SPECTACOLO SOUND DESIGN COURSE

HOSTED BY MASHIRIKA PERFORMING ARTS &MEDIA COMPANY

TRAINING

BY

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MASHIRIKA
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Pre-Production

Pre-Production

- Overview:
  - Pre-production is a crucial phase in sound design for theater. It involves planning and preparation to ensure that the sound design aligns with the director's vision and enhances the overall production.
  - Importance: Proper pre-production helps avoid last-minute issues, ensures smooth execution, and contributes to a cohesive and professional final product.
- Objective:
  - We will cover the essential steps and best practices in the pre-production phase of sound design for theater. By the end, you will have a clear understanding of how to effectively plan and prepare for a successful sound design process

Script Analysis

Understand the Narrative:

- **Story:** Grasp the plot, characters, and key events.
- **Themes:** Identify underlying themes and messages.
- **Emotional Tone:** Note the emotional highs and lows throughout the script.

- Identify Sound Requirements:
  - **Scenes:** Mark scenes that need sound enhancement.
  - **Mood and Atmosphere:** Determine the desired mood for each scene and how sound can contribute.
  - **Sound Types:** List the types of sounds needed (e.g., dialogue clarity, background music, sound effects).

Importance

- Informed Decisions:
  - **Sound Placement:** Decide where and when to introduce sound elements.
  - **Sound Types:** Choose appropriate sounds that fit the scene’s context.
- Creative Input:
  - **Enhancing Storytelling:** Suggest sound elements that add depth to the narrative.
  - **Audience Engagement:** Use sound to draw the audience into the story and maintain their interest.

Example

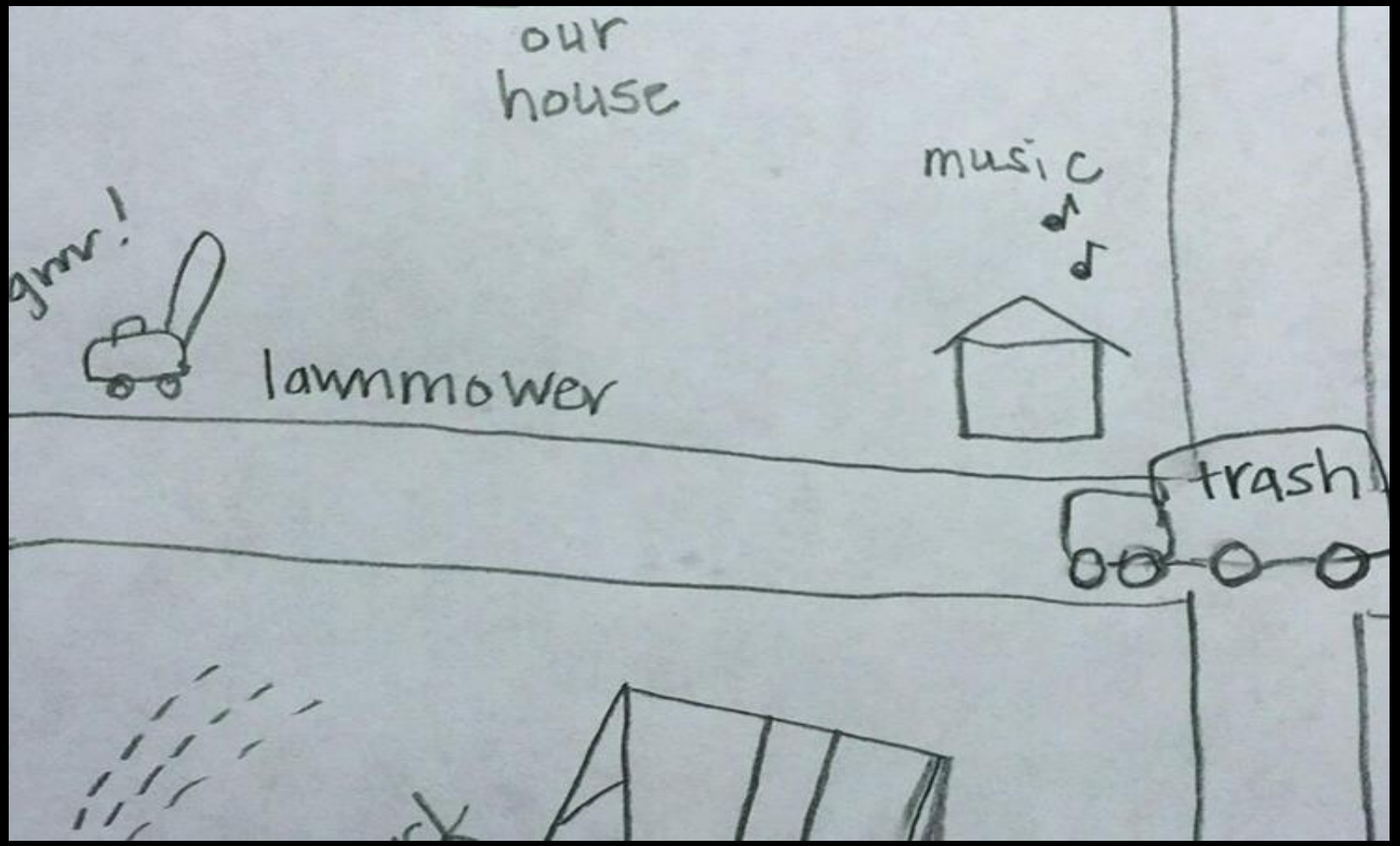
- **Scene Analysis:**
  - **Sample Scene:** A character is walking through a forest at night.
  - **Sound Needs:** Ambient forest sounds (e.g., rustling leaves, distant animal calls), footsteps, and perhaps a subtle, eerie background music to create tension.
- **Sound Cues:**
  - **Placement:** Identify specific moments in the scene where sound cues should be introduced (e.g., a sudden owl hoot when the character looks around nervously).
  - **Purpose:** Explain how these sound cues enhance the scene’s atmosphere and support the storytelling.

