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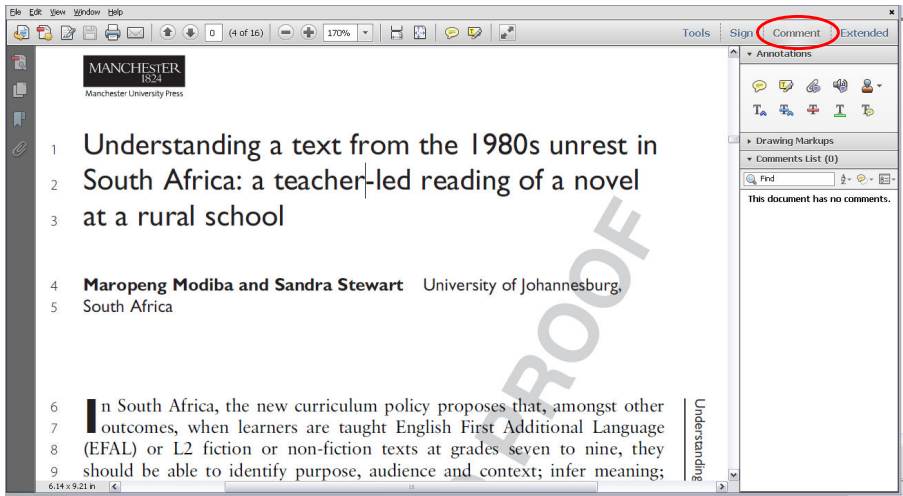
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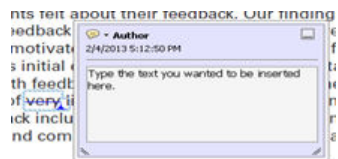
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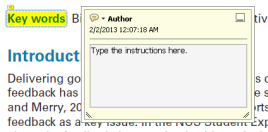
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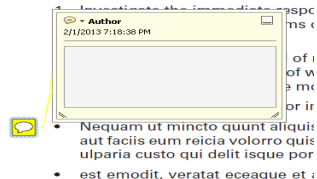
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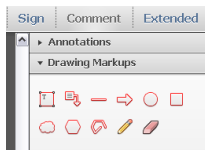
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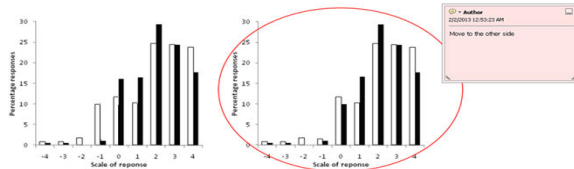


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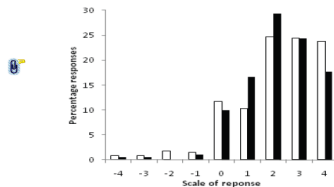
such verbal feedback unless their mark was low (8) to the Department for Innovation, University of... would be made to improve the student experience of the feedback process. Jones *et al.* (2009) show that their experiences at school could affect how they show their own feedback is delivered and authors warn that the expectations of how feedback given the student and the academic who is providing staff have also been shown to share ideas or (2010).

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1 'Way Out – Of This World!'
2 Delia Derbyshire, *Doctor Who* and
3 the British Public's Awareness of
4 Electronic Music in the 1960s

5 *David Butler*

6 **Abstract**

7 The composer and musician Delia Derbyshire (1937–2001) remains most famous
8 for her arrangement and realisation of Ron Grainer's title theme for *Doctor Who*.
9 Yet although providing the theme tune with its distinctive sounds, which would
10 be featured in the programme's titles from 1963 until 1980, Derbyshire provided
11 little else in terms of music for the Doctor's adventures during her time at the
12 BBC Radiophonic Workshop. This article considers the impact of the *Doctor*
13 *Who* theme tune on Derbyshire's career and the interest in electronic music that
14 it generated amongst the British public in the 1960s.

15 **Key words:** Delia Derbyshire, BBC Radiophonic Workshop, *Doctor Who*,
16 (electronic) music, gender, reception

17 One of the recurring discussions throughout the *Doctor Who* (1963–89, 1996,
18 2005–present)¹ fiftieth-anniversary conference held at the University of
19 Hertfordshire in September 2013 was the programme's problematic engagement
20 with gender and the role of women, both in terms of the characters on-screen
21 and the creative personnel behind the camera. Lorna Jowett's keynote, a version
22 of which features elsewhere in this dossier, provided a compelling critique of the
23 Steven Moffat era in particular, and the programme's history as a whole, which
24 features relatively few female practitioners in prominent roles. That overall re-
25 cord is all the more disappointing given the programme's original creative team.
26 With key figures including a Canadian 'creator', female producer (and, at the
27 time, the only female drama producer at the BBC) and a British-Indian director,
28 as well as a title character who was yet to become the recognisable heroic figure
29 celebrated by a global simulcast in November 2013, this original line-up was far

from 'typical' of mainstream British television and society. That atypical quality 30
also applies to the astonishing rendition of the programme's theme music, written 31
by the Australian composer, Ron Grainer, but realised by Delia Derbyshire (1937– 32
2001) at the BBC Radiophonic Workshop with the assistance of Dick Mills. 33

Variations on Derbyshire's remarkable arrangement of Grainer's composition – 34
electronic but with an organic sensuality – would lead in and out of the Doctor's 35
adventures until 1980 and inspire, excite and terrify several generations of viewers, 36
many of whom would grow up to become significant musicians in their own right. 37
Based at the Radiophonic Workshop, from 1962 until 1973, Derbyshire's output 38
during these years, as both a BBC employee and freelance musician, would include 39
collaborations with leading figures in Britain's arts scene, from Peter Hall and the 40
Royal Shakespeare Company to Ted Hughes and Yoko Ono. The result was a dis- 41
tinctive and evocative body of work that contributed to the growing awareness in 42
Britain of the possibilities of electronic music, fusing the popular with the experi- 43
mental. *Doctor Who* looms large in Derbyshire's career and yet, beyond the theme 44
tune, her work was seldom featured in the series. Douglas Camfield used two of 45
her most distinctive compositions—'The Delian Mode' and 'Blue Veils and Golden 46
Sands'—as 'stock music' in the Jon Pertwee *Doctor Who* story 'Inferno' (1970), and 47
in 1967, Derbyshire would arrange Dudley Simpson's 'Chromophone Band' cue 48
for the Patrick Troughton adventure 'The Macra Terror' but there are no 'Delian' 49
scores for any *Doctor Who* stories during the years she was active at the BBC. In 50
fact, Derbyshire was not even the first choice for the creation of the *Doctor Who* 51
theme tune, with Verity Lambert, the programme's first producer, initially 52
approaching the avant-garde French group, Les Structures Sonores; but they 53
proved unavailable. 54

