



EBU Master School on Radio Features

Long-term training
January 2008 – January 2009



“For the past four years, each International Features Conference has included the presentation of work made by students from the EBU Master School (MS). These have definitely been among the highlights of each IFC (International Features Conference). The energy within the EBU Master School program is contagious; the students’ accomplishments have been outstanding. It seems that the very future of European radio storytelling is bolstered by the wisdom and experience gained through the MS program, and greatly strengthened by the regular collaborations between veteran and emerging producers.

I’ve come away from each IFC wishing deeply for something like the EBU Master School in the US, (...)

The EBU (...) started the Master School training course (managed by Nathalie Labourdette and Edwin Brys) four years ago with distinct goals in mind - to cultivate the next generation of European radio feature makers, to embrace changing technologies and format developments, and to support the creative evolution of the medium, while teaching the basics and celebrating the traditions of the radio feature form. To date the EBU Master School has worked with nearly fifty young producers who have each designed and completed a radio feature of their own choosing. (...)

Extract from an article written by Third Coast Festival Artistic Director Julie Shapiro



The EBU School of Talent

The EBU Master School on Radio Features is a long-term training dedicated to young radio producers who want to improve their skills, tools and techniques in audio programming. They design and produce a radio feature under the personal coaching of experienced documentary producers.

During 10 months, they learn to master a complex range of competences, tools and techniques in audio programming (research, storytelling, sound, music, recording, interviewing, distribution, promotion).

The Master School covers the most critical aspects of radio feature genre in order to develop creative and innovative audio programmes. The young producers strengthen their self-confidence by acquiring better methods and richer ways in the audio production.

The EBU Master School creates a dynamic network between Radio stations and builds bridges between generations of producers. Trainees become part of an international class. They exchange ideas and approaches while benefiting from the richness of cultural differences.



2008 – 2009 Programme

Stage 1 – On-line coaching

From 1 February to 8 March 2008 (6 weeks)

Stage 2 – Master course I

RBB, Berlin, 9-12 March 2008 (4 days on site)

Stage 3 – Homework & On-line coaching

15 March – 21 June 2008 (3 months)

Stage 4 – Master course II

VRT, Brussels, 22-24 June 2008 (3 days on site)

Stage 5 – On-line coaching

From June to October 2008 (3 months)

Stage 6 – Final editing

Deadline: 15 December 2008

Stage 7 – Final Production & submission to EBU TRAINING

Deadline: January 2009

EBU Master School presented at the 35th International Features Conference (IFC), Dublin, 9 - 14 May 2009, the work produced by the Trainees together with the CD-rom produced by EBU TRAINING.

For the 4th edition of the Master School, 14 candidates were selected out of 45 from 18 different countries.

Ten months of professional coaching

Each Trainee worked closely for a year with an accomplished radio programme maker and coach: Helmut Kopetzky, freelance (Germany), Lisbeth Jessen, DR (Denmark), Annick Lesage, VRT (Belgium), Stephen Erickson, freelance (Germany), and Edwin Brys, VRT (Belgium).



Master course 1 – “Themes, Topics & Storytelling” 9-12 March 2008, Radio Berlin Brandenburg, Berlin

The 14 Trainees met for a 4-day Mastercourse to review the main skills and competencies that are needed to make a feature: dramaturgy, storytelling, music, interview, recordings.

As many as ten speakers contributed to the Mastecourse, with a special highlight on features for young people (with Leslie Rosin, WDR3 and Isabel Plathaus, 1LIVE-WDR, Germany) and Pitching! (with Lisbeth Jessen, DR, Denmark).



