



Drama

GCSE

Drama

Sound Design

June 2015

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This Topic Exploration Pack should accompany the OCR resource ‘**Sound Design**’ learner activities, which you can download from the OCR website.



This activity offers an opportunity for English skills development.



Introduction

In GCSE Drama, sound design can vary greatly. It is of utmost importance that the sound design fits with the overall concept of the devised drama and links closely with the genre and performance style of the final performance. Students should work effectively with other members of the production team, they might have specific cues within the text but their designs will be influenced by the director and devisors' approaches to the text/stimulus. Effective sound design should enhance the audiences' experience, matching well with the rest of the production values rather than acting as an art form in isolation.

This exploration pack will introduce: Selecting appropriate sound to accompany performance, the technical aspects of sound design and creating a 'prompt book'.

Students who opt for sound design when studying Drama in the Making will be expected to:

- Produce a book/cue sheet to accompany the performance (see activity 5), detailing any live sound, sound effects and recorded sound and when they occur in a fully annotated script
- Demonstrate technical ability both in the performance (acting as sound operator) and in their accompanying written record, in which they detail their overall sound concept and the selection and use of microphones and speakers
- Analyse the effectiveness of the sound design through a written evaluation. Students should detail the strengths, weaknesses and overall effectiveness of their sound design. Students who are in the higher levels of response will also go on to explain how they could have improved their work if they had all the facilities and equipment of a professional theatre venue.

To select and use appropriate sounds for the performance, students need to have a thorough understanding of the period the play is set in, the genre and performance style, the overall design theme and any social, historical and cultural connections. Therefore, it is necessary for the student to take part in the workshops preceding the ten hours of examination time allowing them to apply the information on the chosen stimuli to their sound design.

Each student who opts to be assessed on their sound design must be attached to a group of students who have opted to follow the performer pathway. They should be involved in the process of devising to enable them to create a meaningful and contextualised sound design for performance which resonates with the lighting, props, costume and set design. The student should then act as the sound operator for the examined performance allowing them to be assessed on both their sound design and ability to operate sound in a live performance.

Teacher Preparation

It is necessary for the teacher to:

- Have access to a sound mixing board, speakers and microphones which can be accessed by the sound designer
- Have access to computers with appropriate editing software. Students may need to use these to source sound effects and transfer tracks onto a CD or portable storage device
- Create links between individual sound designers, groups of devisers and other designers. The sound designer should be attached to a performance group enable them to create a meaningful and contextualised design.

Assessment

The Designer Brief: Students prepare design ideas for a drama that does or could derive from the stimulus. The design could be any one of the following: Set; Lighting; Sound; Stage and personal properties; Costume or Make-up. Students should explain how the design would support the drama and any social, cultural and political connections. The work illustrates potential for further development and will be between two and four sides of A4 or equivalent as a 'compendium' of their design ideas, or a two minute demonstration/presentation or a mixture of these.

Evidence for assessment

1. Marked up 'Prompt Book' detailing sound cues and standby cues.
2. A recording of the final performance demonstrating practical sound operating ability.
3. A working record detailing the overall sound concept explaining why the sound used was selected and how it fits with the genre, performance style and other technical aspects of performance (*lighting, costume, stage management, props and set*). The work of practitioners could be referenced here too. Students need to explain the types of sounds they have chosen to accompany the performance (*for example: soundscapes, sound effects or atmospheric music*). They need to give detailed reasons for their choices and explain how they edited and refined their work during the rehearsal process.
4. A stage plan detailing the positions of speakers and the use of any microphones.
5. An evaluation reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the sound design.

Students may also want to include a CD with their recorded sound effects to form part of their appendix. Other supporting material that could be included are: a stage plan, images of rehearsal, images of props/costume/lighting/set and notes from production meetings with other technical departments.

Suggested Activities (Teacher Notes)

Activity 1 – Selecting appropriate sound to accompany performance

Students will take part in three tasks in this activity, each covering a different aspect of selecting appropriate sound for performance. Once they have worked through these tasks, they should be able to determine which type of sound, or which combinations are most appropriate to the work they have been devising.

