Scoring Performance: The Function of Music in Contemporary Theatre and Circus

Submitted by
Kim Baston BA, MA

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Theatre and Drama Program
School of Communications, Arts and Critical Enquiry
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

La Trobe University
Bundoora, Victoria 3086
Australia

October 2008
# Table of Contents

## Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter summaries</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodology and terminology</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter One: Establishing the field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incidental music</th>
<th>22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discursive practices</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music and manipulation</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing the experience of music</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film music</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The live musician</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound and technology</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological listening: Gibson’s Theory of Affordances</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter Two: The framework of terms

### (Why, What, How)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of the theoretical framework</th>
<th>57</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall categories for stage music</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Why</em> – Emotional Framing</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Diegetic Framing</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Metadiegetic Framing</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Spatial Framing</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Temporal Framing</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Formal Framing</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>What</em> – Tonal events (melody, harmony, rhythm) and timbre</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Sound effects</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Three: The cinematic function of stage music 91

Introduction and summary of 52 shows 93
Emotional framing 93
Diegetic framing 103
Metadiegetic framing 106
Spatial framing 115
Temporal framing 119
Formal framing 122
The What: Structural similarities in the composition of stage music 124
Divergent practices between stage and film music 127

Chapter Four: The structural function of circus music 131

A survey of early modern and traditional circus music 133
Emotional, diegetic and temporal framing of ring action 135
Core musical practices for ring action 141
The impact of recorded music 146
Circa 148
The music of Circa 152
Emotional, diegetic and metadiegetic framing in The Space Between 156
Spatial framing in The Space Between and by the light of stars that are no longer 162
The recorded soundtrack as discourse 167

Chapter Five: Music as engagement: the creation of Daddy 171

Engagement through entertainment 172
The Women’s Circus 175
Daddy’s music 178
Engagement and the performance of authenticity 180
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional and diegetic framing</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metadiegetic framing</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Framing</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>What</em> and the <em>How</em></td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timbre and rhythm as core elements</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical form and theatrical context</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity via cadence and segue</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between the Artistic Director and the Musical Director</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six: Musicians performing the musician</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Session</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘virtual pit’</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The onstage musician</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The musician as setting</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The actor-musician or musician-actor</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The musician within spectacle</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I: List of performances</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II: Glossary</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discography</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

This thesis is a cross-disciplinary investigation of how music and theatre interact and proposes a framework of terms for the analysis of music within the theatrical mise-en-scène (Chapter Two). As original research, this framework is proposed as appropriate for two scholarship disciplines, theatrical performance studies and performed music, as these relate both to reception and to artistic intention. The framework is also proposed as a practical means of communication between these two artistic practices.

Within this framework, music is analyzed according to four broad processes: music as structure; music as intervention; cinematic music; and music as engagement. Drawing on scholarship in film music (e.g. Gorbman 1987), performance studies (e.g. Auslander 2006; McAuley 2000) and cultural and theoretical musicology (e.g. Scruton 1999; Frith 1996), it identifies and discusses the common uses of music in theatre, arguing that there are six frames under which the function of music can be considered: emotional, diegetic, metadiegetic, temporal, spatial and formal. The elements of music contributing to this framing (tonal content, formal structure, timbre, signal processing, improvisation and genre) are also considered.

The framework of terms (abbreviated to how, what, why) is applied in reception of script-based performance (Chapter Three), within the physical text of circus performance (Chapter Four) and, by contrast, in one artistic process of production (Chapter Five). The ‘visual object’ of music is also discussed, examining how the musician in performance can be theorized within the theatrical context (Chapter Six).

While genres such as opera and musical theatre are commonly studied, there is less scholarship considering theatre in which music is ‘incidental’ (Savage 2001; Pavis 1998). But in the hybrid practices of contemporary performance that encompass both the script-driven play and the complex set of practices that can be considered as ‘physical theatre’, the analysis of the role of music should be considered integral, rather than ‘incidental’.
Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been researched or completed without the support and guidance of other people. I would like to thank my supervisor, Peta Tait for her rigorous care and patience, and the rest of the staff in the Department of Theatre and Drama at La Trobe University. I particularly acknowledge the generosity and support of Yaron Lifschitz and Circa (Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus Ensemble) and Liz Jones at La Mama. I would also like to thank the musicians and directors who provided valuable insights for this research: Patrick Cronin, Sarah Cathecart, Fiona Roake, Vanessa Chapple, Donna Jackson, Suzie Dee, Tim Flynn, Madeleine Humphries, Matthew Hubbs, Paul Charlier and the members of the Daddy band: Tanya Nolan, Amanda Owen, Jane Coker, Bec Matthews, Jules de Cinque, Claire Warren and Michelle Brisbane. I would also like to thank the Scenography Working Party of TaPRA for their feedback and support of papers drawn from this thesis. On a more personal level, I would like to thank Felicity Collins from Cinema Studies at La Trobe University and Rand Hazou for their support and encouragement throughout the process of research, Claire Warren for proofreading, and particularly Alex Prior for reading drafts and advice on writing.
Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

-----------------------------------    --------------------------------

Signature      Dated
Introduction

The premise of this doctorate is an investigation of how music and theatre interact, and more specifically, how knowledge about each form can be communicated in collaborations between the theatre practitioner and the musician. Is it possible to develop a framework for the discussion of music that is appropriate in a cross-disciplinary context, and that can incorporate the discursive practices of different disciplines?

While there is a considerable body of scholarship on performance genres in which music is a dominant element (such as opera and musical theatre), there is considerably less scholarship considering theatre in which music is a subordinate element. This music has often been termed ‘incidental’ (Pavis 1998; Savage 2001). In the hybrid practices of contemporary performance this term becomes increasingly inappropriate.

Drawing on scholarship by Richard Schechner (2005/1977), Baz Kershaw claims that it is “a fundamental tenet of performance theory: namely, that no item in the environment of performance can be discounted as irrelevant to its impact” (1992: 22). In contemporary theatre presented in Melbourne and Edinburgh, it appears to be rare to find a production that completely dispenses with music. Yet, in theoretical scholarship and in the analysis of practice it seems that music is usually discounted, and its operations under-investigated.

This thesis proposes an original formulation of terms analysing the function of music within the theatrical mise-en-scène. These are proposed as appropriate for two scholarship disciplines – theatrical performance studies and music – in relation to both reception and to artistic intention. This framework is also proposed as a practical means of communication between these two artistic practices.

This thesis considers relevant scholarship (Chapter One) and presents one feasible framework for the discussion of music within script-based and physical theatre (Chapter Two), and applies this to the reception of script-based performance (Chapter Three), to the physical text of circus performance (Chapter Four), and in one artistic production (Chapter Five). An approach to theorizing the
visual presence of the musician within a theatrical production is also considered (Chapter Six).

Within this framework, music in theatre is analyzed according to four broad processes: music as structure; music as intervention; cinematic music; and music as engagement. I suggest that an absence of frameworks that consider how music functions in theatre might account for lack of consideration of music within scholarship on theatre performance reception and the existing ad hoc communication processes in artistic practice. This thesis addresses these concerns through scholarly analysis and descriptions of practice.

In considering the function of music within theatre, the ‘extra-musical’ becomes as important as any discussion of purely musical qualities. These include the reception of the theatre work by the spectator, and perceptions of what s/he is receiving (e.g. Pavis 2003). The reception of a work cannot be divorced from considerations of social and cultural context, and considering the social and cultural context leads to questions about how music exists within a political theatre, and how music is used within society.

As the meaning of music in a theatrical framework is located at the conjunction of two practices, this thesis considers scholarship within cultural and performance studies (e.g. Pavis 1992; Auslander 1999; McAuley 2000), and within what is increasingly called new musicology (e.g. McCreless 1997: 42-43; Kivy 2001: 155), a movement which applies concepts from feminist, semiotic, and cultural theory to the more traditional musicological concerns.

For my purposes these critiques provide an alternative means of discourse about music that is not exclusively couched in the ‘scientific’ language of music theory. The highly technical language of music is a major barrier in a cross-disciplinary discussion, and in effective communication between the musician and the director.

As Peter Kivy eloquently explains:

Description of music is in a way unique. When it is understandable to the nonmusician it is cried down as nonsense by the contemporary musician. And when the musician or musical scholar turns their hand to it these days, likely as not the nonmusician finds it as mysterious as the Cabala, and about as interesting as a treatise on sewage disposal. (2001: 155)
By proposing a framework based on the function of music within theatre, this thesis aims to be of practical use to the theatre practitioner, and to the director, in the development of a critical language, a ‘theatre’ language for music.

Chapter summaries

Chapter One reviews scholarship on incidental music, considering four articles that cover the twentieth century to set the parameters of this research (O’Neill 1912; Mitchell 1951; Lubbock 1957; Franze 2000). It argues that the generally used term, ‘incidental music’, is incompatible with current theorizations of performance. This chapter also covers other scholarship areas related to both music and theatre. These are grouped into sections dealing with scholarship focussing on music, particularly those dealing with the question of the emotions and music, considering musicological approaches (e.g. Scruton 1999; Kivy 2001), current trends of popular music analysis (e.g. Frith 1996; 2003; Small 1998; Bibliography of Australian Popular Music 2004), theories of sound and recording technology (e.g. Sterne 2003; Doyle 2005) and studies of film music (e.g. Gorbman 1987; Brown 1994). These last provide a useful and related study of the use of music within a visual medium, although theories of film music cannot be imported wholesale into the discussion of music within theatre. Finally this chapter considers J. J. Gibson’s theory of ‘affordances’ (1979) as a sound theoretical underpinning to the conceptualisation of the relationship between music and theatre.

Chapter Two proposes a framework of terms for the analysis of music within the theatrical mise-en-scène. As original research, it identifies and discusses the common uses of music in theatre (derived from the sources identified in Chapter One), arguing that there are six frames under which the function of music in theatre can be considered: emotional, diegetic, metadiegetic, temporal, spatial and formal. The chapter also considers the elements of music that contribute to this framing, such as tonal content, formal structure, timbre, signal processing, improvisation and genre. This proposed framework forms the basis of this research and is tested in practice in subsequent chapters. The framework is proposed as a medium of exchange that is based on the analysis of function, and that is applicable both as a tool for analysis and as a tool for action.

Using the interpretative framework, Chapter Three investigates the use of music in script-driven theatre, music that might have once been sidelined as
‘incidental music’, proposing the alternative term ‘cinematic’ to draw an analogy with similarities of practice (such as underscoring) within film music. It finds that music in theatre shows a considerable degree of conformity with the functions of film music (e.g. Gorbman 1987, Kassabian 2001) but that these operations are all different to a degree. It concludes that, for the 52 shows forming the basis of this research, music is used in the majority of theatre productions and is prominent in image-based, and physical work, although there is little observable foundation for the frequency of the use of music in script-based performance. The chapter finds that music used in theatre manifests structural similarities: high redundancy (Meyer 1967); intensional rather than extensional structures (Chester 1970); reliance on harmony over melody; and simplicity. It also concludes that certain aspects of music, particularly temporal framing, cannot be adequately theorized at the point of reception.

Chapter Four applies the proposed framework to the analysis of a physical theatre (circus) performance. Circus is a medium that has been associated with a recognizable style of presenting music since the mid-nineteenth century (Coxe 1952; Culhane 1990), that is also subordinate to the physical performance. Since circus music is distinctive in a way other performance music is not, it is an ideal case study for the application of the proposed framework. This chapter compares the approach of ‘traditional’ circus music to the use of music within an Australian new circus company, Circa (Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus Ensemble), a company that can be considered as ‘theatricalized’ circus (Albrecht 1995; Tait 2001).

This chapter finds that the analysis of music within circus cannot be confined to an analysis of either score or repertoire. Instead, circus music needs to be understood as a particular set of practices, and an approach to musical form. The chapter identifies the dominant musical elements of ‘traditional’ circus music, and the core practices of circus musicians, to identify how music shapes the trajectory of the circus act. While the key element for ‘traditional’ circus music is that of temporal framing, the music also makes a crucial contribution to an emotional and diegetic framing of joyful reassurance. This contributes to a meta-discourse of control. This is then contrasted with the work of Circa, arguing that a discussion of how this company uses music is crucial to understanding their work in its departure from ‘traditional’ circus practice.

In contrast to earlier chapters on reception, Chapter Five discusses music from the point of view of the production process, with the researcher-artist working on a
 circus/theatre-making project and reflecting on the application of the framework of terms in practice. The chapter discusses music as ‘engagement’, a category that takes an overt position in relation to the audience, identifying the political role of music within the context of directorial intent: ‘music that would entertain’. Through reflective analysis of the creative process, the chapter covers the major areas of concern for the musicians involved, considering the framework of terms as it is applicable to the live performance of a compiled score of popular music, focussing on metadiegetic and temporal framing.

This chapter identifies the difficulties for artists that arise from the sometimes conflicting demands of musical and theatrical form, particularly in relation to the concepts of continuity and closure. It proposes the concept of a ‘minimum unit of manipulable form’ in order to maintain the integrity of musical forms in a way that also supports the dramatic form. The chapter confirms the presence of a set of performing practices for the musicians that conformed to the practices identified in Chapter Four. These practices are pertinent to both circus and theatre music.

While previous chapters are primarily concerned with the ‘aural object’ of music in relation to theatrical performance, Chapter Six considers the visual analysis of live musical performance, and how the presence of a visible musician within a theatrical performance can be theorized. Using Philip Auslander’s theories of musical performance (2004b; 2006), it is argued that there is a conventional ‘persona’ for the theatre musician which can be characterized as one of effacement and absorption, and that this ‘theatre-musician persona’ is dramatically, rather than musically constructed. In contrast, in other forms of performance, such as circus, the dominant persona for the live musician may be more obviously constructed in accordance with conventions of musical performance. Whether a musically or dramatically constructed persona predominates is significant to audience response.

The chapter considers this both in relation to Michael Kirby’s theories of acting (1987), and to Gay McAuley’s theorization of stage space (2000) and proposes that the live theatre musician operates within prevailing conventions that form a continuum of six presentational modes: the ‘pit’ musician, the ‘virtual pit’ musician, the ‘onstage’ musician, the musician as ‘set’, the musician-actor/actor-musician, and the musician within the spectacle.
Methodology and terminology

The selection of existing scholarship in which to locate this study presents some difficulties, beginning with the appropriate descriptive term. The common term for music used in performances that does not fall into the genres of opera, musical, or the various historical popular entertainment hybrids (music hall, variety, minstrel shows, cabaret, etc) is ‘incidental music’ (Shaw 1892; Aber 1926; Savage 2001; Pisani 2004). This is a slippery term, used to cover a wide variety of musical-theatrical practices. ‘Incidental music’, for example, is used for music that, while it might have been originally composed for a play, has now become part of the classical canon (e.g. Beethoven’s Egmont Overture, Op. 84). It is not my intention to consider works in the classical canon as they have been effectively severed from their origin as incidental music and are unlikely to be used in contemporary productions of the play for which they were originally composed.

Opera is often considered under the terms ‘music for theatre’ or ‘music-drama’ (dramma per musica) (Leroy 1925; Dahlhaus 1979), while musicals are frequently termed ‘music-theatre’, or ‘musical theatre’ (e.g. Beroff 1984; Taylor 2007). There is also a slightly confusing use of the term ‘music-theatre’ for the work of certain contemporary composers, such as Berio, Maxwell-Davies, Birtwhistle and Stockhausen (Ford 1997; Toop 1998; Williams 2000), which could be described as predominantly musical works with some visual staging. All of these forms, while involving the combination of music and theatre in varying degrees are outside the focus of this research. It is also not my intention to consider the use of music in other forms of historical theatre practice, such as music in Greek or Restoration Theatre, or in the plays of Shakespeare.

Within the discipline of performance studies, Patrice Pavis is one of the few scholars to deal to any extent with the question of music. Within a semiotic approach to performance analysis, music is one obvious sign among the complex signification of a theatre performance. But within the discipline of theatre and performance studies after poststructuralism, music is usually only briefly mentioned as an aesthetic issue and seemingly subservient to cultural ones.

While the development of a framework, and the use of Pavis’ work could be considered to be a structuralist approach, this approach has been taken largely due to the apparent invisibility of music within poststructuralist theories of performance. However music is also not often discussed within other significant
studies using semiotic and structuralist approaches (e.g. Elam 1980; Kirby 1987; Issacharoff 1989; Alter 1990; Beckerman 1990; De Marinis 1993; Melrose 1994; Aston and Savona 1994; Toro 1995; Ubersfeld 1999) or within other theoretical approaches (States 1985; Barba 1991; 1995; Kershaw 1992; Mock (ed.) 2000; Blau 2002; Fortier 2002; Shepherd and Wallis 2004; Carlson 2004; Schechner 2005/1977.) Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) considers the ‘musicalization’ of postdramatic theatre, but this term is used pre-eminently as a metaphor, and his discussion of the function of music within postdramatic theatre is brief. Discussion of music in theatre texts is more common in books dealing with either political or popular theatre (Itzin 1980; McGrath 1981; Filewod and Watt 2001), though its treatment is again brief and it is usually considered in relation to the audience.

The framework of terms presented in Chapter Two is based on a compilation from existing sources and reflection on practice from the researcher’s professional experience. Following the first year of research the framework was re-interrogated and revised, and productions viewed in the second year of research were analyzed reflecting those revisions. The final framework as presented here is a synthesis of those previous observations and propositions. This framework is open-ended.

The establishment of the framework is intended as a medium of exchange, rather than as a checklist to be applied systematically to a performance. In Chapter Three, the framework is explained with practical examples, considering each frame separately in order to give a practical application of the theoretical concepts set out in Chapter Two. Recognizing that the function of a single piece of music can be understood under a number of frames simultaneously, Chapters Four and Five apply the categories of the framework as interdependent elements.

For Chapter Three, comparative performance analysis based on existing models (Pavis 1992; 1996; McAuley 1998) was undertaken. The selection of performances was intended to be a representative sample of contemporary theatre practice, but importantly, unskewed by any selection that privileged the use of music. Fifty-two shows were viewed at the following venues: La Mama, Melbourne between April and July 2006, and March and June 2007; and shows performed during the Melbourne International Arts Festival (11-27 October 2006, and 12-28 October 2008) focusing on productions performed at the Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne. (Two shows in this research period were performed at the Arts Centre, Melbourne).
Productions were also viewed at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh during the Edinburgh International Festival in August 2006 and 2007. Edinburgh was chosen for this research in order to give a wider, international perspective, and to ascertain whether any significant differences prevailed between local and international product. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival offered, for an Australian researcher, the chance to see a considerable amount of work at one venue within a short time period. A full list of all shows is given in Appendix I.

These venues were selected as they would reflect a range of scale of theatre practice and budgets, from the tiny La Mama space to the larger production spaces of Traverse Theatre One and the Merlyn Theatre at the Malthouse. Secondly, that a range of theatrical styles and practices could be considered. Although the focus would be on ‘plays’, as both La Mama and the Traverse Theatre focus on script-based productions, the more hybrid and experimental nature of shows performed during the Melbourne International Arts Festival would provide a balance.

The following hypothetical propositions were investigated:

• That music will be used in the large majority of productions.
• That it will be less used in more naturalistic productions, and in predominantly text-based works.
• That the music will generate meaning that is simultaneously dependent on, and independent of, the theatrical context.
• That the music will manifest certain structural similarities (for example, high redundancy).
• That it will reflect contemporary taste.

Shows were viewed only once, notes were made immediately following the performance, and written up the following day in conjunction with the framework of terms. Both note-taking and writing up focussed on the use of music as this study is concerned with a specific area in both McAuley’s and Pavis’ schema for performance analysis. In certain cases this analysis was supplemented with various tools for reconstruction (Pavis 2003: 10) such as publicity materials, reviews and comparisons of the performance with the published playscript (if available). In some cases further communication was undertaken with the musical director or director of the performance, through electronic and face-to-face communication.

A potential conflict with copyright law emerged during the course of this research in that it appeared that not all of the performances viewed had acquired the
requisite permissions for use of recorded music. While recognizing that this is possibly an endemic situation in small-scale theatre (whether because of budgetary constraints or the current unwieldiness of copyright law in relation to theatre performance), it is a complication for research in this area. Therefore, the music used in compiled scores is only named in this thesis in situations where the researcher was confident that copyright had not been breached. In some cases, the identity of a specific performance, or specific piece of music, has been disguised for both legal and ethical reasons.

Research for the discussion of ‘traditional’ circus music in Chapter Four was complicated by the fact that there are very few extended discussions of circus music, reflecting the lack of primary research in this area; primary research that is outside the scope of this study. One hundred and thirteen sources consulted for this research included general circus histories (e.g. Speaight 1980; Culhane 1990; Albrecht 1995; 2006; St Leon 1983; 2007), circus theorists (e.g. Bouissac 1976; Carmeli 1989; 2002; Stoddart 2000; Tait 2001; 2005), and autobiographical material (e.g. Wirth 1925; Seago 1933; Smith 1948; Bostock 1972; Downer 1966).

Research for this chapter included an in-depth study of the work of Circa, a company from Brisbane whose work could be categorized as new circus, and for whom the use of music is particularly significant. Their work is considered in comparison with ‘traditional’ circus music, which is discussed in relation to the framework of terms. The methodology is descriptive and includes performance analysis of work in repertoire, previous work on video and interviews with the director. Eleven circus shows by different circus companies were viewed over the course of this research as comparative examples (details given in Appendix I).

Chapter Five involved the researcher as a participant/observer in a circus/theatre performance-making project. I was employed on a part-time basis between June and December 2005 to act as musical director for the Women’s Circus’ production of Daddy. The professional brief was to form a live band drawing on members of the community, select and arrange suitable music in differing styles to accompany the various acts, oversee the rehearsal process and perform during the season. The term ‘musical director’ (MD), in the context of this project, means the researcher was responsible for the production of all aspects of the music used in the show, including leading the other musicians in the band. This term does not necessarily imply musical composition. The process of creating Daddy took approximately six months from the first meeting with the director to
opening night, and this chapter covers that period. In contrast to the other chapters, this chapter is not concerned with the point of reception.

In contrast to the observational methodology of previous chapters, with this project I am situated artistically within it as a ‘native’ (Narayan 1993), with nearly twenty years of what Judith Okely terms ‘retrospective fieldwork’ (1996: 10), having worked professionally as musical director and composer/sound designer for theatre and film, and as a theatre director and animateur. Although there are issues arising in research within a familiar territory, a growing body of work in ethnography validates the subjective knowledge gained from ‘insider’ status and refutes the theory that a necessary distance has to be maintained in order for rigorous analysis (Fine 1993; Coffey 1999; Wulff 2000; Dyck 2000; Narayan 1993). As a participant/observer within this process, this chapter has substituted the term ‘researcher’ with the personal ‘I’, reflecting the subjective nature of the research. The methodology used is illuminative and exploratory, and data was gathered by means of a field diary, interviews with the director, audience evaluation and evaluation by band members. The discography gives full details of the recordings that formed the basis of the final compiled score, but these are referred to by title and recorded artist in the main body of the text.

Chapter Six considers all the circus and theatre performances viewed that made extensive use of live music, as the basis for a theorization of the visual presentation of the musician.

Poststructuralism in theatre and performance studies has presented some interesting difficulties for the terminology used in this thesis. The word ‘performance’ itself is problematic in a cross-disciplinary thesis that considers both musical performance and theatrical performance. There is a paradigmatic difference in the use of the word between the two disciplines. Within the discipline of music, for example, ‘performance’ tends to automatically mean performance of the aural object of music, and does not usually consider the visual performance of the musician. So in this thesis the term ‘theatre’, rather than ‘performance’, is used for ease of distinction between the discussion of a musical performance, and that of a theatrical performance. For the same reason the term ‘actor’ is used, rather than ‘performer’, to provide a clear distinction from the musician.

The problem of terminology also recurs for reception theory. Reception theory has been significant within theatre studies in the recognition of the problem of the collapsing of multiple subject positions into a composite group termed ‘the
audience’. The adoption of the term ‘spectator’, in its privileging of visuality, however, is particularly difficult when discussing music within theatrical performance, and when applied indiscriminately in theatre analysis has the effect of rendering the music ‘inaudible’. In the theatre and circus productions viewed for this research, the term ‘audience’ is more inclusive as it is appropriate for both theatrical and musical performances. Therefore, I have approached this on a case-by-case basis, and used the terms ‘spectator’, ‘listener’, and ‘audience’ and ‘audience member’ where each seemed most appropriate.

As this thesis is intended to be used by theatre practitioners who cannot be assumed to have a theoretical knowledge of music, this thesis does not present detailed musicological analyses, and the necessary discussion of music has been written to be as intelligible as possible to a non-music specialist. Appendix II, therefore, consists of a glossary of musical terms as they are used in this thesis. The glossary also contains the specialized circus terms used, and the terms proposed in the framework that are used in this thesis with a specific definition. For the purposes of clarity, key points are summarized in list form within the chapters. Chapter Two also provides summaries of the main terms used for each section of the framework.
Chapter One
Establishing the field

This chapter searches relevant scholarship for music used in theatrical performance, taking as its starting point the scholarship that considers the practice of ‘incidental music’. It also considers where theatre scholarship might mention music before considering its most developed discussion in film.

As the meaning of music in a theatrical framework is located at the conjunction of two practices, this chapter considers scholarship within cultural and performance studies (e.g. Pavis 1992; Auslander 1999; McAuley 2000), with particular relation to theories of mise-en-scène (Pavis 1992). Studies of film music (e.g. Gorbman 1987; Chion 1994) provide a useful, and related study of the use of music within a visual medium, although theories of film music cannot be imported wholesale into discussion of music within theatre.

While music may be incidental to the production of play texts, when the choice is made to include music in a performance it is no longer incidental. It will add its own meanings and aural texts to the performance, along with all the other meaning systems within the performance. Why and how music contributes to these meaning systems is the subject of this study. This chapter considers J. J. Gibson’s theory of ‘affordances’ (1979) as a sound theoretical underpinning to the conceptualisation of the relation of music and theatre.

In order to discuss music in theatre it is essential to understand the nature of discourse about music. There is a key distinction between modes of discourse that deal with music as an object, and those that deal with music as an experience. The question of discourse has become central to this research; discourse that is appropriate across the two disciplines and that can function to allow communication between the two disciplines.

The nature of the discourses surrounding music are examined, focussing on scholarship that deals with the question of the emotional effects of music, considering philosophical and psychological approaches (e.g. Scruton 1999; Kivy
Incidental music

According to Roger Savage, the term *incidental music* began to be used in the mid-nineteenth century, possibly developing from the German term *Incidentenmusik*, meaning “following on from, or incurred in the execution of some plan or purpose” such as the purpose of staging a play (Savage 2001: 138). But, as Savage goes on to state, the English term has derogatory connotations. In contemporary use it can be defined as less important than the thing it is connected with or part of.

To consider the claims made for ‘incidental music’ I focus on four relevant articles that span the twentieth century. These four articles (O’Neill 1912; Mitchell 1951; Lubbock 1957; Franze 2000) set out a series of claims for the function of incidental music, but also reveal the confusions inherent in the term.

Norman O’Neill makes a distinction between music that is called for in a playscript, either in the dialogue or in the stage directions, and music added at the behest of the director; between incidental music, “which may or may not be specially composed for the play” and “music which is specially written for a play, and which is an essential part of the production” (1912: 322). Incidental music includes “marches, dances and songs which are incidental to the action of the play” (ibid.323) and also what he terms *melodrame*, deriving from the then common musical practices in melodrama. He describes *melodrame* as “music which accompanies the dialogue and reflects the feeling and emotion of the spoken lines” (ibid.)

The practice O’Neill describes is now more commonly referred to as *underscoring*. Within his definition of incidental music there are thus two distinctions: music functioning as background (underscoring) and music that remains in the foreground (“marches, dances and songs”) but which is not specified in the script.

He has a third category of “*Entr’actes* and Interlude music”:

---

1 Michael Pisani concurs with Savage, and notes that before the mid-nineteenth century music in theatre would simply be described as “music” or “appropriate music” (2004: 71). Pisani also gives a brief overview of music in theatrical practice during the nineteenth century. For other discussions of this period see Mayer (1981), Shapiro (1984), Self (2001) and Dean (2007). Hibberd and Nilsson (2002) and Cockett (2007) also discuss the indispensable nature of music used in theatres in the nineteenth century.
Under the heading of Entr’acte music one may put music which is played between the scenes and acts of plays, and which does not accompany the action of the play. There may be no call for music during a play, but it may still be necessary to have music during a quick change of scene. Effective and suitable music between the scenes can be of artistic value; if there is an entire change of sentiment from the one scene to the other, the music can in more ways than one fill up the gap. (ibid.)

This third category, therefore, sits somewhere between the incidental and the essential. Incidental, in that it is not indicated by the script, yet essential in a performance for both practical and artistic reasons.

O’Neill goes on to consider the characteristics of melodrame and how it performs the functions of accompanying the dialogue and reflecting the emotion of the text. The music may follow a particular character, in a way similar to leitmotiv, in order to remind the audience of a previous situation. If underscoring dialogue, it needs to be unobtrusive and he recommends relying on harmony to convey the feeling of the words rather than striking melodies, which he considers distracting. He also recommends the use of strings rather than woodwind to accompany voices as they “mix far better with the human voice” (ibid. 327). The audience should not be aware of the music even to the extent of hiding the musicians. After all “[i]ncidental music should be a mere accompaniment to the play” (ibid. 325).

Although O’Neill was writing at the beginning of the twentieth century in a theatrical context very different from the present, much of his theory has a familiar sound to a musician working within theatre at the beginning of the twenty-first century. That the practice he describes can be considered standard is borne out by another article, which although written fifty-five years later, reiterates it without substantial alteration.

Mark Lubbock, obviously seeing no reason to disagree with anything O’Neill thought, only adds one significant point. He recognizes the influence of incidental music not just on members of the audience, but also on the actors:

… for appropriate music can be of the greatest assistance in helping them slip into the appropriate mood for the scene they happen to be playing. (Lubbock 1957: 129-130)²

For Ronald Mitchell, the most important function of music within a play is to be “potent atmospherically” (1951: 243). Unlike Lubbock, and in a reflection of the

---

² In his discussion of nineteenth century incidental music, Michael Pisani also considers the principal function of music was to “assist the actors in establishing and sustaining the emotional pitch at any given moment of a play” (2004: 71). Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Neilson also claim (in a discussion of nineteenth century melodrama) that music would “… help the actors fix their performance in terms of duration, pacing and interpretation.” (2002: 32)
times, Mitchell notes the potential use of recorded music as an alternative to live performance. He places considerable emphasis on the choice of suitable music for “period, style of production, prevailing fashion, musical history, and even audience expectation” (ibid. 243). He is also aware of the increasing influence of film music conventions, though tending to dismiss them as “vulgar” (ibid. 247) and “characterless” (ibid. 246).

There is a subtle, yet important difference in the way Mitchell considers the emotional function of music for the audience, an audience who will “listen but not too keenly but just enough to be controlled and cajoled into all kinds and degrees of moods and emotions by the music you employ” (ibid.). Controlling, or cajoling, to bring about an intended emotional response are powerful claims for music when it is also claimed that the audience members might not be consciously aware of hearing it.

But to elicit emotional responses from members of the audience is not the sole purpose for incidental music. Vladimir Franze, in a more contemporary account, confirms the centrality of emotion to the discussion, yet articulates different and markedly more ambitious functions:

Incidental music forms the emotional and dramatic backbone of a drama, and together with the plot it complementarily produces the tempo-rhythm of a particular staging … The music can confine the space, form frames, lead an inner dialogue with the key character, or even bring a poetic or kinetic solution to specific situation[s] and in such a manner, exchange roles with set designing. It can precede a situation, summarize it and reach the final verdict. (2000: 22-23)

For Mildred F. Roof, “music ceases to be incidental almost in direct proportion to the extent which it diverts the attention of the audience from the action of the drama to the music itself” (1942: 3). Yet all of the above accounts demonstrate that so-called ‘incidental’ music in theatrical performance has a role in the foreground, as well as the background. In discussing contemporary theatre here, with its increasingly hybrid performance styles, for music to take predominantly one role or the other will vary with the theatrical genre.

In summary, according to these writers the role of what is being categorized as incidental music is:

• To reflect dominant emotions (e.g. of spoken lines)
• To influence emotional responses
• To be potent atmospherically
• To support the narrative
• To be suitable for style, period etc. of production
• To cover scene changes
• To take a subordinate role – “the seasoning not the main dish” (Mitchell 1951: 248)
• To be invisible
• To frame or confine the space
• To produce the tempo-rhythm of a particular staging
• To support the actors to sustain an appropriate mood.

The majority of these claims are concerned with the impact on spectatorial reception. The final two are concerned also with the impact on artistic production. The emphasis is on two related functions, that music should support the narrative and frame the emotional content of that narrative. These brief accounts do not detail how music actually fulfils any of these functions.

Patrice Pavis defines incidental music simply as “music used in a performance” (1998: 182); a definition that, while able to encompass a range of roles for music, is so broad that it simply highlights the inadequacies of the term. Because of this, it is fortunate that the term appears to be slipping out of favour. Within film studies, the term appears occasionally (e.g. Gallez 1970), but music within a film is generally referred to simply as ‘film music’ or the ‘film score’. Similarly ‘circus music’ exists as a particular genre, though it is argued (Chapter Four) that this is a term that defines both a musical genre and a set of practices. But, as noted in the introduction, ‘theatre music’ encompasses a problematic number of distinct artistic genres and practices.

The German Bühnenmusik, which translates simply as stage music, suggests itself as a simple, neutral term, while recognizing that a formal ‘stage’ may not always be present. Contemporary practice increasingly uses the term sound design, but this term, at least in its current usage, is problematic for reasons that will be examined later.

The study of music within theatre would logically fit within the theory of mise-en-scène. Pavis defines the mise-en-scène as “an object of knowledge, a network of associations or relationships uniting the different stage materials into signifying systems, created both by production (the actors, the director, the stage in general) and reception (the spectators)” (1992: 25).
Pavis provides a model for a practical analysis of mise-en-scène that includes the function of music. To be considered is the nature of the music, its relationship to fabula and to diction, and also when it occurs (1992: 96). In *L’Analyse des Spectacles* he devotes space to the discussion of music which he expands to include all ‘sonorous events’ – vocal, instrumental and noise (1996: 130).

Pavis provides a list of functions for music within theatre, summarized as follows:

- As *leitmotiv* illustrating and characterising the atmosphere
- As acoustic scenery to set the place of action
- As sound effects (*bruitage*) to ‘make known’ a situation
- To cover scene changes and to punctuate action
- To provide a ‘counterpoint’, (which Pavis characterizes as ironic and cites the use of song in Brechtian theatre as an example)
- To create atmosphere in a way similar to film music
- To sometimes be the centre of attention, producing the action as in musical theatre (Pavis 1996: 133, author’s translation).

For Pavis, as for the other writers on incidental music, music supports the narrative and implicitly has an emotional function. He describes this in terms of the manipulation of spectatorial reception:

> Elle [la musique] crée une atmosphère qui nous rend particulièrement réceptif à la représentation. Elle est comme une lumière de l’âme qui s’éveille en nous (Pavis 1996: 130).

Pavis indicates two differing roles for music; that of stage music which has a structural function to ‘produce’ the action, and music that functions cinematically to ‘create atmosphere’. But, similarly to the other writers on incidental music, his analysis emphasizes music’s support for the theatre and does not consider whether music adds any significances or even a text of its own. Mitchell, by mentioning that incidental music should consider “prevailing fashion” and “audience expectation” (1951: 243) hints at a spectatorial engagement with music that falls outside its immediate theatrical role. Pavis characterizes music as a non-representational art form, and Richard Dyer, (discussing film music in which mise-en-scène is also a related, though not completely identical concept), recognizes a problem in treating

---

3 “Le terme de ‘musique’ est employé au sens (le plus général possible) d’événement sonore” (1996: 130) 
4 “It [music] creates an atmosphere which renders us particularly receptive to the performance. It is like a light of the soul awakening in us” (author’s translation).
the non-representational (music) purely as a function of the representational, and without signification in its own right (1992: 22).

Pavis’ (and Mitchell’s) recognition that some uses of incidental music can resemble film music is an important consideration. Film and theatre exist in an interesting relation. If film staging can be considered to have developed historically from theatre (Brewster 1997), in its divergences as it developed, and continues to develop, it is argued that it significantly informs and influences some contemporary theatre practice (Auslander 1999).

Claudia Gorbman gives the following list of requirements for film music, requirements that bear similarities to the claims made for incidental music:

- Invisibility
- Inaudibility
- Signifier of emotion
- Narrative cueing
- Continuity
- Unity

A given film score may violate any of the principles above, providing the violation is at the service of the other principles (Gorbman 1987: 73).

Similarly to the claims made for incidental music, support for the narrative and for emotion is again emphasized. Implicit in all these accounts is that the emotional effect of music, while linked to narrative support, is also intended to reach out to the audience, to ‘control and cajole’ (Mitchell 1951: 246), to ‘render us receptive’ (Pavis 1996: 130), to psychologically ‘bond’ the audience to the spectacle (Gorbman 1987: 55).

**Discursive practices**

Robert Walser considers that “while meanings are negotiated, discourse constructs the terms of the negotiation” (1993: 33). Both music and theatre are sites of different discursive practices. In order to discuss possible areas of conjunction, it is important to consider what are important areas for consideration within discourse about music, and particularly that relating to its emotional effects. What is an effective communication about music within a theatrical context, particularly as music appears to be so difficult to discuss? For example:

The hardest of all the arts to speak of is music, because music has no meaning to speak of. (Rorem 1967: 128)
Music has an exceptional, an incommensurable position among the arts. It is movement and, therefore, always future – never to be grasped. It is incapable of description; it has no practical use… (Schnabel 1969/1942: 61)

I don’t feel I can talk technically about it [music]. I talk instinctively about it. When I talk to musicians or composers or MDs I talk about feels. I go on gut reaction and gut response when I read the text and talk with a composer.” (Cathcart 2006)

As an example of how music might be discussed, here are two contemporaneous descriptions of what can be considered a ‘canonic’ piece of music within the Western classical tradition. This work was selected because it has attracted a number of descriptions. The following two quotes discuss the same section of music:

… the harmonic context is altered by the dominant pedal supporting bars 9a-16a (17-240). But Ex.9.10 comes considerably closer to its first-movement model. The voice-leading reduction in Ex.9.11a shows that the outer voices in the sketch proceed in parallel tenths, from d/B to an implied g#/E; and although the bass A supports root-position subdominant harmony rather than the supertonic found in the first movement (bar 59), the 4-3 suspensions in the sketch seem to recall in a general way the melodic embellishments of the descending line in the first movement: b#2 on the downbeat of bar 59 which delays the arrival of c#3, for instance, or the appoggiatura b2 delaying a2 in bar 60 (Ex. 9.11b). (Marston 1995: 231)

This ecstatic moment in the final variation reaffirms in the celestial upper register the progression leading to the melodic peak on C# that derives from the theme itself, three bars from the conclusion of the sarabande. It is this gesture that was foreshadowed in the coda of the first movement and stressed at the fortissimo climax of the fourth variation, among other passages; but perhaps nowhere else is the expressive impact of the dissonant major ninth chord supporting C# so striking as here. After this climax a gradual diminuendo on the protracted dominant eventually resolves to the slightly varied da capo of the theme, which now seems transfigured by the experience we have undergone in re-approaching it.” (Kinderman 1995: 224)

The first is a highly technical musicological analysis, an analysis based on the score of the work in question (and on the composer’s preliminary sketches), and an analysis not necessarily dependent on the hearing of that music. The fact that the analysis concerns a piece of piano music is barely referred to in Nicholas Marston’s detailed analysis of the genesis of the work. William Kinderman’s approach, which is also a musicological analysis, combines a technical discussion of the work with comments about the aural experience of the work for that scholar.

The work discussed in these examples is the third movement of the Sonata in E, Op. 109, by Beethoven, a set of six variations on a theme, and the examples
quoted above both refer to the final variation. Another earlier description, this time of the initial theme of the variations, demonstrates a different approach, and one in which the aural experience, and an apparently transcendental experience, of the music is at the forefront:

In the first of the variations the composer soars up above earthly things, seeking ethereal regions in which the melody, in a slightly altered form, moves freely and independently, sustained only by the most necessary harmonies forming its accompaniment. The notes seem to beckon down a heavenly hope. (Behrend 1927: 180)

Marston’s approach is what I will term a ‘formalist’ approach to music analysis, in which the emphasis is on the tonal events and formal structure of the music. William Behrend’s experiential description I term ‘transcendental’; it is a description that reveals a passionate response by the individual to a piece of music. Implicit in this description is the sense that this music is able to transport the listener somehow beyond the limits of the quotidian, to ‘heaven’ itself. Pavis’ description of music as a ‘light of the soul’, noted earlier, could also be described as ‘transcendental’. Kinderman’s description contains elements of both ‘formalist’ and ‘transcendental’ description.

A formalist analytical approach has generally dominated the study of music during the twentieth century. This is a style of analysis that predominantly confines itself to the internal relations of a work of music. A variety of methodologies have developed including functional harmonic analysis (Tovey 1935; Piston 1965), to more specialized methodologies, such as Schenkerian voice leading (Forte 1959; Yeston 1977), or pitch-set theory (Forte 1964; Babbitt 2003). Marston’s detailed work on Beethoven’s Op. 109, as he notes, is indebted to both Schenker and Forte’s approaches (1995: 8).

From the point of view of the discussion of music in a theatrical context, there are two main problems with these various analytic approaches within musicology; firstly, the problem of a mode of discourse that is dependent on a level of musical knowledge inaccessible to anyone without extensive musical theoretical training. Unless a theatre director has come from a musical background, a dominant form of discourse within the discipline of music is rendered meaningless inside the discipline of theatre.

5 Other guises of the transcendental urge (other than to God) in discussions of music have appeared as the Will (Schopenhauer 1966/1819), the Primal Unity recalling the Dionysian self (Nietzsche 1999/1886) or the pure state of Nature (Rousseau 1966/1781).
Secondly, this discourse frequently ignores the question of the experience of music, and particularly the emotional experience of music, and as noted in the accounts given for the use of incidental music in theatre earlier, the creation of some kind of emotional experience appears to be one of the predominant aims of music in theatre. There are various critiques of these analytical methodologies (Meyer 1956; Cone 1960; 1967; Rosen 1976; Kerman 1980; 1985; McCreless 1997), which often centre on the reductionist nature of such analysis and the omission of the experiential aspect of music. Leonard B. Meyer notes the tendency of musical theorists to treat the musical composition as a “thing instead of a process which gives rise to a dynamic experience” (1956: 54). In the reliance on the score, in order to investigate structural features which might not be apparent in immediate aural perception, music becomes implicitly identified with, and identical to, the score. That the score is not identical to the musical work has been identified by a number of commentators (Griffiths 1986; Cook 1989; Shepherd 1991; Small 1998).

Formalist musical analysis is underpinned by what Lydia Goehr terms, the ‘work-concept’ of music (1992: 13), or as Carl Dahlhaus states, “the idea that music is exemplified in works” (1982: 10). Both scholars provide a history of the development of this identification of music as a ‘work’ and, particularly as the *opus perfectum et absolutum*, (the work of music as an isolated and self-contained entity) pointing out that this is a development crucially linked with nineteenth century aesthetic theory, and particularly concerns music’s status as a ‘fine art’. This is a point I will return to later, as it is important in the conception of music within theatre.

By terming an analysis ‘formalist’, I am making an intentional link with the philosophical approach to music that is also termed ‘formalist’ or ‘absolutist’. This position is generally linked with the work of Eduard Hanslick, who has been an enormously influential figure in the development of modern musical aesthetics (see, for example, Kivy 2001; Scruton 1983; 1999; Budd 1985; Dahlhaus 1982; Ridley 1995; 2004; Sharpe 2004). Hanslick, in his book *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (The Beautiful In Music) (1854) located the beauty (in essence, artistic merit) of a work of music in the internal relations of the composition itself and not in any extra-musical association, including emotion.

Its [the beautiful in music] nature is specifically musical. By this we mean that the beautiful is not contingent upon nor in need of any subject introduced from without, but that it consists wholly of sounds artistically combined. (1957/1854: 47)
Malcolm Budd has summarized Hanslick’s argument as:

(i) Music cannot represent thoughts. (ii) Definite feelings and emotions, hope, sadness and love, for example, involve or contain thoughts. Therefore, (iii) music cannot represent definite feelings or emotions. (Budd 1985: 21)

Stravinsky was an adherent to this philosophical position, famously stating:

For I consider that music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc. … Expression has never been an inherent property of music. That is by no means the purpose of its existence. (Stravinsky 1936: 91)

Yet Stravinsky reveals the problem with an extreme formalist philosophy with his next sentence: “If, as is nearly always the case, music appears to express something, this is only an illusion and not a reality…” (ibid. 92). Hanslick, however, never argued that an emotional response to music was inappropriate (1957/1854: 10-15). He asserted, rather, that the value of a musical work is not dependent on whether it arouses emotions.

The philosophy and aesthetics of music is dominated by particular concerns, often dealing with the legacy of Hanslick, particularly the problem of reconciling his formalist account of music with what appears to be overwhelming empirical evidence that music is somehow linked to the emotions, or to aesthetic positions that consider that this is the source of its value, (a position that is sometimes referred to as ‘expressionist’ or ‘referentialist’). Meyer notes the confusion surrounding these terms (1956: 1-3). R. A. Sharpe’s useful introduction to the philosophy of music sets out what appear to be the dominant subjects of debate, which include debates around the ‘work-concept’, and the complex question of the ‘meaning’ of music, particularly in the light of its lack of semantic content (2004). Kivy (2001) also provides a useful overview over some of the main debates.

But as Hanslick, who provided the aesthetic basis for the formalist position, did not deny that music had emotional effectiveness, the expressionist/referentialist and formalist positions might not be quite so opposed as they at first seem. Meyer theorized that it would be more accurate to describe this dualism as between absolute expressionists and referential expressionists (1956: 3). That music is a source of emotion is not denied, and the question becomes one of whether emotional meanings arise within the work itself, or from extra-musical references. Scholars who could be characterized as ‘absolute expressionists’ would include Edmund Gurney
(1996/1880), Carl Seashore (1947), Deryck Cooke (1962) and Carroll C. Pratt (1968/1931). Budd (1985) provides a detailed critique of most of these theories.

A recurring question within these studies is how the ‘object’ of music can create the emotional ‘experience’ of music, and these studies consider how particular compositional elements in Western classical music are related to the portrayal of specific emotions. A related question is whether specific tonal events of music actually ‘arouse’ the emotions or, rather, somehow ‘express’ or ‘depict’ them. Meyer identified the distinction between the ‘arousal’ (emotion felt) theory of music and the ‘embodiment’ (emotion depicted) position and noted that listeners may confuse one with the other (1956: 8). Representatives of the ‘arousal’ theory include Colin Radford and Derek Matravers, who maintain that either sad music (for example) will make the listener feel sad (Radford 1989), or that emotions are perceived internally (identification) and then projected into the music (projection) (Matravers 1998). Kivy, who also admits to a passionate response to music, takes the opposite stance and argues that the expressive qualities of music are heard properties of the music (embodied within it) and not dispositions to arouse emotions in the listener (2001).

But in considering music within theatre many of the main areas of debate in philosophical studies of music and emotions cannot always be deemed to be relevant. Musical aesthetics is dominated by the study of Western classical music, and many of the questions revolve around what is known as ‘absolute’ music. ‘Absolute’ music is used of instrumental music that does not have any obvious point of external reference (such as Beethoven’s Sonata in E, Op. 109). This is music that is distinguished from ‘programme’ music, (instrumental music which contains extra-musical references, sometimes implicit in the work’s title – e.g. La Mer by Debussy), and also from music that involves explicit semantic content, such as vocal music. It also excludes music in a dramatic context (such as opera). Even if a work be considered as ‘absolute’ music by itself, its use within a theatrical performance confers referentiality, and hence its ‘meaning’ or ‘emotional effects’ must be considered in that context. Discussion of the formal aspects of music might be less important than the functional aspects of music’s relation to immediate context.

Within the twentieth century, Meyer is a particularly influential theorist to consider the question of music and the emotions. Meyer also considered how the

---

6 Earlier attempts to codify, or otherwise define, the expression of emotional effects by particular musical elements include Plato (2003: 93-96); Thomas Morley (1953/1597: 177-178); Charles Avison (1967/1753); and, at length, by Johannes Mattheson (1981/1739).
tonal events of music could arouse emotion. His theories rested on the principles of Gestalt psychology and upon John Dewey’s conflict theory of emotions stating “[e]motion or affect is aroused when a tendency to respond is arrested or inhibited” (1956: 14). Meyer’s theory of the musical expression of emotions is one of tension and release, based on the tension and resolution often used to describe the chordal relationships of tonal harmony. Tension and resolution can be seen in, for example, the harmonic progressions of consonance and dissonance, the resolution of dissonance propelling the harmonic structure through time to the eventual return to the tonic. The patterning of melody, rhythm and harmony, according to Meyer, arouses certain expectations in the listener, expectations that might be conscious or unconscious.

A pattern reaction consists of a set or series of regularly coincident mental or motor responses which, once brought into play as part of the response to a given stimulus, follow a previously ordered course, unless inhibited or blocked in some way. The order established by a pattern reaction is both temporal and structural, that is, the series involves not only the relation of the parts of the total pattern to each other but also their timing. Thus a series may be disturbed either because the succession of the parts of the pattern is upset or because the timing of the series is upset or both. (1956: 24)

So, if the expectations that the listener has with regard to the ‘patterning’ of music are disrupted then emotional effects will arise. Meyer also recognized these expectations are a product of learning, or acculturation.

There are various criticisms of Meyer (Budd 1985; Shepherd 1991) centering on the validity of the tension/release model, (which in its application to music is a metaphorical description anyway), and on Meyer’s reliance on the Western classical tradition, but many of his theories appear very prescient in the light of more recent empirical research.

Recent scholarship by David Huron (2007) and John Sloboda (2005) from the perspective of cognitive psychology appears to confirm many of Meyer’s theories, particularly that emotional responses to music are based on expectation. Huron’s argument for music’s significance is based on its evolutionary role, and a number of theorists also consider the link of music with the emotions to have its origins either as a by-product of evolution (Pinker 1997), or as somehow necessary to human evolution (Cross 2001). Steven Mithen (2006) posits that music preceded speech and that at some point in evolutionary history a bifurcation of the brain between music and language happened. The effect of music, therefore, reaches back to a pre-
linguistic form of communication, containing emotional but not semantic content. That music preceded speech is a concept that was proposed by Darwin, who in *The Descent of Man* (1898/1877) considered that music arose to facilitate sexual selection. Rousseau similarly considered that music preceded language (1793, 1781). Claude Lévi-Strauss, who considers, in contrast, that music developed from language, still relates music to pre-industrial mythology (1978). Recent archaeological scholarship is also beginning to look at evidence for the sound environment of pre-history (Waller 1993; 2002; Lawson et al. 1998; Blesser 2007).

The theory that the emotional importance of music can be attributed to its roots in the pre-linguistic informs studies that consider the proto-musical abilities of infants (e.g. Dissanayake 2001; Rose 2004). There are a number of psychoanalytical theories for the emotional effects of music based on either the pre-natal experience of sound, such as the ‘sonorous envelope’ (Anzieu 1976; Schwarz 1997), or developments in early infancy, such as the ‘acoustic mirror’ (Silverman 1988). But, as Ian Cross points out:

… what music is for infants and children is not necessarily what music is for mature members of a culture. Culture shapes and particularizes proto-musical behaviours and propensities into specific forms for specific functions … The capacity for multiple meanings that characterizes proto-musical ability is likely to underpin the social functionality of music and to contribute to, but not to determine, music’s meaning. (2001: 99-100)

Cross takes a middle ground between what might be seen as an overly deterministic view of musical meaning as arising solely from biology and evolution, and theories that treat all meaning as arising from, and as expression of culture. If the emotional effects of music might be plausibly considered to have their origins in evolutionary biology, culture is what ‘shapes and particularizes’ music ‘into specific forms for specific functions’.

Within the cognitive psychology of music there are a number of studies dealing with the production of emotion. Klaus R. Scherer and Marcel R. Zentner (2001) provide an extensive overview of the available scholarship, within cognitive analysis, on the production of emotional effects by music, though their discussion and review is largely based on Western classical music. A useful, though dated overview of studies in music psychology from a behaviouristic perspective is given by Rudolf E. Radocy and J. David Boyle (1979) and more recent work has been undertaken by J. A. Sloboda (1985; 2005; Juslin and Sloboda 2001) and Rita Aiello (1994). There
are critiques of approaches taken by cognitive psychology in that many studies focussing on the listener’s response to music are undertaken under laboratory conditions, with the focus often on the measurement of very specific variables. Nicholas Cook points out that this is not an accurate reflection of the listening experience (1989), and this caveat must obviously be extended to the melange of visual, aural and intellectual stimuli that is theatre.

While Meyer’s work has been a seminal influence on cognitive approaches to music, he also recognized that the emotions, and the expression of particular emotions, are socially conditioned (1956: 10). While not considering cultural codes, or referential meanings in much detail he did anticipate more recent developments in cultural musicology, developments that provide alternatives to the discourse of formalist musicological analysis.

Within what is sometimes termed ‘new’ musicology, a number of different approaches to the question of musical meaning are arising with work influenced by feminism, post-structuralism, and sociological and cultural theory. For the theorists working within a framework of cultural studies, anthropology/ethnomusicology, and sociology the meaning of music is closely, if not completely bound up with its function. Along with discussion of the emotional effects of music, function is seldom considered in musicological analysis.

Feminist theories have influenced some scholars working within the classical Western tradition and also within popular music studies. Within new musicology, feminist studies include those of historical and cultural production (McClary 1987; Leppert 1987; Shepherd 1987; Wheelock 1993; Kramer 2002) and of performance (Ellis 1997). Important work has also been done in the area of cultural codes (van Leeuwen 1998; Toynbee 2003), notation (Griffiths 1986; Chanan 1994), timbre (Pike 1970; Barthes 1977; Shepherd 1991), listening codes (Kivy 2001; Dibben 2003), and performance (Frith 1996; Small 1998; Kramer 2002). Many studies within popular music also consider performance codes, both in the musician’s live visual presentation or in the pop video (Auslander 1998; 2004; 2004b; 2006; Frith and McRobbie 1978; Frith 1989; Mitchell 1989; Grazian 2003), listening codes (Stockfelt 1997) and codes of genre (Fabbri 1981).

Cross (2003) talks of the need to discuss musics rather than music. Popular music studies have generally followed a different path to those within traditional musicology. The strong influence of sociology, anthropology and cultural studies within popular music scholarship has shifted attention away from the notion of the
work itself as text, to texts of audience and society. The focus of discussions of musical meaning, whether considering its emotional effects or otherwise, shifts to the listener (Frith 1987; 1996; 2003; McClary 1987; Cook 1989; 1990; DeNora 2000; Clarke 2003). This focus is supported by phenomenologists (Pike 1970; Berger 1999) and from cognitive psychology (Cohen 1993; 2000; Scherer and Zentner 2001; Dibben 2003) and psychoanalysis (Rose 2004).

The influence of sociology and anthropology on cultural musical theory emphasizes the primarily social function of music (Hirschkop 1989; Shepherd 1991; Chanan 1994; DeNora 2000; Frith 2003). The social meaning of music can be activity-based, such as dancing and ritual behaviour (Small 1977; Shepherd 1991; Keil and Feld 1994) or exercise (DeNora 2000). Christopher Small, has coined the term ‘musicking’, to describe music as first and foremost a participatory activity (Small 1998). Music may be used to construct identity, both personal and within the formation of social groupings and subcultures (Johnstone and Katz 1957; Hebdige 1979; Frith 1987; 1996; 2003; Hirschkop 1989; Dyer 1992; Walser 1993; Small 1998; DeNora 2000; King 2000; Fast 2001; Gracyk 2001; Jazeel 2005), construct personal or social space (DeNora 2000; North, Hargreaves et al. 2004), or aid in the personal managing of emotions (DeNora 2000; Frith 2003; North, Hargreaves et al. 2004; Brown and Theorell 2006).

Within popular music/ethnomusicology there is, therefore, a general difference in the nature of discourse about music. For example, the aforementioned studies of popular music are more likely to emphasize the why (the function of music) though this is sometimes at the expense of the what (the musical object). Pratt recognized this distinction as: “Form is what a work of art is. Function is what a work of art does” (Pratt 1968/1931: xxvi). Musicological analysis, in contrast, concentrates on the what and the how (the tonal events and formal structures of music), yet either completely ignores the why (its function) or else treats it as identical to the what. In general, culturally influenced theories of music with their emphasis on meaning as residing in the listener, are as much concerned with the experience of music, as with the object of music.

There are some attempts to apply musicological theoretical analysis to popular music (e.g. Burns and Lafrance 2002) but it has been questioned whether the wholesale application of methodologies developed for very particular forms of classical music is justifiable in the light of the very different nature of popular music, both in its forms and in how it is produced (Covach 1997). A major problem is the
dependence upon notation within musicological analysis. In the case of popular
music this usually means transcription which is both highly subjective (Winkler
1997) and can be misleading as many aspects that are integral to the sound of
popular music are precisely those aspects that are underdeveloped within the
western notational system (e.g. timbre, pitch bending or the micro-rhythmic nature
of a ‘groove’).

**Music and manipulation**

The tune of an incantation, a significant cry, the mien of the operator, these too
have a natural leading power over the Soul upon which they are directed, drawing it
with the force of mournful patterns or tragic sounds; for it is the reasonless soul,
not the will or wisdom, that is beguiled by music, a form of sorcery which raises no
question, whose enchantment, indeed, is welcomed, though not demanded, from
the performers. (Plotinus 1991: 328)

As noted earlier, Mitchell considers that music in theatre should ‘control and
cajole’ the listener (1951: 246), not only demonstrating a belief that music could do
both, but also implying that this is a desirable aim. It is the prevalence of the belief
that music can manipulate behaviour (which also implicitly includes the
manipulation of emotional feelings), that provides some of the most persuasive
justification for its potential effects upon its listeners.

