

Episode 4.20 Producing Queer Media with Stacey Copeland

May 15, 2020

- Hannah McGregor: [00:00](#) [Theme Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*. And this is take two because I just did the entire intro and outro for this episode without pressing record. So, if you're wondering how I'm doing, that's how I'm doing. The old brain, she's struggling. But that is okay. I joke sometimes that I have a bad brain, but actually it's doing its best. I'm doing my best. We're all doing our best. And sometimes that best is not great. [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [00:42](#) The episode that I'm bringing you this week is a cross-over episode, which I love because a cross-over episode means one fewer episode I have to make. I'm kidding, but I'm only *kind of* kidding. So this is a cross-over with the *SpokenWeb Podcast*, which I've talked about before. SpokenWeb is a very cool collaborative research project here in Canada that's interested in audio literary archives. And because, as a research project, it's all about the question of how we study audio artifacts, we decided to incorporate a podcast into the project so that we have a place to both disseminate some of the archival audio that people are looking at as well as to experiment in making arguments about sound using sound.
- Hannah McGregor: [01:31](#) Now, because it's a podcast about sound and listening and poetry, a lot of the time, most episodes take more of the form of an audio documentary. They're a little more...densely edited, let's say, than your average *Secret Feminist Agenda* episode. But for this cross-over episode, I decided to interview one of the very important feminists who is really central to this podcast. So, without any further ado, let's meet Stacey. [Theme Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]
- Hannah McGregor: [02:04](#) Stacey Copeland is a media producer and Joseph-Armand Bombardier PhD candidate at Simon Fraser University's School of Communication in Vancouver, Canada. She received her Master of Arts from the Ryerson York joint Communication and Culture graduate program where she studied radio production, sound studies, media culture, and gender studies. It was during her Master's work there that Copeland also co-founded *FemRadio*, a Toronto-based feminist community radio collective. She's currently the podcast project manager for the

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SSHRC-funded SpokenWeb partnership. [Stacey's Theme Music: "Time Travel" by Blouse]

- Hannah McGregor: [02:35](#) Why don't we start at the beginning with how you ended up being a person who researches radio and podcasts and sound?
- Stacey Copeland: [03:00](#) Oh, gosh. Well, I was born. No, I'm kidding.
- Hannah McGregor: [03:05](#) [Laughs]
- Stacey Copeland: [03:05](#) I mean, the way that I kind of look back on the start of everything was just the amount of media consumption I did as a teenager was a big start of it.
- Hannah McGregor: [03:16](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [03:16](#) So I was actually a YouTuber for awhile when I was a teenager, [Laughs] which got me into doing covers, like posting covers of me playing guitar online. And then eventually joining a couple of LGBTQ queer teen collaboration groups. So we'd have like, you know, I was Wednesday, and my friend Daniel was on Tuesdays, and we'd have like Micah on Fridays, and those kind of classic YouTube community forums. So--
- Hannah McGregor: [03:50](#) So as you say classic--
- Stacey Copeland: [03:51](#) Classic. [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [03:51](#) I am, I am too, too old to know any of these things.
- Stacey Copeland: [03:56](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [03:56](#) "Oh, is that how it works? Great."
- Stacey Copeland: [03:57](#) So yeah, back when YouTube was more community-based and less lots of very high production videos, there was a lot of these like collab channels that people were part of and so that's what really got me into being more creative with sound and with video. And then I actually wanted to go to university to make music videos, originally, I was way more a visual person than I was a sound person.
- Hannah McGregor: [04:23](#) Okay.
- Stacey Copeland: [04:23](#) And so I applied to the RTA School of Media, which is a four-year undergraduate program at Ryerson University in Toronto. And it kind of gives you a great background... Used to be called Radio and Television Arts now is Media Production

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

because who would wanna only learn about radio and television these days.

Hannah and Stacey: [04:44](#) [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [04:44](#) This is old-timey media for hipsters.

Stacey Copeland: [04:47](#) Yeah! [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [04:47](#) That's what they teach you.

Stacey Copeland: [04:49](#) So I joined that program and in the first year you actually take audio production courses as your first courses, rather than video. And so that kind of gave me a taste for radio production in particular, and I definitely caught the bug. And so from that point, I started taking all of the audio production courses, got an internship at Indie88, which is a radio station in Toronto in my fourth year, and started doing contract production with them for a couple of years 'cause they're great. And then... It also brought in like my music interests and my--

Hannah McGregor: [05:25](#) Yeah.

Stacey Copeland: [05:25](#) --hipster identity at the time.

Hannah McGregor: [05:30](#) [Laughs] Do you have, do you have a sense of why it is the audio production ended up appealing to you so much when you had been so focused on the visual to start?

Stacey Copeland: [05:38](#) I think at that point it was just because it brought in my interest in music in ways that I found more intimate and more relatable and I got to work much more closely with bands and with artists than you get to as part of a much larger video production team. You really get to be one-on-one and close up in person with the people that you're working with in a different way. And it's kind of like this family when you're working in a group of people on a, on an audio production, a very tight knit family. And so from that, I ended up working as a lab assistant and production staff at Ryerson for, for awhile, for about a year after my undergrad and that gave me the teaching bug. And so I applied for grad school 'cause I said, "Well, how can I do this forever?"

Hannah and Stacey: [06:28](#) [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [06:28](#) That is how so many of us get here.

Stacey Copeland: [06:30](#) Yeah! So that's what really brought me into doing my Master's at Ryerson York in ComCult--

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Hannah McGregor: [06:35](#) Mhm.

Stacey Copeland: [06:36](#) --which brought in the teaching--

Hannah McGregor: [06:39](#) What's ComCult?

Stacey Copeland: [06:40](#) ComCult, right. Communication and culture.