It is difficult to quantify the influence of Derbyshire's arrangement of the *Doc-* 55
tor Who theme, but the broadcaster Stuart Maconie was probably stretching en- 56
thusiastic appreciation to its limits when he described it in a 15 November 2010 57
feature for BBC One's *Inside Out*² as 'the theme tune that changed the world' 58
and 'the very first time the public had ever heard electronic music'. Even if we 59
exclude the electronic music in earlier BBC productions like *Quatermass and the* 60
Pit (1958)³ for television and *All That Fall* (1957) for radio or Hollywood films 61
released in the United Kingdom, such as *Forbidden Planet* (1956),⁴ the BBC had 62
included electronic music for the first time in the 1960 Proms season. That said, 63
there was evidence of resistance to electronic music, especially the perceived 'dif- 64
ficulty' of the work of composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen. The BBC acknowl- 65
edged that the 1960 Proms performance of Luciano Berio's 1957 *Perspectives* 66
was listened to with 'polite but somewhat uneasy attention', and there was clear 67
relief when the orchestra returned 'to the platform to continue the concert with 68
"natural" music'.⁵ *Doctor Who*, however, was a very different case, with a promi- 69
nence and regularity (a weekly teatime show aimed at the family) which ensured 70
that, for many people, in 1963 and 1964, it was the first time that they had heard 71
electronic, tape-based music. It has often been pointed out that it was the emer- 72
gence of the Daleks in the second *Doctor Who* story to be broadcast (from late 73

74 December 1963 until early February 1964), which boosted the programme's rat-
75 ings and reputation, as well as helped secure its immediate future.⁶ Within three
76 weeks of the conclusion of the first Dalek story, discussions were taking place
77 with the Head of Business for Television Enterprises about the need to 'resurrect
78 the Daleks' and the creatures' potential for exploitation.⁷ But two weeks before a
79 Dalek's manipulator arm made its first dramatic appearance in the cliffhanger to
80 'The Dead Planet' (1963), Derbyshire's arrangement of the *Doctor Who* theme
81 tune had already generated enough wonder and fascination amongst the general
82 public to be deemed a significant subject which merited coverage in a national
83 newspaper.⁸ In this article, I want to explore the impact of the *Doctor Who*
84 theme tune on British audiences in the 1960s as well as Derbyshire's relation-
85 ship with the programme and the BBC more generally. That impact is worthy of
86 celebration, but it was not without consequences. Interviewed for the 2012 re-
87 release of his music for *The Seasons* (1969),⁹ David Cain, one of Derbyshire's
88 contemporaries at the Radiophonic Workshop, reflected that '*Doctor Who* was
89 an enormous distraction, it became the focus of the output and everything else
90 was pushed into the background'.¹⁰

91 *Doctor Who* was not Derbyshire's first science-fiction project – indeed, her
92 schoolwork includes a time-travel story, in which a railway passenger discovers
93 that the mysterious station he has stopped at has only just been commissioned
94 and he has thus glimpsed into the future.¹¹ If that suggests an interest in the fan-
95 tastic, Derbyshire's schoolwork indicates a somewhat dismissive attitude towards
96 popular culture – she calls in one essay for the banning of American comics and
97 warns against the perils of too much film, television and radio. Born in Coventry
98 in 1937, music and mathematics were her passions at school; she excelled in both
99 subjects with her major formative musical influences being Mozart, Bach and, es-
100 pecially, Beethoven. Derbyshire read music and mathematics at Girton College,
101 Cambridge, and it was during her time at university that she would travel, in
102 1958, with her fellow student Jonathan Harvey (who would go on to become one
103 of Britain's leading composers of the last fifty years and whose own music was
104 influenced directly by Derbyshire's haunting collaboration with the poet Barry
105 Bermange, *Amor Dei* [1964]¹²) to Le Corbusier's and Iannis Xenakis' Pavilion at
106 the Brussels World's Fair and heard Edgard Varèse's *Poème électronique*, nurtur-
107 ing a growing interest in electronic music and its relationship with the visual arts.
108 Throughout her career, Derbyshire would work on projects both about visual
109 artists, including Goya, Henry Moore and Eduardo Paolozzi, as well as with vi-
110 sual artists such as Madelon Hooykaas, Elisabeth Kozmian and staff from
111 Hornsey College of Art. Towards the end of her life, in 1999, she discussed her
112 hopes for an electronic music festival in partnership with Peter Kember (Sonic
113 Boom), which would associate electronic music 'with light, and vibrations of ev-
114 ery sort, including tactile vibrations. A tie-in between sound and light, move-
115 ment, sculpture...'¹³ That interest in the relationship between sound and image
116 became a working concern when she transferred to the Radiophonic Workshop
117 in 1962 after joining the BBC as a studio manager in 1960.

