

RECORDING THE PARLIAMENT PROJECT

Executive Summary

1. In late 2010, a composer and a sound artist approached Tricia Marwick MSP with a proposal for a project involving the participation of members of the public, Members and staff to create a sound-based artwork. Following discussions initial meetings were held with the artists, with a developed proposal then submitted by the artists for consideration.
2. This Paper outlines the aims of the project, and seeks the SPCB's decision on whether to facilitate the project providing the minimal funding required that will enable the artists to seek grants for the project.
3. It is noted that the project would complement programming for the Year of Creative Scotland 2012 and could be launched during the 2012 Festival of Politics.

Issues and options

4. A full outline of the artists' proposal is provided at the Annex. In summary, the artists - Pippa Murphy, composer and Zoe Irvine, sound artist - wish to work with a cross-section of members of the public, Members, their staff, SPCB staff and contractors, to record the voices, activities and discussions that take place in Parliament.
5. The final artwork would likely take the form of a performance, with a working title of *Promenade Performance*, and possibly also a CD.
6. The artists propose to facilitate Members and staff participation in the project by delivering around nine lunch-time drop-in sessions. The artists would also deliver a number of sessions for public audiences and could deliver some targeted sessions for schools and groups with disabilities. The workshops would aim to get participants involved in making and listening to recordings for the project. As follow-up, the artists may also request access to debates, committee meetings, or other areas of the building to record material for the project.
7. The final performance would involve the playing of pieces recorded during workshops, and a tour of the building with recordings played at various points in the building. It would also have a 'live' element with further recordings taking place during the performance. Performances would be delivered both to public and internal audiences.

8. It is an innovative proposal from two artists to use the Parliament as the subject of a new artwork; this is a good model for how institutions can collaborate with artists in the making of new artworks.
9. Participation in the making of this artwork would provide an opportunity for members of the public to experience the day-to-day role of the Parliament in a creative way and participate in exploring and documenting aspects of the institution.
10. It would engage with a wide cross-section of the Parliament campus as it would involve Members, their staff, SPCB staff and contractors. Informal feedback from previous opportunities for Members and staff to get involved with art or literature projects has been very positive.
11. There would be an opportunity to showcase the final work, for example as a performance during the 2013 Festival of Politics. While there are no resources to support a publication plus CD, the artists are looking to self-finance the production of a CD, copies of which could be retailed in the Parliament Shop. We would also explore with the artists whether the final output could be exhibited as part of any future touring exhibitions as an interactive audio piece.
12. The artists have advised they are not looking to record private conversations or to make public sensitive committee discussions. They would take advice from clerks and parliament officials at every stage of the project on these considerations and would be looking to record ambient voices and fragments of discussions only, not individual or entire conversations. We have already consulted with a number of offices across the Parliament with positive response from all about the project but following the SPCB's approval would consult further to discuss the issues around providing any access to debates and committee meetings and ensure the artists are appropriately advised.
13. The project workshops and performance would primarily be marketed via the Parliament website and by the artists themselves. These could also be marketed as part of the Festival of Politics Programme. MRO has been consulted on the promotional merits of the project and considers it to have potential for public appeal to audiences with an interest in culture.

Resource Implications

14. The artists are mainly self-financing and propose to seek grants to support the making of the work. They are asking for the Parliament's support in terms of access and staff time, and also for £1,500 financial contribution, equivalent to 10% of the funding they are seeking from Creative Scotland (due to regulations for Creative Scotland funding which require a financial commitment from the partner or host organisation). These costs can be met from budgets already allocated to art and exhibitions.

Recommendation

15. We are seeking the SPCB's consideration and decision on whether to support this project. The project would provide a unique opportunity for members of the public, Members, their staff, SPCB staff and contractors to engage with an art project and demonstrate the Parliament's support for creativity during the Year of Creative Scotland.