Hannah McGregor: [06:43](#) Okay. [Laughs]

Stacey Copeland: [06:44](#) So rather than... I... Rather than a formal communication program, it brings in that cultural aspect of it more. It's good.

Hannah McGregor: [06:49](#) Yeah.

Stacey Copeland: [06:51](#) Yeah. So that program was great. It really introduced me more to theory and awoke my inner feminist a lot more--

Hannah McGregor: [06:59](#) Mhm.

Stacey Copeland: [06:59](#) --in thinking about my audio production and my approach to it. And so that's why I ended up deep diving into feminist theory and sound and how they relate and how we can think about it. And--

Hannah McGregor: [07:13](#) Yeah.

Stacey Copeland: [07:13](#) --what does... What is the experience that women are having with their voices in audio production? So that's what I ended up doing for my MA and then of course, PhD work now is just the next--

Hannah McGregor: [07:24](#) Yeah.

Stacey Copeland: [07:24](#) --chapter.

Hannah McGregor: [07:25](#) [Laughs] Ahaha...literally and figuratively.

Stacey Copeland: [07:27](#) Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [07:28](#) I... It's so interesting to me the ways that people stumble across feminist theory for the first time, including those of us who, who might have sort of, looking back, been like, "Ah, I was a latent feminist that whole time, but didn't have the language to articulate myself as such" or didn't have any particular sense of what feminism meant beyond, like, "I am a woman and think I should be allowed to do things."

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Stacey Copeland: [07:51](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [07:51](#) Which is, you know, a legitimate standpoint for feminism. My first encounter with feminist theory came through a theology course--
- Stacey Copeland: [07:59](#) Interesting.
- Hannah McGregor: [07:59](#) --I took at the University of Edinburgh and I read Judith Butler for the first time, like, against the Gospel of Mark. So it was just this real, like, like it was this weird way that I sort of entered into this theory, but then it's like, it gets ahold of you and you're like... I don't know. I remember after reading *Gender Trouble* for the first time that it was the first theory book that I had been desperate to tell *everybody* about.
- Stacey Copeland: [08:24](#) Mhm.
- Hannah McGregor: [08:24](#) Like, that it broken open my brain so entirely that I just wanted to grab everybody and be like, "Did you hear?! Gender's a performance!"
- Stacey Copeland: [08:32](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [08:32](#) "I had no idea! But I'm so excited by that!" So, let's talk a little bit more about gender and voice.
- Stacey Copeland: [08:39](#) Yeah.
- Hannah McGregor: [08:40](#) Like what, what does... I mean, I know, but I'm going to go ahead and ask--
- Stacey Copeland: [08:43](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [08:43](#) --the naive question: what did the gender and voice have to do with each other?
- Stacey Copeland: [08:47](#) Oh, gosh. So... [Nervous Laugh]
- Hannah McGregor: [08:51](#) [Laughs]
- Stacey Copeland: [08:51](#) It's a casual question.
- Hannah McGregor: [08:52](#) Aren't we all just people? Maybe?
- Stacey Copeland: [08:55](#) [Laughs]

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Hannah McGregor: [08:55](#) At the end of the day?
- Stacey Copeland: [08:56](#) So I mean, Judith Butler is a great, a great place to start. That was definitely one of my foundational texts, too. And one that got me real riled up... Because Butler doesn't talk a ton about the voice or--
- Hannah McGregor: [09:09](#) Mm.
- Stacey Copeland: [09:09](#) --about sound as part of our construction of gender. Which is fair, that was not very in fashion at the time, you might say.
- Hannah McGregor: [09:18](#) Yeah.
- Stacey Copeland: [09:18](#) I know my supervisor Milena Droumeva says this often that we've really hit this sonic turn--
- Hannah McGregor: [09:24](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [09:24](#) --in the academy and in humanities--
- Hannah McGregor: [09:26](#) Mmm.
- Stacey Copeland: [09:26](#) --and social sciences. And what that means is we're really getting awoken to this idea of how our voices carry so much of our identity and our experience. And it's often... If people aren't seeing us in person for the first time, it's the first thing they notice about us. And if they're meeting us in person for the first time, it's the second thing they notice about us. So it's something that really changes people's perceptions. And when you start to think about what your voice says about you, it also kind of opens up these questions of the different voices that we have in different contexts as well, and how gendered--
- Hannah McGregor: [10:10](#) Mm.
- Stacey Copeland: [10:10](#) --that can often be. So part of my MA work was looking at particularly women's experiences with their own voices in radio, in Toronto, and how they felt about it. Did they think it was high-pitched? Did they think it was low-pitched? Did they feel like they had a radio voice? What is a radio voice anyways? And what I found was for the most part, women working in the radio industry do have lower or what would be considered almost androgynous registers and pitches in their voices.
- Hannah McGregor: [10:45](#) Mhm.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Stacey Copeland: [10:46](#) And they may not necessarily present their voice that way in person, but they do when they're on the microphone. And I mean, even as scholars or as speakers, we often do that, too. We have a different vocal presentation that often--
- Hannah McGregor: [11:00](#) 100 percent.
- Stacey Copeland: [11:00](#) --skews lower, which also translates to skewing as more masculine presenting, at least in Western culture.
- Hannah McGregor: [11:09](#) Yep.
- Stacey Copeland: [11:09](#) So even just there--
- Hannah McGregor: [11:09](#) Yep.
- Stacey Copeland: [11:10](#) --we can think about some of the gendered aspects of voice.
- Hannah McGregor: [11:13](#) One of the many terrible jobs that I had as an undergraduate was working for a Rogers call centre.
- Stacey Copeland: [11:21](#) Mm!
- Hannah McGregor: [11:21](#) And I was maybe six months into that job before I noticed that when I was on calls with men, I pitched my voice a full half octave higher. [Pitches Voice Higher] Like, it just went right up here, like, "Hi, my name is Hannah and I'm calling from Rogers Wireless."
- Stacey Copeland: [11:35](#) Yep.
- Hannah McGregor: [11:35](#) And I just like... I, it was, it was deeply unconscious and my voice has pitched lower, I think both naturally and through training as I've aged.
- Stacey Copeland: [11:45](#) Mhm.
- Hannah McGregor: [11:45](#) That's fairly common. In singing, we learn this, that our voices don't sort of fully settle into their lifelong register until our thirties. And I started off singing much... Like I was a soprano when I was a kid and I sing bass now. But I will never forget a feminist mentor of mine telling me that I would have less difficulty in the classroom than other women my age because I had a naturally lower voice.
- Stacey Copeland: [12:09](#) Mhm.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