Task 1 – Live music/sound accompanying performance (create a soundscape)

Sometimes it is most appropriate for actors to create the sound to accompany performance live on stage. Actors can use their voices and or instruments to create a soundscape. This is classed as 'live sound' as it is happening live in front of the audience.

Students should be organised into small groups of up to six. They will need access to some percussion instruments. If none are available, plastic bottles and other objects can be used to create a variation of sounds. Students follow the instructions to create a soundscape which could accompany a performance to suggest setting and create atmosphere. The group acts as the orchestra creating sound effects using their voices, objects and percussion instruments.

1. Each member of the group provides a different sound that is appropriate to the setting.
2. The different sounds are layered on top of each other to create the soundscape of the setting.
3. The sound designer could act as leader by controlling the dynamics using hand gestures to signal to the actors if they should be getting louder or quieter and signaling when to begin and when to stop.

Some suggested settings to start with:

- Woodland
- Fairground
- School playground
- Seaside
- A graveyard at night.

Task 2 – Selecting appropriate sound effects

When selecting sound effects to accompany performance, it is of utmost importance that the effects selected are appropriate to the performance style and genre and are of the correct time period, for example the 1920s.

Read through the extract from Macbeth as a whole class. Discuss the types of sound effects that are appropriate for the scene. Students can annotate the script highlighting the points where sound effects are necessary. As well as selecting the correct sound effects students should consider the social, historical and cultural influences of the time period that the play is set to enable them to choose sound effects which fit with the genre and performance style.

When reading the text extracts the students should select the owl shrieking and knocking as well as any atmospheric sounds they would like to add to create mood.

Task 3 – Creating atmosphere through recorded sound

Adolphe Appia was a Swiss theatre director/designer born in 1862. He believed that all aspects of design and performance should work together. He rejected painted two-dimensional sets for three-dimensional "living" sets because he believed that shade was as necessary as light to form a connection between the actor and the setting of the performance in time and space. By controlling the use of light intensity, color and direction he created a new way of lighting the stage. He also used music in performance to create setting rather than relying on elaborate sets. He believed in the 'Gesamt Kunst Werke' which roughly translates into the 'Total Art Work'.

By using Appia's theory of creating mood, atmosphere and setting through the use of music, you now need to suggest some recorded sounds to accompany the following scenes:

- A train journey in the 1900s
- A summer's day in the park
- The woods at night
- Lost in the desert.

Then use the internet to find clips of the music you have suggested. More able students will be able to use sound editing software, such as Audacity, to edit and refine their chosen music. Students can add echoes, change dynamics, experiment with tempo, add effects and delays to refine their music choices.

Top Tip: Remember, Adolphe Appia wanted the staging to be very simple and relied on the music in performance to suggest the setting to the audience. Have the sound effects you have suggested communicated the setting to the audience effectively?

Extension activity: Students can source live sounds, for example the sound of birds, and record these for editing and use in the performance.

Activity 2 – The technical aspects of sound design (microphones/speaker positioning)

Microphones

There are 3 main types of microphones that we can use for performance:

- Hand-held microphones
- Radio microphones
- Suspended microphones.

All of the above can be used in your performance to amplify sounds and voices. Depending on which microphones your school has you can experiment with different types to improve the audio quality for the audience.

Here is an explanation of how each type of microphone can be used:

Hand-held microphones: These can be used to amplify voices off stage; they are particularly useful to amplify voiceovers especially when an echo or special effect is required. Handheld microphones can also be used in a static position with the use of a microphone stand.



Radio microphones: Radio microphones are small mobile microphone packs that can be worn discreetly by the performer. They work on a radio frequency which sends signals to the receivers which are generally located by the sound desk. They are controlled by faders on the sound desk giving the sound operator control of the amplification of the performer's voice.



