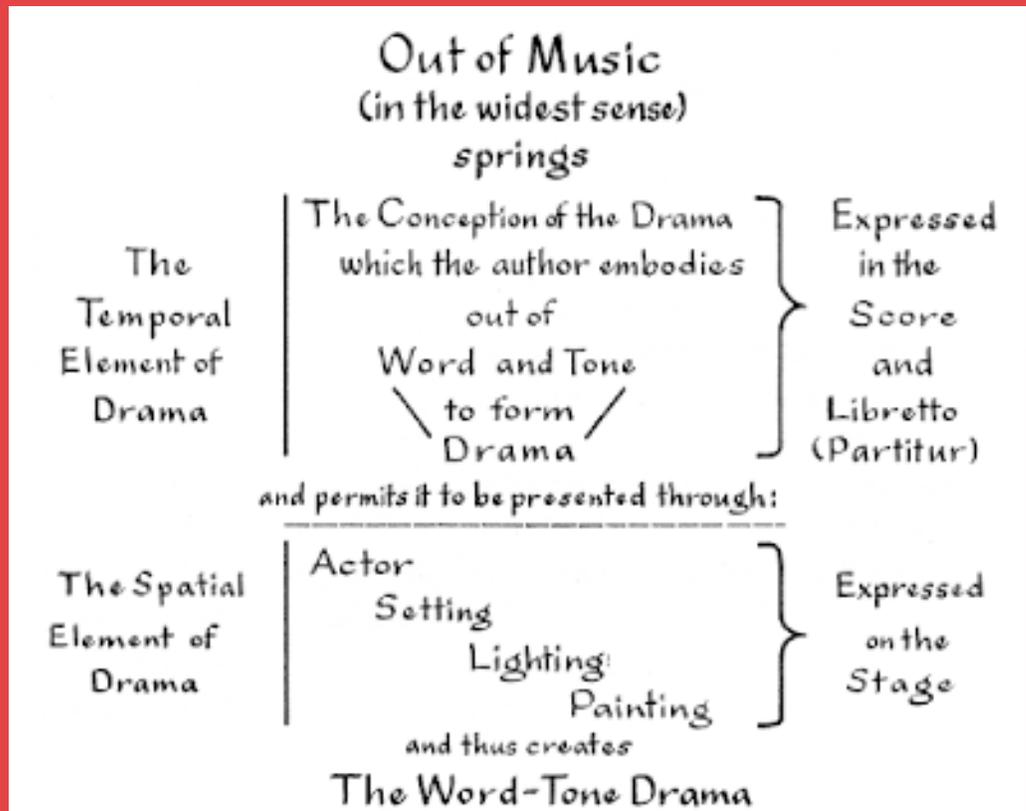


the
FUNCTION
of the
SOUNDSCAPE

by Richard K. Thomas

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From *Music and the Art of Theatre* by Adolphe Appia. This diagram is found only in the German version.

The new millennium finds a curious irony in the development of sound in the theatre. The use of sound in theatrical productions has achieved a prominence and sophistication unimaginable at the dawn of the twentieth century. The irony is that in the history of the theatre, sound may have never isolated itself so totally from the other elements of a production as it has today. In most theatres the members of the sound team are routinely treated as either idiots or mystic gurus. In either case, their work is widely regarded by the other members of the production team as beyond understanding. In film and the video games industry, the entire visual component of a production is typically created first, and then turned over to a sound team for development. Interaction between visual and auditory teams is the exception rather than the rule.

This paper hopes to make a case for an aesthetic foundation upon which sound design rests. It derives its origins from foundations that should be very familiar to visual designers. Hopefully, an understanding by *all*

members of the production team regarding the function of the soundscape will help the entire creative team bridge the gaps between the visual and the aural aspects of a production. An understanding of the function of the soundscape may also encourage the development of a more unified production approach to emerge.

Some Synonyms

Several terms are used interchangeably in this paper. Whether the terms are indeed synonyms can certainly be debated. However, that debate is beyond the scope of this paper. It might be useful to note that these synonyms derive not so much from technical definitions of the words, but from the approach I have developed in creating soundscapes.

The first pair of synonyms are the words “composition” and “design.” In the context of this paper, either term refers to the organization of sonic or visual elements for the express purpose of communicating with an audience. The second pair of synonyms are the words “music” and “sound.” These refer to audible events

organized for the purpose of communicating. By defining these terms in this manner, the paper does not differentiate between *music composition* and *sound design*. They are the same and can be used interchangeably.

The last pair of synonyms are “speech” and “song,” and their derivatives, such as “dialogue” and “singing.” In this paper, these terms refer to vocal communication combining words and music. Treating speech and song as synonyms is fundamentally important to the development of a unified aesthetic for the function of the soundscape.

The Function of the Soundscape

This paper will attempt to present the single principle that guides my work as a composer and sound designer of theatre soundscapes. It begins with a discussion relating Adolphe Appia’s theatre aesthetic to fundamental principles of sound in the theatre. Next, these ideas are developed in a discussion about the relationship between the language of the script and the music of the drama. That discussion leads finally to the development of a guiding principle for sound called “The Function of the Soundscape.”