Hannah McGregor: [12:09](#) And that it's like both as simple and as complicated as that, that when your voice is lower, it registers as more masculine, which is synonymous with more authoritative. And so it will be easier to make people listen to you and take you seriously because your voice is lower.

Stacey Copeland: [12:22](#) Yeah! And this is a common experience. Like--

Hannah McGregor: [12:24](#) Yep.

Stacey Copeland: [12:24](#) --when you have these conversations with women, it's often something that they have experienced in one way or another or have talked to another friend about having this experience.

Hannah McGregor: [12:35](#) Mhm.

Stacey Copeland: [12:35](#) So we can think of... I know a lot of people probably watched *Love Is Blind* recently [Laughs] on Netflix. [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [12:42](#) I did not, but continue your point.

Stacey Copeland: [12:44](#) Oh, gosh.

Hannah McGregor: [12:44](#) [Laughs]

Stacey Copeland: [12:44](#) As a, as a nerdy, like, gender and voice scholar, I was like, "Whoa!"

Hannah McGregor: [12:49](#) Oh, oh...

Stacey Copeland: [12:49](#) "A show where they meet and they don't see each other in person? They just have to fall in love with their voice??"

Hannah McGregor: [12:57](#) [Laughs] Okay, yep. I see why this would have interested you.

Stacey Copeland: [12:59](#) But there's this one character and there's a great article online when the show first came out by Anne Karpf who's also a feminist voice and radio scholar and critic [sic: the article was by Poppy Noor, in which she interviewed Anne Karpf]. And it was talking about how this one particular character on the show actually has this sort of baby voice that she puts on whenever she's--

Hannah McGregor: [13:19](#) Mm.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Stacey Copeland: [13:19](#) --speaking to the person that she's dating. And it actually pitches more baby and higher when they're in person, rather than when she's behind the screen. So...
- Hannah McGregor: [13:31](#) Huh!
- Stacey Copeland: [13:31](#) Right there's like this very fascinating demonstration for everyone watching *Love Is Blind* in the way that we change our vocal performance and interaction depending on who we're talking to because she wasn't doing this to her voice when she was just talking to the other women in the social off time that they had, it was only in these particular situations. And so it brought up these really great conversations online around baby voice--
- Hannah McGregor: [14:00](#) Yep.
- Stacey Copeland: [14:00](#) --and the long history of that voice. We think of characters like Marilyn Monroe.
- Hannah McGregor: [14:06](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [14:06](#) And why do we think that's sexy? Why does anyone think baby voice is sexy, right?
- Hannah McGregor: [14:12](#) [Laughs]
- Stacey Copeland: [14:12](#) So it brings up these really interesting conversations around how we identify what's sexy, what's masculine, what's feminine.
- Hannah McGregor: [14:20](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [14:20](#) Is it a way to be more submissive in having this kind of youthful sounding voice? And, and it comes--
- Hannah McGregor: [14:28](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [14:28](#) --into biology, like you said. As we age, we tend to have lower voice. And that also translates to--
- Hannah McGregor: [14:36](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [14:36](#) --our understanding of what voices have authority, as well, both men--
- Hannah McGregor: [14:41](#) Mhm.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

Stacey Copeland: [14:41](#) --and people who are older. And so we then hit this like youth demo using baby voice to be sexy because it's a little submissive. And then also having vocal fry, which I know I have a ton of--

Hannah McGregor: [14:54](#) [Exasperated Sigh in Agreement]

Stacey Copeland: [14:54](#) --because we're, our voices--

Hannah McGregor: [14:56](#) [Exasperated Sigh]

Stacey Copeland: [14:56](#) --are trying to hit those lower registers to seem authoritative.

Hannah McGregor: [15:01](#) Mhm!

Stacey Copeland: [15:01](#) [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [15:01](#) I...could scream about vocal fry until the cats come home.

Stacey Copeland: [15:04](#) [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [15:04](#) One of my early sort of personal encounters with how much I was going to fixate on gendered voices in podcasting was Marcelle my co-, the co-host of *Witch, Please* and I were invited onto CBC Edmonton AM--

Stacey Copeland: [15:21](#) Okay.

Hannah McGregor: [15:21](#) --to talk about gender and podcasting. In particular, to talk about why there are so many fewer women in podcasting than men. Though, that has change-... I mean, this was like a good five or six years ago.

Stacey Copeland: [15:32](#) Mhm.

Hannah McGregor: [15:32](#) That demographic is shifting decisively.

Stacey Copeland: [15:35](#) Yeah, hot conversation in like 2014.

Hannah McGregor: [15:37](#) Yes.

Stacey Copeland: [15:38](#) [Laughs] Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [15:38](#) So it was a hot conversation at the time. It was like, podcasting is 75% men, what's going on, what are the barriers to access? And so we came on this radio show to talk about this. And we

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

were talking about how one of the barriers to access for women is the policing of women's voices.

Stacey Copeland: [15:51](#)

Mhm.

