

CO-CURRICULAR COLLABORATION: CREATIVE AUDIO LAB & PERFORMANCE

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Collaboration Stage One:

Animated Video

Both classes discuss the script, defining the role of music and effects in the telling of the story.

A script is devised matching dialog, sound effects, music, and action.

They determine where character dialog or narration is necessary, to match the animation.

Live Performance

Pre-Collaboration:

Each Sound Team is assigned a fairytale.

Detailed plot is outlined.

Characters are delineated.

Designers determine where sound best tells the story and where dialog is necessary.

Auditions are held to cast actors who are able to improvise, taking part in the script development.

Using the plot outline, actors improvise character dialog to arrive at a working script.

Divergence of Efforts

Animated Video

Designers begin composing underscoring, spot effects and ambient sound.

A Logic Pro “project” is created and shared on a Departmental Server.

Logic sessions can be recorded anywhere within the departmental system and synched to the server.

Project can be accessed and edited by all students and faculty.

Actors rehearse synching voices to the animation.

Voices are recorded and tracks are loaded into the Logic project (to be edited by designers later).

Preliminary samples stimulate creative choices in both designers and actors.

Live Performance

Designers and Actors independently create samples of music, sound effects, and voice treatments to convey mood, action, and setting.

Designers and actors are encouraged to find inspirational images.

Students begin communicating and sharing ideas via *Basecamp*.

Internet-based project sharing software program that helps students and faculty to organize projects.

Program allows communication through a variety of features including project milestones, document and sound files, messaging, and “write board.”

Collaboration Stage Two:

Actors and designers share samples of ambient sound, music, character voices, and spot effects. Topics of discussion are:

- What major idea do we wish to convey to the audience?
- Who is the audience?
- What inherent themes might we explore?
- What is the overall mood and/or style?

A definite concept is agreed upon and students determine ways they can realize the production goals. This is the “meat” of the process wherein both performers and designers begin to inspire creativity in each other. A specific sound effect, for example, may provoke a particular reading of the dialog. The tone of the actor’s

voice allows the designer to explore a musical motif he/she might not have otherwise considered.

Students discuss the world in which the story takes place, creating a multi-sensory description for each scene. One of the most important considerations is the space in which each scene takes place.

- What is the physical size, shape, and atmosphere of each place?
- Where are the characters in relationship to the space?
- Where are the characters in relationship to each other?
- Where is the audience?

Designing and Recording:

At this point in the project performers and designers work in tandem, listening to each other's recordings, using each other's work to prompt experimentation and creative discovery.

Using Logic Pro, the project is created and saved to a shared server.

- Designers and actors may add components directly to a session, or they may simply drop sound files into the class folder.
- A global video track is added to the Logic Pro session, using the movie as a marker.
- Performers and Designers work simultaneously over the next weeks. The sounds inspire the actors in creating their character's voices, while the actor's voices and expression help to promote design choices.
 - Actors match movements of the character's mouths and time out narration. Vocal tracks are recorded and edited by the actors.
 - Meanwhile, sound designers add musical composition, ambience, and effects to the shared file.

For the Performance option, Logic files are moved to QLab, a software program that enables sound and visual cues to be timed precisely to the actor's voices and movements. Actors are amplified with body mics, and the voices are mixed, live. (See sample of cues and their coordination with the script.)

Results:

Option 1, Animated Video Assignment, the product is a short film.

Option 2, Live Performance, culminates in 1) a live performance, produced in conjunction with the department theatre season, and 2) a web-published video.

In both project options, students learn collaborative skills. Collaboration builds trust and promotes an open climate for artistic experimentation.

Adaptations of fairy tales; part of the department's theatrical season.

Audio Creative Lab class is divided into three production "teams"

Composer

Live Voice Mixer/Stage Manager

Sound Effects

Speaker Plot Designer

Each team produces one fairy tale.

Scripts written by Audio Creative Lab production teams and actors.

Overall artistic direction by faculty director.

Divided into production/design teams, the class and auditioned cast write the scripts for three fairy tales. Sound designers and audio engineers develop a production concept (guided by the Audio Advisor and Production Director). Each team composes a story, including music, ambience, and spot effects. Each student design team includes one composer, one sound effects designer, one stage manager/live mixer, one recording engineer, and one speaker plot designer.