Music has had a long association with the art of persuasion, and at various
times in history has been used as a tool by the particular powers of the time,
whether that be the church (Reese 1977; MacCulloch 2004), or the state (Zhdanov
1950; Attali 1985; Barry 1989), or differently identified as ‘patriarchy’ (Leppert 1987;
Shepherd 1987; 1991) or the malign forces of industrialization (Adorno 2002). Both
Plato in *The Republic* and Aristotle in *The Politics* identified music as a moral force
in the state, and identified a number of ‘affirmative modes’ which should be taught
to the young, while Confucius considered that music represented the ethical level of
a people (Polin 1989). The belief in the persuasive power of music has also led to
its repression, as various studies of censorship attest (Dumling 1993; Skvorecky

In the 1562 the Council of Trent directed:

The whole plan of singing in musical modes should be constructed not to give
empty pleasure to the ear, but in such a way that the words may be clearly

---

7 See also Ishida (1987).
understood by all, and thus the hearts of the listeners be drawn to the desire of heavenly harmonies, in the contemplation of the joys of the blessed. (qtd. in Reese 1977: 449).

This directive, which deals with the ‘proper’ function of church music, as Kivy points out (2001: 46-48), established a new poetics of text setting with a dual function: that the intelligibility of the words of the liturgy should predominate over musical style, and that the purpose of music was to “draw the hearts” of the listeners to God. Or, to describe this in terms of stage music, to influence the spectator emotionally, and subordinate the music to the dialogue for the performance of religion.

If the Counter-Reformation had a clear belief in the power of music and a strong commitment to having it function in a way that supported their ideology, this was equally true of the Reformation:

… we might well be moved to restrict the use of music to make it serve only what is respectable and never use it for unbridled dissipations or for emasculating ourselves with immoderate pleasure. Nor should it lead us to lasciviousness or shamelessness. But more than this there is hardly anything in the world that has greater power to bend the morals of men this way or that, as Plato has wisely observed. And in fact we find from experience that it has an insidious and well-nigh incredible power to move us whither it will. And for this reason we must be all the more diligent to control music in such a way that it will serve us for good and in no way harm us. (Calvin, qtd. in Weiss and Taruskin 1984: 108)

Although Calvin was talking here about licentious songs (his definition of licentious probably included all popular song), his use of the words “insidious” and “incredible power” could easily be replaced with Plotinus’ term “sorcery”. But for Calvin this power is suspect.


These descriptions are (with the exception of Brecht’s)8 directed towards either popular music or film music. The language used reflects a distrust of the manipulative potential of music, whether that be to lull the audience into passivity or to incite them to whatever one considers to be immoral. If music is the “maid-

---

8 Brecht’s scorn is directed towards ‘advanced’ music for the concert hall, though it is unclear to what particular style of music he is referring.
servant” of philosophy according to Boethius (1999: 22), it can be equally judged to be the “devil’s music on coarse fiddles” (Goethe 1995: 24).

… I can’t listen to music too often. It affects your nerves, makes you want to say stupid, nice things, and stroke the heads of people who could create such beauty while living in this vile hell. (V. I. Lenin, qtd. in Gorky 1933: 52)

This suspicion is possibly understandable in the consideration of music that has a sole purpose to indirectly influence behaviour. The prevalence of music in advertising, for example, reflects a belief in the manipulative power of music. The role of music in influencing behaviour has been approached from a psychological perspective (Crozier 1997), as well as a sociological one (DeNora 2000; North, Hargreaves et al. 2004). So music may be used to provide a calming environment before taking a plane trip (van Leeuwen 1998), or undergoing dental surgery (Groom 1996), or to motivate participants to further exertion in aerobic exercise (DeNora 2000), and in numerous other contemporary situations. Studies have analyzed the role of music as an advertising tool (Cook 1998; Bullerjohn 2006) and its use as background music in consumer and business environments (Antrim 1943; Sterne 1997; Lanza 2004; Jones 2005; North and Hargreaves 2006; Robertson et al. 2007). The prevalence of the belief in the efficacy of music as behavioural modification lies behind the activities of the Muzak Corporation (Jarvis 1977). Muzak is not designed to be listened to consciously; it is designed to be subliminal. It is designed to manipulate since listeners are discouraged from an awareness of listening.9

But other uses of music, particularly underscoring in both theatre and film, bear a strong resemblance to the conceptual design of Muzak, particularly in the employment of quiet and unobtrusive persuasion. It is this background use of music that appears to attract the most judgemental criticism from both practitioners of ‘serious’ music, and musicologists (e.g. Eisler and Adorno 1951; Stravinsky 1970: 179-181; Adorno 2002/1934).

There is, therefore, plenty of contemporary and historical evidence over a wide variety of applications of the belief in the manipulative power of music. It is highly likely that some musics might arouse an emotional response in some people, though this arousal may be equally linked to extra-musical associations as to the music itself. There are also convincing arguments that music communicates through a complex

9 The Muzak corporation is now referring to its product as ‘audio architecture’. They consider audio architecture to be “emotion by design”. (Muzak LLC 2007.)
process of coding, although this is historically contingent. The response to Mozart
by a listener in the twenty-first century cannot be the same as that of his
contemporary listener, though both responses might still be emotional.

The theatre composer cannot be sure what will be evoked for a listener,
particularly in conjunction with a response to the other linguistic and visual
communication of a theatre performance, but makes an educated guess – on the
basis of a cultural heritage – how other possessors of that cultural heritage might
respond. This includes acknowledging the existence of stock codings that, for a
contemporary theatre audience, might be influenced by film music conventions.

Describing the experience of music

As demonstrated by the lists compiled from the sources for incidental music, and in
Gorbman’s list of functions for film music, the emotional experience is stressed as
one of the paramount roles for music in a theatrical (or film) context. What appears
crucial, therefore, is to account in description for the ‘experience’ of hearing music,
rather than solely to discuss music, as Meyer noted, as a ‘thing’, or an ‘object’.

Daniel Barenboim stated:

Whenever we talk about music, we talk about how we are affected by it, not about it
itself. In this respect, it is like God. We can’t talk about God, or whatever you want
to call it, but we can only talk about our reaction to a thing – some people know
God exists and others refuse to admit God exists – but we cannot speak about it.
We can only speak about our reaction to it. In the same way, I don’t think you can
speak about music. You can only speak about a subjective reaction to it. (2004: 122-
123)

Rodney Stenning Edgecombe terms “any verbal effort to evoke the experience
of externally apprehended music”, as melophrasis, drawing an analogy with the act of
ekphrasis (1993: 1). Ekphrasis is a term that describes the relation between a work of
visual art and the language used to describe it, and although a term of literary
criticism, it appears logical to consider, as Edgecombe does, that using words to
describe music can also be considered an act of ekphrasis. Umberto Eco, though,
who also discusses ekphrasis, defines it simply as a “verbal text [that] describes a
work of visual art”, not necessarily the ‘experience’ of a work of art (2003: 110).
While this may appear to be semantic hair-splitting the omission of the experiential
element in description has implications. While both transcendental and formalist
treatments, as in the examples of text relating to Beethoven’s Sonata in E, Op. 109
already given, could be described as melophrasis in Eco’s definition, Marston’s formalist discourse would be excluded from Edgecombe’s definition.

But other descriptions of Op. 109 can be considered much closer to Edgecombe’s definition of melophrasis, as they discuss the work in experiential terms. All of them engage in metaphoric description. This may be primarily to do with emotional experience such as the following:

The melody is like a loving, sympathetic hand, gently stroking the head of a sufferer and giving relief where relief can be given. (Behrend 1927: 180)

The work has the charm and luminosity of an old sweetheart met again after twenty years, with the same noble features but spiritualized and more transparent.” (Fischer 1959: 108)

Hanslick, arch-representative of formalism (Sharpe 2004: 16), also wrote about this sonata:

This sonata … tells of unhappy days. Melodies full of proud rapture and noble grace are impulsively interrupted by bad humour and a weary lowering of the wings. (1950/1862: 92)

This quote, taken from an extensive collection of critical writings was written eight years after the publication of The Beautiful in Music, reviewing a performance of the sonata by the pianist, Tausig. One of the purposes of a critic is to describe music (or theatre) for someone who is not there. Crucially, Hanslick is describing an ‘experience of’ the music, for his readers, through emotive metaphor. Hanslick’s extensive writing about the composers and performers of his day reveals a passionate and emotional response to music (Hanslick 1950), a response that Kivy refers to as “Hanslick’s Inconsistency” (2001: 41).

If emotive metaphor underlies the communication of an experience of music in the above examples, other descriptions relating to the same piece of music resort to other metaphors:

Every note should be illuminated with a golden light. (Fischer 1959: 109)

…the slow cantabile theme virtually explodes from within, yielding, through a kind of radioactive break-up, a fantastically elaborate texture of shimmering, vibrating sounds” (Kinderman 1995: 224)

… in the last variation he again soars from the earth to where stars gleam and twinkle in long sparkling chains of trills” (Behrend 1927: 180)
The above descriptions, all metaphorically allude to a similar common perception of this work, a perception that the aural experience of music can be equated with the visual experience of light. The same feature (a gradually increasing division of the beat from whole notes, to demi-semiquavers to trills), has not always been described with such admiration. For Wilhelm von Lenz, invoking another metaphor, it was a senseless whirlwind:

… on y soit pris d’un tourbillon de notes qui aux yeux de Beethoven avaient sans doute un sens qui nous échappe (Von Lenz 1852, qtd. in Marston 1995: xix).10

Liquid metaphors underlie Eric Blom’s description of the same aspect of the variation:

Towards the end notes which adumbrate the theme are heard gently dripping above the rippling accompaniment. The music droops and softly melts into a restatement of the theme itself … (1938: 229)

Metaphoric description of music was common in the nineteenth century, before becoming supplanted by the formalist analytical approach. Roger Scruton considers that metaphor is crucial to our understanding of music:

Music is the intentional object of an experience that only rational beings can have and only through the exercise of imagination. To describe it we must have recourse to metaphor, not because music resides in an analogy with other things, but because the metaphor describes exactly what we hear, when we hear sounds as music. (Scruton 1999: 96)

Musical language is riddled with certain prevailing metaphors, and, following George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s theories that an understanding of the world is conceptually underpinned through prevailing metaphors derived from bodily experience (1980), Scruton’s statement warrants consideration. Scruton argues, for example, that metaphorical understanding is what enables us to hear music as being music, and not just ‘noise’. Scruton suggests that the prevailing metaphor for describing music is spatial, reflected in the terms ‘high’ and ‘low’ pitch, for example (1999: 92-96).12 There is nothing that is actually high or low about pitch, pitch being dependent on faster or slower vibrations of a sound wave.

---

10 One is overtaken by a whirlwind of notes that to Beethoven’s eyes doubtless have a sense that escapes us (author’s translation).
11 See for example the music criticism of Schumann (1946), Hoffman (Charlton 1989), and Heine (1895).
12 See also Guck (1991). Both Lawrence Kramer (2004) and Cook (1990) also discuss the necessity of metaphorical language in the description of music. There are also some interesting cultural variations in the description of pitch, for example, with revealing conceptual implications. These differences include the French terms (derived from the Roman equivalents) *aigu* and *grave* (sharp, or pointed, and heavy) (Scruton 1999), ‘small’ and ‘large’ in Indonesia, (Eitan and Granot 2006: 223), and ‘young’ and ‘old’ for the Suyá of the Amazon basin (ibid.). Joseph Needham notes many examples of metaphorical language in the description of Chinese music and considers it unsurprising that, in a culture he considers so concerned with hydraulic features,
Another common metaphor, that of movement, he considers as part of a general spatial frame. A sense of movement is what is characteristically perceived when listening to music, it is experienced as directional, or as ‘vectorized’, to use Michel Chion’s term (1994: 18-20). As the music is heard as moving through time, the person experiencing music might be moving with it, formally by dancing or in various aspects of entrainment such as tapping the feet to its rhythm. The sense of movement is metaphorical in that there is nothing that moves within music, simply individual or combinations of pitches succeeding each other temporally (Budd 1985: 39). Pratt also noted that many words used to describe the emotional effects of music concern its dynamic character (restless, awkward, excited, calm) (1968/1931: 197-198). Pratt considered that these dynamic qualities are also characteristic of the actual bodily states of a human experiencing emotion (ibid. 184-198) and therefore the apparent embodiment of emotion can be explained by experiencing a similar quality of dynamic movement in music. Pratt’s theory that this is the reason for the emotional power of music has been heavily critiqued by Budd (1985), but Hanslick also recognized the dynamic qualities of emotional experiences, considering them reasonable as descriptive terms for music while denying that the emotions were embodied within the music itself (e.g. 1957: 21-23).

But there are other common metaphors that underlie the historical discourse of music. The metaphor of ‘transport’, identified by Tia DeNora (2000: 7), which is closely allied with movement, is central to transcendental description, while traditional musicological discourse frequently rests on either the ‘architectural’ or the ‘organic’ metaphor. Certain metaphors underlie the nature of musical performance, the most prevalent being the ‘conduit’ metaphor’ (Gay 1998: 83). The common metaphors reoccurring in description are all rooted in bodily experience. The most obvious can be characterised as those relating to visual experience (colour, space, light, architectural), or kinaesthetic experience (movement, weight). Tactile sensation (smooth, airy, hot etc) also occurs, particularly in relation to the execution of music (Barten 1998; Putnam 1985).

One ‘faded’ metaphor is that of knowing music ‘by heart’, and this returns to the question of the emotions. According to Scruton, the emotional response to engineering, the terms for pitch reflect this, in the terms zhong (clear) and do (muddy) (1962, Vol IV: 157.) Needham also notes that “[a] number of references suggest that the earliest Chinese conception of a scale was not, as in the West, that of a ladder ascending from low to high or descending from high to low pitch, but of a court in which the notes are ranged on either side of the chief or kung note” (ibid. 159).
music is conditioned by metaphorical ideas. ‘Music = emotion’ could be considered, what Lakoff terms a ‘root metaphor’ (1980).

Scruton’s position has been critiqued (e.g. Budd 2003), but even if not prepared to take on Scruton’s account of the essential metaphorical nature of music wholesale, to engage in metaphoric description appears to be inescapable if communicating musical experience. Steven Feld, who is one of the few scholars to explicitly consider the nature of speech about music, considers it important to consider not only the referential or lexically explicit semantic character of speech, but to recognize that most people use both lexical and discourse metaphor in communication (Keil and Feld 1994: 92).

Metaphors involve the instantaneous recognition that things are simultaneously alike and unlike. And when most people talk about music, like and unlike is what they talk about. (ibid.)

Sybil S. Barten (1998) produced an interesting study of the prevalence of what she terms motor-affective metaphor in the instruction of music students. The terms that music teachers commonly use to describe a piece of music in order to indicate an approach to the execution of that music (Barten lists, for example, outgoing, growing, sweeping, tense, jaunty, calm, hesitant, soothing) (1998: 90) are very similar to Pratt’s dynamic emotion words. She concludes that the use of metaphor as a descriptive tool, rather than merely relaying information, also serves clear rhetorical functions, including the engagement of the imagination of students.

Steven Feld points out that communication is fundamentally relational. It is not “located in the content communicated or the information transferred” (Keil and Feld 1994: 78).

Communication is neither the idea nor the action but the process of intersection whereby objects and events are, through the work of social actors, rendered meaningful or not. (ibid.)

The imaginative engagement can be considered a “process of intersection” where the discussion of music may be “rendered meaningful or not.” Lawrence Kramer, similarly, considers that the function of metaphorical language about music is “to bridge the gap between different spheres of being, or awareness” (2004: 11).

If, as Feld argues, communication is not about content, or information per se, but rather how individuals, such as the director and musical director, or the spectator/listener engage “in a process of interpreting symbolic forms” (1994: 79), it
is necessary to consider how individuals, musicians as well as non-musicians, actually talk about music. This will be considered further in Chapter Two.

**Film Music**

To consider music and its meaning in conjunction with another representational medium, it is useful to consider scholarship on film music, of which there is a growing body of analysis. Within studies of film music, more attention is paid to the experiential aspect of music, and particularly how this relates to spectatorial reception. Robynn Stilwell provides a useful critical review of the available scholarship in cinema studies up to 1996, identifying the major areas as follows: biographical, historical, theoretical, pedagogical, sociological and cultural (2002).

Wagner’s concept of *leitmotiv* and its application to the narrative function of film music is particularly prevalent (Gorbman 1987; Brown 1994; London 2000; Paulin 2000; Buhler, Kassabian et al. 2003). Other areas of study important for film music and relevant to stage music are music’s role in conveying and evoking memory and nostalgia (Mowitt 1987; Flinn 1990; Frith 1996; Shumway 1999; Everett 2000; Toop 2004); studies of the soundtrack, considering music along with effects (Williams 1980; Johnson 1985; Flinn 1990; Chion 1994; Murch 2003); and music as a temporal medium (Widgery 1990; Burt 1994; McClary 2000).

Most studies of film music will deal in some way with the functions of support for the narrative and production of emotional effects (Kracauer 1960; Frith 1984; Gorbman 1987; Carroll 1988; Flinn 1992; Brown 1994; Coyle 1998; 2005; Everett 2000; Kassabian 2001) and for the purposes of this research it is important to consider these theories.

From the earliest writing on film, the link between music and the emotions has been made. Leonid Sabaneev states that “music, whether with the silent or the sound films, supplies the romantic, irrational element illustrating emotion” (1978/1935: 18). The music “must accord with the mood of the scene”. This congruence is practically demonstrated in volumes such as Erno Rapée’s *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists* (1924), a comprehensive compendium of selected music labelled in categories to give the silent film pianist a choice of appropriate pieces to accompany particular types of scenes and emotions. Edith Lang also provides a list of pieces to accompany moods with lists arranged under such headings as “Light, Graceful Moods, Elegiac Moods, Love Themes” (1920: 27-
music that is intended to be “descriptive of the various situations and emotions portrayed” (ibid. 31).

Siegfried Kracauer (1960) provides a theorization of the opposite effect, prompted by a childhood memory of a drunken film pianist who never looked at the films he was accompanying. Thus “it was by no means uncommon that gay tunes would sound when, in a film I watched, the indignant Count turned his adulterous wife out of the house, and that a funeral march would accompany … their ultimate reconciliation” (1960: 137). For the child, this incongruent relationship was not only “delightful” but enabled him, if accidentally, to “see the story in a new and unexpected light” (ibid.).

Kracauer uses the terms ‘parallelism’ and ‘counterpoint’ to describe music that is respectively congruent and incongruent with the scene. His terminology is not confined to music’s emotional effects, but also to its accompaniment of narrative, and this complicates the use of the terms. Wolfgang Thiel follows Kracauer in his use of counterpoint, but instead uses the term affirmative (1981: 66) for music that is congruent with a scene.

These frequently used terms have been criticized as inadequately reflecting the complexity of the music/narrative relationship. Gorbman, for example, considers that the users of these two terms “erroneously assume that the image is autonomous” (1987: 15); that the image and the music cannot be considered as separate meaning systems but as interconnected, arguing that whatever music is used in a scene will have an effect on that scene, whether as a result of intention or accident, and that the meaning of a scene can only be considered in their combination.

William Johnson, while emphasizing the importance of considering the sound and image in conjunction, still reinforces the dualism of parallelism and counterpoint, though he uses the terms ‘confirmation’ and ‘opposition’ (1985: 7).

Chion refers to empathetic music, contrasting it with anempathetic (1994: 8-9), focusing on the emotional effect of music, rather than its relationship to any other narrative element. The effect of anempathetic music is, for example, the shock to the audience of the use of Beethoven to accompany skinhead violence in Stanley Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange (1971). As Chion points out, this does not mean that the music contains no emotional content in itself. It is perceived as apparently

---

13 “Parallelism” was previously used by Pudovkin (1938).
indifferent to the dominant emotion portrayed in a scene, and it is this indifference that potentially provokes an emotional response.

The implication for music supporting, and music undercutting, emotional effects is that both intend to also influence an emotional response for the spectator. While prevalent, these simple binary definitions are simplistic as they assume that the two aspects function in opposite ways. Returning to the above concepts, music that Chion describes as ‘anempathetic’ is easy to perceive in operation and understand as a concept. Empathetic music should be its opposite, but it is not. Affirmative or empathetic music is too subtle to be a simple antithesis. Douglas W. Gallez, for example, identifies “Mood (Background) Music” and within this distinguishes between imitation or mickey-mousing (music that follows events), and evocation (the “overall treatment”) (1970: 47).

Both Gorbman and Chion recognize a category in film music that is neither affirmative nor anempathetic. Chion notes this ‘middle ground’ for music “which has either an abstract meaning, or a simple function of presence, a value as a signpost: at any rate, no precise emotional resonance” (1994: 9). Unfortunately, he does not explain either ‘abstract meaning’ or ‘a simple function of presence’. However this bears similarities to the ‘neutral’ music noted as necessary in places by both Sabaneev and Lang. Lang, who includes a selection of pieces that would be suitable for this purpose, describes these as “music of no particular character, which forms a suitable accompaniment for scenes that do not call for special musical illustration” (1920: 34).

Gorbman uses the description ‘music as spectacle’, in which the music does not invite the audience to be involved ‘in’ the narrative, but rather in the contemplation ‘of’ it (1987: 68). Gorbman is referring to the film convention of using ‘epic’ music to accompany, for example, a shot of an imposing landscape. ‘Music as spectacle’ cannot be considered synonymous with ‘neutral’ music, but points to an ambiguous middle ground. It is this middle ground that is significant for the emotional function of music within theatre (see Chapters Two and Three).

The situation is complicated further by consideration not just of the classic film score, as in Gorbman’s seminal study, but also the increasing use of a compiled soundtrack, of pre-recorded popular music. Gorbman observes that the growing use of recorded popular music is changing the relationship between the music and
the film image (1987: 162) and there are an increasing number of studies of the compiled score (Shumway 1999; Brackett 2001; Kassabian 2001; Smith 2001).14

David R. Shumway, for example, points out that whereas the classic Hollywood film score was intended to “cue an emotional response in the viewer without calling attention to itself” (1999: 36), scores that contain popular music tracks are designed “to take the foreground and displace the image as the principal locus of attention” (ibid. 37). These scores, therefore, do not quite fulfil the function of ‘inaudibility’ that Gorbman identifies as one of the requirements of the classical film score (1987: 73).

Anahid Kassabian uses different terminology for her discussion of the function of music in film with the terms ‘mood’ and ‘commentary’. ‘Mood’ music she characterizes as “similar in emotional tone to other threads of the film” (2001: 56). In Kassabian’s definition, music that is used for ‘mood’ is less likely to be consciously perceived. This term therefore corresponds to affirmative. However ‘commentary’ is able to cover not only the use of anempathetic music, but also of music that occupies a middle ground between the two states. Kassabian’s use of the term ‘commentary’ is not a new one. Kracauer termed all musical accompaniment as ‘commentative’ (1960: 138-139). But the description of music as ‘commentary’ appears more consistently in studies dealing with the use of popular music (e.g. Frith 1984, Smith 2001). Kassabian notes that it could be argued that mood music and commentary music are “versions of the same attribute” (2001: 59) but considers that there is an important difference in their reception; mood music suggesting “(unconscious) identification”, while commentary music suggests “reflective evaluation” (ibid.).

Pavis’ list of functions for music in theatre have similarities to the above theories. He considers that “[a]dopting the approach of cinematographic technique, music can create a sequence of atmospheres and surroundings” and that music can create a “counterpoint effect” (2003: 143). This suggests that there are times when music can be considered to function ‘cinematically’ within theatre, though the application of film music terminology to theatre needs further investigation (see Chapter Three).

A recurring concept within film studies is the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic music (Gorbman 1987; Brown 1994; Kassabian 2001; Buhler,

14 The silent film score was usually a compiled score. Pisani also mentions the use of both compiled and composed scores in his discussion of nineteenth century theatre music (2004).
Kassabian et al. 2003) and this concept is worth consideration for music within the theatrical mise-en-scène. The prevalence of this discussion appears largely due to Gorbman’s influential scholarship, and her application of Gérard Genette’s theories of narrative to film music. Genette defines diegesis as “l’univers spatio-temporel auquel se réfère la narration première”\(^{15}\) (1969: 211). One of the illusions in film is the use of non-diegetic music. The music plays, the audience hears it but the characters do not. In film, diegetic (or ‘source’ music) will either have a visible sound-source, (a café orchestra that can be seen playing) or an implied sound-source (the disco music heard when a character walks into a nightclub). The orchestra playing in the middle of a battleground sequence is non-diegetic.

In this way music in the cinematic mise-en-scène is different from the other scenic elements. It not only relates to the present narrative world of the performance, but can exist simultaneously within and outside it. Music within film is able to move easily between both states and flow between the two, affecting meaning, continuity and narrative.

There is a further qualification to what might appear to be a clear distinction between the diegetic and the non-diegetic. Genette distinguishes between three levels of narration – the diegetic (arising from the primary narration), the extradiegetic (narrative intrusion upon the diegesis), and the metadiegetic (pertaining to narration by a secondary narrator). So in circumstances where music functions as a kind of secondary narration this could be referred to as ‘metadiegetic’ music.

Theatre also has its own non-diegetic music. Historically the pit musicians would provide the non-diegetic music such as the melodrame referred to by O’Neill. There may also be use of onstage musicians providing diegetic music, but the divide, as in film, is not simply that between visible and invisible musicians. The pit musicians might also provide diegetic music as called for by stage directions. Also, unlike the situation in film, while the music might be functioning non-diegetically, it will be heard by the actors and as Lubbock has pointed out this can be useful for helping the actors get into the mood of the scene (1957: 130). But it can also influence their performance in other ways, for example the energy or rhythmic pacing of a scene.

---

\(^{15}\) “The spatial-temporal universe referred to by the primary narration” (Gorbman 1987: 20).
The live musician

A notable difference between film and stage music is the potential of live music in the performance. A musician is, after all, a performer, and it is reasonable to subject a musical performance to theatrical performance analysis. If a musician inhabits the physical stage space alongside the actors, then that musician’s performance will also transmit meaning as part of the mise-en-scène. The “sorcery” that works on the “reasonless soul”, according to Plotinus, is not solely due to “the tune of an incantation”, but also to “the mien of the operator” (1991: 328).

It would seem that traditional musicology has been little concerned with the physicality of a musician’s performance. This effacement of the presence of the musician is most noticeable within the classical tradition, but can also be seen in other genres. The word ‘performance’, as applied to music tends to automatically mean performance of the music, not the performance of the identity of the musician (e.g. Godlovitch 2003; Ridley 2004). More recent studies within the field of music are beginning to look at the physicality of performance (Ellis 1997; Small 1998; Kramer 2002; Cook 2003). Within certain popular music genres, such as glam-rock, the theatricality of the musician is an intrinsic part of the genre, and so has been easier to consider (Bartlett 1995; Frith 1996; Berger 1999; Auslander 1999; 2004(b); 2006). Describing this genre of music as theatrical, however, emphasizes that it is a departure from normal musical performance practice.

Following on from Schechner’s idea of ‘actuals’ (2005/1977), Michael Kirby defines a performance in which actors are not embodying a fictional character, but carrying out actions that might have referential or representational significance, as ‘non-matrixed’ (1987), a definition that might conceivably apply to the musician performing within theatre. This will be further investigated in Chapter Six.

A major difference between film and stage music is the nature of the creative process. Live music within a theatre production is – like the theatre performance – potentially in a state of change. This raises questions of what can be considered to be the aural ‘text’. Cook (2003) suggests using the theatrical and cinematic term ‘script’ for music as performance, recognizing the need for re-orientation of the relationship between notation and performance. Cook’s analysis is limited to the performance of classical music, and the use of his term would be problematic when discussing stage music. His argument, however, points out the importance of the
process within musical performance. In the context of a theatrical performance, live music does not necessarily consist of a pre-existing musical text which is realised in performance but of an on-going and developing relationship that is emergent during the performance.

Cook does not extend his analysis to include improvisation, the most obviously emergent musical form, and also an important aspect of live music in theatre. Discussions of improvisation are frequently concerned with jazz improvisation (e.g. Monson 1994; Joyner 2000; King 2000), although John Whiteoak also deals with functional improvisation in other forms of music (1999b). Other discussions of improvisation in music tend to focus on their significance as social practice (Durant 1989; Keil and Feld 1994; Small 1998; Berger 1999), though Beate Kutschke (1999) locates improvisation within a discussion of innovation in contemporary music.

**Sound and technology**

As indicated, when considering the nature of the relationship of music to theatre, and particularly the relationship between composer and director, it is important to consider the nature of the production process. As music is a functional element within a production, all the conditions that pertain to that production will have a bearing on the final outcome. The influence of technology is an important part of this process. Discussions of film music frequently demonstrate a strong connection with the practical conditions of production (Kracauer 1960; Sabaneev 1978/1935; Burt 1994; Sadoff 2006).

There are various studies considering technology and its impact upon artistic form in music, film and theatre (Benjamin 1968; Mowitt 1987; Meyer 1994/1967; Chanan 1994; Mauceri 1997; Auslander 1999). There is also an increasing body of work focussing on the history of recorded music, and on recorded music as a distinct cultural product (Laird 1999; Weidman 2003; Lockheart 2003; Prendergast 2003; Sterne 2003; Katz 2004; Doyle 2005; Anderson 2006).

Within film the role of sound effects and the sound designer, as distinct from the composer, is considered by a number of authors (Chion 1994; Meyer 1994/1967; Buhler, Kassabian et al. 2003; Deutsch 2003; Murch 2003; Sinclair 2003). The mediated and constructed nature of sound recording is considered
(Williams 1980; Flinn 1990; Murch 2003; Doyle 2005) as is the importance of considering the music and the sound effects track in conjunction (Johnson 1985).

Christopher Baugh considers the historical role of sound in the theatre, noting that, while recorded music became more acceptable within theatre due to the influence of sound film during the 1930s, the limitations of recording technology meant that sound effects were still produced live until the development of a reliable tape recorder and improved amplification systems during the late 1950s (2005: 204-206). The first use of tape in a theatre production in England is claimed to have occurred in 1954, used by the composer Roberto Gerhard in a production of The Prisoner (Cholij 1996). The growth of the use of recorded sound in theatre brings the concept of theatrical sound closer to that of the film soundtrack. Baugh considers that the use of the tape-recorder in conjunction with the development of hi-fi and stereophonic sound “invented the art of sound design” (2005: 206).

Mitchell (1951), in America, suggested its use as a term, and Dan Dugan, working for the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco in 1968, is cited as the first person to be called a theatrical sound designer (Kaye and Lebrecht 1992: 8).

The term sound design is becoming increasingly used within contemporary theatre, to the extent that the respective roles of sound designer and composer appear increasingly to be interchangeable yet its use is still problematical. Sound design has its inception in the technical, with sound designers often having come from a background in sound engineering rather than from music (Cook 1987). Historically it has been more concerned with the overall sound environment, including sound effects and the use of pre-recorded music. So in a theatre production using a compiled score (from pre-existing music), rather than an originally composed score, the sound designer’s role is clearer. Ross Brown states that during the 1970s and 80s, the term referred to technical system design, rather than to what he considers is now known as ‘soundscape design’ or ‘sound scoring’ (2005: 106).

The term soundscape, originally coined by R. Murray Schafer (1994/1977), has become part of theatre language, though in the research conducted for this thesis there has been no other evidence of use of Brown’s terms. His use of these terms reflects the blurring of roles between composer and sound technician due to the increasing possibilities of recording technology. They also reflect a possible interchange between music and sound effect, in that a sound score can be an

---

16 Baugh attributes this to the fact that “a mechanically and imperfectly reproduced sound effect could be compared alongside the immediate flesh-and-blood reality of the actors on stage, and was usually found to be lacking…” (2005: 205)
amalgam of both, and that a score composed of natural or industrial sounds \textit{(musique concrète)} can function in a similar way to music. The list of performances given in Appendix I reveals a variety of terms currently used to describe the roles of the musician within theatre.

**Ecological listening: Gibson’s Theory of Affordances**

Sound is increasingly being studied for its significance in cultural history (Rosand 1977; Smith 1999; Garrioch 2003) and geography (Smith 1997; Sterne 1997; Connell and Gibson 2003; Matless 2005). Of particular interest in this area of scholarship is what is termed ‘ecological sound’, or how the perception of sound informs artistic, cultural and physical attitudes to space and place (Murphie 1996; Smith 1997; Böhme 1998; 2000; Kahn 2001; Augoyard and Torgue 2005; LaBelle 2006). Certain musical theorists argue for an ecological approach to listening (Windsor 2000; Clarke 2003; 2005; Dibben 2003). Eric F. Clarke defines this as “an approach in which the relationship between perceiver and environment (natural and cultural) is taken to be fundamental” (2003: 117). Central to this ecological perspective is the theory of \textit{affordances}. A theory first articulated by J. J. Gibson (1979), \textit{affordance} is “the way in which the meanings of things are a function of the mutuality of organism and environment” (Dibben 2003: 197). The concept is complex, and is best explained through example.

From Gibson, objects afford certain things. A teacup, for example affords drinking, and particularly drinking hot liquids. It affords this by being an open container made from non-porous ceramic (which does not afford leaking), by being of a size easy to pick up (rather than, for example, a non-porous plastic bucket), and by having a handle (which affords not burning the hand). These qualities are all properties of the teacup itself and exist independently of the individual user. Some of these qualities can also have negative affordances. Being an open container the cup affords spilling, so a takeaway cup with a lid would afford more safety if the user were travelling in a vehicle, for example.

As it is easily graspable, a teacup also affords throwing, although this is hopefully an infrequently occurring use. According to Clarke, this would be how “an organism’s changing \textit{needs} affect affordances” (2003: 118) but this is a slightly confusing reading of Gibson. It is important to recognize that the affordance of throwing is still a property of the teacup itself, it is not an affordance that a user has
imposed on it but an affordance that is perceived as necessary according to a changing need. As Gibson states:

```
The affordance of something does not change as the need of the observer changes. The observer may or may not perceive or attend to the affordance, according to his needs, but the affordance, being invariant, is always there to be perceived. An affordance is not bestowed upon an object by a need of the observer and his act of perceiving it. The object offers what it does because it is what it is. (1979: 138-9)
```

So how is this concept useful in a discussion of music and theatre?

Many of the discussions of the meaning of music implicitly posit a subjective/objective duality. Music can be treated as an object in which meaning is hermetically contained within the work itself (as within traditional musicological analysis), or treated subjectively in studies which locate its meaning completely within the perceiver. The concept of affordances “cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy” (Gibson 1979: 129). This is similar to, yet goes further than, the phenomenological approach of Alfred Pike (1970) who, while noting the importance of considering both the objective tonal events of music (notes, chords, rhythms etc) and the subjective (emotional meaning), considers them separate elements.

To paraphrase Gibson, the concept of affordance points two ways, to the music itself and to the listener (1979: 141). The relationship is active and mutual. Within a theatrical context, the theory of affordances can be said to allow for an active and ongoing transference of meaning between the texts of the music and the texts of the performance, a more complex relationship than the idea that all music does is add something to the theatre. The theatre is also affording something to the music.

There is a further dimension to this concept. A coffee mug not only affords drinking of hot liquids, but also affords drinking of cold ones. Yet, if at a dinner party it would be unlikely to be the vessel of choice for drinking wine, though it has all the physical properties to afford this. Perceived affordances are also, therefore, cultural and social.

DeNora (2000) defines an affordance structure for music as a structure that allows for music to be understood as a place or space for work or meaning. For Clarke (2003), by considering music in terms of its affordances, discussions of musical meaning, whether abstract (absolutist/formalist), emotional or semiotic can combine with a consideration of its social functions and uses. Considering music as
an affordance structure also supports the idea of *musics*. Different types of music can afford different things, and rather than a grand unified theory of musical meaning, what eventuates is a number of independent meanings, depending on what is perceived as the main affordance of the music.

Some music might, therefore, afford the state of contemplative listening, while other music could afford dancing. DeNora’s study of music for an aerobics class is particularly interesting in this regard (2000: 89f). The same music might, however, afford different things in different settings. If classical Western music, culturally coded for contemplative listening (Small 1998; Kivy 2001), is played in a wine merchant’s as ‘muzak’, it might afford something different. According to one study of music played in a wine merchant’s, rather than stopping and falling into contemplation when classical music was alternated with episodes of pop music, customers instead bought more expensive wine (Areni and Kim 1993, qtd. in DeNora 2000: 141).

And within a theatre performance, it is completely possible to use a canonic classical work as aural filler for a particular purpose, and foreground what might be considered a throwaway piece of pop music. So to consider music in a theatre production from the notion of what it affords to a performance is useful to this discussion. Gibson’s theory also allows consideration of what the performance affords to the music. In considering affordances it is possible to dispense with the idea that there is a ‘right’ music for a production, the ‘perfect match’, and instead propose that different *musics* will afford different meanings.

---

17 Muzak is a trademark name for music supplied by the Muzak Corporation to be ‘piped in’ to restaurants, elevators, hotels etc. The term and the initial delivery system were invented by Brigadier General George Owen Squier (Lanza 2004: 23). The term has become more widely, and pejoratively, used for background music played in a wide variety of environments.
Chapter Two

The framework of terms
(Why, what, how)

To discuss the affordances of music within the theatrical mise-en-scène I am proposing a selective language of terms that can be applied in both reception and in artistic creation. The terms are derived from a synthesis of the relevant literature, particularly informed by studies of film music, the researcher’s practical knowledge as a theatre composer, and modified as a result of the research conducted for this thesis.

This framework of terms is presented as a summary below and is grouped in three main areas: the functions of music in performance (the why), the core elements of music that contribute to that process (the what), and the common organization of those musical materials (the how). The why contains six frames: emotional, diegetic, metadiegetic, spatial, temporal and formal. These frames and their subordinate terms are explained in detail sequentially through the chapter. This framework is further interrogated and applied in artistic reception and production in subsequent chapters. Terms are also proposed for an analysis of the visual framing of the live musician, and will be discussed separately in Chapter Six.

Summary of the theoretical framework

Overall processes for stage music

- Cinematic music
- Music as structure
- Music as intervention
- Music for engagement
The Why (Why have music in theatre?)

- **Emotional Framing**
  - Signifier of emotion
  - Affirmative music (mirroring/evocation)
  - Separating out (contemplation/involvement)
  - Anempathetic music (undercutting/ironic)
- **Diegetic framing**
  - Support for fabula – establishment of time/place
  - Support for fabula – delineation of character
  - Support for discourse
- **Metadiegetic framing**
  - Resonances
  - Imaginary Music – Music as ‘heard’ in the character’s ‘mind’
  - The Imagined Musician
  - Music as ‘speaking for’ a character
- **Spatial Framing**
  - Music to extend/diminish the stage space
  - Positioning and relationship to audience (live music)
- **Temporal Framing**
  - Stasis/Progression
  - Pace
- **Formal Framing**
  - Continuity
  - Unity

The What (What are the musical materials used?)

- Tonal events (melody/harmony/rhythm)
- Timbre
- Sound effects
- Signal processing

The How (How are the musical materials organised?)

- *Ghost* music
- Musical form – integrity/distortion
• Improvisation
• Core musical practices

**Framing the live musician**

• The pit musician
• The ‘virtual pit’ musician
• The onstage musician performing music
• The musician as ‘setting’
• The actor-musician/musician-actor
• The musician within spectacle

**Overall processes for stage music**

There are four broad processes identified by this framework for the use of music in theatre. Each process has certain general implications for the use of music. They are not mutually exclusive, in that a performance may draw on more than one process for different aspects of the performance. In each case the music can be live or recorded, composed or compiled.

*Cinematic music* is used to consider music that is usually referred to as incidental music, underscoring or O’Neill’s *melodrame* (1912). The use of this term reflects a similarity with music used as underscoring in film, and considers theatrical performance in which the music functions in a subordinate role, and in which the spectator might remain largely unaware both of the music and of how it is functioning. As in this category, music ‘accompanies’ the action, rather than ‘produces’ the action (Frith 1996: 110), if the music intrudes too much into the spectator’s awareness then it might not support the theatrical intention. As its primary function is accompaniment, the music will be more likely to exist in the background rather than the foreground, and musical form is more likely to be subordinate to theatrical form. This category is discussed in Chapter Three.

*Music as structure* refers to situations in which the music is integral to the structure of the theatre work and assists to ‘produce’ the action. Any performance choreographed to a piece of music is using the structure of the music to determine the structure of the performance (opera and dance are obvious examples). The music might be more likely to exist in the foreground and be pre-composed, although it is possible to conceive of structuring performance to an improvised,
emergent musical structure. The pre-composition might also contain improvised elements. This category is also used to discuss circus music in Chapter Four. The trajectory of the ‘traditional’ circus act is underpinned by a corresponding structural imperative in the music, even though circus music (if played live) also ‘follows’ the action. Given the common structures of circus acts the architecture of the supporting music is crucial to the structure of the circus act.

*Music as intervention* is a distinct sub-category of music as structure, the distinction being that in this case music intervenes in the action, as in musical theatre and related forms such as cabaret and vaudeville, although this use is not confined to those forms. The intervention is often in the form of a song (or dance), which interrupts the narrative flow and creates a pause in the action. This intervention is more likely to involve live musical performance, and exist in the foreground. In music used for structural purposes, including music as intervention, musical forms are less likely to undergo distortion in their use within theatre. As this category is particularly related to processes within musical theatre, which is not within the scope of this thesis, it is not discussed as a separate chapter, though examples are noted in Chapters Three and Six.

*Music as engagement* considers music’s relationship to the audience, rather than to the theatrical production itself, and is a category that is related to authorial intent. Music that aims to engage can function either cinematically or structurally. There are two aspects to engagement: music as entertainment and music used for its social or cultural significance. These two concepts are not completely separate, as music used for entertainment has an obvious social and cultural importance, but there are still certain pejorative connotations attached to the use of the word entertainment (see Chapter Five). This use of music will often place the music in the foreground.

In Chapter One I outlined various claims that have been made for the use of music within theatre. In analyzing the affordances of music within the mise-en-scène it is important not only to consider in what ways music functions, but also how it achieves those functions. Why is it useful? What are the musical materials that a composer can use to achieve a particular effect. How are these materials commonly used?
The Why (Why use music in theatre?)

Emotional framing

Summary
Emotional framing covers the particular association of music with the emotions, which in discussion of music in both film and theatre is usually covered with the vague term ‘mood’. Affirmative music (Thiel 1981) is music that affirms, i.e. supports, the dominant emotional content of a scene, either by following events closely (mirroring) or by providing a general mood (evocation) (Gallez 1970). Anempathetic music (Chion 1994) is music that undercuts the dominant emotion depicted, usually by being contextually inappropriate, such as the use of cheerful music for a narrative that depicts a tragic scene. Separating out is used to describe music that occupies a ‘middle ground’ between the two, operating as independent to the emotions (or lack of emotions) portrayed in a scene, while not actually undercutting the emotional effect of the scene.

Gorbman considers that the presence of music is, in itself, a signifier of emotion, so its entrances and exits will themselves have an emotional signification aside from the music itself (Gorbman 1987: 73). Meyer also came up with a modernist presumption of the efficacy of listening:

[The] listener brings to the act of perception definite beliefs in the affective power of music. Even before the first sound is heard, these beliefs activate dispositions to respond in an emotional way… (1956: 11)

Pavis’ model for performance analysis includes the occasions when music is used during a performance (1992: 38). The frequency of its use may affect how consistently it can be regarded as a signifier of emotion, before considering how it is representing the emotion.

The use of music for emotional effects presents in a continuum that contains ‘anempathetic’ and ‘affirmative’ as two poles. Thiel’s term is used as it is not antonymic to ‘anempathetic’.

To discuss affirmative music, following Gallez’ terminology (1970: 47), I will use the term mirroring to identify music that follows the stage action, and responds
to moment-by-moment events, whether produced by a live musician in response to the performance, or the live actor responding to particular cues in either live or recorded music. I will use the term *evocation* to refer to situations in which the music in a more general way supports one mood for the scene, without closely marking specific events.

The production process for a film means that the visual editing usually occurs before the music is composed, enabling the precise timing of musical events to particular events in the cinematic image. This precision of musical timing is not the norm in theatre, as live performance does not have precision in timing. Susan Sontag considers that the film differs from theatre in that film is an object rather than a performance, an object that is “totally calculable” (1966: 31). She states that “[b]ecause they are performances, something always ‘live,’ theatre-events are not subject to a comparable degree of control, do not admit a comparably exact integration of effects” (ibid. 32).

Live music for theatre is therefore able to *mirror*, as the musician can respond to particular dramatic moments within the variable time of live theatre, while the recorded score, being temporally predetermined, might be more likely to operate closer to evocation. Recorded music, in Sontag’s terms, is also a ‘totally calculable’ object, rather than a performance. Recent advances in technology, though, blur the boundary between live and recorded music. However, it is important to note that, even with an unchanging recorded score, an actor’s performance might be worked to aspects of the music, and therefore this can effect a closer perceptual linking of the music and the staged event.

*Mirroring* can therefore be considered to be a progressive musical device, while *evocation* remains static. As a progressive device *mirroring* can also function to stabilize or destabilize the dominant emotional content of the scene. This is a common function of underscoring in film, in which affirmative music, by closely following changing situations on screen, might alter in its emotional expression over relatively short periods of time. Within theatre, music that begins in one emotional register can be subjected to changes that gradually shift the emotion during a single scene. As a simple example, music might suggest ‘happy’ at the beginning of a scene and end in suggesting ‘sad’ by shifting the harmony from a major mode to a minor one, but emotional progressions of this sort can also be achieved in other ways such as tempo shifts, or timbral changes.
Yet even if music as *evocation* can be considered ‘static’ in its emotional framing, changing events in the dramatic action can also afford a different relation to the music. It is possible to conceive of a dramatic situation in which the music remains constant, while the emotional tenor of the scene changes. Thus a piece of music that at the outset could be considered affirmative could become anempathetic in its effect, although the music itself does not change. For Gorbman, this would be ‘mutual implication’ (1987: 15). The relationship between music and stage action is a dynamic one.

The operation of affirmative music is more opaque, and harder to ascertain than the use of anempathetic music. For affirmative music used in film, it is desirable that music and image form a seamless whole, in which they are so closely blended that they suggest inevitability, they become inseparable. This aids in the creation of the ‘inaudibility’ of the music. The purpose of such ‘inaudibility’ is, for Gorbman, “a catalyst in the suspension of judgement” (1987: 6), “the effacement of discourse in favor of story, and a trance-like spectatorial immersion in its world” (ibid. 7). Anempathetic music, whether serious or ironic, depends for its effect on the recognition of its ‘lack of fit’ to a situation; its effect demands its ‘audibility’. This ‘audibility’ aids in its clear perception. Affirmative music depends for its effect on calling less attention to itself.

Kassabian has termed this the ‘attention continuum’, stating that:

> Attention to music depends on many factors, including the volume of the music, its style, and its “appropriateness” in the scene. The degree of attention given to the music can be anywhere along an infinitely divisible continuum ranging from none to all; rarely, if ever, does an instance of film music belong on either end of the spectrum. (2001: 52)

But if the use of background music for the classic Hollywood film, according to Gorbman, is to enable “the effacement of discourse in favor of story” (1987: 7) it cannot be said that contemporary theatre similarly effaces its discourse. In non-naturalistic theatre the articulating discourse can be as important as the narrative. It is also debatable whether it is possible for theatre audiences to enter a “trance-like spectatorial immersion” (ibid.). André Bazin considers that:

> Illusion in the cinema is not based as it is in the theater on convention tacitly accepted by the general public; rather, contrariwise, it is based on the inalienable realism of that which is shown. (1999/1967: 416)
The ‘realism of what is shown’ suggests that the theatre spectator in non-naturalistic performances is likely to be cognizant, to some degree, of the theatrical devices operating in the presentation of story, devices (such as an ingenious onstage alteration of set) which in themselves may be a source of enjoyment. So, while music might aid in an emotional identification with that story, the requirement for ‘invisibility’ and ‘inaudibility’ might not be so strong as in the classical narrative film.

Anempathetic music, while undercutting the emotional context, cannot be considered to undercut the narrative. On the contrary, it has a particular role in supporting narrative. In comedy, for example, the use of anempathetic music is a prime source of spectatorial engagement via its potential for humour, and so supports the humorous intent of the narrative. In more serious work, as Chion makes clear (1994: 8-9), it is the fact of its apparent indifference to the dominant emotional register of the scene that provokes a response in the spectator. Assuming that the artistic intent is to engage the spectator’s emotions, to ‘bond’ him or her to the story narrated, then anempathetic music can be said to support the narrative, though in a different operation to that of affirmative music.

As noted in Chapter One the music might occupy a more neutral ‘middle ground’. If affirmative scoring is the blending of music and theatre, the middle ground consists of a separating out of music and theatrical event. By this I do not mean that they exist with no relation to one another, or can exist in the absence of the other, but that they are more perceptible as distinct elements.

Music can function to distance the spectator from very emotionally charged material, while not going as far as to be considered anempathetic, thus providing a space of contemplation of the narrative rather than immersion in the narrative. Or, conversely, music could provide an element of involvement in very formal, coolly presented situations, without necessarily functioning as affirmative.

For example, in the production of The Space Between by Circa (see Chapter Four), the formal and abstract physical language was accompanied at times with songs by Jacques Brel. Warm, intimate and French, the songs oozed ‘romance’ and ‘sexy’, providing an involving element. In The Space Between the warmth of Brel contrasted with ‘cooler’, more absolute music, such as the use of Bach and Aphex Twin. The contrast between these two musics is between music that invites emotional involvement and ‘cooler’ music that provides a space of contemplation. The Brel songs invited the audience into a greater emotional involvement with the
relatively abstract, non-denotational physical action, while the music by Bach and Aphex Twin afforded a ‘cooler’ appraisal of the physical patterning.

These two attributes illustrate an inherent analytical difficulty; both are simultaneously providing, in Kassabian’s terms, mood and commentary. Neither music is anempathetic to the scenes, neither music can be considered unequivocally affirmative, in that, within an abstract physical text that affords ambiguous or multiple interpretations, the music also does not direct to any singular interpretation.

When music is functioning as intervention the songs can often create the effect of spectacle, withdrawing from the immediate narrative to create a space of reflection.

**Diegetic framing**

*Summary*

Diegetic framing is music used in support of the fictional ‘universe’ created by the narrative of the theatre, either at the level of the story that is told (*support for fabula*), or as support for the theatrical structures within which that story is told (*support for discourse*).

I use the term ‘diegetic framing’ to refer to the use of music to support the diegetic world created by the narrative, while recognizing that the narrative contains both emotional content as well as diegetic information, and that music is able to support both at the same time. Diegetic framing expands the concept of diegetic music, referring to music that primarily functions to delineate aspects of the fictional universe, for example, setting historical time and place of action. Diegetic framing also covers the use of music to directly refer to characters and their attributes. These attributes can be external, (for example, delineating their social class or status) or internal (for example as an indication of their emotional state.)

Diegetic framing can be achieved through the use of either diegetic or non-diegetic music, and, as noted in Chapter One, in film the distinction between these is frequently blurred. The film industry terms for the distinction between diegetic/non-diegetic music are respectively *source* and *score*, with a further term of *source* music, a composite term for music that exists between the two (Sadoff 2006),
as for example a tune initially heard on a radio (source) which is later incorporated into the score.

Many of the discussions of incidental music in Chapter One focussed on the use of music to give narrative support. A distinction needs to be made in this discussion between two different levels of narrative support – of support that is directly related to the story, and of support for the structures within which that story is told. As commonly used terms within film theory differ at times from those used in performance analysis, it is necessary to clarify the terminology used in this thesis for these two levels.

Pavis’ model for performance analysis asks how music and sound effects support fabula (1992: 96). Fabula is a term that appears to be applied in different ways. Pavis’ use of the term is linked with the Russian formalist concepts of fabula and sjuzet, and the translation of these terms is also problematical. Victor Erlich, for example, translates fabula as ‘story’ (or ‘fable’) and sjuzet as ‘plot’ (1969: 240-242). In Dictionary of the Theatre (1998), Pavis’ states that fabula refers to both ‘story’ and ‘plot’:

The notion of fabula, with its dual definition as material (story narrated) and story structure (narrating discourse) indicates by its very ambiguity that a critic faced with a dramatic text should address himself simultaneously to signified (story narrated), signifier (way of narrating), and the relationship between the two. (1998: 141)

In other writings, Pavis’ use of the term is not always consistent, a fact complicated by translation. However for the purposes of this research I will use the distinction between story narrated and narrating discourse as being the two important levels of narration which music supports, and consider them equivalent to ‘story’ and ‘plot’.

Within film theory, the theatrical term ‘mise-en-scène’ is used to refer to the actualization of the narrative, including, for example, décor, lighting, angle and framing of shots and logically music and sound, (although music is often left out of the discussion). This as “a confrontation of all signifying systems” accords with Pavis’ use of the term, although the means by which these are controlled in film and

---

18 For example, L’analyse des spectacles (1996) the terms fabula and sjuzet are used, derived from the Russian formalists, but in the translation by David Williams these terms are translated as plot and subject, subject described as the way the plot is presented chronologically (Pavis 2003: 23). Later in the book, though, it is fabula rather than subject which is described as “the course of events ordered temporally” (ibid. 256). In Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture fabula translated by Jilly Dougherty as story, with the implication that the structure of that story is something different (1992: 96). This is similar in implication to the collaboratively written book Approaching theatre (which takes Brecht as a starting point) in which it appears that the fabula is the story reconstructed in chronological order, which is contrasted with dramatic discourse as the way those events are ordered in the actual text (Helbo 1991: 136-137).
theatre obviously differ. The term is subsumed in much film theory as part of the discussion of discourse (e.g. Browne 1999/1975, Gunning 1999; Prince 1999).

For Gorbman discourse refers to all the “means of articulation” that constitute a film, of which music is a part, while story is what is being articulated, the “narrative world and what happens in it” (1987: 72). For my purposes, as I draw on both scholars, her terminology can be clearly identified with Pavis’ distinction between “narrating discourse” and “story narrated”.

Music may then provide support for narrative at both levels of ‘narrating discourse’ and ‘story narrated’. For example, using a piece of music to set or confirm location (the cliché of accordion for the streets of Paris) supports the narrative at the level of “story narrated” (assuming for this explanation the story/scene is located in Paris). If this accordion music is used as a recurring thematic element in the play, such as indicating a return to that location, or a character’s nostalgic reminiscence of that location, it is also supporting the “narrating discourse”. Music can provide narrative support at both these levels simultaneously, or be predominantly supporting one or the other level. If the accordion is playing a cheerful tune to accompany a scene depicting sad emotional content, then the music could be simultaneously providing both diegetic and emotional framing, as the music would be anempathetic to the emotion, while potentially giving support to the diegetic framing at the level of story narrated (indication of location), and also, if the accordion music is a recurring thematic element, for narrating discourse.

Within contemporary performance there may be no clear story. If ‘postdramatic theatre’ establishes the possibility of dissolving the logocentric hierarchy and assigning the dominant role to elements other than dramatic logos and language” (Lehmann 2006: 93), then one of the elements that might dominate is music. In the absence (or plethora) of story it is still possible to consider the theatrical discourse, the structure of events. Music can function to support the theatrical structure itself. But even if this is its primary function, it can still have narratives of its own.

---

19 It may be more accurate in discussing theatrical performance to re-phrase these terms as ‘story enacted’ and ‘enacting discourse’, but as the discussion presented here is so indebted to Gorbman’s and Pavis’ theories, and their use of terminology, I have chosen to continue with their terms.
20 This term has become linked with Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006), but as he acknowledges, Schechner also used the term briefly in a discussion of happenings in the first edition of Performance Theory (1977: 21), though this has disappeared from the 2005 edition.
21 Lehmann even applies the term ‘musicalization’ as a stylistic trait for postdramatic theatre, mentioning the use of voice for its rhythmic and tonal properties, the manipulation of sonic space through electronics, and the amount of music used (2006: 91-93).
In performances that are predominantly a physical text, such as circus, the music can have a strong structural function such as establishment of tempo/rhythm, but it might also have a narrative function, or suggest narrative, even if this might not be as obvious as the setting of time and place or delineating character. It might be the emotional suggestions of music that become of particular importance.  

Gorbman, borrowing from Barthes, considers that, in support of narrative, music behaves as ‘ancrage’ – anchoring an image more firmly in meaning (Gorbman 1987: 32; Barthes 1977: 38-41). Thus music can direct the spectator towards a particular interpretation of the diegesis, an interpretation that is also often an emotional one. If presented with a seemingly neutral filmed image – for example, a beautiful lake bathed in sunlight – the accompanying music might reinforce the impression that this is indeed a beautiful lake or it could conversely suggest that something very unpleasant is lurking beneath the surface. The music could employ any of the “relatively small selection of musical devices” common to the music for horror films (Donnelly 2005: 91) to achieve this effect. Noel Carroll terms this use of music ‘modifying’, with the music ‘filling-in’ the blanks left unspecified by the image/text (1988: 213-225). Gorbman considers that “the two overarching roles of background music can be characterized as semiotic (as anchrage) and psychological (as suture or bonding)” (1987: 55). All diegetic framing can thus be determined as semiotic, while emotional framing is psychological.

Kassabian uses ‘identification’ as a term consistent with Gorbman’s ‘bonding’ and Carroll’s ‘modifying’ music. Her argument makes a distinction between the psychological path of the traditional composed film score, and that of the more contemporary use of compiled scores. Kassabian calls the path of the traditionally composed film score an ‘assimilating identification’, the purpose of which is “to draw perceivers into socially and historically unfamiliar positions, as do larger scale processes of assimilation” (Kassabian 2001: 2). In contrast, a compiled score brings with it “the immediate threat of history” (ibid. 3), the fact that the spectators might already know the music means that they bring “external associations with the songs into their engagements with the film” (ibid.).

---

22 Lehmann does not consider an emotional function of music in his discussion of music within postdramatic theatre, which is a curious omission. This may be because his theorization of the term appears to treat music as an object, rather than as a dynamic experience, which aligns him with the formalist approach to discussion of music.

23 See Donnelly (2005: 88-109) and Huckvale (1990) for a discussion of stock musical devices in horror films. For accounts of commutation tests (in which a film scene is played with different music and the effects evaluated) see for example Gorbman (1987) or Cohen (1993).

24 Her use of the term is not always consistent, which problematizes its use as a term.
Assimilating identifications track perceivers toward a rigid tightly controlled position that tends to line up comfortably with aspects of dominant ideologies. Affiliating identifications track perceivers toward a more loosely defined position that groups, or affiliates, several different narrative positions within a fantasy scenario together … the difference is one of direction: assimilating identifications narrow or tighten possibilities, while affiliating identifications open outward. (ibid. 141)

As Kassabian frames it, assimilating identifications assume both a direct intention on the part of the director/composer and a belief in the ability to communicate that intention, to ‘control and cajole’ the spectator. Assimilating identifications are related to diegetic framing while affiliating identifications escape from the diegesis, as their identifications cannot be predicted. Affiliating identifications can, therefore, be considered more likely to be metadiegetic.