When Derbyshire arrived at the Radiophonic Workshop, it was still in its formative years, having been established in 1958 to provide the 'special sound' for BBC productions. Derbyshire soon made a positive impression and her first major contribution, composing the music for *Time On Our Hands* (1963),¹⁴ was also her first involvement with science fiction. Broadcast in March 1963, *Time On Our Hands* was a docu-fiction about the city of the future – Holyhead in 1988 – imagining a world in which the Russians got to the Moon first (in 1967), mass unemployment is rife as a result of increasing automation, cyberneticists have become hill farmers and the core problem is 'how to spend a golden lifetime, what to do with so much time'.¹⁵ Derbyshire's title music conveys the programme's sense of progress, leading to an uncertain emptiness ('the void of leisure') with its glassy sounds and slow ascending notes giving way to childlike falling phrases and a lack of ultimate resolution. There is no satisfying keynote achieved here, unlike the triumphant musical ascent suggested by Stanley Kubrick's use of Richard Strauss' first movement from *Also Sprach Zarathustra* at the outset of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968),¹⁶ laying the foundation for the evolutionary quest ahead. In contrast, Derbyshire's music points to a chilly ennui and restless yet lonely cityscape. *Time On Our Hands* was well received within the BBC and gained particular praise from the Head of Television Drama, Sydney Newman. By the end of the year, Derbyshire had realised and arranged the theme tune for a new project overseen by Newman – a piece of music that would become an iconic part of the soundscape of British popular culture, instantly recognisable yet with sounds whose origin and nature retain a potent ability to fascinate and mystify today: *Doctor Who*. Its success would generate considerable attention for the Radiophonic Workshop and Derbyshire, although she was often not named in coverage of the theme tune.¹⁷

The standard practice at this time was for individual Radiophonic Workshop staff not to receive on-screen or printed credit for the special sound and music they contributed to BBC programmes. The *Daily Mirror* was among the first to try and solve the mysteries of the *Doctor Who* theme tune for the general public and, in a piece from 7 December 1963, two weeks after the first episode of *Doctor Who* had been broadcast, claimed that 'nothing quite like this [...] has been heard before on TV. It's a noise with rhythm and melody which continually pulsates in a weird, fluid, and uncanny way'.¹⁸ But the article made no mention of Derbyshire's involvement, placing more emphasis on the role of Verity Lambert, the producer of *Doctor Who*, and her desire for a 'new sound – way out and catchy'.¹⁹ For his part, the tune's composer, Ron Grainer, was delighted with Derbyshire's contribution and sought, unsuccessfully for her, a share of the credit and royalties, but he was overruled. As Derbyshire noted: 'The BBC wouldn't allow it. I was just on an assistant studio manager's salary and that was it. . . and we got a free *Radio Times*. The boss wouldn't let anybody have any sort of credit'.²⁰

The 'boss' in this case was Desmond Briscoe, the manager of the Radiophonic Workshop. His relationship with Derbyshire and role in how her reputation and awareness of her work was managed, and in some instances restricted, is

162 complex. Derbyshire's time at the BBC has been characterised by some as her
163 being suppressed by a patriarchal institution.²¹ Interviewed in 2005, Clive
164 Blackburn, Delia's partner from 1980 until her death in 2001, reflected that 'she
165 was badly treated by the BBC, repeatedly turned down for promotions that
166 should have been hers'.²² There is no doubt that Derbyshire did encounter sex-
167 ist attitudes and prejudice both within the BBC and other organisations as well;
168 as when she was told by Decca in 1959 that they did not employ women in
169 their recording studios. It is also true that reviews and news items were still re-
170 ferring to 'the men' of the Radiophonic Workshop in the late 1970s, despite
171 the central role of female personnel at the Radiophonic Workshop, from
172 Daphne Oram, Maddalena Fagandini and Derbyshire to Glynis Jones and
173 Elizabeth Parker. It is easy to cast Briscoe, with his 'notoriously officious side'²³
174 as Louis Niebur describes it, as the face of BBC patriarchy holding Derbyshire
175 back, but to do so would risk constructing a somewhat convenient strawman.
176 Evidence suggests that any restraints from Briscoe were neither directed exclu-
177 sively at Derbyshire nor necessarily a direct result of her gender. Other Work-
178 shop staff also encountered complications in their dealings with Briscoe. Niebur
179 notes, for example, how Derbyshire and her Radiophonic Workshop colleagues,
180 John Baker and Brian Hodgson, worked 'long but eccentric hours' in part to
181 'avoid Briscoe's interference', with Hodgson confirming that Briscoe became a
182 'great bogeyman' and 'was seen as an obstacle rather than anything else'.²⁴ The
183 BBC Written Archives at Caversham, however, reveal a more shaded story: there
184 are several documents in which Briscoe praises Derbyshire and acknowledges
185 her burgeoning reputation and in return she would congratulate him warmly on
186 his 1977 radio production *A Wall Walks Slowly*, after she had left the Work-
187 shop.²⁵ Most significantly, when Briscoe was on extended leave from the Radio-
188 phonic Workshop in 1966, Derbyshire was placed in charge during his absence.
189 Interviewed by Jo Hutton in 2000, Derbyshire was willing to suggest that
190 Briscoe's motivation for the lack of credits might have been benign and that 'his
191 attitude may have been, come on let's give him benefit of the doubt, that because
192 a lot of the Workshop's stuff was criticised as being too frightening or too, you
193 know, too whatever, he was protecting us by keeping our names secret'.²⁶

194 The issue of individual staff not being credited for their work seems to have
195 been a case of Briscoe 'following orders' rather than a wilful effort to deny his team
196 recognition. There were multiple opportunities and indeed direct calls for the pol-
197 icy on credits to be overturned. On 30 June 1964, Martin Esslin, the Head of
198 Drama (Sound), wrote to Briscoe to put on record 'my deep appreciation for the
199 excellent work done on [*The Tower*]²⁷ by Delia Derbyshire and John Harrison':

200 This play set them an extremely difficult task and they rose to the challenge with a
201 degree of imaginative intuition and technical mastery which deserves the highest
202 admiration and which will inevitably earn a lion's share of any success the produc-
203 tion may eventually achieve. I only wish that is [sic] were possible for the names of
204 contributors of this calibre to be mentioned in the credits in the Radio Times and

on the air. But failing this I should like to register the fact that I regard their contribution to this production as being at least of equal importance to that of the producer himself.²⁸

