Hermann Kasack*, *Hermann Kesser*, *Friedrich Wolf*, *Walter Benjamin*, and *Bertolt Brecht* served as acoustic models for following plays. [6:207]

After Hitler's seizure of power (1933), in which the media, in particular, were with Hitler's ideology centralized, autonomous radio art suffered, and propagandistic radio plays were developed to spread ideologies. Nationwide plays (for example made by *Wolfgang Möller* or *Heinz Ehrke*) promoted Hitler's ideologies and were particularly influential at the time.

After the liberation of the Allies and their division of the media landscape in 1945, a “Western” and “Eastern” radio play culture first developed with different thematic focuses. While the eastern radio play culture referred to the socialist heritage of the Weimar Republic. The Weimar Republic was the first period of parliamentary democracy in Germany from 1918 to 1933. The western radio play culture was primarily concerned with dealing with the past of nationalism.

At this time, the general radio broadcast, especially the radio drama “offered a unique space to make

and critique its newly democratic culture” – *Caroline Kita* [7]. Radio dramas created space for discussing the past and the future after fascism. Central themes at the time were, for example, the senselessness of war, inner resistance, the relationship to Jews, the guilt-atonement complex, and the identity crisis of the individual. [8:350–360]

For example, the radio play “Eichs Dream” (NWDR, April 19, 1951) is considered the beginning of a special genre, the postwar radio play. In his works, The author draws attention to the complicity of the people in war crimes. *Günther Eich* is also seen in literature as a referent for the general development of German radio drama. The subsequent 1950s in Germany were especially portrayed as the golden decade of radio drama. During the 1950s, radio remained the primary source of news and entertainment, and before people could afford televisions, more than 500 radio plays were in general released between 1945 and 1960. During this time genres such as melodramas and crime and suspense serials were very popular. Especially after 1945 the radio play landscape has evolved so that today you can find a wide range of different productions today, such as explained in the following.

In summary, radio dramas offered a “discursive realm for Germans [...] to confront the past and imagine the future after fascism”. [7]

Special Genres and Access to Radio Dramas:

Despite the establishment of new media, the radio play landscape has evolved a lot. Also, the WDR produces on its different stations more than over hundreds of radio plays. These now play less in the regular broadcasting time but are rather online in a large and modern radio play repository to find: <https://www1.wdr.de/radio/hoerspiel/index.html>.

These repositories present thousands of various radio plays in several categories such as fantasy, (true) crime, radio drama, history, and stories for a different audience.

Each radio station is still producing and publishing new radio dramas such as “Kommando Gleichstrom – Erfolgreiche Band testet Zeitreisen”, which will be explained in detail in the following part.

Exemplifying Radio Drama: To offer a profound view into German radio dramas, the following part presents and analyzes one of the broadcasting productions, namely “Kommando Gleichstrom - unsuccessful band tests time travel”. As the name reveals, the play is about an unsuccessful band who uses time travel to send their demo tape in past decades. They want to become famous but accidentally change the total world order. Thus, it belongs to the genre of Sci Fi satire, and it shows. That radio drama was produced by *Veit König* for WDR 3, one of the radio stations in North Rhine-Westphalia. The play is about 50 minutes long. Also, one can still access it in the online media center. [9] First, it aired on the 12th of

December 2017 on WDR 3. The radio channel 1Live repeated it two hours later the same day, but also once in 2019 and 2022. The fact that radio stations play it despite being five years old indicates that its plot seems timeless.