Publication Scheme

16. This Paper may be published once a decision has been taken by the SPCB and communicated to the artists.

Next steps

17. If the SPCB approves this project we would consult further with parliamentary offices to discuss the issues around providing access to debates and committee meetings, advising the artists appropriately.
18. We would then develop a work programme for the artists to visit the Parliament to take forward the project. We would also invite Members, their staff, SPCB staff and contractors to participate in this project through the weekly Events and Exhibitions Bulletin, emails and the Corporate Bulletin.
19. Workshops will be held during lunch periods, 12.00 – 14.00, on different days of the week, giving as many Members, their staff, SPCB staff and contractors the opportunity to participate in their own time. For any follow-up recording sessions, we would advise staff to seek permission from their line managers or Group heads.
20. Once the project is completed, we would support the organisation of a performance as part of the 2013 Festival of Politics; explore retail possibilities with the Parliament Shop if CD produced; and consider whether the work should be acquired or used in any future exhibitions following discussions with the SPCB accordingly

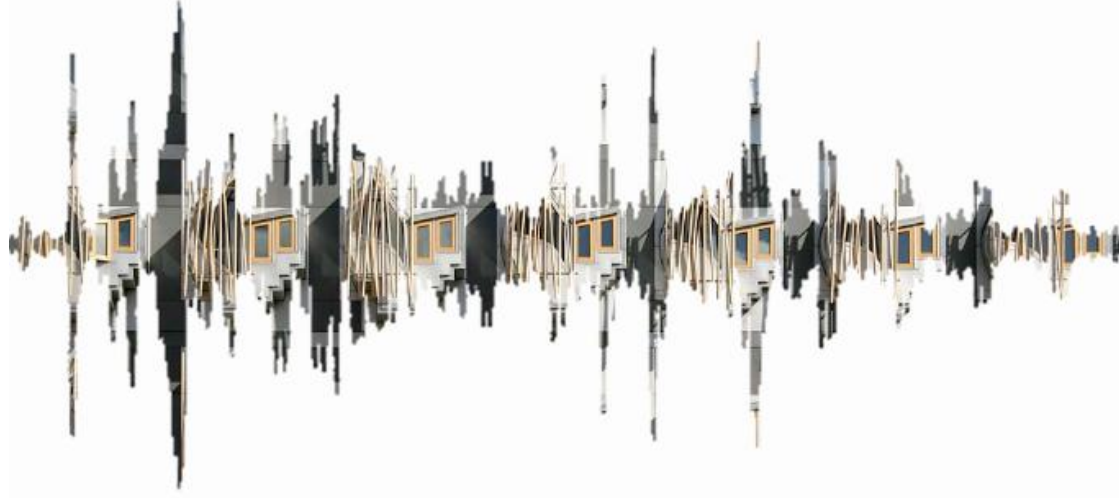
Decision

21. The SPCB is invited to consider whether to support this unique project and support with staff resources and a budget of £1,500.

EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS TEAM

March 2012

Artists' Proposal: Recording the Parliament
Zoe Irvine and Pippa Murphy



Parliament, a place of work.

An audio snapshot of the activities within the Scottish Parliament by Zoë Irvine & Pippa Murphy.

Introduction to the proposal:

We would like to propose to make an audio work that explores the voices, discussions and activities that happen within the Scottish Parliament building. We wish to include, but go beyond the Parliamentary debate, the Committee meeting, for example we would like to record and work with the cleaners, the crèche staff, the canteen workers, the Holyrood TV broadcast team, the transcribers, the researchers, the accountants, the security guards, the advisors, the managers, receptionists, tour guides, visitors and many people we don't yet know of.

Pippa Murphy is a composer with a background in music and Zoë Irvine is a sound artist with a visual arts background. Both Zoë and Pippa have independently discovered the Parliament as a welcoming place to go with their new babies. One day they bumped into each other and began to share their curiosity about the building and all the activities within it. The tour was not enough to satisfy this curiosity.

We envisage the work being a performance, perhaps a CD release and/or an installation.

Content for all recordings and edited material that we make to be available and approved by the Parliament.

Creative ideas behind the work and working process:

We wish to approach the Scottish Parliament building as a subject and a collaborator (made up of many collaborators), listening to it and the processes within and working with sound recordings. Artistically we aim to combine ideas of sonic and musical aesthetics on the one hand and documentary and cultural analysis on the other.