Breaking down the Script

- Scene Analysis:
  - **Action:** Understand what is happening in each scene. Is there a fight, a quiet conversation, or a dramatic reveal?
  - **Dialogue:** Pay attention to the dialogue and how sound can enhance or support it.
  - **Setting:** Consider the location of the scene. Is it indoors or outdoors? What natural or environmental sounds are present?
- Sound Cues:
  - **Emphasis:** Use sound to emphasize important actions or moments (e.g., a door slamming, a sudden silence).
  - **Transitions:** Smooth transitions between scenes with appropriate sound cues (e.g., fading out music, introducing ambient sounds).
  - **Emotional Beats:** Enhance emotional moments with sound (e.g., a soft piano note during a sad scene).

Steps

- Identify Key Scenes:
  - **Critical Scenes:** Focus on scenes that drive the plot forward or are pivotal to character development.
  - **Sound-Heavy Scenes:** Identify scenes that naturally require more sound design, such as action sequences or scenes with significant background activity.
- Note Sound Requirements:
  - **Ambient Sounds:** Background noises that set the scene (e.g., birds chirping, city traffic).
  - **Specific Sound Effects:** Sounds that are directly tied to actions or events in the scene (e.g., a phone ringing, footsteps).
  - **Background Music:** Music that supports the mood or tone of the scene.
- Create a Sound Map:
  - **Visual Map:** Use diagrams or charts to visually represent where sounds will be placed.
  - **Written Map:** Create a detailed written plan that outlines each sound cue and its timing.


our
house
music
grrr!
lawnmower
trash

Sample Breakdown

- Scene Description: A bustling marketplace in the morning.
- Sound Requirements:
  - **Ambient Sounds:** General crowd noise, distant chatter, occasional laughter.
  - **Specific Sound Effects:** Vendor calls, footsteps on cobblestone, a bell ringing.
  - **Background Music:** Light, cheerful music to set a lively atmosphere.
- Sound Map:
  - **Visual:** A diagram showing the placement of ambient sounds around the scene.
  - **Written:** A list detailing each sound cue, its source, and timing within the scene.