APPIA’S HIERARCHY OF DRAMA

It seems that Appia could have written his revised forward to *Music and the Art of Theatre* just as appropriately today as in 1918:

At the time when I wrote and published this volume the problem of production, and consequently of dramatic art, was of concern to no one. The audience, as well as the specialists in the field, was preoccupied solely with innovation through an ever increasing sumptuousness in setting, or else through an ever more complete realism: this attitude toward stage setting condemned the dramatist to mark time. (Appia 1962, 1)

Let us take a look at how Appia’s views reflect back on “The Function of the Soundscape.”

At the 1999 OISTAT Scenography Symposium, Belgian director Marc Schillemans said, “All theatre starts with a script.” Most theatre artists agree with that thesis and begin their work on a production with an analysis of the intellectual ideas communicated by the words in the script. However, Appia suggests a radically different way to understand drama:

Out of Music (in the widest sense) springs the conception of the drama which the author embodies out of word and tone to form drama and permits it to be presented through: actor, setting, lighting, (and) painting. (Appia 1962, 27)

Appia explains the importance of this hierarchy:

A dramatic idea requiring musical expression in order to be revealed must spring from the hidden world of our inner life, since this life cannot be expressed except through music and music can express only that life. By means of the spoken word, [the dramatist] endows it with a practical dramatic form and composes the poetic-musical text, the score. (Appia 1962, 26)

The idea here is that the script and the spoken words are only the outward manifestations of the inner life of the character and the drama. They are not the inner life, and are relatively powerless on their own to express the inner life. Music, on the other hand, expresses that inner life directly, and is incapable of expressing anything but the inner life. Our potential to experience and participate in an inner life draws us to the theatre in the first place. The primal impulse for the creation of the drama is music, and, for Appia this implied that the drama itself would be full of music. He could not help but “wonder what usefulness a scenic reform...could have for dramatic works in which music plays a minor role or is absent altogether.” (Appia 1962, 196)

Of course, music has always been an integral part of drama. Drama *evolved* out of music, or more precisely, any area presided over by the Muses. Aristotle believed that tragedy derived from the dithyramb and comedy from the phallic songs (Aristotle 1962, 74). Thespis changed the structure of the tragedy by introducing the spoken word, which was nevertheless governed by strict rules of rhythm, melody and harmony (Brockett 1968, 11). One needs to look no further than the overwhelming popularity of the Broadway musical compared to spoken text plays to realize how successfully this concept has withstood the test of time. However, if Appia’s premise is correct, then where do we find this music in the spoken text play, and what are the implications of our findings for “The Function of the Soundscape?”

THE DUALITY OF LANGUAGE: Ideas & Music

One element is largely missing from the pervasive power of music: intellectual discourse. Schopenhauer said, “Music by itself never expresses the phenomenon, but only the essence of the phenomenon.” (Schaupenhaur 1911, 308) Language, on the other hand, has the ability to communicate precise intellectual ideas, which prompted Appia to suggest that “in order to define his expression, the musician needs the poet.” (Appia 1962, 45)

Written language differs from spoken language in that written language provides the intellectual ideas to which the reader interprets the music of the inner life. Within the capacity of the *spoken* word, however, we find

two types of communication: the intellectual communication of ideas through the signs and symbols of words, and the “inner life,” which is communicated through the music, embedded within the vocalization of the performer. The general assumption seems to be that the ideas of a play give birth to the musical expression. Appia suggests that the nature of drama was the other way around; language provides the musical manifestation of the inner life with a practical dramatic form.

This is a very important distinction, because so often we presume that the function of theatre is *intellectual discourse*, not the conveyance of the inner essence of human existence. Therefore, we start our discussions of theatre and plays by boiling down the intellectual discourse to “themes” and other “ideas.” We force our students to read plays rather than experience them. Unfortunately, the music of the play only communicates through experience, and a script without performance tends to emphasize communication of intellectual ideas. We teach students in our classes that the theme of *Antigone* is “the conflict between divine law and human

the musicality of the poetry is dictated by notated music, and creates the inner life powering the literal meaning of the words which the actor must follow. However, in the world of spoken word plays, the ideas are fixed, but the actors *interpret* the music in their speech melodies, vocal inflections, etc. Our problem then, is that it is easy to presume that the music, which does not exist in written form as it does in opera or musical comedy, is dictated by the intellectual ideas of the words. However, the opposite is clearly the case. The poet in the dramatist takes great care to construct the speech to communicate that inner-life by fitting the words to the music of the poetry, *not the other way around*. When Shakespeare wrote in iambic pentameter, he forced himself to fit the meaning to the music. It does not make a difference whether it is Shakespeare or Williams, or Mamet or Fugard. The poet in all great dramatists fits the words to the music. Therefore, even in the language of spoken text plays, we understand an *a priori* existence of the music of the inner life *before* the intellectual communication of the words.