The following questions serve as starting points:

- How might an art project intervene in a working Parliament?
- How might the working processes in the Parliament already constitute aesthetic forms?
- What can we learn about the Parliament, the space it inhabits and the social relations within it by listening and working with sound?
- What can we learn about Scotland by listening to this cross-section of dialogue and the architecture it takes place in?
- And what can Scotland learn about its Parliament from the very same process?

The work that we propose is as much about the process of its making, that is, our intervention by listening, conversing, making recordings and working with that material, as the outcome of a final completed work. In fact, although we will make a completed work for release, we will also keep the work open for change, remix and reconfiguration in performance and installation forms. We would like to make the original recordings available for the participants and listeners, subject to consent from all participants.

Taking part in this project could give participants new ears for their workplace and the other people and activities within it. For us being able to work musically with the recordings, as opposed to making reportage, will mean that unexpected combinations occur and new connections and serendipities may become apparent. Perhaps there are ideas that span many different type of activity within the building? Perhaps there are voices that chime with one another despite great differences in work and activity? We cannot know until we are actually doing this. So we hope and anticipate that welcoming our working process as artists into the building will be interesting and stimulating to those working there we also imagine that our recordings and work will find a wide ranging audience with people not related to the Parliament.

It is not our aim as artists to represent any political claims or to embody any particular politics.

We are interested in the processes, the working, the dialogue, the flow of conversation within the building and what we can learn and share by recording sound and composing this material into new constellations. We hope that our work will be engaging and playful. It will in no way exploit the participants.

What we are offering the Scottish Parliament:

- The opportunity to host an exciting art project which will explore the Parliament as a place of work and engage people who work within the building to consider their work place and the other workers within it.
- With this small time commitment from a diverse range of people who work in the building we will be able to create a portrait in sound, which may open participants' ears to their work place and colleagues.
- All participants will be credited and invited to attend the performance of the completed work.
- In a wider sense it will allow members of the public to engage with the Parliament and its processes in an unusual and exciting way.
- In addition to the completed composition, we will make available all the recorded conversations made for the project as an oral history archive about the Parliament as a working environment at this time.

What we are asking from The Scottish Parliament:

- A period as artists in residence with the Parliament in which we can research, propose a recording schedule and carry out ambient and conversational recordings.
- Introduction and permission to invite different people who work in the Parliament to participate in the project by recording a conversation about their work, working process and place of work.
- Access to areas around the Parliament in order to make ambient recordings.
- Hosting and promotion of a public performance of the finished work within the building and/or hosting an installation of the work within the building.
- We would like to retain the right to tour the work to other venues and make broadcasts of work made from the recordings.
- Written support from the Parliament when making funding applications to support this project.

Information about the artists

Zoë Irvine has worked with sound as her principal artistic medium since 1997. She has exhibited, broadcast and performed internationally. In 2004 she won a Creative Scotland Award to make the first edition of DIAL-A-DIVA, a 24 hour global telephonic singing event. Recent work includes “Dancing on the Stairs” a film about exile created for the first show of sound art in Cairo (2009) and Magnetic Migration Music (1997-2010) an ongoing project collecting and working with fragments of cassette tape found in the environment. Zoë also works on installations, broadcasts, CD releases and performances as well as working as a sound designer for film and television and lecturing in sound art at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design in Dundee. More details about her work can be found at www.zoeirvine.net.

Pippa Murphy, a composer of instrumental and digital music Pippa has written music for BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 3, Scottish Flute Ensemble, Paragon Ensemble, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Sonic Arts Network and numerous contemporary theatre companies including Tron Theatre, Traverse Theatre Company, 7:84. Pippa has trained teachers in Scotland, Syria, Vietnam and China with the British Council. She has taught at Edinburgh and Aberdeen University and composed with asylum seekers in Glasgow, Manchester and Edinburgh. She completed her BMus, MA and PhD in composition at Birmingham University and has written for Whitakers Almanac, Sunday Times and The Scotsman.