Visiting the Location

- Acoustics Assessment:
  - **Natural Acoustics:** Evaluate how sound travels and behaves in the space. Consider factors like reverberation, absorption, and diffusion.
  - **Sound Check:** Perform a sound check to understand how different sounds are perceived from various points in the venue.
- Layout Familiarization:
  - **Stage Layout:** Understand the dimensions and layout of the stage. Note any areas that might need special attention for sound coverage.
  - **Audience Seating:** Consider the seating arrangement and how sound will reach different parts of the audience.
  - **Backstage Areas:** Familiarize yourself with backstage areas where sound equipment might be placed or accessed.
- Identifying Challenges:
  - **Background Noise:** Identify any sources of background noise, such as air conditioning units, traffic, or other external sounds.
  - **Echo and Reverberation:** Note any areas where echo or excessive reverberation might be an issue and plan to address them.
  - **Interference:** Be aware of potential sources of interference, such as wireless signals or electronic devices.

Importance

- Sound Quality:
  - **Clarity:** Ensures that dialogue and sound effects are clear and intelligible.
  - **Consistency:** Maintains consistent sound quality throughout the venue.
- Technical Planning:
  - **Equipment Placement:** Strategically place microphones, speakers, and other equipment to optimize sound coverage.
  - **Cable Management:** Plan the routing of cables to avoid tripping hazards and ensure a clean setup.
- Problem-Solving:
  - **Preemptive Solutions:** Address potential issues before they become problems during the performance.
  - **Adaptability:** Be prepared to make adjustments based on the specific characteristics of the venue.

Checklist

- Acoustics:
  - **Assessment Tools:** Use tools like sound level meters and acoustic analysis software to measure and evaluate the venue's acoustics.
  - **Adjustments:** Plan for any acoustic treatments or adjustments needed to improve sound quality.
- Noise Sources:
  - **Identification:** Identify and document sources of background noise.
  - **Mitigation:** Plan strategies to mitigate or manage these noises during the performance.
- Equipment Placement:
  - **Microphones:** Determine the best locations for microphones to capture clear sound.
  - **Speakers:** Plan the placement of speakers to ensure even sound distribution.
  - **Monitors:** Consider the placement of monitors for performers to hear themselves.
- Accessibility:
  - **Equipment Access:** Ensure that all sound equipment is easily accessible for adjustments during the performance.
  - **Backup Plans:** Have backup equipment and plans in place in case of technical issues.

Selecting Gear

- Choosing Microphones:
  - **Dynamic Microphones:** Durable and good for capturing loud sounds. Ideal for live performances and loud environments.
  - **Condenser Microphones:** Sensitive and accurate, suitable for capturing detailed sounds and dialogue. Often used in quieter settings.
  - **Lavalier Microphones:** Small and discreet, perfect for capturing dialogue from individual actors without being visible.
- Speakers and Monitors:
  - **Speakers:** Choose speakers that can handle the power requirements of the venue and provide clear sound to the audience.
  - **Monitors:** Use stage monitors to ensure performers can hear themselves and other important sounds during the performance.

Selecting Gear

- Recording Devices:
  - **Portable Recorders:** Handy for capturing sound effects and ambient sounds on location. Ensure they have good battery life and storage capacity.
  - **Multi-Track Recorders:** Useful for recording multiple sound sources simultaneously, allowing for more complex sound design.

Considerations

- Venue Size:
  - **Small Venues:** May require fewer microphones and smaller speakers. Focus on clarity and coverage.
  - **Large Venues:** Need more powerful speakers and multiple microphones to cover the entire space effectively.
- Sound Requirements:
  - **Dialogue Scenes:** Use microphones that capture clear and natural-sounding dialogue.
  - **Ambient Scenes:** Consider using ambient microphones to capture the overall sound environment.
- Budget Constraints:
  - **Prioritize Needs:** Focus on essential equipment first, then consider additional gear if the budget allows.
  - **Quality vs. Cost:** Balance the need for high-quality sound with the available budget. Sometimes renting equipment can be a cost-effective solution.