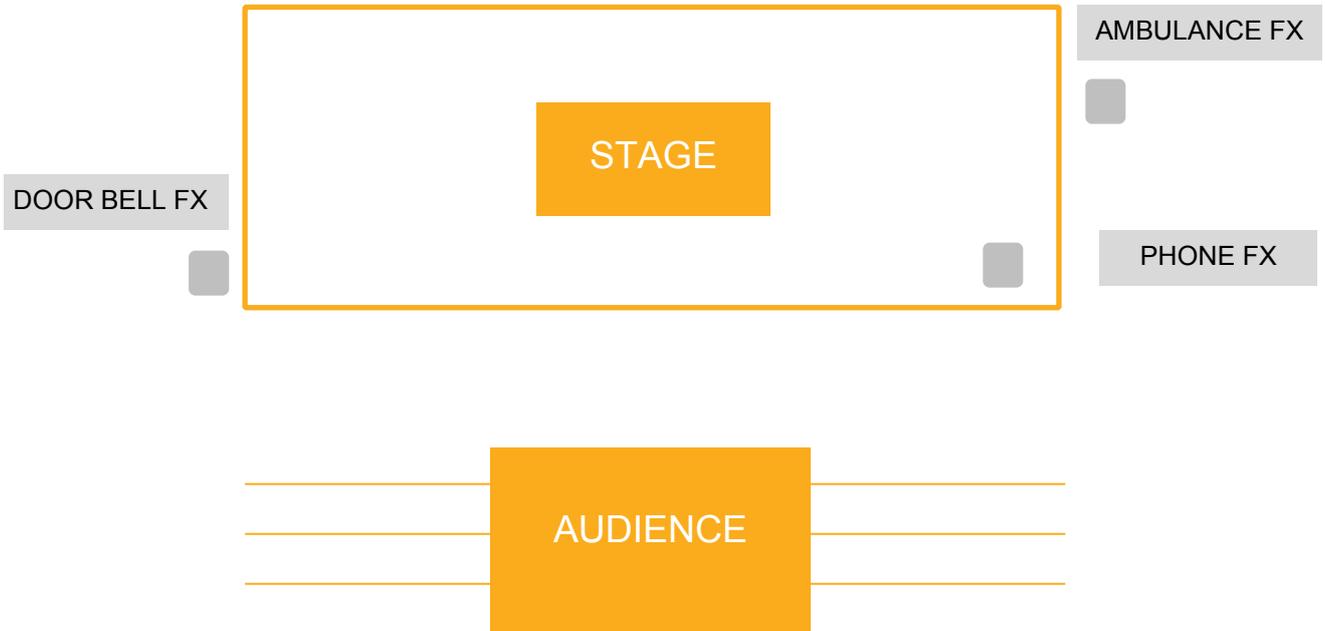
Suspended microphones: These can be positioned overhead on the stage, floating above the actor's heads. They are mainly used to amplify sound for performances with a large cast. They are particularly useful in choral numbers, choral speech or when radio microphones are not available.



Speaker positioning

Depending on the style of performance, speakers can be placed in different positions throughout the theatre. Positioning speakers in different places can alter the overall sound effect (FX) for the audience and performers. Here are two examples:

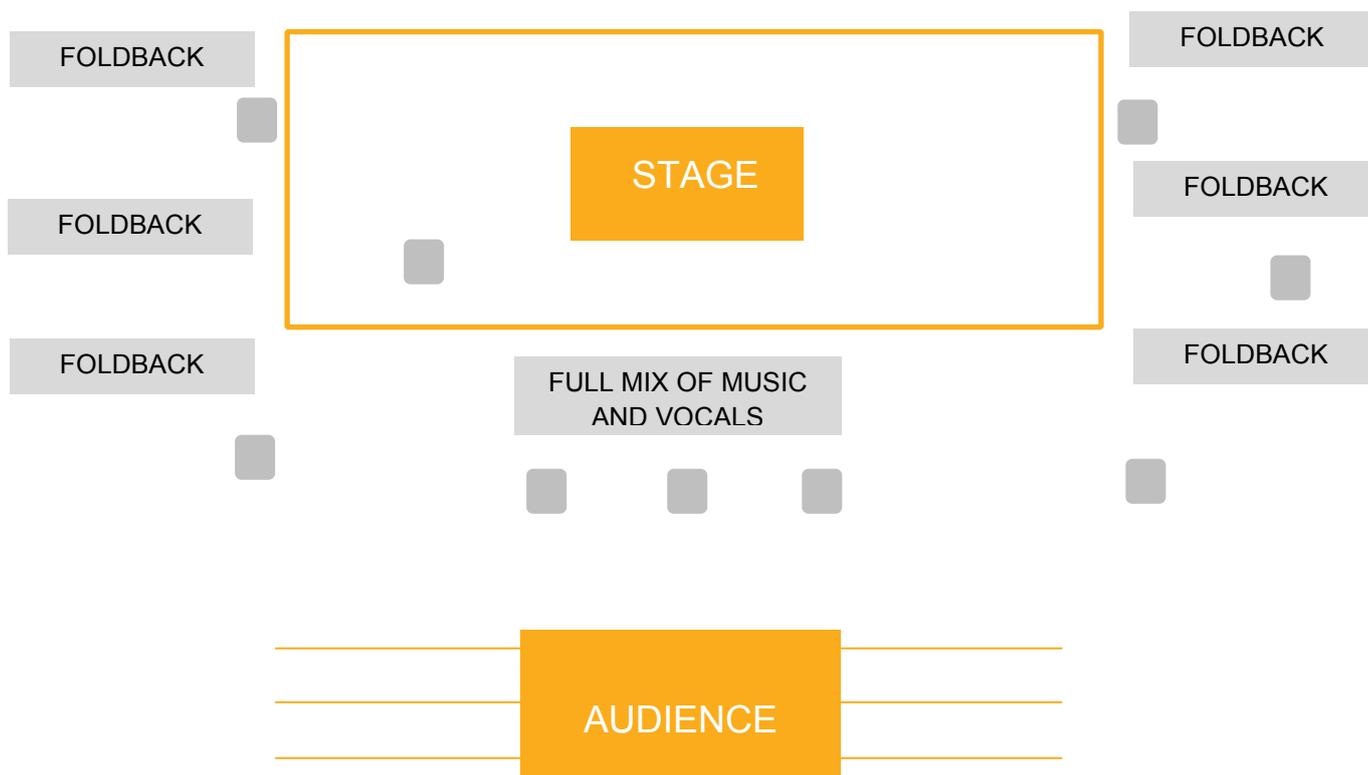
Traditional Play



In this style small speakers are used in the location of the direction the sound comes from to make the sound effects more naturalistic for the audience, for example the phone sound effect comes from a speaker on stage which is set, out of view from the audience, next to the phone. You will notice that there are no speakers facing the audience directly. This is because in traditional plays, the actors are not reliant on microphones to amplify their voices. The actors are required to project their voices effectively to ensure the audience can hear them clearly without the aid of microphones.



Musical Theatre



In Musical Theatre there is a need for fold back speakers. These speakers are in the direction of the performers so that they can hear the music clearly allowing them to stay in time. There are also speakers at the front of the stage pointing towards the audience (*front of house*), which enable the sound designer to send the required mix of music and vocals to the audience.

Sound check

Before the performance you must complete a sound check. During the sound check the overall balance of the sound is established. You will need to adjust volume levels of individual tracks, recordings, live sound and microphones to ensure that they are equally balanced and no one area is significantly louder than the other. You also need to check the overall volume of the sound design, ensuring that all sound is audible but not overwhelming. It is useful for a technician to sit in the auditorium/audience to check if sound levels are appropriate as levels may vary from the sound operator's position to that of the audience.

Activity 3 – Creating the ‘prompt’ book

Below is an example of a prompt copy, generally known as ‘The Book’. This contains all the paperwork relating to the performance. It details all the technical details of the show. This copy of the script is used to run all technical aspects of the performance enabling the stage crew to work together to maintain a smooth running, well organised performance.

When the book is complete it contains all of the actors’ moves, lighting cues (LX), sound cues (FX), and any special effects (SFX) such as the use of smoke machines. Generally the prompt book is written by the stage manager and is kept by them, however it is the responsibility of the sound designer to mark up the sound cues and pass this information on to the stage manager.