Music expresses that inner life directly, and is incapable of expressing anything but the inner life.

law,” or that the theme of *Macbeth* is that “too much ambition leads to self destruction.” We then test our students’ ability to understand the plays by their ability to squeeze a *theme* out of the play. In doing so, we tend to squeeze the (inner) life right out of the play.

Appia seemed to reinforce this idea when he says, “the dramatist who uses only the spoken word appeals only to our understanding.” (Appia 1962, 15) Certainly, there is a communication afforded by language that permits the transfer of intellectual ideas from one party to another. However, in theatre, this intellectual communication takes on a special character that is quite different from the discourse of the sciences, or law, for example. Theatre connects intellectual communication to the soul, or the inner life of the characters in a play. This special connection is at the heart of the theatre experience, and music is the single most important force that makes that connection.

A symphonic performance can create the inner life directly in an audience with just music. Drama attaches important ideas to a similar “inner life” in the minds of the audience. Unlike the symphony, the instigator and primary conveyer of this complex communication in drama is the actor.

In opera and a great part of the modern musical,

Theatre springs from the inner life that music provides, and theatre associates that inner life with an intellectual discourse that brings profound enlightenment to humanity’s most fundamental questions. The moment we accept the primal role that music in its broadest sense plays in instigating the drama, we open ourselves to the approach that music in its more audible manifestation must play in the drama.

THE FUNCTION OF SOUND IN DRAMA

Historical Background

When we examine some of the historical perspectives regarding the function of sound in the theatre we discover a multitude of attempts to define that function. Harold Burris-Meyer provided the first attempt at codifying the functions of sound in the drama in his landmark text, *Sound in the Theatre*. He defined eight functions for sound in the theatre:

1. To transmit the human voice in speech or song (adequate audibility is always the first requisite);
2. To establish locale (bird songs, traffic noises);
3. To establish atmosphere (wind and rain);

4. To create and sustain mood (combinations of devices used for locale and atmosphere; distortion of speech; soft music);
5. As an independent arbitrary emotional stimulus (music, non-associative sounds);
6. As an actor (the voice of the Living Newspaper);
7. To reveal character (the unspoken aside);
8. To advance the plot (sound bridges between scenes or episodes) (Burriss-Meyer 1979, 2)

David Collison attempted to quantify the functions of sound effects in his book *Stage Sound* by suggesting five functions:

1. To establish (a) locale, (b) time of year, (c) day or night, (d) weather conditions;
2. To evoke atmosphere;
3. To link scenes;
4. As an emotional stimulus;
5. To reproduce physical happenings: spot cues like cars arriving, babies crying, clocks

striking, elephants falling out of trees, etc. (Collison 1976, 75)

Carol Waaser also lists five functions in her book *Sound and Music for the Theatre*:

1. Realistic effects called for in the Script;
2. Voiceovers;
3. Punctuation effects for entrances and exits, ends of scenes;
4. Underscoring for mood or character themes;
5. Preshow atmosphere. (Waaser, 67-69)

John Bracewell identified seven in his excellent text, *Sound Design in the Theatre*:

1. Audibility;
2. Motivation;
3. Music;
4. Vocal alteration;
5. Vocal substitution;
6. Extension of dramatic space/time;
7. Mood. (Bracewell 1993, 207)

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1. Note that Bracewell also groups these functions into three somewhat similar categories: *Practical*, referring to the "necessary considerations for audience comfort in perceiving the vocal component of dramatic production;" *Dramatic*, referring to "those things that directly advance or condition the progress of the drama or the environment within which the dramatic action takes place;" and *Aesthetic*, which "designates matters that have to do with personal interpretation of the immediate emotional character of the drama and with the long-term development of feelings and attitudes as modified by the dramatic experience." (Bracewell 1993, 207)

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Three Categories

The functions described in the preceding historical texts all seem to group into three general (although often overlapping) categories:

1. Amplifying or otherwise manipulating actor's voice;
2. Recreating sounds as they naturally occur; and
3. Influencing the emotional content of the drama.¹

Grouping the authors under these three general categories might produce the following combinations:

Influencing the emotional content of the actor's voice:

To transmit the human voice in speech or song; as an actor; to reveal character (Burris-Meyer);
Voiceovers (Waaser);
Audibility, vocal alteration, vocal substitution (Bracewell).

Recreating sounds as they naturally occur:

To establish locale, to establish atmosphere (Burris-Meyer);
To establish (a) locale, (b) time of year, (c) day or night, (d) weather conditions, or to reproduce physical happenings; (Collison);
Realistic effects called for in the script (Waaser);
Motivation (Bracewell).

Influencing the emotional content of the drama:

To create and sustain mood, as an independent arbitrary emotional stimulus, to advance the plot (Burris-Meyer);

To evoke atmosphere, to link scenes (Collison);
Punctuation effects for entrances and exits, ends of scenes, underscoring for mood or character themes, preshow atmosphere (Waaser);

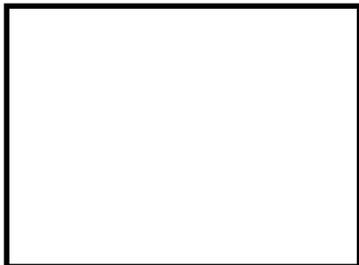
Motivation, music, extension of dramatic space/time, mood (Bracewell).

