**Sound Design: the Art of Foley**

**Caitlin Hall**

**Unit Objective:**

Students will demonstrate their mastery of sound and the creation of sound by adapting and performing a scene from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* using live sound effects.

**Level:**

Beginning/Intermediate Technical Theatre

**Previous Experience:**

Beginning set and lighting design

**National Standards:**

* TH:Cr1.1.I.a. Apply basic research to construct ideas about the visual composition of a drama/theatre work.
* TH:Cr1.1.I.b. Explore the impact of technology on design choices in a drama/theatre work.
* TH:Cr3.1.II.c. Re-imagine and revise technical design choices during the course of a rehearsal process to enhance the story and emotional impact of a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.
* TH:Pr5.1.I.b. Use researched technical elements to increase the impact of design for a drama/theatre production.
* TH:Re9.1.I.b. Consider the aesthetics of the production elements in a drama/theatre work.
* TH:Cn11.2.I.b. Use basic theatre research methods to better understand the social and cultural background of a drama/theatre work.

**Big Idea:** Tuning in to sound helps us increase our awareness of the world around us.

**Essential Questions:**

* What happens when theatre artists use their imaginations and/or learned theatre skills while engaging in creative exploration and inquiry?
* How do theatre artists transform and edit their initial ideas?
* What can I do to fully prepare a performance or technical design?
* How are the theatre artist’s processes and the audience’s perspectives impacted by analysis and synthesis?
* In what ways can research into theatre histories, theories, literature, and performances alter the way a drama process or production is understood?

**Key Knowledge and Skills:**

* Adapt a scene from a script to a radio show
* Experiment with and create practical sound effects
* Creating a sound cue script
* Listening as a sound designer

**Authentic Performance Tasks:**

* Write a scene outline – Explanation
* Writing a radio show script – Interpretation and Application
* Complete a detailed cue script – Application
* Performing their show with sound effects – Application, Perspective
* Write a response paper to the assignment grading themselves and their peers – Empathy, Self-Understanding
* Sound Board Quiz – Explanation, Application

**Lessons:**

**Lesson 1: What is Foley?**

**Objective**: Students will demonstrate their understanding of Foley art and sound design by selecting a scene (in a group) from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*to adapt into a short radio show.

**Lesson 2: How to Write a Radio Show**

**Lesson Objective**: Students will demonstrate their understanding of how to move along a plot by writing a script for a Radio Show.

**Lesson 3: Work Day**

**Objective**: Students will complete their radio show scripts in preparation for a sound rehearsal.

**Lesson 4: Experimenting and Rehearsing With Sound**

**Objective**: Students will demonstrate their understanding of sound design in a radio show by experimenting and rehearsing with different objects to prepare their sound cue list and script.

**Lesson 5: Performances**

**Objective**: Students will demonstrate their understanding of sound design and Foley art by presenting their radio shows to the class, along with turning in a completed sound cue script.

**Lesson 6: Introduction to Sound Systems**

**Objective**: Students will understand the purpose of the sound board, microphones, and other equipment in the theatre space as demonstrated by their personal experimentation with the equipment.

**Lesson 1: What is Foley?**

**Objective**: Students will demonstrate their understanding of Foley art and sound design by selecting a scene (in a group) from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*to adapt into a short radio show.

**Materials Needed**: Computer with access to YouTube, projection

Hook: Tell me everything you know about sound. (Where does it come from, what does it do, how does it influence you?) Let students answer this as they will, with minimal sidecoaching – here is your pre-assessment for the unit.

Step 1: Sound Design

Sound design is integral to a show, as it influences how we feel and react to what we see. Show 10 minute Wall-E sound design clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSf8Er2gV_Q>). Part 2 can be shown if you think your class is interested and you have time. Have the students discuss in groups what they noticed in the video about sound. Why is it important? How is sound created? Have the class come together and share their findings.

Step 2: Live Foley

What is Foley art? Explain that Foley is when sounds are produced live in the space. Give an example from Seabiscuit (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqgXhXx-EAk>). Let the students know that they will be performing a 3-5 minute scene from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* using live Foley for the class.

Step 3: Group Work

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Hand out the rubric for the final assignment. Instruct them to select a scene to adapt from the script. If there is time, let them start working on adapting the scene by outlining what happens and creating a list of sounds they think could work with the scene. If desired, play a radio show (like Prairie Home Companion) while the students work. By the end of class, they need to have a scene selected.

**Midsummer Night’s Dream Radio Show Rubric**

**Tech 1**

Welcome to the team, Foley Artists! You have just been hired at The Bard 105.2, our local Classics radio station. Your task is to adapt a scene from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for our weekly radio show, the Shakespeare Hour. The story should be 3-5 minutes long, incorporate at least 8 sound effects, and stretch your creative abilities in the creation of those sound effects.