Hannah McGregor: [15:52](#)

The way that women talk is always wrong. And that... We were talking about that iconic *This American Life* story, "If You Don't Have Something Nice to Say, SAY IT ALL IN CAPS," [sic: should read "If You Don't Have Anything Nice to Say, SAY IT IN ALL CAPS"] where they talk about how the top form of hate mail they get is about the voices of their young women producers.

Stacey Copeland: [16:06](#)

[Sadly] Yeah.

Hannah McGregor: [16:06](#)

Like, nothing makes their listeners as mad as the sound of a young woman with vocal fry.

Stacey Copeland: [16:11](#)

[Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [16:11](#)

Like, just makes them lose their fucking minds. And we were talking about how there's sort of this pseudoscientific concern-trolling attached to it.

Stacey Copeland: [16:20](#)

Mhm.

Hannah McGregor: [16:20](#)

Like, "Oh, well, it's *bad* for your voice. And that's why you need to stop. Vocal fry wrecks your voice. We're really just worried about you." Which every woman has experienced somebody using this kind of like pseudomedical concern-trolling to--

Stacey Copeland: [16:32](#)

Gaslighting. [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [16:32](#)

--to control us. Ga- precisely. It is absolutely gaslighting with a thin veneer of the medical on top of it.

Stacey Copeland: [16:41](#)

[Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [16:41](#)

And the host was like, "Oh, well actually vocal fry is extremely bad for your voice, though." And then just launched into like, mansplaining vocal fry to us. We like lost our *goddamn minds*. [Laughs] What is happening here?? Anyway, all of our listeners listened to the segment and then were really mean to him on Twitter all day.

Stacey Copeland: [17:00](#)

[Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [17:00](#)

And it was very satisfying.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Stacey Copeland: [17:03](#) Yeah. I mean, vocal fry is really fascinating that way. And you have to ask the question well, who is being, you know, bothered by vocal fry? What's the demographic behind that? Because it's very unlikely that it's younger women who also have vocal fry. There is--
- Hannah McGregor: [17:22](#) Yeah, we're not mad. [Laughs]
- Stacey Copeland: [17:22](#) --the argument that it is a millennial and Gen Y, just, vocalization the same way that we had Valley Girl as a kind of slang and vocalization in generations before us. So, there's... Part of what I found in my MA work was that a lot of younger women actually really enjoy the sound of vocal fry--
- Hannah McGregor: [17:43](#) [Laughs]
- Stacey Copeland: [17:43](#) --because to them, it sounds like *them*. It's, it's more--
- Hannah McGregor: [17:46](#) Yep.
- Stacey Copeland: [17:46](#) --like having a conversation with a friend, rather than a, a formal radio broadcast presenter, you know?
- Hannah McGregor: [17:53](#) Yeah, yeah. And I wonder if the embrace of things like vocal fry is one of the sonic differences between radio and podcasting, that podcasting has sort of emerged as a space where in fact, because there's a younger demographic who are hosting sometimes, and because there's a sort of casualness behind a lot of the recording settings, that you are more likely to hear vocal fry on a podcast than on the radio and that becomes part of what makes it feel like a cozier medium.
- Stacey Copeland: [18:18](#) Mhm. Yeah, and it's easier for vocal fry to come across, too, because there's not as much high compression on the voice. You're maybe listening or most likely listening on headphones versus on a blasting car stereo.
- Hannah McGregor: [18:31](#) Mm...
- Stacey Copeland: [18:31](#) So even when you maybe have a vocal fry voice—I've had this experience—and are doing a radio broadcast, it doesn't necessarily come through because it's smoothed out and compressed, versus on a podcast where we kind of let things breathe a little bit more because it is more conversational.
- Hannah McGregor: [18:49](#) Mhm.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

Stacey Copeland: [18:49](#) So I think podcasting, yeah, it's definitely more conversational, but it's also produced differently. There's a different--

Hannah McGregor: [18:56](#) Mhm.

Stacey Copeland: [18:56](#) --logic behind it often.

Hannah McGregor: [18:59](#) Ugh, I love that. Okay, let's fast forward now to that, to that next chapter. Tell me about what your research is about now.

Stacey Copeland: [19:07](#) Oh, gosh. So I just presented my, and defended my, proposal a couple weeks ago. So...it's fairly fresh in my mind.

Hannah McGregor: [19:13](#) [Laughs]

Stacey Copeland: [19:13](#) But-- [Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [19:16](#) And still in, in that pure form before you've actually started trying to write it.

Stacey Copeland: [19:20](#) Yeah, exactly.

Hannah McGregor: [19:20](#) When it's just a, just a perfect idea.

Stacey Copeland: [19:23](#) [Laughs] I'm in the ethics stage now and quickly realizing how much work I have ahead of me in the next year.

Hannah McGregor: [19:30](#) Mhm.

Stacey Copeland: [19:30](#) But it's exciting. So, basically, the, the one-liner or the elevator pitch version is--

Hannah McGregor: [19:37](#) Mhm.

Stacey Copeland: [19:37](#) --I'm, I'm looking to ask the question, how is gender and sexuality communicated through audio media?

Hannah McGregor: [19:43](#) Mm!

Stacey Copeland: [19:43](#) Specifically asking that question in relation to audio produced by queer women in different decades. So the two kind of foundational shows that I'm looking at are *The Lesbian Show*, which was on Vancouver's co-op radio in the 1970s, 1979, all the way into the early 2000s. So quite a few decades on air.