**Metadiegetic framing**

**Summary**

Metadiegetic framing deals with the other texts and narratives that music brings to the theatrical situation, in which a secondary narration (Genette 1969) can be discerned. These are termed *resonances*, potential texts that lie outside the immediate theatrical diegesis. *Imaginary music* is the use of music to signal the inner life of a character, rather than refer to the character’s outwardly performed actions. The *imagined musician* refers to the use of recorded music, in which the trace of the recorded performer(s) ‘people’ the stage, while being themselves absent. Music that *speaks for* (Smith 1998) refers to situations in which the lyrics of a performed, or recorded song can be read as directly apposite to the narrative.

Taking Genette’s definition of ‘metadiegetic’ as pertaining to narration by a secondary character (1969: 202), I refer to metadiegetic framing as uses of music that function as a form of secondary narration. In these instances the music may be conjuring other references that are outside the immediate theatrical diegesis. Metadiegetic framing assumes intertextuality, although this intertextuality is not confined to the musical text’s relationship with other musical texts, but also to a range of extra-musical associations. Compiled scores can be assumed to be inherently metadiegetic. Composed scores, however, are not solely confined to a position of assimilating identifications as they can also function metadiegetically in a

---

25 In accordance with Gorbman’s adoption of Genette’s definition as applicable to music (1987: 22).
number of ways. A composed score that is, for example, in an identifiable genre, or which employs pastiche, is also capable of ‘opening outward’. Kassabian does recognize the impossibility of completely tracking the identifications, even within an intended position of assimilation (2001: 142).

While Kassabian’s ‘assimilating’ and ‘affiliating’ identifications are an interesting distinction, I consider them both too limited and too dualistic to be useful in considering contemporary theatre practice. Newly composed scores are not free from intertextual interpretation and, as Kassabian herself notes, it is impossible to completely predict the inferences a spectator might make from the use of a particular music. Conversely, compiled scores may also ‘line up’ quite ‘comfortably with aspects of dominant ideologies’, a function of what Shumway would call “commodified nostalgia” (1999: 39). While acknowledging that in many cases they may be more available to ‘opening outward’, I would also argue that there are definite ideological choices made for the music in compiled scores. These choices are likely to be tightly controlled by the director or musical director, who are also intent on a particular meaning-making process, or, indeed, ideology (see Chapter Five).

I propose, therefore, to use the term *resonances* as an aural term that links with the idea of ‘trace’. Walter Murch uses the term ‘conceptual resonance’ to describe a particular effect of good sound design:

… in my own experience, the most successful sounds seem not only to alter what the audience sees but to go further and trigger a kind of conceptual resonance between image and sound: the sound makes us see the image differently, and then this new image makes us hear the sound differently, which in turn makes us see something else in the image, which makes us hear different things in the sound, and so on. (1994: xxii)

Murch is describing a dynamic relationship between image and sound effect, but his concept can be extended to music. *Resonance* can refer both to intertextuality, and also to the effect that music can have on imagination and memory and as a concept is applicable to both composed and compiled scores.

*Resonance* is well illustrated in the following quote by Andrew Ford, describing his experience of the music of Russ Bolleter, a contemporary Australian composer who creates music on ‘ruined’ or ‘destroyed’ pianos and accordions, which he finds in paddocks and tractor sheds.
... as I listen to Bolleter’s instruments, it is not just the heat of a West Australian summer I sense, not just the dogs and the crows and the station owners. I am also transported to the front parlour of my grandparents’ house in Kirkdale, Liverpool. It is cold and dank, because it is never used ... I can feel the cold and I can smell the thick twist in my grandfather’s pipe and, just, through the cloud of aromatic smoke, my grandmother’s rice pudding baking in the oven.

My grandparents are long dead, their house pulled down, and the piano probably ended its days being smashed to pieces with sledgehammers at a fairground. But Bolleter’s music brings it all back. You see, like all the best art, Ross Bolleter’s music not only takes us into its own world, it also takes us deep into ourselves. (2005: 151)

Resonance, defined as ‘re-sounding, re-echoing’ reflects the complex web of associations conjured up by the perceiver, and which cannot be controlled by the composer. In Ford’s account, the first ‘echo’ of the relationship between Bolleter’s music and a West Australian summer, an easily understandable, although by no means definite association, is ‘re-echoed’ to produce the less likely evocation of a Liverpool parlour. As Ford goes on to explain, his first experience of a piano was playing on his grandparents’ dilapidated instrument.26

Here, the resonance is both nostalgic and an example of what F. C. Bartlett would call an “imaginative reconstruction”.

Remembering is not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organised past reactions or experience, and to a little outstanding detail which commonly appears in image or in language form. It is thus hardly ever really exact, even in the most rudimentary cases of rote recapitulation, and it is not at all important that it should be so. (Bartlett 1995/1932: 213).

Resonances for Ford were produced predominantly by a particular timbre present in the music, that of a dilapidated piano. Murch’s idea of conceptual resonance is also crucially linked to the timbral qualities of a sound. Resonances are not limited to timbre but carried by other elements of music. As noted above, the use of well-known music in a compiled score is likely to carry many ‘outward-opening associations’.

Chion states:

Take one image and compare the effect of a music cue played on a well-tuned piano with the effect of a cue played on a slightly out of tune piano with a few bad keys. We tend to read the first cue more readily as “pit music,” while with the second,

26 Ford also notes that the first experience of a piano for many people would be one in a similar state of dilapidation (2005: 150).
even if the instrument isn’t identified or shown in the image, we will sense its concrete presence in the setting. (1994: 116)

The timbre of the well-tuned instrument as opposed to the timbre of the ‘honky-tonk’ or ‘saloon’ piano distinguishes a type of instrument. In the relation to a fully realized film image, the timbre of a particular piano is confirmatory of that image either as the implied sound source of diegetic music (the honky-tonk piano playing out of sight in the frontier saloon bar), or, as an instrument unrelated to that context and therefore understood as part of the non-diegetic score. If the unseen source instrument has a ‘concrete’ presence, there is also the implication of the ‘concrete’ presence of the pianist, an imagined musician who sounds that instrument.

Both Frith (1996: 211) and Auslander (1998: 9; 2004b: 5) contend that listening to recorded music is not a disembodied aural experience, but rather that the performing musician is also present, even if as a trace, in the aural experience. In the context of a theatrical production, which will be visually more minimal than the literalness of a film setting, the trace of the musician and his or her instrument can ‘people’ the stage in the imagination.

Certain solo instruments, especially the instruments that do not traditionally belong in the orchestra are often more emotionally “resonant” than orchestral instruments. For some instruments, the sound feels inseparable from the physicality of the performer playing it – in a guitar performance, depending on the quality of the performer or the complexities of the music, one might hear only the notes of the music and the timbre of the instrument. It might also be possible to hear the sounds of the fingers depressing the strings on the frets or the squeak of sliding between the notes. These ‘non-musical’ sounds are also traces of the physicality of the player, of a single, human subject whose extra-theatrical physicality is interwoven in the theatrical diegesis even if the music is recorded. Borrowing from Barthes, this could be called the ‘grain’ of the instrument (1977: 179-189).27

Within the creation of the fictional onstage world, the imagined musician exists as a trace of the physical performing presence of a musician. Imaginary music is a different concept in which the music itself functions as a trace within the fictional world. The usual distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic music is that, in the first case, the music can be ‘heard’ by the fictional characters, and in the second, music can be heard by the audience, but not by the fictional characters. A further

---

27 Chion’s term for these sounds, and for his example of the piano noted above, is materializing sound indices (1994: 114-117). Barthes term grain is used here as equivalent.
distinction needs to be made for the cases where music is presented as occurring in the ‘mind’ of a particular character, as *imaginary music*. The music is understood as referring to one particular character (as opposed to the entire cast), a character who ‘appears’ to be aware of it. This possibility extends the diegetic function of music referring to the inner life of a character. This effect is particularly linked with memory and nostalgia, (although in this instance with relation to the character). The evocation of nostalgia by music can be seen as a trace of other locations and other periods of time to the immediate onstage fictional world presented. *Imaginary music* appears to be also associated with the depiction of extreme mental states such as madness.

Music that evokes nostalgia operates within the theory of resonances. An obvious way for music to evoke nostalgia is by using a compiled score containing period songs (Shumway 1999; Brackett 2001; Kassabian 2001). Yet, as Shumway notes, it is also possible for music to have a nostalgic function for people who “do not have actual memory of the period being revived” (1999: 40).

*American Graffiti* appealed to an audience that included many too young to have grown up with the music in the film. Thus, the songs need not literally bring the past to life for the viewer but give the impression of such an experience, creating a fictional set of memories that, especially when taken together with other such representations, may actually come to replace the audience’s “original” sense of the past. Of course, those who lack any other representation of the period will be all the more likely to assume that the representation in the film is “true”. (ibid.)

Music is considered here to be able to evoke a personal moment of nostalgia or a particular sense of cultural nostalgia, an effect that can also be achieved by the use of quotation or allusion. It is not necessary to hear a complete piece of well-known music for imaginative recall to happen. It is possible to alter or arrange, in effect ‘re-compose’ pieces of music to achieve not just nostalgia, but a range of other effects, from the deeply emotional, to parody and irony. This effect is not limited to the use of well-known music. A nostalgic resonance can also be stimulated by a pastiche of a particular genre, or, as in the above account of Bolleter’s music, by a particular instrument or instrumental timbre.

Resonance can also exist as a structural device within the overall arc of a theatre piece. A leitmotiv can be considered to have resonance within the work itself, but it is also possible for a leitmotiv or even a complete piece of music to
undergo transformation and change alongside the transformational processes of the theatre itself.

The ‘recomposing’ (or possibly ‘decomposing’) of music in the context of a theatre work is an example of what I term **ghost music**, music that can be considered a fragment, or trace, of its original form, and which has been adapted or altered for theatrical effect, rather than for musical purposes. In the case of a well-known piece, a **ghost** version will carry the associations of the original, yet with the possibility of altered meaning. **Ghost** music can also be found within newly composed scores, where a theme or motif that has been used previously returns in a reduced or altered form. **Ghost** music is a compositional choice, an example of how musical material can be used to create resonance.

Associations produced by music within a theatrical context might be completely personal for the spectator, or culturally conditioned (the two are probably inseparable) (Bennett 1990), but they lie outside the immediate control of the diegesis of the theatre work. In line with the theory of affordances, it is important to remember that this particular process of meaning making is an active and ongoing transference, not just from the music to the image/text, but also from the image/text to the music. If the music creates ‘ancrage’ or ‘resonance’ for a given image/text, the image/text is equally capable of functioning as ‘ancrage’ or **resonance** for the music.

Jeff Smith theorizes that song lyrics can function to **speak for** a character, often as a clue to the inner life of a character (1998: 166).\(^28\) The live performance of song, as in musical theatre, is often used as a place for reflection rather than to forward the narrative. In the case of a compiled score, particularly of popular music, song lyrics provide an extra textual device, which can be considered analogous to the ‘voice-over’. However, as noted by Kassabian above, the ‘affiliating identifications’, the resonances of the compiled score ‘open outward’ (2001: 141). Thus while song lyrics can be read as directly referring to a fictional character (or characters, or situation), they speak beyond the immediate theatrical diegesis.

---

\(^{28}\) This theory is also used by Brackett (2001: 249).
Spatial framing

Summary
Spatial framing refers to both the creation of imaginary space by music, such as music that suggests other exterior, or offstage locations, or, conversely, creates an imaginary intimacy within either the fictional world of the theatre, or the ‘concrete’ world of the theatre building itself. This includes the relationship to the theatrical action of any visible presence of a musician (Chapter Six).

It is possible to suggest in sound that the physical space of the stage world is bigger – music can extend “out of the frame” of the stage in a virtually physical way. This is also achievable by sound effects and their placing in aural space, and sound effects can also function in many of the ways that music can. How sound functions in space, and the importance of this function are becoming increasingly theorized.

David Toop, for example, eloquently describes the importance of reverberant sound:

One of the ways in which we negotiate our environment is through a refined awareness of resonance and its atmospheres. This is a language based to some extent on emtpiness: a constant monitoring of sound swelling and decaying, bounding or falling dead within a series of enclosures both soft (the earth’s atmosphere, a park), and hard (an office, a prison cell), open (a desert), relatively open (a valley), closed (a cinema), and claustrophobically enclosed (a cubicle shower), complex and resonant (a mountain range, a stairwell, a swimming pool), simple and absorbent (a bedroom full of soft, thick fabrics, an anechoic chamber). (2004: 63)

Culturally and historically, the highly reverberant suggests large spaces, often linked to power, both secular (the loud echoing courtroom) and the spiritual or magical (the cathedral) (Blesser 2007: 88-93; Doyle 2005: 42-45; Garrioch 2003). Accordingly, the role of signal processing such as reverberation becomes important to consider as part of the musical effect.

It would seem that predominant film conventions link high reverberation to large spaces (the echoes round the mountain tops) (Doyle 2005: 104-119). The depiction of outer space is also predominantly characterized by highly reverberant music even if this is technically inaccurate – in space “no-one can hear you scream”.

29 Toop takes his definition of ‘atmospheres’ from the philosopher Gernot Böhme’s ‘aesthetic of atmospheres’ (1998; 2000).
The extreme contrast is the anechoic chamber, which contains no reverberation, and has been described as an experience of being stifled, of being claustrophobically enclosed, no matter the actual size of the space (Augoyard 2005: 114-115; Blesser 2007: 18-20).

A growing interest in, and capacity for the alteration of sonic space has been a result of the development of recording, which from its earliest days has been a manipulation of sound in space.30 Brian Eno states:

Recording and electronics … allowed composers to work with impossible perspectives and relationships. Producers and musicians discovered that tiny sounds could be made huge, and huge ones compacted. And, using echoes and reverberations, those sounds could seem to be located in a virtual space which was entirely imaginary. The act of making music becomes the art of creating new sonic locations and creating new timbres, new instruments. (Eno 2000: xii)

Electronic signal processing can make a piece of music sound very different for dramatic purposes. For example, the sound of music emanating from a late-night party in the neighbourhood usually demonstrates the acoustical property of bass frequencies to predominate over a distance. If a theatrical situation demanded a similar atmosphere, a composer could reproduce this acoustic effect on stage by simply adjusting the equalisation of a piece of music to emphasize the bass frequencies. The immediate physical area of the stage can thus be virtually extended through sound. A scene might take place in one room in one house, but sound can create the impression of an imagined neighbourhood around the physical set.31

Spatial effects are not, however, solely the product of signal processing. The choices of frequencies used in the music itself can also suggest different spatial relationships, for example, the prevalence of low pitch over high, or the distance between the pitches. But it is also possible to perceive lower frequencies as ‘darker’ and high frequencies as ‘brighter’ (Dahlhaus 1982: 79), metaphorical terminologies that have direct implications for emotional meaning. Sloboda provides some empirical evidence for the association of low frequency sounds with ‘solemnity’ and ‘sadness’, with high frequency sounds showing a correlation with attributions of ‘happy’ and ‘exciting’ (2005: 220). Music containing a juxtaposition of high and low...

---

30 The manipulation of sonic space is not just the province of recorded music. Landels considers an interesting system of resonating bowls used in classical Greek theatre as described by Vitruvius in his De Architectura (Landels 1967; 2001). Bowls of earthenware or brass were placed around the amphitheatre and tuned to the pitches of Greek modes. Both speaking and singing voices would be amplified and made to resonate, yet with specific pitches. In this way the theatre environment itself becomes an instrument. Similar devices are noted as being used in church architecture (Augoyard 2005: 104-105). I note also the placing of instrumental and vocal combinations within space in the music of Gabrieli, for example.

31 See for example Meszaros (2005) for specific case studies of the aurality within certain contemporary plays.
frequencies but not containing much in the way of middle frequencies sounds more ‘open’, as if the emptiness of the aural space translates into actual space, hence music ‘extending out of the frame’.

As noted in Chapter One, a number of scholars have identified the prevalence of spatial metaphors to describe music (Scruton 1999; Brackett 2001; Kramer 2004). The philosopher, Gernot Böhme, even considers that “music as such is a modification of space as it is experienced by the body” and this manipulation of actual space is the explanation for its emotional effect (2000: 16).

**Temporal Framing**

*Summary*

Temporal framing refers to the use of music that establishes the tempo and rhythm of action (*pace*), aiding in the creation of forward momentum (*progression*) or the slowing, or halting of action (*stasis*).

Music as a temporal art form is different from the other elements of design that make up the theatrical diegesis. Music, while always moving through time (metaphorically) is capable of giving the impression of stasis. It can also help with shifts of pace. This is important for the performers, as it is likely that they will respond to musical pace and style.

According to Gorbman (1987: 24) there is a conflict between the abstract, yet regular time of music and the less predictable dramatic, human time. Kassabian notes that music ‘packs’ much more information in a shorter time than words (2001: 27). In my experience as a composer, it can often feel as if the music is too ‘busy’ for a theatrical situation, and this can be explained by the relatively concentrated pace of musical events. In this situation, means have to be found to slow down that pace. This does not necessarily mean playing slower music, but can mean employing repetition, or lessening the rate of harmonic change.

**Formal framing**

*Summary*

Formal framing is used to cover the use of music that is mainly confined to the covering of blackouts and scene changes, providing continuity to the action.
Music can hold together a fragmented discourse. In supporting narratives that consist of many short scenes in different locales, it can be easier to use music to indicate location, than alter or use a set. The thematic linking of related stories can help spectators to navigate their way through a theatrical structure that mixes time and place. If the music remains in one style throughout it can also help impart a formal unity to the theatre. Music can aid transitions and fill awkward scene changes. It can point both forwards and backwards narratively. While Ross Brown considers that “the days of scene-change music ‘masking’ a scene change, or ‘easing a transition’ might be over” (2005: 115) this was not found in research for this thesis (Chapter Three).

Instead there was still strong evidence for the continued existence of the theatrical convention that confines the use of music to inter-scene, or as overture/postlude, usually for the purposes of formally marking the ends of an act/scene, or to indicate a change of location or that time has passed. This remains common enough to warrant its inclusion as a specific aspect of formal framing.

But while music can provide continuity to the overall arc of a theatrical performance this relationship is not one-way. In analyzing The Space Between, by Circa (Chapter Four), the unity of the theatrical style afforded a continuity to the music soundtrack; a soundtrack which otherwise had no obvious stylistic unity.

The relationship to the overall structure, the ‘long arc’ of the narrative involves a combination of factors. The idea of continuity can also apply to following a character, or cast of characters, through a piece, such as the use of leitmotiv. Gorbman makes a useful distinction between the musical ‘theme’ and the ‘motif’; with the ‘motif’ remaining specifically directed and unchanged in diegetic association (1987: 27). The narrative arc may also be supported in other ways, such as pace, or position of climaxes, relating back to the use of music to support both fabula and discourse (see Chapter Five).

**The What**

**Tonal events (melody, harmony, rhythm) and timbre**

Aaron Copland identifies four “essential elements” of music: rhythm, melody, harmony and tone colour (1957: 33). Of these the first three deal with the
organization of sounds, while tone colour or timbre deals with the character of sounds themselves.

In the majority of performances viewed the music could be characterized as tonal, and falling within two categories: music characterized by functional harmony, such as Western ‘classical’ music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and popular music forms which are derived from those harmonic conventions; and music that, while tonal, could be termed ‘minimalist’ or minimalist-influenced. The latter covers recent developments in musical style including ‘art’ music and also a range of contemporary popular musics, such as ambient or electronic music. I consider this distinction an important one for the operations of music as a temporal form within theatre.

Functional harmony concerns the underlying ‘grammar’ of tonal music; the ‘rules’ that determine what chord usually follows another. These rules can be easily seen, for example, in Walter Piston’s classic treatise on harmony, in which he lists a table of the usual chord progressions (the Roman numerals designate the seven degrees of the scale):

I is followed by IV or V, sometimes VI. Less often II or III
II is followed by V, sometimes VI, less often I, III, or IV
III is followed by VI, sometimes IV, less often II or V … [etc] (1965: 17)

Piston continues likewise through the other notes of the scale. Important for this discussion is the implication for forward movement provided by the expectation that chords will follow each other in a tonally coherent progression, including the sense of finality that will be given by the cadence (which is a highly formulaic chord progression used at phrase endings). This begs the question of whether it is only the musically educated listener who would perceive a ‘tonally coherent’ section of music.

But, as Jamshed J. Bharucha notes:

… it is almost impossible to escape exposure to tonal harmonic music if one grows up in a Western society. Tonal-harmonic music pervades television, radio, supermarkets and the dominant popular forms of music. (1994: 221)

Bharucha, in this study, also provides persuasive empirical evidence that the mental schema of expectations provided by the cultural predominance of tonal harmony are as prevalent in the non-musically trained, as in musically trained listeners. Sloboda also considers that the recognition of tonal dissonance (a ‘wrong’
note in a chord) is present in children by the age of nine, and that recognition of the ordering of chords in tonally conventional patterns is present by age eleven. He also finds that this aural perception is not related to the experience of formal musical tuition, but appears to result from “mere exposure to the standard musical culture” (2005: 179). This suggests that a person without formal musical tuition might not be able to describe, or identify tonal chord progressions with conscious understanding, but does understand them aurally, through acculturation.

It is common to talk about the effects of functional tonality, and its contribution to the sense of forward movement in music in terms of tension and release – the ‘pull’ of the tonic providing closure and completion, through the resolution of dissonance. The music has a definite beginning and a definite ending. This can be seen as a contrast with minimalist music, where “beginnings and endings come to seem unimportant, and one can imagine the music going on forever” (Cox and Warner 2005: 287).

Wim Mertens makes this distinction between music that operates within the conventions of functional harmony and minimalism:

> The traditional work is teleological or end-orientated, because all musical events result in a directed end or synthesis. The composition appears as a musical product characterized by an organic totality. By the underlying dynamic, dramatising construction, a directionality is created that presumes a linear memory in the listener, that forces him or her to follow the linear musical evolution. (1983: 17)

In contrast he considers that minimalism is “non-narrative and a-teleological” and “[i]nstead there appears non-directed evolution in which the listener is no longer submitted to the constraint of following the musical evolution” (ibid.). 32 This has implications for musical form and for creating both a sense of forward movement, and the experience of time.

Jonathan D. Kramer considers that “[m]ost of us tend to listen teleologically, given the prevalence of tonal music in our culture. We listen for, and even project onto the music, implication and progression” (1981: 550). For Kramer “if there is implication there is linearity” and so in contrast to this he uses the term ‘vertical time’ for compositions in which “we do not perceive a work’s directionality” (ibid. 552). If linear implies a sense of forward movement, then vertical music implies stasis.

---

32 See also Frith (1996: 154) and Schwarz (2008: 9) for similar considerations.
Minimalism as ‘art’ music has many similarities with contemporary popular musics, such as ambient or techno (Frith 1996; Neill 2005; McClary 2004; Sherburne 2005). Ben Neill considers that it is solely in the use of rhythm that any difference exists:

It is the beat that draws the dividing line between serious and vernacular, visceral and intellectual. Pulse equals life equals pleasure. While composers used to define themselves in terms of tonal style (atonality, serialism, octatonic, modal, etc.), those distinctions have been largely superseded by rhythmic content. The two worlds of high art and popular electronic music may use slightly different tools, but their aesthetic approaches are most clearly defined in terms of the presence or absence of repetitive beats. (2005: 387)

If the lack of functional harmony implies stasis, sound itself can never be considered actually static. Chion makes the important point that individual sounds are more directional in time than are visual phenomena, as each sound consists of an attack and then a decay – “a finite story, oriented in time in a precise and irreversible manner” (Chion 1994: 19). To use Chion’s term, they are ‘vectorized’. Chion explains this through a description of an imaginary film shot of a woman “ensconced in a rocking chair on a veranda, dozing, her chest rising and falling regularly” (ibid. 18). If the frames of this scene were to be projected in reverse order, Chion considers it would have no discernible effect on the scene. In contrast if the accompanying sound (in his example, bamboo windchimes) is reversed, it would be immediately perceived as being played backwards. Unlike the image, sounds are always ‘vectorized’, they have temporal direction. A sense of temporal direction implies forward movement.

The difference between ‘linear’ music that will resolve, or provide closure, and ‘vertical’ music, which appears to contain less forward momentum, also has implications for the stage composer, particularly in terms of the malleability of musical form, or whether the musical form chosen will undergo distortion (see Chapters Four and Five).

O’Neill, in 1912, identified certain musical elements that were useful in the composition of incidental music – the reliance upon harmony rather than melody to convey feeling and particular instruments that served better to underscore dialogue. Similarly, the film composer Bernard Herrmann avoided long melodies, finding harmonies with short phrase structures more useful (Brown 1994: 153-154). As melody is the most recognizable aspect of pitch organization (Aiello 1994: 173;
The composer Irwin Bazelon, writing about the conventions of film music, identifies common musical elements:

> The ever-changing series of pictorial events allows a composer little time for extended development of musical ideas. The music tends to be as episodic as the scenic episodes. ... Simple musical phrases, held notes, repeated figures, sharp accents, rhythmic punctuation, ostinati, drawn-out chords, and single, long, lyric lines become the rule of the day. (1975: 9)

For Sabaneev it was also important to use short musical phrases, avoiding the interweaving of too many melodic lines, while repetition, and rhythmic punctuation are also emphasized. Like O’Neill he discusses leitmotiv (and the need to have neutral music for emergencies) (Sabaneev 1978/1935: 38, 44). For Carter Burwell (2003) the two most important aspects of composing film music are repetition and rhythmic pace. All agree on the need for music to be either completely unobtrusive, or absent during dialogue.

Over a century, the musical techniques recommended by these writers remained the same. Musical styles changed, but the musical techniques did not, although they did emphasize different elements based on their contemporary perspectives. Sabaneev’s exhortation that ‘harshness [harmonic dissonance], and even originality, are to be shunned’ (1978/1935: 37), makes a lot more sense considering he was writing in 1935, a period of much harsh originality. For Sabaneev, repetition was largely conceived in terms of sequences and harmonic progressions in the form of sequences, devices that can be considered ‘varied’ repetition, while Burwell, composing for film in the twenty-first century, is quite comfortable to use what he terms the “relentless repetition” of a simple four-bar phrase (2003: 196).

Copland’s fourth element, tone-colour (timbre), is an element that is very important to referential meaning, within both film and theatre, yet, in contrast to melody, harmony and rhythm, receives little discussion in musicology. 34 Far more attention is given to it in popular music studies and ethnomusicology. It has a particular importance in creating extra-theatrical resonances as the sound of a

---

33 Dowling gives a number of reasons for the recognition of melody and (following a study by Trehub, Bull and Thorpe (1984), notes that a sensitivity to melodic contour is discernible in infants before they begin to speak or sing (1994: 184).

34 Timbre is little represented in the musical score, which forms the basis of musicological analysis, unlike the other elements Copland identifies.
particular instrument, or the way it is played, might bring a specific extra-theatrical meaning.

There is a certain amount of conventional codification within timbre that aids in establishment of place/time (the cliché of accordion to suggest Paris) and of associational codification (saxophone is often associated with night time, sleazy low-life, sex). Timbre, in conjunction with certain stock melodic/harmonic configurations can produce what Barthes calls “icities” (1977: 48-49). For example, parallel fourths and gong sounds produce an “Oriental-icity” (although the same fourths used with drums in a film Western might suggest ‘circle the wagons’).

An instrument can also suggest an instrumentalist or a compound “icity” which has the potential of setting up extra-theatrical resonances.

It is possible that the use of solo instruments, rather than ensembles, can have the effect of drawing an audience closer to the narrativized space. The orchestra (particularly the string section) is more neutral timbrally, a generic rather than an individualized sound, and therefore less likely to evoke the trace of the performing musician. Within the broadly recognizable range of instrumental timbre (that which enables the perceptual distinction, for example, between a clarinet, and a violin), there is plenty of individual differentiation. A klezmer clarinet player produces a different timbre to that of a classically trained clarinettist, although the instrument is still recognizably a clarinet. Differences in timbre between instruments of the same type are not just a result of the style of instrumental playing, but also of individual differences in the instrument itself.

**Sound effects**

To Copland’s four elements, it is necessary to add sound effects as an essential aspect to be considered in the aural environment of theatre. Sound effects can form an integral part of music recording, and a composer might include them in a recorded track. Alternatively, a sound designer can create what is, in effect, a piece of musique concrète to create ‘soundscapes’.

Harold Burris-Meyer, in an early discussion of theatre sound stated:

> Sound effects are important to the production in that they create, reinforce, or counterpoint the atmosphere or mood; reveal character; or contribute to the advancement of the plot. In a sense they fulfil the function of music as illustrated by the fact that musical figures can often be substituted for effects and serve as

---

35 Gorbman lists a number of these “icities” (1987: 83).
background music. In conformity with the principle that music is a way of handling sound, effects treated according to the principles of music composition can achieve emotional response as does music. Sound effects need not be faithful reproductions of the subject concerned. (qtd. in Brown 2005: 107)  

There is an important concept – as Burris-Meyer notes above – of the constructed nature of sound effects, which has also been noted in studies of film sound (Williams 1980; Chion 1994; Murch 2003). Theatre and film sound effects are not necessarily a reproduction of a natural sound, but a representation of a sound. Chion uses the term ‘rendering’ to describe “the use of sounds to convey the feelings or effects associated with the situation on screen – often in opposition to faithful reproduction of the sounds that might be heard in the situation in reality” (1994: 224). So, while a sound effect may carry ‘objective’ information, the way that sound is presented will also contribute other, less obvious information, (e.g. spatial or emotional information), in similar ways to music (see Chapter Three).

The **How**

The distinction between the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ is not always a clear one, and many of the above explanations have conflated the two in the interests of illustration. At this stage, though, I wish to consider them as separate elements. While timbre, for example, can be taken as an essential material of music, the choice of timbre to achieve a particular purpose is a compositional one, and one which in theatre music is as likely to be informed by dramatic or practical considerations, as by purely musical ones. Any signal processing will also affect timbre, and, as a consequence, potentially alter meaning as discussed earlier. *Ghost* music has already been discussed in terms of its contribution to resonance and can be understood as a ‘rendering’ or ‘representation’ of the originating music.

The tension between musical form and the needs of dramatic form is important to consider. Sabaneev recognized this in discussing the composition of film music:

> It [music] should possess a musical form of its own, in some way subordinated to the rhythm [sic] of the screen, but not destroyed by them … Music in the cinema cannot sacrifice the principles governing its form: no matter what is happening on the screen, the music must have its melodic structure, its phrases and cadences, and

---

Franze, discussing incidental music considers that “any musical form collapses if its limits are penetrated” (2000: 23).

For a composer of theatre music, then, it is a question of what musical forms are more resistant to ‘collapse’, or how to determine the ‘limits’ of any particular form (see Chapter Five). As noted earlier, in the work of Bazelon, Sabaneev and Hermann, the nature of subordinating music to dramatic form mitigates against extended development of musical ideas, with short phrase structures and ‘episodic’ music predominating.

The question of the integrity of musical form, and the analysis of musical form within theatre, is also complicated by the presence of certain predominant musical practices that are determined by theatrical, rather than musical exigencies.

A comic tune from the theatrical pantomime *The Touchstone* by Charles Dibdin, Astley’s collaborator in the early English circus, bears the following mark-up dating from 1779:

Play this till Harlequin and Colombine goes in the flat Dorasic and finish this when Watchman appears. (qtd. in Shapiro 1984: 52)

This direction demonstrates two basic sets of instructions; the repeat of a section of music until a particular visual cue signals a change of state, and the end of the music and associated action. In her discussion of music in pantomime, Millie Taylor identifies the presence of both basic types of instruction, which she terms the “round and round” and the “cut to cue”. She notes not only the prevalence of these two practices in current music for pantomime, but also their presence in many other forms of theatrical and televised entertainment (2000: 53).37

The purpose of both techniques is to cover a period of variable time in live performance. These two basic techniques can be elaborated in various ways. The ‘round and round’ might be an exact repetition of a section but can also include variations, depending on the length of variable time to be covered. The ‘cut to cue’ is not only used to signal the move to a cadence or coda, but also to signal sudden silence, a tension-inducing drum roll or ‘stinger’ chord,38 a shift to another section

---

37 Also useful is David Mayer’s analysis of a prompt score from a melodrama dating from 1889 demonstrating similar practices. Reproduced in his study are a number of similar instructions. Cue 33, for example, consists of the notation of a tune which needs to be repeated “till Maude Willoughby’s killed and on Couch – then Segue”. (Mayer 1981: 61). Pisani also gives examples of similar cues from nineteenth century plays, with examples of both visual and spoken cues (Pisani 2004).

38 Taylor also notes the term “button” for this type of highlighting chord (2000: 53). I have not come across this term anywhere else.
of the music, a modulation of the music, or to segue to an entirely different piece of music.

O’Neill also noted the practical necessities inherent in accompanying dramatic action in the theatre:

It is often expected of the conductor that at a moment’s notice in a performance he should step in and save the situation. For instance, there may be some music to bring some characters on to the stage. Perhaps they are late, and do not appear until the music is nearly over. To avoid an awkward stage wait of this kind some conductors always have “emergency repeats” in their scores. (1912: 327)

After O’Neill’s death, the music critic Francis Toye paid tribute to his success in accompanying these periods of indeterminate dramatic time, relating: “He knew all the dodges: optional repeats of 4 or 8 bars, tremolandos of indefinite duration, and so on” (qtd. in Hudson 1945: 86).

‘Emergency music’ is still used in contemporary theatre and circus practice. Paul Charlier, a Sydney-based composer theatre composer and sound designer, said that:

The biggest problem with theatre music I have found is bad set design – both acoustics and scene changes; being asked to write a 1 minute and 45 second cue to cover a change that you know no-one is going to accept in performance because it is too long and they will inevitably change the mechanics of the change and so the music will need to be shortened. I quite often now write these cues with a ‘plan B’ in mind in advance. (2006)

Essential to this practice is the need for improvisation. Whiteoak’s study of improvised music in Australia convincingly establishes that improvisatory ability for a musician was a dominant practice in many forms of popular musical culture, long before the advent of jazz (1999b). He notes, for example, the techniques he had to learn in order to perform at dances in the late 1960s, and the fact that improvisation or ‘busking’ was as essential a part of a dance-band’s practice as the ability to read a score, to the extent that experienced players often would not bother to refer to the band parts provided. He states:

… as a keyboard player, I had to learn quickly how to fake introductions, endings and modulations; spontaneously interpolate or leave out a section of music … transpose on sight or by ear; play accompaniments by ear; spontaneously ‘fill-out’ or otherwise modify a given arrangement to suit a particular ensemble structure or type of dance; spin out simple dance tunes by embellishing or otherwise varying each repetition of my solo or ‘break’ … and ‘fill-in’ gaps left by the lead instrument (e.g. at phrase endings of cadences). (ibid. 47)
These are very similar to the improvisatory techniques employed by the musicians for *Daddy* (see Chapter Five). Whiteoak’s study also suggests that these practices were not just the province of the trained musician, but part of the normal practices of any competent performing musician.39

These improvisatory techniques are pre-eminently functional, employed in situations of accompaniment to physical or visual action, and therefore differ in purpose from jazz improvisation, even if the technical practices bear similarities. But they complicate any analysis based purely on a musical score, in that the scores used in the course of functional musical accompaniment provide only a skeleton or an approximation of the actual music performance practices. Furthermore, even if particular cues and repeats of sections of music are determined and ‘set’ as part of rehearsal, they will necessarily continue to be adapted to reflect events in individual performances. These core musical practices will be discussed in relation to the production process in Chapters Four and Five.

**The framework of terms as a medium of exchange**

As discussed in Chapter One, the question of discourse about music is central to this research, discourse that is appropriate *across* the two disciplines and that can function to allow communication *between* the two disciplines. In order to integrate both theory and practice, it is important that it can function both as a tool for analysis, and as a tool for action. Thus language needs to function not just as a descriptive tool but also as a directive one, or at least a suggestive one. With this framework I am presenting terms for communication based on function.

But it is important to state that, while discussion of stage music can be contained within a functional paradigm, and, as I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, is appropriate for both analysis and creative action, it is not considered as the only useful means of communication about music.

Within film music scholarship, particularly those with an emphasis on pedagogy, there are a number of sources that contain sections of interviews with film composers and directors about their processes in creating, or using music in film (Bazelon 1975; Rosar 1989; Brown 1994; Burt 1994; Hershon 1998; Brand

---

39 As an exercise I gave Whiteoak’s list of core musical competencies to the members of the *Daddy* band (see Chapter Five), only one of whom has undertaken formal musical training, the others having various levels and degrees of experience, including the ability, or lack of it, to read music. With the exception of the bass player, who thought she would find the execution of these competencies difficult, the rest of the band, musical training notwithstanding, all indicated that they possessed these competencies. In the case of the bass player, who has only been playing for three years, possibly explaining her diffidence, I have, during the process of rehearsal, observed her performing most of them.
There are also a few sources that contain interviews with musicians who work in theatre (Cook 1987; Brand 1998; Peaslee 1999; Williams 1999; Brown, Bennett et al. 2001).

In response to the question, “What do you discuss with your composer?” the film director David Lynch replied:

Mood, mostly. And any kind of work that will zero in on a mood. And then it's action and reaction. I'll say, 'You've done this colour, and I really wanted this colour', and he says, 'Oh, I get it', and he comes back and it’s closer but it’s not quite there – you know what I mean? It's back and forth, back and forth. (2003: 51)

But if this description appears disconcertingly nebulous, there was little evidence that composers would prefer directors to use technical musical language if they could:

I think it’s useful for the director to speak to me, the same way he would speak to his actors, to talk about emotion and motivation and drama. I think that’s the most useful language. (Burwell 2003: 207)

Music’s so damned abstract as something to talk about that you’re better off talking about emotions or feelings or temperatures or colors when you’re working on something like this. The notes are just the tools. (Johnny Mandel, qtd. in Bazelon 1975: 266)

… I have worked with directors who were very pretentious and thought they know quite a bit about music. Those are the worst. In a sense, I like to work either with somebody who is very responsive and really knows about music or with someone who doesn’t know anything about it at all. Then your hands aren’t tied. (Richard Rodney Bennett, ibid. 212)

George Burt, who also briefly considers the problem of communication considers that composers prefer to “interpret what the filmmaker is saying and translate this into musical forms” (1994: 219).

It is best when directors talk about what they want the music to do, not how they want it done. (Ibid.)

If attempting to describe a piece of music for someone who is not familiar with it, musicians and non-musicians alike will frequently use example, either comparison (“it sounds like… [another piece of music]”), or categorization (“it’s like punk meets ska with some Latin-y trumpets”). Categorization can entail, as in the last example, recognition of instrumentation and also of genre, but also,

importantly, of function (e.g. dance music), and will often also include an affective component. Categorization and comparison is notable in that it is also used as a means of describing other areas of sensory experience, e.g. taste, touch and smell. “It tastes like (something else), it’s like traditional English meets Italian, with some Latin-y spices.”

Communication through example is undeniably useful as both a tool for description and as a tool for action, and has the advantage of being available to the non-musically trained. It leads logically, and perhaps unfortunately, to the ‘guide track’.41 Yet, the guide track appears to inspire a curious mixture of both temptation and revulsion from the part of the composer (Bazelon 1975; Burt 1994; Sadoff 2006); temptation because it appears to give an insight into what the director is thinking of musically no matter how inarticulate their description, yet once the guide track is heard it cannot be unheard, and therefore becomes creatively stifling.

Communication through emotional, or other types of metaphor, and communication through example, both of which have limitations, can be augmented through a discussion of function. In proposing the framework of terms as a medium of exchange, I emphasize that it is not intended to be applied as a systematic checklist from beginning to end within performance analysis. The six types of framing identified here have been separated for the purposes of explanation, but in practice, it is quite possible for one piece of music to be functioning on all levels simultaneously. Thus subsequent chapters demonstrate slightly different approaches to the application of the framework. The following chapter, which summarizes 52 performances, evaluates each individual frame with reference to practical examples.

41 The ‘guide’ or ‘temp’ track is the term for the temporary music used while editing film or television, before it goes to the composer, and is the rule rather than the exception in those areas. While there is not a systematic use of it within theatre, it is common, in my experience and particularly when the musician is brought in in the later stages of a rehearsal period, to find the director has been working with pre-recorded music in order to create, for example, atmospheric stimulation for the actors, or to devise choreography. This can lead to the problematic situation for the composer in which the director manifests ‘temp love’, a term used in the film industry to describe the inability of the director to give up this music and let the composer do their work (Sadoff 2006: 166).
Chapter Three
The cinematic function of stage music

Reflecting the similarities between certain uses of music in the theatre and practices in film, this chapter considers those aspects of stage music that appear most analogous to film music, music that functions ‘cinematically’. This term also recognizes the influence that musical conventions in film have over stage music. Gorbman’s list of functions of film music (1987: 73) is used to investigate how far it can be connected to the functions of stage music. The framework of terms presented in Chapter Two is here applied in the comparative performance analysis of 52 productions.

The salient points of Gorbman’s list for the purposes of this investigation concern the ‘background’ nature of the recorded film score, its ‘invisibility’ and ‘inaudibility’ (ibid.), therefore this chapter concentrates on stage music that can be considered ‘background’ or ‘underscoring’, a function predominantly associated with music that accompanies spoken dialogue. It is this function that is most closely associated with O’Neill’s term *melodrame* (1912: 323). As noted in Chapter Two, ‘cinematic’ is not a discrete category, in that ‘underscoring’ can also have a structural function. Similarly, not all film music resides in the background; so to use the term ‘cinematic’ assumes that, like film music, stage music might also have a foreground role, in addition to its role in underscoring. ‘Cinematic’ is used for stage music that primarily functions to “accompany” rather than to “produce” the action (Frith 1996: 110).

The selection of theatres for the bulk of the research for this chapter was determined by the expectation that they would be likely to present a predominance of script-driven performances. It seemed reasonable to assume that music would be more likely to be in a subordinate role as underscore to the spoken text.

This chapter does not attempt a complete analysis of either the performances or the music, but presents a broad picture of contemporary practice. The research for this chapter consisted of viewing performances to determine general
characteristics of the current use of music, and to further question the framework. 52 performances were viewed in 2006 and 2007 at La Mama Theatre, Melbourne (during their autumn season), during the Melbourne International Arts Festival (October to November), focussing on productions performed at the Malthouse Theatre, and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival at the Traverse Theatre (August). Viewing as many shows as possible within a particular general or festival season mitigated the chance of self-selecting productions that would be likely to contain music.

La Mama comprises two venues, the intimate La Mama Theatre and the larger Carlton Courthouse Theatre. The Traverse Theatre comprises two main venues, Traverse One and Two in the Traverse building itself, and a selection of temporary venues: Traverse Three, which in the 2006 festival season was a small theatre space within the Traverse Building, a space which was not used during the 2007 season. During the 2007 festival season Traverse Three was held at a separate venue, the Drill Hall. One production viewed in the 2006 Traverse season was a site-specific work. During the Melbourne International Arts Festival seasons, productions were viewed in three venues operated by the Malthouse Theatre, the Merlyn and Beckett theatres inside the Malthouse itself, and, in the 2008 season, in a temporary theatre constructed in the theatre workshop space. Two of the productions considered were performed in the State Theatre of the Melbourne Arts Centre. In the following discussion, productions are designated by number, those presented by La Mama are given the prefix L, those presented by the Traverse Theatre by the prefix T, and those presented by the Melbourne International Arts Festival by the prefix M. A full list of performances and production details is given in Appendix I.

With three exceptions\textsuperscript{42}, all productions were viewed once only, although in certain cases the initial experience was supplemented by a process resembling reconstruction\textsuperscript{43} through communication with artists, published playscripts when available, reviews and publicity material.

Unless otherwise indicated, I am using the word ‘music’ to include ‘sound’ in the sense of ‘organized sound’, reflecting the fact that the boundary between music and sound effects was frequently blurred, such as in the use of ‘musique concrète’ or ‘soundscape’. Sound that is described here as ‘soundscape’, consisted of natural (or industrial) sounds organized musically, or a composite soundtrack consisting of

\textsuperscript{42} These were viewed twice, as they were productions I found particularly enjoyable (not necessarily because of the music), and had the fortunate opportunity to see more than once.

\textsuperscript{43} Pavis argues for the need to distinguish between the experience and the reconstruction (2003: 20).
sound effects and music. In cases where the sound consisted solely of either ‘spot’
effects
textual reference to music. The subject matter of T2 was the nature of compilation tapes,

44 A ‘spot effect’ as a sound that appears as a specific cue, e.g. the telephone rings, the gunshot (Kaye and Lebrecht 1992: 190).
45 An ‘ambient effect’ is sound used as a continuous background atmosphere, that often serve to flesh out a location, such as
insect or bird song in a rural setting, or a more constant barrage of gun sounds in, unfortunately, some urban ones. This
accords with Kaye and Lebrecht’s definition of ‘ambience’ (ibid. 187). I also include as ‘ambient effects’ those soundtracks
that included music in the mix but at a low level relative to the other sounds, and therefore functioning predominantly as an
ambient sound effect rather than as music.
who makes them, and why, thus using a musical concept as the subject of the performance. The music present in the pre-show and post-show was effectively a ‘compilation tape’ in the context of the production. The set reinforced the ‘musicality’ of the subject matter, consisting of a very large bookcase crammed with cassette tapes. T1 used a selection of country music in the pre-show, to which reference was made throughout the production by the characters, although there was no music during the performance. Music, therefore, had a textual or visually referenced presence during these productions while being itself absent. L9 made minimal use of spot sound effects, and played popular music during the interval that was related to the historical setting of the production.

Of the 29 productions exclusively using recorded music, 12 used a composed score, 14 used a compiled score and 3 used a mixture of composed and compiled music. Of the 10 productions exclusively using live music, 7 used a composed score, one a compiled score, and 2 used a mixture. Of the 13 productions containing both live and recorded music, 2 used a composed score, 4 a compiled score, and 7 used a mixture. In total, 33 productions contained music that was specifically composed for the production, and 31 productions used compiled music.

To summarize, music was used in nearly all the productions viewed, and in nearly half of the productions was integral to the performance. But was music less used in performances that were either predominantly script-based, or more realistic in style?

42 productions were predominantly script-based, 3 alternated spoken text with music (two of these easily conformed to the genre of ‘musical’ in that the actors both spoke and sang, the other contained songs used as intervention performed by a musician, alternating with spoken text delivered by the actor), and 6 alternated spoken text with episodes of physically-based wordless action. Only one production did not contain spoken text (M3).

Of the 42 predominantly script-based productions, music was used less frequently in 28 productions, but the other 14 productions made prominent use of music. Of the remaining nine productions, music was used frequently in the 6 shows mixing spoken text with physical action, the 3 alternating spoken text with music, and the production without spoken text.

So although the use of music in the 42 script-based productions tends towards the ‘less frequent’ end of the spectrum (28), a significant number of productions (14) with a predominance of spoken text also contained a significant amount of
music. The difference was not as great as initially hypothesized. While it was unsurprising that performances containing episodes of wordless physical action would be accompanied by music, the question remains whether it is possible to find a theoretical explanation that would account for the frequent use of music within a script-based production? Is there any validity to the second part of the proposition regarding the less frequent occurrence of music in more realistic productions?

The styles of theatre were varied in the productions observed, however there was only one production that could be called naturalistic, and ten that could be classified as semi-realistic. Only three productions (M3, I.13, M5) could be clearly classified as ‘postdramatic’ contemporary performance. The rest were all narratively based theatre, arrayed on a continuum of varying degrees to realism. Within the continuum of more realistic to less realistic presentational styles there was a tendency for the productions using frequent music to cluster towards the less realistic end of the spectrum, but there were also a number of productions that were less realistic that did not follow this pattern. While there was a tendency for the more realistic productions to use less music, there were also significant exceptions to this.

Examining the productions using frequent music, and contrasting them with the productions making infrequent use of music, it is not possible to identify an encompassing theoretical explanation to account for the prominence, or otherwise, of music. Plot construction, whether linear or non-linear, mono- or multi-locational, appeared to bear little correlation to the occurrence or otherwise of music. The productions making frequent use of music were as likely to be serious as comic in subject matter and style, and were as likely to use a compiled score as a composed score. While 8 of the ‘frequent use’ productions used music in a structural manner, including music as intervention, for another 7, music functioned cinematically, having no particular structural function. 9 productions using frequent music contained music that worked both structurally and cinematically. While 19 productions using live music used music frequently, particularly those employing a musician or ensemble of musicians (as opposed to actor-musicians), there were also significant exceptions to this. Whether music was used frequently in a production appeared to be simply linked to a set of factors grouped here as directorial intent (which could include the availability of, and budget for, resources or musicians) rather than to any other stylistic feature.
There are two observations that would merit further research; the first observation concerning a particular use of music in solo performance.

Of the 13 productions using solo performers, 9 of them made prominent use of music, one used no music, and 3 made infrequent use of music. In 6 of the solo shows using frequent music, the solo performer played multiple characters. In 4 productions using infrequent music, the performer remained as one character (in one of these productions the performer played three characters but in three separate and sequential stories). In the multiple-character performances the music also had the function of thematic/motivic linking, which helped with the audience identification of the different characters, a function that was not necessary in the mono-character solo shows. Of the 3 solo shows where the performer remained as one character throughout, yet which used frequent music, 2 were multi-locational, and the music aided in the definition of different locations. However one production (M9) was both about one character and mono-locational, yet made frequent use of music, the character expressing his role partly through song, accompanied by a live pianist. So, while this was not clearly indicated, it is worth noting that music might be particularly useful in constructing the fictional world of a solo show, especially as these productions generally used minimal set.

The second observation is that the use of music might be influenced by conformity to genre expectations, particularly genre expectations derived from other media, most obviously, but not confined to, film. For example, L2 and T4 were based on film and television genres respectively. L2 lampooned classic Hollywood film conventions, such as the gangster movie and the cartoon, and the frequent use of music in this production conformed to those genres. In contrast, the narrative of T4 was presented through the medium of the television interview, and used music sparingly (although to good effect) in conformity with that genre. T6, a story of Gothic horror, set in the Victorian era, made prominent use of music in keeping with both film and melodrama conventions, although the music was contemporary electronica.46

The first two of Gorbman’s functions, invisibility and “inaudibility” are linked, referring to the background nature of film music; to the underscore. (Gorbman qualifies the use of the word ‘inaudible’, defining it as music “not meant to be heard consciously”) (1987: 73). While the live performance of music during theatre is the

---

46 The prominent use of music in this production cannot be solely attributed to genre conventions. As this was a promenade production the music, played over individual audience headsets, importantly covered the lengthy transitions of both audience and cast between locations.
most obviously significant difference to film, the majority of productions used recorded, invisible sound sources, as does film. M4 used a live musician who performed from the back of the theatre at the sound desk so was invisible to the audience and, if he had not been signalled in the programme as performing live, it is questionable whether the audience would have known that the electronic score had not been pre-recorded. But, this example apart, the productions using live music tended (not surprisingly) to fore-ground the music. Thus the visibility of musicians becomes equated with audibility, which is not necessarily dependent on the nature, or even amplitude, of the music itself. ‘Invisibility’, therefore, is less useful as a concept in theatre containing live music, even if that music is predominantly underscoring.

Considering the productions with invisible (i.e. recorded) music, the balance was weighted towards inaudibility, either because the music was low volume, underscoring accompanying spoken text, or because it was used infrequently. Yet there were a significant number of productions in which, while the music was ‘invisible’, it was decidedly audible. This in itself is not enough to overturn the analogy. Film music varies in its requirement for inaudibility, demonstrating many situations in which the music is foregrounded, as in scenes containing no dialogue.

Inaudibility is necessary because, in performances containing dialogue, it is important that the music not distract from the dialogue. The productions with invisible, yet audible music confined music largely to sections of the performance not containing dialogue. T8, which made frequent use of music, used a foregrounded, compiled score, covering stretches of physical action. T5, which used music infrequently, also foregrounded songs during periods of physical action with no spoken text. One of the underlying premises of L2 was a parody of film conventions, including the associated conventions of film music, such as the exploitation of the loud orchestral sting to mark (or mickey-mouse) comedic effects.

It is useful, therefore, to consider the concept of ‘inaudibility’ in relation to Kassabian’s ‘attention continuum’. In this continuum the attention given to the film music might be “none or all” (2001: 52) and this was also the case for the productions studied. The underscoring of dialogue would be an example of ‘low attention’ music, supported by the generally low volume levels. Music that accompanied wordless, physical action, in contrast, generally demanded more attention, and generally had a higher volume level.
Emotional framing

The third of Gorbman’s functions for film music is that music acts as a signifier of emotion (1987: 73). This implies that the entrance of music itself suggests that a scene, or moment, is emotionally significant. This was only apparent in half of the productions viewed, suggesting that theatre music, while often providing some emotional signification, does not have a completely identical function.

What became apparent was a trend (that can be also seen in contemporary cinema) where silence, rather than music, becomes the signifier of emotion, although this was dependent on the amount of music used in the production. In T11, which used music frequently, the emotional climax of the production was marked by the absence of music. In this production, which dealt with the sex trafficking of Eastern European women, the silence can be read as signifying the ‘reality’ and seriousness of the subject matter. This device was more readily identifiable in, and gained its effect from, productions containing continuous (or near-continuous) music in which the sudden cessation of the soundtrack marked the ‘emotionally signifying silence’. It was also observed in productions using less frequent music, but in which music or sound effects were present directly before the emotionally climactic moment (T15, L10).

Stage music, therefore, cannot reliably be considered to be a signal of the emotionally significant moment; however it was expressive of emotion, with clear examples of music used both anempathetically and affirmatively.

Anempathetic music, as noted in Chapter Two, is more likely to be consciously perceived than affirmative music. Anempathetic music essentially exploits an inappropriateness to context, a lack of ‘fit’, between the music and action it accompanies. This lack of ‘fit’ describes anempathetic music used in both tragedy and comedy, and can be at odds with a situation or with a character, using either inappropriate lyrical content or inappropriate musical genre.

T8, which dealt with the brutality of life in a South African township consistently used a compiled score anempathetically, where the anempathy came predominantly from inappropriate lyrical content. The director, Paul Grootboom said:

I chose the songs not in an emotional way, but to ironic effect. In a fight scene where the criminal is beating up his girlfriend, we play a love song. At the end we
play ‘It’s a Wonderful Life’, and what you’ve just seen is not wonderful at all. (qtd. in Jones 2006) ⁴⁷

That this song had an anempathetic function was due to the disjunction between the lyrics and the situation depicted, a clear-cut opposition. The use of the ‘inappropriateness’ of lyrics is not always quite this obvious.

Early in this production, the use of a Paul Simon song, “Still Crazy After All These Years” (1975), was used to accompany a flashback scene of the character of the father and his late wife, their relationship portrayed as a nostalgic idyll. The lyrics in this instance could be understood as ‘speaking for’ the father in a straightforward way, expressing his overwhelming love for his late wife. In this context the song functioned affirmatively.

Later in the production, this song was repeated to accompany a ‘present-day’ scene of the father raping his young son, and was further repeated at the performance’s climax to accompany the son’s eventual act of patricide. In these later scenes the song functioned anempathetically, hinging on the hook line of the song, “still crazy after all these years” which in this chain of theatrical events revealed its innate semantic ambiguity. But the anempathetic relation of music to event was not purely dependent on a reinterpretation of the word ‘crazy’, a reinterpretation afforded to the song by the changing theatrical context. The song still is, as a ‘complete’ piece of music, a nostalgic love song.

At one level there was the obvious lack of fit between a nostalgic love song and a graphic depiction of sexual abuse (and this scene was particularly gut-wrenching due to the combination of music and image), but as this song was used more than once in the production, each subsequent use linked thematically to any previous occurrences. Thus the rape of the son was emotionally linked through the music to the tragic death of the wife, and that link provided an emotional complication, however unjustified an audience member might consider it, to the father’s subsequent abuse of the child. The song ‘speaks for’ multiple subject positions: the father’s ‘crazy’ love for his wife; the father’s ‘crazy’ and brutally dysfunctional love for his son; and the son’s subsequent retreat into madness, and murder.

The music was anempathetic due to both the troubling ambiguity of the lyrics and a lack of fit between the genre of music (love ballad) and the violence underlying the situations it accompanied. In L2, comedy was drawn from the

⁴⁷ The recording used was actually of Louis Armstrong singing “What A Wonderful World” (1967).
incongruity between the musical genre and the characters listening to it. In one scene a group of ‘tough-guy gangsters’, driving to the scene of their next crime, switched on the car radio. The music they settled on, listened to with visible enjoyment, and then all lip-synched with, was a bright disco song with a high-pitched and breathy female vocalist. This music undercut the stock identity of the tough male gangster, the humour predicated less on the particular song or apposite lyrics, but on the perceived inappropriateness of a genre to character, and also on the discrepancy of gender between the male actors and the audible female singer.

In these examples the music and the theatre are juxtaposed in opposition, but both are internally consistent. Music can also be internally anempathetic. In L8, coincidentally a musical about gangsters (with a composed score performed live), the lyrics of the song were internally inconsistent with the genres of music used. Thus lyrics about murder and other mayhem were set to popular song genres, juxtaposing sinister lyrical content with relatively light-hearted music, a style of production reminiscent of the Brecht/Weill collaborations. The music was anempathetic to its own lyrical content, producing an effect of commentary. It is important to recognize in all of these situations that context directs the interpretation.

Anempathetic music can be clearly perceived, and its use tends to be foregrounded as its effect depends on its perception. The situation is different for the use of affirmative music, which frequently depends for its effect on its ‘inaudibility’.

Music that mirrored scenic events was rare, unless the music was performed live or specific action ‘worked’ to it. In most cases the recorded music used to underscore many of the productions remained broadly supportive of the general emotional tenor of the scenic unit without following specific events, therefore functioning as evocation.

For example, the live music in M4 mirrored the development of dramatic events. In a scene in which the solo performer described an anonymous sexual encounter the music progressed from a relatively neutral underscoring, built in excitement through an increase both of the tempo and of the density of musical events, while the harmonic palette both broadened and became more threatening (through increased dissonance). The musical structure was a loop consisting of
repeated motifs expanded through a process of accretion. As it progressed the music conveyed both mounting excitement and mounting threat, supporting the dialogue, although there was little physical action during this scene, the events portrayed primarily through narration.

However, other music in this production, and in a significant number of other productions, occupied what I identified in Chapter Two as ‘middle ground’, the area of emotional framing that can be neither regarded as affirmative or anempathetic, but where the music and the theatre separated out, where the music can afford both ‘contemplation of’ and ‘involvement in’ the narrative.

In order to illustrate this middle-ground, in which music functions as both mood and commentary, I will use as an example a performance in which the music had both a structural and a cinematic function.

