

Richard K. Thomas

Presents

...Recommend it to musicians, composers, performers and anyone in art and entertainment.

--Matt Booty, Head of Microsoft Studios

Music as a Chariot offers a multidisciplinary perspective whose primary proposition is that theatre is a type of music. Understanding how music enables the theatre experience helps to shape our entire approach to the performing arts.

Beginning with a discussion on the origin and nature of time, the author takes us on an evolutionary journey to discover how music, language and mimesis co-evolved, eventually coming together to produce the complex way we experience theatre.

The book integrates the evolutionary neuroscience of the human brain into this journey, offering practical implications and applications for the auditory expression of this concept—namely the fundamental techniques artists use to create sound scores for theatre.

With contributions from directors, playwrights, actors and designers, *Music as a Chariot* explores the use of music to carry ideas into the human soul—a concept that extends beyond the theatrical to include film, video gaming, dance, or anywhere art is manipulated in time.

Richard K. Thomas is Professor of Visual and Performing Arts at Purdue University with over 100 credits as a composer, sound designer, author, playmaker, and educator. He is a Fellow of USITT, and winner of the 2018 Distinguished Achievement Award in Sound Design and Technology.

THEATRE

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MUSIC AS A CHARIOT

RICHARD K. THOMAS

Routledge



MUSIC AS A CHARIOT

THE EVOLUTIONARY ORIGINS OF THEATRE IN
TIME, SOUND, AND MUSIC



RICHARD K. THOMAS

A three day workshop exploring topics in the book

Music as a Chariot is a three-day intensive workshop to introduce composers, sound designers, directors and others interested in developing an enhanced aesthetic and understanding of the power of sound and music to fundamentally create and transform the dramatic experience.

Music as a Chariot

Description

Almost 14 billion years ago the Big Bang set into motion fundamental laws that govern the behavior of energy in time and space. These laws made music not only possible, but eventually caused music to evolve into a fundamental element of the human experience. *Music as a Chariot* combines biological, anthropological, neurological, philosophical, psychological and historical evidence into a fascinating story that explains and explores the dominance of music in popular culture, and the fundamental role it plays in empowering ideas in song and dramatic action.

This lecture and project-based workshop introduces the fundamental thesis of the book, that theatre is a *type* of music. In *Music as a Chariot*, we place particular emphasis throughout the workshop on the differences between music composition as an autonomous art, and as a vehicle for inciting emotion and manipulating the perception of time by theatre audiences. In short, the workshop helps us to understand the implications of using music to transport audiences into the dramatic worlds of theatre.

The workshop includes a series of lecture/discussions that trace the evolution of music, theatre, and mimesis, and how core elements of design and composition evolved to become artistic tools. Full participants in the workshop further explore these elements in simple recording projects in which they attempt to incite specific emotions of love, fear, anger, joy and sadness in their peers by isolating the design element under consideration. Additional projects allow full participants to explore and develop their own aesthetic in relation to how they use sound and music to carry dramatic ideas. At the end of the course, then, students should be able to articulate fundamental elements of design and begin to explain how they use those elements to carry stories and ideas.

Music as a Chariot is intended for participants who are keenly interested in exploring the relationship between the creation of sound scores, and the audience who experiences the sound scores. Past participants have come from a wide range of media, including theatre, film and video, and video games, and many diverse occupations, from designer to director to visual artist to consumers of popular media culture. Two levels of involvement are possible. The lecture/discussions can hold a relatively large number of audience members, depending on the size of the venue. Full participants create and explore projects together, and should be limited to 10-15 participants. Their work will be presented and explored during the lectures and discussions. Full participants will need to have a portable device that records audio. Most smartphones will have an app available that will record audio in mp3, WAV, or AIFF formats.

Historical Background

Music as a Chariot is an adaptation of an introduction to sound design course developed by Professor Thomas at Purdue University. The course was initially developed in 1977, and has been taught and developed over the course of the last forty years to reflect the professor's research shared in publications, lectures, webinars and workshops all over the world. It has become clear from the number of participants in the original course that even faculty, staff and graduate students from diverse disciplines have strong desires to gain a more in-depth understanding of how music affects us as human beings, and how music serves as a primal force in theatre, film, ritual and other art forms. But the lessons learned from this interdisciplinary experience go far beyond music and into a deeper understanding of the nature of who we are as human beings.

This course is clearly the most popular course that this professor teaches. A few pertinent comments from prior courses:

"...Amazing in how <projects> correlate to the overall concepts in the course. The way the assignments and projects and compositions are set up provides a perfect way for students to show what they take from a concept, how they apply it, and receive feedback on what went right and what went wrong. The overall classroom discussions are great. The lectures...were extremely interesting."

"I appreciated very much that <the professor> told us at the beginning of the semester that we would not be judged on our artistic abilities....It allowed me to feel free to create and explore new things without ever worrying about my actual craft skills and my so called talent. The creative process was respectful and pressure-free thus SO enjoyable."

"I never expected a course in sound design could take on such an angle (evolution!?). I now understand more systematically how emotions can, and in some cases cannot be carried by elements of music...I was able to relate to my past experience and think about why something I did worked (or didn't work), and interestingly, those are not limited to sound design/music composition stuff....The course is inspiring in many different ways....beneficial to not only sound students, but actors, directors as well."

"This course has deeply enhanced my capacity for examining and articulating the importance of musicality in my directing work. I have long known it was a priority, but I didn't have the vocabulary to address it with actors or designers. I have struggled with rhythm in the past and sitting in on this course has helped me improve this aspect of my work. Also, I no longer feel shy or weird about expressing my intuitions about sound and musicality because I now have knowledge that validates them."

Comments on the 3-Day Workshop:

This workshop was great, information-packed, inspirational and fun! [Richard](#) shone through a very challenging task and did a wonderful job, taking us on a magical journey and immersing us into the magnificent, exciting world of sound. It was wonderful getting to know and interacting with other professionals in the area.

Music as a Chariot

3-Day Workshop Schedule

	Day 1: Music = Time Manipulated	Day 2: Song = Music + Idea	Day 3: Theatre = Song + Mimesis
9:00 - 12:00 a.m.	Why Do We Need This Workshop?	Primate Numbers	Ritual, Arousal, Reward, Ecstasy
	Let There Be a Big Bang	Campfire Songs	
12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Lunch Project	The Mass Project	The Rhythm Project	The Texture Project
2:00 - 5:00 p.m.	The Great Mystery of Time	Music and Language	Music Mimesis and Memory
	The Great Mystery of Time	Consonance and Dissonance	
Evening Project:	The Color Project	The Line Project	End of Workshop