Below is a rubric by which you can judge your group’s work:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Great Scott! An A!** | **You did good, kid** | **Needs work** |  |
| **Sound Effects** | At least 8 creative sound effects that inform and support the radio show script. | Under 8 sound effects; sound effects do work, but do not make total sense in the context of the show. | Sound effects are non-existent or nonsensical; the sounds chosen do not match the purpose in the script. |  **/20** |
| **Cue Script** | Clear, follows the format provided; you could hand this script to another technician and they could perform it. | Clear script, but does not totally follow the format. Another technician could follow along, but not perform from this script. | Missing cues, poor organization, does not follow examples given. Not useful to another technician. |  **/20** |
| **Performance** | Rehearsed, interesting, and well thought out. Actors use different voices to portray different characters | There has been some rehearsal, and there is some variation in voices and/or vocal quality. | Unrehearsed, poorly executed, no variation in voices or character choices. |  **/10** |
| **Total** |  **/50** |

**If you need inspiration, check out these links we watched in class!**

Wall-E Part 1: http://bit.ly/1qjrqlx

Wall-E Part 2: http://bit.ly/1qE8Kxs

Seabiscuit: http://bit.ly/23pdvMW

The Foley Artist: http://bit.ly/1N384I2

**Lesson 2: How to Write a Radio Show**

**Lesson Objective**: Students will demonstrate their understanding of how to move along a plot by writing a script for a Radio Show.

**Materials Needed:** Audio equipment for playing radio show, access to the internet

Hook: Play “Christmas Dragnet” for the students. Have them listen to how the show is constructed – what is the dialogue to narration ratio? How do they balance the two? (It’s about 3 parts narration to 5 parts dialogue.) How did you hear sound effects used?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1vJ4sXetw4

Step 1: Group Discussion: Essential questions for writing

Take 15 minutes to discuss these questions as a group and write down the answers. Give out one handout per group (handout below).

What happens in the scene? What is the most important thing?

What people do you want speaking? Who do you want to cut from the scene?

How will sound figure into the scene?

Step 2: Group Work

Take the rest of class to work on your script. One page translates into about one minute. If you are having trouble, consult your paper, your group, and me. By the end of class you should have at least two pages. I recommend starting with the original script and figuring out where to make cuts and insert narration and/or sound effects. Remember *Christmas Dragnet*: how did they balance narration, dialogue, and sound?

As the groups are working, explain that for the actual performance, we will listen like we did to the radio show: we won’t see them making the sounds. After they are done performing, we will turn around and look at what they used to create the sound effects in their production.

Also let them know that while they can play music off of a device, no other recordings will be allowed. All other sounds MUST be practical, or made with physical objects.

Note: This would be a great day to go to a computer lab. Students should print out the script when they have finished it.

**Writing a Radio Show**

Take 10-15 minutes to answer these questions in detail. This is the backbone of your story. Use this sheet as a reference in your group as you write your scene.

Which scene have you selected? What happens in the scene? What is the most important thing about the scene?

What people do you want speaking? Who do you want to cut from the scene?

How will sound figure into the scene?

**Lesson 3: Work Day**

**Objective**: Students will complete their radio show scripts in preparation for a sound rehearsal.

**Materials Needed**: Whatever the students bring from home to experiment with, everyday objects around the classroom

Hook: Soundscape

The leader or one member of the group acts as conductor, whilst the rest of the group is the ‘orchestra’. Using their voices (and body percussion if appropriate!), the group paints a *soundscape*of a particular theme or mood, for example the seaside, a city, a jungle. The leader can control the shape of the piece by raising her hand to increase the volume or bringing it to touch the floor for silence. You may also use simple percussion instruments for this exercise. (<http://dramaresource.com/soundscape/>)

Step 1: Work Day

The goal today is to finish our scripts! If the students are having trouble, ask them these questions: What is the most important part of the unit? (The sound!) How are you facilitating the use of sound in your radio show? Remind them if they have brought any objects to class to experiment with for sound that they can experiment with those today, as well.

Have the students check in with you halfway through the class period. They should show you what they have completed and tell you what goals they are working on next.

Note: If you have noisemaking tools or instruments in your props or classroom, it may be appropriate to bring them in for the kids to experiment with. You also may consider talking with your band teacher to see if there are any percussion instruments you can borrow.

Note: This would be a great day to go to a computer lab. Students should print out the script when they have finished it.

**Lesson 4: Experimenting and Rehearsing With Sound**

**Objective**: Students will demonstrate their understanding of sound design in a radio show by experimenting and rehearsing with different objects to prepare their sound cue list and script.

**Materials Needed**: Whatever the students bring from home to experiment with, everyday objects around the classroom

Hook: Master, Master Who am I?

Start in a circle. Choose one participant to be Master and to be blindfolded. Tell the Master they are to listen carefully and try to identify the owner of the mysterious voice. Choose another member to say the words "Master, Master, Who am I?" in a different voice. The blindfolded Master has to guess who is speaking.