Summary: What happens in the radio drama is that the three students, namely Jo, Doc, and Eddie, found a band called “Kommando Gleichstrom”. They do not have any success, which they blame on the time they live in. They think they would have been much more famous if they lived in the 1990s. The band approaches a professor at their university who devotes himself to time traveling. They use time travel with the help of an instrument to change the past – but since one can only go back, not forth, sending a human through time would be too dangerous. So, they sent their demo tape into the 1990s to make them famous, but that did not work out. Frustrated due to the foil, the band sends its demo tape to the 1980s. Back then, one found their tape but hated their music so much that one considered electronic music pointless and awful. Since they could not change it back to the original state, the three students sent their tape to the 1970s, resulting in a total catastrophe: Electronic music was forbidden and even punished with the death penalty. Consequently, the band decides to send their demo tape to the 1960s, hoping for the better. Indeed, that travel through time makes them the most successful band in a world with only peace, no diseases, and no nuclear weapons – but no music genre except for one called “pep”. The band hates what they hear because they miss the fun that music is supposed to present for them and wonder if their original life has been the best-case scenario possible. The only option that is left for them is to travel to the center of time and regain normality. Eventually, everything turned – more or less – back to normal. They ended the band because all the incidents opened their eyes that they are not good enough as musicians.

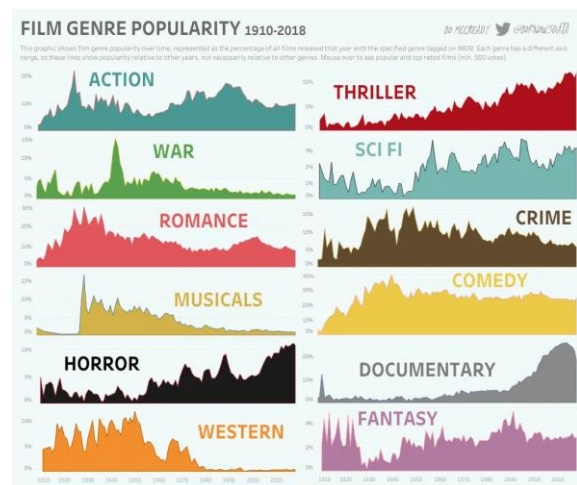
Analysis: It remains the question of what makes “Kommando Gleichstrom” so special and suitable for a radio drama. The best way to address this question is to examine certain excerpts and analyze them, especially regarding the genre and topic, the focus on audio, and the references to (German) pop culture.

The first aspect to consider is the radio drama’s genre: Sci-Fi satire. Science Fiction has become profoundly popular since the 1960s until today (*Figure 1*) [10]. The figure depicts the percentage of all movies being released that year with the genre specified. Although it refers to people’s preferences for film genres, one can transfer the results to radio drama, too. In “Kommando Gleichstrom”, the Sci-Fi elements rely upon traveling through time – a heavily used motive in pop culture. According to *Cornelius Holtorf*, “time travel has become a widespread desire among both adults and children” [11: 31–41]. Sci Fi, such as

“Kommando Gleichstrom” represents one opportunity to fulfill that desire.

Hereby, it is not only about creating different realities of music but whole different worlds that the band caused by sending their demo tape through time. In the world existing after sending their tape to the 1970s, the world turns into a dystopia. Society accepts cannibalism on humans with low income, physical handicaps, and too low or high intelligence. Plus, the highest goals are to take drugs and have unprotected sex. Many other references resemble the German government and society during the Nazi regime. In contrast, the reality created afterward appears to be utopian. There is no environmental destruction or any other threat to the world or humanity.

Figure 1: Film Genre Popularity [10]



All elements of the different worlds presented are exaggerated, proving the radio play’s satirical character. Its ending is ironic, too. Although the band left the world in which they were successful because they ended up not making the music they liked. Jo eventually reveals he listens to classical music only and does not like pop anymore. Since the radio drama of question combines both Sci-Fi and comedy, it offers the best qualifications to entertain the audience.