The subject matter of T13 was the trial of an old man accused of genocide and murder. While the particular location and context of this story was unspecified, it strongly suggested the Holocaust, particularly as it was narrated through the character of a Jewish playwright. The central questions posed by the production concerned what makes people engage in evil behaviour. The subject matter was itself highly emotive.

This was a production with minimal theatrical staging; there was no set, props, or strongly marked costume and the lighting design was minimal. The performance was non-realistic, and particularly effective theatrically in its presentation of the narrative by the oscillation of the present with the past, such as the presence of multiple time-frames simultaneously on stage, in which the fictional playwright could be watching from his ‘present’ events from the ‘past’ about which he was simultaneously writing. *A cappella* songs were performed during the course of the production by all members of the cast, although predominantly by the female actors, and these were interwoven into the action. There was also a composed electronic soundtrack, which underscored other sections of the text, and at times, the live singing. None of the actors left the stage space, the stage functioning, as noted in the published script as “an imaginative space in which Michael Redhill, the

48 ‘Accretion’ is used here to indicate an ‘increase’ of musical resources used, which could be the use of additional instruments, or sounds, increased complexity or density of harmony, subdivisions or increasing complexity of the rhythmic structure, increase in amplitude, etc. either singly or in combination. In a looped musical structure this is a common way of approaching a climax. A more colloquial term sometimes used is the ‘pump-up’.

49 The occurrences of the songs were noted in the script and indications were given at times of where they continued under the dialogue, but this is not consistent and it is difficult to understand the effect of this purely from the published script.
character, is writing the play” (Redhill 2005: 7). All the actors were involved in performing the music, although sometimes they might be doing this from a seated position in the front row of the audience, in effect, functioning as a chorus.

Music director, Brenna MacCrimmon described the live music in the production as “based on traditional folk songs from as far north as Ukraine, and as far south as Zimbabwe, with a variety of stops throughout Northern and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Africa” (2006).

The songs were not used as intervention, demarcating a space of non-action, but were performed in and around the text. A song might begin as a quietly hummed drone underscoring the dialogue, swell to prominence during a brief piece of physical action and subside, yet continue under subsequent dialogue. The non-English lyrics did not compete for intelligibility with the spoken English of the dialogue. The programme translated only one of the songs, a Hungarian lament which occurred more than once in the production, but the possible lyrical content of the other songs was less important than the sound of the human voice itself.

The relationship between the music and the production was a complex one. The production did not afford passive emotional immersion to this spectator at least, due to a constant awareness of the construction of that narrative. But while the artifice of the play’s construction might have kept the spectator at a distance, the music presented an intense emotional quality. The Hungarian traditional lament “Szerelem”, the most frequently recurring song, is a beautiful and heartrending piece of music, its effect not dependent on the intelligibility of the lyrics.

While the narrative dealt with one war crime, using different ‘world musics’ for the performance widened the scope of the subject matter, from one particular story to potentially all incidences of genocide. The songs functioned as ‘speaking for’ the victims of genocide, but as the words were untranslated, the ‘speaking for’ in this instance had the powerful effect of underlining the ‘muteness’ of those victims.

The music, therefore, functioned both as ‘mood’ and as ‘commentary’. The play related one very specific narrative of genocide, the resonances of the music commented that this specific narrative is but one example of other genocides. The use of African and Balkan music suggested examples of recent ethnic cleansing in those parts of the world. This musical commentary, though, was very far from

---

50 ‘Michael Redhill’ is the name of both the character in the play, and the author of the play, which adds another layer of theatrical identity.
51 “Szerelem, szerelem/átkozott görelem” (Love, love/wretched suffering). A translation of the other songs are given in the published script (Redhill 2005).
anempathetic, in that the songs, to use MacCrimmon’s description, covered the emotional “gamut from love and loss to praise and celebration” (2006). To use celebratory music in scenes with difficult emotional content did not undercut those scenes. It ‘separated out’ aspects of the music from aspects of the theatre.

While the live music occupied the ‘middle ground’, affording simultaneously emotional ‘involvement in’ and ‘contemplation of’ the story, the electronic underscore operated as affirmative evocation, as it drew less attention to itself. It was, therefore, different from the live music in its relation to the narrative, being more closely blended with the dominant emotion of the moment-to-moment actor’s delivery of the narrative. While the live music was a structural element of the production, the electronic score functioned cinematically – demanding low attention, and providing affirmative evocation.

While providing emotional framing, the music also provided diegetic framing, the underscore functioning at the level of story narrated, and the live music operating at both this level and to support the narrating discourse. The music for this production therefore also illustrated Gorbman’s fourth function of film music, “narrative cueing” (1987: 73).

**Diegetic framing**

‘Narrative cueing’ covers a number of areas within the framework of terms, the most immediately obvious being diegetic framing. The diegetic function of music and sound effects to indicate time and place of action, or to provide information about character, are easy functions to identify in reception, and were readily observable in the productions viewed for this research. Information about time and place was significant in 33 of the productions viewed, information about character was given less often but was observed in 22 productions. This informational use of music is primarily supporting the ‘fabula’, the story narrated. But while this function was easy to observe, the way in which time/place and character is conveyed has more complex elements.

Gay McAuley has a category of stage space that she terms ‘thematic space’. She considers that:

---

This was the artistic intention as stated in the program note by the music director, and was clearly observable in the performance.
...the way the space is conceived and organized, the kinds of space that are shown and/or evoked, the values and events associated with them, and the relationship between them are always of fundamental importance in the meaning conveyed. (2000: 32)

The type of music used to indicate time and location, can also impart a set of values. L10 and T26 both used music to convey the ‘Middle East’. T26 was textually located in Damascus, L10 was less specific in its location, but textually inhabited a similar geographic area. Confirming this general ‘middle-eastern’ location, both productions used ‘middle eastern’ music, identifiable to this broad category of geography due to its musical and sung language, characteristic timbres, and particular vocal styling. But the generic ‘middle eastern’ music in L10 was of a ‘traditional’ variety, using acoustic folk instruments. In contrast, T26 used ‘middle eastern pop music’, blending some ‘traditional’ characteristics with electronica. T26 was set in a city, the pop music having a diegetic function linked with the textually referenced location of a nightclub. L10 was set in a generic ‘village’. The pop music was linked to ‘urban and sophisticated’ (the main location being an international hotel), while the traditional music was associated with ‘rural and less sophisticated’.

A set of values is imparted in both these productions; in L10 the contentious linking of ‘traditional’ music with the rural; in T26 the equally contentious issue in the global age that the music chosen to represent a nightclub in Damascus is solely ‘middle eastern pop’. 54

Time and place were also frequently signalled in other productions through the use of sound effects rather than music. The most commonly used ambient sound effects were either musical sound sources (radio, record player etc) or locational ‘atmos’ (birdsong, sounds of war). The only spot sound effects used were gunshots or telephones. The use of sound effects to indicate time and place can, however, simultaneously convey emotional information, this information communicated through the particular ‘rendering’ of the sound (Chion 1994: 109-114).

Chion uses the term ‘rendering’ to describe the use of sound effects in films that are more than a simple case of reproduction of a realistic sound. The

53 This was not ‘middle-eastern-icity’, i.e. music composed with a middle-eastern ‘flavour’. Both productions used a compiled score of, respectively, middle-eastern pop and folk music.
54 Zilberg’s article (1995) on the apparent preference for the music of Dolly Parton within Zimbabwe highlights the distinction between what can be the actual situation ‘on the ground’ and Western cultural assumptions. There are a number of studies of the sometimes problematic concept of ‘world’ musics, particularly in relation to globalization (e.g. Feld 2000; Kassabian 2004). Tony Mitchell has produced a particularly interesting article, which also considers Australian indigenous music, and issues surrounding hybridization (1993).
55 This is a film industry term for ambient sound effects.
'rendering' of sound effects was present in some of the productions viewed for this research. In T17, sound effects were used throughout (a ticking clock, a mosquito, and various amounts of insect 'atmos'). These sounds all 'made known' a location, but all of these sounds were electronically treated. They were not a realistic reproduction of the sounds, but a manipulation of the sounds. Similarly, in T11, the sounds of cars and the dripping of water were electronically rendered and given unnatural echoes. The sounds functioned as informational sound effects, but the rendering imparted other qualities. In T17 the electronic harshness and unnaturally loud volume of the sound effects induced a feeling, for this spectator, of claustrophobia and threat. The amplified reverberations of a clock suggested not just time passing, but time passing inexorably and exhaustingly. In T11, the use of echo and loud volume for a water drip also suggested a sense of claustrophobia, and the unnaturally prolonged delay given to the sound of passing cars was unsettling and hallucinatory.

These rendered sound effects were not simply carriers of aural information but also had emotional content. How sounds are rendered is an important contributor to the function of 'ancrage', they indicate how an audience member should interpret a particular scene. 'Realistic' (i.e. less obviously rendered) effects were more likely to be present in productions that were also more realistic in their presentational style.

M4 rendered the voice of the solo female performer by using electronic pitch shifting. While the performer told stories from the perspective of different characters, these identities were not differentiated by physical means, but through rendering her voice. Her voice was artificially lowered to sound guttural for a monster, while for a child identity the rendering of her voice contained a preponderance of high frequencies. Male identities were given a 'male' voice rendering, producing a contradiction between the female body of the performer and the masculinized voice. Music can also be 'rendered' for particular effects. Any use of ghost music is 'rendering' that music, rather than reproducing it, and can therefore convey not only the information carried by the original, but other connotations conveyed by its adaptation, its ghosting.

For example, in the final scene of this production the performer sang “Are You Lone-some Tonight” (Handman and Turk 1926) while her voice was pitch-shifted throughout the course of the song, and the different shifts were themselves combined to give the aural impression of two voices in duet. In the context of the production this ghosting of the song was both poignant and eerie.
Similarly, T4 used a ghost version of a well-known song to poignant effect. The production dealt with the aftermath of a school shooting, through the outwardly dispassionate form of a television interview with the parents of the perpetrator. The interviewer was a disembodied robotic voice. At the end of the performance the song, “Somewhere Over The Rainbow”, was played in an electronic and weirdly distorted version. This rendition of the song was disturbing, and served as commentary to both the original song and the narrative. The radical distortion of the well-known song suggested the impossibility of anything better lying anywhere ‘over the rainbow’.

The rendering of music in these two examples provided diegetic information. Both were linked to the themes of the two performances, and simultaneously provided a type of emotional commentary on those themes. This commentary also arose from the resonances of the particular music used.

**Metadiegetic framing**

One of the hypotheses informing this research was that music would generate meaning that is simultaneously dependent on and independent of theatrical context. In line with the theory of affordances, this is a dynamic relationship between the two art-forms. If a melodic motif becomes associated with a particular scene, location or character, then its meaning will be partially dependent on the theatrical context, while it is also helping to define that context. A changing theatrical context will also redefine the music itself. So, as the use of music in a theatrical situation will afford certain meanings to the theatre, simultaneously the theatrical context will also afford meaning to the music.

The theory of resonances (Chapter Two) is concerned with the generation of independent meaning by music, namely intertextual meaning. Intertextual resonances were discernible for the majority of the productions viewed, confirming the assumption that music in a theatrical context will generate independent meaning.

This can be illustrated clearly by M4, a production with a solo performer playing multiple identities. In this production a child identity was accompanied by

---

56 Harold Arlen/E. Y. Harburg. “Over The Rainbow” (1939). This is the correct title of the song though it is frequently misquoted, as in the recording used in the production, which was Hank Roberts, “Somewhere Over The Rainbow” from the album *Little Motor People* (1993). This production was the only one out of the 52 performances viewed that gave full credits in the programme for any pre-recorded music used in the production.
simple (both melodically and harmonically), tonal piano music. This music effectively connoted innocence and youth, and functioned as a thematic link for scenes involving the child identity. It was noticeably different timbrally in the sound’s acoustic nature from the predominantly electronic sounds used in the rest of the performance. This piano music, however, was also used later to accompany the identity of a monster.

There was mutual ongoing transference of meaning between the music and the theatre. The piano music initially assisted, through connotation, a definition of the child identity; both as character trait (innocence) and in colouring a desired emotional response to the child identity (sympathetic). The music, which was heard before the child identity was delineated, then became identified with the child, and what was originally a musical evocation of innocence and sympathy was then confirmed through the spoken text and the performance. But subsequently the music that signified ‘child’ came to signify ‘monster’, and a further transference of meaning took place. It is important to note that the monster was textually identified as an archetypal monster, rather than as a ‘character who behaves monstrously’.

In a circular fashion, the evocation (innocence and sympathy) given by the music, gained confirmation from the spoken text used in the child’s scene, which then carried forward as an amalgam image/music/text formed by association. This association carried forward into the later scene of the monster. While the image/text altered, the music remained the same, providing a thematic link in which the child image/music/text remained as an indelible trace. ‘Innoccence’ and ‘sympathy’ were transferred to become properties, now with more problematical connotations, of the monster. If the response to the child was relatively simple, the response to the monster became ambiguous through this transference; this ambiguity was then confirmed by the image/text that did not present a stereotypical monster. However, this ambiguity also transferred back to the music. The music remained the same, yet became coloured by an ambiguity of response to the monster. Further uses of this music for later child scenes continued these transferences.

It is possible, however, to raise objections to this argument. The juxtaposition of monster with child/innocence is staple fare in the horror film genre, the horror gaining in effect from the contrast with its ‘other’. This has become a cliché of the horror film soundtrack (the dark house with the sound of a child’s voice piping a nursery rhyme, the dark house with the tinkling of a pretty tune on a music box
M4 was a performance not definable by genre, and certainly not by the horror genre. If the piano theme in this example had only been used for the monster, it is possible that it would evoke a similar response to ‘innocent’ music in the horror film: “pretty music plus monster equals scary”. The child and the monster, however, were not juxtaposed in any obvious fashion. They were two of a number of identities inhabiting multiple narratives, none of which made obvious textual reference to the others. The monster could conceivably have been thematically linked with any of the other identities. The monster was linked with the child clearly and solely through the use of thematic music.

This operation is not, therefore, a simple case of the music providing ‘added value’, which tends to suggest a desirable, but essentially optional extra. Rather, the creation of meaning is not confined to the sum of the parts, but rather to an ongoing interaction of those parts.

In this example, the music carried emotional information through its timbre and simple musical style, even though the music was ‘low attention’ underscore. It was observed that there are three common categories for ‘resonances’ of the music:

- Resonance through timbre
- Resonance through use of well-known music, including ghost versions of that music
- Resonance through genre and conventions of genre, including inter-textual reference to other media.

Of the productions viewed, 43 contained resonances of either one, or a combination of types. As the dominant type of score used was the electronic score, I will consider what particular resonances are possibly evoked through the particular timbral qualities of ‘electronic’. To discuss this I will focus on an influential study by Philip Tagg.

Tagg (1982) produced a study of written descriptions of ‘mood music’ catalogues (library music that can be used without copyright issues). He focussed on

---

57 For discussions of stock musical coding, and effects of music in horror film soundtracks see Huckvale (1990) and Donnelly (2005: 88-109).
‘nature’ as a category, investigating what musical means were used predominantly to produce ‘nature music’, and how these were described. This was contrasted with Nature’s ‘other’, the industrial and technological. His study concluded:

Nature’s affective poles of opposition are in technology, in space, in science and in other aspects of advanced civilisation and industry. These latter areas are mainly viewed as negative areas of experience, associated with tension, threat, violence and crime, the objectively progressive and subjectively prestigious or enterprising aspects being outweighed by negative connotations involving fear. (1982: 21)

As there were a significant number of scores using predominantly electronic sounds (which can be seen as highly technological and evidence of ‘advanced civilisation and industry’), investigation of whether Tagg’s findings related to the subject matter of the productions, and carried these ‘negative areas of experience’, showed some correlation.

Fifteen productions used a predominantly electronic score. Twelve of these productions could be described as depicting ‘negative areas of experience’: various tragic deaths (L7, T3, T16), murder (T15, T16), the aftermath of a school shooting (T4), genetic experimentation and madness (T6), war, rape and murder (T10), sex trafficking (T11), capital punishment (T17), terrorism (T28), totalitarianism (M2). Three productions could not be described as necessarily negative areas of experience, although fear was presented in all of them; these concerned contemporary Middle America and religiosity (T5), birth, death and states in-between (M3), and innocence/experience and voyeurism (M4).

In four productions, the electronic score carried connotations of ‘inhuman’ (T4, T11, T16, M2), six carried connotations of ‘threatening’ (T6, T10, T15, T17, M3, M4). There was therefore a predominance of productions using predominantly electronic sounds that also had brutal subject matter, and of those there was a correlation between electronic and either inhuman or threatening.

However Tagg also argued that while nature was presented musically as ‘overwhelmingly positive’ (ibid. 14), technology was not always represented as negative. Technology could be presented, for example, as ‘purposeful’ or as ‘progressive’ (ibid. 19). As noted in Chapter One, while discussing the importance of music used in play production to be ‘potent atmospherically’, Mitchell stated that the choice of suitable music might also be dependent on ‘prevailing fashion’ or on ‘audience expectation’ (1951: 243).
The use of electronic music can also be said to reflect ‘prevailing fashions’ in contemporary sound. T15, M3 and M4, in which the score carried ‘threatening’ connotations, also carried connotations of ‘contemporary’. T3, T5 and T24 only carried ‘contemporary’ connotations, while L7 was the only production that did not suggest any particular connotation, its electronic score supplemented equally with the use of a soundscape containing many sounds of nature.

Conversely, the predominant use of non-electronic sounds does not necessarily indicate the opposite. T8, for example, had brutal subject matter (rape, serial murder, child abuse, self-induced abortion with a coat hanger, beatings) and this was staged graphically. However, in this production the music (a mixture of up-beat South African *kwaito*[^58] music and romantic ballads) was used anempathetically. Similarly, in M9 (murder) the cool clarity of Bach *separated out* from the horror of the story.

Certain genres of non-electronic music appeared to offer adverse connotations. T10 (war, rape, murder), and T1 (abuse and rape in small-town Ireland) used country music. While less harsh in subject matter, T25 also used country music, but also equated it with the rural (in this case, rural England), the redneck, and the uneducated. The only other production using country music (L11) also linked the music with rural, in this instance the Australian bush, and with an intellectually disabled character.[^59] Similarly, L1 used heavy metal for a character whose qualities could be described as cruel and loutish, contrasting with the main character who, presented sympathetically in his struggle with mental illness, was accompanied by a Shostakovich symphony. That this was not accidental usage was clear from the text, which explained the adversarial relationship between these two characters using the two contrasting musics as symbol.

In T13 (genocide) the use of predominantly *a cappella* vocal music from different parts of the world suggested the humanity of the faceless victims. L5 (death from cancer) used a live female vocalist, the warmth and fragility of the voice emphasizing the human tragedy. Non-electronic sounds were predominant in all the comedies, and the two examples of productions using pre-industrial myth.

---

[^58]: For discussions of *kwaito* see Peterson (2003) and Steingo (2005).

[^59]: That is, an Irish, a Scotish, an English and an Australian theatre production used country music with these adverse connotations, despite the popularity of country music in these four countries. In the USA, the ‘home’ of country music, it could be speculated that the situation might be different, but unfortunately no example of that was presented during the research period. Barbara Ching, in an essay on film music, suggests that country music might instead have very different connotations in the USA, either as “sounding the American heart”, or valorizing “the American way of life” (2001: 202-204). See also Brackett (2001).
Resonances are not fixed. They can exist within the realm of the purely personal. They can assume more particular social meaning through context. They are also dependent on context, and so the context of a particular theatre performance will influence the strength or effectiveness of any resonance.

Seventeen productions had resonances resulting from the use of well-known music.\(^60\) The simplest use of these resonances was as an empathetic music, either for comic or serious effect. The other notable use was for evocation of memory. To further illustrate the context-dependent nature of resonance, this time in the case of a piece of well-known music, I will discuss two performances, L7 and T29, that used the same piece of music, “The Skye Boat Song” (“Speed bonnie boat/Like a bird on the wing”), for different purposes.

In L7 this song was performed unaccompanied by the female actor as a leitmotiv throughout the production. Its first appearance was simply as a lullaby, linked with the character of a child.\(^61\) As the production progressed, the song assumed more importance thematically. It became progressively linked with a memory of Scotland, specifically of standing at Thurso\(^62\) looking out over the ‘empty sea’, a pivotal memory for the characters in the story, and one closely linked with the text of the song. The production made use both of the connotative resonances of this particular song (lullaby, childhood) with more overt denotative textual references (Scotland, sea).

But what is important here is the (highly probable) assumption that audience members might only be familiar with the beginning of the song, the lyrics of the opening chorus and first verse. The production appeared to have made this assumption, as the presence of other, less familiar, verses was alluded to early on in the production and this became significant in the development of the plot.

The production began as a simple reunion of old college friends, two of whom had married and had a son, and the song was used both for its signalling of memory for the friends, and also as a lullaby for the son. But the problem with the characters’ memory of the other verses became symbolic of problems of memory as a whole and the gradual unravelling of certainty and history for those characters. During the course of the production it was revealed that the son was, in fact, dead;

\(^60\) It is of course possible that I may have missed other examples of well-known music, in that they were not well known to me, and the reverse is equally true. Therefore I will qualify ‘well-known’ as being a rough definition applicable in a particular cultural milieu.

\(^61\) The song is characteristically used as a lullaby, although its origins are probably as an original sea shanty, extended and given its Jacobite theme in the nineteenth century by Miss Annie MacLeod and Sir Harold Boulton (Kuntz, Fiddler’s Companion 2007).

\(^62\) Effectively the northernmost tip of the Scottish mainland and not near Skye.
his physical presence on stage only visible to the mother (and to the audience). So
the lullaby began to function almost as a memento mori, to poignant effect. It was only
at the end of the production, when the fiction the characters had made of their lives
was stripped bare, that the final verse of the song was performed, as their home was
surrounded by a bushfire.

The lyrics of this verse are:

Burned are our homes, exile and death/Scatter the loyal men
Yet, c’er the sword cool in the sheath/Charlie will come again.

The verse only partly speaks for the situation, the crucial lyrical content for the
scene presented contained in the first line only. However it was easy to ignore the
other lyrics in the theatrical context, laden as that was with varieties of death and
exile, and the aural presence of the bushfire in the soundscape.

The lullaby was revealed to have been a memento mori all along. This was an on-
going transference of meaning between the resonances of a particular song and the
circumstances of its performance, in which the revelations of the plot also influence
the reception of the song. The resonances of “The Skye Boat Song” in this
production were carried by the song itself, but, just as the song afforded meaning to
the production, the production afforded attention to particular aspects of the song.

T29, in contrast, used the same song to very different effect. In what was
essentially a piece of theatricalized stand-up comedy, T29 dealt with a journey to the
Hebrides by Dr Johnson and Mr Boswell, a trip which they both wrote about rather
differently; the differences in their accounts exploited for comedy. During the
performance, the audience was asked to sing the “The Skye Boat Song”, from the
lyrics printed in their entirety in the program. In the context of a very different
production the resonant emphasis for the song altered.

While the audience sang the song the performers enacted a boat trip in a
storm, during which audience members were directed to throw buckets of rubbish
and some fish onto the stage. The resonances of ‘Scottish’ and ‘sea’ were to the
forefront; the song is one of the better-known Scottish songs, and it is very
obviously about going to the Hebrides by boat. However its resonances as a lullaby
receded, partially due to the inevitable raucousness of its performance (audience
singing underpinned by bagpipes and drums), and its use for comedy. This comedic
use palliates the effect of the tale of war and death that the song narrates. Yet, even
through the comedy, this rendering is more political. As a Jacobite song of lament
and defiance against the English, it was a pertinent one to use in a story about the Scottish Boswell, and the English Dr Johnson, in a story that used their literary relationship to satirize Scottish-English rivalry. This political significance of the song was still present as a resonance in L7, but this particular resonance was not brought into focus because of the different performance context.

The song contains resonances that are yielded by the lyrics, music, and musical form that are, so to speak, properties of the song. Both productions made use of the same resonances, but brought different aspects to the foreground. The 6/8 rhythm, moderate tempo, and high redundancy of the melodic structure (the second two lines are an exact repeat of the first two lines in both verse and chorus) make the song very suitable as a rocking lullaby, and ensure the resonances of ‘lullaby’ and ‘childhood’ were prominent during L7, and, in that context, the song functioned affirmatively. These resonances were still there for the comically disastrous boat trip in T29, but the context of that performance made those particular resonances anempathetic.

The interpretation of music within a theatrical context, therefore, includes not only its relation to the narrative, and whether that narrative is comic or tragic, but also the way the music itself is rendered within that context. An unaccompanied female voice singing the song gently to her child is very different from audience singing with bagpipes, drums and fish. In both productions, however, the meanings afforded by the performances were predicated on the song being a well-known one.

Well-known material carries with it both cultural associations, and the likelihood of individual personal associations. These resonances might not always be fortuitous. One production, dealing with the Iraq war, used as part of the underscore a piece of gentle, melodious guitar music, which in its quiet dynamics and moderate rate of harmonic change should have functioned suitably as a piece of unremarkable filler. The guitar music used, however, was the instrumental introduction of “Stairway To Heaven” by Led Zeppelin (1971), an opening so well known, and so iconic, that it cannot be deemed neutral, and thus fails to fulfil any function of ‘inaudibility’. There was no narrative purpose for its use; so, as music seemingly intended to provide background atmosphere it was highly problematic. The resonances it evoked were various; genre (heavy metal), lyrical, the ‘star personalities’ (Frith 1996: 212) of the original performers, all of which were at odds with the scene, location, setting, subject matter etc of the production. It jarred.
Less well-known music naturally carries fewer associational meanings. The use of the generic country music in T10 and T1 carried associations of genre, but not necessarily associations with particular performers, and probably carried less personal meaning for a spectator (unless a country music aficionado). The country music used in T25 was composed for the production, and therefore carried associations through genre but could not carry associations connected with a personal response to the particular song or to its performer. Unlike the examples given above, the music drew less attention to itself as distinct from its setting in the performance, and did not distract from the main thrust of the performance.

Anempathetic use of music, however, frequently relies on the resonances of well-known music used out of context, or in the ‘wrong’ context, and of the ten productions making anempathetic use of music, seven used well-known music in this way. As noted in Chapter Two, the transgressive nature of anempathetic music ensures that it draws attention to itself, and this is important in creating its effect. But it is not always desirable for affirmative music to draw attention to itself. While the use of well-known music in L3 was problematic, there were other productions using well-known music for affirmative purposes (L4, L7, T5, T18, T20, M4, M5) rather more successfully. In these cases there was a narrative purpose for its use, and the music was foregrounded, not intended to be ‘inaudible’. Well-known music used as background underscoring appears to be problematical, unless it has a specific narrative purpose.

In the framework of terms, three other types of metadiegetic framing were presented: imaginary music (music understood as occurring in the ‘mind’ of a particular character, and audible only to that character), the imagined musician (the trace of a recorded performer), and music that speaks for a character. (Music that speaks for a character, or situation, was noted in the discussion of T13 above, and will be further discussed in subsequent chapters).

As noted in Chapter Two imaginary music can be often used to signify madness, or evoke memory. Three productions (L1, L10, M9) used imaginary music connected with the madness of a character, and six productions (L4, L6, T7, T8, T25, M2) used imaginary music to evoke memory. In all cases the memory was of better times in contrast to current circumstances; nostalgic memory. One production (L4) also used imaginary music to evoke a sense of longing and dreams for the future. In this

---

63 The rest were anempathetic either through use of inappropriate genre, or had a composed score.
production, a Latin-American song was used in conjunction with a fantasy of a future South American holiday, becoming a leitmotiv\textsuperscript{64} for this particular fantasy. While this production was a multi-character solo performance, the musical motif was linked with only one of the characters portrayed and would appear briefly in scenes to signify the character’s dream of the holiday even if these were inappropriate for the immediate location of the action and unaccompanied by any other textual or visual reference.

There was only one clear example of the imagined musician. T7, another solo production, used the sounds of drums and flutes (an example of ‘pagan-icity’) to accompany the character’s description of a Bacchic orgy. While the music here was also evoking nostalgia for the character, the use of an ensemble of instruments in the recording suggested the musicians who would be performing at such an occasion, and by peopling the imagination musically helped to evoke an orgy, which of necessity involves more than one person. Unfortunately in this case, the musical orgy failed to suggest extremes of Dionysian abandon as the audio level was so low (in order to underscore the dialogue), that the drums lost all lower frequencies and sounded like cardboard boxes. It is important to note that if the music is rendered less effective by being played at an inappropriate level, this could be detrimental to the intended theatrical effect.

The imagined musicians in this production evoked offstage spaces, fictional locations additional to the immediate fictional onstage location. The contribution of music and sound to the framing of both on- and offstage spaces was readily observable in the productions viewed.

**Spatial framing**

It is common to consider music as a purely temporal art form. Pavis, for example, considers what he calls “the trinomial nexus” of “space-time-action” (2003: 148). This nexus

\[ \ldots \text{is situated at the intersection between the concrete world of the stage (as materiality) and the fiction, imagined as a possible world. It comprises a concrete world and a possible world within which all the visual, acoustic, and textual elements of the stage are intermixed. (ibid.)} \]

\textsuperscript{64} In the sense that Gorbman defines ‘motif’, as remaining unchanged in diegetic association (1987: 26).
Within this nexus, music is positioned as being entirely temporal and without space, as “pure duration”, which he contrasts with the example of painting and architecture as being space without time (ibid.). Pavis recognizes the interdependence and interconnection of the elements of his nexus, but I would argue that music (and sound) consists of both the temporal and the spatial, and that meaning is created through the spatial dimensions of sound. While the temporal dimension of music exists in both what he terms the “concrete” world (“theater space and time of the performance”) (2003: 149), and the “abstract” or “possible” world (“fictional place and imaginary temporality”) (ibid.) the spatial dimension of music is directed towards the “possible”. This ‘possible’ space of music can overwhelm the ‘concrete’.

In Chapter Two, I noted some ways in which music contributes to extend the spatial frame of the stage, and that this can be achieved not only with the obvious device of signal processing but also within the structural composition of the music.

McAuley identifies various categories of fictional place in performance, three of which are easy to identify in terms of their relationship to the music; the ‘onstage’ (whatever space, or multitude of spaces are represented onstage), the ‘localized off’ (the immediate area surrounding the presentation space, which may be directly referred to in the text or implied by the story) and the ‘unlocalized off’ (places that are part of the “dramatic geography or the action but which are not placed physically in relation to the onstage”) (2000: 29-31). All of these places can be indicated with sound.

T11 was set in a war zone; the immediate ‘onstage’ space consisting of one room (plus an entrance from an unspecified other location which could be either another room in the building or an entrance to the building). Among other objects, this room contained a record player and records. That the production was set in the middle of an armed conflict was signalled at the outset by the costuming (khaki uniforms), the presence of prop guns, and, eventually, textually, although the opening dialogue did not indicate this. War was also signalled through sound, yet the sonic aspect was most crucially directed to the outside, the ‘unlocalized off’ which in this circumstance was the war itself. Yet this ‘unlocalized off’ was not constant, the war moved closer, receded into the distance and changed in intensity, and in so doing not only contextualized the action and dialogue but also positioned the audience within the fiction. As the war surrounded the actors in this production,
it also surrounded the audience, one effect of which was to heighten an effect of claustrophobia. This was achieved in a number of ways.

The war soundtrack consisted, not surprisingly, of sounds of materiel, the crump of mortar shells and bursts of automatic weapons fire. These sounds were at times distant, at times close. This was achieved through stereo panning (if the crump of artillery is panned to the extreme left or right of what is, aptly enough, known as the ‘stereo image’, it will appear to encompass a wider distance than if it is placed towards the centre). In this production, which used a modified surround-sound speaker system, the sound was also perceived as coming from behind or in front as well as from left or right. The presence of subwoofers underneath the seats, amplifying certain subaural frequencies, ensured that sound was felt bodily as well as heard. What the surround-sound system does is mimic the experience of sound in real life, as the ear is an omnidirectional receiver, yet able to distinguish the specific directions of sounds.

The ear detects depth [Chion defines depth as “the sensation of distance from the source”] from such indices as a reduced harmonic spectrum, softened attacks and transitions, a different blend of direct sound and reflected sound, and the presence of reverberation. (Chion 1994: 71)

The surround-sound used in this production also enabled the perception of other sounds concomitant with the immediate location such as voices from the street, and ‘general hubbub’. There was also a change in the sound of these more immediate ‘localized off’ sounds indicating the passage of time, as sounds consistent with daytime faded into those consistent with night (no voices or the use of singular voices rather than a crowd noise, night-time insect sounds).

The spatial aspects of the sound also potentially contributed to the emotional effect. While war sounds are, in themselves, highly emotive and threatening, the sense of threat became more immediate or receded in intensity during this performance according to the perceived distance of the sounds and the frequency of their occurrence.

The omnipresent atmosphere of threat was also created by the frequent, yet random occurrence of sounds, in that they were only occasionally synchronous with the text and action. The action and dialogue proceeded as if the characters were paying no attention to the sound, underlining the sense of battle-fatigue of the

---

65 The terms *stereo width* or *stereo movement* are also common.
66 The sound system for the productions viewed in 2006 and 2007 was not a complete surround-sound system, but did contain a number of different speakers to which different aspects of the sound could be directed.
soldier characters, for whom these sounds presumably appeared so normal that there was no need to refer to them textually, although their actions registered the existence of a constant state of tension on the occasions when a mortar burst appeared to be very close.

The war soundtrack, diegetic in its nature as produced by an implied sound-source, contrasted spatially with the other uses of diegetic music in the performance, which emanated physically from the visible source of a portable record player, and a selection of country records. Sound was clearly defined as emanating from both within and without the stage space.

While the creation of a virtual war zone with the use of sound processing is a clear illustration of the spatial dimension of sound, the construction of the music itself also carries a spatial dimension. If the placing of sound within surround-sound or stereo-imaging carries spatial connotations of width, or breadth, music can also suggest vertical spatial dimensions (depth and height). As noted earlier, music, as well as rendered sounds, contributes to McAuley’s concept of ‘thematic space’.

The evocation of space also potentially carries emotional expression. For example, the prevalence of ‘low’ frequencies, as noted in Chapter One, might evoke concepts of ‘dark’, ‘high’ of ‘light’ or ‘airy’, terms that carry emotional connotations. T6, a brooding, gothic, site-specific work about a Victorian doctor’s genetic experimentation and descent into madness, performed in the appropriately brooding and gothic buildings and environs of an historic surgeon’s college in Edinburgh, used a predominantly electronic soundtrack, in which low frequency electronic sounds were combined with the low frequency notes of bass clarinets. In contrast, T3, while also dealing with a serious topic – a young woman’s drug-induced death – and also with an electronic score, used predominantly high-frequency sounds, suggesting height and airiness, reflecting both the amount of time the characters spent looking at the stars and the height of the tree from which the young woman fell to her death (a tree being a constant point of reference and forming the only article of set design). This was music that pointed upwards, rather than music anchored in the depths.

Pavis talks of ‘vectors’ and makes reference to Chion’s use of the term, though does not specifically relate this to sound, which is the element that Chion specifically claims as ‘vectorized’, as having a direction (1994: 18-20). Direction incorporates spatiality. To consider something as having ‘movement’ (a recurrent
metaphor in the description of music), also implies spatiality. It is interesting, therefore, to consider Pavis’ description of vectors as applicable to music.

A vector is as much a trajectory inscribed in space as a temporal and rhythmic itinerary. [...] the vector no longer distinguishes between space and time. In this way time is vectorized, spatialized, folded and unfolded, concentrated and extended within the particular space. Space itself “becomes body”; it is in-corporated, embodied. (2003: 165)

Temporal framing

In the creation of a theatrical performance, the establishment and setting of suitable speed (tempo) and rhythm for the music is one of the paramount practical concerns for the musician (often discussed as ‘pace’ or ‘energy’). But, although spatial framing with music and sound effects was readily discernible, it was considerably more difficult to determine temporal framing, which leads to the conclusion that this particular operation is less susceptible to analysis at the point of reception. If a useful analysis of temporal framing is to be made it might need to be approached earlier in the theatrical process, during the act of creation.

One of Franze’s claims for incidental music (Chapter One) concerned the ability of music to “produce […] the tempo-rhythm of a particular staging” (2000: 23). But what does the term ‘tempo-rhythm’ actually mean? Pavis considers that the distinction between ‘rhythm’ and ‘tempo-rhythm’ is important (although his explanation only distinguishes between ‘tempo’ and ‘rhythm’):

Tempo is invisible and internal; it determines the speed of a mise-en-scène (quick or slow); it shortens or prolongs action, accelerates or decelerates diction. (2003: 145)

This appears on the surface to be relatively simple. After all, it is easy to observe the effect a change of tempo has on an actor, such is the bodily entrainment effected by music.67

‘Rhythm’ is defined by Pavis as being:

67 For example, Stanislavski describes this in detail in “Tempo-Rhythm in Movement”, Chapter IX, Building a Character (1981/1950: 183-223). The whole chapter is useful on the effect of rhythm on the body of the actor, but this excerpt is particularly pertinent:

“Gradually the metronome was increased, we were finally unable to keep up with it and found ourselves lagging behind. This disturbed us. We really wanted to keep up in tempo and rhythm with the count. Perspiration broke out on some of us, our faces flushed, we beat our palms sore, we used our feet, our bodies, our mouths; we groaned. [sic]”

“Well, have you learned how to play? Are you having fun now?” asked Torkov laughing. “See what a magician I am – I control not only your muscles but your emotions, your moods. According to my wish I can put you to sleep, or I can raise you to the highest pitch of excitement, put you into a fine lather.

“I am not a magician, but tempo-rhythm does possess the magic power to affect your inner mood.” (189)
… not so much to do with changes in speed, as with changes in accentuation, in the perception of stressed or nonstressed moments … Rhythm is the sense and direction of time, of its elasticity in the hands of a director. (ibid. 146)

But in music, rhythm and tempo do not exist without the other. Rhythm always has a tempo, and tempo cannot be established without rhythm. While the terms are individually definable, as musical elements their effects are in their conjunction. And because of their direct effect upon the body of an actor, at the stage of production the tempo-rhythm of the music has become completely enmeshed with the other rhythms of performance. Pavis also identified this difficulty, considering that tempo can be observed in performance analysis, but that “[a]s far as rhythm is concerned, it is rather difficult to show which elements of a performance it attaches itself to” (ibid.).

This difficulty in observation was apparent in all of the productions for which the music had a predominantly cinematic function. It was clearer, however, in productions in which music had a structural role of any kind, including music as intervention. This, though, is a rather obvious point as, if the structure of the music is determining the structure of the theatre, tempo-rhythm is obviously a vital part of that structure. All the productions using live music demonstrated this, although this is not necessarily because of the liveness of the music but rather because productions using live music tended to use the music in a more structural manner. It was also evident in five productions using recorded music, three using a composed score (M3, T24, T16) and two using compiled scores (L4, T8).

Of the productions using live music a strong correlation between the tempo-rhythm of the music and the tempo-rhythm of the dialogue was observable in T21 and T14. In both of these productions the spoken text itself had strong rhythmic elements. The spoken text in T14 was verse, which at times was rhythmically metrical, and these rhythms were supported by the rhythms of the music. At other times the spoken text was rhythmically freer and underscored with a correspondingly less metrical musical rhythm. The strongly metrical spoken and musical rhythms created a strong sense of pace; in contrast the freer sections gave an impression of stasis. This sense of momentum was not necessarily concomitant with the forward momentum of the narrative.

The two different aspects of rhythm could be considered analogous to the operations of aria and recitative in opera, in which the freer rhythm of recitative is usually the vehicle for moving forward the narrative, while the more strongly
patterned aria provides elaboration on the narrative. T14 was described in the publicity material as a “mini rock-opera for the spoken word” (Traverse Theatre 2006). While T21 did not use verse dialogue, it was similarly marked by increases of tempo in the dialogue, and strong musical rhythms, contrasting with periods of relative stasis. However, in this case the strongly rhythmic momentum coincided with moments in the spoken text when the character was physically in motion. The production followed one character as he moved around a city, his travels were usually marked with ‘mime’ walking. The strong musical rhythms fleshed out those performed journeys but in a way less analogous with opera and more with film, which will frequently use rhythmic music to accompany, for example, car or train journeys. The moments of musical stasis in this performance coincided more often either with ‘interior’ locations, or ‘external’ locations (defined textually) in which the character was motionless. In both productions the marked correspondence of speech rhythm and musical rhythm had the effect of ‘musicalizing’ the speech and was relatively easy to perceive as there were frequent sudden contrasts rather than gradual ones.

Surprisingly, this effect was also present in T24, a production that did not use live musicians, but a recorded composed score. In this production the music demonstrated clear passages of strongly marked rhythm contrasting with ‘freer’ music (less defined by pulse). The strongly marked rhythm accompanied journeys, or moments of strongly physicalized action. This production was performed in the round by four actors on a bare stage with no changes of lighting, no props or strongly marked costume. The music, which was a nearly continuous underscore throughout, was therefore the only element exterior to the four performers and, as such, was important in defining locations. However, the correspondence between the performed actions and dialogue and the recorded music score suggests that a number of aspects of the performance were ‘worked’ with the music, possibly aided by the sound operator, although I was unable to verify this. The musical structures used, which consisted mainly of loops of short phrase-lengths, would have made this easier as I will discuss in the following chapters.

In these three productions the music was an obvious structural element in the performance, but in all cases the music usually functioned as underscoring. The music’s function was both structural and cinematic.
**Formal framing**

Gorbman’s fifth and sixth categories concern the use of music for creating ‘continuity’ and ‘unity’ (1987: 73). Richard Davis explains the creation of continuity in film:

> If we watch a scene that ends, and then we cut to another scene in a different location, obviously the eye is very aware of this change. Many times an abrupt visual change is appropriate, but sometimes it is desirable to soften this change. Music can help achieve this by beginning in the first scene, and carrying over to the second. In this way, both the eye and the ear are engaged; the eye takes in the abrupt scene change, and the ear hears a continuous piece of music. The total effect is one that is smooth; the music effectively overrides the visual aspect. (1999: 144-5)

But if, in film, the music is to smooth abrupt visual transitions, in theatre the immediate practical use is to ‘smooth’ the passing of time in the transitions between scenes, as in a blackout or to cover a set change. Of the productions viewed, 28 used music to cover scene changes, either changes of location or to indicate time passing. In 7 of these productions this was the only time music was used. With only one exception (L7), blackouts were inevitably accompanied by music.68

The use of inter-scene music, however, was not dictated by necessity, as all the productions viewed were economical in their use of set, which obviated the need for extended transitional music, or, in strictly practical terms, for any music at all. The ‘continuity’ provided by the inter-scene music was providing a ‘formal’ delineation of scenes.

In the majority of productions the original set arrangement remained constant, even if the narrative was multi-locational. Where significant set alteration did occur, this was either used as a feature of the show, performed by the actors in full view of the audience, (L6, T8, T16, T27, M5, M6), sometimes aided by the ingenious construction of the set itself (T9, T12, T27), or as consistent with the stylistics of the production in the case of L8. The music used for scene changes, whether to cover actual set manipulation, or as a purely formal marker, were usually ‘grabs’, used in two different ways to provide continuity.69

---

68 This production was viewed on opening night, and there were a few overlong blackouts that appeared to result from technical difficulties, particularly in moments where music was used to cover a blackout but ended before the blackout did. This strongly suggests that the lack of music to cover blackouts was due to production difficulties rather than to artistic choice.

69 The term ‘grab’ refers to a musical fragment, a device used frequently in film that may often be of only a few seconds duration. Because of this short duration, they cannot be considered as a piece of music as such. They may often be derived from other more complete music used in the production. Grabs are also used intra-scene to mark particular moments of action particularly in physical comedy, melodrama, circus and pantomime, where they will more commonly be referred to as ‘stings’. As the productions viewed did not fall into any of these genres, there was very limited use of the intra-scene sting, apart from L2 which, parodying film genres, also contained certain cartoon-like intra-scene stings. For discussion of cartoon ‘stings’ see Daniel Goldmark (2005: 63-65).
The ‘grabs’ could be basically the same throughout, signalling, by means of establishing a convention, a change of scene or time of action while providing little further narrative information. The most important purpose of these non-informational grabs is reassurance; that the performance has not finished so there is no illusion-breaking applause; to cover periods of time where there is no visual information (as in a blackout) and, by tailoring the grab to the length of the blackout, aiding the confidence of the audience that all is technically under control; in short, to maintain the attention of the audience.

In contrast the use of differing motivic grabs simultaneously fulfils continuity, as does the exactly reiterative grab, and also provides narrative information, similar to the narrative cueing provided by intra-scene music. The most common information provided, in conjunction with the symbolic set, was about location. In L4, three distinct pieces of classical music were used to signify three different locations.

Grabs can also be used to provide emotional framing, either as preparation for a subsequent scene or to carry emotional effects over from the previous scene. In L2, a comedy playing with various film conventions, the inter-scene grabs often carried forward leading information. A grab reminiscent of music from the ‘classic’ horror film70 was heard in the blackout immediately preceding a scene in a graveyard, thus setting up a particular set of expectations of that setting, even if those were immediately undercut for purposes of comedy in the subsequent action. In L1 the music accompanying a scene depicting the mental breakdown of the main character continued into the subsequent blackout and scene change, prolonging the effect of that scene.

In observation, inter-scene music was generally confined to the specific time of transition, whether a blackout, or a pause in the action, and ended at the beginning of the following scene rather than bleeding into it. But whether the music exists discretely in the space of no-action or blurs the edges of those spaces can have an interesting effect on the overall rhythm. (This is linked to the compositional decision to use cadence or segue, discussed in Chapter Five.)

Broadly speaking, a grab that only exists inter-scene exerts a more formal effect on the overall structure, with the creation of discrete scenic units, while a grab that overlaps scenes smooths transitions and can provide a more fluid rhythm. The

---

70 By ‘classic horror music’ I mean, for example, the music of Frank Skinner, and Hans Salter, written during the 1940s for Universal Studios, or the film scores from the Hammer Films stable. This music standardized the stock ‘horror’ music conventions noted by Donnelly (2005).
productions that used music primarily to link scenes conformed to one or the other type. No production exhibited both types, however it is possible to speculate that a change from predominantly one use to the other in the course of a performance would shift the overall rhythm of that performance, such as a move from formality to flow.

Gorbman’s sixth requirement is that of unity, which, in the classic film score, she considers is provided by the establishment of “genre, mood, and setting”, through the management of tonal relationships through the score and the thematic repetition of musical material (1987: 90-91). The unity provided by genre and thematic music was particularly apparent in the productions viewed that used compiled scores. Productions using live music will obviously have unity of timbre, yet in the composed soundtracks timbral unity was also common.

These composed scores were of three broad types: scores using analogue sounds, i.e. producing the sound of ‘real’ instruments (whether actual instruments or generated through sampling), scores using predominantly electronically generated sounds, and scores that could be considered as soundscapes incorporating sound effects (musique concrète). Scores could be predominantly of one type or a mixture of all types.

As noted earlier, a significant number of productions used a score consisting solely of electronically generated sounds (15), or predominantly electronic sounds (4). The electronic score was thus the dominant aurality for the productions viewed. While there is a tremendous variety in the sounds possible in electronic music, a timbral unity exists in that these sounds are all heard as electronic, i.e. not attributable to any specific instrument. And while it is possible, with sampling technology, to accurately simulate ‘real’ instruments (some more easily than others) the majority of productions using a composed recorded score used precisely these un-attributable electronic sounds.

**Structural similarities in the composition of stage music**

In Chapter Two, I discussed whether there were common patterns of tonal events and their organization that were common to theatre music, drawing on both film theorists and the literature on incidental music (O’Neill 1912, Sabaneev 1978/1935, Bazelon 1975, Burwell 2003). Elements that were common to all these studies included the reliance on harmony over melody, short musical phrases, use of
repetition including either exactly repeated figures or ostinati, or what can be
described as inexact repetition, which could be evinced in various ways such as use
of sequences, or variations on a loop.

While the music for each production was very individual, there were
observable structural similarities that conformed closely to the common musical
elements identified by Sabaneev, Bazelon and Burwell for film music. In the
productions viewed, the structural principles underlying the music can be broadly
summed up as demonstrating:

- High redundancy: Repetition (whether exact or varied, often achieved
  through looping); and strongly coded genre
- Intensional rather than extensional structure\(^{71}\)
- Reliance on harmony rather than melody, and frequently a slow rate of
  harmonic change, or looped harmonies
- Simplicity.

These principles were particularly marked in music used as underscoring.

Meyer defines the term ‘perceptual redundancy’ as “the totality of patterned
structure and orderly process available to the mind of an ideally experienced
processes” or “stable schemata” which enable processes of pattern recognition that
will be available to a listener who “has learned the syntactic-formal premises of a
style” (ibid. 276-7).

Redundancy will be high where there is a marked correspondence between the
objective relationships presented by a composition and the listener’s learned habits
of discrimination, derived from his experience with stylistically established modes of
progression and organization… (ibid. 277)

Redundancy will be present, therefore, in music that conforms to well-known
genres. The redundancy present in a 12-bar blues, a culturally learned pattern,
enables the recognition of a song in that genre even if the listener were to begin
listening halfway through the song.

In music not conforming to a particular genre, redundancy manifests in the
patterning of unfamiliar material. Patterning, according to Meyer, is a crucial part of

\(^{71}\) These terms were first used by Andrew Chester to distinguish the extended forms of classical music from the forms used in
popular music, in which the lack of extended structural development has often been used as a dismissive characterization. He
defines the terms thus: “Extensional development … includes all devices that build diachronically and synchronically outward
from basic music atoms. The complex is created by the combination of the simple, which remains discrete and unchanged in
the complex unity”. Intensional development “is created by inflecting melody, timbre and rhythm, and other elements while
many parameters may remain constant throughout a song.” (Chester 1970: 78-79).
the musical experience, in that successful music strikes, in varying degrees, a balance between the presentation of new material and the repetition/patterning of existing material.

Music containing a large amount of repetition is subject to a high degree of patterning, and, therefore, will manifest high redundancy. But if, following Meyer, it is necessary to find a balance between redundancy and new material, it appears impossible to define what exactly this balance should be. It is certainly not reducible to any mathematical or proportional figure. Different genres of music appear to require different balances, and this balance might vary in music having a theatrical function.

As a theatrical example, the musical device of ‘vamp till ready’ is a formal device displaying extreme redundancy; the exact repetition of a musical fragment that is used to cover scene changes or underscore dialogue that may be of indeterminate length, such as the introductory patter to a vaudeville song. It does not exist outside a theatrical context; it has no independent musical purpose, but is a practical, functional response to a theatrical requirement.

Effectively, the higher the redundancy, the less overtly perceptual processing is required by the listener. It is not necessary to pay close attention to the music in order to understand it, and this becomes important in both film and theatre music when it is not desirable for the music to draw too much attention to itself, or when, as Mitchell puts it, it is desirable for the audience to “listen but not too keenly” (1951: 243). The ‘vamp till ready’, displays such extreme redundancy that it would be torturous to listen to it in isolation, it is designed precisely so that no attention is paid to it.

But if the ‘vamp till ready’ is at the extreme end of the redundancy continuum, the need for underscoring that does not draw too much attention to itself would seem to require music that, in its style, can sustain a high degree of repetition. Out of the productions viewed for this research nearly half (21) used music that traversed the spectrum of electronic music that could be classed as influenced by minimalism, from ‘art’ music to more popular styles. The rest used live music or a compiled score of other genres of music.

Minimalism (which, as noted in Chapter Two, is a style defined by its highly repetitive nature) is weighted towards the redundant rather than the new, therefore requiring less perceptual processing; and its influence was strongly present in the scores used. It is also, as ‘art’ music, far closer in its nature to current popular
contemporary music. And for contemporary electronic music production the
difference between popular forms and ‘art’ forms is even less, often fusing under
the heading ‘nu electronica’.72

Both ‘art’ minimalism and much contemporary electronica also have an
innately repetitive structure and it could be seen as fortuitous that contemporary
styles of music, reflecting contemporary sensibilities are also, by their strongly
repetitive nature very useful for the purposes of underscoring. This would bear out
Mitchell’s emphasis on using music for a theatrical production that reflects
‘prevailing fashion’, and ‘audience expectation’ (1951: 243). Thus, the use of
repetition in the music for the productions viewed conformed more closely to
Burwell’s use of what he calls “relentless repetition” (2003: 196), or minimalist
approaches to repetition, rather than to the more classically influenced Sabaneev’s
conception of repetition through sequences and sequential harmonic progressions

Divergent practices between stage and film music
There is enough similarity in the function of the music in the theatre viewed for this
research to accord with Gorbman’s claims for the functions of film music, to claim
the analogy of ‘cinematic’. The stage music supported emotional effects, narrative
cueing, unity, continuity, invisibility and inaudibility,73 but these operations were
different to a degree from film music.

There was also a marked difference in the musical resources used, namely the
near absence of the orchestral score in the theatre, while this is a staple of the film
industry. As John Burlinghame notes “[p]ractically every major studio release now
enjoys a score played by a 100-piece orchestra (regardless of whether the movie
really calls for it)” (2000: 28). In contrast, the dominant aurality in the performances
viewed was the electronic score.

The reason for this contrast is easily attributable to the financial constraints of
theatre, but there is the possibility of using pre-existing orchestral works in a
compiled score, or using sampling technology to simulate an orchestra. There was,

72 I acknowledge that the terms ‘minimalism’ and ‘nu electronica’ are contested labels, covering a wide variety of practices.
McLeod (2001: 60) in a discussion of the sub-genres of electronic/dance music notes over 300 different labels, and notes that
these are changing all the time. He also notes that there are many sub-genres which, although in the ‘contemporary popular’
sphere are not marked by strong rhythm, as they are not all intended for dance.
73 Gorbman’s seventh principle, namely that “[a] given film score may violate any of the principles above, providing the
violation is at the service of the other principles” (Gorbman 1987: 73), is the same for theatre.
however, little sign of this in the productions viewed.  

Large-scale orchestral resources were only used in three compiled scores (L1, L2, L4). L1 used a classical symphony, as one character was defined textually by his relationship with that particular piece of music and its composer. In L2 some orchestral scoring referencing various film genres was used in keeping with the performance’s imitation of those genres. In L4, various pieces of classical music were used as underscore, including an example of symphonic music, but the majority of the classical music used was solo instrumental music. There were two operatic excerpts used in M6 and M7, both productions by the same company, and both used in sections of the production with no spoken text.

This suggests that it is more likely that the marked lack of use of orchestral scores reflects other artistic choices. The tendency in the productions viewed was towards a smaller musical ensemble. Solo instruments were used frequently, not just in the productions with live music but also in both composed and compiled soundtracks. The popular musical styles used were also those with smaller ensembles, such as the typical rock band (3-5 musicians). This might be purely a reflection of scale; as if the size of the acting ensemble influences the size of the musical ensemble, but while the case could be made for a purely numerical equality, the scale of the theatrical production is also a factor.

This appears to confirm Frith’s (1996: 211) and Auslander’s (2004b: 5) contention that listening to recorded music is not a disembodied aural experience, but rather that the physical presence of the musician is also present, even if as a trace, in the aural experience. Using a smaller ensemble, even in the case of recorded music, appears to work with the more intimate scale of theatre. So, it might be possible to assume that the larger the theatrical spectacle and cast, the larger the musical resources that will be used. Only three productions of those viewed could be termed large-scale spectacle, in two of those (M1, T12) an ensemble of live musicians similar in scale to the cast were used. The third used a compiled score of popular music. Only one production (T21) used a significant disparity of instrumental resources; in this case seven live musicians performed and moved onstage alongside two actors.

An electronic score, while containing the potential for multiple instrumental voices tends towards the homogeneity of the single instrument, either because of

---

74 It needs to be noted that a full orchestral score is a time-consuming production, even in the theoretical possibility that it can be successfully reproduced by sampling technology. This is then also a financial consideration.
the implied single source of generation, such as the electronic keyboard, or because of the implied single author of that score.

Another difference is the relationship between diegetic and non-diegetic sound, a distinction that is often considered in studies of film music, as noted in Chapter Two. The majority of films aim at the construction of a reality (a coherently depicted imaginary world), where the confirmation of sound effects (and source music) is vital. Contemporary theatre often constructs an imaginary world from suggestion, through synecdoche, and, as the theatrical world is visually less realized in the staging, it corresponds that the aural realization might be less rigorous. In productions using live, visible musicians, their visibility as the obvious source of sound is not necessarily tied to the construction of a hyper-realistic world. Even if there is a diegetic reason for the use of music or sound effects, these sounds will generally emanate from the speaker system in the same way as non-diegetic music. The radio that is switched on in the course of a production (a radio which might actually work), is likely to be a recorded cue emanating from the sound desk, even although it may be processed to sound like music played on a radio.

But if the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic music was not useful for the majority of productions, there were some productions that did make a distinct and important use of music and sound emanating from within and without the diegesis.

Two productions made particular use of carefully realized diegetic sound, both productions (T10, T26) with the same sound designer, Graham Sutherland. Both used onstage record players as actual, rather than prop, sound sources. Both were semi-realistic in style and the detailed construction of the sound added to their particular creation of reality. But particularly in T10, the music played on the record player present in the scene was important both to the plot and to the definition of character. In this production the choice of music played on-stage represented different things to different characters, and their conflicting reactions to the music was an indication (and symbol) of the existence of conflicts between their characters.

So, although the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic music was not significant for most of the theatre viewed, there are productions that may make an explicit distinction between the two. For the purposes of analysis, then, it needs to be noted that if the distinction is present, it can be, as for these two productions, an important one.
Given that all the productions viewed made use of music, and in nearly half of the productions was a defining element of production, it can be concluded that consideration of music is important in performance analysis. Music was prominent in image-based work, and appeared to have a particular importance to solo performance. It also appeared to conform to genre expectations influenced by other media. There was, however, no observable theoretical conclusion possible on the basis of this sample for whether the amount of music was dependent on the amount of spoken dialogue, or related to the presentational style. This study confirmed that music generates independent meaning, but its own meaning is also dependent on the theatrical context. The music used appeared to manifest structural similarities in composition, namely high redundancy, intensional structures, emphasis on harmony rather than melody, and simplicity. The music used was reflective of contemporary tastes, being heavily weighted to the use of contemporary popular musics and minimalism, rather than to Western ‘classical’ music.