Hannah McGregor: [20:09](#) Yep.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Stacey Copeland: [20:09](#) And then *Dykes on Mykes*, which is a community radio show out of Montreal, CKUT. And these are kind of my foundational shows of thinking about the production of audio and radio by queer women for queer women talking about queer identity. And from these shows, the goal is to create an intergenerational analysis where I interview these, these particular producers and then make linkages to contemporary podcasts that are making content either connected to or influenced by or reflecting back to these, these foundational shows. So for instance, I'm sure a lot of people, if they're into queer podcasting or just like more intimate feminist podcasting, have listened to *The Heart*.
- Hannah McGregor: [21:02](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [21:02](#) It's a great podcast. But what a lot of people don't know unless they dig deeper is that podcast, *The Heart*, was actually a community radio show audio smut on CKUT at the same--
- Hannah McGregor: [21:16](#) Huh!
- Stacey Copeland: [21:16](#) --community radio station as *Dykes on Mykes*. So making these kind of linkages to where are we finding these groups of feminist and queer community who are making audio either in the same spaces or together or are influencing each other and how does that transition from historical understandings of community radio, and how that was produced,--
- Hannah McGregor: [21:38](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [21:38](#) --into podcasting today? So with shows like *The Heart*... There's another great one, *Asking For It*, by the same collective, which is Mermaid Palace. And... There's quite a few out there there's, there's *Queer Public*, which is another great podcast out there, also someone from Montreal CKUT-background who's producing that. So making these kind of connections early on made me wonder what the intergenerational overlap is in--
- Hannah McGregor: [22:07](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [22:07](#) --the experience and underlying desires in producing queer media as queer women.
- Hannah McGregor: [22:15](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [22:15](#) Who is it for? What's the intention behind it? What does it sound like?

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Hannah McGregor: [22:20](#) Yeah.
- Stacey Copeland: [22:20](#) What's queer media anyways? And what, what is that when you're doing it on the radio, when both queer politics and feminist movements have this very long history of visual metaphors, of visibility, of coming out, right? What does it mean when that's being done only through sound?
- Hannah McGregor: [22:38](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [22:38](#) So that's what I'm really interested in exploring over the next year, anyways.
- Hannah and Stacey: [22:46](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [22:46](#) Yeah, yeah. I love this focus on the intergenerational, which is such a necessary and often fraught conversation when we are talking about, I think, both feminist and queer, intergenerational solidarity and divisions.
- Stacey Copeland: [22:58](#) Mhm!
- Hannah McGregor: [22:58](#) I've been talking a lot with other queer and feminist friends about this feeling sometimes that, I think because we are so invested in a constant movement towards greater liberation, that there is a tendency to, as I usually put it, eat our mothers.
- Stacey Copeland: [23:20](#) Yeah. That's, that's a great way to say it.
- Hannah McGregor: [23:22](#) Which is to say that in order to articulate our greater liberation, it often involves a kind of disavowal of those who came before us. And we're seeing that playing out in Vancouver in all kinds of complex ways, especially around the surprisingly [Laughs] vocal TERF movement in this city and the way that a trans inclusive queerness and a trans inclusive feminism feels this need to break with what is not necessarily, but it's often seen as, a generational divide. I think that's important to, to distinguish: that it isn't necessarily a generational divide, but that's often how we understand it as a like, "Oh, those are like... Lesbians from the '70s hated trans women. And so we distinguish ourselves from that generation." And the figuring out ways to find forms of continuity and to build dialogue, like, intergenerational dialogue feels like really vital work...right now to try to sort of, I don't know, figure out how we can find different ways to relate to the generations who came before us that are not a sort of burn it down, build something new out of the ashes. [Laughs]

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Stacey Copeland: [24:30](#) Mhm! I mean, that's a big part of the issue with the waves metaphor in feminism, that--
- Hannah McGregor: [24:36](#) Mm!
- Stacey Copeland: [24:36](#) --everything comes in waves, but we have this first, second, and third, and fourth, and arguably fifth, [Laughs] at this point in the way that we're micro-breaking it down into almost standpoints or initiatives. So...
- Hannah McGregor: [24:50](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [24:50](#) Yeah, part of what I'm really fascinating in, in doing is taking a step back and asking, "Well, we can't just simply dismiss all of the work that lesbian feminists in particular did in the '70s." Yes, there are awful stories, there are dark histories, but we need to open those up and see what else was going on. Well, why was this happening at that time? What are the other stories? What were some of the wins that were coming out of that? And how, how was that politics influencing everyone who came in the decade or wave after, and then now, as well, when we start to see this rising of queer feminist work and people taking up even lesbian feminist and lesbian separatist identities—which I found *very* fascinating—or using the term "sapphist" for instance.
- Hannah McGregor: [25:42](#) Haha!
- Stacey Copeland: [25:42](#) Right?
- Hannah McGregor: [25:42](#) That I've never come across.
- Stacey Copeland: [25:42](#) Oh.
- Hannah McGregor: [25:42](#) But...
- Stacey Copeland: [25:44](#) It's new. If you go on Tumblr...
- Hannah McGregor: [25:47](#) [Laughs] Ah, Tumblr. Fucking Tumblr. Everything I know about gender and sexuality, I definitely learned from Tumblr use.
- Stacey Copeland: [25:54](#) [Laughs] Yeah, so the term sapphist, it's there. And it's making a comeback, which is fascinating to me. So there is this kind of desire I think people have of looking back, of trying to understand where these movements came from and reconnecting to feminists who maybe are from older demographics. And this... You know, it's not unheard of. When we think of the way that we interact with our grandparents or

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

elders in our lives, this should also be happening within queer and feminist communities--