Influencing the Emotional Content of the Drama

Notice that the last category is by far the largest, and all of the authors in one way or another imply an inclusion of the first two categories in the last. Bracewell specifically includes all of his seven functions as influencing the emotional content of the drama:

Mood... is the manipulation of all of the other functions in order to enhance the mood and emotional character of a play, of acts and scenes within the play, and of individual beats and moments within acts and scenes. For example, one is not likely to choose a bright, trumpet fanfare as lead-in to a dark, melancholy scene in a jail cell. (Bracewell 1993, 208)

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Another outstanding treatise on the subject, written about the same time as Bracewell's book, also emphasizes the emotional function of sound. Deena Kaye and James LeBrecht write in *Sound and Music for the Theatre*:

Rain or snow can be calm, menacing, inviting, or foreboding. Just as a menacing person presents the threat of attack, an approaching rainstorm with distant thunder poses the threat of a more violent storm to come. And just as a person who is friendly and warm makes you feel relaxed, the tempo, rhythm and muffled lull of a gentle rain can be soothing and comforting...A jungle can elicit many sorts of emotions...But without very specific consideration about the dramatic and emotional impact you want your sound to make, the finished sound design will become chaotic. (Kaye 1992, 12)

Clearly one can infer from the above that these authors together place a special importance on the power of sound to make an audience feel something. Upon closer examination, the importance of the first two categories diminishes further in comparison with the third.

manipulated or not—functionally from the music of the soundscape is the first step towards disassociating the soundscape from the inner life. The previous section on music and language discussed the musical component of spoken text. The actor's voice is part of the music, and that part must therefore have the same function as the music. Rather than treat it as a separate element, we need to learn to treat the actor's voice as part of the music, e.g., as the melody to which the soundscape provides the orchestration. So, in the end, any manipulation of the actor's voice must necessarily be part of the music, and serve the same function as the music.

Recreating sounds as they naturally occur is a much more problematic and complex issue.

Appia and Scenic Illusion

Appia argues forcibly that “there can be no such thing as scenic illusion.” (Appia 1962, 34) He argues that “whenever we do use the term we are referring either to the illusion of reality produced by the setting or that which is created by the actors. But it cannot be both at the same time, for although they are not always mutually exclusive, these two sources of scenic illusion have nothing in common.” (Appia 1962, 34) He adds, “During the performance, the audience is presumed not to be aware that the same roof which shelters them [the audi-

A loudspeaker is not the source of sound in the same way that a fresnel is the source of light.

Manipulating the Actor's Voice

Generally speaking, amplifying and recording the human voice is not so much a function of sound, as it is a function of sound equipment. A loudspeaker is not the source of sound in the same way that a fresnel is the source of light. The source is still the actor's voice, and the function of the sound of the actor's voice does not change. Of course, a common practice in amplifying and recording the actor's voice is the manipulation of the sonic qualities of the actor's voice. However, when one examines the purpose in such manipulations, one invariably concludes that the manipulations are typically made to influence the emotional content of the drama. Why does Darth Vader's voice need to be so low? To convince the audience that this is the way he speaks? It is more likely that the director and sound designer understood the ability of the rich low voice to condition the audience emotionally.

There is a greater danger in the existence of this category, however. Separating the actor's voice—whether

ence] also covers the actors in the strange world of the stage.” (Appia 1962, 51) Appia rejects the idea that the proscenium frame could effectively focus the attention of the audience on the *mise en scene*, and describes the imposed boundaries of stage floor, wings and borders as “an infamous practical joke.” (Appia 1962, 55)

Scenic illusion in sound is even more blatantly false and distracting because lighting can be used in the visual realm to help remove the obviousness of the artifice, namely the theatre building, the audience, etc. We have not found a way to remove the acoustic signature of the hall from the sonic scenic illusion, nor of eliminating the ambient noise of the audience. Every time we introduce a sound effect *masquerading* as a real sound, we jerk the audience out of the performance by the incongruity of the acoustic signature of the theatre environment. The illusion of the car sound effect that drives up in the *mise en scene* is ruined by the inescapable truth that the car sounds like it is entering backstage.

Appia further argues that scenic illusion is required

only to “satisfy the tastes of the average audience...” that “true art never tries to deceive...” and yet “the average audience will always ask to be deceived.” (Appia 1962, 33) Music compels the audience to transcend this hurdle because it “sweeps the audience along with the sheer force of its own rhythm. And in so doing it fulfills man’s need—a need in most cases impossible to satisfy—to *escape* from himself in order to find himself again.” (Appia 1962, 34) This is the highest purpose of theatre. My old director friend Jim O’Connor used to tell me, “I don’t want reality. Who would pay twenty bucks to come and see a day in my life?”