For this chapter the framework of terms has been applied in terms of its separate elements. But, in Gorbman’s category of narrative cueing, it could be considered that all elements of the framework contribute to that general function, either at the level of ‘story narrated’ or of ‘narrating discourse’. In particular the functions of emotional, diegetic and metadiegetic framing are often inextricably linked. Reflecting this, the following chapters treat the framework more loosely, in order to demonstrate the interdependence of all elements of the framework.
Chapter Four

The structural function of circus music

Noises new to sea and land
Issue from the circus band.
Each musician looks like mumps
From blowing umpah umpah umps. (Nash 1951: 119)

This chapter applies the framework of terms to the physical text of circus performance. In order to discuss music in contemporary circus it is necessary to deal with the shadow of circus nostalgia, if only because within the performing arts circus has to accommodate a particular tension between the ‘traditional’ and the theatricalized ‘new circus’. This chapter begins with a discussion of traditional circus music (usually live music), before considering the work of Circa (Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus Ensemble), a contemporary circus company based in Brisbane. The second half of the chapter considers the development of Circa’s performance style, before focussing on two recent works, The Space Between, and by the light of stars that are no longer. Using relevant aspects of the framework of terms, the chapter argues that the use of music in the work of Circa departs radically from both traditional circus music practice, and even from most new circus practice and that this underpins their aesthetic.

Circus performance has long been defined by a style of presenting music since the mid-nineteenth century (Culhane 1990; Coxe 1952), a recognizable style in which music is prominent, yet remains subordinate to the physical performance. The particular sound associated with circus music is the ‘blaring’, ‘brassy’, ‘oom-pah-pah’ sound of the wind band, and this sound retains enduring cultural

75 The terminology used in this research to designate specific historical periods within the development of circus is derived from a number of sources. What is termed the ‘modern’ circus is generally dated from 1768 and attributed to Astley’s displays of equestrian skills within what became the standard 42 foot ring (Coxe 1952: 22-23; Kwint 2002: 76; Tait 2005: 5). I will designate the period up to the 1850s as ‘early modern circus’. I will use the term ‘traditional circus’ to refer to the modern circus after the mid-nineteenth century, reflecting what Tait calls the “institutional form of circus” (2006: 5) and to contemporary companies still working within that framework. ‘Traditional circus’ as a term is used in this way by a number of scholars (e.g. Bouissac 1971; Little 1986; Whitsoak 1999a; Tait 1999; 2001; 2005; Sugarman 2002). Yoram S. Carmeli also refers to ‘travelling circus’ (1989: 128). ‘New circus’ is the term used to refer to the range of circus companies departing from traditional practices, the beginning of which is usually dated to the 1970s (Albrecht 1995; Broadway 1999; Tait 1999; Maleval 2002; Sugarman 2002; Mullett 2006).
associations. A one bar quotation of Julius Fucík’s *Entry of the Gladiators*, Op. 68, for example, is enough to signify ‘circus’ (ring, sawdust, sequins, clowns, acrobats etc). The sudden stops, the *voilà* of the surprise major chord, the suspense-laden drum rolls are musical practices that underpin the ritual nature of the circus act and, like the recurring physical skills of circus performers “produce standards through repetition that become continuous with the past” (Tait 2005: 5).

The ‘sound’ of circus music consists of a dominant instrumentation, a particular repertoire, and a distinct set of performance practices and it is this combination that distinguishes it from any other performing art that involves such a prominent use of music. While the repertoire and wind band sound may have largely disappeared from new circus, there are still a number of musical performance practices that continue to underpin the ‘ring action’. While circus music is often considered as ‘accompaniment’ to the circus action (e.g. Culhane 1990: 11), these practices have an important structural function within the repeated formats of circus and to the dominant trajectory of the ‘traditional’ circus act. This chapter, therefore, considers the structural use of music in traditional circus, in order to demonstrate that alteration within this structural relationship, as in the work of Circa, has implications for the circus form itself.

I argue that music for circus can be considered equally open to analysis using the framework presented in Chapter Two, though there is a focus on its relationship to physical action. The physical action is supported predominantly through rhythm, marking of ‘tricks’ and shaping the climactic portion of the act. The music will also function to provide continuity, both by covering changeovers between acts, which will frequently involve the removal and set-up of technical apparatus, and to cover mistakes or preparation time during the act itself. The choice of particular types of music, though, will also function connotatively, to provide emotion and atmosphere and support narrative, a function both simultaneous and overlapping with its immediately practical function.

Both scholars and circus practitioners agree that it is important for music to relate to the ring action (Whiteoak 1999a, Speaight 1980, Bouissac 1976, Moy 1978, St Leon 1990a) yet what is notably absent is the exact nature of that relation and details of how it was achieved. Whiteoak, in his discussion of early Australian circus music, distinguishes two main “yet separate” functions of circus musicians as being “to draw patrons to the circus through street parades and tentside concerts and to provide appropriate musical accompaniment for the unfolding entertainment
program” (Whiteoak 1999a: 61). For the purposes of this research the most important question is not the circus music for the parade or played outside the circus tent to attract custom, but that used within the dominant Euro-American circus tradition to accompany the circus acts in the ring.

It remains difficult, though, to ascertain details of a practice that Whiteoak appropriately terms ‘anonymous music’ (1999b). Research for this chapter involved an extensive search of circus commentaries, the reward often only a handful of comments, as there has been no specialist body of research on circus music. Most references to historical circus music and musicians consist of a brief indication either of repertoire or of the nature of the circus band (e.g. Speaight 1980; St Leon 1983; Culhane 1990). Whiteoak provides a useful article on Australian traditional circus music (1999a), and there are some extended sections that deal with music in both traditional (St Leon 2007b; Whiteoak 1999b) and new circus (Albrecht 2006; Mullett 2006). The semiotician Paul Bouissac provides some useful analytical material as one element of his analysis of circus, but does not specifically deal with music, citing the complexity of the subject (1976: 195). There are also references in a number of circus biographies, of which Mervyn King’s is the most extensive (St Leon 1990a). Writings by circus musicians, who should logically provide the most useful record of actual practices, are anecdotal and scarce (e.g. Baker 1956; 1961; Braathen 1971).

Mervyn King, founder of Silver’s Circus, stated that:

There is a box of music around this country somewhere full of all the stuff that Reg [Reg St Leon] wrote but nobody seems to know where it is (St Leon 1990a: 55).

While there is some information dealing with the instrumentation and repertoire of traditional circus bands, there is a decided lack of specific historical reference to the actual practices of circus musicians, and also a lack of differentiation between the different roles the musicians were expected to fulfil. The contribution of music to the circus spectacle in the ring needs further analysis.

A survey of early modern and traditional circus music

If the sound of brass instruments became the dominant aurality for early twentieth century circus, it is a sound that is distinguished from other brass band music by being louder or ‘brighter’, according to Merle Evans, bandleader of the Ringling
Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus (The Circus in America 2008: para. 1). In the American circus, loud was probably the most important quality, not only for drawing maximum attention during the Circus Parade, but also to cope with the scale of the spectacle of the three-ring circus (Davis 2002) that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Prior to amplification, the choice of instrumentation was given impetus by the need to be heard. Brass instruments plus drums fulfil this function better than any other class of instrument, and this imposes a certain timbral unity upon the music used.

Before the establishment of the wind band as the preferred accompaniment, it appears that in the early circus the choice of instrumentation was far more opportunistic, reflecting the “diverse and often jumbled network of performing practices and organizations which incorporated entertainments taken from fairground and theatre” (Stoddart 2000: 3) that comprised the earliest circuses. The earliest equestrian performances by Astley were apparently accompanied by “rudimentary music played on French horns” and a drum” (Kwint 2002: 76). Engravings of the various incarnations of Astley’s Amphitheatre (e.g. Speaight 1980: 37) reveal diverse musical ensembles that included string and keyboard instruments. A. H. Saxon mentions Astley’s orchestra in the early nineteenth century as being “stationed between the ring and the stage”, but gives no indication of its exact composition (1975: 302). Similarly, as Moy notes, no detailed information exists concerning the “grand Band, under the direction of Mr. Young”, which was used in 1794 at John Ricketts’ circus in America, though it appears likely by 1796 to have included piano, clarinet and violin (Moy 1978: 192-3). The flexibility of boundaries between the early circus and other theatrical performances appears to extend to the nature of the musical ensemble used.

The repertoire of the traditional circus band, developing during the 1890s and predominating until the 1930s (Studwell et al. 1999) ranged from military style marches to selections of both classical and popular tunes. While some tunes were written specifically for the circus, much of the repertoire was obtained from other sources. There appears to be little distinction between what might now be considered the ‘high-brow’ and the ‘low-brow’ (Speaight 1980: 99). E. H. Bostock’s

---

76 These would not have been modern valve horns, but earlier versions using crooks. At this period it is not clear whether the method of hand-stopping, devised by Hampel in Dresden between 1750 and 1760, and which gave a full chromatic range to the horn was being used in England. It is possible the first mention of hand-stopping in England dates to 1772 (Blandford 1922: 545). Thus the complexity or otherwise of the music used would of necessity depend on the type of horn used.

77 Studwell, Conrad and Schueneman call the ‘golden age’ of circus music the period from 1900-1930, and consider the preference for the wind band developed from the 1870s onwards (1999: xii-xiii).
description of the ‘high-class fare’ the band provided for the Bostock and Wombwell travelling menagerie includes both Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” alongside the decidedly non-classical “Life’s a Bumper” (Bostock 1972/1927: 33).

John B. Ricketts, founder of the circus in America, used music as a prominent draw card in his advertising after 1795, emphasizing the use of new compositions (Moy 1978: 192), although it is impossible to gauge the extent of composed material. John Durang, a clown in Ricketts circus, gave ‘music compiler’ as one of his roles and it is reasonable to assume that the early circus music contained a mix of popular tunes and songs drawn from both folk and art music traditions (Downer 1966: 69).

In its later developments, circus continued to make use of whatever was available and popular at the time. Merle Evans, the Ringling Bros. bandmaster recalls playing popular show-tunes for May Wirth in 1919 instead of the more usual quadrilles and schottisches (St Leon 1990b: 11-12). According to Judy Cannon and Mark St Leon, Ashton’s Circus engaged Buddy Williams to perform yodelling and country music, and Alan Saunders to sing ‘negro’ spirituals when these styles were popular in the early 1950s (Cannon 1997: 117). Similarly, in the early 1970s, Lionel Rose was hired to perform what are described as ‘country pop songs’ using the electric guitar (ibid. 142). Whether these were separate musical acts or accompaniment to the physical performances is not indicated. Jane Mullett notes the importance of the growing rock counter-culture to the new circus as it developed in both France and Australia (2006: 181).

**Emotional, diegetic and temporal framing of ring action**

The most obvious discussion in the relation to ring action is how music supports the physical actions and practical requirements of the progression of circus acts, as this is practically important to both performers and musicians. I will discuss this in relation to the framework of terms, arguing that the core areas for the historical use of music to support ring action are temporal, diegetic, and emotional.

It is argued here that the core element that underpins the function of circus music is the rhythm matched to the style of act, rather than distinctive harmonic or melodic features. This would appear to be a consistent attribute throughout circus history. For example, a street tightrope walker and stilt dancer interviewed by Henry Mayhew in the mid-nineteenth century stated:
My wife and the girls all have their turns at the rope, following each other in their performances. The band generally plays quadrilles, or a waltz, or anything; it don’t matter what it is, so long as it is the proper time (1967/1851: 150).

Traditional circus shows a correlation between certain rhythms and certain acts. Mervyn King mentions the need for a “good strong heavy march for a lion act”, while a 6/8 march would be used for an equestrian act and a waltz for flying acts (St Leon 1990a: 55). George Speaight similarly notes the use of waltz for flying trapeze, Risley and balancing acts, military marches for weight lifting and strong man acts, gallops for fixed bars, springboard and ground acrobatics and the quadrille for horse acts (1980: 99).

The early circus was predicated on two particular rhythmic elements; the rhythm of the horse and the rhythm of the dance. The equestrian acts that formed the basis of the early modern circus, and continued as a staple throughout the nineteenth century, demonstrated aspects of both the natural rhythmic movement of the animal as it canters or gallops around the ring, and of the training of horses to undertake dance-like movements and patterns in both liberty and haute-école acts.

In jockey acts (those involving balancing or acrobatics on the bare back of a moving horse) the regularity of the animal rhythm, its “even pace” and “smooth gait”, was paramount in ensuring the success of the act and the safety of the performers, who would be in danger of falling from a horse which suddenly varied its speed or step (Coxe 1952: 53). The regularity of rhythm takes precedence over a fast tempo, even if the latter is to be desired. Given this precedence, and an obvious natural similarity of rhythm between different horses, it is understandable that particular types of musical rhythm (6/8 for a canter, a fast 2/4 for a gallop) predominate in these acts. Music is therefore primarily selected for the presence of suitable rhythm; the tempo of that rhythm is then determined by the speed of the particular horse act.

The rhythm of the dance can be seen, for example, in historical accounts of rope-dancers. In the early modern circus the influence of both formal and popular dances is seen in references to rope-dancers such as “la belle Espagniola” who “danced a hornpipe and a Spanish fandango, clicking castanets, without a pole” (Speaight 1980: 17), or to the success of Alexandre Placide, a ballet dancer as well as

---

78 The sections of the quadrille are danced to either 2/4 or 6/8 rhythms.
79 Both liberty acts (in which the horses have no rider but are directed to perform synchronized routines), and haute-école acts (in which a complex series of steps are engaged in by horse and rider, similar to the art of dressage) are described fully by Coxe (1952: 91-103 and 169-179).
80 See also St Leon (1990b: 6).
“the best tightrope dancer that ever was in America” according to Durang (Downer 1966: 31; Winter 1938: 63). The success of the twentieth century wire walker, Con Colleano, rested not only on his extraordinary acrobatic prowess as the first performer to achieve a forward somersault on the low wire but also on his skill as a dancer, performing “his tangos, jotas and fandangos with the unsurpassed grace of a prima ballerina” (St Leon 1986: 16). In the early modern circus, social dances would also be performed on horseback, or presented ‘as themselves’ as part of the entertainment programme. Ricketts advertised that he would “ride a single horse in full speed, [and] dance to the tune of THE FLOWERS OF EDINBURGH in the character of a Highland Laddie…” (Moy 1978: 192) and Durang listed dancing and singing as part of his ‘business’ (Culhane 1990: 6).

A collection of published music from 1790, The Celebrated Circus Tunes Performed at Edinburgh This Season, contains short dances in duple or triple time such as hornpipes, marches and jigs. Four of these tunes (three duple time country dances and one jig) bear the dedication “Perform’d by M’Rickets” (Watlen 1790).81

Rhythm is also the core element in music for social dancing, with melody and harmony as secondary elements. As Mayhew’s anonymous street performer indicates, providing the rhythm is appropriate to support the dance steps, tunes are interchangeable. Rhythm also appears to have been the predominant factor in the choice of music to accompany other acts, even as the circus developed to incorporate acts that were less obviously tied to equine or dance rhythms.

Dance music not only provides the rhythmic underpinning to the steps of the dance, but also cues different sections, or changes in movement during the course of the dance, through characteristic phrase structures. However if the choice of music for an act is predominantly determined by its support for the act’s physical rhythm, this rhythm can also affect audience perception.

The presence of a dominant aural rhythm appears to influence a perception of visual images as being more synchronized than they might actually be. In perceptions of haute école and liberty equestrian routines (which are usually

81 This is highly likely to be the same Ricketts. The collection also includes music entitled “The Pursuit” for a “Pantomime on Capt’. Cook”. According to The Fiddler’s Companion, a comprehensive website for traditional music, “Ricketts Hornpipe” remains a popular hornpipe tune in American traditional music, with a version recorded on 78rpm by Dan Sullivan’s Shamrock Band. It was imported back to England and appears under various names, including “Pigeon On The Gate” (Kuntz, Fiddler’s Companion, http://biblio.org/fiddlers/circus.htm, Accessed 8 January 2008. “Pigeon On The Gate” was a popular tune in the Mendip Hills in Somerset in the mid-1980s which is where I learnt to play it. Kuntz also lists as current tunes “Leslie’s Hornpipe”, a corruption of the original title “Astley’s Hornpipe” or “Astley’s Ride”. Durang also has a hornpipe named after him, which is still played, which he stated in his memoirs was composed by “Mr Hoffmaster, a German Dwarf, in New York, 1785”. This tune is reprinted in full (Downer 1966: 22), and is also an extant folk tune more commonly known as the “Manchester Hornpipe” (see e.g. Raven 1984: 159).
symmetrically patterned, according to Bouissac (1976: 134), like military drills or the ensemble movements of the corps de ballet), observers have commented on the fact that the horses appear to dance to the music. A review of Chiarini’s Royal Circus from the Sydney Morning Herald, 1873, describing the Arab steed ridden by a Miss Holloway, stated that “it danced to the music in a very intelligent and even graceful manner” (St Leon 1983: 75). But horses do not dance or keep time to the music (Speaight 1980: 59; Coxe 1952: 169; Moy 1978: 192). The music stimulates the visual perception of synchronisation, and this will be aided by the presence not only of well-trained horses, but also, logically, of a trainer who is musically aware enough to cue them to regular phrase lengths.82

The musical accompaniment iconicizes the horses’ movements by reducing them to a rhythm, either to achieve complete harmony, as is the case in liberty horse acts, or to achieve individual regularity, as in “haute école” acts (dancing horses). (Bouissac 1976: 131)

A dominant and regular auditory rhythm, therefore, appears to impose an impression of a regular visual rhythm. This may be because the ear “analyses, processes and synthesizes faster than the eye” (Chion 1994: 10). Cook, in a discussion of exploding volcanoes in Disney’s Fantasia, notes that the impression of metric regularity perceived in the combination of image and score, disappears when the image is watched without sound. The images are “appropriated by the audible rhythms of the score” (1998: 208). Annabel J. Cohen shows that perception of abstract physical shapes is influenced by musical rhythm. Her study involved the perception of a video animation involving three geometric objects, and how music influenced the perception of those objects. Noting that one figure, a small triangle, seemed “more active with one of the musical scores”, she considers it likely that the congruence between the temporal patterns (in effect the rhythm) of the music and the videoed motion of the triangle led to a focussing of attention on that figure rather than on the other figures present (Cohen 2000: 363).

82 A rare and interesting insight into the musical awareness of the trainer exists in one account of the mixed reactions to the Stravinsky score, Circus Polka for a Young Elephant, an elephant ballet written for the Ringling Brothers 1942 season, choreographed by Balanchine. While the band, led by Merle Evans, apparently struggled with the modernist difficulties of the score, more of a problem was that “the elephant boys could never pick out the changing rhythms of the piece so that they could “cue” the pachyderms with their hooks when it was time for the bulls to pick up their feet and “dance”” (Albrecht 1989: 129). However there appear to be so many apocryphal stories surrounding the history of this particularly famous piece, including that the elephants reacted very badly to the music, that it is hard to separate fact from fiction. Culhane, for example, notes that 425 performances of the ballet took place without any reports of bad behaviour by the elephants (1990: 243). Although presumably elephants have the same limitations when it comes to music as horses at least one critic was fooled, noting that “…Modoc, the elephant, danced with amazing grace and in time to the tune…” (Albrecht 1989: 129). The roots of this opinion are buried deep in history. Aelian also considered that elephants could dance to music (1958 V. II (11): 102-103).
Chion uses an evocative phrase “the ear that is in the eye” (1994: 135) to describe rapid images in film that appear to leave auditory impressions. Much earlier, however, Thomas Draxe stated that “musicke is the eye of the ear” (1654: 134) and I would argue that it is this “eye that is in the ear” that is important in the perception of a circus act.

While the selection of music is often conditioned by suitable rhythm, the chosen narrative presentation of the act will also influence choice. Whiteoak considers that there are grounds for assuming some similarities between the music used for melodramas and music used in narrative circus acts (1999b). Musicians certainly moved between circus, vaudeville and other theatrical performances (Whiteoak 1999b: xvii; Cannon 1997), and it seems likely that their musical practices would move with them, as they are likely to do today. The early circus also incorporated narrative performances (e.g. burlettas and ballets d’action) (Saxon 1978: 21; Speaight 1980: 36), and narrative scenes continued through the later developments. Mervyn King describes a simple pantomimic act, performed by Norman St Leon, his wife and three posing dogs, which displays many melodramatic elements. A musical medley was used, the different tunes employed for their linguistic references and familiarity to the audience, and descriptively (if somewhat simplistically) denoting the situations and emotions portrayed.

If he was posing the dogs for Off To The Hunt, you saw Norman with the gun on his shoulder and the dogs posing in stride but not moving anywhere. The ‘hunting we will go’ tune was played as an accompaniment. The right music was as important to the act as the settings in the act. There were about eight different settings altogether. There was Auld Lang Syne, Rock of Ages. In The Wounded Paw, the dog was acting as though it was injured and the man in the act was holding the dog’s foot. The Dying Pal was a very sad one too. For Dying to save the Colours, Norman dressed as a soldier, but all in white. (St Leon 1990a: 117).

In acts more straightforwardly reliant on demonstrations of skill, there are still levels on which music supports a narrative. In a discussion of lion acts, Bouissac notes various musical choices that could be made, choices that will then act as a “supplementary modifier”. He lists as examples “a tragic Wagnerian-type overture, an exotic tune, a typical ethnic tune, a national anthem, or popular contemporary music” (1976: 95). The two predominant approaches to the presentation of the lion in traditional circus are either as a savage beast to be mastered by the trainer (en

---

férocité) or in a quieter mode demonstrating ease and familiarity with the animal (en douceur or en pelotage) (Stokes 2004: 140), and both these approaches demand different musical choices.

The self-presentation of the trainer, including costume and choice of props used will further determine, and be determined by, the choice of music. The “glam-rock” appearance of Gunther Gebel-Williams or the “Indian rajah” costume worn by Rudolf Matthies (ibid. 145-6) both suggest obvious directions for the accompanying music, whether by supporting the narrative of contemporary relevance in the first example or the narrative of exoticism suggested by the second. Music therefore supports both a physical text and a narrative text.

It is therefore appropriate to consider music for circus as contributing to diegetic framing, even if the ‘diegesis’ of the circus act manifests a simpler narrative than those operating in script-based performance.

It is also appropriate to consider circus music for its contribution to emotional framing. Here traditional circus music appears to display a predominant emphasis on the use of affirmative emotional framing (both evocation and mirroring). One study considering the recognizability of emotion characteristics of music in a cross-cultural context lists the characteristics of ‘joyful’ music as being “fast in tempo, major in mode, wide in pitch, high in loudness, regular in rhythm and low in complexity” (Balkwill, Thompson et al. 2004: 337). These are all characteristics of traditional circus music. In listening to four collections of traditional American circus music84 the majority of the repertoire exhibited all these characteristics. For example, the predominant mode was major and when the minor mode was used it was exclusively in the context of the narrative of exoticism, though this musical ‘exoticism’ was more a case of displaying ‘exotic-icities’ with, for example, gestures to the flavour of Spanish music (a frequent accompaniment to equestrian acts) or to a more generalized ‘orientalism’.

If the circus act includes both exhilaration and risk, that the predominant emotional quality expressed by traditional circus music is ‘joyful’ confirms the function of the music as providing both excitement, and simultaneous reassurance. While the thrill of the circus spectacle includes the “demonstration and taunting of danger” (Stoddart 2000: 4), the crucial element is that the performer ultimately

84 The Merle Evans Circus Band, Circus Music from the Big Top, Legacy International, n.d.
demonstrates mastery of that danger. As Helen Stoddart notes “it is the unspoken law of the circus that the performer always gets up again and leaves the ring a conqueror of animal, machinery or gravity” (ibid. 95). Loss of control, and the attendant risk of real physical injury, is, for obvious reasons, undesirable.

The acknowledgement of danger can be seen in the culmination of the circus act, the ‘glory’ trick, which is frequently underlined by a cessation of the music into a tension-inducing drum roll, marking the climax of the act. Following the marking of the most difficult or dangerous trick, for which the drum roll functions as a ritual framing (and as ritual framing itself has a reassuring function), the music will typically resume in a ‘joyful’ coda. The difficult tricks will often be performed in silence, which, in the extraordinarily noisy environment that characterizes the bigger circuses, provides the aural equivalent of the bodily sensation of “holding of breath” (Tait 2005: 142). But this is only momentary. The resumption of the music instantly relaxes the tension.

The result is a notable absence in traditional circus of anempathetic music. The predominant emotional role of the music is to affirm the demonstration of control and this is, in effect, providing a meta-discourse. This meta-discourse also underlies the musical practice of ‘marking the tricks’, such as the crash of the cymbal to underline particular moments of physical action. This marking always occurs at the point of successful completion of the action, at the moment when mastery has been demonstrated, and is there also to stimulate audience participation, via applause, in the recognition of that mastery.

An extension of this discourse is in the shaping of the act from commencement to climax, and how the music supports that shaping. The simplest shape for a skills-based act will typically follow a straightforward ‘ascending’ trajectory, beginning with the least complex and demanding trick, and progressing through more complex and difficult skills, with the glory trick as the finale. Therefore, if music were to follow this trajectory it would need to start ‘small’ and progress steadily to ‘big’.

---

85 Jane Mullett mentions the drum roll as part of “the hyperbole related to the glorification of danger”, and notes that this is a specific direction of attention for the audience. This may be to direct attention to genuine physical risk for the performer, but could also be to stimulate a perception of risk where none exists (2006: 166).
86 For example, see St Leon who describes the band playing during Colleano’s performances as introducing a trick with a drum roll but thereafter remaining silent during the attempt at the trick, though he interprets this as being for the purposes of not disturbing his concentration (1993: 131).
87 Clown music can sometimes be an exception, in keeping with the frequently parodic role of the clown.
Core musical practices for ring action

But if the why (to support ring action and narrative presentation) and the what (the repertoire of popular song and dance music of the day and indications of instrumentation) are hard to determine in any detail from historical accounts, the question of how circus musicians have practically carried out their jobs is even more difficult to discern.

I argue that it is a set of practices of flexible delivery, rather than a tailored score, that in fact constitute the core of circus music as these practices remain a constant element while pieces in the repertoire are often interchangeable. A key function of music is to support ring action by temporal framing, achieved predominantly through the core musical element of rhythm. The nature of circus performance, though, involves periods of variable time.

It is hard to obtain any information about how much of the ring action the musicians would take note of, beyond establishment of a suitable rhythm and the presence of ‘stops’, for drum rolls and other special effects. This is further complicated by the particular demands of two- or three-ring circuses. Bouissac considers that music in the three-ring circus can only be considered as a “pervasive background noise, for it cannot possibly be in harmony with three or more simultaneously performed acts” (1976: 11). It appears likely that the circus band would actually be following the centre ring act, the highest status act, to which the outer ring acts would need to conform. Alfredo Codona, star aerialist in Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, stated:

…the performer who works in the center ring has an easy system by which he brings grief to other performers whose acts he does not desire to shine. He simply develops a penchant for changing his music, with the result that while the playing of the band is matched to his act, it is not matched to the others. Time is thereby destroyed, and good performers suddenly become bad ones. (qtd. in Fenner and Fenner 1970: 96)

Arthur Withers, a cornet player in the Australian Bullen’s Circus band in the 1950s, emphasizes the need for quick reactions on the part of the musicians, both for changes in length and changes in mood, and also to mark particular moments of an act. Changes in length could not only be achieved through repetition and sudden cuts to cue, but also by speeding up and slowing down, which he describes as a “gigantic rubato effect” (qtd. in Whiteoak 1999b: 82). Changes in tempo can be used to signal a change in mood, or employed to accompany a variation in the pace
of the act, and these could additionally be augmented or replaced by the use of *crescendo* and *decrecendo*. Withers also hints at the use of variations in texture, presumably in the use of solo instruments or sections of the band rather than the full ensemble (Whiteoak 1999a: 69).

Changes in tempo or dynamics are simple to effect at short notice as in each case there is only one musical parameter to consider. Sudden changes involving more than one parameter, such as a segue or shift to another section of music which may be both harmonically, melodically and rhythmically different are more complicated to effect, particularly if an ensemble is involved. The presence of a bandleader is essential to coordinate the ensemble response. This is aided by the presence of the percussionist who, having only one musical parameter to consider, becomes the crucial player able to effect the quick synchronization of spot effects, such as the ‘marking’ of the tricks with a drum roll or cymbal crash.

Arthur Withers confirmed how the presence of improvisation within a circus band was customary even when a score was used:

> Cornet or trumpet players would be playing off ‘legit’ [fully scored] parts and it depended on the complement how you played the music. ‘Cocka’ Newman on euphonium, who was the leader – he improvised nearly all the time. They might start the march off together [as written] and then he would ‘go off’. Davey Greenhorn would even do much more vamp[ing] and [so forth] on the tenor cor – he’d go all over the place… (qtd. in Whiteoak 1999b: 80)

Bouissac notes that while the band music for the production of a circus act will more usually consist of a complete score which “has been written or combined specially for the act”, the instructions to the musicians might “simply be elementary notes indicating to the Band Master at which phases the music must start, stop, be replaced by drums or change of pace” (1971: 846). Bouissac is describing the common practice within traditional circus (and new circus) where an already existing act is employed and incorporated wholesale into the program. In such cases the performer might very well provide the music they wish to be used for the act (Bouissac’s ‘complete score’).88

However, if the ‘complete score’ is subject to a considerable amount of functional improvisation, this is accentuated in a score that consists solely of

---

88 Con Colleano apparently brought some of the band arrangements he had used in Australia to the Merle Evans band in Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus including “a good march set to Spanish music” (St Leon 1993: 129). There is no further indication of what these consisted of.
'elementary notes'. In a contemporary example, Jeffrey Gaeto, one of the composers for the Pickle Family Circus stated:

There’s a lot of improvisation. …I remember a clown act. I was handed a piece of paper with eight bars on it with the chord names, and that was it. After a while, a lot of the music in the show becomes a group composition. (qtd. in Albrecht 2006: 74)

The ‘complete score’ might, in actuality, be far less complete than Bouissac suggests. It is also possible that the circus ‘score’ is an illusory ideal anyway. As Arthur Withers noted, even if playing from a score “it depended on the complement how you played the music”. While the large traditional circuses, particularly with a long-term contracted bandmaster, would be likely to have a repertoire of scored music, this cannot be assumed of the smaller circuses. But even the larger circuses appear to be likely to have varied in their complement of instruments, and presumably musical standard of personnel. As Sverre O. Braathen states:

A thirty piece band might have used as many as fifty different musicians during the course of a season because of the frequent changes in its personnel. The vast majority of musicians joining out with circuses did well to remain an entire season, many quitting the road after a week, a month, or at the summers end. (1971: para. 3)

There were some Australian circus bands that were noted for the quality of their music. Wirth’s, Fitzgerald’s, and the St Leon Great United Circus were all praised in their heyday for possessing particularly fine bands (St Leon 1983; 1990a; Whiteoak 1999a). Wirth’s Circus was founded by four brothers, all German musicians, who initially learned circus performance skills while playing in the band for Ashton’s Circus (Wirth 1925: 141; St Leon 1990a: 157-8).

But in smaller circuses the situation was markedly different. In the family structures of these circuses many, if not all, of the performers would be expected to double as musicians, and musical skills were taught to the circus children as a matter of course (St Leon 1990a: 54; Ramsland 1993: 83; Lord 1965). When not in the ring with their act, the performers would often join the band. If not augmented by specifically hired musicians, the band would obviously vary in size throughout the evening’s entertainment. Quality can also be assumed to have varied. This, though, appeared to be “all right for out in the bush” (St Leon 1993: 61).

Sid Baker remembers that with Perry’s Circus:

… we would start at 7.30 with as many as 12 players; one by one they would leave the bandstand to go into the ring and do an act or some other chores until finally
only Jimmy Perry on trumpet and myself on the sousaphone would be left to play the acts until the others returned one by one, when by the end of the performance, we had a full compliment of bandsmen again. (1961: 25-26)

Even a circus such as Wirth’s, which is considered to have provided a high standard of music, would occasionally come up against problems. Following a tour of South Africa in 1899, in the course of which the band had left the circus (George Wirth gives no further explanation for this), the subsequent tour of southern India had continued with whatever local musicians were available, with variable results in some towns:

The only thing we could get in the way of music was by three Indians who played on three yellow clarionettes. Their overture was “God Save the Queen,” and they played for their second attempt and our first act a few bars of “Ta-ra boom-de-ay.” They would keep on repeating these few bars over and over. Then for the next act they played “God Save” again, and so on, until Philip, who was performing the brumby horses to the tune of “God Save,” stopped them, and told them to get out, to the amusement of the English audience. (1925: 118)

If this example might be considered a nadir in the musical support for ring action, it does demonstrate that analysis of live circus music cannot be limited to the study of the musical repertoire, whether that is obtained by commercial recordings of circus music, which will consist of the music in toto rather than in the actual performance realization of them, or in any score notation of those tunes. Discussion of circus music can only be fully contained within the context of a one-time performance analysis.

The commonality of techniques typically employed by musicians to deal with the demands of changing ring action are based around the use of functional improvisation, underpinned by the principles of the ‘round and round’ and the ‘cut to cue’ as noted in Chapter Two. The practicalities of accompanying the variable time inherent in the circus also appear to favour a particular ‘modular approach’ to composition. Brigitte LaRochelle, composer for The Big Apple Circus says of her practice:

I've lettered sections of the music A, B, C. If an act goes long, or the performers have to repeat a trick, Rob [Slowik, the conductor] can take the band back to a letter to repeat the music as necessary.” (qtd. in Albrecht 2006: 77)

Similarly Miriam Cutler, composer for Circus Flora designs music:
in a modular way. ... Janine [Del Arté, conductor] calls it as she’s watching the acts. The band learns the sections and when she sees that a change is needed, she’ll just say, “C,” and they’ll go into C section. (qtd. in ibid. 83-84)

Both of these examples demonstrate a contemporary approach to what appears to have been common historical practice, not only in circus, but in many other forms of theatrical performance.

The impact of recorded music

But even if there were inevitable variations in the quality of structural support given to the circus performance by the live circus band, the introduction of recorded music obviously imposed a particular problem in relation to support for ring action. St Leon states that Edison’s ‘talking machine’ or phonograph was introduced to Australia by W. W. Cole’s Circus in 1881, along with electric light, and the ‘American Indian’, and exhibited in a museum tent alongside his circus performances (2007a: 252), although it appears likely that the introduction of the phonograph to Australia was slightly earlier. Although St Leon dates the decline of the live circus band to after the First World War, citing increasing labour costs and the unionisation of the musicians, live music remained dominant in Australian circus until the early 1930s, when Wirth’s Circus, the largest of the time, began to substitute recorded music (St Leon 2007b: 328). First to go was the pre-show music, as, in the early days of recording, the novelty value of an early gramophone was a drawcard (and saved the expense of paying the musicians extra for the pre-show performance). Philip Wirth wrote:

Between the hours of 7 and 8, early comers are held entranced by a delightful programme of recorded music reproduced on the superb panatrope [sic]90 belonging to the show. All the greatest artistes and bands the world has produced,

---


90 The panotrope was the trade name for the first all-electric phonograph developed for domestic use by the Brunswick company and first marketed in 1925 (Gelatt 1977: 227).
may be heard during this period, and at 8 o’clock sharp, the actual show commences with the overture, “Poet and Peasant.” (1934: 15)

Silver’s Circus, established in 1945, used recordings from its inception for the performance itself, and Perry’s Circus by this time also used recorded music, including popular songs of the period (St Leon 1990a: 202). In America a musician’s union strike led to a brief experiment with recorded music for the performances in Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1943, though Merle Evans’ popularity ensured the retention of the circus band until his retirement in 1969 (Albrecht 1989: 87).

While recorded music had obvious financial benefits given the rapidly escalating costs of circus, it was also inflexible when circumstances changed in the ring. Peggy St Leon said:

I can remember that when we [St Leon’s Circus] were in Adelaide [1930] I heard my first panotrope … and it was playing music on a merry-go-round. I can remember Mum saying, “Why don’t you cut out the band and have this panotrope?” But Papa and Uncle Syl didn’t like the idea because, at least with a band of live musicians, you could play chords at the end of each act and you couldn’t do that with mechanical music… (St Leon 1990a: 135)

Sid Baker also lamented the use of recorded music:

… now that progress has taken a hand, the robot bands make a poor attempt to imitate. It is such a pity because I have yet to hear a recorded programme of music that fits a circus performance adequately and come[s] anywhere near the real thing. Real circus music is not recorded. (1961: 26)\(^91\)

While recorded music is now used in many smaller and ‘traditional’ circuses (at least partly due to budgetary considerations), a distinguishing feature in the development of new circus was the reintroduction of music composed specifically for the circus and performed live\(^92\) (Mullett 2006: 181-183; Albrecht 2006: 71ff). The majority of the new circus shows viewed for this research used live music,\(^93\) which, while reflecting contemporary musical taste and instrumentation, is able to support ring action in the same way as the wind band.

---

\(^{91}\) See also Braathen (1971: para.34) for similar sentiments.

\(^{92}\) The use of original music, and also of classical music was a feature of Russian circus performance throughout the twentieth century (see Hammarstrom 1983). Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus also included classical music from the early 1940s onwards.

\(^{93}\) Professional ‘new’ circus companies using live music viewed for this research were: Circus Oz, Cirque du Soleil and Les 7 Doigts (a mixture of live and recorded music). Non-professional circus (student and community) companies using live music were: two student productions Synesthesia and Do Not Pass Go from the National Institute of Circus Arts, and the Women’s Circus.

New circus companies using recorded music were The Flying Fruit Fly Circus (Circus Girl) and Circa. All the ‘traditional’ circus companies viewed used recorded music: Cirque Royale, Silvers Circus and Cirque Surreal. See Appendix I for details.
If a problem with recorded music is synchronization with the action, there are different approaches taken to solving this. In Silver’s Circus and Cirque Surreal, both contemporary ‘traditional’ circuses using recorded music, the accompaniment for individual acts most commonly consisted of a tripartite musical medley with different rhythms (or, conversely, lack of rhythmic pulse) as the main determinant, often increasing in tempo or in musical density during the act to provide a climax. A typical structure would be a slow or pulseless introduction (if the act required set-up, such as entrance and ascent to aerial equipment), with a rhythmic section commencing at the beginning of the ‘tricks’. The recorded music was varied in both circuses with certain ‘spot’ effects, (similar to the traditional use of percussion ‘hits’ to mark particular pieces of action), provided by the operator. Current recording and editing technology makes this increasingly possible, and the growth of DJ culture facilitates this from both a technological and an aural point of view.

The work of Circa is interesting in that the company has used both live music and recorded music in its productions. Circa’s use of live music, though, has, in its indifference to ‘ring action’, approached the nature of the recorded artifact. Conversely, the use of recorded compiled scores in recent performances approaches a state in which the unchanging nature of the recording becomes not a limitation, but a feature that supports the structural discourse of the performance.

**Circa**

‘Traditional’ live circus music can be defined by a set of practices (functional improvisation) and an approach to form (malleable and modular). This is underpinned by a strong, regular rhythmic impulse derived from dance and movement and couched within a predominant emotional framing of reassurance. The performance of *Sonata for Ten Hands* (2000) by Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus (Circa) demonstrated a very different set of aesthetic principles, a difference that is largely predicated on the company’s use of music, under the artistic direction of Yaron Lifschitz.

*Sonata for Ten Hands* was staged with four circus performers to sonatas by Brahms and Schumann,\(^4\) performed live by classical pianist Tamara Anna Cislovska. The concert performance of these sonatas in their entirety meant that,

---

rather than the forms of music being subordinated to the demands of circus, the
structure of the circus had to conform to the music.

This music did not mark tricks, did not set up an unchanging rhythmic pulse
or an unchanging emotional framing, and did not follow the shape of a ‘traditional
act’ in any way. The circus performers were not supported by the music, but
conformed to it. There was superficially a resemblance to dance, an art form that is
able to match its choreography to extended musical forms. But the element of risk
involved in circus means that it is not possible to fully choreograph an act. The
construction of a high stack of chairs in order to perform balancing acts on top of
them (as in this performance) is not something that can be exactly choreographed,
and nor, for safety reasons, should it be, yet the music accompanying this act
proceeded regardless. The performance, therefore, involved a mixture of
choreography and improvisation.

Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus began in 1986 as a youth project by Street Arts
Community Theatre (now Interchange), culminating in a production at the Rialto
Theatre in Brisbane. At the conclusion of that project a core group continued as an
independent company. Through the following decade their work can be seen as a
successful example of new circus, combining narrative and thematic elements with a
political focus, producing shows dealing with AIDS education, human rights, body
image and youth detention (Balkin 2005).95

The employment of Yaron Lifschitz as director in 1999 marked a break in their
practice, and the company has since embarked on a period of restless exploration of
circus form and aesthetics. This change in direction was acknowledged in 2004 by
the adoption of a new name, Circa. By this stage shows had been performed to the
music of Mozart, Shostakovich, Astor Piazzola and Arvo Pärt and it was clear that
the company was anything but ‘rock ‘n’ roll’. The company now trades under the
name Circa (Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus Ensemble). For the purposes of this research I will
use ‘Circa’ to refer to all the shows directed by Lifschitz, acknowledging that the
early shows of his tenure were performed under the company’s former name.

The development of Circa’s aesthetic (so far) can be divided into three periods,
which are also marked by development in their use of music. Sonata for Ten Hands
(2000) and Figaro Variations (2002) are examples of a significant change in direction
for the existing company; Naked (2003) and A Love Supreme (2004) can be

95 For discussion of previous work by Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus see, for example, Peta Tait (2001).
considered bold ‘middle period experimentation’, and The Space Between (2004) and by the light of stars that are no longer (2007) as mature works with an assured and confident aesthetic.

Sonata for Ten Hands and Figaro Variations were notable for their use of classical music with circus performance, and foregrounding the use of this music, which in both shows was performed live. In Sonata for Ten Hands, the role of the pianist was as equal partner with the circus performers, a role also indicated in the title of the show. Figaro Variations employed a piano trio, led by pianist Paul Hankinson, who performed arrangements of Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro, K492, the Piano Trio No 2, Op. 67 by Shostakovitch, and music composed by Hankinson himself.

Both shows had a narrative basis. Sonata for Ten Hands explored the world of childhood power struggles and their development into the adult world. Figaro Variations, as the title suggests, explored the story of Mozart’s opera in the first act (Love); extending its themes in the second act (Revolution) to explore some of the political implications of the Beaumarchais original play (1988/1780) (set to Shostakovitch); and ended with the exploration of redemption in the third act (Forgiveness), set to a minimalist score by Hankinson.

Naked (2003), set to the music of Arvo Pärt, and A Love Supreme (2004), set to the music of John Coltrane and Charles Mingus, marked a move away from narrative. Naked contained a number of unusual elements. It opened with a solo juggling act performed by Davey Samford, which, as only three balls were used, was an unusual choice in professional circus performance. This act was performed in a tight circle of light although Samford remained outside the light for a considerable portion of the act. This centralized the manipulation of the three balls, while the performer remained a shadowy figure. Rockie Stone’s chair balancing act was performed with no music, but Stone talked directly to the audience about how the act worked, how she had learnt it and what she liked about doing it, a post-Brechtian performance exposing the mechanics of the act. Andrew Bright’s final trapeze routine did not evoke the triumph over gravity, but rather the constant presence of gravity including staged falls from the equipment. In a particularly intriguing scene, Stone performed a single rope act in very little light, the light instead centering on the figure of a man (Bright) who appeared caught in a private moment, moving almost imperceptibly to a blues song, reminiscent of a person lost in music in their own lounge room. While the performance contained elements of
‘traditional’ circus acts, the presentation of those acts appeared to question the very nature of the ‘traditional’ act.

A Love Supreme (2004), pursued the experiments with improvisational form to the extreme. This show, performed to two canonic jazz recordings, became a performance that was completely improvised, in effect becoming visual jazz. The circus act here became further fragmented. Performers might take a ‘solo’, but there might equally be a split focus with different skills inhabiting different areas of the stage. Skills were repeated during the performance, analogous with the musical device of theme and variations.

While Naked had been presented in the round (within a square rather than a ring), A Love Supreme was presented on a conventional stage – end-on so that the performance could take place against a backdrop of projected graphics and fragmentary text for the first section, and against real-time projections of the performers in the second. Both shows had moved away from the exploration of narrative and into the exploration of form and firmly placed Circa at one extreme of new circus performance styles, although Lifschitz acknowledges that shows had been of varying quality.

The gradual stripping away of circus apparatus, and eschewing the usual structure of the ‘traditional’ act in its progression of ‘tricks’, blurs the line between circus and physical theatre. As the circus act is deconstructed so is the nature of the performance and the performers’ relation to each other and to the audience.

The relentless interrogation of circus form and tradition continued in The Space Between and its successor by the light of stars that are no longer, both shows with a unified and assured artistic vision. Both used almost no circus apparatus apart from aerial equipment, balancing poles and mats. Staple acts of previous shows, acts predicated on the skill areas of the performers were missing. There were no juggling balls, no hoops, no tightwire, no pile of balancing chairs. The performance consisted largely of acrobatic floor work and adagio. The focus was on ensemble performance rather than on individual skill presentation.

Both shows used a compiled score that, unlike the unified compositional elements of earlier shows, consisted of an eclectic selection of music. The core music of The Space Between was songs by Jacques Brel, interspersed with J. S. Bach, Darrin Verhagen, Cake, Aphex Twin and others, a mix which continued to

97 Indicated in interviews with the researcher, April 2007.
change as the show developed while touring. By the light of stars that are no longer currently (at time of writing) uses music by Arvo Pärt, Leonard Cohen, Sigur Rós, The Velvet Underground, múm, Radiohead, Elluvium, DJ Shadow, Autopoeisis, with additional music by David Carberry, a member of the circus ensemble. This selection, though, is likely to also change as the show tours and develops.

If the early shows, with their emphasis on narrative, straddled a divide between circus and physical theatre, some reviews of The Space Between saw it as rather “straddling the divide between circus and contemporary dance” (Woodhead 2005). Lifschitz resists this definition, citing the imprecision of circus movement in comparison to dance:

The basic movement unit in circus is the whole limb extension, whether it’s lifting someone up into a high bird, or a tumble or an acrobatic move, whereas in dance you might just be focussing on the movement of an elbow or a finger joint. That’s not the block of a circus thing. And you’re going to have to do that [whole limb extension] in real time. You can’t mess with that one when it’s got actual weight on it. (2007a)

But the comparison with dance is interesting, because circus and dance work with music in very different ways, and it is Circa’s use of music that both defines and distinguishes it from traditional and most new circus.

The music of Circa

As discussed earlier, traditional circus music involves a core set of practices that support the ring action. These practices are couched within a dominant affirmative discourse of reassurance. The music follows the action, and while foregrounded in performance, supports, but does not completely dictate the structure of the act. The traditional trajectory of an act is an ‘upward’ one, of gradually increasing difficulty and complexity, and therefore it follows that if the music is to support this trajectory it is also likely to ‘get bigger’ through the course of the act, climaxing at the end. So within a repetitive musical framework (or loop), the reiterations of the basic musical material will frequently climax through accretion.98 The purpose of the

98 This is achieved through various means such as increase in dynamics or speed, modulation (usually to a higher key), or increased density of texture. While recognizing that this will not pertain to every circus act in performance, nevertheless this can be easily perceived in practice. For example, Cirque du Soleil’s production of Varekai (viewed Melbourne, 20 April 2007), contained four acts (Straps, Russian Swing, Quadruple Aerials, Risley act), for which the music sets up a dominant loop pattern, then modulates to another key. These four acts all have a tripartite musical structure. Similarly Silver’s Circus (a ‘traditional’ circus viewed in Melbourne, 30 May 2007) contained a number of acts that, while performed to recorded music, also contained a similar tripartite structure and build. Thus the structural aspect to the music was similar in two circuses, one of which is currently the dominant new circus, the other a contemporary ‘traditional’ circus. The tripartite build was also
accretive climax is to stimulate the increase of excitement as the act progresses to the finale. This particular teleology differentiates circus from theatre and dance. Dance has no equivalent dominant trajectory, and therefore no corresponding structural imperative for its music, and so performing circus to the music of Brahms and Schumann, music that is not adapted in any way to a circus ‘act’, will bring that circus closer to a dance aesthetic.

With Circa, as there is a definite progression in circus language through the evolution of the company’s aesthetic, there is also a progression in their use of music. However, as the company’s particular circus aesthetic has matured, the use of music has become more conventional, at least in the complexity of the musical structures. The extended rhetorical structure of sonata form represents a particular apogee of musical development that is resistant to any alteration in its structure. The music for Sonata for Ten Hands, presenting these extended forms in their entirety, can therefore be considered the ‘music least likely’ to be suitable for circus. Cisłowska, the pianist, recognized the “strange choice” of music, but also the purpose behind that choice. She stated that “[Lifschitz] was looking for works that had a tremendous sense of structure, a grand architecture that the circus could use as inspiration for a narrative” (Murdoch 2001).

Similarly the second act of Figaro Variations was, of necessity, structured by the extended form of the Shostakovich Piano Trio. This, though, marked the extreme of Circa’s practice. Mozart’s The Marriage of Figaro, which formed the basis for the first act, was used more flexibly. The original opera, with its mixture of recitative and aria has a more episodic construction, and the opera was not performed in its entirety, but rather ‘selected from’, apparently both through musical imperatives (such as choosing what could be considered the more ‘popular’ of the arias) and with some consideration of the dramaturgy (a desolate hoop act was performed by the character of the Countess to “Porgi, Amor”, the aria from the opera which recounts her sadness at the loss of her husband’s love). This was a reworking, a variation of the opera, and this approach extended to the alteration and adaptation of Mozart, using its themes for blues and ragtime variants (which in one section became reminiscent of silent film practice when the aria “Voi, Che Sapete” was performed in a honky-tonk style with added melodramatic shock chords and suspense tremolos following and supporting the staged action).

---

present in Cirque Surreal (viewed Edinburgh, 19 Aug 2007), basically a ‘traditional’ circus in its structure, with some new circus ‘dressing’.
If the rigorous structure of the music in these shows functioned to produce rather than accompany the action, this changed with *Naked*, which was primarily set to three instrumental pieces by Arvo Pärt: *Fratres*, *Für Alina* and *Spiegel im Spiegel*. Pärt’s ‘minimalist’ music is quiet, meditative and harmonically directionless. The lack of a strong pulse means that it is also rhythmically directionless. The absence of either rhythmic or harmonic vectors creates stasis, a silence into which sounds are dropped.

While the use of extended musical forms challenged the usual structural trajectory of the ‘traditional’ act, the use of Pärt challenged the rhythmic underpinning of the circus act. This had a curious effect that was most obvious in the acts in which the circus equipment itself imposes a rhythm. Chelsea McGuffin’s hoop act, performed to *Spiegel im Spiegel*, demonstrated a disjunction between the rhythm of an act and the rhythm of the music. In a hoop act, the hoops are circulated round the body rhythmically. Whether this is fast or slow depends as much on the skill of the performer as on personal choice. Once the overall tempo-rhythm is established it tends to be maintained throughout the act, although there are unavoidable, if slight, losses of momentum as hoops are transferred to other limbs. Here the presence of a dominant musical rhythm aids in the perception of a synchronous, unvarying visual rhythm. A hoop act will generally be performed to music that will pick up on the overall tempo of the act, which is in fact the tempo of the equipment, the hoop rather than the horse.

But in McGuffin’s hoop act in *Naked*, the extremely slow pulse of the music undercut the rhythm of the hoops, revealing another contradictory rhythm; that of the performer within the hoops. A skilled hoop performer effects the movement of the hoops through almost imperceptible individual isolations of movement by different parts of her body. The aesthetic aim is for the performer’s movements to be minimal. While the hoops circulate at sometimes dizzying speed, the performer in the middle of the hoops appears very still. It is this ‘still performer’ that the stillness of Pärt’s music supports.

The music for both *A Space Between* and *by the light of stars that are no longer* inhabits a different aesthetic. Both shows are set to diverse *musics*, including contemporary electronica, twentieth century popular song, and classical music, a post-modern score where the ocean of available recorded music is selectively fished.

---

99 Both shows are currently in repertoire.
As Lifschitz stated, this is an approach that is mediated by current technology, in that he is able to “sit with five thousand songs on my iPod and try anything” (2007a).

He described the musical design for by the light of stars that are no longer:

Unusually for me I had two weeks of creative time before the performers arrived and I’d spent two weeks putting together very elaborately crafted music, a structured music in terms of a relationship between the parts that was sublime. It was symphonic, almost fugal in its conception, composed with other people’s pieces of music yet highly deliberate. But it went out of the window because it just didn’t work. A lot of that music is still in the show but in terms of how it’s structured a lot isn’t there.

There are lots of pieces of music we try and use that … work very well for a bit of time but then they run out of puff, it doesn’t get any deeper. And those are the ones we chuck. There was one piece that opened the show that we had to get rid of and then it came back when we needed something else and it’s now in the second part. I’ve been pretty cynical about the contemporary – Sigur Rós and múm, that contemporary Icelandic sound thing – I’d always thought it was pretty trivial and there is a part of me that still does, but there’s a lot that is very good. There’s one piece of music that we’ll change in the show- we didn’t have time to move it on in the time we had. I have a better piece but Dave [Carberry] didn’t have time to learn how to perform to it. There was this whole New York thing going on for a while with another Velvet Underground piece and a Sonic Youth piece. The whole show went to New York in the middle for a bit and then most of that, except for one Velvet Underground track [“After Hours”] all went. That was such a great piece I couldn’t not use it. That scene got added about three days before we went into the theatre. I thought the piece was a bit heavy and it needed a kooky dance. (ibid.)

The simpler musical forms used in these two shows appear to conform to the historically pragmatic relationship between circus and music, based on musical forms that are malleable enough to facilitate the real-time indeterminacy of circus performance. The most extended musical form used is the smaller unit of song rather than the extended architecture of the sonata. Where ‘classical’ music is used, it is in either relatively simple forms (the opening Aria from J. S. Bach’s Goldberg Variations, BWV 988, essentially a 32-bar binary song form used for The Space Between), or the minimalism of Arvo Pärt. The contemporary electronica used in both this show and in by the light of stars that are no longer generally contains loop structures based on four-bar units. Lifschitz gives reasons for this change:

The glitchy, loop-based stuff we’ve been working with, though I have questions about it as music, it’s about the right phrase length to the work we do. We can interrupt it but essentially it doesn’t matter what bar or two of the sample it is. … Some of the things that ended up on the cutting-room floor were things that were
probably much bolder musical choices but we either weren’t ready or they weren’t right for this show. … I wanted to make this show so that everything – music, lights, performance – supported each other but were not too present in their own terms. I see the show as being a series of reflections both about itself and between parts of itself, so I needed music that had space in it. Anything that wasn’t suggestive enough or too present seemed to get removed. (ibid.)

**Emotional, diegetic and metadiegetic framing in The Space Between**

There was a mixed critical reaction to the diverse musical compilation in *The Space Between*. One review described it as an “integrated soundtrack” (Mercer 2005), another as “an eclectic and at times jarring array of music” (Woodhead 2005). A number of reviewers obviously approved the musical choices, as either “excellent”, “moody and deliberate” (Goodyear 2005), and (the general catch-all description) “evocative” (Nelms 2004; Wills 2004). In another review, the music is singled out for particular criticism as being “taxingly various (a through-composed score please!)” (Gallasch 2007).

Only one review hinted at a functional aspect for the music beyond the emotional. Cameron Woodhead described “a conflict at the heart of the physical performance … between intimacy and alienation, between sensuality and torment – and the sound design accentuates those tensions” (2005). This statement, while ambiguous, does point to a correspondence between the dislocations of the musical score and dislocations within the performance.

Acknowledging the limited scope of reviews as broad descriptions rather than analyses, they are useful as verifiable examples of individual ‘points of reception’. Therefore the arguments that follow are predicated on a sample of ten reviews, and I acknowledge the limitations of the sample.

A consistent refrain of the reviews is that any narrative, situations and themes are the province of the physical performance; the music is merely ‘evocative’. ‘Evocative’ is viewed as a positive quality. ‘Evocative’, however, is curiously meaningless as an adjective unless it is ‘of…[something]’. One review stated:

… Circa explores the age-old saga [the love triangle] using nothing but the connections and spaces between three bodies. … Restricted almost entirely to acrobatic floor work, the three remain impassive in their facial expressions, choosing to convey meaning solely through physical movement. French crooner Jacques Brel provides a consistent romantic musical overtone as they interchange partnerships and sketch out all-too-familiar scenarios. (Drew 2005, researcher’s italics)
This reflects a problematic assignment of meaning when a performance is imagined as inhabiting a solely physical space, that is, a ‘wordless’ space.

Circa’s performers do not speak. In the reviewer’s imagination, therefore, it is all the more impressive that they manage to communicate complex themes. But the performance is bathed in language; in this instance the songs of Jacques Brel, as a song is as much linguistic as it is musical. Even assuming that an English-speaking audience may not understand the French lyrics, it is likely that the educated, theatrically literate audience for Circa’s more experimental work would at least understand the word ‘amour’, which features heavily in the songs used in the show. But even if the lyrics are not understood at any level, there exists the cultural stereotype, shown by the above reviewer, that axiomatically links ‘French’ and ‘love’.

But why is it so easy to make this identification; an identification that is crucial to the interpretation of Circa’s physicality? I will discuss this in relation to two scenes which used Brel’s songs.

The final scene of the show is performed to “Ne Me Quitte Pas”, which is probably one of the more well-known of Brel’s songs to an Anglophone audience, some of whom might know this song via Rod McKuen’s translated rendition “If you go away” (1966) (Tinker 2005b: 181-182), inadequate though that translation might be. This song is used for a three person adagio sequence, performed in a tightly focussed patch of light, in which the three performers are in almost constant physical contact, intertwining their bodies.

The song could be considered a ‘torch song’ although this appellation is more usually applied to female singers, in the sense that it is a song that “carries a torch”, a song of unrequited or unreciprocated love. “Ne Me Quitte Pas” is a sustained plea for the lover to stay. The singer makes a series of extravagant promises (“… je t’offrirai/Des perles de pluie/Venues du pays/Où il ne pleut pas”), promises which by the last verse recede into abasement, of wishing to be hidden in the lover’s shadow (“L’ombre de ton ombre/ L’ombre de ta main/L’ombre de ton chien”).

The lyrics are powerful and poetic and their expression is mirrored in the musical line; the desperate promise in an upwardly yearning melody, offset by the

---

100 In early versions of this show, including in the original version I saw, there were short moments of spoken text. These completely disappeared from later shows.
101 As distinguished from the work they do for corporate contracts and for family audiences.
102 Studies of Brel’s work include Tinker (2002; 2005; 2005b) and Poole (2003; 2004). These studies focus on the literary qualities of Brel’s lyrics rather than on the music. Tinker includes a few remarks on the music, while Poole virtually ignores the fact that these are songs rather than poetry.
103 This song was lampooned as a ‘torch’ song in Cirque du Soleil’s show, Varekai.
104 I will offer you/ Pearls of rain/That come from a land/Where it does not rain (author’s translation).
105 The shadow of your shadow/the shadow of your hand/the shadow of your dog (author’s translation).
downward spiral of the title and hook line (“ne me quitte pas”), a reiteration of a two-note figure in a descending sequence. This is a musically expressed ‘dying fall’, a sinking to one’s knees. The repetitions of this phrase ensure that the plea is dominant within the song.

