

City Beat

by Stacey Recht

Paul Schuette, a grad student in composition at UC's College-Conservatory of Music, assembled a cast of almost two dozen fellow music students to perform *Music for Newspapers and Radios* (Media Bridges, 100 Race St.), his nonlinear, multimedia program of performance, video, projection, spoken word and broadcast sounds.

Schuette built the entire program around one important work: famous 20th-century avant-garde composer John Cage's 1956 "Radio Music," an eight-part composition played entirely on radios, whose "players" tune the transmitters and incorporate whatever hits the airwaves into the performance. Cage's work is one of five compositions in the program that weave in and out of each other.

The performers — radio tuners, a string quartet, a group with a guitar, electric piano, small drum kit and a sine tone generator and newspaper readers — overwhelm the stage and spill into the audience. This placement is out of necessity in the Media Bridges space, but Schuette uses the inconvenience of too-many-performers-not-enough-stage to his advantage by dispersing Cage's composition throughout the theater.

Unfortunately, in the small Media Bridges black box, the performers naturally outnumber the audience, making an already non-narrative and non-melodic work seem self-indulgent. But this is Fringe, and therefore we gleefully indulge indulgences.

"Tomorrow?" is Schuette's own 2003 composition, an inherently contemporary and localized composition, similar to "Radio Music." Four newspaper readers pace the stage and the awkward diagonal "aisle" of the space, reading aloud and in unison separate sections from a newspaper printed on the day and in the city of the performance, imbuing it with transience and attaching it to geography.

A string quartet plays Schuette's 2005 composition, "... no news is good news," a piece in graphic notation spliced onto a week's worth of *New York Times* front

pages from April 2005. The pages and notations are projected on a screen, whose unfortunate position far offstage divides the audience's attention.

Still, it is interesting to "read" the music as Schuette has sketched it. The musicians have great flexibility in interpretation, and each adds his or her own flourishes and idiosyncrasies. As they play, each shouts out select words ("Republicans!" "Iraq!" "North Korea!" "Attacks!") from the *Times* pages, reminding the listener how closely connected the piece is to newsworthiness. The shouting and the dissonance of the music make the words feel incendiary, like sparks flying up from a roaring blaze.

In "Media Counterpart," Schuette turns his focus to a catastrophic near future or perhaps a nostalgia for the imagined apocalypses of the nuclear arms race era. A guitarist uses an electronic bow and another musician plays a sine tone generator and incorporates radio static in this eerie, abstract electronic composition, calling to my mind abandoned landscapes dotted with destruction, desolation and war machines.

In Cage's "Radio Music," the listener strains and struggles to identify meaning among the hisses, cracks and whistles, experiencing the tiny victories and defeats of grasping at some elusive communiqué before it dissolves again into the fuzzy signal interference between stations.

What ties Schuette's and Cage's pieces together is the pull and push of white noise and discernable meaning. This pattern — content and static, content and static — provides both the structure of the program and defines the experience for the audience.

Content broken and scattered among abstraction makes the audience feel uneasy and anxious during the 60 minutes. This will not be an easy hour spent for the Fringe-goer seeking the quirky narrative storytelling characteristic of many Fringe shows. But Schuette's work grants an attentive, open-minded audience member the time, space and freedom to loosen the imagination while paying close attention to the anxiety that is the personal toll of our geopolitical discord.

Cincinnati Enquirer

by Joseph McDonough

'Music for Newspapers and Radios'

UC College-Conservatory of Music doctoral candidate Paul Schuette has assembled this intriguing concert of experimental musical pieces.

The compositions include Schuette's own "Media Counterpoint," "... no news is good news," and "Tomorrow?" as well as "Radio Music" and "Water Walk" from famed avant-garde composer John Cage.

The sounds in each of these works are made by actors intoning from the day's newspaper, snippets of sounds from live radio broadcasts, as well as traditional instruments (particularly a string quartet) used in nontraditional ways.

Each performance of "Music for Newspapers and Radios" is different because the contents and evocative nuances of each day's newspaper and of each evening's Cincinnati radio broadcasts are never the same.

Kudos to Schuette for assembling and directing a fine company of over a dozen committed, well-rehearsed musicians, actors and radio operators who fill Media Bridge's tiny stage.

Behind the Curtain

MUSIC FOR NEWSPAPERS AND RADIOS as part of the 2011 Cincinnati Fringe Festival. You can read the show description [here](#).

One of the best things about attending the Fringe Festival is the opportunity to experience works outside your experience or comfort zone. MUSIC FOR NEWSPAPERS AND RADIOS was my first exposure to experimental music and to be honest, I can't say that I enjoyed it.

That statement is by no means a reflection on the composers or musicians. I have no intention of trying to review this performance as I don't have the knowledge or experience to speak with any authority about the medium.

The Examiner

by Richard O Jones

Believe it or not, "Music for Newspaper and Radios" is exactly what the title proclaims it to be.

It's a concept that makes the performance as fresh as the morning newspaper. Indeed, it starts out with an ensemble of actors reading from, well, the morning newspaper, all at the same time, and in motion, not following a narrative specific thematic line.

Then a string quartet starts to play, if you can call it that. Yes, you should call it exactly that: Playing. Their score is projected onto a screen for you to follow along if you dare, and rather than a conventional staff, it seems to be a series of squiggles and dots on a ribbon of paper and pasted to the front page of the New York Times. They don't play notes so much as they evoke a variety of sounds, some pleasant, some not so pleasant, as they slap their instruments with the bows, pluck the strings where they're not supposed to be plucked and play seemingly random scratches and tones. While there's an occasional snatch of melody, they do everything with their instruments except drop them on the floor or bonk each other over the head with them, though it sometimes sounds like it. Every once in a while, one of the musicians will say a word that is circled in the projected Times.

The radio part of it, primarily, is a section of the piece where a half-dozen or more performers (it's hard to tell because they're not only on stage, but scattered among the audience) play with various kinds of radios, randomly going from station to station, sometimes landing on a bit of a sports talk show or classic rock. But mostly it's static, white noise and whistles with snatches of recognizable human sounds.

The nature of this beast, if you haven't figured it out by now, is cacophony, the constant noise of our popular culture. So much noise that meaning or enlightenment is always and only fleeting.

"Music for Newspapers and Radios" is a creation of Paul Schuette and musicians from the College-Conservatory of Music.

Bottom line: Not recommended for those prone to anxiousness or those who need a clear narrative thread. Somewhat recommended for those with a taste for the avant garde.

I quite enjoyed it, but my companion, not so much.

"Tedious," she said.