Considerations

- Microphone Types:
  - **Dynamic Microphones:** Example: Shure SM58, ideal for live vocals and instruments.
  - **Condenser Microphones:** Example: Audio-Technica AT2020, great for capturing detailed sound in quieter settings.
  - **Lavalier Microphones:** Example: Sennheiser ME 2, perfect for discreetly miking actors.
- Speaker Placement:
  - **Example Setup:** In a medium-sized theater, place main speakers at the front of the stage, with additional speakers along the sides and rear to ensure even sound coverage. Use monitors on stage for performers.

Considerations

- Creating SFX:
  - **Original Sounds:** Record unique sounds that are specific to the production's needs. This can include Foley work, where everyday objects are used to create sound effects (e.g., using a sheet of metal to simulate thunder).
  - **Manipulating Sounds:** Use audio software to alter and enhance recorded sounds. This can involve pitch shifting, time stretching, and adding effects like reverb or delay.
- Sourcing SFX:
  - **Sound Libraries:** Explore both free and paid sound libraries. Ensure that the sounds are licensed for use in your production.
  - **Quality Check:** Listen to multiple options to find the best match for your scene. Ensure the sound quality is high and that the effect fits seamlessly into the production.

Considerations

- Editing SFX:
  - **Volume Adjustment:** Balance the levels of different sound effects to ensure they blend well with dialogue and music.
  - **Reverb and Effects:** Add reverb to create a sense of space or echo. Use other effects like EQ, compression, and delay to enhance the sound.
  - **Layering:** Combine multiple sounds to create a richer, more detailed effect. For example, layering different rain sounds to create a more dynamic thunderstorm.

Methods

- Recording New Sounds:
  - **Portable Recorders:** Use devices like the Zoom H4n or Tascam DR-40 to capture high-quality field recordings.
    - Different recorders and Prices
    - Entry-level: Tascam DR-05X, Zoom H1n, Tascam DR-07X
    - Mid-range: Zoom H4n Pro, Tascam DR-40X, Zoom H5, Sony PCM-D10
    - High-end: Zoom H6, Zoom H8, Tascam DR-40X, MixPre-6 II, MixPre-10 II, Zoom F4/F8N

Methods

- **Foley Techniques:** Create sounds using everyday objects. For example, crumpling paper to simulate fire or using coconut shells for horse hooves.
- Sound Libraries:
  - **Online Resources:** Websites like Freesound.org, SoundSnap, and AudioJungle offer a wide range of sound effects.
  - **Commercial Collections:** Invest in professional sound libraries like those from Boom Library or Sound Ideas for high-quality effects.
- Audio Editing Software:
  - **Audacity:** A free, open-source audio editor suitable for basic editing tasks.
  - **Pro Tools:** Industry-standard software for professional audio editing and mixing.
  - **Adobe Audition:** A versatile tool for recording, editing, and mixing sound.

Methods

- Creating a Thunderstorm Effect:
  - **Step-by-Step Process:**
    - **Record Rain:** Capture the sound of rain using a portable recorder.
    - **Record Thunder:** Use a metal sheet or find a pre-recorded thunder sound.
    - **Record Wind:** Capture wind sounds or use a sound library.
    - **Layering:** Import the recordings into audio editing software and layer them to create a cohesive thunderstorm effect.
    - **Editing:** Adjust the volume levels, add reverb to the thunder, and blend the sounds to create a realistic atmosphere.

Knowing your Team

- Building Relationships:
  - **Director:** Understand the director's vision and how sound design can support it. Regularly communicate to ensure alignment.
  - **Actors:** Get to know the actors and their needs. This helps in creating sound cues that support their performances.
  - **Crew Members:** Build rapport with other crew members, such as the lighting designer, set designer, and stage manager. Collaboration with these roles is crucial for a unified production.
- Team Dynamics:
  - **Importance of Teamwork:** Theater is a collaborative art form. Each member's role, from the lead actor to the sound technician, is interconnected.
  - **Respect and Trust:** Foster an environment where team members respect and trust each other. This leads to better cooperation and a more positive working atmosphere.