The instrumentation is minimal, beginning with sparse solo piano, which only gradually becomes more florid, and only in the last section of the song is it joined by quiet strings and flute. The string harmonies do not merely echo previous harmony, but add some chromatic instabilities of their own. There is no closure, the song ends with a poignant flute figure that consists of ‘wrong’ notes, notes that emphasize the instability of the harmony. This instability underlines the impression that this is not a love affair that ends happily, the impression is that the lover is already through the door.

A strong rhythmic pulse is absent, as Brel’s vocal line approaches the conversational through the use of speech rhythms and rubato. Longing is conveyed through the alternation of declamatory passion and despair, the move from the articulate to the inarticulate, through the intense emotion of Brel’s delivery. As Sean Cubitt notes, it is the voice that “evokes desire through its promise of intimacy” (1984: 211), and, even without knowledge of the lyrics, Brel’s singing style is able to communicate intense passion. His voice is aptly described by Joëlle Deniot as a “voix de chair et de cendres” (2002: 711), a voice that bespeaks intimacy. The songs of Jacques Brel therefore function as ‘ancrage’, as ‘evocative of’ love, for physical images that are not of themselves explicit.

The physical imagery ‘evocative of’ love is performed physical intimacy. But circus is physically intimate, not ‘evocative of’ physical intimacy. A couple engaged in an adagio sequence are an actual presence that is physically intimate. They hold on to each other and to parts of each other’s bodies in an immediate way that does not form part of the usual repertoire of people’s interactions in social spaces. This is the ‘actuality’ of circus. To call something intimate already contains an ambiguity in that intimacy can be either physical or emotional, or both physical and emotional. But an adagio as a repertoire of physical movements involving close bodily contact need not be read as emotionally intimate, even as the performers are physically

---

106 The recording used in the show was a version recorded in 1972. Earlier recordings of the song used different instrumentation, such as the use of the Ondes Martinot in the original 1959 recording for the album La Valse À Mille Temps (Barclay).
107 A voice of flesh and ash (author’s translation).
intimate. It could be read as a ‘really neat trick involving two people standing on each other.’

For the ‘actual’ physical intimacy to be read as ‘illusory’ emotional intimacy (‘illusory’ in the sense that it is performed emotional intimacy, to be actually emotionally intimate is obviously not a prerequisite for the performers), the physical movements have to be invested with something else that is exterior to the physical necessities of the act. This may be gestural inflection or facial expression which may then suggest ‘jealously holding on’ rather than ‘holding on so a balance may be completed’, potentially moving a circus adagio sequence closer to the narrative ‘illusion’ of theatre. But the adagios in The Space Between are ‘not quite’ narrative. The eyes of the performers ‘do not quite meet’, and there is elusiveness about their contact. The actuality does not completely elide into illusion. There is an open-endedness that lends itself to a range of interpretations. The performers are not acting out a particular situation and the audience is left to fill in the gaps. The music of Jacques Brel provides information that crucially contributes to the reading of emotional intimacy.

As Kassabian points out, the compiled score is subject to ‘opening outward’, so its identifications cannot be predicted (2001). It is possible that every audience member will have a different reaction to and interpretation of the songs of Jacques Brel. However other reviewers who commented on the use of Brel’s music also identified it as being about ‘love’:

With the French renowned as most fluent in the international language of love, the music of Jacques Brel is well chosen. (Goodyear 2005)

… chansons of Jacques Brel – the torch songs of tortured romance. (Nelms 2004)

The disembodied voice of Brel in effect acts like the film ‘voice-over’, a narrative device that Chion considers “has the power to make visible the images it evokes through sound – that is to change the setting, to call up a thing, moment, place, or characters at will” (1994: 172).

In a Deleuzian sense (2007: 348ff), what is imported into the physical performance is the territory of ‘romance’, a social territory that is defined by the intimate space. The attribution of emotional intimacy is linked with the evocation of the virtual intimate space. There is a complex chain of resonances, of associations that are formed from the music which transfer to the physical images, anchoring the physical images in meaning.
But the songs do not completely determine the meaning, as there is a further transference back from the physical images to the music. If Brel affords an interpretation of ‘love’ to the physical images, then the images also afford an interpretation of Brel that reduces to ‘love’, and are almost inevitably so reduced, as, without a fluent knowledge of French, the poetic subtlety of the lyrics will not be perceived. The music therefore, while providing ‘ancrage’, does not completely determine an interpretation. It sits in an oblique relation textually to the physical movement, informing but not completely defining. The theory that lyrics function as ‘speaking for’ a character can be extended to include situations where character is not present or is ill-defined, the lyrics in effect ‘speaking for’ a more universal situation.

Meaning in this show is therefore not constructed, as the reviewer suggested, “using nothing but the connections and spaces between three bodies” or “solely through physical movement”. But even within an open-ended set of possible interpretations, it is also not accurate to state, as does another reviewer, that “Circa invites its observers to interpret these poetically shaped circus acts and repertoire of startling movements in any way they choose” (Wills 2004). The relationship between physical gesture and music directs to a range of interpretations within limits.

“Ne Me Quitte Pas” does not function to support any traditional idea of the circus act. It does not mirror the performers’ actions, unsurprisingly as it was written before Circa was conceived, yet neither, apart from length, is the act itself ‘worked to the music’. The choreography for this scene is largely improvised within a loose framework and repertoire of ‘tricks’. The song’s primary importance is as emotional framing, as evocation, but this is not its only function.

A further act in the performance was set to another Brel song, “La Valse à Mille Temps”. The music here conforms more closely to the telos of the ‘traditional’ act. The act set to this music was also, at this level, simpler to understand as an ‘act’. In this act, the performer, James Kingsford-Smith,108 left prostrate on the floor at the end of the previous scene, attempts to get up. But his feet are ‘stuck’ to the floor. He performs contortions in order to detach his feet from the floor, and succeeds, only to then find that his hands are now equally ‘stuck’. Increasingly elaborate and improbable contortions and acrobatic stunts ensue, in each case to

---

108 Kingsford-Smith is the current performer of this act as the show’s personnel has changed over time. My discussion is based on his particular realization of this act, which is different, though following the same basic concept, to earlier versions of the scene.
‘un-stick’ various body parts from either the floor or each other, each successful un-sticking inevitably ending in another, increasingly ridiculous, adhesive problem. This is set up by the director as a highly skilled comedic performance that simultaneously lampoons and affirms acrobatic virtuosity. As a stand-alone act it could easily sit within a more traditional circus performance. It is very funny, it demonstrates immense skill and it’s ‘meaning’ is ostensibly simple: “this is what happens if you inadvertently find yourself with glue on your feet…”. “La Valse à Mille Temps”, which is (on one level) a comedic song, begins as a gentle waltz that accelerates to the point of incomprehensibility, in its own way a demonstration of tongue-twisting sung virtuosity.

“La Valse à Mille Temps” has an important structural function for this virtuoso, comedic, ‘stand-alone’ act in that it follows the trajectory of a ‘traditional’ act. The opening of the song is suggestive of the fairground, its opening instrumentation redolent of a carousel, with flutes imitating the timbre of a calliope. The tempo is moderate and the music texture light. The progression of the song from a “valse à trois temps” to a “valse à mille temps” is one of steadily increasing tempo, the resultant tongue-twisting virtuosity of the vocal line eventually stumbling over itself to end in inarticulacy.

While the tempo increase is the most prominent feature, the musical materials undergo other accretive processes. The pitch range of the instruments steadily increases, the number of instruments increase and their parts become more florid, resulting in an increase in amplitude. The pulse not only increases in tempo, there are increasing subdivisions of the beat, which themselves create the semblance of a tempo increase. While the melodic and harmonic material of this song is very simple (a circular, limited pitch melody, over a two chord tonic/dominant progression) the interest is provided by increasing instrumental colour, culminating in a fanfare-like brass, which coincides with a semitone modulation upwards (a ‘pump-up’) to provide the climax of the song. The vocal line undergoes a similar elaborative process in the final verse, straying from the defined compass of the melody to a freer vocalization. The deployment of the musical resources ensures a steady increase in excitement, a linear progression from ‘small to big’, the trajectory of the ‘traditional’ circus act, and of much ‘traditional’ circus music. The music, though, has a sting in the tail as there is no closure but rather an abrupt termination of both the orchestra and the vocal line in an interrupted cadence.
As Brel’s songs comprise the musical core of the overall performance, the use of his music for this scene creates links to other, very different scenes. As ‘love’ is already established as a dominant meaning for this music, this association continues into the ‘sticky body’ scene. The waltz is a dance for a couple, a romantic dance. But in a poignant reversal, there is no one for the performer to dance with. And even if he had a partner, his feet are stuck to the floor.

While a good clown act is able to suggest pathos through humour, or a sense of vulnerability and fragility even if expressed through the acrobatic skill of the strong, physically able performer, (and this scene can be interpreted simply in this way), what is important is that the music does not function as a stand-alone piece, no matter how suitable it is both in its structural (temporal, affirmative, narrative) support for the act, and in its comic association of the waltz with the situation of being unable to dance. The music in this act also has a thematic relationship with the performance as a whole. It links this scene with all the other scenes in which Brel’s songs are used. The separate associations of these scenes bleed into one another. This solo performance is haunted by the presence of another performer who does not appear.

Brel’s music undoubtedly supports and affords interpretation to the emotional complexity covered by ‘love’. It also affords a narrative meaning that goes far beyond a simple attribution of a solely emotional response to the music. As part of a compiled, recorded score the music inherently functions metadiegetically. But the music additionally provides spatial framing of the action and this can be demonstrated in a comparison with the use of lighting.

**Spatial framing in The Space Between and by the light of stars that are no longer**

Beginning with *Naked*, Circa’s work demonstrates an increasing preoccupation with the use of light, and this has become more sophisticated in *The Space Between* and *by the light of stars that are no longer*. These shows make use of tightly focussed squares and circles of light, combined with the video projection of moving patterns. The patterns are projected onto both the stage space and the performers’ bodies. In *by the light of stars that are no longer* the projections are in motion during the scene, and are at times generated from the music.
Lifschitz designed both the sound and the lighting, and the two are conceived as a single entity. The performers might, in one scene, be performing in a wash that illuminates the entire performing area, while in another the light is tightly restricted to a small rectangle within which the action takes place. If the music was interpreted in the reviews for *The Space Between* solely in terms of emotional meaning, the light was interpreted in terms of physical framing of action, but this physical framing was directly linked to the themes of the piece, as in the following examples:

In the light and in between, the performers are confined and defined. This recurring attention to space is in keeping with the production’s exploration “into the things that keep us apart and our desire to be together”. (Mercer 2005)

… framed within patches of slinky lighting. (Drew 2005)

Lighting projections of smaller grids are changeable, multiple realities – the beach, swimming pool, arena, bed, prison – or else a metaphorical abstraction of the confinement and constraint of sexual and emotional intimacy. … the illumination created shadowy, criss-crossed, cage like meshing which served as an angular enclosure for McGuffin and Grant’s ritualistic dance of interlocking codependence. (Wills 2004)

The distinction present in these opinions is a reflection of what Jonathan Sterne calls the ‘audio-visual litany’, a prevailing assumption that attributes “a ‘surface’- orientated spatiality to vision as opposed to an ‘interior’ orientation to sound” (2003: 18). That music is limited to the emotional, the subjective, is indicative of its perceived ‘interiority’. The lighting is discussed as an aspect of ‘surface’; it delineates the space. But this is not merely a ‘metaphorical abstraction’ of ‘confinement and constraint’. The lights physically constrain the space if the performers wish to be visible, and in this they do function as a virtual ‘cage’. The sense of confinement and constraint is an emotional response to the ‘surface’ delineation provided by the lights.

As Sterne goes on to argue, sound yields plenty of information about ‘surface’:

Anyone who has heard finger-nails on a chalkboard or footsteps in a concrete hallway (or on a wooden floor) can recognize that listening has the potential to yield a great deal of information about surfaces very quickly. (2003: 18-19)

If lights, by their spatial definition create “confinement and constraint”, create ‘interiority’, the construction of intimacy by music can also be attributed to a manipulation of ‘surface qualities’, such as the manipulation of sound inherent in the recording process.
For example, the development of the microphone allowed for a new type of singing to emerge, one which, as Allison McCracken points out, made “it possible for soft or untrained singers to be heard over large distances while conveying a much more conversational and intimate tone than had been heard before in performance” (2001: 111). Unlike the ‘stage singing’ present in operatic performance, ‘conversational’ singing, with its lower volume, and informal delivery creates “the comforting illusion that the speaker or singer was there in the room, lulling the listener from only a few feet away” (Lockheart 2003: 376). The microphone creates a virtual space in which the voice is foregrounded artificially. No matter the size, or amplitude of the accompanying instrumentation, the microphone can foreground the intimacy of a whisper.

The impassioned delivery of Brel as a performer is an easily perceivable trace in listening to his recordings, and the most obvious anchor for any attribution of emotional intimacy. But this ‘interiority’ is constructed by the manipulation of sonic ‘surface’, with the electronic foregrounding of the voice. The mano à mano of a listener’s engagement with Brel is furthered by the artificial disappearance of the trace of other musicians.

The recognition of the ‘surface’ qualities of sound is also the implicit recognition of the spaces in which sounds are located.

In *by the light of stars that are no longer* there is a very clear spatial definition within the soundtrack. Much of the ensemble action is performed to music by Sigur Rós and múm, contemporary Icelandic bands who both work with spatialized soundscapes. Their music is dominated by electronic timbres, or instruments that are heavily electronically effected or, in the case of Sigur Rós, played unconventionally. They are also drenched with extreme reverb.¹⁰⁹

In direct contrast is the song “After Hours” by The Velvet Underground. This was used for a solo scene consisting of a rather strange, ‘kooky’ dance¹¹⁰ that was comic, and yet conveyed vulnerability. By contrast with the sophisticated sound manipulation of Sigur Rós, “After Hours” uses acoustic instruments in a simple tonal framework, accompanying the seemingly artless voice of Maureen Tucker. Her voice is close-miked, with little or no reverb,¹¹¹ and employs very little inflection or vibrato, sounding almost child-like in its simplicity.

---

¹⁰⁹ A number of pieces of music were used, but predominantly from the albums (†) by Sigur Rós (MCA 2002), and *Finally We Are No-One* by múm (Fatcat 2002).
¹¹⁰ McGuffin’s idiosyncratic comic dance style, which also appeared in *The Space Between*, was always referred to within the company over the period of my observations as ‘Chelsea’s kooky dance’.
¹¹¹ There is only one word/note in the song that is deliberately given reverb. This is on the word “hello” in the second verse.
“After Hours” is an example of what Peter Doyle would term a “realist” recording aesthetic, which appears transparent, unmediated, though this is illusory. Doyle terms this type of recording as ‘convex’ and considers it has the effect of seemingly transporting the artists into the listener’s living room. It brings the listener and singer into the same space. In contrast, Doyle considers that the ‘concave’ recording (of which Sigur Rós can be considered an example), takes the listener into the space of the recording (2005: 90-93). The ‘convex’ recording of “After Hours” also creates a sense of intimate space, in contrast to the ‘big’ spaces of Sigur Rós.

The effect is not solely created by the differing amounts of reverb. The lyrics of “After Hours”, which deal with someone in a room closing the door on the world, can, in the absence of any other spoken text, be read as ‘speaking for’ the performer. The effect of the lyrics is reinforced by the small acoustic ensemble (acoustic guitar, bass), recorded with a small room ambience, and with Tucker’s voice in the foreground. The music of the song itself paints a small canvas. Its melody is simple and its form uncomplicated. The recorded music is ‘located’ in a small room, from the ‘room-sized’ ensemble, to the recreation of the atmospheric sound of a small room, to the artlessness of Tucker’s performance.

The aural space of the recording is transposed onto the concrete performance space. The lights also frame an intimate space within the performing area. There is a solo performer enacting a kooky dance, the solo voice sings wistfully of “closing the door” while somewhere else “people are dancing and they’re having such fun”, but these more obvious surface features are confirmed by the spatial construction of the recording, the simplicity of the music and the immediacy and warmth of the acoustic instruments.

Equally, the other-worldliness of Sigur Rós is not simply an effect of heavy reverb, but is also created by the predominance of electronic sounds divorced from an obviously recognizable source, including that of recognizable instruments used unconventionally (e.g. bowed guitar). The instrumental sounds here are ambivalent signifiers. Lyrics are in an unknown language devised by the band, often performed in an ethereal falsetto by the lead singer (itself ambivalent in terms of gender), which

---

112 Sterne, in a fascinating study of the cultural origins of sound reproduction very convincingly demonstrates the artifice present in the ‘transparent’ recording. He states: “… the sound event is created for the explicit purpose of its reproduction. Therefore, we can no longer argue that copies are debased versions of a more authentic original that exists either outside or prior to the process of reproduction. … [R]eality is as much about aesthetic creation as it is about any other effect when we are talking about media (2003: 241). See also Anderson (2006: 151-178). The one example of reverb used in “After Hours” in fact emphasizes the careful construction of ‘transparency’ in that recording.
is mixed into the texture rather than foregrounded. The musical textures are far more complex and cover a wider frequency spectrum, and the musical form consists of looping and repetition.

Sigur Rós’ use of heavily repetitive musical structure lacks the progressive harmonic direction and marked cadences of the simple ternary song form of “After Hours”, and so also lacks the sense of closure produced by that functional harmony. The music is altogether denser, ‘bigger’ and wider in its frequency spectrum, instrumental resources, and lack of closed form. The repetitive looping of the music is potentially infinite; it only ends when it is faded out, which is at the most a partial closure. It covers more space.

In the recording of “After Hours”, Tucker’s voice is located in the middle of the ‘stereo image’, with the guitar and bass panned to either side of the spectrum, which also enables the centrality of the voice in aural perception. As Doyle points out:

This ‘proximity’ between singer and listener perhaps invites another more subtle participation – the singer is centrally located within the imagined field, and we listeners are in intimate proximity to him. Thus we are implicitly also at or near the epicenter of that notional field. (2004: 35)

But at the centre of the ‘notional field’ there is an ambiguity about the song as ‘voice-over’. The creation of intimate sonic space is able, according to Mark Katz, to collapse any technologically imposed distance between the artist and the audience (2004: 41). As noted in Chapter One, recorded music is commonly consumed as a private occupation, and is habitually used as expression of, and to construct personal identity and personal space. Song lyrics complicate the subject position of the listener, through, as Cubitt notes, “the profound ambiguity of the word ‘I’ ” (1984: 211). Unencumbered by the actual physical presence of the singer, recorded music allows the listener to become the ‘I’ of a song, to interpret the lyrics as also ‘speaking for’ the listener. This collapses the space of performance into the ultimate interiority, the ultimate intimate.

by the light of stars that are no longer had as its subject matter journeys taken by the light of stars, the human in the presence of the infinite. The immense spaces of the universe were evoked by the highly reverberant, ecstatic other-worldliness of Icelandic post-rock. “Closing the door” is also closing the door to the other immense sonic universe.
The recordings of Sigur Rós and The Velvet Underground bring widely contrasting spatial environments with them, and contribute to the defining of space within the performance. These different sonic spaces veil the ‘concrete’ aural space of the theatre. They bring different territories with them, different possible worlds. These territories are not only constructed sonically but are also emotionally, geographically, historically and socially constructed, and become part of the temporary territory that is evoked onstage. Of course, the music of The Velvet Underground potentially evoked other territories: New York, The Factory, the Sixties, youth, counterculture, as well as personal associations.

Similarly in The Space Between, the use of Brel (‘the torch songs of tortured romance’), imported the social territories of romance, which are also imposed on the concrete materiality of the stage. The music supports the onstage spatial framing, and also evokes many potential offstage spaces. These are all, so to speak, lurking in the wings.

These territories are the ‘affiliating’ or ‘outward-opening’ associations identified by Kassabian (2001: 141), their meanings for a spectator cannot be completely determined. They are a potential source of dis-location.

The recorded soundtrack as discourse

If circus music aims to convey reassurance, through the use of ‘joyful’ music scored to discrete acts, progressing through an upward trajectory to eventual closure, then in the work of Circa, for which the music does little of this, the score is contributing something other than reassurance.

Within Circa’s work there is a continuity of underlying theme and preoccupation. The stated intention of Naked was to “explore the state of vulnerability that plagues every performer and indeed all of us” (Lifschitz 2003). What Circa appears to be attempting to portray is nothing less than la condition humaine, an ambitious agenda which was further articulated in the program note for The Space Between:

How, when we are so often strangers to ourselves as well as to each other, can the actuality of circus be harnessed to tell of our needs, our vulnerabilities and our weaknesses? How can the refined heart of an entertainment tradition be sent in search of new questions and even (might such a thing be hoped for) new answers for these spiritually troubled times? We wanted to make a show that takes all the key elements of our work, the re-imagining of circus, the pursuit of the limits of our
humanity, the longing, absences and otherness of being alive and implants them back into the body of the performer. Not as characters or stories, not as crude physicalisations but as real experiences. (Lifschitz 2004)

Implicit in the discourse of Circa is a sense of ‘gaps’, discontinuities which in an exploration of the human condition are arguably a part of that condition. The director’s notes for by the light of stars that are no longer state that “in a way, this is a show about love and beauty, which is to say (in another way) it is a show about solitude and death” (Lifschitz 2007b). Lifschitz when discussing his work constantly refers to the presence of these gaps:

It’s like you’re in a relationship with someone, and you’re holding that someone and you’re looking out the window and you suddenly catch a glimpse of infinity and you can’t explain that to the person you’re with. You know somehow it’s made this presence with this other person completely untenable and completely wrong but you also know that you wouldn’t have seen it unless you were holding them at that particular time. That was the feeling that I wanted. (2007a)

Lifschitz describes the self-reflexive state, the feeling that one is simultaneously in the body and outside the body looking in. This self-reflexivity runs through the work of Circa.

In many of Circa’s performances the performers’ bodies are presented as fragile, as vulnerable, even while they are displaying highly skilled physicality. An aerials act is not presented as a defiance of gravity, but as imbued with gravity, as in Bright’s aerial performance in Naked. Displays of skill are often presented as a simultaneous negation of that display. McGuffin’s aerial routine in by the light of stars that are no longer was, for example, largely performed with her back to the audience. If the circus body can be considered a body in extremis, then Circa displays this in a way that acknowledges that extremis. There are a set of tensions underlying the work, and I argue that these tensions are supported by the compiled scores used for the recent shows.

Both The Space Between and by the light of stars that are no longer were marked by diverse musics. In both cases some pieces of recorded music, usually songs, were used in their entirety with sequences ‘worked’ to the length of the music. Other pieces of music were truncated or extended, and these pieces were generally ones with a minimalist, loop structure rather than the more extended song form. The loop structure is the easiest structure to manipulate in this way without detriment to the music.
Pieces of music were not simply faded in or out but frequently there was a sudden shift between them, or a new piece of music was mixed in over the previous one. Lifschitz operated the sound during the shows, in effect acting as a DJ. There was often no attempt to blend pieces, and this was experienced as a ‘jolt’. The music did not provide closure but instead this jolt in the score became a defining principle.

A valid criticism levelled at the use of recorded music in performance is that the recording is indifferent to indeterminate time. Hence putting on a recording and letting it run until the act is completed and then fading it out indiscriminately can result in an act that, unshaped by any musical trajectory, feels curiously anticlimactic. Circa’s use of the recorded medium exploits this limitation as a feature of their style. The dislocations of the score accentuate the tensions contained within the performance. In this way a score that is ‘compiled’ can be also be used structurally, in the same way as the composed score.

The spatial, emotional and territorial dislocations of the compiled score contribute to the dislocations inherent in Circa’s exploration of the human condition, to the gaps between what is wished for and what is experienced, the space of the universe and the closed room we cower within.
Chapter Five
Music as engagement:
the creation of Daddy

In this chapter I use the word ‘engagement’ to discuss two particular applications of music: music for entertainment, and music for social or cultural significance. I argue that, in practice, these distinctions become blurred. This category is different to the other broad uses of music in theatre, identified in Chapter Two. Cinematic music and music used as structure or as intervention sit in relation to the theatrical work itself, and their effectiveness is gauged primarily in relation to the work. Music as engagement gauges its effectiveness in direct relation to the impact on the audience, as much as to its contribution to the work. Chapters Three and Four deal with music at the point of reception, while this chapter is concerned with artistic intention as it relates to eventual audience reception.

This chapter consists of a record of a professional project undertaken by the researcher. The researcher was employed as the Musical Director (MD) for the show *Daddy*, produced by the Women’s Circus, a community circus company based in Melbourne. The Women’s Circus has a professional Artistic Director (AD), and administration staff, and contracts professional department heads for its shows. At the outset of this project, the AD stated that the primary function of the music was to provide entertainment. This chapter will discuss the creation and rehearsal process as it relates to the production of the music.

*Daddy* was a large-scale work of theatricalized circus, involving 86 performers, musicians and technical crew. The concept for the show was the exploration of the relationships women have with their fathers, and the show combined drag performance, shadow puppetry and swing dancing with circus skills (predominantly acrobalance, acrobatics and aerials). The structure of the performance consisted of thematically linked discrete acts, chronologically tracing a path from birth (opening with a scene of acrobatic sperm) to death, with a narrative through-line provided by the characters of a father (the Vicar) and his daughter (Lucy).
As discussed in Chapter Four, traditional circus music provides a dominant emotional frame of reassurance. The ‘joyful’ characteristics of the music with its loud volume, are intended to stimulate excitement, particularly of the group response. The music stimulates engagement through its emotional framing, and supports the structures of the circus acts by marking the physical action, particularly the demonstration of the controlled skill of the performers. Daddy, as a work of theatricalized circus, within a discourse of feminism, aimed to engage the audience via the entertaining presentation of political issues.

The framework of terms is discussed within the context of the creative process, rather than applied at the point of reception. As noted in Chapter Three, there are some uses of music, such as the support for tempo-rhythm, that are hard to analyze in viewing a performance. Tempo-rhythm is a crucial consideration for the composer or sound designer. The marriage of musical form and dramatic structures is also a constant negotiation for composer/sound designer in the creation of a theatrical performance, but also difficult to analyze and separate in reception.

As the project concerned a compiled, rather than a composed score, this chapter will also concentrate on issues of production of specific relation to the compiled score. As music for engagement seeks an implicit relation with members of an audience, discussion of the framework for analysis will focus on aspects of metadiegetic framing.

**Engagement through entertainment**

From the first it has been the theatre’s business to entertain people, as it also has of all the other arts. It is this business which always gives it its particular dignity; it needs no other passport than fun, but this it has got to have. … Nothing needs less justification than pleasure. (Brecht 1982: 180-81)

Notwithstanding Brecht’s statement, the ‘art versus entertainment’ distinction is still an ongoing debate. According to Richard Dyer, entertainment is usually identified as “distraction, pleasure, triviality”, as “anti-seriousness”, rejecting claims of “morality, politics and aesthetics in a culture which still accords these high status”, “renouncing concern with meaning or ‘content’” (1992: 2-3). As Dyer points out, to call something ‘just’ or ‘mere’ entertainment, is a common pejorative statement,
used to dismiss aspects of popular cultural production and also of how people interact with that production.

Dyer also considers that ‘entertainment’ is a category of response, not of objects, stating that ‘we cannot lay down a rule that only some cultural products entertain since they (virtually) all entertain someone” (ibid. 1). This distinction is an important one. Adorno’s critique of popular music, for example, rests on a conflation of these separate premises, in that entertainment (in this case ‘popular music’) is discussed as an object that actively encourages what for him is an undesirable response.

The frame of mind to which popular music originally appealed, on which it feeds, and which it perpetually reinforces, is simultaneously one of distraction and inattention. Listeners are distracted from the demands of reality by entertainment which does not demand attention either. (2002/1941: 458)

For Stuart N. Hampshire, though equally dismissive, the question of entertainment is distinguished as being that of a particular response to an object (in this case, music in general):

Music is understood as art if, and only if, the listener is intellectually active in listening to it. If he remains intellectually passive and attends only to the surface play of sound, he is treating the music only as entertainment. (1970: 174)

Dyer points out that much cultural theory concerning the popular and the entertaining has a strong ideological underpinning, particularly the idea that entertainment is only valuable in the service of something else (1992: 3). This may take the easily recognizable theatrical approach of appropriating popular forms for ultimately didactic purposes as in the political/community theatre movements that came to prominence in the 1970s (see Craig 1980; Itzin 1980; Filewod and Watt 2001).

John McGrath, highly influential within the British political theatre movement of the 1970s and 1980s, placed music as central to his conception of popular theatre. Opining that “working-class audiences like music in shows”, he attributed this to a “submerged folk tradition which is still there”, though his own interest in music stemmed initially from a fascination with the form of the rock concert (1981: 52-59). He considered music enjoyable as it acts as an “emotional release” and useful because of the “neatness of expression of a good lyric, or a good tune” (ibid. 55). A description by the English theatre company, Belt and Braces, of one of their performances sums up this common reasoning for music within political theatre:
The stage is set as for a rock show … The music must be non-acoustic and of a high professional standard. By experience young working-class audiences are far more discriminating in their musical appreciation than in their knowledge of dramatic techniques. For this reason, the show was constructed to form a bridge for these audiences between styles of music with which they were familiar and the less familiar territory of drama and political debate. (Gavin Richards, qtd. in Itzin 1980: 203)

The use of music to act as a ‘bridge’ for the audience, using the familiarity and accessibility of one form of music (rock) as a way to engage an audience with political ideas is what Dyer refers to as the use of entertainment to ‘sugar the pill’ (1992: 5), with rock music providing the ‘sugar’ and drama and political debate the ‘pill’. Music that has social and cultural importance for a particular audience is simultaneously there to entertain. The main function of this music is thus for engagement.

This is similar to the reasoning given by Donna Jackson, the artistic director of Daddy for the use of music in her work:

If you’re going to give people a pill, it needs to be a sugar-coated pill and one way of doing that is through the music. The rhythm of the music can just pick people up and make them feel good. (2006)

Underlying this justification is the presumption that the politics comes from the theatre and not from the music. If music has social or cultural significance, however, it also has an inherently political subtext. Music has frequently been associated with counter-cultures, and with the assertion of identity, particularly among young people (e.g. Hebdige 1979). The prevalence of music censorship attests to its implication in political consciousness, and while censorship has often focussed on lyrical content, it has also extended to the music itself, including bans on musical instruments (Baily 2004; Oliver 1972).

The ideological charges levelled against popular music, and entertainment generally, focus on the idea that it supports the status quo, creating passivity. Adorno is one of the fiercest proponents of this view:

113 Ludicrously so, in the presence of a belief in ‘back-masking’, the term given to the presence of subliminal messages, generally assumed to be satanic or obscene, that become apparent when a recording is played backwards. Although some sensational trials have been conducted alleging this premise, it has never been proven to actually exist (see Walser 1993: 145-147, Nuzum 2001: 15-16, Blecha 2004: 47-58).

114 For example, the Taliban outlawed all traditional music and instruments in Afghanistan (Baily 2004), and certain instruments (drums and horns) were suppressed in slave colonies in America (Oliver 1972: 10). Examples of censorship of music rather than lyrics or instruments include the strictures on Modernist music in Soviet Russia as in Zhdanov’s historic address to the Conference of Soviet Music Workers in 1948 (1950) or the suppression of Jewishness in music in Nazi Germany (Dunling 1993).
Music today is largely a social cement. And the meaning listeners attribute to a material, the inherent logic of which is inaccessible to them, is above all a means by which they achieve some psychical adjustment to the mechanisms of present-day life. (2002/1941: 460)

Yet this charge could quite easily be laid against ‘concert’ music. It is also possible to agree that music is ‘social cement’ and view this positively. The ‘social cement’ of music can be considered to provide a ‘bridge’ between the performers and the audience.

The Women’s Circus

The Women’s Circus is a long-running community circus organization, founded by Donna Jackson in 1991 to work initially with survivors of sexual abuse, and has evolved into a sizeable community organization, with a good artistic reputation. Survivors of sexual abuse are still a major target group for the circus, though as the group has developed the community has become more diverse. Throughout the year the Women’s Circus runs regular training in circus skills and performance, with up to one hundred women participating. The company then produces a major show at the end of the year. Women fill all positions in the circus, from the professional trainers to the administration staff and technical crew. As Jackson states:

The rationale behind the circus is to create an environment where women can come together to train in a non-competitive, supportive, safe environment. The circus gives women a vehicle for expressing political views and beliefs to an audience made up from the general public. (Jackson, qtd. in Women’s Circus 1997: 4)

Jackson had returned to the Women’s Circus after a gap of eight years to direct Daddy. While endorsing her earlier rationale, she considers that there is now an additional focus on artistic product.

I would add … that it’s an environment where women can make art, and communicate feminist ideas … in a challenging and provocative artistic manner. (Jackson 2006)

Jackson described her role as artistic director as:

to enter into a relationship with the community where through barter and exchange we develop a performance together. So I offer my skills as a director, people offer their stories and skills and together we make something we couldn’t make by ourselves. … I don’t enter into that relationship as a blank sheet. I bring with it my

---

115 This description is based on my prior experience and knowledge of the practices of the Women’s Circus. Prior to my employment on this show, I had previously worked as permanent music trainer and MD from 1997-2002, and have remained a ‘sister and supporter’ of the company since then.
artistic ideas, my artistic fetishes, my passion as an artist about where I am at that
time and I carry with me my history in theatre making. I have a style that I work in
and I bring that style with me. (ibid.)

Jackson’s concept of ‘barter and exchange’ is also relevant to the work of the
musical director within the context of a Women’s Circus show. The role of the MD
is a combination of the artistic (having responsibility for the music) and the
organizational (organizing the rehearsal process for the band, liaising with the AD
and the production team and dealing with the legal performing rights). The final
say for any musical decision, as with all other aspects of the production apart from
those relating to occupational health and safety, rests with the AD.

While this is not an atypical job description for an MD in theatre, there is a
significant additional requirement for all members of the Women’s Circus
professional production team: to “work in a way that supports the community
culture and maintains the philosophy and principles of the Women’s Circus”
(Women’s Circus 2005a).

The MD therefore has a role that is both artistic and supportive of the
community culture. To understand the nature of the ‘barter and exchange’ between
the MD and the Circus, and between the MD and the community musicians who
formed the band for the show, it is necessary to consider the nature of the
discourses underlying the organization.

Alison Richards considers that the “goals and practices” of the Women’s
Circus belong to the ‘second wave’ of feminism, with the idea of a “women’s
community, a supportive culture within which each participant can grow in spirit
through physical achievement” (Women’s Circus 1997: 19). This culture continues
to underpin the practices of the company in 2006. The Women’s Circus recognizes
the diversity of women and the potential for conflict this generates, yet expects that
difference will be actively supported by members of the circus community.

116 The job description for the MD (Women’s Circus 2005a) was:

In conjunction with AD;
– Designs/composes and chooses the music for the performance, sources and/or writes all components of the musical work
– Ensures that the musical component of the performance does not breach copyright laws in any way. Takes full responsibility
  for APRA application and licensing and ensures availability of material
– Organizes/facilitates the band rehearsals
– Negotiates and liaises with AD as to the timeline for decision making regarding the musical content of the show
– Liaises with Sound Designer regarding technical needs
– Liaises with AD regarding rehearsal times with performers on site
– Manages and supports band members
– Attends production meetings as required
– Attends evaluation
– Work within venue and production safety procedures.
[The] Women’s Circus is a feminist circus because it is created and managed by women for a community of women to participate in making art. Women’s participation in the Women’s Circus allows them to be whatever female identity they want … be it a mother, be it a lesbian separatist, be it celibate, be it successful businesswomen. They can have any identity and they’re all treated with equal value and respect. (Jackson 2006)

The model for performance further articulates this discourse. As might be expected, past shows have dealt with various ‘aspects of oppression’, whether through historical narrative or present issues, yet have always included a celebratory aspect, in line with the stated policy to “communicate feminist views in an entertaining and challenging manner” (Women’s Circus 2005b).

From the moment the audience arrives, it is clear that they are in ‘women’s space’. The company also makes a political statement in its choice of venues.

We take over whole warehouses and we have big seating systems and we take up a lot of space … [in] spaces where women are not normally allowed to be. It’s not the home, it’s warehouses, it’s industrial, it’s very masculine spaces that we take and claim for women. (Jackson 2006)

As Jackson states:

As a director, I’m aware of the juxtaposition of a show called Daddy with a number of the women in the circus being survivors of sexual abuse but I think it’s a credit to this community that they are gutsy enough and strong enough to be able to do that show. I think that in 2005 women wanna do things that are fun and empowering rather than setting up roles for women as victims. (qtd. in Young 2005)117

These elements particular to Daddy are contained within the broader political contexts of feminism and community cultural development implicit in the aims of the organization. While the Women’s Circus emphasises collaborative working practices, with a structured model for community involvement and stated objectives of transparent organizational goals, it is not a collective. The overall decisions for its artistic and organizational aims rest with the AD, and the board.118

---

117 The political elements of this show for the Women’s Circus were: dealing with the relationship of women with their fathers, in the context of a large number of community members who are survivors of sexual abuse, the use of satire for aspects of the ‘patriarchy’ and the analogy of political figures as ‘Big Daddies’.

118 Currently (July 2008) the Women’s Circus does not have a permanent AD, and decisions rest with the General Manager and the board.
Daddy’s music

In April 2005 I was approached by Jackson to act as MD for Daddy. The initial brief was to form a live band drawing on members of the community, select and arrange suitable music in differing styles to accompany the acts, compose original music if necessary, oversee the rehearsal process, and perform during the season.

It was agreed that the nucleus of the band would be formed by an existing group who had trained with me in my previous work at the Women’s Circus, and who had gone on to form The Cascades, a country band with whom I also played. This nucleus would be augmented with additional members, allowing the resulting band to perform other genres of music, (e.g. for the swing dancing that the AD intended to use in the show).

The organization of a Women’s Circus show (shows typically involve approximately sixty non-professional performers) is a complex one for both AD and MD. Content for the show is developed in separate skills-based workshops and, to a large extent, the AD’s job consists of coordinating the different approaches and material produced, including the directorial input of a large number of professional trainers, and fusing these into a coherent structure. In practice, this means that individual scenes are devised and rehearsed with the members of a particular workshop class and their trainer. The Circus as a whole does not meet until a series of three or four weekends immediately prior to the show, in which the show is put together.

The MD functions within this system. The band rehearses as a separate group yet the group is required to provide music for all of the individual scenes. This means that the MD needs to maintain an overview of the work in progress with each workshop group. As workshops meet on a sessional basis for one evening a week, including Saturday sessions, monitoring the work of each group is a time-consuming process. As the band members are unpaid, there is also a limit on the amount of time they can reasonably be expected to work, so the MD provides the

---

119 I had previously worked for the Women’s Circus as composer/MD and music trainer between 1997 and 2002, under the artistic direction of Sarah Cathcart.

120 The Cascades, which formed the nucleus of the band, had the following line-up: Jane Coker (vocals, tenor sax), Jules de Cinque (bass guitar), Tanya Nolan (rhythm guitar, banjo, vocals) and Kim Baston (accordion). To this we added Michelle Brisbane (lead guitar, vocals) and Amanda Owen (soprano saxophone), both of whom had been previously associated with the Women’s Circus, as member and as Head Trainer respectively. By September, after failing to secure a female drummer within the broader Circus community (the Cascades’ semi-regular drummers were all male and therefore unsuitable) I was relieved to find Bec Matthews (housemate of a Circus member), a professional percussionist, who volunteered her services.
point of communication between the band and the workshop groups. She is also the point of communication between the AD and the band.

The AD was very clear that the function of the music would be primarily entertainment, supporting her wish for the show to focus on the positive and humorous aspects of the father/daughter relationship. She indicated early in the process that the music could be linked to the idea of ‘Daddy’ in a number of ways: the music Daddy might listen to, the music Daddy might play in the garage with his mates or, by using what the AD termed the ‘big Daddies’ of popular music (Frank Sinatra, Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley were mentioned as examples). The intended feel of the music was described as “a Saturday night at the pub with your mates”, music that would “get you horny”, music with “grunt”.\(^{121}\)

The AD’s verbal descriptions, and the fact that the show would be performed in male drag, suggested the musical direction of what can be termed ‘cock-rock’, music that is strongly coded as ‘male’ music. Rock music is an arena that is still dominated by men, and the ‘harder’ the rock form the more ‘masculine’ it is perceived to be (Walser 1993).

The performance of music so strongly coded as masculine, and particularly as what Frith and McRobbie would describe as an ‘aggressive, dominating and boastful’ masculinity (1978: 227), by women musicians performing in male drag, is an obvious feminist response to the politics of rock music. Jackson elaborated further:

> It’s the right music to use with the drag and it’s giving women permission to do music that has … a strong positive sexuality to it. … In the music [cock rock], the male voice is somebody who is saying that they are sexually powerful and that they are positive, feeling good about their sexuality … and by women doing it, playing that music, you are showing that you are sexually powerful and strong and in control. (2006)

While the idea of a generic ‘daddy’ does not suggest a specific era of music, the decision was made to concentrate on what could be termed the ‘classic’ rock of the 1970s and 1980s. The compiled score would include popular music likely to be well-known by the audience. A ‘hit’ that has stood the test of time could reasonably be considered to have high entertainment value. This use of the music is as described in the example from Belt and Braces cited earlier; music chosen to function as a

---

\(^{121}\) These descriptions are taken from my notes of a number of telephone conversations and a meeting prior to my formal engagement with the show.
‘bridge’ for the audience (Itzin 1980: 203), or, to use James Linton’s term, music to provide the ‘drama of reassurance’ (1978: para. 26).

Engagement and the performance of authenticity

A commonly recurring discussion in studies of popular music is that of ‘authenticity’, and this concept is relevant to the creative process of a show that involved the live performance of a compiled score, and particularly to a score compiled from recorded material. David Grazian defines the concept of ‘authenticity’ in two related ways:

First, it can refer to the ability of a place or event to conform to an idealized representation of reality: that is, to a set of expectations regarding how such a thing ought to look, sound, and feel. At the same time, authenticity can refer to the credibility or sincerity of a performance and its ability to come off as natural and effortless. (2003: 10)

Grazian’s definition neatly sums up the prime artistic concerns for the Daddy band in reception, as it encompasses both the performed identity of the band, and the performance of the music. But as Grazian goes on to point out, authenticity “is never an objective quality inherent in things, but simply a shared set of beliefs about the nature of things we value in the world” (ibid.12). Authenticity, like entertainment, is a category of response, rather than a category of object. Richard A. Peterson’s (1997) study of ‘fabricated authenticities’ in country music demonstrates, as does Grazian’s study of Chicago blues clubs, that authenticity is always manufactured with varying degrees of conscious intent.

The Daddy band were visible within the presentational space throughout the performance. As female musicians performing in drag, and as a collection of individual musicians brought together for theatrical purposes to perform cover versions of male-identified rock songs, the band had a clearly problematic relationship with authenticity.

There are many different levels of both musical and performance authenticity at work here. The Daddy band was intended to be read by the audience both as a parody of a male band, and also as an authentic ‘working covers band’, providing competently performed song renditions. The drag identity of the band could be considered as an example of the consciously ‘staged’ inauthentic, for the purposes of parody, and consistent with the theatrical conventions of the show as a whole.
The assumption of drag by the band was not for the purposes of ‘passing for’ male, but to perform and parody an idea of maleness. The gender identity of the individual members of the band could therefore embrace the inauthentic. On the other hand, the collective identity of the ‘working covers band’, the band’s performed musical identity, needed to be as ‘authentic’ as possible.

The *Daddy* band was not an authentic ‘working covers band’. The band only came together for the purposes of the show, some members had never previously met, and even those members who had performed together had not performed the genres that were to form the basis of the compiled score. In effect, the musical identity of the band was as inauthentic as its performed gender. In the interests of providing an entertaining and high quality theatre experience, though, it was important to create the impression of credible musical authenticity.

First, it is important to consider what can be considered authentic in relation to a covers band. The attribution of authenticity within popular music is often connected with the identification of auteur status, which is often attributed to whoever receives the song-writing credit, or to a particular performer. But both these attributes are absent in a covers band.

A covers band is defined in relation to recorded music. This primary reference is in contrast to the notated score (the primary reference for performers of classical music), or to a mixture of notated score and oral tradition (such as in the performance of folk music). Deena Weinstein notes that the covers band is a practice that only exists in rock music.

Cover songs in the fullest sense of the term, are peculiar to rock music, both for technological and ideological reasons. A cover song iterates (with more or fewer differences) a prior recorded performance of a song by a particular artist, rather than simply the song itself as an entity separate from any performer or performance. When the song itself (as opposed to the performance) is taken as the reference for iteration, each performer does a version or a rendition of the song, and none of these versions is a necessary reference. Forms of popular music other than rock,  

---

122 The visuality of the musician’s performance is considered further in Chapter Six.  
123 This is itself contestable, as song-writing credit, and therefore by implication, ‘value’ (both aesthetic and economic), appears to be given to those elements of music which conform to those valued in traditional musicology – lyrics, harmony and melody. Susan Fast’s study of Led Zeppelin notes that while Plant and Page often received sole song writing credits, the contribution made by the two other band members were crucial to the eventual sound of the song. She states: “According to Jones [the bass player], song-writing credit was largely determined by who brought in the chord progression or riff, that is, the ‘shell’ of the song, as opposed to the contributions made to the arrangement” (Fast 2001: 12).  
124 ‘Notated score’ here refers to tune books or to chord notation of a song. While folk music tends to stress its oral nature, it is important not to ignore the notational aspects that are also part of its transmission.
then, generally do not have covers as I have defined them; rather, they have versions. (1998: 138)

While a common practice of jazz musicians is often described as ‘covering a standard’, the genesis of the ‘standard’ is usually either a score, or derived from oral transmission. The covers band will always stand, at varying degrees of distance, in relation to a recording. Harmony, melody and rhythm remain important but to these are added timbral aspects of the recorded music (instrumentation, and the vocal stylings of the original performer).

To perform cover versions, a band takes a position between two poles of representation, according to Dai Griffiths: faithful imitation (‘rendition’), or transformation (2002: 52), which can be described as ‘making a song your own’. Both approaches can take different forms. A case of extreme rendition would be the ‘tribute band’, where the intention is to reproduce all of the details of the original, including aspects of performance and costume. Transformative covers also embrace a range of different practices, the most extreme being that of genre alteration.

Auteur status, and authenticity attributed on that basis can, therefore, be attributed to transformative covers, and authenticity could also, arguably, be attributed to the extreme of the tribute band, in the sense that the tribute band celebrates and replicates the original auteur. But in the case of the *Daddy* band, covering material in an imitative way less extreme than the über-rendition of the tribute band, the source of authenticity lies elsewhere.

Adorno recognized one important function of popular music as being “[t]he element of self-reflection on the act of identification, (“Oh, I know it; this belongs to me”)” (2002/1941: 455). This act of identification is important to consider in attempting a cover version of a ‘hit’. Music, particularly that encountered and enjoyed during adolescence, is often experienced as ‘belonging’ to an individual, a ‘belonging’ that can become a potent social experience on occasions when it becomes a group identification (Frith 1987: 140-143; Mattern 1998: 16-19).

The pre-eminent task for the *Daddy* band was to present the music in a way that recognized the importance of this act of identification and the potential investment that audience members might have in the songs. Particularly in the case of ‘hit’ material, an incompetent rendition, or ill-judged transformation, could easily tip the scales from an act of identification to an act of revulsion, which would significantly lessen both the entertainment value, and the creation of authenticity.
Remaining faithful to the original recordings, particularly to their form and tempo, was also important for practical reasons: with the musicians unavoidably absent from much of the protracted rehearsal process, the physical performers could rehearse with the recording. Band member Jane Coker identified a further practical reason, in that this would also make it easier for the band to learn songs.

Not doing any original material at all was interesting because we had to decide to what extent we had to make it familiar to the audience by making it sound like it [the recording] sounds, and also make it easy for ourselves to learn it by doing it the way it was done, and to what extent we were going to take it in our own direction. … with a bit more rehearsal time and not the pressures that you get with circus we could have taken the songs in a direction that would have made them more our own (though I think we did that a bit anyway). But we didn’t have time to do that in that environment. (2006)

While a covers band will generally operate broadly within one genre, the Daddy band needed to operate effectively across a number of genres. Therefore authenticity also entailed a negotiation of the conventions of each genre, and decisions about which of these were crucial, and which could be modified.

To talk of genre is to admit a certain looseness; any genre contains contradictions, grey areas, and the boundaries are never entirely fixed. Genres in popular music are subject to continuous alteration and adaptation, a genre spawns numerous sub-genres which themselves are riddled with inconsistencies. Walser considers that:

while meanings are negotiated, discourse constructs the terms of the negotiation. Genres such as heavy metal are sites where seemingly stable discourses temporarily organize the exchange of meanings … (1993: 33)

Franco Fabbri (1981), in attempting to establish a set of rules underlying musical genres, demonstrates how complex any such attempt is, yet his study is useful in establishing that musical genres are not purely defined by the tonal events of the music itself, but are also determined by semiotic codes surrounding the performance, including the audience.125 An example of a semiotic code that functions as a ‘seemingly stable discourse’ in the understanding of musical genre would be that of instrumentation, an important factor for the Daddy band.

The pre-existing band (The Cascades) that formed the nucleus of the Daddy band was a country band with a line-up of kit drums, electric bass, acoustic rhythm

---
guitar/banjo, accordion, saxophone and close-harmony vocalists. This is not the most standard and ‘authentic’ country line-up, but is within the range of instrumental possibilities for this genre. In order to make the transition from country to hard rock (a genre containing a different set of instrumental markers), the addition of a lead electric guitar, changing from an acoustic to an electric instrument for the rhythm guitar, substituting a synthesizer for the accordion and adding some distortion pedals were easy changes to accommodate.

To transform this basic line-up to produce a rendition of the big band swing sound of “Regular Joe”, (a song that had to be included in the show as a dance sequence had already been choreographed to it prior to the employment of the MD), was more problematical. Immediately obvious was the lack of a large horn section, a crucial element of the big-band sound, and therefore an important marker of genre. For “Regular Joe” the band had to find a solution to the lack of the appropriate instrumental resources, and yet provide a rendition that could be considered ‘authentic’.

‘Swing’ is inherently a rhythmic device. Technically a swing band is a band that ‘swings’ rather than a particular instrumental line-up. Within the era particularly associated with ‘swing’, the 1930s, the big band sound dominated (Berendt 1976), and it is this large ensemble that has become pre-eminently associated with the genre. But within this era smaller ensembles did exist. Within this smaller ensemble a standard instrumental line-up would consist of drum kit, bass, guitar and/or piano, saxophone/clarinet and trumpet. With the exception of trumpet, the band could therefore approach the identity of the small swing combo. The small swing band, though, tended to place a premium on looser, more virtuosic improvisation (which needs to be kept tighter in a larger ensemble). This presented the MD with two problems, firstly not having band members (other than the drummer) who were experienced in jazz improvisation, and secondly, that the choreography for this particular scene had been created to particular instrumental accents present in the recorded (big band) version. A looser improvisatory style consistent with the common performance attributes of the small swing combo, could not be guaranteed to hit the particular accents necessary for the choreography every time.

126 “Regular Joe” is actually a pastiche of Big Band Swing, being written and performed by the contemporary band, Indigo Swing.

127 For example, Artie Shaw’s Gramercy Five, the Bob Crosby Bob Cats, the Dorsey Clambake Seven, or the various numerical incarnations of the Benny Goodman Trio/Quartet/Quintet etc.
It was necessary to find a compromise, one that would be within the competencies of the group, that would provide a satisfactory level of authenticity, and that would give the dancers the necessary level of support for their choreography. In contrast to the other music used in the show (which was, for the most part, arranged collectively during rehearsals), this piece necessitated formal arranging by the MD. One compromise eventuated in a reduced harmonic complexity as the two saxophones available could only carry the main melodic lines, the focus of which was to mark the main accents of the choreography. To a swing dancer of the calibre of Sally MacAdams (the choreographer) all the choreographed accents were important, but here, in the spirit of ‘barter and exchange’ a compromise was also negotiated. Where there was less need to provide distinct accents, the band was then freer to emulate the looser improvisatory style more in keeping with the style of the smaller swing combo.

The table given on the next page presents the final scene list, a brief description of the physical presentation of those scenes, and the music used to accompany those scenes. This is the musical performance that was presented on opening night.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenes</th>
<th>Music by Recorded Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Who's Your Daddy?</strong></td>
<td>Band entrance “Who’s Your Daddy?” (band impro.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sperm</strong></td>
<td>Shadow puppetry/ Acrobatics “Lust For Life” – Iggy Pop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Regular Joe</strong></td>
<td>Swing dance “Regular Joe” – Indigo Swing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 Portraits</strong></td>
<td>Shadow puppetry “Are You Gonna Be My Girl?” – Jet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 Fashion Parade</strong></td>
<td>Performance/Narration Cont. instrumental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 Dad Dances</strong></td>
<td>Performance Cont. song with vocals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 Dad's Hobbies</strong></td>
<td>Acrobalance “Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood” – The Animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7 Mr Sheen</strong></td>
<td>Shadow puppetry Lounge music, jazz interlude (band impro.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8 When Dad Met Mum</strong></td>
<td>Aerials/Swing dance “You Never Can Tell” – Chuck Berry “Shivers” – Boys Next Door (Nick Cave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 Handshaking</strong></td>
<td>Shadow puppetry “Do You Love Me?” – Nick Cave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10 When You Were Born</strong></td>
<td>Acrobalance/Narration “When You Were Mine” – The Church (instrumental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11 Being A Dad</strong></td>
<td>Shadow puppetry/ Narration “Factual Yet Sexy” (Baston)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 Dad’s Fantasy Life</strong></td>
<td>Vicar and Lucy Performance/ Mixed circus skills “Conversational” (Baston), brief ‘air guitar’ (Brisbane) “What Have They Done To My Song, Ma” – Melanie Safka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13 Big Daddies</strong></td>
<td>Shadow puppetry “There Is No Time” – Lou Reed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14 Santa Claus</strong></td>
<td>Audience participation “Is You Is Or Is You Ain’t (Ma Baby) – Louis Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15 Pope</strong></td>
<td>Shadow puppetry/Aerials “Love Is The Drug” – Roxy Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16 Inside Dad’s Head</strong></td>
<td>Vicar narration “When You Were Mine” – The Church (instrumental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17 End of Daddy</strong></td>
<td>“When You Were Mine” Cont. and play out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18 Eulogy</strong></td>
<td>Lucy narration No music Piano solo variant of Melanie moving up tempo to …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19 Wake/Charleston</strong></td>
<td>Swing dance/Acrobatics “Brontosaurus Stomp” – The Piltdown Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20 My Daddy</strong></td>
<td>Curtain call “Who’s Your Daddy?” – reprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emotional and diegetic framing

As noted in Chapter Four, circus music is often used to provide a dominant emotional framework of reassurance. The use of music to function as a ‘bridge’ between audience and the performance, or to ‘sugar the pill’ of political issues can also be considered as having a reassuring function. Although music within theatricalized circus is likely to serve other purposes, within Daddy, the meta-discourse of reassurance was also dominant. As emotional framing, the main function of music within Daddy was affirmative, with examples both of evocation and mirroring. Certain choices of music were used as parody, such as the use of “Love Is The Drug” (Roxy Music) to accompany images of the Pope, and the ‘duel’ between lounge music and free jazz for the shadow puppet scene, Mr Sheen, which portrayed the then prime minister, John Howard. But while the point of the musical ‘gag’ relied on the recognition of musical incongruity with the characters presented, this incongruity is at the level of ‘story narrated’, rather than necessarily of emotion. In scenes where the music functioned as underscore to dialogue, the music was intended to be affirmative to the immediate emotion of the scene. The music remained continuous throughout the show, with the only exception being the penultimate scene in which the character of the father gave a eulogy for her father. As noted with reference to examples in Chapter Three, in this scene, silence, rather than music became the signifier of emotion.

As diegetic framing, the music supported the ‘story narrated’ (fabula) for the individual scenes, but a major function for the music was as support for the ‘narrating discourse’ of the overall performance. For Jackson the choice of the term ‘vaudeville’ to describe the show was based on her decision to use short acts in which there would be direct address to the audience. The collection of discrete acts was reinforced by the use of scenic captions such as ‘Dad’s Fantasy Life’, ‘Dad’s Hobbies’, with the music supporting the theatrical structure by means of cadence and segue.

While the acts were self-contained, there existed a thematic and chronological progression; thematic in that each act related to the overall theme of ‘father’, chronologically in that there was a broadly sketched progression from conception to death. There was a minor narrative through-line, in the recurring characters of a vicar and his daughter (Lucy), and this was marked by a recurring thematic element
in the music, but in this performance the musical support for fabula was much less important than for that of discourse. The narrative elements were relatively underdeveloped in relation to the thematic elements.

Spatial framing was not an aspect that concerned the musical direction in the devising process, therefore will not be discussed here.

**Metadiegetic Framing**

As noted in Chapter Two, the use of a compiled score, containing ‘well-known’ music, is by its nature inherently metadiegetic. The intention behind the musical score was to engage the audience, through the selection of music that could be considered likely to have personal resonances for the audience. The musical ‘gags’, for example, depended on the recognition of the original recording and its incongruity to the presentational context. In the selection of music for *Daddy*, the relationship of lyrics to performed action was carefully considered. In general, I proceeded as if all the words would be audible and known to the audience, while acknowledging that this was an unlikely situation. A professional decision of a more aesthetic nature was my decision to avoid overt literalism in the lyrics.

This aesthetic position was determined by three considerations. Firstly, the wish to create a richer set of resonances by choosing lyrics that had an oblique relation to the scenes, that would afford ‘texture’ to the narrative. Secondly, that the use of very literal lyrics for some scenes could establish a problematic performance convention; an assumption by the audience that all of the lyrics were literal. Thirdly, that overly literal lyrics would create unnecessary redundancy – if the narrative of the scene was clear, there seemed to be little point in repeating that narrative through the lyrics.

