

Title: Blockade Airwaves: the Poetry and Performance of Olga Bergholz  
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Abstract:

Ubiquitously remembered as a lifeline during the Siege, radio played an unparalleled role in Leningrad between 1941 and 1944. For the beleaguered residents of the city, radio was a tool for communicating practical instructions and news from the front at a time when the distribution and periodicity of newspapers was radically diminished. Besides information on the wartime effort, broadcasters were also responsible for drumming up the patriotic cause through inspirational readings and performances. This paper will focus on one of Radio Leningrad's most prolific writer-broadcasters Olga Bergholz, a poet whose on-air readings and distinctive language came to metaphorically represent the voice of Leningraders. Through an examination of the poet's verse and her post-war memoirs, the paper will illustrate how Bergholz's readings challenged wartime conventions by moving away from the galvanizing rhetoric of leading male broadcasters towards a personal, fluid, conversational style.