The Problem with Sonic Scenic Illusion

The plain fact of the matter is that sound is a very poor communicator of intellectual ideas. In one course I teach at Purdue University, the first assignment of the class is called “The Sound Story.” The assignment is for each student to record a one-minute story without words. The student plays their story for the class and must sit patiently while the class tells them the story. I count on the exercise to create a great amount of discussion, confusion, disagreement and controversy regarding the simple plot of the story. The class usually finds it impossible to provide even the broadest details that a textual description or a visual enactment could easily provide. Along the way, we always discover how difficult it is to understand exactly what sounds mean. Typical observations include:

- Even audiophile recordings of a sound do not sound “real” when we play them back without the visual reinforcement (try recording yourself actually “punching” somebody);
- Many sounds are indistinguishable from each other (is that rain or bacon frying?);
- Natural sounds lack specificity (that blizzard might say “winter,” but is it January or February, and which day?);
- The acoustic environment of the recording is often incompatible with the acoustic playback environment.

In the final analysis, using sound to communicate intellectual ideas is for all practical purposes impossible beyond simple, rudimentary and typically iconic uses.

If communicating intellectual ideas is so limited and impractical in theatre, why do so many playwrights populate their plays with natural sound? Appia may be correct in suggesting that theatrical productions cater to the “tastes of the average audience,” but experience has also shown that productions whose sonic objective is solely theatrical illusion are almost never remembered for their outstanding sound designs. Outstanding sound designs that use so-called “naturalistic sound” are almost always remembered for their ability to affect the emotional state of an audience. Natural sound

is not so much the function of sound in the drama as it is a style employed to allow sound to affect the emotional state of the audience.

Consider, for example, one of the most powerful uses of a natural sound in a classic American play, the signature sound of Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire*. When Blanche first talks about the loss of Belle Reve, we are overwhelmed with the sound of a streetcar passing by. Sure, Williams uses the sound of the streetcar because it perfectly fits the style and setting of the play. However, he does not use the streetcar to tell the audience that a streetcar has gone by, or to tell them that the Kowalski family lives near a streetcar line—these things are immaterial to the heart of the play. Instead, he uses the overwhelming power of the streetcar to make his audience feel the power of a *streetcar named desire*, and to associate that power with the controlling emotions lurking within the character of Blanche Dubois.

The Function of the Soundscape

When we consider the special power that music has, we begin to suspect that sound has one function that must reign over all others.

We have already explored Schopenhauer’s observation that “Music never expresses the phenomenon but only the inner essence of the phenomenon.” (Schopenhauer 1911, 308] Appia suggested something even more potent: “the poet-musician, thanks to the music, presents us not only with external effects of emotions...but with the emotions themselves.” (Appia 1962, 16) He suggested that this special power of music extends through the actors and beyond:

Put a character in that setting (the walls of a room), and let five minutes’ worth of music suggest a mood to him, some manner of acting, it matters not what—or simply let the music flow over his physical presence like some evanescent liquid, and suddenly the atmosphere takes on life, the setting becomes expressive; and the walls of the room, because they are not a part of this expression, cease to exist. (Appia 1962, 59)

We have seen that sound is not particularly adept at communicating intellectual ideas, in the same way that language does, or in the same way that a “picture is worth a thousand words.” If the dramatic experience starts with a musical impulse, to which the poet provides a practical dramatic form, then music is the direct agent of the cathartic experience. The soundscape attains its highest and most effective purpose when it serves this very critical and singular function:

the soundscape makes us feel a certain way about the world we are experiencing.

Whether we employ stylistic devices such as the illusion of realism or not, we are most certainly destined to succeed if we focus our sonic energies on manipulating the emotional state of the theatre audience. Let the meaning of the words and the visual signs communicate the intellectual ideas. They are much better at that. Begin by focusing the sound on manipulating the emotions of the audience. My friend Vladimir Franz, a wonderful Czech theatre composer