- Hannah McGregor: [26:27](#) Yeah.
- Stacey Copeland: [26:27](#) --so that we can understand what people went through and what people experienced before we got to the point we're at now.
- Hannah McGregor: [26:34](#) Yeah.
- Stacey Copeland: [26:35](#) How did we come to a moment where we have, you know, queer same sex marriage in Canada when we have something like the Me Too movement that didn't just spring up overnight?
- Hannah McGregor: [26:46](#) No. Okay, I want to talk more about what queer production sounds like, but just a brief aside about intergenerational and queer ancestors: have you watched *A Secret Love* yet?
- Stacey Copeland: [26:58](#) Noo, it's on my, it's on my, my list on Netflix.
- Hannah McGregor: [27:02](#) [Emotional Exhalations] Hoo, whoa. I mean, I strongly recommend it and I also cried so much.
- Stacey Copeland: [27:09](#) Yeah!
- Hannah McGregor: [27:09](#) It's...
- Stacey Copeland: [27:10](#) My social media feed is full of people talking about how emotional it is. And I'm like, I need to be in a space where I'm prepared to watch this.
- Hannah McGregor: [27:18](#) Yeah, you gotta be ready. I was not ready. I thought it was just going to be like fun, like, "Ooh, *A League of Their Own*."
- Stacey Copeland: [27:23](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [27:23](#) "Like, look at this, old-timey lesbians!" But it was a full on like five Kleenex situation.
- Stacey Copeland: [27:28](#) Mm.
- Hannah McGregor: [27:28](#) It was, it was intense. But also really exciting to get even this micro history told through a queer lens. I was chatting with a friend—a friend of the show—Cynara Geissler about it afterwards. And she was like, "Isn't it interesting that the two women being described met in Moose Jaw and moved to Chicago in the '40s because it was safer." And she was like,

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

"What narratives do we hear about Chicago in the '40s? It's never that it is a safe place to be." It's always articulated as this like, den of iniquity, this wildly dangerous city. But all of our definitions of like what makes a city safe are really, really different when you're like...a couple of lesbians in the '40s--

Stacey Copeland: [28:14](#)

Mhm.

Hannah McGregor: [28:14](#)

--doing something that is literally illegal. You know, all of a sudden the big city becomes safe for you in a different way. And it was just like, even in that small register, the way that we understand reality, historically, becomes so, so different when we're offered different lenses on it. Anyway.

Stacey Copeland: [28:30](#)

No, completely. So I--

Hannah McGregor: [28:32](#)

Rec-, recommend.

Stacey Copeland: [28:33](#)

--I've listened to quite a bit of *The Lesbian Show* so far. There's a big collection of it as part of the Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony, which is an initiative by Elise Chenier here at Simon Fraser. And then there's a new big collection at the Vancouver Archives, which I'm very excited about. But listening back to these shows, there is so much fascinating history and interesting, very queer sound moments like sexual innuendo commentary over a lesbian baseball game [sic: should read "track and field"] at the Gay Games, you know?

Hannah McGregor: [29:07](#)

Yep!

Stacey Copeland: [29:07](#)

Or a tap dancing competition on air. [Laughs] And then like...

Hannah McGregor: [29:15](#)

So many of the lesbians I know love tap dancing. [Jokingly] Can you explain that to me?

Stacey Copeland: [29:19](#)

[Laughs] I don't know.

Hannah McGregor: [29:20](#)

[Laughs]

Stacey Copeland: [29:20](#)

Maybe it's connected to this '70s and '80s fad.

Hannah McGregor: [29:24](#)

Okay, great.

Stacey Copeland: [29:24](#)

I don't know, right? And then other moments like Valentine's call-in shows where women could call in anonymously and the host would read out a love letter to the person that they were having a crush on if they wanted to stay anonymous. And so we get all of these kinds of historical points and we also get a lot of

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

discussions around like working class lesbians and Black feminist lesbianism. And they also do discussions on global issues and transgender issues and solidarities, as well, throughout the LGBTQ community and the poor community, because they were also rooted in community radio stations.

Hannah McGregor: [30:07](#)

Yeah.

Stacey Copeland: [30:07](#)

So making those kind of connections and hearing those stories really does question and rewrite the histories that we understand.

Hannah McGregor: [30:15](#)

That's so exciting. History's great, right? What a fun discipline.

Stacey Copeland: [30:18](#)

[Laughs]

Hannah McGregor: [30:18](#)

Media history is the best. So, you mentioned that you're interested in, like, what does queer media sound like?

Stacey Copeland: [30:24](#)

Mhm.

Hannah McGregor: [30:24](#)

What does queer production sound like? And that was like... It really struck me even when you were describing like how podcasting and radio sound differently because they're produced differently.

Stacey Copeland: [30:35](#)

Mhm.

Hannah McGregor: [30:35](#)

So have you started to hypothesize what queer production sounds like?

Stacey Copeland: [30:40](#)

Yeah, it's tough, but there's already some examples that have come out of my kind of initial research into the subject. And some of them are when you're looking back at community radio, those moments where you can imagine someone flipping through the dial and then all of a sudden they're hearing two lesbians talk very sexually about another woman playing baseball [sic: should read "track and field"]. That kind of a moment is really, very queer, very queer--

Hannah McGregor: [31:07](#)

[Laughs]

Stacey Copeland: [31:07](#)

--in a way that--

Hannah McGregor: [31:08](#)

Yep!