Esslin's fulsome praise was not enough to overturn the BBC's standard policy on individual credits but underlines the growing esteem in which Derbyshire's creativity was held by her colleagues and senior figures within the BBC. It was not enough, however, to persuade Briscoe. Tellingly, following the production of 'The Naked Sun', a 1969 episode of the science-fiction anthology series *Out of the Unknown* (1965–67, 1969, 1971),²⁹ there were requests by their respective Heads for the lighting, sound and costume supervisors on the production to be given credit, but Briscoe did not lobby on Derbyshire's behalf for her music to receive similar recognition.³⁰

If Briscoe was not prepared to stretch the BBC's policy on credits for Radiophonic Workshop staff in 1963 when *Doctor Who* first appeared, a decade later he was accusing the *Doctor Who* production team of the very 'crime' with which he has been charged. In January 1974, *Doctor Who* was in the midst of its tenth anniversary with the *Radio Times* marking the milestone with a *Doctor Who* Special, recognising the contribution of 'the backroom boys'. The Radiophonic Workshop, however, received little recognition and Briscoe wrote to the programme's producer, Barry Letts, to express his disappointment that his staff were given nothing more than 'a name drop' in a piece on Dudley Simpson, the show's principal composer. Briscoe's 'officious side' saw him coming to the defence of his staff: 'Delia, Brian and Dick [Mills] have, I think, made significant contributions to the success of *Dr Who* over the years. Whether or not this warrants a word or two from you in *Radio Times* I leave for you to decide and, should it be felt necessary, a brief not-too-technical note could be prepared'.³¹

Although Derbyshire did not receive an official on-screen credit for her work on *Doctor Who*, it is certainly not the case that her contribution was actively hidden and suppressed by the BBC. The *Doctor Who* theme was released commercially as a record by Decca in 1964, and in the same year, the BBC prepared an information sheet about the creation of the *Doctor Who* theme tune, which emphasised that one of the most distinctive qualities about the music was that nobody actually played it with each note being constructed by electronic means. This information sheet made no direct reference to Derbyshire ('DR. WHO title music by Ron Grainer with the BBC Radiophonic Workshop') but was clear about the impressive level of skill required to create the theme tune:

working from Ron Grainer's score, the music was constructed note by note, with infinite patience, and without the use of any live instrumentalists whatsoever. But what does such a score look like – is it a series of undecipherable hieroglyphics set out on logarithmic graph paper? No – in fact in this case it was not far removed from a regular music score except for certain rather abstract indications of tonal quality such as "clouds", "wind bubble" etc, and subsequently a rather awe-inspiring

248 superscription of long decimal numbers denoting decibels, cycles per second and
249 inches of tape [...] The resulting catchy sound, which can be heard every week in-
250 troducing Dr. Who on BBC Television, has now been issued as a commercial
251 recording.³²

252

253 Derbyshire's marvellous arrangement was realised in the pre-synthesiser days
254 of the Workshop: a combination of sounds augmented using *musique concrète*
255 techniques, sine and square wave oscillators, and a white noise generator. These
256 sounds were recorded to tape and manipulated, raised and lowered in pitch,
257 sped up, slowed down, looped and filtered to eliminate particular frequencies – a
258 painstaking process informed by Derbyshire's mathematical precision, but with
259 a human warmth and unpredictability often felt by opponents of electronic mu-
260 sic to be lacking in the field.³³ Indeed, prior to the positive response generated
261 by the *Doctor Who* theme tune, a considerable amount of reviews and corre-
262 spondence relating to the Radiophonic Workshop's output stressed frustration
263 and distaste with what was perceived by some viewers and listeners as unpleas-
264 ant, discordant noise. The *Radio Times* received several complaints including
265 one viewer, in November 1960, describing the 'noise' before the 'Two O' Clock
266 Television News as 'a nightmare in a railway train!'³⁴ Whereas a later letter in
267 September 1962 noted that 'it seems that every interval between radio pro-
268 grammes has now to be filled with weird, celestial, electronic, faintly musical
269 noises.'³⁵ More critical was a letter from April 1962 bemoaning that 'the BBC
270 had forgotten conventional music and resorted to electronic music' otherwise
271 known as 'horrible emanations'.³⁶ Desmond Briscoe responded that 'many of
272 the sounds we produce are [...] well designed and beautiful, which is more than
273 can be said for the building where, in fact, they are made'.³⁷ Yet even Briscoe
274 had been forced to acknowledge the previous year in 1961 that 'it has been
275 found that whilst with manipulated sound it is easy to be unpleasant, to create
276 an atmosphere of horror, it is difficult to be pleasant, and more difficult to be
277 beautiful.'³⁸ Derbyshire's *Doctor Who* arrangement challenged these perceptions
278 of electronic music.

279 It certainly intrigued audiences at the time, as the 4 September 1964 instal-
280 lment of the radio question and answer show, *Information Please*, reveals. Pre-
281 sented by Franklin Engelmann with a busy piece of light orchestral theme
282 music, underlining just how unusual and alien the *Doctor Who* theme was in the
283 British televisual and musical landscape at the time, *Information Please* fielded
284 questions from the public on a variety of topics including, in the 4 September
285 edition, the following request from a Miss Anne Macmillan of Perth: 'We often
286 hear in mystery or science fiction plays strange, eerie music, which I understand
287 is not produced by ordinary musical instruments but electronically. How is that
288 done?' To answer that question, the programme provided a short feature in
289 which Engelmann visited the Radiophonic Workshop to meet with Derbyshire
290 and discover how, amongst other things, the *Doctor Who* theme was made. The
291 conversation between Derbyshire and Engelmann seems to have provided the

basis for the BBC information sheet discussed earlier. Several of the observations 292
 by both Derbyshire and Engelmann about the *Doctor Who* theme tune's con- 293
 struction reappear, word for word, in the information sheet. The radio item, 294
 however, is revealing, not just for the air of slightly patronising and paternal be- 295
 musement that runs throughout (acknowledging her 'good technical knowledge 296
 combined with a musical training and a sense of dramatic ability', Derbyshire is 297
 described by Engelmann as 'a very versatile girl' and the music sounding as 298
 though it was 'picked up by radio telescope from outer space') but also the tone 299
 in which Derbyshire's work is framed by the programme. Having explained her 300
 working methods and tools ('without going into technical details' pleads Engel- 301
 mann), including the 'wobbulator' ('well that is simply an oscillator which wob- 302
 bles!'), Derbyshire delights in a final demonstration of her craft as Engelmann's 303
 clipped 'received pronunciation' tones begin to warp and gurgle. 'Hey! What are 304
 you doing to my voice Miss Derbyshire?' 'I've turned you into a fish!' 'Thank 305
 you very much indeed Miss Derbyshire'. That mischievousness was a feature of 306
 Derbyshire's personality, but there is a subtext to the item: her work is viewed as 307
 trickery, magic even, the opportunity for a funny game. 308