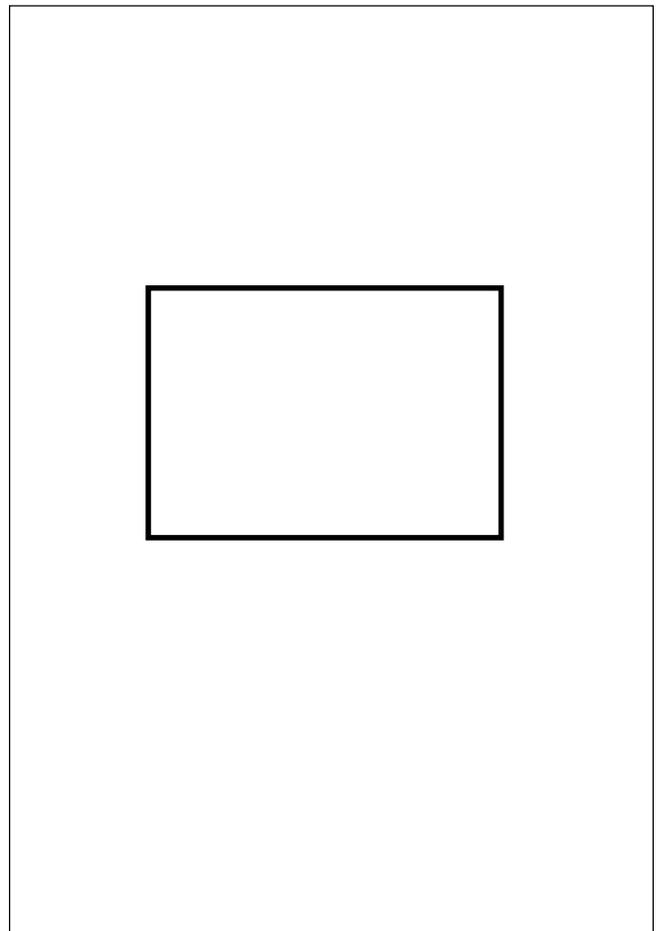
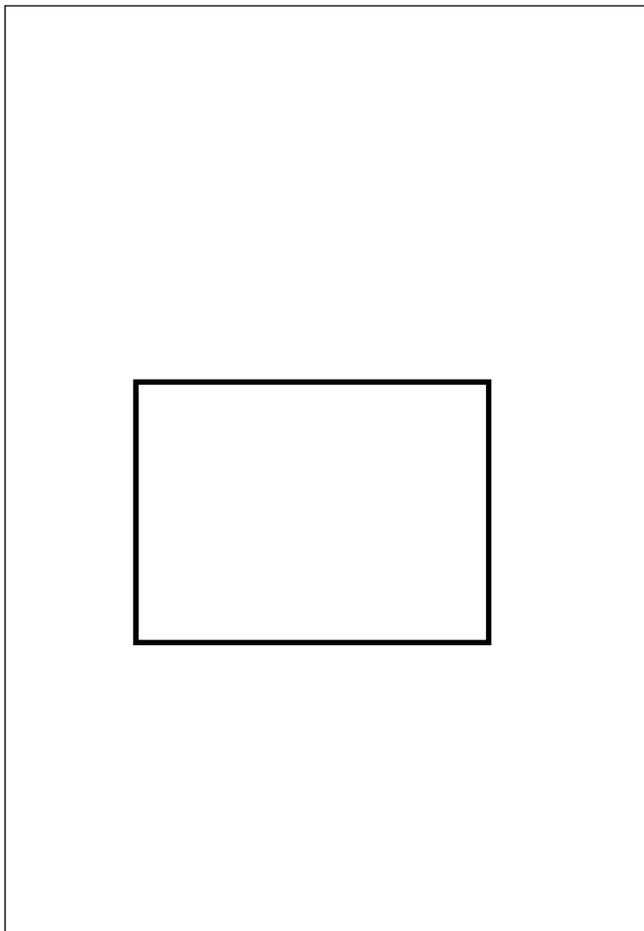
doorbell if you integrate it into the musical fabric of the drama properly.

I would like to share an example from a recent work of mine. It may help to demonstrate the difference between adhering to the literal ideas of the script, and exploring the music dictated by the inner life of the drama. I will try to show the benefits of starting from a vantagepoint that the function of sound is to manipulate the emotions of the audience.

...a car horn will probably work just as good as a doorbell if you integrate it into the musical fabric of the drama properly.

said, "Whatever the staging or the film is, virtually any music can be used for it, if—to put it vulgarly—played at the right moment...The music and the corresponding situation simply need a point in common." (Franz 2000, 23) I have often expressed a similar thought to my students: It doesn't make a difference what the sound is, as long as you integrate it in a musical manner. To put it crudely, a car horn will probably work just as good as a

I recently composed a musical score for the Edgar Allen Poe short story, *The Masque of the Red Death*. Poe based his dramatic conception around a large clock. Consider first how the sound design might have proceeded if we had started from the vantagepoint of looking for a realistic clock sound. I would go to my sound effects library and find some samples of large clocks.



I would present these sounds to the director, and the director would then choose the best one to serve as a “cue” in the show. We might try to alter the sound from there to influence the emotional state of the actors and audience. However, we would always be stuck with the quality of the sound dictated by our starting point: a script said we needed a real clock.

Instead, the director, Joel Fink, and I focused our early discussions on a search for the musical essences of the piece. We never talked about the reality of the clock and looked instead within the musicality of Poe’s language and his story to uncover the “inner life” that would make the audience feel a certain way. We chose a musical style that seemed appropriate to the piece, and I began composing within the limits of that style. We introduced the story with a sound that we would eventually associate with the clock—not to tell the audience about a clock. It was immaterial what the audience thought the sound represented in the beginning. How they felt going into the piece was critical, however. So we established an emotional context of an impending doom from the very beginning centered on this sound, whatever it is.

Later we learn that this sound is associated with a mammoth clock, and that the hourly chiming of the clock causes the nightly reveling to cease. However, since we have focused on the music, and not on the reality, our audience does not concern itself with whether a real clock

of any sort could sound like this. Instead, they are engrossed in an eerie and ominous air that looms as the clock chimes its foreboding tone.