Before the cue itself, you will notice there is a standby cue: this is to ensure the sound operator is ready for the actual cue and standing by to make sure the cue comes on time and at the correct volume. These should be written in roughly 30 seconds before the actual cue takes place.

sc.1]	KING LEAR	99	
	And, from some knowledge and assurance, offer This office to you.		Standby Sound Q3
Gent.	I will talk further with you.		
Kent	No, do not. For confirmation that I am much more Than my out-wall, open this purse, and take What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia,-- As fear not but you shall,--show her this ring; And she will tell you <u>who your fellow is</u> That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm! I will go seek the king.	45	Sound Q3 GO [Thunder}
Gent.	Give me your hand: have you no more to say?	50	
Kent.	Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet; That, when we have found the king,--in which your pain That way, I'll this,--he that first lights on him Holla the other. <i>[Exeunt severally.</i>	55	Standby LX Qs 10-14 and Sound Qs 4-6 LX Q10 GO [Dim scene change]
SCENE II.-- <i>[Another part of the heath.] Storm still.</i> <i>Enter LEAR and Fool</i>			<i>When the stage is clear</i>
Lear.	Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks! You sulphurous and thought-executing fires, Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts, Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world! Crack nature's moulds, an' gergens spill at once, That make ingrateful man!	5	LX Q11 GO [Heath state – dim] LX Q12 GO [Lightning flash] Follow on Sound Q4 GO [Thunder rumble] LX Q13 GO [Lightning flash]
Fool.	O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters' blessing: here's a night pities neither wise man nor fool.	10	Follow on Sound Q5 GO [Thunder crack]
Lear.	Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain! Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters: I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness; I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children, You owe me no subscription: then let fall Your horrible pleasure: here I stand, your slave, A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man. But yet I call you servile ministers, That have with two pernicious daughters join'd Your high engender'd battles 'gainst a head So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!	15	LX Q14 GO [Lightning flash] Follow on Sound Q6 GO [Thunder rumble]
Fool.	He that has a house to put's head in has a good head-piece. The cod-piece that will house Before the head has any, The head and he shall louse; So beggars marry many.	20 25 30	



Student Sheet 1 – How to create a soundscape

The group acts as the orchestra creating sound effects using their voices, objects and percussion instruments.

- Each member of the group provides a different sound that is appropriate to the setting (*e.g. wind or a bird song*)
- The different sounds are layered on top of each other to create the soundscape of the setting
- The sound designer should act as leader by controlling the dynamics using hand gestures to signal to the actors if they should be getting louder or quieter and signaling when to begin and when to stop.

Task 1

In groups of six, create a soundscape for each of the following settings:

- Woodland
- Fairground
- School playground
- Seaside
- A graveyard at night.

Task 2

Now experiment with the soundscapes you created varying the order that the actors create the sounds and the pitch, tone and frequency of the noises.

Extension activity: Try introducing instruments to your soundscape to enhance the variation of sounds.

Student Sheet 2 – Selecting sounds

When selecting sound effects to accompany performance, it is of upmost importance that the effects selected are appropriate to the performance style and genre and are of the correct time period.

Read through the extract from Macbeth as a whole class. Discuss the types of sound effects that are appropriate for the scene. Annotate the script highlighting the points where sound effects are necessary. As well as selecting the correct sound effects you should consider the social, historical and cultural influences of the time period that the play is set to help you to choose sound effects which fit with the mood of the performance.

Macbeth extract

ACT II SCENE II Court of Macbeth's castle

[Enter LADY MACBETH]

LADY MACBETH That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold;
 What hath quench'd them hath given me fire.
 Hark! Peace!
 It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,
 Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it:
 The doors are open; and the surfeited grooms
 Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd
 Their possets,
 That death and nature do contend about them,
 Whether they live or die.

MACBETH *[Within]* Who's there? what, ho!

LADY MACBETH Alack, I am afraid they have awaked,
 And 'tis not done. The attempt and not the deed
 Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready;
 He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled
 My father as he slept, I had done't.

[Enter MACBETH]

MACBETH My husband!
 I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak?