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Stacey Copeland: [31:08](#) --in a way that isn't the same as podcasting because podcasting, in contrast, someone's going to be choosing to listen to that show.
- Hannah McGregor: [31:16](#) Mm...
- Stacey Copeland: [31:16](#) So then how are those produced in a more... To create a more queer audio experience? And I think shows like *Asking For It* that Kaitlin Prest and the collective at Mermaid Palace are, are making--
- Hannah McGregor: [31:29](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [31:29](#) --are great example of some of the queer feminist work that we're going to see moving forward where we have lesbian, queer, and feminist protagonists--
- Hannah McGregor: [31:40](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [31:40](#) --and taking on more difficult subjects, like same-sex relationship abuse and domestic abuse, but in ways that really bring us into the spaces in new ways. So it's not just voice-over conversation or a journalistic style of production. It's actually taking us into those rooms with the couple...
- Hannah McGregor: [32:01](#) Mm.
- Stacey Copeland: [32:01](#) Hearing both sounds of violence but also sounds of intimacy and sex in a podcast between two women, right?
- Hannah McGregor: [32:12](#) Yep!
- Stacey Copeland: [32:12](#) Creates these very queer audio experiences that we aren't used to hearing. And really, podcasting is perfect for creating that kind of experience in contrast to radio, because little coos from a woman, for instance, or soft crying is something that's much harder to communicate because of the compression and way that radio is broadcasted in contrast to a podcast.
- Hannah McGregor: [32:40](#) Oh, that's, that's super interesting. I just finished listening to the second season of *Within the Wires*.
- Stacey Copeland: [32:46](#) Mhm, yeah!
- Hannah McGregor: [32:46](#) Which is also--
- Stacey Copeland: [32:46](#) I've started listening to that. It's so good!

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Hannah McGregor: [32:46](#) It's, it's really good. And the second season has all of these examples of both crying and also intentional silences where the narrator is supposed to be recording these audio guides to art that was created by her former lover. And she begins to cry and then just stops talking for lengths of time. And as I was, was walking around and listening and I was like, "Oh, this is impossible in any other medium." Because you can't... There's an intentionality to listening and a kind of duration to listening with podcasting where like, I will sit here and listen to a solid minute of silence because I understand you have put it here intentionally.
- Stacey Copeland: [33:31](#) Mhm.
- Hannah McGregor: [33:31](#) And that will register to me. Whereas if you're flipping... [Laughs] I mean, I imagine if you're flipping through the radio, 'cause when have I flipped through the radio in my adult life? The answer is zero times.
- Stacey Copeland: [33:39](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [33:40](#) But I imagine if you're flipping through the radio and come across a station where there is a minute of silence, you will assume it's just not a station and keep going.
- Stacey Copeland: [33:47](#) Yeah, exactly. You'll assume something's going wrong and go somewhere else.
- Hannah McGregor: [33:51](#) Yeah, Yeah.
- Stacey Copeland: [33:52](#) Yeah. Yeah, moments like that. And there's also work with groups like Constellations. I don't know if you've heard of, of Constellations, but it was originally an installation—sound art installation—in Toronto and it traveled around a bit. And then it was put online as a series of podcasts. And it's really sound artists and podcasts and audio producers making these pieces that kind of push the boundaries in the way that we understand radio and podcast production and asking--
- Hannah McGregor: [34:24](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [34:24](#) --really intimate questions. So one of the episodes, for instance, takes us into a session where the audio producer is learning how to sing and voc-...and vocalize. But it takes us into these very intimate spaces in a way that sounds quite different because we're hearing the room, we're hearing overlap of time, so I think that's another way that we can think about it: a

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

queering of audio and queering of media is playing with our sense of time and space--

- Hannah McGregor: [34:55](#) Mm, mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [34:55](#) --in a way that we don't necessarily hear in traditional, linear, radio formats, right? It's 'cause--
- Hannah McGregor: [35:02](#) Yeah.
- Stacey Copeland: [35:02](#) --radio is traditionally produced as very linear: you tune in at six o'clock, it's going to be the six o'clock news. You tune in at five, we've got the traffic, right?
- Hannah McGregor: [35:13](#) Yep!
- Stacey Copeland: [35:13](#) And it's cyclical as well. So it's always pre-produced and cyclical every day. Versus podcasting can really play with those senses of time and space in a new way.
- Hannah McGregor: [35:23](#) Yeah. So this... Listening to you talk about production in this way... I mean, you are a great example of a scholar who comes into their work with a kind of experiential knowledge because of your background in audio production.
- Stacey Copeland: [35:38](#) Mhm.
- Hannah McGregor: [35:38](#) And I imagine your knowledge of audio production heightens your ability to understand what you're hearing and the kinds of deliberate choices that people are making when they are producing radio or podcasts. But I wonder if sort of before SpokenWeb and the other work we're doing together, if you had been thinking about, you know, sharing some of your research as a podcast, like, is that an impulse that you have given that you both work on and think about sound and are also a producer yourself?
- Stacey Copeland: [36:09](#) Yeah, and it's *hard*. [Laughs] So...
- Hannah McGregor: [36:11](#) [Laughs]
- Stacey Copeland: [36:11](#) It's very, very... It's a very different experience 'cause when you're writing academic work, you're writing with an academic audience in mind versus when--
- Hannah McGregor: [36:22](#) Mhm.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Stacey Copeland: [36:22](#) --you're creating something like a podcast or a radio documentary, you really want to make it as accessible as possible. And that can often be difficult to do--
- Hannah McGregor: [36:31](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [36:31](#) --as you know, from making this--
- Hannah McGregor: [36:33](#) Uh-huh
- Stacey Copeland: [36:33](#) --show and working with SpokenWeb. So I actually... I attempted to do that for a first time during my MA. So I made a three-piece radio documentary that went with my MA work. I think the first part is really good and I think then I got too heady and it's really still--
- Hannah McGregor: [36:50](#) [Laughs]
- Stacey Copeland: [36:50](#) --for an academic audience in the second--
- Hannah McGregor: [36:52](#) Yep.
- Stacey Copeland: [36:52](#) --and third part. But my, my goal is to try and do that again with my PhD work.
- Hannah McGregor: [36:57](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [36:57](#) So radio documentary, audio documentary is part of the process that I'm going through. So I'll be keeping an audio diary as a feminist reflexive method--
- Hannah McGregor: [37:09](#) Yes.
- Stacey Copeland: [37:09](#) --throughout my research process. So after each interview, I'll sit down with my microphone and kind of detox and have a bit of a--
- Hannah McGregor: [37:16](#) [Laughs]
- Stacey Copeland: [37:16](#) --confessional moment and work through my material that way. And so I am trying to think through, and I think working with SpokenWeb and thinking about the way that we can translate academic work into something that's more publicly accessible and just more enjoyable, to be honest. Sometimes reading--
- Hannah McGregor: [37:35](#) Mhm!