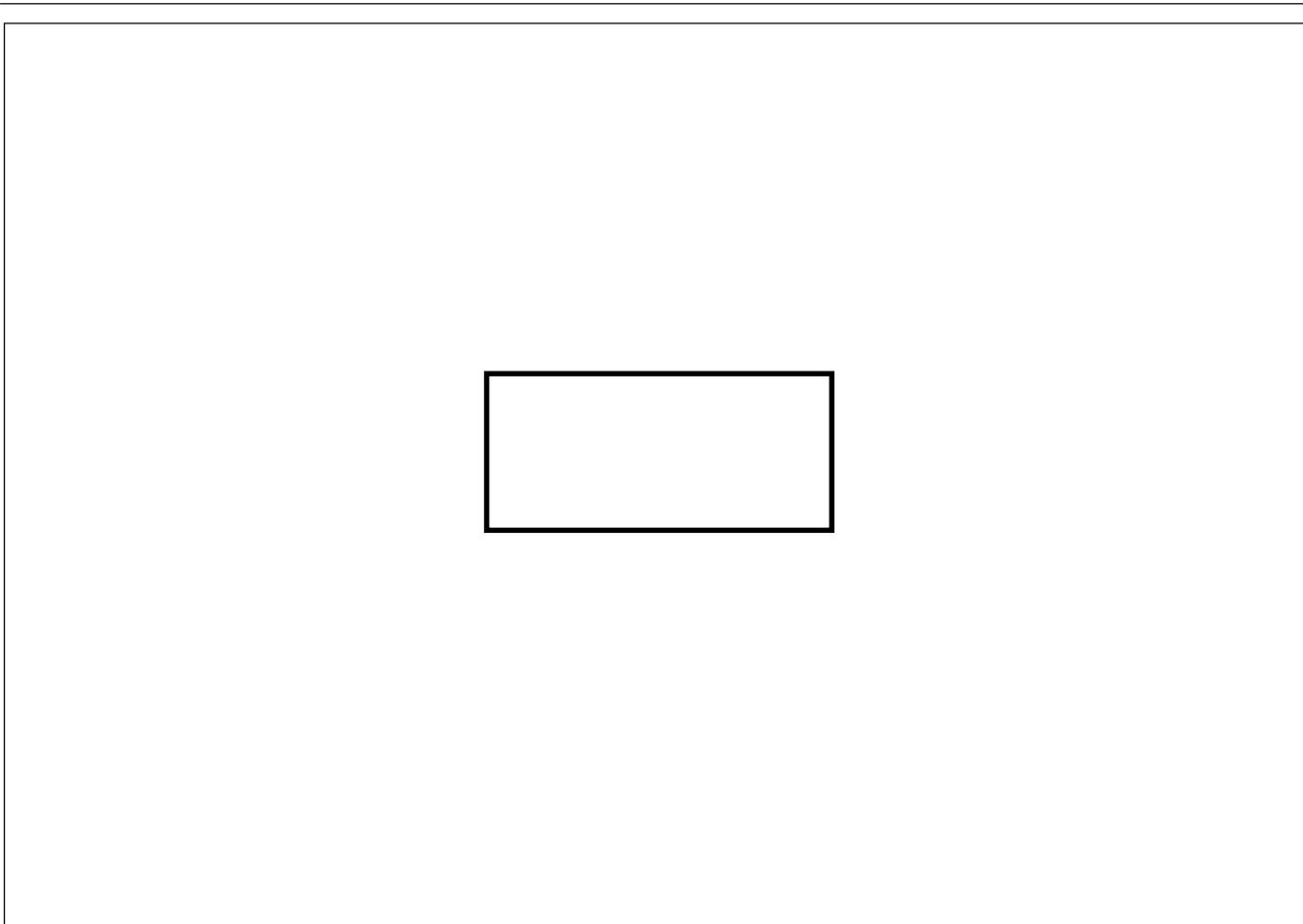
The ticking of this clock of course bears no resemblance to the time with which a clock really ticks, but marks a musical time, because, as Appia said,