MACBETH When?

LADY MACBETH Now.

MACBETH As I descended?

LADY MACBETH Ay.

MACBETH Hark!
Who lies i' the second chamber?

LADY MACBETH Donalbain.

MACBETH This is a sorry sight.

[Looking on his hands]

LADY MACBETH A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried
'Murder!'
That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them:
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them
Again to sleep.

LADY MACBETH There are two lodged together.

MACBETH One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other;
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
When they did say 'God bless us!'

LADY MACBETH Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
Stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH These deeds must not be thought
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

MACBETH Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast,--

LADY MACBETH What do you mean?

MACBETH Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house:
'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.'

LADY MACBETH Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy thane,
You do unbend your noble strength, to think
So brainsickly of things. Go get some water,
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there: go carry them; and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACBETH I'll go no more:
I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on't again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;
For it must seem their guilt.

[Exit. Knocking within]

MACBETH Whence is that knocking?
 How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
 What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes.
 Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
 Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
 The multitudinous seas in incarnadine,
 Making the green one red.

[Re-enter LADY MACBETH]

LADY MACBETH My hands are of your colour; but I shame
 To wear a heart so white.

[Knocking within]

I hear a knocking
 At the south entry: retire we to our chamber;
 A little water clears us of this deed:
 How easy is it, then! Your constancy
 Hath left you unattended.

[Knocking within]

Hark! More knocking.
 Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us,
 And show us to be watchers. Be not lost
 So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

[Knocking within]

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

[Exeunt]

Extension activity: Use the internet to find the type of sound effects you would need if you were designing the sound for this performance.

Student Sheet 3 – Adolphe Appia

Adolphe Appia was a Swiss theatre director/designer born in 1862. He believed that all aspects of design and performance should work together. He rejected painted two-dimensional sets for three-dimensional ‘living’ sets because he believed that shade was as necessary as light to form a connection between the actor and the setting of the performance in time and space. By controlling the use of light intensity, colour and direction, he created a new way of lighting the stage. He also used music in performance to create setting rather than relying on elaborate sets. He believed in the ‘Gesamt Kunst Werke’ which roughly translates into the ‘Total Art Work’.

By using Appia’s theory of creating mood, atmosphere and setting through the use of music you now need to suggest some recorded sounds to accompany the following scenes:

- **A train journey in the 1900s**
- **A summer’s day in the park**
- **The woods at night**
- **Lost in the desert.**

Then use the internet to find clips of the music you have suggested. You could use sound editing software to edit and refine your chosen music. You can add echoes, change dynamics, experiment with tempo, add effects and delays to refine your music choices.

Top Tip: Remember, Adolphe Appia wanted the staging to be very simple and relied on the music in performance to suggest the setting to the audience. Have the sound effects you have suggested communicated the setting to the audience effectively?

Extension activity: Students can source live sounds, for example the sound of birds, and record these for editing and use in the performance.

Student Sheet 4 – Planning the use of microphones and speakers

Task 1 – Microphones

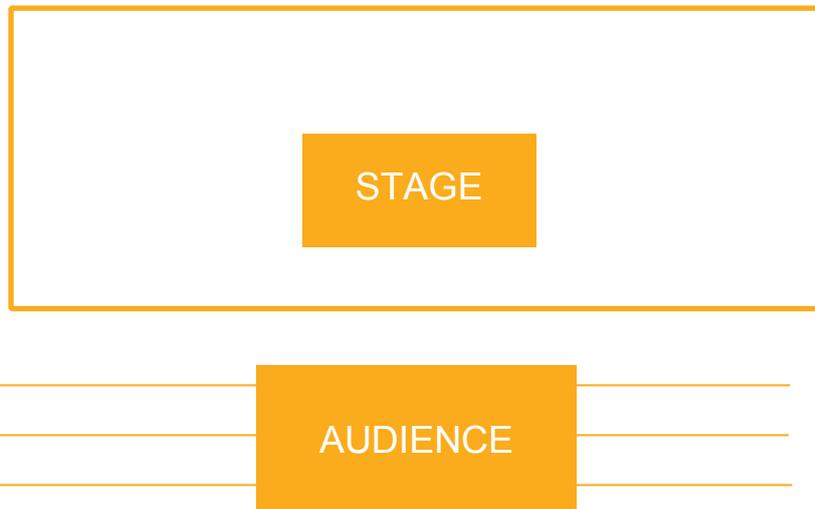
There are 3 main types of microphones that we can use for performance:

- Hand-held microphones
- Radio microphones
- Suspended microphones.