What makes the play further suit perfect for a radio drama is its strong focus on sounds. The radio drama starts right in the beginning with the band performing a song – matching the overall topic it is about time. That already hints at what is going to happen. The radio drama focuses on audio both thematically and implemental. One can define sounds as a feature of dynamic processes [12:29]. Accordingly, using proper sounds is what makes the radio play vivid. In “Kommando Gleichstrom”, there are many proper sound effects underlining the plot and conveying a specific atmosphere, which makes it perfect for radio. The topic of musicians using time travel provides the perfect requirements since the story is about sounds already. One example of high audibility takes place in

the very first minutes as the following transcript shows, based on the Jeffersonian Transcription Symbols. [13]

Radio play with Jo (J), Doc (D), Eddie (E), “Kommando Gleichstrom – Erfolgreiche Band testet Zeitreisen. Min: 3:54–4:08. [9]

Original version:

- J: → Wir müssen einfach besser werden
- D: → = Aber genau das können wir eben nicht
- E: → = Wir hätten eben in den Neunzigern leben müssen hhh
- J: → = Was soll das denn heißen?
- E: → = hhh naja für die Neunziger hätte es für uns noch ge↑reicht. Ich mein (.) damals ist auch der letzte ↑Mist noch n Hit geworden
- J: → = Zum ↑Beispiel?

Translated from German:

- J: → We must improve
- D: → = That is exactly what we’re not capable of
- E: → = We should have lived in the 90’s hhh
- J: → = What is that supposed to mean?
- E: → = hhh well in the 90’s it would have been possible even for ↑us. I mean (.) back then even total ↑crap was successful
- J: → = for ↑example?

One of the band members states that they should have lived in the 1990s because back then they would have become famous, too. After this conversation, one can hear different popular songs from the 1990’s playing as examples for the previous statement, about two seconds of each song. These songs are well-chosen as they are giving the listeners flashbacks to past decades and their lives back then.

Although the whole story takes place in the band’s studio, the listeners get an intense feeling of the different and absurd realities that the time travels cause. Because the audio supports the story so well, one does not miss any pictures. However, one of the band members, Jo, functions not only as a character but as a narrator, too. He thus gives information about some observations that the audio cannot transmit, such as what the portal for time travel looks like. Yet, the narrator

does not have to explain often, which marks the impression of supportive audio in the radio drama.

Focusing on the thematic use of music and audio, the “Kommando Gleichstrom” offers loads of references from pop culture. At one point in the play, a radio host presents news about multiple known pop stars, namely *Ed Sheeran, Taylor Swift, and Kanye West*, amongst others. By that, the play gains relatability and links the topic to the real-live audience. Another example of a reference to pop culture is one of the members’ names. Doc’s real name is Roland, however, his nickname refers to Doc Brown from “Back to the Future” because of his interest in science.

Looking closer at the rest of the play, the references to specifically German artists are outstanding. Besides the language, that fact makes the radio play almost exclusively accessible and relatable for Germans. In the dystopian world – after they sent the tape in the 1970s –, the sovereign is *Till Schweiger*, a German actor and director, who protects the country from electronic music. Also, the play brings up *Xavier Naidoo, Dieter Bohlen*, and others. That shows that the play was specifically produced for a German audience. Plus, a lot of puns and expressions originate in the Western German dialect.

Summary: To conclude the analysis of how “Kommando Gleichstrom – Erfolgreiche Band testet Zeitreisen” suits the requirements for a well-made audio drama, it includes many audios, sounds, and references to pop culture. The used sounds support the story and thus match the radio’s demands perfectly. The expressions and pop cultural references are especially related to German artists, which makes the radio play accessible and relatable for the Western German target audience. Overall, one can consider “Kommando Gleichstrom” as representative of the German radio drama landscape.

Summary: German radio drama has a turbulent history, starting in 1923 with the first radio program. Broadcasting services have been instrumentalized by the Nazis before the Allies found the basis for what Germans know today. In North Rhine-Westphalia, public radio broadcasting is called WDR and is in turn composed of many different channels.

The rich landscape in broadcasting results in a wide variety of radio dramas, too, which one can easily access online. One of them that was produced for WDR3 is called “Kommando Gleichstrom – Erfolgreiche Band testet Zeitreisen”. Hereby, one can see a profound focus on sounds and references to (German) pop culture.

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