The playfulness in much of Derbyshire's music is one of its most endearing 309
 and charming features, but there is an awkward question here as well. 'Re- 310
 stricted' to theme tunes, radio call signs and advertising jingles is there anything 311
 here of musical substance?³⁹ To answer that question in the affirmative, certain 312
 prejudices about the perceived lesser status of functional music and shorter 313
 works or miniatures need to be overcome. Nonetheless, there is something bit- 314
 tersweet about the opening track on the 2007 CD of Daphne Oram's electronic 315
 music from the 1960s and 1970s, where Oram (Derbyshire's predecessor and 316
 one of the co-founders of the Radiophonic Workshop with Desmond Briscoe) 317
 introduces her new studio and its sonic possibilities and offers as her first ex- 318
 ample of these exciting new horizons an advertising jingle for power tools. Der- 319
 byshire and her close friend and colleague Brian Hodgson (creator of the 320
 TARDIS dematerialisation sound and Dalek voices and the special sound for 321
Doctor Who as a whole until 1973) were clearly aware of the need to counter 322
 certain assumptions about electronic music and the tone of some of the media 323
 coverage of the Radiophonic Workshop which emphasised the sci-fi gimmickry 324
 of *Doctor Who*. In January 1965, they organised an open day with the proposed 325
 title 'Serious Publicity for the BBC Radiophonic Workshop', in which 'selected 326
 members of the responsible press' were invited to attend the Workshop during 327
 work on the music (by Derbyshire) for *The After Life* (1965),⁴⁰ the third Inven- 328
 tion for Radio, a series of four collaborations between Derbyshire and the poet 329
 Barry Bermange.⁴¹ It is almost as if Derbyshire and Hodgson, conscious of the 330
 'gimmick' publicity their *Doctor Who* work was generating, were trying to cor- 331
 rect that by drawing attention to the Workshop's more serious 'art' projects. 332
 One publication that seemed to get the message was the fashion, lifestyle and 333
 high society magazine, *Tatler*, which ran a 12 May 1965 feature titled 'The Cli- 334
 mate for Experiment'. The piece asserted that 'artists and people concerned 335

336 with the social scene are induced to experiment when the century moves faster
337 than they do [...] The boundaries of the arts must be pushed even further to
338 include new experience – designers and architects must make themselves aware
339 of what the public needs before the public itself is aware of the need. Here are a
340 dozen experimentors, all concerned, all committed and all pleased to be living
341 in Britain in 1965'.⁴² In poll position, showcased on a centrefold photograph
342 like a publicity still from *Mad Men* (2007–present)⁴³ or, perhaps more appropri-
343 ately, *The Hour* (2011–12),⁴⁴ was the Radiophonic Workshop: Desmond
344 Briscoe, Dick Mills, Delia Derbyshire, Keith Salmon and Brian Hodgson, with
345 *Doctor Who* mentioned most prominently alongside other significant Radio-
346 phonic Workshop achievements such as Samuel Beckett's *Embers* (1959).⁴⁵

347 If *Tatler* featured the Radiophonic Workshop as a whole, other publications
348 across 1965 chose to focus exclusively on Derbyshire with her work on *Doctor*
349 *Who* to the fore. The *Coventry Evening Telegraph* located Derbyshire within
350 'this almost wholly male scientific preserve' where she acknowledged that 'in
351 the three years I have been here I suppose my most popular accomplishment
352 was doing the electronic setting to [...] "Dr. Who"'.⁴⁶ The *Daily Express*
353 claimed that the Workshop's 'proudest achievement – in collaboration with
354 Ron Grainer – is the signature tune for "Dr. Who" which has proved so popu-
355 lar that they have brought out a single as a candidate for the Top Twenty',⁴⁷
356 and the *Lancashire Evening Post* painted a vivid portrait of Derbyshire ('She
357 can talk about electronic manipulation, "white noises," "pink noises" and man-
358 ual tape manipulation like some girls talk about pop records') as a 'tall girl with
359 a mixed mathematics and music degree' who produced the sounds which 'made
360 one five-year-old I know wet the bed the first time he heard it' before noting
361 that 'neither she, nor the composer Ron Grainer dreamt that a sound which
362 was produced purely to go with the credit titles would virtually steal the thun-
363 der from the stars of the serial'.⁴⁸

364 By the mid-1960s, the appeal and fascination of the *Doctor Who* theme tune
365 had generated such an amount of requests to visit the Radiophonic Workshop
366 that Briscoe, although noting that 'we like to help students when possible', ad-
367 vised that school parties visiting the BBC should no longer be allowed to see the
368 Radiophonic Workshop as it distracted the staff from their work.⁴⁹ There had
369 been interest in the Workshop prior to *Doctor Who*, but, from early 1964 on-
370 wards, the Workshop's mailbox was bulging with a substantial amount of corre-
371 spondence about the *Doctor Who* theme from as far afield as Canada. The
372 theme tune attracted most letters from enthusiastic teenagers as well as (occa-
373 sionally) insistent school Music Masters. Derbyshire was more than happy to en-
374 gage in outreach activities (in 1962 she assisted Luciano Berio with sessions on
375 electronic music at Dartington international summer school) and respond to
376 questions about her creation. That public interest continued throughout the
377 1960s with numerous letters from people asking how electronic music was made,
378 some for personal interest others for theses and school projects with *Doctor*
379 *Who* often mentioned. In 1966, the musicologist and composer Hugh Davies,

