

Summary: **Imagined Voices**

Over the past years, I have developed a form of composition, music with on-screen text, which I define as 'music-text-film', in which I explore the dynamics between sound, words and visuals. In this thesis, I explore the ideas around these pieces, and attempt to explain how meaning is constructed in the interplay between the different layers of media.

The issues that initially arose out of the research, was related to the question of 'voice': Who is narrating? And where is the voice located? These questions became more pertinent after I noticed a strange phenomenon occurring during performances of these works: that when we read text synchronised to music, we become very aware of an inner voice silently reading along. This effect of hearing one's own voice in the music, becomes an added phenomenon that I had not initially predicted. It was a discovery that had many consequences for the ways in which I subsequently approached composition and ideas about listening. In my music-text-films a state of limbo is created between the narrative voice of the text and the implied voice of the music, due to the absence of a conventional focal point to pin it on - an actor or a singer. In the thesis I suggest that because of this vacancy and the way the projected word takes the place of the sung or spoken voice, the inner voice of the audience becomes activated. This then becomes a vital immersive dimension in the performance, as the inner voice of the audience finds its place within the space of the composition.

I have chosen to call this thesis a 'poetics.' There exist two thoughts behind this: first, I wanted to place the focus primarily on the form, meaning and implications of music-text-film. Rather than deal with theoretical, aesthetic or other philosophical questions discretely, I wanted to approach them as they arise out of, or through commenting on, this particular artistic practice. Secondly, the themes that I have chosen to structure the theory around come directly from the Aristotle's poetics: The keywords for the first three chapters are based around terms strongly associated with the *Poetics*: 'mimesis', 'diegesis', and the trichotomy of media: 'melos, lexis, opsis'.

The first two chapters elaborate on Plato's binary distinctions of art: mimesis and diegesis (imitation and narration). In Chapter 1, I begin with the basic definitions, centred on the idea that art is by nature imitative, and develop the idea of mimesis, not in terms of how art mirrors the world, but how the spectator mirrors the artwork. The question of what extent the spectator is implicated in the artwork, the relation of immersion versus critical distance involved in music-text-film, is defined as an intermediate state of 'cognitive immersion', not fully immersed but engaged on a certain cognitive level, where the spectator is projected into the artwork.

Out of this I define three forms of inner vocality that, I argue, are activated by music-text-film: 'silent reading' as in the reading of the text; 'silent singing' as in the tracing of melodic contours with the inner voice; and 'silent discourse' the hidden dialogue of thought that occasionally surfaces during overt self-reflexive moments in the works, or when the half-completed syntax of words triggers a myriad of possible answers.

Chapter 2 develops Aristotle's conception of diegesis, the art of narration, elaborated into questions about how narrative operates in a musical context and specifically a multimedia form such as music-text-film. The necessary conditions for narration are discussed, specifically highlighting the relation between narration and voice: the focus of the narrative that is then given over as perspective to the spectator. The idea that for narration to exist there have to be two distinct ontological levels is one of the conclusions that drawn from this. One of the concluding observations is that ontological levels are also demarcated by differences of media.

Multimedia art is the principal focus of Chapter 3. Aristotle's trichotomy of media, melos, lexis and opsis, forms the basis of a discussion of the history, hierarchy and opacity of media, as well as notions of what in fact constitutes a medium. I go on to propose two different models of analysing multimedia: the first based on the correlation of six different aspects of media, and the second model, by looking at how hierarchies of media are manifested in the artwork.

In Chapter 4, I trace a history of text-film organised not in chronological order but in terms of metaphoric relations between the two dominant media. This, again, demonstrates the way in which perspective is dependant on the particular art practice these works emerge from, as well the cultural context. These include pieces that have had a significant influence on my own work: Marcel Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema*, Hollis Frampton's *Zorn's Lemma*, Michael Snow's *So Is This*, Dick Raaijmakers' *Ballade Erlkönig*, Robert Ashley's *Perfect Lives* and Isidore Isou's *Traité de bave et d'éternité*.

The second part of the thesis is devoted to the discussion of my own music-text-film pieces. In recent years I have written about 30 works which use projected text in some form, in a music or sound art context. I have charted this progress in the four chapters that make up this part of the thesis: 'Internal Monologues', deals with three ensemble works that highlight first-person narratives derived from conscious or semi-conscious discourse, 'Unanswered Questions', deals with a video and two installations that explore question and answer structures across media, 'Voiceprints' concerns work where the material is based on the manipulation of spoken voices, and 'Interactive Scores', looks at my recent work dealing with algorithmic app-scores that extend the idea of music-text-film towards interactive musical notation.

I have tried to highlight the different ways the idea of 'voice' can function in some of my music-text-film, as a way of articulating the dynamics of multimedia work in

general. The shifting perception of what 'voice' can be, is a compelling aspect of this form of music-text-film, as it fluctuates from a purely narrative form, to a voice as sonic expression, to the audience becoming aware of their own inner voices as they read the projected text in resonance with the music. The question of what constitutes a voice is ultimately at the heart of this research, as the voice moves from being a carrier of meaning, of narrative, to determining the way our attention shifts between the many layers of different media.