An important question, though, is how much a listener pays attention to the words of a popular song. Some studies of popular music suggest that in many cases the meaning of the lyrics is not noticed, or understood in many cases of popular music (Denzin 1970; Robinson and Hirsch 1972; Denisoff and Levine 1972).¹²⁸ These studies, albeit limited, cast doubt on any assumption that the meaning, or even the popularity, of a song resides primarily in the lyrics, or that the lyrics of a song will be known and understood even by members of an audience who consider

---

¹²⁸ These studies were limited to school and college students, and I have been unable to discover any similar, or more recent, studies of older audiences.
they know the song. A further consideration for Daddy was whether the lyrics would be consistently audible given the unavoidably low-budget nature of the PA equipment.

The majority of popular song lyrics concern love (Frith 1987: 141), yet love as eros, rather than filial or platonic love (Frith 1987; 1988; Denzin 1970). In consequence, a song with sexual connotations used in the context of a show considering the father-daughter relationship, within the larger context of a community that included a large number of survivors of sexual abuse, had to be considered carefully. Lyrics treating eros from a sexual point of view were, for obvious reasons, inappropriate. Love songs which dealt with eros from a primarily romantic position, were more obviously useful. The re-contextualization of a romantic love song into the context of a father-daughter relationship has the potential of creating a particular resonance.

The songs used in Daddy can be read as speaking for a generic father. ‘Speaking’ the language of romantic, rather than platonic, love adds a particular charge to this relationship. Romantic love as expressed in the ‘serious’ (i.e. non-comic) popular love song can contain various elements; yearning, heartbreak, misunderstanding, passion, need, contained within the envelope of an exclusive relationship of two people. Filial love, that of the parent-child relationship, is usually couched in other phraseology, which can be described as comforting, nurturing, steadfast, supportive – an altogether calmer, possibly more passive, love experience altogether. It is altogether possible to conceive of a parent-child relationship as containing yearning, heartbreak, misunderstanding, passion and need, but less usual to describe it as such. The resonances of the individual songs used could be described broadly as functioning both within this definition of the parent-child relationship, and from a musically defined ‘male’ identification.

The scene, Dad’s Fantasy Life, was accompanied by the music “What Have They Done To My Song, Ma” (Melanie). This song was chosen by the workshop group who were the performers of this scene, and stands out from the other music used as being a female-identified song (through the ‘star personality’ of the auteur).

The lyrics for “Lust for Life” (Bowie D./Osterberg J.) are a case in point. In the rehearsal process, I found the lyrics on the internet, printed them out, and added the chord notation. Claire Warren, who was to sing this song, independently searched the internet and printed out a version. The version of the lyrics she had brought along differed from the version I had found, altering the meaning of the song. The main difference in the versions was in the third line, which was given as either ‘a flesh machine’ or ‘a fast machine’, which can be interpreted as being either about sex and the body (flesh machine) or a car (fast machine). In checking over thirty internet lyric sites this confusion predominated, seemingly determined by who had covered the song. ‘Fast machine’ appeared, from other referential information, to be possibly traceable to the Tom Jones rendition of the song on the album Reloaded (1999). The difficulty with ascertaining which version was more likely is attributable to the poetically elusive meaning of the lyrics, whichever variant is chosen.
As this orientation did not conform to the already established show convention of male-identified music (‘daddy’s music’), I initially resisted its inclusion. However, even if the song is predominantly a female-identified song, the lyrics are non-gender specific and could here be easily read as also ‘speaking for’ the character of the father, particularly as this scene was a presentation of a fantasy. In this case the scene was a presentation of the ‘mind’ of the father, so the song could also be read as occurring in his ‘mind’, as imaginary music. This song also reappeared in a ghost version towards the end of the show.

In the scene Eulogy (which was intended to be read by the audience as the funeral speech given at the funeral of the father/vicar character), the character of the daughter, Lucy, delivered the text of the scene in direct address to the audience, with no musical accompaniment. A version of “What Have They Done To My Song, Ma” re-entered when the figure of the Vicar was seen in giant shadow, dancing a waltz by himself. The shadow-Vicar was then joined by other dancers projected as normal sized. These dancers commenced by imitating his waltz, then separated and began the dance steps of the Charleston. As the figure of the Vicar disappeared, these dancers continued, eventually running out from behind the screen to begin the dance choreography of the finale, Wake/Charleston. The music accompanying this set of actions can be understood in relation to the theoretical model in a number of ways.

The ghost version of the song was performed as a keyboard solo, retaining the harmonic structure of the original, yet in a ‘skeletal’ version consisting of simplified bass (containing solely the chordal root) and a musical figure derived from the accordion accompaniment to the recorded song. The ghost version was also performed at a slower tempo to the original song. This was intended to suggest a certain melancholic wistfulness, as of music in a half-remembered dream. This music can also be read as being ‘heard’ in the ‘mind’ of the character of the daughter, in the same way that the visual presentation of the father as a giant shadow can be read as a visual image occurring within the daughter’s ‘mind’.

130 It could, possibly, be read as the demonstration of the father’s female side. As an example of the ‘barter and exchange’ principle of any collaborative process, particularly in community theatre, this was a negotiation the MD lost.
Temporal framing

As noted in Chapter Three, the contribution of music to temporal framing is difficult to determine at the point of reception. Yet, as already stated, it is an aspect of direct concern to any musician working in theatre, particularly in relation to the pace and energy of the show. There are a number of different concepts bound up in the link between music and pace in a show. In Daddy the process of deciding the shape of the show (and the musical shape) was conducted over a period of time and the final decisions for both were, from the MD’s point of view, less successful than in some earlier conceptions of the show.

There were two aspects determining the pace and energy of music used in the show: the appropriate tempo-rhythm for individual scenes and how these individual tempo-rhythms would combine to create the ‘long arc’ of the show i.e. its overall rhythm and structure. While it is relatively simple to determine the appropriateness of tempo-rhythm for the ‘short arc’ of the individual scene, it is a more complex job to produce a satisfying ‘long arc’.

I will use as an example the process of determining the music for the final sequence, a sequence involving a combination of swing dancing and acrobatics, to be performed by the entire cast.

I have earlier discussed the problems for the Daddy band of performing within the swing genre of “Regular Joe”. When I became involved in the creative process, the finale scene, Wake/Charleston, had not been choreographed, and existed only as a concept. The concept involved using swing dancing (which would be based on the Flying Charleston step), combined with acrobatics which would be performed in a manner reflecting the dance. As the finale, it would eventually include all of the cast members. As many of the cast had not attended the swing workshops it was necessary to devise choreography that also included a simple repeated dance step. This was determined to be the basic Charleston step, a step with a characteristic rhythm and pace.

As noted earlier, the music of a ‘swing’ band is both described, and determined by the rhythmic device called ‘swing’. This rhythmic character was inherited by rock and roll, developing into the continuous shuffle rhythm.\(^{131}\) Rock and roll is

---

\(^{131}\) Band member Bec Matthews (who is both a classically trained percussionist and a professional rock drummer) described shuffle as “It's a pattern based on a triplet figure with the middle triplet missing. Similar to swing, you can play a swing over a
distinguished from the later genre of rock by this rhythmic characteristic, rather than by melody, harmony or timbre. Swing dancing is specifically choreographed to reflect the rhythmic quality of the swing/shuffle rhythm. Therefore any piece of music intended for use with this scene would need to contain that rhythmic emphasis.

As the scene had not been choreographed, I was anxious to find a suitable piece of music that would present the band with fewer difficulties for the creation of musical authenticity than “Regular Joe”. While the original recording of “Regular Joe” only contained one section using a large brass and horn ensemble, the music initially chosen by the choreographer for the final scene was far more challenging, being a full instrumental example of big band swing.

It appeared more sensible to substitute music within the instrumental capabilities of the band. Whatever piece of music was substituted needed to have a suitable rhythm and tempo for the existing dance steps, and similar prevailing mood (“joyful”). As a ‘swing’ or ‘shuffle’ rhythm is also present in rock and roll, and the instrumentation of the rock and roll genre was similar to the construction of the Daddy band, this was the obvious musical alternative. While this was not the ideal genre, from the choreographer’s point of view, it was, at least, a possible one. From the point of view of the musical direction, it could also be performed more authentically given the instrumental resources of the band.

The song “Brontosaurus Stomp” (The Piltdown Men) was chosen as it had a similar tempo (roughly 104 beats per minute) to the music the choreographer had initially selected. While the piece is not a noted highlight of the rock and roll era, it did contain some sax riffs that could be credibly performed by the Daddy band’s two saxophonists. The similar tempo meant that the dancers could work with the recorded version, obviating the need for the musicians to be present in rehearsal. Solo and duo performers within the workshop groups could also use one common recording for their individual rehearsals.

This music, therefore was selected pre-eminently for its genre, of which the rhythm is the primary determinant, and the tempo of the recording. Thus rhythm and tempo were of equal importance in the decision. “You Never Can Tell”, also a rock and roll song from the same era which was used earlier in the show, was also

shuffle, or a shuffle over a swing, but a shuffle is more continuous than swing.” A rock rhythm she describes as “a strong back beat on 2 and 4, fairly driving and consistent. Uses syncopation, but nothing too fancy.” (2006)
selected for the same rhythmic element, which would support the choreography, but the tempo was less of a determinant.  

Other songs were selected for tempo rather than rhythm. The need for a high energy and fast pace at the beginning of the show determined the selection of “Break On Through (To The Other Side)” by The Doors (the original choice of the AD for the opening of the show) and “Are You Gonna Be My Girl” (Jet) for the scenes Portraits/Fashion Parade. As none of these scenes involved dance choreography, the rhythmic composition of the songs was less important than a high energy and suitable lyrical content. As performing rights permission to use “Break on Through (To The Other Side)” was denied at a late stage of production, the substitute piece, “Lust For Life” (Iggy Pop), for which permission could be quickly obtained, was chosen for the same purpose; high energy and broadly opposite lyrics.

But what determines ‘high energy’ in a theatrical or musical context? ‘Energy’ is, like the word ‘pace’, a commonly employed term that covers a theoretical black hole. The difficulty of definition is that it appears to be a composite term. ‘Energy’ appears related primarily to tempo-rhythm yet these are not the only determining elements.

The two songs, “Lust For Life” and “What Have They Done To My Song, Ma”, can be said to embody, in the first example, a high energy and fast pace, and in the second a gentler energy and slower pace. “Lust For Life” was used as a musical gag, and to provide a strong opening for the first scene of the show, a portrayal of acrobatic sperm in the search for fulfilment. “What Have They Done To My Song, Ma” accompanied a more wistful scene, intended by the scene’s director, Kate Sulan, to have a “dream-like, French film quality” (2005). The two energies could be easily and most obviously attributed to their relative tempi, but other factors (timbre, melody, and rate of harmonic change) are also important.

As Walser notes, the power chord, a feature of the electric guitar-based “Lust For Life”, communicates ‘energy’ due to the timbral effect of distortion, effected by characteristically over-driven signal processing in combination with volume (1993: 43). In contrast, the dominant timbre in the instrumentation for “What Have They

---

132 Unbeknownst to the MD, the two workshop groups who were separately working on this scene were working with two different recordings of the song, which had widely differing tempos. This meant that at the first combined rehearsal attended by the MD one group appeared to be completely unable to dance as they had been working to a recording in a different, slower tempo, and had developed material suited to that tempo. This material was difficult to perform at the faster tempo used by the second group. Eventually a tempo was selected for the band that fell somewhere in the middle of the two versions.
Done To My Song, Ma, is the accordion, an acoustic sound. The vocal styling of Iggy Pop’s original recording of “Lust For Life” (a quality emulated by band singer, Claire Warren, in performance) is also harsh, the song is sneered as much as it is sung, and the melody of the song contains minimal variants in pitch. “What Have They Done To My Song, Ma” is both far more melodic in nature and with a very different vocal delivery, based on folk/gospel stylings rather than the ‘scream’ of the hard rock vocalist.

While tempo, therefore, is a determinant of ‘high’ energy, it is also affected by instrumentation, timbre (including vocal styling) and the density of musical events. If the term ‘density’ implies an increase of general musical resources (such as instrumentation, or more complex harmonies), it is also linked to the increased subdivisions of the beat (i.e. the rhythm) within the overall tempo.

The tempo-rhythm of the above pieces were suitable in each case to the ‘short arc’ of the individual scenes they accompanied, however the ‘long arc’ of overall dramatic structures also needs consideration.

As the performed identity of the Daddy band was predominantly linked with the genre of rock music, the creation of credible authenticity for its musical character is not only performed by the music but by other codes that, as Fabbri identified, surround genre and the audience expectations of the performance of genre (1981: 52). Fabbri’s categories include ‘semiotic’ and ‘behavioural’ rules, which importantly also provide other intrinsic markers of genre. As noted in the discussion of authenticity earlier, Grazian states that how “a thing ought to look, sound, and feel” (2003: 10) is crucial to the attribution of authenticity. The ‘thing’ relevant to the performed identity of the Daddy band is the loose collection of ‘semiotic’ and ‘behavioural’ rules that pertain to the rock ‘gig’.

In Daddy, the musicians were presented theatrically as a ‘band’. For example, the musicians were not playing a random collection of instruments, but a set of instruments and related equipment that signified ‘rock band’ (electric guitars, drum kit, the stacked PA system). So before the band played a note, the visual set-up signalled a potential genre and style of presentation. This was also emphasized by performing on a defined ‘stage’, surrounded by coloured festoon lighting, with theatrical costuming. The musicians were performing a ‘rock band’ and, therefore, even within the theatrical context, were operating within, to use Jauss’ term, a ‘horizon of expectations’ (1982: 97), an important expectation being the foregrounding and loud volume of the music. So while there was a need to provide
music as underscoring for scenes containing spoken text, within the performative possibility of the ‘rock band’ it was important to keep as much music in the foreground as possible.

Within the progression of scenes that constituted the final shape of *Daddy*, the middle section (Scenes 9-13) contained a predominance of music that functioned as cinematic underscoring to scenes containing dialogue. Following a truncated rendition of “Do You Love Me?” (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds), consisting of one verse and a chorus, the following three scenes (10-12) were accompanied respectively by a low volume, skeletal instrumental version of “When You Were Mine” (The Church), and two solo keyboard instrumentals “Factual Yet Sexy” and “Conversational”, which I had provided for two scenes which were developed late in the process. A brief 10-second burst of distorted electric guitar was then followed by “What Have They Done To My Song, Ma”. Thus, there was a conglomeration of scenes in the middle section of the show which were accompanied by music that bore little relation to the ‘semiotic’ rules pertaining to the rock gig, particularly in terms of ‘energy’. Music used for cinematic underscoring, which was necessary in this case for the individual scenes concerned, is not part of the codes that generally surround the rock gig.

In the case of *Daddy*, my final assessment of the process is that, while the music succeeded for the ‘short arc’ of the individual scene, the ‘long arc’ of the overall form was unsatisfactory, due to the loss of energy in the middle of the overall dramatic structure.

In part, this was due to changes within the dramatic structure that happened at a relatively late stage of the rehearsal process. Scene 13, *Being a Dad*, was devised in the final weekend immediately prior to opening night, and also contained more spoken text that had originally been envisioned. Some scenes had also been reordered late in the rehearsal process. The conglomeration of scenes accompanied by low energy music was, in part, a somewhat unfortunate effect of these late changes.

It needs to be stated, obviously, that *Daddy* was not a ‘gig’, and was unlikely to be perceived by the audience as a ‘gig’. Audience evaluations\(^{\text{133}}\) for the performance of the *Daddy* band were favourable, and indicated no apparent problem with the

\(^{\text{133}}\) 305 audience evaluations were completed, of which 89 specifically identified the band or the music as among the ‘favourite aspects’ of the show. There were 10 responses that evaluated the band or the music negatively, of which 7 concerned the loud volume of the music, the other three the unintelligibility of the lyrics. The evaluations were collected by the Women’s Circus, and provided to the researcher. No evaluation category specifically concerned the reception of the music.
contradiction between the performed identity of the band and its use for a long stretch of underscore. The theatrical context appeared to effectively override the conventions that could be considered dominant within the musical genre. I would argue, though that it is certainly worth considering the relationship between the performed genres of music and their theatrical context, and, if a potential conflict exists, to consider whether this is a significant problem in the intended reception of the overall theatrical performance.

The What and the How

I do not propose here to provide an exhaustive analysis of all aspects of the music but rather to draw attention to the elements of the music that were particularly pertinent to the production, the ‘core’ elements that occurred as concerns for the band, the performance and the collaborative process with the AD. If, as noted earlier, the nature of a covers band is defined in its relationship to recorded music, what can be determined as ‘core’ elements for the band need to recognize what are also ‘core’ elements for the recording.

Bernard Gendron (1986), in an interesting critique of Adorno, discusses what might be considered core and peripheral elements in recorded music. Using a comparison of the song, “Blue Moon”, in two different versions, one recorded by Connee Boswell in 1935 and one by The Marcels in 1961 (both hit records of their respective times), he notes that while the melody and harmony remained the same in both versions, the sound of each record was very different. He describes one as ‘a muted torch song’, while the other is characterized as ‘upbeat’ doo-wop. The two renditions, he considers, also display, as a result of their different sound, very different connotations, one “a song of pining world-weariness, the second a let’s-have-fun song…” (ibid. 30).

He states:

If we put melody and harmony in the core, and timbre and connotation in the periphery, we will see a radical sameness between the Boswell and Marcels recordings. If we put timbre and connotation in the core, and relegate melody and harmony to the periphery, we will see a radical difference. Western classical music focused on melody and harmony, whereas contemporary pop music focuses on timbre and connotation. (ibid. 31)

---

In considering Gendron’s arguments in the context of the compiled score for *Daddy*, and in what became the ‘core’ elements of concern for the performance of this score in a theatrical context, there are some similarities. The core preoccupations for the musical direction were connected with timbre, connotation, rhythm, and aspects of musical form (specifically structures, role of cadence and segue, and the use of ostinato). Melody and harmony (once learned) were of peripheral importance in the execution of the job unless they directly pertained to one of the core elements.

**Timbre and rhythm as core elements**

As noted earlier, a core element for the rock music in the compiled score was the ‘power chord’. A power chord consists of a chord produced on the lower strings of a guitar comprised of an open fifth or fourth, with the amplifier overdriving the sound to produce distortion, one of the effects of which is to produce overtones. While this device is termed a chord, it is much a timbral device as a harmonic one, and its effect as dependent on its particular sound as on the pitches constructing the harmony. The particular sound of a power chord is vital as a marker in the genres of metal and hard rock, and therefore carries connotational meaning as a core element. As Walser explains:

> Distortion … also results in a timbral change toward brightness, toward a more complex waveform, since distorting a signal increases the energy of its higher harmonics. Power chords, on the other hand, produce powerful signals below the actual pitches being sent to the amplifier. Thus, the distorted guitar signal is expanded in both directions: the higher harmonics produced by distortion add brilliance and edge (and what guitarists sometimes call “presence”) to the sound, and the resultant tones produced by the interval combinations of power chords create additional low frequencies, adding weight to the sound. (1993: 43)

The power chord is harmonically ambiguous, due to the lack of either a major or a minor third in the chord. It may, though not consistently, be notated with the numeral 5 appended after the chord indicator (e.g. C5) to distinguish it from the usual major/minor chord designation. Thus it escapes from the emotionally coded nature of the major/minor chord, and the harmonic ambiguity weakens its function as a musically ‘vectorized’ device. As Walser notes, what the power chord communicates is ‘energy’, through the combination of timbre, signal processing and, importantly, amplitude. This is a sound that depends on being played loudly, thus
making volume an additional marker of genre. The core elements of the power chord are not therefore melodic or functionally harmonic, but timbral (including volume, and addition of the electronic effect of distortion), and connotational (as a marker of genre, and communication of energy).

It is also arguable that rhythm and timbre, rather than melody or harmony, were the primary determinants of genre within the popular music chosen for the compiled score of *Daddy*. For a covers band, rhythm and timbre are also the prime elements that are altered in order to ‘transform’ the material. In contrast, the melodic shape may be varied, but will still generally be recognizably related to the original, and the harmony may not vary at all. Timbre is an important surface element in ‘transformation’, easily recognized in changes in instrumentation and voice. And in a more structural manner, rhythm can also be determined as core.

While timbral and rhythmic elements proved to be core elements there were also certain elements of form that were problematical for both the musicians and the AD.

**Musical form and theatrical context – The *minimum unit***

The most frequently occurring points of discussion, and often dissension, between the AD and myself during this show concerned questions of musical form. The discussion in Chapter Two raises the issue of the tension between musical form and the needs of dramatic action. The development of *Daddy* included many examples of decisions made as a result of this tension. This section addresses the issue of cuts within the music that cause loss of integrity, using one specific example initially as explanation. This is followed by other, briefer, examples of the decisions taken by the band in order to remedy this tension.

My overriding concern as MD was to support the dramatic intent and yet to maintain the integrity of musical forms, in order that they would not, to paraphrase Franze, collapse when their limits were penetrated (2000: 23). Franze’s article does not offer any further explanation of his vivid statement. To investigate further, the questions need to be asked: what does it mean for a form to collapse? What determines the limits, or ‘integrity’ of musical form within the context of a theatrical performance? The set of practices identified in Chapter Four demonstrate that in the case of a composed score the challenge for the composer is to create musical forms that will be suitable, and flexible enough, for the nature of the production.
undertaken. In contrast, in using a compiled score the musician is working with forms that are already in existence, forms which may have different limits and which will not have been composed with a view to their suitability for use in theatre.

I argue that the limits of any particular musical form used for theatrical accompaniment are not determined solely by the music, but are also context dependent. I will use as an example the song “Is You Is Or Is You Ain’t (Ma Baby)” (Louis Jordan), used for the scene Father Xmas. The song was chosen for inclusion by the AD, in conjunction with the performers who had developed the scene, primarily for the comic juxtaposition of the lyrics with the subject matter (Father Xmas as a sperm donor).

The chorus of the song was the section intended for use in the performance. It has a 36 bar form, articulated in regular 4-bar phrases. The lyrics of the chorus are set out below, each line corresponding to a 4-bar phrase.

Is you is, or is you ain’t ma’ baby,
The way you’re acting lately makes me doubt.
You’re is still my baby, baby,
Seems my flame in your heart’s done gone out.
A woman is a creature that has always been strange,
Just when you’re sure of one you find she’s gone and made a change,
Is you is, or is you ain’t ma baby.
Maybe baby’s found somebody new,
Or is ma’ baby still ma’ baby true. (Austin and Jordan 1943)

The function of this song was to cover the entrance and exit of the performers, framing the scene, which even with the large performance space would only take approximately thirty seconds. The entire chorus of the song is, at roughly one minute and twenty seconds, therefore over twice as long as required. Ergo, cutting the chorus in half, would, from the AD’s point of view be the perfect solution. As MD, my instinctual and dogged resistance to that suggestion was based on the belief that, if the music were to end after the 16th bar, halfway through the chorus, the form of the music would indeed ‘collapse’, or, to use Sabaneev’s expression, it would be so ‘diluted’ (1978/1935: 22) that it would lose integrity as music, and this loss of integrity would dilute and undermine the theatrical situation itself.

But what does integrity mean in this situation? A nominalist aesthetic position, such as Nelson Goodman’s (1968), would consider that the original form of any piece of music is inviolable and therefore implies that any variation is artistically
undesirable. This position is related to the performance of classical music, and is a position essentially reiterated, though with some modifications by Stan Godlovitch (2003). This is not a useful aesthetic position to hold for a musician working in theatre or circus. If there can be considered to be an ‘ontology’ of the theatre/circus musician, it is that adaptation and flexibility of musical form is the rule, rather than the exception. So the concept of the ‘integrity’ of musical form within theatrical performance must lie elsewhere.

My identification of this situation as an example of the ‘collapse’ of musical form, is, in part, due to a problematic lack of closure.

If, for example, the AD had requested that the performed work were to finish abruptly on the word ‘heart’s’, the form could be considered to have collapsed. Here the collapse is due to lack of closure that is both lyrical (the sentence is incomplete), and musical (the music is interrupted on the II of a conventional II-V-I cadence, and halfway through the fourteenth bar, analogous in aural terms to an incomplete … sentence). This is so obvious aurally that it would be surprising if a director insisted upon ending the music there, unless there was a specific dramatic point to be made dependent precisely upon such an interruption. So if one was to complete both the sentence, the cadence and the articulation of the phrase structure to end on the 16th bar (the bar after the word ‘out’ and approximately five seconds more), as the AD wished, would that be a suitable place to end the music, or would it still ‘collapse’?

From a musical point of view, this appears possible as the lyrics have closure, and the music has a perfect cadence appearing at the end of what is a common regular phrase structure (4 bars), which also indicates musical closure. What is problematic, however, is that the ‘long arc’ of the musical form does not have closure, and this form is one of the strongest conventions of this genre and period.136

135 4 bar phrase structures, and their extension into multiples of 4, are the most common phrase structures in Western music.
136 The form is a simple ternary structure, AABA. The first two lines of the lyrics musically constitute the A, the second two lines reiterate the A, the next two lines introduce new material in a contrasting tonal area, B, and the final three lines consist of a recapitulation and extension of A1, of which the penultimate line could be omitted without undue musical damage, and with a tweak, without lyrical problems, though the effectiveness of the song would be lessened. This basic 32 bar ternary structure informs most of the popular song of this genre and period. To finish the song at the halfway cadence (i.e. after AA) violates a basic precept of this highly conventional form. Most song is based on either a ternary structure (ABA) or the simpler binary structure (AB) (as in the folk song “My Darling Clementine”. There are many variants of this structure, including, for example extensions into C and D themes, but it appears that an important element of a form in the tonal Western tradition is the minimum requirement of a transition from A to B. For example, Maud Karpeles identifies ABCD, AABA, ABBA and ABAC as forms in English folk song (1973: 24) and Wilfrid Mellers identifies the basic formal conventions of the Baroque period as being the binary (AB) dance form, and the ternary (ABA) da capo aria, tracing their development into the more extended sonata form (1977: 6-7). The lack of the B material is what, in this case, appears to determine an incomplete unit of form, and, being such a common determinant in Western song, can account for the sense of the song being unfinished for a listener familiar with this tradition, even if that listener is not consciously aware of, or may have no technical musical literacy to recognize the form.
As part of the band rehearsal process for this scene, and for all of the music used in *Daddy*, it was necessary to establish what I term ‘the minimum unit of manipulable form’. This can be described in blunt, practical terms as the shortest amount of time between starting a section of music and ending it so that it does not sound ‘wrong’, an effect created by musical incompleteness. The shorter the minimum unit, the greater is the flexibility created in relation to the demands of indeterminate length in theatrical performance. In the case of “Is You Is Or Is You Ain’t” the minimum unit that would enable the musical closure of the ‘long arc’ of the form entailed the unwieldy length of all 36 bars of the chorus.

As MD, my insistence on the complete chorus as the only acceptable minimum unit for the scene was not only due to musical considerations. In different theatrical circumstances it may have been possible to make a different decision, notwithstanding the above argument.

If “Is You Is Or Is You Ain’t” had been used as underscoring under dialogue (as ‘low attention’ music), and as an instrumental rendition, it would be quite possible to perform just the AA structure and treat the cadence as a final cadence, which could be emphasized by other traditional means of marking it as final such as *ritardando*. This is what can be termed a ‘faked’ cadence, an artificial ending presented as an intentional choice. As background music it is easier to get away with this, as audience attention is far more likely to be focussed on the visual and textual elements.

But, as considered earlier, the musicians were not framed as background instrumentalists, but presented theatrically as a rock band. The positioning of the scene within the ‘long arc’ of the theatrical form was also important, particularly as this scene followed what I have already identified as a problematic section in which the band were largely confined to performing a cinematic underscore. Following this extended section of underscoring, it was important, for the band’s performed identity, to return the music to the foreground.

So, ideally, the musical performance of “Is You Is Or Is You Ain’t” should support the theatrical exigencies of framing the scene, cover the entrance in a way that was also consistent with the performance framing of the musicians, and take account of the overall shape of the theatre performance. With the song performed as foreground rather than background, and with the likelihood that it would be

---

I wish I had been able to articulate this explanation at the time, as it may have been more convincing than a stubborn insistence on the validity of a gut feeling, which is a more realistic appraisal of the communication on this point between the AD and the MD during the rehearsal process.
consciously perceived by the audience, it was then important to maintain the conventional integrity of its musical form. The eventual compromise reached was that the entrance of the performers would be extended and choreographed to fit the entire chorus.

The minimum unit of manipulable form is, therefore, contingent not only on musical considerations, but also upon the specific theatrical context and the performing conventions established within that specific context. It is a concept that while relating to purely musical considerations is not confined to them. It is related to a specific theatrical context, yet is not completely defined by that context. Its content is contingent upon its function. Thus, in order to recognize the dual nature of the function, and its dependency on both musical and theatrical specificities, a full definition of the term would be ‘the minimum manipulable unit of musical form, dependent upon the specific theatrical context pertaining to its function’. In the following I will refer to it as the minimum unit.

In some cases the minimum unit was reducible to the pattern of the main riff within sections of individual pieces, one to four bars in length. Susan Fast defines the riff as:

… a short instrumental pattern that is repeated throughout a song or section of a song, acting as a structuring device over which the vocal line or instrumental solos occur …. Riffs comprise rhythm, melodic shape, harmony, and timbres that are related to one another in specific ways. (2001: 115-116)

Riff is the popular music term for ostinato, which can also be defined as a repeated figure that may contain various combinations of harmonic, melodic and rhythmic elements. The harmonic elements, however, become less anchored in functionality. The ostinato/riff does not ‘progress’, it can be indefinitely extended, creating a circular rather than a linear momentum, and in which closure can be indefinitely delayed.

This makes it a highly useful formal unit within a theatrical context (a contemporary ‘vamp till ready’) as it can easily accommodate fluctuations in the length of a stretch of physical action, or variations in the tempo of dialogue. This is an essential consideration in a circus context, the physical nature of which might have to encompass the missed (and therefore repeated) ‘trick’, or technical considerations such as the safety of the performers.

The minimum unit of “Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood” (The Animals), used for the scene Dad’s Hobbies, consisted of a four bar riff which comprised the first
musical material of the song, of which the primary feature in terms of manipulation was its cycle of descending chords (Am, G, F, E). Fluctuations in length could be accommodated relatively quickly, which was necessary in this scene as the music alternated between foreground for physical action and underscoring for sections of text. The physical action was loosely choreographed to reflect this basic four-bar structure.

In some cases the riff functioned as a ‘vamp till ready’ device, while the rest of the song retained its structure. The song “Are You Gonna Be My Girl” (Jet), used for the scene Fashion Parade, has a two bar riff similarly used as a vamp. For extra flexibility in the middle of the song (where it was necessary both to underscore dialogue and provide fanfare-like episodes), the minimum unit could be reduced to one bar. The integrity of the original verse and chorus structure was retained for non-text based physical action.

The internal structure of other pieces was not so easy to manipulate either because they contained longer harmonic progressions (e.g. “What Have They Done To My Song, Ma” in which the minimum unit was determined to be a complete verse) or because they were in a standard genre form (e.g. “Brontosaurus Stomp”, a 12 bar blues, a form so recognizable that it is hard to convincingly alter the minimum unit from the complete 12-bar form). In these circumstances it was only possible to keep the intros and ‘outros’ flexible.

The harmonic simplicity of the ostinatos used in this production have other advantages such as providing ease of improvisation (to provide variations of colour, or to respond to individual accents in the action). For example, in the scene Fashion Parade, the ostinato derived from “Are You Gonna Be My Girl” also supported other musical quotations that gestured (in the spirit of gentle satire) toward the drag identities presented (quoting variously from Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” to “Old MacDonald Had A Farm”). The more static the harmony, the easier it was for the band to manipulate, and, importantly in the circus context, to manipulate quickly.

The shorter the minimum unit, therefore, the quicker the musicians could respond as an ensemble to theatrical imperatives (covering sudden changes, technical malfunctions or performer error) while ensuring that the music would still sound ‘right’). Establishing the minimum unit in pre-composed music made it possible to determine where flexibility was possible without undue detriment to the musical form. If a scene required a great deal of flexibility, music with extended forms less able to be ‘minimized’ in this way proved more difficult to work with.
The core musical practices used in this show, therefore, conformed to the set of musical practices that appear to predominate in the accompaniment of both circus music (Chapter Four) and within theatre (Chapter Two). The minimum unit provided the basis for the practices of the ‘round to round’ and ‘cut to cue’. An example of a typical instruction from the cue sheet used by the musicians illustrates both the use of ‘round to round’ and ‘cut to cue’, and also provisional instructions in the case of emergency:

Play “Happy” until sax cues psycho knife moment (if late Kim will cycle D/A), then into fast “Cadillac”, repeat, cycle on E till Cut 1234-1. (In emergency get to nearest E in the form, cycle till cut).

Where there was a need to provide underscore, the bass guitar provided the most dominant structuring instrument, both rhythmically and harmonically. Gay Jr. notes that while the overall sound of a rock band resides primarily in the timbral qualities of the lead guitar, the bass guitar functions in a manner important to the ensemble in ‘playing more structural parts’ and in ‘moving the rhythm forward through time’ (Gay Jr. 1998: 89). It is these functions of the bass guitar that provide the ‘drive’. 137

The bass guitar provided the ‘drive’ not just to the foregrounded songs but also functioned as an important element of the underscored scenes. In order to function as background support to the dialogue, the music has, of necessity, to decrease in amplitude, with the potential (and in this case the undesirable consequence) of diminishing energy. The low frequency of the bass notes did not interfere with the higher frequency of the spoken voices, therefore could ‘sit under’ the dialogue at a level that could maintain some rhythmic drive and energy, without overpowering the text.

In general it was the scenes containing spoken text, or acts on aerial apparatus, that were problematical in terms of maintaining the integrity of musical forms. The speed of spoken text delivery was variable throughout the season, unsurprisingly, as speech rhythms are less predictably regular in comparison to musical rhythm, and the dialogue-dominated scenes were not cued or choreographed to the music. The physically demanding nature of aerials work, coupled with the need to preserve the safety of the (often inexperienced) performers meant that it was desirable for the music to follow the action.

137 When de Cinque was asked how she would define her musical role as bass player in the Daddy band, her response was given as being “the drive. Just keeping it moving along” (De Cinque 2006).
Both Lynne Kent (shadow puppet director) and Kate Sulan (director of the New Women’s group who performed the scene *Dad’s Fantasy Life*) were working with physical scenes, containing no spoken text. Sulan, whose brief was to devise a scene of approximately four minutes in length, with no spoken text, had created this scene to the length of the music the group chose for the scene (“What Have They Done To My Song, Ma”). The task for the musicians was therefore simply to provide a rendition of the song that remained consistent with the recording. Unlike the choreographed dance sequences, the music (apart from the overall length) had no necessary structural effect on the scene, being used primarily to provide emotional or diegetic framing. The only variant from the recording was the provision of a ‘vamp till ready’ intro and ending to cover the entrance and exit of the performers. So although the minimum unit was a complete verse (for similar reasons of musical closure to that identified for “Is You Is Or Is You Ain’t” the vamp (in this case a riff based on the accompaniment at the opening of the recorded song, using its tonal root) could accommodate flexibility of length.

The shadow scenes devised by Kent were all of flexible length, with no specific choreography to the music, and also contained no spoken text. In rehearsal discussions with Kent, she was happy to take her cueing from the music. So although none of the shadow scenes were performed to a complete song, for these scenes, I determined the minimum unit of form, and Kent worked within those limits.

The individual trainers/directors had different ways of working with music, a reflection both of individual style and their particular performance form. Of the varieties of non-music-based performing art, dance is the form that usually works most closely with music, and dancers pay close attention to music and timing as their performance is often choreographed directly to it. This was certainly true of the approach taken by Sally MacAdams, whose swing dance choreography reflected not only the broad musical form, but also particular accents of timbre and syncopation. Her concern was whether the musicians would be able to consistently perform the detail of these choreographed accents. In working on the choreography for “Brontosaurus Stomp”, used for the finale, it was necessary to have a number of meetings with her, in order to discuss the form and rhythmic character of the song.

---

138 As a general note, cueing was given to the performers through the lyrics, it proving easier for the performers to register a text cue rather than identify a musical one.
in detail (down to quarter notes) and where it would be possible for the music to be altered to reflect her desired choreography.

**Continuity via cadence and segue**

While the bass guitar provided continuity within songs, particularly in transitions between foreground music and underscoring for text, by its maintenance of pace, the use of cadence or segue was crucial in providing continuity between scenes.

The decision to employ either cadences or segues was important for the formal structure of *Daddy*, a musical decision analogous with the theatrical decision to black-out or not to black-out. I define cadence here as the definite ending to an individual piece of music, and segue as the set of devices which can uninterruptedly link one piece of music to the next.

The traditional structure of circus invites a particular pattern of audience response in which applause occurs frequently; to signal appreciation of individual acts, or of particular demonstrations of skill within the course of an act. Traditional circus music supports this response, by ‘marking’ the tricks and by ‘upward trajectory’ to the climax, along with the sense of closure provided by the cadence.

While the individual act, with its concomitant pattern of applauded response, is a staple of traditional circus, this has not been the case with many past Women’s Circus shows. For the AD, this was about positioning and relating to the audience in a particular way.

> [It] was important to structure … claps and bowing into the show in that I was trying to get the build of pleasure for the audience and for the audience to be acknowledged as part of the performance. It was … about comedy and making them feel happier…different than everybody sits in silence and they’re invisible. (Jackson 2006)

So a strong cadence, signalling musical closure, coinciding with a definite end to a scene would, in the circus context, predictably elicit applause and this was the case in *Daddy*. The applause also covered and alleviated any loss of energy in the gap between one discrete piece and the next, even if the gap was in actuality very short. In certain instances, however, it was more effective to use segue.

Segue can function in different ways, and it was employed for a number of purposes in *Daddy*, for example to create a medley. In the final scene the music segued between two songs in order to aid a general build towards a climax, over a
relatively long individual scene. Using segue to link scenes was useful to create a longer musical unit, and this was employed towards the end of Daddy in order to intensify the climax of the work.

Segue can also be used intra-scene to create a shift in emotional register. In the development of the scene, When Dad Met Mum, which combined dancing with aerial work, the aerial workshop group had chosen to use “You Never Can Tell” (Chuck Berry) and had choreographed their dance steps to that music. Neither the AD nor I particularly liked the song, and I felt it was uncomfortably close to the clichés of rock and roll dance films. The steps of rock and roll dancing are tied to the presence of the shuffle rhythm, a rhythm that needs to be there in order for the dance steps to work, so substituting a more contemporary musical genre would not work.139 So in an endeavour to create some more emotional depth I proposed to segue from “You Never Can Tell” into the darker, alternative rock sound of “Shivers” (Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds), music with a different pace and energy. This was achieved using a melodic motif from “You Never Can Tell”, over a transitional chord progression, using drums to mark the moment of change.

The generalization can be made that the individual popular song contains little in the way of development in the classical Western musical tradition. In emotional terms, a popular song will generally remain in one register throughout,140 and the songs used in Daddy conformed to this. To overcome this limitation, the juxtaposition of the disparate styles of “You Never Can Tell” and “Shivers” was used to create a shift in emotional register for dramatic purposes. This use of segue, in conjunction with the dramatic action, also signalled a continuation of the scene, and did not invite applause.

139 In trying to find a song that the AD and I preferred that would still facilitate the rock and roll aerial dance steps, the AD suggested the song “I Love Rock ‘n’ Roll” by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts (1982). But this song, despite its title, is not rock and roll, but rock (lacks the shuffle rhythm, has strong rock back beats, etc). Without the shuffle rhythm, the developed choreography would not work. Putting a shuffle rhythm into the song would indeed turn it into rock and roll, enabling the choreography, but this would still present the problem of the clichéd genre I was trying to avoid in the first place. Jackson’s response to my explanation of why “I Love Rock ‘n’ Roll” was not actually rock and roll, and therefore not usable for our purposes, indicated, to use Kivy’s words quoted earlier, that she found my musical explanation, “as mysterious as the Cabala and as interesting as a treatise on sewage disposal” (2001: 156), though her exact phrase was both more succinct and less polite. I find her response quite understandable, and it serves to highlight the difficulties of technical communication about music.

140 Heavy metal is a notable exception.
Communication between the Artistic Director and the Musical Director

There were three general areas in the communication between the AD and the MD. Firstly, the initial instructions for action, secondly, the negotiation of the individual elements of the compiled score and thirdly, communication that dealt with the interaction between the compiled score and the details of the dramatic action (or, in other words, the relationship of music to ‘ring action’).

From the point of view of the MD, the first initial area of communication was unproblematic, the second achieved with a little more difficulty, but considerable problems emerged with the third. As identified, a core problem involved the tension between musical and dramatic form, in that some musical forms proved to be less flexible than others in order to accommodate the periods of variable time inherent in the live circus/theatre context. It was difficult to communicate this to a director without musical training, as any explanation, apart from the stubborn insistence on the validity of creative intuition, involved a level of technical musical knowledge. But if communication about musical structures was understandably difficult in this situation, other areas of communication were unproblematic.

The initial instructions, which concerned the overall musical direction, the ‘feel’, or ‘energy’ of the music, and its function within the show were communicated vividly by the AD. The nature of this communication contained many of the elements identified in Chapter Two. Instructions were given using affective and motor-affective metaphor, and also used categorization and comparison. Descriptions of this sort included:

It’s a Bruce Springsteen anthem-esque number. It’s music on a Saturday night down the pub with your mates. Music to get you horny. (Jackson 2005)

The description of the music that might accompany the opening scene of acrobatic sperm was initially described as “bright, happy, fecundant, spurting” (ibid.). The instruction for the proposed scene that eventually became Fashion Parade was “fast, trashy, fanfare”. All these instructions for action are concerned with expressing the experiential aspect of music, the why, within the stated directorial intent of entertainment. Considered, as Barten argues, as a source not just of information but of imaginative engagement (1998), or as Feld argues, as a “process of intersection” for meaningful exchange (Keil and Feld 1994: 78), the
combination of metaphoric description and example used by the AD, combined with a recognition of the socially situational aspects of music functioned as a clear direction for action for the MD.

The compilation of the actual music that would be used for the performance, (the *what*), was aided by the obvious fact of the availability of recorded music from which to make the selection. Music could be tried out, discarded, or provisionally accepted as necessary. Some of the initial suggestions by the AD were discarded early in this process, either because the genre would present practical executional difficulties for the band (Frank Sinatra was a quickly discarded artist, as his recorded product would have given the band many of the same problems as those identified with the performance of big band swing), or because performing rights permission was likely to be withheld (this influenced the early discarding of Elvis Presley and AC/DC). As part of the professional role for the MD involved support of the community culture of the Women’s Circus, the music selected needed to not only potentially engage the audience, but also engage the members of the community, which included the members of the band. The eventual compiled score, therefore, reflected an extended period of ‘barter and exchange’, containing music which was selected by the MD and the band, and music chosen by the AD (or the trainers/choreographers etc.) in conjunction with the individual workshop groups. But while the inclusion of certain pieces of music over others involved compromises from all concerned, the use of existing recordings as the objects of negotiation ensured the communication was still relatively simple.

It is possible that if the score were to be a composed one, this area of communication might have been more difficult. Only two brief pieces were composed (or, rather, improvised) for *Daddy*. “Functional Yet Sexy” and “Conversational” gained their titles from the initial descriptive instruction given to the MD by the AD. Whether my musical interpretations of those instructions resembled their descriptions is a moot point, but the AD revealed no dissatisfaction with the interpretation of those instructions, though this could easily be attributed to the pressures of time at that stage of the production.

In reflecting on the process of compiling and performing the score for *Daddy*, what became apparent was that musical decisions were not solely made on the basis of the musics’ suitability for accompanying the various scenes presented, but also took into account the performance framing of the musicians. As the musicians were framed theatrically as a ‘rock band’, and therefore operating within certain
performing conventions concomitant with the ‘gig’, which included their staging, there was some conflict between providing what was the necessary musical accompaniment and the theatrical identities the musicians assumed for the performance. The following chapter therefore investigates the musician as a performer within theatre, considering the prevailing conventions surrounding the visual staging of the musician.
Chapter Six
Musicians performing the ‘musician’

If I had something to see, would it be theatre? (John Cage 1971: 49)

The study of musical performance has focussed on the performance of the music rather than on the performance of the musician, to the extent that to talk of music performance always implies the former, at the expense of rendering superfluous the latter. Yet in analyzing theatrical performance, any visible presence of a musician needs to be accounted for to complete that analysis. This chapter considers the prevailing conventions in a musician’s performance and the implications of the presence of a visible musician in a theatrical production. How does the musician perform the musician?

This chapter, therefore, discusses the visual embodiment of music rather than the ‘aural object’, and argues that there is a continuum of six main presentational conventions within which to consider the live musician within theatre. These conventions are summarized as: the pit musician, the virtual pit musician, the musician within ‘spectacle’, the onstage musician performing music, the musician as ‘setting’ (onstage performing rudimentary elements of characterization), and the actor/musician.

The analysis for this chapter is based on the performances viewed during the course of this research that made extensive use of live music. This includes 20 productions identified in Chapter Three as using live music,\(^\text{142}\) and 7 circus performances using live music viewed for Chapter Four. These are identified by title and number in the case of the theatre productions (as in Chapter Three), and by title (if applicable) and company in the case of the circus productions, with full details given in Appendix I. As a starting point, however, I will consider a

---
\(^{141}\) An earlier version of part of this chapter has been published in Australasian Drama Studies, 52 (April 2008).
\(^{142}\) Three shows that contained a small amount of live music are not considered here as the live musical elements were not defining elements of the production. These were: The Jacaranda Tree (L7) in which the female actor sang an unaccompanied folksong as part of her dramatic role, Particularly In The Heartland (T5) which contained some audience singing, and Township Stories (T8) in which the cast sung a final song, in a production that otherwise used a compiled recorded score.
performance that was viewed outside the designated research performances, but which proved fruitful for this investigation as the acting ensemble was an ensemble of musicians.

The Session

The Session, performed at the Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne in June 2006,\textsuperscript{143} was a theatrical presentation of a musical experience. The conceit was that a group of five musicians and a sound engineer had gathered to record a film soundtrack. This soundtrack was recorded and mixed live; the set simulating a recording studio complete with a soundproof booth. The musicians recorded both music and sound effects, moving from cue to cue at the behest of the sound engineer, though not in numerical order. At the climax of the show, announced as the ‘Final Take’, the result of this live recording session was performed, the cues assembled into the correct order with the musicians then providing the final overdubs. While the musicians made an actual recording, the audience never saw a film and the discrepancy between the real and the imaginary provided considerable amusement.

The music exploited many conventions of film genres, yet the mix of genres into one soundtrack made it hard to ascertain the nature of the unseen film. At one moment it sounded like a martial arts movie, the next a B-grade horror flick. The use of a theremin\textsuperscript{144} in one instant suggested science fiction, but the next moment brought tasteful minimalist music suggestive of an art-house French film. Snatches of dialogue in a variety of languages added to the confusion of location and genre, particularly as the ‘cues’ were initially recorded out of sequence. The ‘Final Take’ had the effect of a reveal, in that there appeared to be a certain narrative logic, but for a strangely inconceivable film. The presence of a television monitor at the front of the stage, turned away from the audience, and ‘watched’ at times by the musicians added to the gag. It was likely that each audience member constructed his or her own imaginary film narrative, as what the show undoubtedly made clear is the evocative nature of sound. It also showed how sound remains evocative even after the mechanics of its production have been revealed.

\textsuperscript{143} The Session, performed by The Ennio Morricone Experience (Patrick Cronin, Graeme Leak, Boris Conley, Dave Hewitt) with Steph O’Hara and Stephen Taberner, directed by Barry Lang, with sound design by Steph O’Hara and Graeme Leak. The Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne, 14-25 June 2006. Viewed 23 June 2006.

\textsuperscript{144} An early electronic musical instrument, named after its inventor, Léon Théremin, which consists of a box with two radio antennae, which the player controls by moving the hands in proximity to the antennae, but without actually touching it. Its other-worldly sound made it a feature in science fiction films, such as Bernard Herrmann’s score for The Day the Earth Stood Still (dir. Robert Wise 1951). It was also used in Miklós Rózsás’ score for Spellbound (dir. Alfred Hitchcock 1945).
The Session was not a purely aural experience however, as it demonstrated the theatrical quality of sound production. This was particularly evident in the recording of sound effects, for which the musicians took on the role of Foley artists. A cue entitled “Seaside Atmos” involved the careful spooning of Eno’s powder into a glass, an effect that was inaudible to the audience as it happened, and which only became audible in playback. The musicians demonstrated the theatrical possibilities of Foley art, as in order to produce a convincing sound effect it is not enough to mechanically make the sound, it is also important to perform elements of character. The sound of footsteps is produced not just by the physical juxtaposition of particular items of footwear in conjunction with specific surfaces, but the performance of an identity wearing those shoes with a particular dramatic motivation. In The Session, the sound of heavy breathing from physical exertion was generated by a musician running energetically on the spot, not merely standing and breathing heavily into a microphone. The physical reproduction of action was highlighted in this piece by visual demonstrations of, to use Chion’s term, the “vectorization” of sound (1994: 19-20). Sonic arrows in flight, for example, were accompanied by an equivalent vector of the performers’ movement, the sounds of the arrows moved towards and away from the microphones and the performers visually followed the arrow’s trajectory.

The show attracted favourable critical review, yet with a notable qualification. Cameron Woodhead reported:

Director Barry Laing ensures ample visual stimulation, although the Ennios, who are not actors, are more engaging with instruments in their hands. (Having said that, there’s a striking naturalistic sequence where the musicians take a break and begin to chat over each other.) (2006)

This comment raises some interesting questions about the nature of the performances. Were the musicians inadequate at performing the ‘role’ of a musician, apart from in the one ‘striking naturalistic sequence’? What in the performance gave the potential for this ambivalence?

The show presented a simple situation, without plot or developmental narrative, yet the absence of a conventional plot is a common enough situation in contemporary theatre. While the reviewer noted only one ‘striking naturalistic

---

145 Foley artists create the SFX for film. The name derives from Jack Foley, an early pioneer of sound effects.
146 The recording of such a quiet sound source meant that the recording levels had to be set so high that any amplification for the audience would have resulted in unbearable feedback loops. The playback speakers were therefore turned off for this recording cue.
sequence’, however (accepting that there was a certain exaggeration of gesture for comic effect) the behaviour of the musicians could be described as basically naturalistic throughout. As a musician who has undertaken session work for film, I found the performances convincing in their recreation of what musicians do. But this show threw a spotlight on the physical act of musical performance as equal in importance to the aural aspect and this is not how musicians are usually viewed.

Patrick Cronin, a performer in the show, commented:

My brother, who’s worked a lot with disabled people, said that we seemed to exhibit all the traits of being autistic. As characters we were quite disconnected from each other, quite confused, though we knew what we had to do, our own specific job in the band and we could all do it well. But he said he found it good to watch. Musicians are a bit like that. They don’t like to speak much. And they often don’t listen to each other. (Cronin 2006)

But was *The Session*, in which there was certainly plenty to see, ‘theatre’? Woodhead avoided the term, characterizing the show as a “zany and distinctly postmodern piece of musical comedy” (Woodhead 2006), a somewhat perverse description given the dearth of singing and dancing, and not particularly improved by adding the word ‘postmodern’. His review demonstrates the difficulties that can occur when performance framing breaches certain expectations. He also implicitly posits a distinction between the performance styles of the actor and the musician.

For this show there was ambivalence between the framing of a concert, where the focus is on the aural experience, and the framing of a theatre show, where music will be part of a set of competing aural and visual stimuli. *The Session* continually fluctuated between these two states. As a theatrical work, *The Session* was presented within the convention of the fourth wall, with the audience observing a ‘slice of life’, performed in a heightened yet basically naturalistic way. While in an actual studio recording session the musicians would be unlikely to record any dialogue, or Foley effects, the nature of the cue-to-cue spotting performed in *The Session*, with its brevity, non-connectedness, and highly condensed use of time, is customary.147 Yet as a theatrical experience there were long sections when the performance of the music conformed to the different expectations of a concert performance, in that the visual elements were subsumed in the aural experience, and the musicians played the music in a manner consistent with the conventions of a concert. This in itself breached a further set of conventions, in that the music played

---

147 For example, one recording of Carl Stalling conducting a studio recording session is very similar to the approach taken in *The Session* in the efficiency and brevity of spoken comments (1990.).
was inconsistent with the conventions of ‘serious’ music, which in itself provided another source of humour.

Concert performance has no term that is equivalent to the ‘fourth wall’ in theatre, although the musicians perform on a stage in front of the audience, in what is often a proscenium arch setting, and might make no reference to the presence of an audience. The musicians do not perform character, or engage in the representation of a fictional world. The concert stage can be considered a space of actuality rather than illusion. Yet as Auslander states:

We may not usually think of musical performance, apart from opera and musical theatre, as entailing characterization in the conventional dramatic sense. Nevertheless, we must be suspicious of any supposition that musicians are simply ‘being themselves’ on stage. (2004b: 6)

If the musicians’ performance exists somewhere between ‘characterization’ and ‘being themselves’ the question is: who, or what, are they performing?

Auslander, building on work by Frith (1996), identifies three elements of a musician’s performance: “… the real person (the performer as human being), the performance persona (the performer’s self-presentation), and the character (a figure portrayed in a song text)” (2006: 4), while noting that the line between the real and the persona, and the line between persona and character are indistinct (2004b: 7). Auslander explains his use of the word ‘persona’ in this situation as a useful description for “a performed presence that is neither a fictional character nor equivalent to the performer’s “real” identity” (2006: 4, footnote 3).

Both Auslander and Frith consider the lyrics of a song as analogous to a dramatic text, and it is in this context that Auslander uses the term ‘character’. Auslander’s studies have also focussed on genres of music that are far more reliant on overt visuality and therefore more likely to be deemed ‘theatrical’ in nature, such as glam rock.

Both scholars base their analyses predominantly on the figure of the singer, but Auslander notes that “character is an optional element that comes in primarily when

---

148 I take these terms from Antony Hippesley Coxe (1952: 17-18). While Coxe uses these terms to discuss circus performance in contrast to dramatic performance I consider them to be also applicable to the performance of music.

149 Frith’s three levels of music for the pop musician consist of the musician as ‘themselves’, the “star personality (their image) and a song personality, the role that each lyric requires” (Frith 1996: 212). Frith also equates the performance of the pop singer as akin to that of the film actor, rather than to the theatre actor (ibid.).

150 Otakar Zich and the Prague School also theorized three levels of performance for the actor corresponding to the levels identified by Auslander. These are: the actor (personal characteristics), the character, and the stage figure. The stage figure is defined as an “image of the character that is created by the actor, costume designer, director, and others as a kind of technical object or signifier” (Gay McAuley in Bouissac 1998: 11).

151 This can also be equated with the term ‘character song’, which sometimes occurs in discussion of musical theatre, and other popular entertainments such as music-hall (e.g. Beroff 1984: 107).
the musician is a singer performing a song that defines a character textually” (2004b: 7), reflecting the situation that the instrumental musician, who cannot be defined as a character through lyrics, “may be perceived as a direct performance of persona unmediated by character” (ibid.). If, in a singer’s performance, the line between the personal self, a persona, and a defined character is indistinct, this becomes more problematic for the non-singing musician. A persona, therefore, might be the most constant element of the instrumental musician’s performance, yet this is neither randomly chosen nor completely subject to personal choice.

Genre provides the most usual frame for a musician’s performance, and this is evinced in both costume and in performance conventions (Auslander 2004b: 9). For Frith, the presence of conventions is vital to alleviate ‘anxiety’ in the spectator (and the theatre reviewer) over the question of meaning.

... there is always a gap between what is meant (the body directed from the inside) and what is read (the body interpreted from the outside): and this gap is a continual source of anxiety, an anxiety not so much that the body itself but its meaning is out of our control. In most public performances the body is, in fact, subject to a kind of external control, the motivation provided by a score or a script or a routinized social situation, which acts as a safety net for performer and audience alike. (1996: 206)

The gap between what is meant and what is read, as happens in a reception process, is particularly pertinent to discussing a musician’s performance, as a musician, who is generally not trained to consider his or her visual presence, might be unaware of both. There is another gap between what is customarily considered to be musical performance, and what can be deemed to be the purview of the theatrical performance. The critical response to the performance of The Session can be read as an anxiety over these gaps.

There is a metaphor of ‘conduit’ that, according to Leslie Gay (1998) underlies the relationship between the rock musician and technology. He frames this in terms of the ‘image schemata’ central to the theories of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This metaphor is applicable to the traditional framing of musical performance. The ‘conduit’ metaphor describes the musician as an ‘empty vessel’ through which the music passes from composer (or equivalent) to audience, and discursively situates the musical performance as an essentially auditory experience with the musician as transmitter, whose bodily presence, while obviously essential to the transaction, is to
be effaced as much as possible. This has a number of implications for both the focus of the musician’s persona, and also for the expectations of the spectator.

The effacement of the musician’s body can be seen, for instance, in the development of the orchestra pit for dramatic forms involving music, where the musician’s visual presence is seen as a distraction from full emotional engagement. O’Neill stated:

it greatly adds to the illusion if the music is heard and not seen. The best arrangement is for the orchestra to be sunk and covered in with palm leaves, as is the practice in London at His Majesty’s Theatre and at the Haymarket. (O’Neill 1912: 327)

But this is not solely to avoid distraction from theatrical visuals. In classical concert performance it is expected that physical gestures are restrained, as the musician “ought not to distract the audience from the music” (Rosen 2004: 131).

The effacement of the bodily presence is continued in costume, which, outside the more obviously ‘theatrical’ musical styles, can be described as tending towards anonymity. This might be the traditional black of the concert hall, or the ‘street-wear’ of the popular musician, even while recognizing that the street-wear is subject to various degrees of fictionalisation (as in the fringes and spurs of country music), and formal concert wear concedes to the current ‘sexing-up’ apparently deemed to be necessary in contemporary marketing of classical music. Another degree of effacement can be seen in tendencies towards uniformity, such as the matching jackets of swing bands. While uniformity of dress can be seen to approach the idea of ‘costume’ more directly, the effect is to reduce individuality. The musician becomes instead a functional unit, a body with a socially anonymous identity.

Ornette Coleman explains the role of costume in music performance as:

For me, clothes have always been a way of designing a setting so that by the time a person observes how you look, all of their attention is on what you’re playing. Most people that play music whether it’s pop, rock or classical, have a certain kind of uniform so they don’t have to tell you what you’re listening to. (qtd. in Frith 1996: 219)

If the musician is to direct attention to what is being played, rather than to the body who is playing, where does the musician direct his or her eyes? As for all other performers, this eye focus, both the nature of it and where it is directed, is crucial in

---

152 Lawrence Kramer’s account of the controversies around the visual excess that characterized Liszt’s virtuoso pianism in the nineteenth century provides an insightful demonstration of the ambivalence surrounding the excessive musical performing body (2002).
the relationship with the audience. The eyes of the instrumental musician are typically not directed at the audience, but at the score, or, if there is no score, on the instrument being played. This is not necessarily due to a need for such visual confirmation, but rather that direct eye contact would transgress the performance conventions of the ‘empty vessel’.