who had visited the Workshop in 1963 for his thesis on electronic music before 380
working as Karlheinz Stockhausen's personal assistant, contacted Briscoe on be- 381
half of François Bayle and the Parisian Group de Recherches Musicales, asking 382
for Briscoe's assistance with an international audit of all compositions for mag- 383
netic tape ever composed up to the end of 1966 in order to document the early 384
history of tape music, with the *Doctor Who* theme duly acknowledged. This de- 385
velopment was indicative of the growing awareness of Derbyshire's work 386
amongst figures within so-called 'serious' music. On 26 April 1968, her piece ti- 387
tled 'Composition' featured alongside works by Luciano Berio, Tristram Cary, 388
Brian Dennis, Pierre Henry and Donald Henshilwood on the programme of the 389
first concert of electronic music given in the north west of England, at Liverpool 390
University's Mountford Hall. 391

By now her profile had expanded considerably. She was commissioned to com- 392
pose for the first edition of the Brighton festival in 1967, and her freelance activity 393
increased markedly through Unit Delta Plus and Kaleidophon, studios she set up 394
with, respectively, Brian Hodgson and Peter Zinovieff, and Hodgson and David 395
Vorhaus. Derbyshire and Hodgson often collaborated, and there is clear evidence 396
in her archive of the two sharing and recycling sounds they had created for earlier 397
BBC productions. Sounds and cues from 1964's *Amor Dei* return in Derbyshire's 398
work for Peter Hall's 1967 Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) production of 399 Q1
Macbeth. Similarly, sounds from a theatre production could also re-materialise in 400
a later project for the BBC as was the case with an early 1970s production of 401
Macbeth that Kaleidophon contributed ambiences to, one of which would reap- 402
pear nearly ten years later in the Dalek tunnels deep beneath the surface of Skaro 403
in the Tom Baker *Doctor Who* story 'Destiny of the Daleks' (1979). 404

When 'Destiny of the Daleks' was broadcast, Derbyshire had been long gone 405
from the BBC. What prompted her to leave the corporation in 1973? Inter- 406
viewed by John Cavanagh in 1998, she discussed how the BBC had become in- 407
creasingly dominated by accountants and that both the corporation and the 408
world at large had 'gone out of tune with itself'.⁵⁰ It is certainly true that the 409
early 1970s were a turbulent time at the Radiophonic Workshop, with increased 410
demands being placed on its staff without an adequate increase in the resources 411
needed to meet them. Across 1971–72, there were major discussions around 412
staffing at the Radiophonic Workshop and its role within the BBC. In March 413
1971, the Managing Director of BBC Radio, although acknowledging that '[the 414
Radiophonic Workshop] is a useful part of the BBC', recommended that 'we 415
could set a target for a reduction in operating expenditure' and the possibility 416
of dropping one of the assistants (the official staff title) at the Radiophonic 417
Workshop.⁵¹ Much more revealing is a confidential document from late 1971, 418
in which Briscoe detailed his concerns about the staffing and management of 419
the Workshop. He warned that the commitments placed upon the Radiophonic 420
Workshop in the previous twelve months had 'exceeded both quantitatively and 421
qualitatively those for any previous year' and that, although the recent purchase 422
of 'small electronic synthesisers' had enabled the Workshop to meet increased 423

424 demands, 1971 had stretched his staff to the limits with the year ending with
425 sickness and annual leave being taken in November and December.⁵² It was
426 clearly not just Derbyshire who was feeling this change, and Briscoe cham-
427 pioned the 'talents of the individual members [and their] ability to provide an
428 absolutely reliable creative service' noting that his staff were becoming increas-
429 ingly vulnerable and that the increased demands meant that the organisation
430 was no longer adequate.⁵³ It is a damning assessment and lends credibility to
431 Derbyshire's much later comments about accountants taking over at the BBC –
432 cuts to posts and value for money are clearly driving concerns in much of the
433 correspondence during these years. At the same time, the Radiophonic Work-
434 shop's greater emphasis in the 1970s on the use of synthesisers, with ever tigh-
435 ter deadlines, moved away from Derbyshire's preferred tape and *musique*
436 *concrète* techniques where she could create and sculpt her own sounds. In a
437 1999 interview, her response to Sonic Boom's observation that only a minority
438 of the Radiophonic Workshop's output was 'really great, and the majority of it
439 was crap, churned-out-for-TV tunes' underlines her disaffection with the shift
440 in ethos which she perceived at the BBC in the early 1970s:

441 Well, this was the level of what was demanded, and this was why I eventually left. I
442 didn't want to compromise my integrity any further. I was fed up with having my
443 stuff turned down because it was too sophisticated, and yet it was lapped up when I
444 played it to anyone outside the BBC. The BBC was very wary, increasingly being
445 run by committees and accountants, and they seemed to be dead scared of anything
446 that was a bit unusual. And my passion is to make original, abstract electronic
447 sounds and organise them in a very appealing, acceptable way, to any intelligent
448 person. But it was set up as a service to the drama department. It was nothing to do
449 with music, and that's it.⁵⁴

450

451 Derbyshire was not alone in this perception of the BBC of the early-to-mid
452 1970s, with practitioners like Peter Watkins observing 'that had TV taken an al-
453 ternative direction during the 1960s and 1970s and worked in a more open
454 way, global society today would be vastly more humane and just'.⁵⁵ The corpo-
455 ration was still a broadcaster capable of producing 'original' and 'unusual'
456 works, to use Derbyshire's descriptors, such as David Rudkin and Alan Clarke's
457 *Penda's Fen* (1974), featured in the fifth season of *Play for Today* (1970–84)⁵⁶
458 (a strand which Derbyshire had also contributed to), but it seems that Derby-
459 shire felt there were no longer enough opportunities within the BBC to satisfy
460 her creative needs and her working methods were becoming increasingly at
461 odds with the overriding demands being placed on the Radiophonic Workshop.