(<http://www.dramatoolkit.co.uk/drama-games/item/voice-and-dialogue/master-master>)

What does this have to do with our class project? Why am I making you do drama things in this class? Why is this important to you as a designer? (As we learn how to listen better, we improve as designers and learners; participating in interactive activities works with a different learning type; we need to develop empathy for performers.)

Step 1: Sound Experimentation and Rehearsal Instructions

Here is what needs to happen today:

- You have your items you have brought from home, take time today to test out all your sounds and see what works best. Don’t be afraid to use something for a purpose different than its intended use! (Please do respect the tools others have brought in, however.)

- You need to write your sound cues in your script. Here is an example of a cue script: <http://www.theatrecrafts.com/images/promptbook.jpg>. Make sure to write both standbys and the actual cue in your script, so you can follow along and be prepared when your sound effect happens. You may also want to write what tool you will use to make the effect, since this is a Foley show. This is standard for sound designers and techs to have a cue script. Stage managers also will have a cue script. Show me your script when you are done. You *MUST* follow this format.

- After you have your sound effects selected and recorded in your script, rehearse! Practice this until it is smooth. If you are reading for characters, practice your voices, inflections, and the lines. They do not have to be memorized, but it should be smooth.

**Lesson 5: Performances**

**Objective**: Students will demonstrate their understanding of sound design and Foley art by presenting their radio shows to the class, along with turning in a completed sound cue script.

**Materials Needed**: an old-fashioned radio (if possible), a table, whatever materials the students bring for their performances

Step 1: Performances

Going in order of the play (or by volunteers, whichever you prefer), have students perform their pieces. For the performances, the audience should face away from the performer’s table at the old-fashioned radio, and should only listen to the performance, not watch. After each piece, have them explain in a few minutes how they made some of their favorite sounds and what they learned about sound design from this process. Let other students look at their equipment and ask questions.

Use the rubric handed out in lesson 1 to grade the students. Have them turn their cue script into you when they are done performing.

Step 2: Personal Response/Reflection

After all students have performed, post these questions on the board and have the students write a response in the remaining class time. If there is not enough time, this can be a take home assignment.

1. How has learning about sound influenced how you listen to the world around you?

2. If you could do this project differently, what would you do? Why?

3. How was working with the other people in your group? Are/were there any issues I should know about as a teacher?

The reflection paper should be 2-3 paragraphs long.

**Lesson 6: Introduction to Sound Systems**

**Objective**: Students will understand the purpose of the sound board, microphones, and other equipment in the theatre space as demonstrated by their personal experimentation with the equipment.

**Materials Needed**: Theatre, sound board, microphone, speakers, music playing device

Hook: Lead students into the auditorium, explaining that today will be a hands-on day in class.

Step 1: The Equipment

Demonstrate to the students how to turn on your sound system. It may be appropriate to post in your booth the power up and down procedure, for clarity.

Pull out a wireless microphone and have the students trace the sound, from vocal production to the audience’s ears. Ask them where the sound starts, and see if they can figure out the following steps:

1. The person speaks or sings into the microphone
2. The microphone transmits from the base of the unit to the aerial antennae
3. The antennae transmits back to the receiver, which then transmits into the board
4. Sound is mixed in the board (we will cover this in a minute)
5. Sound leaves the board and enters the amp, where the signal is boosted
6. The amp then sends the sound to the loudspeakers, which put out sound for the audience to hear

Step 2: How the board works

This is an excellent opportunity to see if any of your students have experience with sound equipment. Sound is input either through a microphone or an auxiliary cable connected to some sort of music playing device, like a computer, phone, or mP3 player. Each cord or microphone is connected with a channel on the board, often arranged in vertical rows on an analog board, and sometimes arranged in horizontal rows on a digital board. Then, using the variety of knobs on the board, we manipulate the sound to give the correct effect.

Here are some short definitions for your use in teaching this lesson:

Volume: This controls the signal being sent out from the amp. Higher volume, more signal, louder result. There are main volume and channel volume controls

Gain: This controls the power of the base signal. Too little gain, and the voice sounds tinny. Too much, and there is a risk of feedback through the loudspeakers.

EQs: The equalizers, or EQs, control various sets of frequencies. Say you are playing a song and you think it needs more bass, then you turn up the low EQ settings.

Auxiliary knobs: These are connected to specific speakers, such as stage monitors. You can send certain channels to certain monitors to help the performer hear his or her part.

Faders: The volume control for a specific channel.

Mute: Exactly what it sounds like. The mute button exists so you don’t have to constantly change levels on your faders.

Solo: Say you have twelve people singing on stage, and one of them has a solo. Hit the solo button and all the other mics will cut out.

Step 3: Experimentation

Let the students have time to play with some music played off of the music-playing device. If possible, have one student go and sing a song while another mixes their vocals with the music playing.

Step 4: Quiz

Hand out the quiz at the end of class. Let the students work in pairs to answer the questions.

Sound Board Quiz Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is gain?
2. What does an amp do?
3. When would you use the Mute button?
4. What was the most interesting thing you learned today?