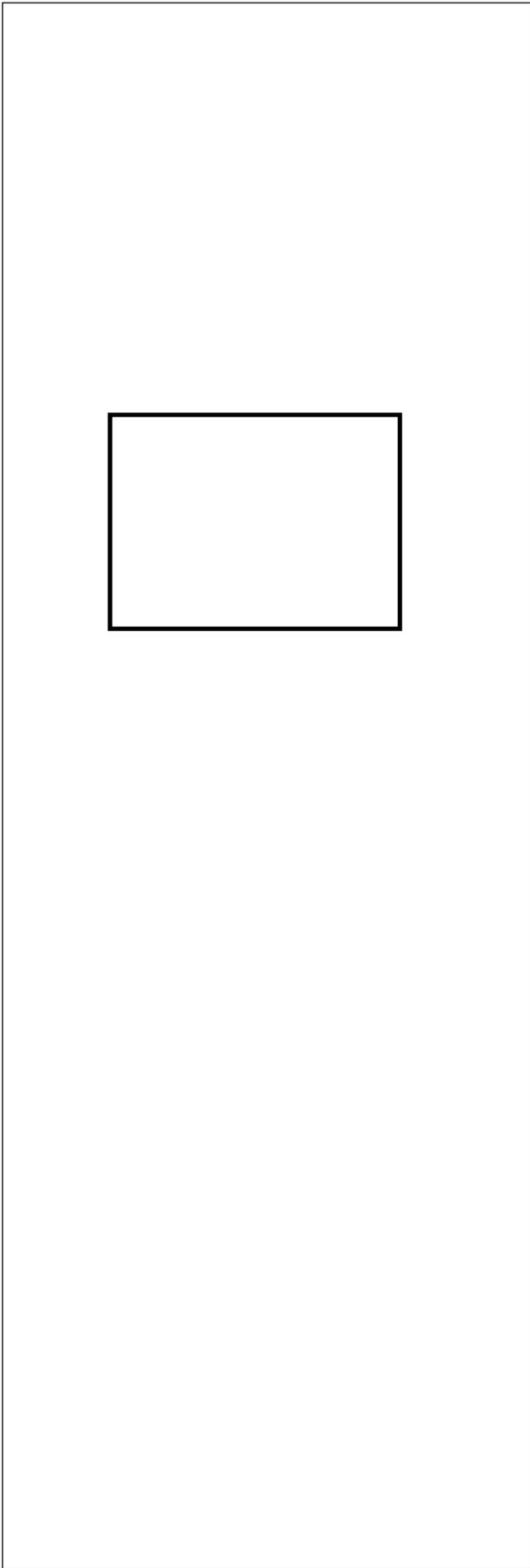
From the point of view of theatrical production music not only regulates the time, is not merely a length of time, but is the time itself. . . (Appia 1962, 15)

If we are creating properly, our audience is never aware that the clock is faulty, that its tempo varies with the emotional state of the moment. They become internally caught up in that moment, so that later, when the clock ticks in an impossibly fast frenzy, the audience gets so caught up in the frenzy, they do not notice the misbehaving clock.

At the climactic moment of the piece, the ticking of the pendulum turns into the footsteps of the masked figure bringing death to Prince Prospero.

One wonders how the soundscape would have developed had we started by focusing on the literal script. Certainly, we would not have been able to associate the figure with the clock by using the same sound for the ticking *and* the footsteps. We would not be able to vary





the tempo of the clock to match the dramatic music implied by the story. Even if our technical tools allowed us to make such manipulations, our aesthetic approach would have stymied our ability to make such leaps.

This past July I presented the Poe piece as a dramatic reading with music at the Festival de Caribe in Santiago de Cuba. This presentation provided a unique opportunity, because while I was presenting the poem in English, the audience understood only Spanish. In my introduction, I advised my audience through an interpreter:

What I hope is to tell my story through the music, the international language. So I hope when you do not understand the words, you will listen to the music, and follow the story that way.

After my presentation an audience member asked, “what is the meaning of the bell?” To which I responded, “It’s the tolling of a clock, on one level. But also there’s an emotional communication in the tolling that is really important to the piece. The audience member responded, “I interpreted the bell as the dying of people.” For me, this was clear evidence of my soundscape’s ability to communicate, without the intellectual power of words, the most fundamental and musical inner life of the *Masque of the Red Death*.

When we focus our attention on the inner life the drama attempts to communicate, we free ourselves of the literal trappings of clocks and footsteps. In doing so, we see that a car horn *will* work as good as a doorbell if integrated into the musical fabric of the drama properly. We liberate the drama from the trappings of realism by focusing our designs on the function of sound to *make our audience feel a certain way about the world they are experiencing*.

CONCLUSION

It might be true that all theatre “starts with a script.” However, within that script we can choose to start with the music, or to start with the intellectual content. Appia strongly believed that we should begin by finding the music that expresses the inner life. I have found in my work that when start with the music, the audience no longer cares about the “realism of the illusion.” Instead, they get swept along with the emotions created in them by the soundscape. Once we provide the audience with a musical experience, the play’s intellectual ideas can be associated with those experiences to complete the dramatic communication. The soundscape, should be considered as an instigator of the script rather than a derivative of it. This principle probably seems obvious when applied to opera or musical comedy. However, it is the contention of this paper that the same principle applies with no less force to spoken text plays.

Appia applied many of the same principles discussed in this paper to the visual component of scenography. Given this common foundation that designers share in theatre, future productions might benefit from the exploration of the design “tools” we share in building this foundation. These tools might include such common elements as line, color, mass, rhythm, texture and space. Upon this foundation we could explore the *differences* between visual and auditory perception such as the dominance of space in the visual arts and time in the auditory arts. We could explore how those differences complement and illuminate each other in a sublime manner. We could investigate the similarities and differences that occur in the way we use our tools because of the differences of time and space. We would come to understand the advantages of working together. Hopefully this paper will serve to enlist its readers as partners in a

quest to find a unified aesthetic in theatre. An aesthetic that remarries sight and sound as equal and desirable partners in the creation of the drama. ❖

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