What participants said about the Berlin Master course:

- “These days have been a reminder of why I did choose this field. The lust for it. It’s been an inspiration, a wake up call. Like the world is big again. It’s smelly, sunny, difficult, touching. (...) Stop, re-think and fuel yourself with stories, sound scapes & discussions. And of course to be a part of a passionate group & to see the sparkling eyes of the coaches and their skills.”
- “It’s an inspiring international community; very professional coaches with different focuses and backgrounds.”
- “The course re-energised me and gave me many new creative thoughts. Also I learnt new techniques, especially in interviewing.”
- “Explaining the feature circle, the tension and the focus was most valuable as well as the structure of the feature and individual coaching. It gave me a basic confidence for creating a story with “head and tail” from beginning to the end.”
- “The coaches are really friendly, charming, skilled and know what they are talking about; they brought great examples of features; they inspired me and made me want to work even more in the field of radio features.”





Master course II – Coaching 22-24 June 2008, VRT, Brussels, Belgium

During this mastercourse, the trainees presented their work on their radio feature. A brainstorming session allowed them to get comments from their fellow colleagues and the coaches. They presented a scene and an interview, as well as the main topic of their feature.



What participants said:

about the brainstorming session

- “I think it was very useful and everybody said really good comments and ideas, everybody were so interested and enthusiastic.”
- “It gave me a new look on my topic.”

about the friendly & confidence-building atmosphere

- “Being creative in such an open and friendly environment was incredible - people were critical but always in a constructive way. It was a fabulous learning experience.”

about building up your skills, confidence & motivation

- “It helps to rethink everything you have done, it inspires further motivation, refurbishes your brain.”

A training with impact

The EBU Master School is designed to integrate with the trainees’ professional obligations.

The EBU works in collaboration with the trainees’ supervisors to maximize the impact of the training and promote broadcasting of the documentary produced during the Master School.

All features have been broadcast nationally, and some have even been adapted by other broadcasters.



A close-knit community

As a group, trainees help each other, make important decisions as they learn the ins and outs of radio feature production, and support each other throughout the process.

"... I could easily tell that the EBU Master School candidates had become a close-knit squadron of storytellers, gained invaluable insight into radio and life beyond radio, and formed life-long friendships. I'm certain their connections will remain strong, and the European airwaves will benefit in the long run as well. At the very least we can take great inspiration from their efforts..." wrote Julie Shapiro, TCF Artistic Director

The 2008-09 group even managed to collaborate musically at the end of their collective experience by producing a song.

A musical testament to the relationships fostered by producing radio within a community.



Imagine there's no feature

(Lyrics based on "Imagine" by the Beatles, re-imagined by the 2008-09 EBU Master School participants)

Imagine there's no feature
It's very hard to try
Imagine all the silence
Dead air is a crime
Imagine all the talents
Waiting to be found

It might sound Scandinavian
But it's just my inner wind
Excuse me if I'm being personal

But that's the point of No return

Imagine there's no coaches
No stories to be told
Imagine all the Silence
No mikes to Hold

Imagine all the stories
Waiting to be told...



IFC, Dublin, 9 – 14 May 2009

“The International Features Conference (IFC) is a forum for the lively discussion of ideas with colleagues drawn from all over the world. For a period of five days, we come together to listen to each other’s work; to debate and analyse; to develop our professional skills in a friendly and supportive environment. The long number of years for which the IFC has been convened stands as an eloquent testimony to its value and place in the world of feature making. In addition to listening to programmes from many different countries, there are seminars and plenary sessions on particular aspects of feature making.

The IFC is always on the look-out for new voices, fresh forms and different approaches to the work in which we are all engaged. We particularly welcome newcomers, young and old: journalists, radio producers, radio researchers and, of course documentary/feature makers.(...)”

Adrian Moynes, Managing Director, RTE Radio
Lorelei Harris, Chairperson, EBU Features Group

Edwin Brys and Lisbeth Jessen presented the 2008-2009 EBU Master School after an introduction by Nathalie Labourdette, Head of EBU TRAINING:

“Being in Ireland, a country with so many famous writers should be inspiring for us. I am thinking of Jonathan Swift in particular.(...) Three and a half centuries after it was published, “Gullivers’ Travels” is still famous all over the world. Swift used all styles of storytelling and continues to inspire us today in making successful TV series such as LOST, for example.

Storytelling is very powerful. The EBU Master School was really focused on storytelling (...)