Now that you have learned about the three main types of microphones explain which microphones you would choose to support your performance and give detailed reasons for your choices.

Task 2 – Speakers

Use the blank template below to plan out where you will position your speakers for the performance you are working on.



In the box below explain why you have chosen to position your speakers in the way you have. Again, give detailed reasons for your choices.

A large, empty rectangular box with an orange border, intended for the student to write their explanation of speaker placement.



Student Sheet 5 – Creating the ‘Prompt Book’

Use the example below to help you, mark up the script you have been working on with all the sound cues. If you are not currently working on a script you can use the extract from Macbeth to practise your skills in creating the ‘Prompt book’.

sc.1]	KING LEAR	99	
	And, from some knowledge and assurance, offer This office to you.		Standby Sound Q3
Gent.	I will talk further with you.		
Kent	No, do not. For confirmation that I am much more Than my out-wall, open this purse, and take What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia,-- As fear not but you shall,--show her this ring; And she will tell you <u>who your fellow is</u> That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm! I will go seek the king.	45	Sound Q3 GO [Thunder}
Gent.	Give me your hand: have you no more to say?	50	
Kent.	Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet; That, when we have found the king,--in which your pain That way, I'll this,--he that first lights on him Holla the other. <i>[Exeunt severally.</i>	55	Standby LX Qs 10-14 and Sound Qs 4-6 LX Q10 GO [Dim scene change]
SCENE II.– <i>[Another part of the heath.] Storm still.</i> <i>Enter LEAR and Fool</i>			<i>When the stage is clear</i>
Lear.	Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks! You sulphurous and thought-executing fires, Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts, Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world! Crack nature's moulds, an gergens spill at once, That make ingrateful man!	5	LX Q11 GO [Heath state – dim] LX Q12 GO [Lightning flash] Follow on Sound Q4 GO [Thunder rumble]
Fool.	O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters' blessing: here's a night pities neither wise man nor fool.	10	LX Q13 GO [Lightning flash] Follow on Sound Q5 GO [Thunder crack]
Lear.	Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain! Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters: I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness; I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children, You owe me no subscription: then let fall Your horrible pleasure: here I stand, your slave, A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man. But yet I call you servile ministers, That have with two pernicious daughters join'd Your high engender'd battles 'gainst a head So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!	15	LX Q14 GO [Lightning flash] Follow on Sound Q6 GO [Thunder rumble]
Fool.	He that has a house to put's head in has a good head-piece. The cod-piece that will house Before the head has any, The head and he shall louse; So beggars marry many.	20 25 30	

Top Tip: Don't forget to mark in your standby cues. They should be roughly 30 seconds before the actual cue takes place.



I hear a knocking
 At the south entry: retire we to our chamber;
 A little water clears us of this deed:
 How easy is it, then! Your constancy
 Hath left you unattended.

[Knocking within]

Hark! More knocking.
 Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us,
 And show us to be watchers. Be not lost
 So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

[Knocking within]

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

FX cues	Standby cues

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Useful Links

<http://ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk/media/video/9460-war-horse/-YEtHnI7upo>

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/shakespeare/plays/hamlet/2008-sound.aspx>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/technology/broadcast-technology/television>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/performing/supportrev7.shtml>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolphe_Appia

Useful Reference Books

R, Brown. (2010) *Sound: A Reader in Theatre Practice*. Hampshire: Macmillan Distribution Ltd.

D, Kay and J, LeBrecht. (2013) *Sound and Music for Theatre*. Burlington: Focal Press



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Lear prompt book image: <http://www.theatrecrafts.com/page.php?id=602>

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