That this is such a prevalent convention is demonstrated in a recent manual on stage performance for musicians:

Instrumentalists should not look directly at the audience as they perform. In fact the only time to make eye contact with the audience is immediately before and immediately after the bow (unless you also choose to establish eye contact as you are walking on stage.) (Hagberg 2003: 20)

While the audience may look at the musician, the musician is advised not to return that gaze. The musician performs as if unaware of a spectatorial gaze. Charles Rosen also gives, in a rather revealing turn of phrase, an explanation for this:

During the actual playing, the performer does not betray an awareness of the audience: to do so has the slightly scandalous effect of a breach of decorum (this can be forgiven when it is done ironically). (2004: 120)

To describe this as a ‘breach of decorum’ suggests that this is an occasion of potential discomfort for audience members (and, possibly, for the musician).

While both Karen Hagberg and Rosen are referring to the performance conventions of Western classical music, these conventions can also be observed operating in popular music genres. It is exactly this situation that Cronin discusses as being problematical in his career transition from being an actor to being a musician:

I started out doing comedy and cabaret and the playing and singing was something I did as part of it. In fact when I started playing in bands after six years of comedy I had no idea how to be on stage. I didn’t know how to act as a musician. I was very self-conscious. I was so used to being on stage and reacting to the other performers, or as it was cabaret I was directly eyeballing the audience [and] interacting with them so I just stood around and felt completely uncomfortable for a couple of years. I found it hard to just relax and be a musician. When you’re being a performer or an actor or cabaret person every look, every twitch, every little grimace is to be interpreted by the audience in a particular way, and whether it actually is or not you have the feeling it contributes to the piece, whereas as a musician it’s just what sound is coming out of your instrument. It took me a long time to get used to just doing nothing and not to look at the audience. (2006)
Cronin also described the nature of the musician’s gaze as ‘unfocussed’, a ‘vague staring into middle distance’ (ibid.).

When I observe David Hewitt on the vibes, when he’s playing his gaze goes from direct gaze looking at an object to completely peripheral. He might even be looking at the audience, his head might be directed at the audience but the audience knows he’s not looking, he’s just playing. I’ve tried to use that but I struggle with it because I always think I have to be eyeballing people. I was struggling with The Session and I couldn’t work out why and I’ve gone over shows that I’ve not enjoyed and it’s to do with the fourth wall. Actors get feed back from each other, musicians don’t feed back off each other in the same way. (ibid.)

If the process of representation can be compared across visual forms then it is interesting to consider this in conjunction with Michael Fried’s description of absorption in his study of French painting in the eighteenth century. He states:

… for French painters of the early and mid-1750s the persuasive representation of absorption entailed evoking the perfect obliviousness of a figure or group of figures to everything but the objects of their absorption. Those objects did not include the beholder standing before the painting. Hence the figure or figures had to seem oblivious to the beholder's presence if the illusion of absorption was to be sustained. (1980: 66).

The indices of absorption noted by Fried, which include the lack of outward gaze by figures depicted in the paintings, bear some similarities to the performing conventions of the musician. Interestingly, it is the depiction of a musical instrument in the paintings he discusses that might function as an iconic representation of the state of absorption. In live performance, though, the musician exists in a different relation to the spectator than a figure in a painting. The musician cannot fail to be aware of the physical presence of an audience, even if, as Cronin, Hagberg and Rosen imply, the convention is to perform as if absorbed, as if oblivious. Awareness of an audience is therefore limited to specific interactions, which will be more or less formal depending on the genre of music performed. It might be only at the beginning and end of the performance that acknowledgement of the presence of an audience is given.

There is a distinction between the perception of absorption demonstrated by a musician’s performance and the performed absorption of an actor playing a fictional role. This distinction might be discussed in relation to ideas of ‘presence’ and ‘representation’ as Lehmann distinguishes them, between “the doing of the real”

---

153 For example, see Fried 1980: 30.
and “the mimesis of the fictive” (2006: 104). If a musician is visible and not performing a dramatic role in a fictional diegesis, then that performance is read as an ‘actual’ event rather than ‘illusionary’ and thus the musician is comparatively more life-like.

As a piece of theatre, The Session was a somewhat unusual performance, drawing attention as it did to the qualities and nature of a musicians’ performance, and blurring the distinction between presence and representation. In many theatrical presentations involving live music, the musicians are readily visible as many performance spaces lack the luxury of either orchestra pit or abundant palm leaves. The effaced bodies of the musicians might strive for invisibility, but an audience member will still see them and interpret their presence.

The physical presence of the musician is unavoidably influenced by the practical demands inherent in playing a particular instrument, and an absorbed focus can be attributed, in part, to these demands. As Frith explains:

... the musicians’ body is also an instrument.... in musical terms the instrument we play thus determines the instrument our body must be, (standing up, sitting down, bowing or blowing, hitting or pulling). On the other hand, our movements are also determined by our purpose. (1996: 219)

But while the demands of the particular musical instrument afford certain physical opportunities or limitations, this is not the sole determinant of movement. The complexity of the music and expectations of genre will also inform the physical performance. For example, the design of the piano, locating the keyboard at a height that demands a seated position, allows the optimum physical control of the instrument, necessary in the performance of the classical piano repertoire. But, as Frith notes above, movements are also determined by purpose, and a choice between standing and sitting also has a purpose. A pop keyboard player who stands assumes a more theatrically dominant position than one who sits, signalling a measure of equality with the rock guitarist (who never sits), and also giving more possibilities for bodily movement. The choice of whether to stand or to sit becomes a trade-off between control of the instrument and the theatrical possibilities of performance.

This trade-off can be seen in other instruments. Broadly, unlike the rock guitarist, classical and jazz guitarists generally sit, again reflecting the complexities of the physical demands placed on them in those genres of music. But other instruments can be played equally well sitting as standing, and this is not just about
the demands of the instrument or the complexity of the music but also about the theatrical conventions of that genre. In the performance of a violin concerto, the violin section of the orchestra sits, while the violin soloist, who will have the more complex and demanding music, stands. The instrumentalists of a large swing band will usually sit unless they are taking a solo, in which case they will generally stand. The conductor never sits.

The performing conventions of a genre thus also determine whether the musician performs sitting or standing. But ‘theatrically’ these conventions also have other implications for the spectator. Sitting or standing is not only determined by genre, but is a potential signalling of genre. As part of the framing of a genre, it conditions the spectator’s response to that genre. The combination of performing conventions can signal, at one extreme, a response of contemplative listening as in the classical concert, or, at the other, the energetic participation of the mosh pit.

A musician performing in a theatrical production is not defined by the performance conventions of any particular musical genre as, theoretically, all are available for use. But if the visible presence of a musician within theatrical performance is to be accounted for, it is necessary to consider whether there are prevailing conventions within that context, and what those conventions signal to the spectator. What then is the persona of the musician in theatre?

The ‘virtual’ pit

I will consider two theatre productions using a live musician: Haul Away (L5), performed by Glynis Angell, with music written and performed by Fiona Roake, at La Mama, Melbourne; and Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny (T14) written and performed by Greig Coetzee, with music written and performed by Syd Kitchen, at Traverse Two, Edinburgh. Both productions employed a solo actor and a solo musician, both were primarily spoken text-based performances and could be considered to be driven by this text, yet in both the music was integral to the performance.

In Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny the music was purely instrumental, and while billed as a soundtrack, and underscoring dialogue for the most part, the underscoring was closely interwoven in the rhythms of the production, and in the structure of the dialogue. The performance itself was described as “a mini rock-opera for spoken word” (Traverse Theatre 2006). Haul Away also had music as
underscoring, but Roake’s main role was to perform songs, which intervened in the action. In both productions the musicians did not perform a dramatic character. But in both cases the musicians were presented as co-performers, through their staging and presence within the performance, and also in their representation in the publicity.

In both shows, the placing and visibility of the musician was largely driven by theatre architecture as neither Traverse Two (which has a thrust performance area with the audience on three sides) nor La Mama (a tiny performance space) offers any offstage area. Both, however, created a separate space for the musicians, distinguishing this from the acting space. In *Haul Away*, Roake performed on raised black rostra stage left, the constructed nature of which marked it out as separate from the acting area, along with the visual accoutrements of the musician – in this case consisting of music stand, instruments and instrument stands, and a small amplifier for a bass guitar. In *Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny*, Kitchen’s upstage right position was less obviously delineated, lacking the physical marker of the raised platform, yet was clearly musicians’ rather than actors’ space, being again marked by musical accoutrements. The demarcation of these spaces was aided by the discontinuation of any elements of set design in those areas. The sets, minimal as they were in both cases, referred to the actors and not to the musicians.

The separate ‘musicians’ space’ functioned as a ‘virtual pit’. While the musicians were completely visible and in some instances took the focus of spectatorial attention, it was also easy for them to be ignored when they did not take that focus. This might be due in part to the conventions of non-diegetic film music, and hence the apparent acceptance of the presence of visible musicians without the need to award them the same attention as that given to the actors.

In both *Haul Away* and *Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny* the effect of the ‘virtual pit’ was reinforced by the costume of the musicians, which was, unsurprisingly, black. Auslander states:

> Musicians’ costumes, make-up, and general appearance, along with any sets, lighting, props (including musical instruments), and visual effects they may use, usually express their personae, which remain continuous throughout a performance and across their performances, not the individual characters they may portray from song to song. (2004b: 8-9)

154 Due to the smallness of the La Mama theatre there is little distinction between up- and down-stage.
The ubiquity of black costuming for the live theatre musician suggests, therefore, that there is a dominant persona being expressed in this situation. This is costuming which functions as a non-costume, and has the interesting property of linking the musician with the stagehands. Practically, black is light absorbent, neutral, therefore does not draw focus away from the actor or the visual design. In this situation it is the colour of effacement. Yet in two shows in which the musicians are readily visible, their presence advertised in advance, and who (in the case of Haul Away) take the focus for large parts of the show there appears to be another purpose to this non-costume. (I note that Kitchen’s predominantly black costume included a large, rainbow-coloured hat, a point that will be returned to later.)

The prevalence of the black non-costume aids in the dominance of performance conforming to the metaphor of ‘conduit’. The body of the musician is effaced, giving focus to the instrument. By not drawing attention to the body through strong visual costuming, attention is therefore focussed on the aural quality. This is the quality of focus stressed most prominently in performance of ‘serious’ concert music.

The gaze of the musician in concert music, as noted earlier, is also largely determined by the idea of ‘conduit’ and both Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny and Haul Away demonstrated different aspects of this.

In Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny, Kitchen’s attention was largely focussed on either his music stand or on his instrument. At no time did he seem to look at the audience, and only seldom at Coetzee. Sometimes his eyes were closed. Yet while the music was solely instrumental, functioning as underscoring to the text, his performance was not as pure accompaniment. Rather his demeanour suggested a dual partner, with the theatre piece feeling rather like a jazz duo. At no time did he direct focus by looking at the actor, his eye focus was ‘internal’, either focussed on the physical production of the music, or having his eyes closed. Yet, as the music was so closely tied to the rhythms and cadences of the script, this internal focus acted much like the internal focus of the jazz improviser, with a connection provided by aurality rather than visuality.

In contrast, Roake’s performance in Haul Away seemingly sought eye contact: her focus at particular moments directed at the actor, and also at the audience. As Roake is an actor as well as a musician, was she aware of those choices? She explains:
Because there wasn’t that much time to rehearse there were times when there were moments of toy ing with that [eye focus of the musician] which felt incredibly awkward to me. I had to be one or the other in a way, and I wasn’t comfortable toy ing with the actor-me in it. I was supposed to be more conscious of that than I was and there was fric tion. There was direction about “now I want you to be with us, or with her or with yourself”, which I heard and stored somewhere though I wasn’t sure how much of that I did. … And as an actor when I’m performing music, there is a sense that I know I’m being looked at. I had a sense of my presence in that I allow people to look at me, I’m happy for people to look at me. (2006)

It is interesting that Roake, like Cronin, notes a conflict between her ‘actor-me’ identity and her performance as a musician. As Roake’s songs functioned as intervention within the narrative, in that all other staged action ceased, the music was able to become the focus of attention, and thus Roake would presumably not need to worry about pulling focus from the actor. Yet many of the songs were still performed without directing her focus, with Roake directed to ‘be with herself’, rather than ‘be with us [the audience]’. But despite Roake’s stated uncertainty, the change in her visual orientation during the performance was effective. To this spectator, when she looked at the audience the direct connection was highly charged, given the sensitive emotional terrain of the show’s material (a young woman’s death from cancer). But as Vanessa Chapple, director of the show, stated: “sometimes we needed a rest from the action, a time of composure” (Chapple 2006) and this was enabled by the periods when Roake used an ‘internal’ focus.

Both Kitchen and Roake sat during the performance, though in their separate careers as musical performers this would not always be the case. Sitting further reinforces the ‘virtual pit’. This was also observed in a number of other shows using live music viewed for this research. In the majority of them the musicians sat, regardless of their instrument, or of the genre of music performed.

I would argue that the performed persona of the theatre musician correlates much more closely to that of the classical musician, even in the performance of non-classical musical genres, and that this framing contributes to the reception of live music in the theatre. The dominant visual conventions such as the prevalence of black costuming, the seated position of the musician and a performance of self-absorption are all qualities associated with genres of music that seek to elicit a response of contemplative listening. This is also the dominant audience convention

155 Roake stated: “if I was performing a straight music gig I would most likely be standing although I may choose moments to sit” (2007). I was not able to verify information with Kitchen, but his web page contains a gallery of performance photos in which he either stands or sits, seemingly related to type, and size of gig. (<http: //www.sydkitchen.com/>. Accessed 12 January 2008).
in theatrical performance. But the persona of the theatre musician is not necessarily dependent on the musical genre performed, suggesting that theatrical conventions override any conflicting musical conventions.

In *Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny* and *Haul Away*, the musician’s performance was treated in a way that is conventional to theatre. The musicians were within sight, but were not the main focus of the audience’s attention. Both productions were obviously pieces of theatre in which a musical performance was subsumed.

The *Session* eludes easy definition. The musicians carried the focus as if they were actors, while operating within the conventions of music performance. By disrupting the conventional presentation of a musician’s and an actor’s performance, the show revealed the differences between the two.

The establishment of a ‘virtual pit’ appears to provide the simplest convention to operate for the visible theatre musician. It provides a separation between the performance of the actor and the performance of the musician, and in this way reinforces a particular separation of music from the staged action. This separation also enables the different performance qualities of the actor and the musician to operate, yet not be in conflict with each other. This does, however, problematize the concept of ‘onstage’ performances. McAuley’s useful analysis of on- and offstage spaces is identified mainly in terms of stage space as ‘fictional’ space (2000: 29). Yet the musician, unless operating as a dramatic character within the fiction, cannot be completely defined as performing a ‘fictional’ role. Even as a persona, the musician cannot avoid the sense of actuality. As such, he/she may be performing ‘onstage’ but it might be a different ‘onstage’ to that of the actors.

In the shows viewed for this research, there were five additional shows (L8, T12, T20, M5, M9) to the ones considered above in which the musicians could also be considered as functioning within a ‘virtual pit’.

In *Squizzy* (L8), the pianist (wearing formal black) performed at the front of the performance area facing a miniature constructed proscenium arch stage, imitating an early twentieth century music-hall stage. Her placing imitated an actual orchestra pit. While in front of the stage, she was positioned to the far stage right, had her back to the audience throughout and was seated lower than the raised stage area. In *Improbable Frequency* (T12), the musicians (wearing casual black) were

---

156 As she performed with her back to the audience it was only in the curtain call that her rather fetching red waistcoat was seen.
positioned behind, and facing towards, the playing area, and thus were visible, if partially masked, by the set.\textsuperscript{157} They also performed in a lower lighting level to the onstage lighting. Both these productions were musicals, but the instrumental musicians were placed in positions of effacement, while the actor-singers took the focus onstage. In \textit{The Tell-Tale Heart} (M9), (a production in which the solo actor also sang), the pianist performed in a lower level of light, wore casual black and was positioned stage left, separate from the ‘actor’s space’ in that the design elements which framed the actor-singer (a long, nearly vertical staircase on which the actor performed) did not extend to the musician. \textit{This Show Is About People} (M5) used two instrumental musicians who were positioned to the far stage left, in a clearly identifiable ‘musician’s space’, but were costumed similarly to the other performers of this show, including onstage singers. I will return to the figure of the singer, who appears to occupy a liminal position in these theatrical productions later.

The musician in \textit{Venus As A Boy} (T20) was an unusual case. This was a one-man performance by Tam Dean Burn, accompanied by a solo musician, Luke Sutherland. Sutherland was also the author of the novel on which the production was based (Sutherland 2005). This was obvious from the pre-publicity, but also announced in the opening of the performance, which was introduced by Burn, specifically not as a piece of theatre, but as a ‘memorial’ to Cupid/Desirée, whose life and recorded reminiscences formed the subject of the novel. Sutherland, the novel’s author, also had a biographical presence as a character in the novel, (and also in the theatrical adaptation), as well as having an actual presence in the production.

Sutherland therefore cannot just be considered as ‘musician’, although his actual role in the performance was solely as a musician, with no other participation in the staged diegesis. His presence contained multiple enactments: as a musician, as the originary author, as a character in the fiction, and potentially as himself. Visually Sutherland performed within the virtual pit, with his eyes usually directed at Burn or to his instrument, with an absorbed focus. But in part his presence also could be considered analogous to Frith’s term ‘star personality’ (1996: 212) in that his persona also incorporated the knowledge that he was not participating in the performance just as a musical creator, but also as a critically acclaimed author of the production the audience were seeing.\textsuperscript{158} Perhaps reflecting this performed

\textsuperscript{157} The two Circa shows using live musicians considered in Chapter Four (\textit{Sonata for Ten Hands} and \textit{Figaro Variations}) also displayed the convention of the ‘virtual pit’.

\textsuperscript{158} This was noted both in the pre-publicity and in the blurb contained in the novel, which was on sale at the door.
multiplicity, Sutherland’s costume was ‘smart street-wear’, less anonymous that the usual black, but also not providing particular visual distraction.

And so, to return to the question of Kitchen’s hat in *Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny*. Kitchen, who appears to be a well-known musician in South Africa, the country of origin of this production, could also be considered to have a ‘star personality’, a musical persona that exists separately from the persona constructed for the theatrical production. The ‘star personality’ escapes from the theatrical diegesis. While his predominantly black costuming conforms to the conditions of effacement established for the musician in a theatrical production, it could be argued that his hat, which was strikingly non-effacing, performed his other ‘musician’s persona’.

Only one show viewed for this research, *Peepshow* (M4), contained an ‘actual pit’ musician, a musician performing live yet not visible to the audience. In this case, the ‘pit’ was the biobox, the musician performing electronic music live, combined with the use of pre-recorded material, alongside the lighting and sound operators.

The shows viewed for this research that used live music demonstrated other conventions than that of the ‘virtual pit’.

**The onstage musician**

If the ‘virtual pit’ exists as ‘not-quite-onstage’, there are circumstances in which the musician does perform ‘onstage’. *The Bush Undertaker* and *The Drover’s Wife* (L6) used a solo harmonica player (Frank Kennedy), who can be considered as performing onstage. But in this show, the ‘onstageness’ of the musician was problematic.

This show, based on two of Henry Lawson’s short stories, was performed in a Brechtian manner, the three actors performing various roles and also narrating through direct address to the audience, in a fairly straightforward adaptation from the original text. The mechanics of production were revealed; set changes were incorporated into the action and illustrative sound effects were produced by the actors, either vocally or created using pieces of the set in various ways. In both pieces, one actor functioned as the central identity of the story, embodying him or

---

159 It is impossible to establish this completely, but this is the impression given both in the publicity, and reviews of the production and in Kitchen’s substantial internet ‘footprint’, including his website.

160 This was one continuous production of the two stories.
her, while the other two actors assumed the roles of narrators. The solo harmonica player accompanied with a mixture of folk- and blues- influenced music.

The music was used, for the most part, to indicate transitions such as the passing of time or changes of location, in short, providing the formal continuity that was a feature of many of the spoken text-based shows viewed in the course of this research. And as such was effective. However, the restriction of the music to this role, rather than, for example, to provide underscore to the spoken text, meant that for long periods of time the musician was idle, and very visibly idle. For this spectator, there appeared little point in using a live musician, rather than a recording.

This problematic visibility was increased because the musician was ‘onstage’, a decision consistent with the stylistics of a production in which the mechanics were laid bare. The presence of the musician was therefore understandable as another part of those mechanics. Yet, as an onstage presence, his lack of activity was distracting particularly while the other performers were working hard.

But what distinguishes the positioning of this musician as ‘onstage’? After all, in both Haul Away and Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny the musicians were technically ‘onstage’, in the sense of being visible within the playing area. Kitchen’s position of up-stage right was in fact, the same position as the harmonica player. There were stretches of action in which both Roake and Kitchen were silent, and visible as silent. However, as their playing area was demarcated as separate from the actor’s area, their periods of non-activity were not distracting. In McAuley’s terms, the virtual pit can be understood as existing within ‘presentational space’ (2000: 29). However it is within her categories of ‘fictional space’ that a lacuna exists. Roake and Kitchen, as musicians, did not perform a fictional role, but were embedded in that fiction, in a different way and in a different ‘onstage’ to the actors.

In contrast the musician for The Bush Undertaker and The Drover’s Wife can be considered as positioned onstage and in ‘fictional space’ for a number of reasons. His playing area, while remaining constant throughout, was contained within the overall set and, while he used a music stand, this was also disguised as a piece of set. His costuming (which could be described as stock early twentieth century rusticity) was similar in design to the actors’ costume. There was no special lighting for his playing area. Visually, he was therefore framed as being part of the diegesis.

But while framed within that diegesis, he did not participate in that diegesis. Thus, in this show, the ‘liveness’ of the musician existed in an uneasy situation: 228
onstage but not participating in any of the fictional onstage activities; framed as an almost-character yet not performing any elements of characterization. While it might be argued that accompanying music is performing narration by other means, in this show the music was primarily limited to a transitional, inter-scene role, therefore existing ‘between’ the story, but not enmeshed within that story as an ‘underscore’.

The use of a live musician in this show was problematic, even while the nature of the music he played was perfectly suitable; well executed and appropriate as both emotional and diegetic framing. But the under-utilization of the musician had the effect, for this spectator, of drawing the eye to that lack of activity, as the performance of stillness within busy staged action will possibly draw attention by its contrast. By positioning the musician within the staged action, rather than in the separate space and different attention continuum of the ‘virtual pit’, his stillness assumed the performative quality of an actor’s (rather than musician’s) stillness. But unlike, for example, the stillness of an anonymous spear-carrier, there was no narrative purpose to give context to that stillness. It jarred.

Other examples of onstage musicians were not as problematic. *Y La Galigo* (M1) was performed within a framework of Asian theatre practice, in many forms of which the onstage musician is part of the performance conventions (e.g. Freund 2005), of which a detailed consideration is outside the scope of this research. In *Roulette* (L11), a female singer with acoustic guitar performed centre-stage between two short self-contained theatrical works, yet her performance, which basically functioned as entr’acte music, had little obvious relation to either. In this instance the onstage virtually morphed (in that there was no set alteration) in the interval from a ‘theatre onstage’ to a ‘short gig onstage’, the different framing of ‘theatre performance’ and ‘concert performance’ not conflicting as both were self-contained.

The examples of musicians performing within a virtual pit, or onstage but not performing dramatic character or role, represent one end of the ‘acting/non-acting’ continuum defined by Kirby (1987).161 They would appear to fit within the definitions of either ‘non-matrixed’ or ‘symbolized matrix’ performance, depending on whether other diegetic references are present. Costume, for example, is noted by Kirby as an important reference.

---

161 While Kirby’s theories of matrixed and non-matrixed performances appear to be seldom used now, his inclusion of stage-hands etc in his analysis does, unlike many other theories, suggest the possibility of its applicability to the musician, even if only to closer identify the nature of the ambivalent position of the musician.
In *The Bush Undertaker* and *The Drover's Wife* the musician’s costume positioned him in the rough historical timeframe established for that play and linked him to the actors. In *Squizzy* the formal black suit of the pianist was not only appropriate to the conditions of effacement prevailing in the ‘virtual pit’, but also had a symbolic role in the diegesis, as also appropriate to the specific theatrical pastiche established as a design convention for that show. In both these situations the “referential elements are applied to but not acted by the performer”, as Kirby defines a symbolized matrix (ibid.5). These two musicians, one ‘onstage’ and one in the ‘virtual pit’, thus appear to fit under ‘symbolized matrix’, costume being the defining ‘referential element’.

But the black apparel worn by Kitchen and Roake in *Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny* and *Haul Away* had no diegetic function. Both wore the previously mentioned ‘non-costume’ defined as characteristic of the persona of the theatre musician.

In Kirby’s terms these two musicians would have to be considered as inhabiting the extreme non-acting end of his continuum, as non-matrixed performance, which he defines as “not embedded … in matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place and time” (ibid. 4). Kirby illustrates his definition with the examples of the stage attendants in Kabuki theatre, figures who he considers are “not included in the informational structure of the narrative” (ibid. 4). But the musicians in both these productions were entirely embedded within the ‘informational structure’ of the performances.

The oblique lyrics of the songs in *Haul Away* contributed crucial information to that show, particularly in the expression of an intense emotional world that underlay the frequently dispassionate, and even humorous, presentation of a tragic story. As a spectator, I would agree with this vivid description of directorial intent:

> Fiona [Roake] was the … emotional world each time … She could be seen in lots of ways … She was the siren singing her songs, she was singing the lament, she was the wailing going on underneath everything. She was the grief, she was the water, she was the tears. (Chapple 2006)

It is not clear which of Kirby’s terms to use for the musician’s role in this situation. In this performance the musician exists within the ‘matrix’ of information, crucially in the contribution of emotional information, despite her ‘non-acting’, and her lack of other diegetically ‘symbolized’ references, such as costume. Even without the obvious informational content imparted by the performance of lyrics,
Kitchen’s underscore for *Johnny Boskak Is Feeling Funny*, which provided a series of cinematic ‘atmospheres’, and also functioned as a structural co-creator of the strongly marked series of tempo-rhythms in the spoken poetic text, is also contributing information.

**The musician as setting**

If the terminology, in Kirby’s continuum, is problematic in the case of the musician who is not acting a dramatically-constructed identity, there is still, clearly, a continuum of performance for the theatre musician. Kirby’s framework becomes more applicable further towards the ‘acting’ end of this continuum, such as in situations where the musician performs a role containing elements of characterization. Two shows, *Shrimp* (I.13) and *Subway* (T21), contained musicians whose performance went beyond the role of straightforward musical accompaniment.

In *Shrimp* the solo musician (Wally Gunn) initially appeared as if performing within the convention of the virtual pit; he wore black and his ‘musician’s space’ was clearly defined stage right. Yet in the course of the performance he donned rudimentary, symbolic costume and his presence fleshed out the imaginary landscape of the theatre. He took on the roles of an airline pilot, a food vendor, a beggar, various backpackers, a member of the family, and, while having no spoken text, used physical gestures to give simple definition to these roles. Thus his performance could be described in Kirby’s terms as ‘simple acting’ in which “only one element or dimension of acting is used” (1987: 10); in this case mimed physicalization.

The set used in this production was minimal, consisting of a screen that served both to provide a backstage/offstage area and as a shadow screen. As the production traversed a number of locations between Vietnam and Australia, both the music and the performance of the musician became crucial in distinguishing between the imaginary locations. Gunn’s instruments also served as set and props; a number of china bowls and brass cups were used as percussion sources, as well as becoming prop receptacles such as a begging bowl. As Gunn’s music was effective in the evocation of location through sound, in a similar way his acting of these theatrical identities functioned to ‘flesh out’ the setting.
Subway used two actors, who performed surrounded by seven onstage musicians. The musicians wore black, in contrast to the diegetic costume of the two actors, yet their performance can be characterized as onstage (rather than in a virtual pit) as the musicians at times moved round the stage while playing, and also had some spoken text, delivered in chorus. They became drunkards in a bar, sick people at the gates of a hospital, or passers-by in the street and were addressed in these rudimentary roles by the two actors. As in Shrimp, they ‘peopled’ the set, but as relative ciphers, as ‘representative of people’ rather than as dramatic characters. This ‘simple acting’ was achieved through choric text, rather than the combination of symbolic costume and mime used in Shrimp. The black non-costume supported the choric performance, in establishing a ‘uniform’ that collapsed the individual musicians into one ‘ensemble of musicians’.

The actor-musician or musician-actor

The furthest end of Kirby’s continuum (complex acting) is represented in two productions, Stoopud Fucken Animals (T25) and Damascus (T26). Both productions featured individuals who enacted dramatic characters, characters who were also musicians. In Stoopud Fucken Animals, Robert Goodale enacted the role of Lefty, a faded country singer, in Damascus, Dolya Gavanski enacted the role of Elena, a jaded cocktail pianist. Both roles included substantial amounts of spoken text. Although, as in The Session, Goodale and Gavanski both performed the ‘role’ of a musician, they critically differed from The Session in that they enacted characters that were substantially more developed. Goodale, for example, had a fictional role in a fully developed plot, which required him to perform songs in various pubs. The complex nature of his acting role made it much easier to read him as an actor who is also able to play music with convincing authenticity. In Damascus, Gavanski spoke directly to the audience, functioning as a narrator, and her spoken text did not solely concern the music. While her dramatic role was not as developed as was Goodale’s, and involved substantial periods of time when she solely played the piano, her musical performance had an obvious diegetic function. Performing the role of a cocktail pianist in a hotel lobby, her musical performance

---

162 This was noted by one reviewer: “What impresses most is the all-engulfing theatricality of the occasion … Sandy Grierson is the hoodie-wearing hero; the mercurial Rosalind Sydney takes on the other roles. But they’re helped by the shifting presence of a seven-piece Kosovan band which provides not only a continuous, richly textured live accompaniment but also the detailed impression of a populated city” (Cavendish 2007).
could also function as cinematic underscoring to many of the other scenes in a way completely consistent with the theatrical diegesis.

In *The First White Man* (L14) and *The Human Computer* (T23), the actors also performed music, but did not portray the musician as a character. In both these productions songs functioned as intervention. In *Cogito* (L12) was a piece of postdramatic theatre, without characters or identities, and the musician differed in his performance role from the actors solely in the fact that he played music and the other performers didn’t.

In *Goodness* (T13), the live music was performed by the actors, mixing live harmony singing with an electronic score by John Gzowski. Using actors as musicians is an obvious solution to the problems identified in *The Bush Undertaker* and *The Drover’s Wife* enabling the integration of music with the other performances, and in this show it was particularly successful, the production achieving critical acclaim including an Edinburgh Fringe First Award in 2006.

An obvious problem in the use of actor/musicians lies in the frequent compromise between two different competencies. For *The Session*, in which the cast were musicians first, actors second, the critical review quoted earlier lauded the musical abilities displayed and was critical of the acting ability, even though, as I have argued this assessment was problematic. In this case, though, the fictional context demanded a high level of musical skill.163

In *Goodness* the cast appeared to be selected primarily for their acting ability, yet performed the songs competently, aided by the very strong vocal abilities of one of the performers, Lili Francks. The choice of vocal music was very practical as none of it was technically difficult to sing, therefore achievable with singers of a reasonable ability even if untrained. It is also significant that the competent musical performance given by the actors was singing, rather than instrumental music. If a high level of instrumental ability was required it could have proved difficult to find performers competent in both areas.

---

163 Cronin identified that one of the difficulties the musicians struggled with in rehearsal was the concept of replicating visual performance.

“We would do something in rehearsal and […] the director would say: ‘That was great, the particular way you moved with the instrument. I want you to do it exactly like that.’ And we couldn’t do that. If we tried to replicate it, it looked terrible. It looked like an actor pretending to be a muso shifting a timpani. It’s technique we struggle with. We did some technique, some theatrical exercises [with the director] but it’s not something you can just learn and bang on in six weeks.” (Cronin 2006)

The musician’s training, in my experience, emphasizes and indeed is predicated on the notion of replicating performance, but is replication of a particular kind. The musician, like the circus performer or the dancer, spends a lot of time obsessively repeating particular physical actions whether that be a major scale, a three-ball cascade, or a demi-plié, in order to train the requisite musculature. In contrast to the dancer or circus performer, this repetition is enacted for the sole end of a successful aural outcome. While the body may be viewed for its physical characteristics, such as by a teacher in the correction of posture, or positioning of the hand on the keyboard/fretboard, this viewing is not primarily for aesthetic purposes.

233
The figure of the singer also appears more likely to perform ‘onstage’ than the instrumental musician, and not just in the obvious cases of musical-theatre. In *This Show Is About People*, as noted earlier, two instrumental musicians performed in a virtual pit, while the cast contained four singers who performed onstage. This production could be considered as a ‘post-dramatic’ piece of physical theatre, the onstage performers sang or danced ‘roles’, rather than dramatic characters. As all the members of the cast could be said to be performing ‘persona’, there is little theoretical distinction between the persona of the musicians and the personae of the other performers. But while this was clear in the case of the singers, there was still a separation between the singers as ‘onstage’ and the instrumental musicians who performed within a virtual pit, even while they were costumed similarly to the other performers. However, as the instrumental musicians performed surrounded by a number of electronic accoutrements, necessary to the music they were performing, their positioning could have been determined by the practical limitations on their ability to move. The singers did not have similar limitations on their movement.

The practical limitations of movement were demonstrated in the only other ‘post-dramatic’ performance that used live music, *In Cogito*, in which the guitarist at times performed stage left, and at times joined the other performers onstage. While his visual presence onstage was in keeping with the performance style, there was a strange disjunction between his visual presence and his aural presence for this spectator/listener. When the musician performed stage left, he played directly in front of his amplifier, but when he moved to the centre of the stage, while his guitar moved with him, the amplifier did not, setting up a contradiction between the visual and the aural. My eyes told me that the guitarist had moved to perform centre-stage, my ears told me the guitarist was still performing in his original position, as that is where the sound of the guitar was coming from.

But while the singer might be more likely than the instrumental musician to inhabit the ‘onstage’ due to the limitations of movement that might apply for the instrumental musician, it could also be attributed to the liminal status of the singer. The singer, as noted by Auslander, is more likely to perform elements of characterization than the instrumental musician, and, therefore, brings the performance of a song closer to the performance of the actor. But this is possibly also attributable to the conventions of opera and musical theatre staging, in which the singer occupies the onstage space while the instrumental musicians are hidden in the pit.
The musician within spectacle

In some of the theatre productions viewed for Chapter Three, those that could be characterized as stand up comedy, and the circus performances viewed for Chapter Four, a slightly different performance approach was evident.

These genres of performances are at the ‘actual’ rather than the ‘illusory’ end of performance, and the presentation of the music within these bore more similarities to the genre conventions of non-theatrical music performance. Live musicians in these productions, while often framed thematically or narratively in a particular performance, operated closer to the performance persona operant within the expectations of musical genre. Thus in Boswell and Johnson (T29), which was essentially a ‘period stand-up’, the personae of the two musicians (a Scottish piper and a kit drummer) were consistent within the theatrical requirements of ‘Scottish-ness’, both in the genres of music performed (Scottish folk music) and the diegetic staged situation (a journey to Scotland by Mr Boswell and Dr Johnson). The personae of both musicians conformed to the broad parameters of ‘contemporary Scottish traditional musicians’.

The live band used in two Circus Oz productions took part in the staged activity and within the company’s style are treated as part of the ensemble of performers. The musicians in the 2007 season also performed ‘tricks’, in this instance an orchestral spoof culminating in the destruction of a grand piano and the flying of the bass player round the arena while he continued to play. The 2008 season similarly lampooned Western classical music conventions, with a clown performer performing a classical piano concerto on a toy piano. In both cases, the rest of the orchestra was performed by the circus performers on a variety of instruments, in combination with the band. The musician’s personae here reflect the extrovert comedy of the Circus Oz style.164

Cirque du Soleil also features singers, who at times take equal focus onstage, though they do not perform circus tricks, and instrumental musicians who also at times parade amongst the audience. In Varekai, the musicians were costumed in keeping with the highly stylised visual aesthetic of the production, but also in keeping with the ‘European-icity’ of the music played, which gestured towards the gypsy ensemble. Similarly in A Plane Without Wings Is A Rocket (The Women’s Circus), in which the live music was predominantly provided by an existing duo,

164 Peta Tait equates the Circus Oz ‘house’ style with the Australian quality of larrikinism. She also notes previous shows in which the musicians had their own specific ‘acts’ (2004: 74).
Sista She, the musicians’ visual presence conformed to the extrovert and parodic style of their already existing musical personae.

These musical personae were far more obviously constructed than that of the other theatre musicians discussed, and more obviously embraced theatricality, in the way that the personae of glam rockers consciously embrace theatricality (Auslander 2006). In contrast to the absorbed, effaced presence of the theatre musician, a presence that, as I have argued, invites the response of contemplative listening, the presence of these circus musicians contributed to the atmosphere of participatory excitement usually aimed at by circus, whether that be the comedy-excitement of Circus Oz, or the more exoticized and mystical excitement of Cirque du Soleil.

While in the circus performances viewed the musicians tended to perform as part of the spectacle, as new circus is itself ‘theatricalized’ it cannot be assumed that this is standard. In two productions performed by students at the National Institute of Circus Arts (Do Not Pass Go and Synesthesia), both of which contained narrative themes, the live musicians operated within the convention of the ‘virtual pit’. While Traces (Les 7 Doigts), used a predominantly recorded score, two performers effectively operated as acrobat-musicians, in a virtuosic display of both physical and pianistic skill.

This chapter concludes that the presence of a live musician operates within a continuum of presentation, and problematizes both Kirby’s analysis of the actor, and McAuley’s definitions of stage space. The common persona for the theatre musician can be characterized as one of effacement and absorption, and most similar to conventions present in performance of classical concert music. This ‘theatrical’ persona will often override other, ‘musically’ constructed personae, and therefore has the potential for conflict if musical genres are used that do not have the contemplative response as part of their ‘horizon of expectations’. Within the performance conventions of circus, stand-up and cabaret the persona of the musician may be more congruent with purely musical expectations.
Conclusion

This thesis has developed a framework of terms for the discussion of music within theatrical performance. This framework has been tested in practice and has been found to be applicable to a wide variety of performance styles. By emphasizing the function of music, this framework provides a means for the discussion of music that is not dependent on a high level of theoretical knowledge about music, and that can be accessible for both theatre practitioners and performance theorists.

This thesis has argued that music cannot be considered as merely ‘incidental’, as an undoubtedly useful but essentially an optional ‘extra’. Its relationship with the theatre is dynamic and emergent. As music affords certain meanings to a production, so that production will afford certain interpretative attributions to the music. As has been shown in Chapter Three, a particular piece of music can direct towards very different interpretations, not just in its use in a different theatrical context, but by how the music itself is rendered, or performed.

Music in theatre can be considered as an object, as an experience, as a function, as a set of practices. It both is and does. The analysis of music in theatre needs to consider all of these elements, rather than privileging the ‘object’ of music as is often the case in traditional musicological analysis.

The list of claims for stage music set out in Chapter One has been confirmed in investigation. The predominant claims that music supports the emotional and the narrative content have been observed in practice, but there are subtler shadings. Music is able to support both the story narrated and the narrating discourse, but this is not necessarily identical to its support of the emotional content. It is important to consider the inherently metadiegetic nature of music in theatre – its contribution to both the emotional content and the narrative is often dependent on its relationship to other texts and contexts. This is particularly important in the use of compiled scores, but, as has been shown, composed scores (particularly those in strongly marked genres), can also function metadiegetically.

Importantly, music has also been found to aid in the definition of on- and offstage spaces, and its support for both narrative and emotional framing can be
reinforced by this spatial framing. Music’s relationship to the tempo-rhythm of a performance, however, might also be one of its most important functions, but this has been found to be difficult to consider at the point of reception alone.

This thesis has also found that it is important to consider the performance of the musician within theatre, an aspect of performance that is often overlooked. It is important that this is related to the performance as a whole, but the performance conventions of different musical genres warrant consideration, as conflict can arise between the presentational style of the theatre and the expectations signalled by the music.

For Performance Studies as a discipline to engage with music in a productive way, I suggest that it is important to engage with the concerns within the discipline of music; to consider how people engage with music separately from its use within theatre. The consumption of music outside theatre, particularly in relation to ongoing developments in recording and playback technology has a bearing on the reception of music in a theatrical context. More research on the conditions of production pertaining to the composition and performance of music within the theatre industry would be useful.

Music has a relation to the work of theatre it exists within and with the spectator who witnesses that interaction. Its reception is simultaneous with and inextricably linked to the reception of the performance as a whole. Music and the live musician have been shown to be widespread in theatrical performance, but this is largely ignored by both performance studies and musicology. Finally, that the use of music appears to be ubiquitous within theatrical production suggests that it needs to be considered more extensively than is currently the case within Performance Studies.
Appendix I
Performances viewed for this research

La Mama Theatre, Melbourne


L4. An Unfortunate Woman. Written and performed by Nicola Gunn. La Mama Theatre, Melbourne. 30 April 2006.


---

**The Edinburgh Fringe Festival at the Traverse Theatre**


T2. **C-90.** Written and performed by Daniel Kitson. Traverse One, Edinburgh. 25 August 2006.


---

**The Melbourne International Arts Festival**


**Also viewed (Chapter Six)**


**Circus performances**

• **A Plane Without Wings Is A Rocket**. The Women’s Circus. Drill Hall, Melbourne. 23 November 2006
• **Synesthesia**. NICA 2nd Year Students. National Institute of Circus Arts, Melbourne. 19 June 2007.
• **Circus Oz 2007**. Birrarung Marr, Melbourne. 30 June 2007.
• **by the light of stars that are no longer**. Circa. The Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, Brisbane. 6 July 2007.
• **Circus Girl**. The Flying Fruit Fly Circus. The Powerhouse, Brisbane. 8 July 2007.
• **Traces**. Les 7 Doigts. The Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh. 22 August 2007.
• **Circus Oz 30th Birthday Bash**. Birrarung Marr, Melbourne. 18 June 2008.

**Performances by Circa viewed on video**

No exact date was given for these recordings, but they were recorded during the following performance seasons.

• **Figaro Variations**. Performed 29 November-7 December 2002, The Powerhouse, Brisbane.
• **Naked**. Performed 8-19 April 2003, The Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, Brisbane.
• **A Love Supreme**. Performed 31 March-10 April 2004, The Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, Brisbane.
• **The Space Between**. Performed 8-17 September 2005, North Melbourne Town Hall.
by the light of stars that are no longer. Performed 3-6 July 2007, The Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, Brisbane.

Summary of job descriptions: sound designer or composer?

All attributions for aspects of the sound and music are listed as they were described in the programme. The most common attribution for the music/sound was as either sound designer or composer.

For twelve shows a sound designer was credited, and for twelve other shows a composer was credited. ‘Sound’ was the credit for five shows, ‘music/sound’ for two shows, and the term ‘soundscape’ in one show. Other credits were for ‘live music’ (two shows), ‘musical director’ (three shows), or the credits were given by instrumental designation (two shows). No credit was attributed in six shows. Where both sound designer and composer were credited (six shows), there was a clear distinction between the two roles; the composer responsible for the composed score, the sound designer for the sound effects and any compiled music.

For shows with the sole credit given as ‘sound design’, ‘sound’ or ‘soundscape’, the majority (14) comprised either a compiled score, or consisted mainly of sound effects or ‘musique concrète’. Five shows using a composed electronic score were also credited under the designation ‘sound designer’ rather than ‘composer’. A ‘composer’ was credited for eight of the shows using live music, but also for six shows using a composed electronic score, and for two shows using a mixture of composed and compiled music.

The credit ‘live music’ or a designation by instrument was applied to both composed and compiled scores. The term ‘musical director’ was used in live performances involving an ensemble of musicians, and in these the music was either compiled, or a separate composer or sound designer was credited. The origin of the compiled music score was only credited in two programmes, and in only one of these was the music comprehensively attributed.

The difficulty of a simple attribution for the ‘person who does the music’, in contrast to the more commonly straightforward designations given to other members of the scenographic process, such as lighting designer or set designer, appears to lie in the originary creation or sourcing of the music.
Appendix II
Glossary

A Cappella  Unaccompanied singing.

Accretive climax  A climax that consists of an ‘increase’ of musical resources, which could be the use of additional instruments, or sounds, increased complexity or density of harmony, subdivisions or increasing complexity of the rhythmic structure, increase in amplitude etc. either singly or in combination. In a looped musical structure this is a common way of approaching a climax. A more colloquial term sometimes used is the ‘pump-up’.

Adagio  Played slowly or a slow piece (music), in circus the term usually refers to a slow acrobalance act.

Affirmative music  Music that supports the emotion of a scene. (Thiel 1981)

Ambient effect  A continuous sound effect, often acting as a background wash of sound. See also atmos.

Amplitude  Loudness or volume of the music

Anempathetic music  Music that undercuts the emotion of a scene (Chion 1994)

Aria  A classical song form, usually in a ternary or ABA form.

Atmos  Used in film sound, this refers to ambient effects that indicate the general location of a scene. This sound may be recorded on location, or compiled.

Atonal  See tonal.

Attack  The onset of a sound such as a finger striking a piano key.

Binary form  A simple binary form, consists of two sections, an initial musical statement (A) which may modulate to another key, followed by a contrasting section (B), which returns the music to the tonic or home key.

Break  Taking a solo

Cadence  A chord progression that concludes a phrase, section, or complete piece of music. There are many conventional forms of cadence, the most common of which return the music to the tonic or root of the music, signalling closure.

Coda  An extra passage added on to the end of a section, or complete piece of music to emphasize the finality of the ending. In popular music forms, this can be known as a tag.

Compiled score  A theatre or film score consisting of pre-composed music.

Composed score  A theatre or film score consisting of newly composed music.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consonance</td>
<td>See <em>dissonance</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterpoint</td>
<td>In music, this means the combination of a number of individual melodic lines, to form a coherent whole. Each line is important individually. The interweaving of each line in a Bach <em>fugue</em> is an example of <em>contrapuntal</em> technique. This term has been adopted in cinema studies (e.g. Kracauer), to discuss music in relation to the cinematic image, with the implication that the visuals and the music consist of individual and separate lines that combine to form a harmonious whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crescendo</td>
<td>Getting louder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut to cue</td>
<td>In theatrical performance, a change to a new section of music, a change to a different piece of music or an end to the music, usually determined by a verbal or a visual cue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decay</td>
<td>The length of sustain of a sound. A sound may have a quick decay, such as snare drum, or a long decay, such as a bell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrescendo</td>
<td>Getting softer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay</td>
<td>A <em>signal processing</em> device that records a sound signal, and repeats it back, often multiple times, giving the effect of a series of echoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diegetic music</td>
<td>Film music that has a visible or implied sound-source. Also <em>Source</em> music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissonance</td>
<td>Dissonant is used of harmonies that can be considered to be clashing, and which in functional harmony usually require resolution to a concord, or consonant harmony. Whether a harmony is considered to be consonant or dissonant has changed through history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>The fifth note of the major or minor scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duple time</td>
<td>In which the rhythm is split into two main beats, such as a march.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamics</td>
<td>The loudness, or softness, of music or sound effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En douceur</td>
<td>A mode of presentation of a wild animal act in circus, emphasizing trust and friendly relations between a trainer and his/her animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En ferocité</td>
<td>A mode of presentation of a wild animal act in circus, emphasizing the ferociousness of the animal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equalization</td>
<td>Boosting specific <em>frequencies</em> of sound to change their <em>timbre</em>. This may be to compensate for deficiencies in the recording or performance environment, such as increasing clarity of sounds, or to create unusual effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evocation</td>
<td>Music that provides a general wash of affect, without following individual dramatic events closely (Gallez).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensional structure</td>
<td>Music that has an extended form, such as the sonata form of Western classical music (Chester 1970). See <em>intensional structure</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>The rate of vibration per second of a sound wave. Rapid vibrations create a ‘high’ pitch, slow vibrations a ‘low’ pitch.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ghost music  The term used in this thesis for music that is re-arranged or appears in fragmentary form specifically for theatrical purposes, and which functions as a trace in the theatrical diegesis.

Grab  A very short snatch of music, often used to smooth editing transitions in film, or to signal a scene change, or change of time in theatre.

Haute-école act  An equestrian act in which a complex series of steps are engaged in by horse and rider, similar to the art of dressage.

Imaginary music  Music that is ‘heard’ in a dramatic character’s ‘mind’.

Intensional structure  A term used by Andrew Chester (1970) to describe popular music forms that do not have the extended structure of classical music forms.

Jockey act  An equestrian act, involving balancing, acrobatics, or dancing on the horse.

Leitmotiv  A repeated motif.

Liberty act  Originally used of an equestrian act in which the horses are not ridden (‘at liberty’) but are cued by a trainer to perform movement routines. This can be used of other animal acts.

Loop  A term derived from the creation of tape loops (sections of tape spliced together at each end to provide continuous playback). ‘Loop’ is used more widely to describe popular and electronic music that proceeds by multiple repetitions of a basic section of musical material.

Melodrame  O’Neill (1912) uses this term for music as underscoring to spoken dialogue in theatre.

Mirroring  Music that closely follows the events of a piece of theatre. (Gallez 1970)

Modulation  Music that changes from one key to another. A modulation that proceeds sequentially upwards is a frequently used ingredient in the accretive climax of circus, or the pump up.

Non-diegetic music  Film music that has no apparent source in the narrative world presented. Also known as score music.

Ostinato  A repeated figure, similar to a riff in popular music.

Phrase  A rhythmic/melodic/harmonic unit that articulates musical form, analogous to a sentence in language. Each line of a lyric in a song, for example, will usually form a musical phrase. A common unit is the 4-bar phrase, such as in “Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling Clementine”, however there is no necessary set length for a phrase.

Power chord  A chord consisting of two notes, (the tonic and the dominant), and deliberately overdriven through an amplifier to produce distortion. Common to hard rock and heavy metal.

Programme music  Music written to illustrate, or suggest, an external idea, such as Debussy’s La Mer (The Sea).
Pulse This term is often used synonymously with ‘beat’, and in listening to music is synonymous. However in a notated score the beat refers to the notated division of a bar, which may not be identical.

Pump up The effect when music modulates up a step (e.g. from the key of C to the key of D) which usually provides the effect of an increase of excitement. This is a cliché of circus music, or of ‘stadium rock’.

Recitative A solo vocal piece which, rather than following a strict metre, approximates the rhythms of speech. Within opera, it often serves to forward the narrative, while the contrasting aria is used for more extended reflection.

Rendering A sound effect that is not a recreation of an actual sound, but constructed or treated in a way that it becomes a representation of a sound. (Chion 1994)

Rendition (covers band) A version of a recorded song that attempts to recreate the details of the original recording.

Reverberation (Reverb) The blending of echoes when sound is naturally reflected off surrounding hard surfaces. It is a common form of electronic signal processing.

Riff A repeated melodic/harmonic/rhythmic pattern. The popular music term for ostinato.

Risley act A foot juggling act in circus.

Round and round A piece of music that is repeated, or cycled, as necessary to accompany a piece of theatrical action of indeterminate length (Taylor 2000).

Rubato Literally ‘robbing time’, this term is used to describe a performance of a piece of music which departs from a strict observance of the rhythm, speeding up some sections, and slowing down others for expressive effect.

Score (film) Non-diegetic music.

Scource (film) Music that exists between non-diegetic music (or score music), and diegetic music (or source music), e.g. a tune that is initially heard coming from a record-player, that is subsequently used within the non-diegetic orchestral score.

Segue A link between two pieces of music, to form a continuous whole, as in a medley of tunes.

Separating out Separating out is used in this thesis to describe music that occupies a ‘middle ground’ between affirmative and anempathetic music, operating as independent to the emotions (or lack of emotions) portrayed in a scene, while not actually undercutting the emotional effect of the scene.

Sequence In classical music, a phrase or pattern of music that is repeated at a higher or lower pitch. In contemporary music, sequencing refers to the creation of loops.

Shuffle A rhythmic pattern in which the beat is divided into three (triplet) and played minus the middle note. Also called a swing rhythm.

Soundscape A term coined by R. Murray Schafer (1977), to refer to the ambient sound that distinguishes particular locations.
It is commonly used in theatre for soundtracks (live or recorded) consisting of a collage of natural, or industrial, sounds, or in which music and a proportion of natural (or industrial) sounds are included. *Dingetic music.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source (film)</th>
<th>Spot effect</th>
<th>Sting</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Ternary form</th>
<th>Timbre</th>
<th>Tonal</th>
<th>Tonic</th>
<th>Transformation</th>
<th>Transpose</th>
<th>Tremolando</th>
<th>Triple time</th>
<th>Vamping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A ‘one-off’ sound effect that needs to happen on a particular cue, such as a gunshot, or the ringing of a telephone.</td>
<td>A punctuating chord used in cartoons, pantomimes, film music etc to mark a particular moment of action.</td>
<td>The speed of the music.</td>
<td>Music in an ABA form i.e. what distinguishes this form from binary form is that the A section is recapitulated. The most common version of this form is AABA.</td>
<td>Sometimes called ‘tone-colour’, this is the particular sound of an instrument (or other sound source) that distinguishes it from a different instrument, e.g. the different sound of a piano and a trumpet. It also distinguishes between different individual examples of the same instrument, e.g. a ‘honky tonk’ piano and a concert grand piano.</td>
<td>Music that is underpinned by functional harmony.</td>
<td>The key note of a piece of music in a major or minor <em>mode</em>. In C major this would be C. The tonic acts as a ‘home base’ for the music tonal music. Also known as the root.</td>
<td>A covers band version of a recorded song that is a radical departure from the original recording.</td>
<td>To change the key of a piece of music.</td>
<td>With string instruments the rapid repetition of a single note, or alternation of two notes. This is a stock melodramatic musical device to indicate suspense.</td>
<td>For music in which the predominant rhythm is divisible by three, as in the waltz, or the jig.</td>
<td>Improvising. This is predominantly used of functional, rather than jazz improvisation, e.g. the instruction ‘vamp till ready’ would indicate the repeat of a section of music, sometimes varied for interest, to cover periods of variable time, such as the introductory patter for a comedian.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


Adams, M. P. “How the Circus Comes To Town.” *The Lone Hand*. 1 April 1910. 597-606


Betts, John Rickards. “P.T. Barnum and the Popularization of Natural History.”


<http://www.circushistory.org/history2.htm#NEAVE >


Cathcart, Sarah. Interview with author. 28 January 2006.


Chapple, Vanessa. Interview with author. 10 July 2006.

Charlier, Paul. Email communication. 11 June 2008.


in Music from British Universities. Ed. John Caldwell. New York: Garland,
1989.
Eds. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton. London:
Cook, Norman D. “The Sound Symbolism of Major and Minor Harmonies.” Music
1957.
Cottle, Gerry and Helen Batten. Confessions of a Showman: My Life in the Circus.
London: Vision, 2006
Covach, John. “We Won't Get Fooled Again: Rock Music and Musical Analysis.”
Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity and Culture. Eds. David Schwarz,
75-89.
Cox, Christopher and Daniel Warner, eds. Audio Culture: Readings in Modern
Coxe, Antony D. Hippisley. “Equestrian Drama and the Circus.” Performance and
Politics in Popular Drama. Eds. David Bradby, Louis James and Bernard
Coyle, Rebecca, ed. Screen Scores: Studies in Contemporary Australian Film Music.
Cronin, Patrick. Interview with author. 11 July 2006.


De Cinque, Jules. Interview with author. 27 February 2006.


<http://cc.utah.edu/~gem16480/cirquedusoleil/dupere1.html>

<http://cc.utah.edu/~gem16480/cirquedusoleil/dupere4.html>


265


Fitzgerald, J. “Bill Us Big.” The Lone Hand. 1 May 1911: 46-54.


Hershon, Bob. “Off the Beaten Track: Harmonious Composer/Director Teams.”

Hibberd, Sarah, and Nanette Nielsen. “Music in Melodrama: ‘The Burden of
Holland, Wendy. “Re-imagining Aboriginality in the Circus Space.” Journal of
Huckvale, David. “Twins of Evil: An Investigation into the Aesthetics of Film
Inglis, Ian. “Embassy Records: Covering the Market, Marketing the Cover.” Popular
Ishida, Hidemi. “An Introduction to Musical Thought in Ancient China - Sound,
Itzin, Catherine. Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain since 1968.
Jackson, Donna. First briefing with the author/Musical Director. 1 April 2005.
---. Interview with author. 7 April 2006.


<http://www.sydkitchen.com/>


---. Interview with author. 8 July 2007a.
---. *by the light of stars that are no longer*. Programme note. July 2007b.
Link, Stan. “Nor the Eye Filled with Seeing: The Sound of Vision in Film.”
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinesays/JC17folder/OnlyAmovieLinton.html>
London, Justin. “Leitmotifs and Musical Reference in the Classical Film Score.”
<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol12/iss1/art9/>


Matthews, Bec. Interview with author. 25 February 2006.


Mullett, Jane. “Circus Alternatives: The Rise of New Circus in Australia, the United States, Canada and France.” PhD Diss. La Trobe University, 2006.


North, Adrian C., and David J. Hargreaves. “Music in Business Environments.”


Roake, Fiona. Interview with author. 11 June 2006.

---. Email communication. 28 September 2007.


Roof, Mildred F. “Incidental Music in History and in Practice.” MA Diss. Leland Stanford Junior University, 1942.


282


286
Sternfield, Frederick W. “Copland as a Film Composer.” The Musical Quarterly 37.2 (1951): 161-75.


Sulan, Kate. Workshop discussion. 22 August 2005.


<http://www.circusinamerica.org/public/music>


Tovey, Donald Francis Sir. Essays in Musical Analysis. London: Oxford UP, 1935.


Wirth, George. Round the World with a Circus. Melbourne: Troedel and Cooper, 1925.


Young, Christine. “Father Figures.” *Inpress Magazine* 16 November 2005: From a collection of reviews provided by the publicist to the Women’s Circus. No pagination given.


Discography

Cirque Surreal. Voyagers. Gandey World Class Productions, n.d. (The soundtrack sold at the show performance. No composer was attributed.)
múm. Finally We Are No-One. Fatcat, 2002.
Simon, Paul. “Still Crazy After All These Years.” (P. Simon). *Still Crazy After All These Years*. Warner, 1975.