Knowing your Team

- Effective Collaboration:
  - **Open Communication:** Encourage open and honest communication. This helps in addressing issues promptly and effectively.
  - **Mutual Respect:** Treat all team members with respect, regardless of their role. Everyone’s contribution is valuable

Importance

- Cohesive Production:
  - **Seamless Integration:** When the team works well together, the various elements of the production (sound, lighting, set design) integrate seamlessly.
  - **Professionalism:** A cohesive team presents a more polished and professional production.
- Problem-Solving:
  - **Quick Resolution:** Effective teamwork allows for quick identification and resolution of problems.
  - **Support System:** Team members can support each other, sharing the workload and reducing stress.
- Creative Synergy:
  - **Idea Generation:** Collaboration often sparks creative ideas that enhance the production.
  - **Innovative Solutions:** Working together can lead to innovative solutions to challenges.

Tips

- Regular Meetings:
  - **Progress Updates:** Use meetings to update the team on progress and any changes.
  - **Planning:** Plan upcoming tasks and address any concerns.
- Clear Communication Channels:
  - **Tools:** Use tools like Slack, Trello, or Asana to manage communication and tasks.
  - **Consistency:** Ensure that communication is consistent and accessible to all team members.
- Role Understanding:
  - **Responsibilities:** Clearly define each team member’s responsibilities.
  - **Expectations:** Set clear expectations for performance and collaboration.
- Feedback Loop:
  - **Constructive Feedback:** Encourage constructive feedback to improve processes and performance.
  - **Continuous Improvement:** Use feedback to make continuous improvements to the production.

Script Sample

EXT. ROAD SIDE . EVE

SFX: BIKE STOPPING, CARS AND BIKES PASSING

KEMMY:

Don’t tell me that your boda boda has run out of fuel.

BODA MAN:

Basonyiwe naye soka ovekko...kajiwuzikke.

KEMMY:

And we just passed by a petrol station. I just don’t understand you boda men...

BODA MAN:

Madam, binno ebintu bibawo...naye tofayo tugenda.

Script Sample

KEMMY:

I don’t have time for this. Here have your money

BODA MAN:

But this is just two thousand shillings we agreed four.

KEMMY:

Mbu four don’t be funny...is this my final destination?

I told you I was going to LIVA Bar not the road side.

BODA MAN:

Nyabo gumikiriza...let me shake the fuel out of the

reserve tank and we go.

KEMMY:

My friends are waiting for me...Boda...boda

SOUND: BIKE STOPS

KEMMY:

Ssebo wama take me to LIVA bar.

SOUND: BIKE LEAVES

SOUND FOR THEATRE

Approach to Sound design

Recap

- Pre-production Steps:
  - **Reading Through the Script:** Emphasize the importance of understanding the narrative, themes, and sound requirements.
  - **Breaking Down the Script:** Highlight the process of identifying key scenes and sound cues.
  - **Visiting the Location:** Stress the need for acoustics assessment, layout familiarization, and identifying challenges.
  - **Selecting Gear:** Summarize the considerations for choosing the right microphones, speakers, and recording devices.
  - **Working on SFX:** Recap the methods for creating, sourcing, and editing sound effects.
  - **Knowing Your Team:** Reinforce the value of building relationships, understanding team dynamics, and fostering effective collaboration.
- Importance:
  - **Thorough Preparation:** Explain how thorough pre-production helps avoid last-minute issues and ensures a smooth execution.
  - **Cohesive Production:** Highlight how pre-production contributes to a cohesive and professional final product.

Recap

- **Creative Input:** Emphasize the role of pre-production in allowing for creative input and enhancing the overall quality of the production.

Conclusion

- Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to any questions or discussions you might have!

Have a blessed week

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Illuminating Sound