462 Delia Derbyshire left the BBC in 1973, still in her thirties and with the poten-
463 tial for so much more music. She worked briefly at Brian Hodgson's Electrophon
464 studio, collaborated with the Dutch video artist Madelon Hooykaas on two films
465 (*Een van die dagen/One of These Days* and *Overbruggen/About Bridges*) released

in 1973 and 1975, respectively, and with Elisabeth Kozmian on her 1980 film, *Two Houses*, but her output reduced considerably following her departure from the corporation. After working for Laing Pipelines as a radio operator and relocating to Cumbria, she worked with the artist Li Yuan-chia at the LYC Museum and Art Gallery at Banks by Hadrian's Wall. In 1978, she returned to London and settled in Northampton in 1980 with Clive Blackburn, her partner for the remainder of her life. The two would work together on songs privately, but it was not until 2003 that new work by Derbyshire would be released in the form of *Synchrondipity Machine (an unfinished dream)*, a collaboration with Sonic Boom, whom she had begun to work with in the late 1990s before her death in 2001. Yet, although only consistently active as a professional musician for just over ten years, her work has a remarkable range – if she is most often associated with the shimmering beauty and melancholy ambience of pieces like 'Blue Veils and Golden Sands' then there are also playful, whimsical and delightful works like 'Door to Door' or 'Time to Go' and its transformation of the Greenwich time signal 'pips' into 'Oranges and Lemons' as well as aggressive machine-like rhythms and stop-start angular 'computer' melodies or the paradigm shifting dance beats buried deep within the mix of a BBC schools radio dramatisation of the story of Noah – years ahead of its time, but tucked beneath a cheery melody and wholesome arrangement so that its kinetic groove and squelching pulse was barely noticeable to the schoolchildren of 1971. It is precisely that connection, whether in schools radio and television or *Doctor Who*, which enabled her work to place deep roots in the formative soundscapes of children growing up in the 1960s and 1970s who have gone on to become successful musicians and champion Delia Derbyshire as a seminal influence and inspiration.⁵⁷ When she, Brian Hodgson and Peter Zinovieff established Unit Delta Plus, one of the core aims of the organisation was, as Derbyshire acknowledged, to bring electronic music to the public.⁵⁸ Over forty years on, with new works inspired by Derbyshire being commissioned and performed by prominent music groups, such as the Kronos Quartet and the first 'Delia Derbyshire Day' held in January 2013, the extent of Delia Derbyshire's creativity can still not be counted in full and the influence of her music continues to grow. 23 November 2013 may well be the fiftieth anniversary of *Doctor Who*, but the programme would be far less memorable if its theme tune had not been in a Delian mode.

Notes

- 1 *Doctor Who* (BBC/BBC Wales/BBC TV, 1963–89, 1996, 2005–present).
- 2 *Inside Out* (BBC/BBC One, 2002–present).
- 3 *Quatermass and the Pit* (BBC, 1958).
- 4 *Forbidden Planet* (Fred M. Wilcox, 1956).
- 5 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/11/2, Radiophonic Workshop General, BBC Press Service, press release by B. Kane, 'The Wizards of Room 13 – The BBC's Radiophonic Workshop', December 1960.

- 6 See, for example, Jonathan Bignell and Andrew O'Day, *Terry Nation*, Manchester University Press, 2004, pp. 51–2; James Chapman, *Inside the TARDIS: The Worlds of Doctor Who*, I.B. Tauris, 2013, pp. 26–7.
- 7 David J. Howe, Stephen James Walker and Mark Stammers, *The Handbook: The Unofficial and Unauthorised Guide to the Production of Doctor Who*, Telos, 2005, p. 109.
- 8 Clifford Davis, 'Verity's Tune is Way Out – Of This World!' *Daily Mirror*, 7 December 1963.
- 9 *Seasons, The* (BBC School Radio/BBC Radio 4, 1969).
- 10 David Cain, 'Q+A with Julian House (Ghost Box) and Composer David Cain', CD Liner Notes, *The Seasons*, Trunk Records, 2012.
- 11 Delia Derbyshire Archive, Manchester, Juvenile Papers of Delia Derbyshire, BDD/1/1/1/5, Delia Derbyshire, 'A Glimpse Into the Future', 25 September 1952.
- 12 *Amor Dei* (BBC Third Programme, 1964).
- 13 Sonic Boom, 'Delia Derbyshire Interview', first published in *Surface* magazine, May 2000, http://www.delia-derbyshire.org/interview_surface.php, accessed 27 October 2013.
- 14 *Time On Our Hands* (BBC, 1963).
- 15 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC N15/17/1, *Time On Our Hands*, script and press release material, 1962–63. The finished programme was transmitted on 19 March 1963.
- 16 *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968).
- 17 In fact, Delia would have to wait fifty years before she received an on-screen credit in *Doctor Who* for arranging the original theme tune. When the programme's fiftieth-anniversary special, 'The Day of the Doctor', was broadcast on 23 November 2013, the episode opened with the Derbyshire arrangement and in its closing credits noted 'Original theme arranged by Delia Derbyshire'.
- 18 Davis, 'Verity's Tune is Way Out', 1963.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Jo Hutton, 'Radiophonic Ladies', interview conducted in 2000 and published on the Sonic Arts Network, <http://web.archive.org/web/20050906164214/http://www.sonicartsnetwork.org/ARTICLES/ARTICLE2000JoHutton.html>, accessed 27 October 2013.
- 21 Both Jude Rogers and Michelle Drury discuss Delia Derbyshire's status as a 'feminist icon' and note the obstructions and battles that she faced in her career as a result of her gender. Jude Rogers, 'In Praise of Delia Derbyshire', *The Guardian*, 20 July 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/jul/20/electronicmusic.bbc>, accessed 18 December 2013; Michelle Drury, 'Do Women Dream of Electric Sheep? Delia Derbyshire and the Women of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop', *The f word: Contemporary UK Feminism*, 28 October 2012, http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/2012/10/radiophonic_workshop, accessed 18 December 2013. Tim Baker comments that Delia 'faced a lot of prejudice in a then male dominated world of engineers, technicians, mathematicians and musicians, and bitchy BBC queens who didn't like a strong-minded perfectionist woman who refused to stay in her place'. Tim Baker, 'Ada Lovelace Day: Delia Derbyshire', *Radio Clash*, 24 March 2010, <http://www.radioclash.com/archives/2010/03/24/ada-lovelace-day-delia-derbyshire>, accessed 18 December 2013.