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Stacey Copeland: [37:35](#) --a lot of large manuscripts and articles can, can be a lot if you want to grasp a subject. I know I'm more of an oral learner. So thinking about the ways that we can use some of these production techniques, and especially when you're thinking about sound and in something intimate, like queer experience and queer identity, how can I marry these two things together in a way that really makes it useful and enjoyable and also informative, right?
- Hannah McGregor: [38:03](#) [Laughs] Yeah.
- Stacey Copeland: [38:03](#) At the end of the day, getting those ideas across is a big part of it.
- Hannah McGregor: [38:07](#) Yep.
- Stacey Copeland: [38:07](#) And so I do think SpokenWeb is doing some interesting work that way.
- Hannah McGregor: [38:10](#) And it's also interesting, as part of working on this project, to see the places that are challenges and the places that come more easily and maybe whose work lends itself to that kind of translation or mobilization more readily, right? Because there are, there are different kinds and levels of translation that are required for different kinds of fields. And there is... I, I've been finding myself... I'm trying to relearn how to write right now--
- Stacey Copeland: [38:42](#) Mm.
- Hannah McGregor: [38:42](#) --because I was rigorously trained how to write over a decade of education in a very particular way with a very narrow audience in mind and have come to the conclusion that I personally don't particularly want to write to that audience. I mean, I don't want to exclude that audience either, but I don't want that to be my primary audience. But the ease with which I produce scholarly prose at this point is such that it is like *physically difficult* [Laughs] to produce anything else. But I have to stop myself and be like, "Nope, okay, nobody understands any of these words and also that sentence was 14 lines long. Why are you doing this?"
- Hannah and Stacey: [39:24](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah McGregor: [39:24](#) A friend of mine once said, "I write as though I'm challenging myself to fit every preposition into every sentence."
- Hannah and Stacey: [39:29](#) [Laughs]

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Hannah McGregor: [39:31](#) Which was rude, but true. And podcasting for me, especially sort of over these different projects, has been a way to try to find a different voice as a scholar. That rather than starting with the work and then trying to translate it, by actually doing the thinking through this medium I'm finding the ability to, to articulate a different kind of scholarly voice with a different audience and a different conversation in mind. So I love that idea of like keeping the audio journal as you go, of, of building sound into the process itself so that it's not a sort of "once all the research is done and I've written all of the papers and I know everything and exactly how I want it to sound, then I will translate it." It's like, how do I actually think when I think out loud?
- Stacey Copeland: [40:22](#) Mhm.
- Hannah McGregor: [40:22](#) Because we think differently, don't we, when we think out loud?
- Stacey Copeland: [40:25](#) I mean, I know I do. Yeah. And sound does bring this entirely new element into it. Part of the other sound element that I'm bringing into my process is actually playing archival clips for my interviewees to kind of evoke--
- Hannah McGregor: [40:39](#) Mm...
- Stacey Copeland: [40:39](#) --some of those memories and experiences back. And I think that's part of what excited me about the SpokenWeb project, too, is thinking about how can we use sound archives in new ways? How can we take all of these fascinating stories and voices out of places that are usually exclusively for researchers and librarians and archivists and bring them to the public, take them out of the dusty box and into--
- Hannah McGregor: [41:07](#) [Laughs]
- Stacey Copeland: [41:07](#) --the digital space, right, and create this kind of time overlap. So there is some, some relationship between maybe me listening to a lesbian's experience in 1982 when I'm listening in 2020. And I think--
- Hannah McGregor: [41:23](#) Yeah.
- Stacey Copeland: [41:23](#) --we have, you know, this very long history of sound recordings, not being archived properly, not being given the same value, but we're seeing a huge change in the last couple years and it's definitely exciting times for sound scholars.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Hannah McGregor: [41:37](#) Do you think that there's anything behind this, this sonic turn in the humanities? Why are we suddenly taking sound seriously?
- Stacey Copeland: [41:44](#) [Laughs] I mean, this is a great question. There's a couple theories behind it, one of them being that we're finally really used to the visual, we're bombarded with it every day, the novelty's kind of wearing off. And so we're actually finding ourselves retreating into sound in new ways that we never had before. We're wearing headphones as we commute to curate our own spaces, to listen--
- Hannah McGregor: [42:08](#) Mhm.
- Stacey Copeland: [42:08](#) --and create these experiences for ourselves in ways that we never had before. Listening used to be very communal, now it's very personal. So it's creating new connections and new relationships to sound that we didn't necessarily have before, which I think, I think gives more value or at least perceptive value to some of these recordings from the past. [Stacey's Theme Music: "Time Travel" by Blouse]
- Hannah McGregor: [42:44](#) If you want to learn more about Stacey's work you can check out her website at staceycopeland.com. That's Stacey, S T A C E Y, Copeland, C O P E L A N D.com. You can also follow her on Twitter @ASCopeland. Show notes for the website, as per usual, are at secretfeministagenda.com. You can follow me on Twitter @hkpmcgregor and you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. And, of course, you can review the show. We have two lovely reviews this week. One is from magicpages in Germany and the other is from katcam92 in Canada. Thank you both so much. The podcast theme song is "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans off their album *Chub Rub*. You can download the entire album on freemusicarchive.org or follow them on Facebook. Stacey's theme song was "Time Travel" by Blouse. This episode was recorded on the traditional and unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations where I'm grateful to live and work. This has been *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Pass it on. [Theme Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]