- 22 Fidelma Cook, interview with Clive Blackburn (article title unknown), *Mail on Sunday*, 20 March 2005, transcript available online at <http://www.effectrode.com/magnetic-delay/delia-derbyshire/>, accessed 27 October 2013.
- 23 Louis Niebur, *Special Sound: The Creation and Legacy of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop*, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 131.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 142.
- 25 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/25/2, Radiophonic Workshop Scrapbooks, undated letter from Delia Derbyshire to Desmond Briscoe. Although undated, the letter is clearly from 1977 as it is written in response to the transmission on 13 February 1977 of Briscoe's *A Wall Walks Slowly*.
- 26 Delia Derbyshire Archive, Manchester, Delia Derbyshire interviewed by Jo Hutton, audio recording donated by Jo Hutton, 24 February 2000.
- 27 *The Tower* (BBC Third Programme, 1964).
- 28 Delia Derbyshire Archive, Manchester, DD332, memo from Martin Esslin to Desmond Briscoe, 'The Tower', 30 June 1964.
- 29 *Out of the Unknown* (BBC/BBC2, 1965–67, 1969, 1971).
- 30 See the production files for 'The Naked Sun', BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC T5/1, 702/1.
- 31 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/31/1, Radiophonic Workshop General Programme Correspondence, memo from Desmond Briscoe to Barry Letts, 'Re: Radio Times Dr Who Special', 4 January 1974.
- 32 Delia Derbyshire Archive, Manchester, DD333, author unknown, 'DR. WHO title music by Ron Grainer with the BBC Radiophonic Workshop', undated (but at least September 1964).
- 33 For a more in-depth account of the creation of the *Doctor Who* theme tune, see Mark Ayres' excellent article 'A History of the Doctor Who Theme' available at his website, <http://markayres.rwsprojects.co.uk/DWTheme.htm>, accessed 27 October 2013.
- 34 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/25/1, Radiophonic Workshop Scrapbooks, letter from F.M.M. (Shrewsbury), *Radio Times*, 10 November 1960.
- 35 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/25/1, Radiophonic Workshop Scrapbooks, letter from Leslie F. Stevenson (Hillsborough, County Down), *Radio Times*, 8 September 1962.
- 36 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/25/1, Radiophonic Workshop Scrapbooks, letter titled 'Radiophonic Music. . .', *Radio Times*, 19 April 1962.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/11/2, Radiophonic Workshop General 1953–73 File 2, 'The B.B.C. Radiophonic Workshop', undated document by Desmond Briscoe. Although a publication date is not given on the document, the text is a variation of an earlier document from 1 March 1961 and pre-dates Derbyshire's arrival at the Radiophonic Workshop.
- 39 Notably, when the album *BBC Radiophonic Music*, featuring tracks by John Baker, David Cain and Delia, was reviewed in the November 1973 edition of *Hi-Fi News & Record Review*, the anonymous reviewer commented that some of the pieces are 'mere electronic jingles while others, notably the works of Delia Derbyshire, have enough interest to exist in their own right'.
- 40 *After Life, The* (BBC Third Programme, 1965).

- 41 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/29/2, Radiophonic Workshop External Corres.: General, event proposal by Delia Derbyshire and Brian Hodgson, 'Serious Publicity for the BBC Radiophonic Workshop', 13 January 1965.
- 42 J. Roger Baker, 'The Climate for Experiment', *Tatler*, 12 May 1965.
- 43 *Mad Men* (Lionsgate Television/Weiner Bros. [in association with]/U.R.O.K Productions/American Movie Classics [AMC], 2007–present).
- 44 *The Hour* (Kudos Film and Television/BBC, 2011–12).
- 45 *Embers* (BBC Third Programme, 1959).
- 46 Anonymous, 'Delia Makes a Hit With "Dr. Who"', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 28 April 1965.
- 47 Anonymous, 'Composers Without Crotchets', *Daily Express*, 10 June 1965.
- 48 Joan Mulcaster, 'Weird Noises, But They're All in a Day's Work', *Lancaster Evening Post*, 18 November 1965.
- 49 See various responses by Briscoe to requests to visit the Workshop across 1965–66. BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/29/1, Radiophonic Workshop External Corres.
- 50 John Cavanagh, 'Delia Derbyshire: On Our Wavelength', first published in *Boazine* 7, 1998, http://www.delia-derbyshire.org/interview_boa.php, accessed 27 October 2013.
- 51 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/11/1, Radiophonic Workshop General 1953–73 File 1, letter from Ian Trethowan, 'Radiophonic Workshop', 25 March 1971.
- 52 BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC WAC R97/11/1, Radiophonic Workshop General 1953–73 File 1, letter from Desmond Briscoe, 'Staffing and Organisation', 26 November 1971.
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 Sonic Boom, 'Delia Derbyshire Interview', http://www.delia-derbyshire.org/interview_surface.php, accessed 27 October 2013.
- 55 Peter Lennon, 'Hate and War', *Guardian*, 25 February 2000, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2000/feb/25/1>, accessed 24 November 2010.
- 56 *Play for Today* (BBC/BBC1 1970–84).
- 57 Derbyshire's influence has been acknowledged by a wide and diverse range of musicians, such as Aphex Twin, Graham Massey, Drew Mulholland, Orbital and Adrian Utley of Portishead as well as musicians and composers who have discovered or responded to her work more recently, including Caro Churchill, Naomi Kashiwagi, Ailís Ní Ráin, Bishi, Nicole Lizée and the Kronos Quartet.
- 58 Sonic Boom, 'Delia Derbyshire Interview', http://www.delia-derbyshire.org/interview_surface.php, accessed 27 October 2013.

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