

Interviews and
conversations

about music and sounds

with directors and
authors

MIRKO MESCIA

of the
Argentine theater

HEARING POINTS

DOSSIER

Prologue by
Jean-Jacques
Lemêtre

and Edgardo Rudnitzky



CORREGIDOR

The prologue of RUDNITZKY



Detail of the sound installation "NOCTURNO para 15 monocordios", one of the most emblematic works of Rudni. Photos © Rudni

nor does it suggest imposing this or that style or particular aesthetics. This book invites us to start that discussion, encourages us to approach it from the decision and not to avoid it from the difficulty. Speaking of the sound in the theatrical context implies talking about everything that sounds in that context. It encompasses the discursive sound manifestations, speech and musical / sound structures elaborated and non-discursive, noises, referential sounds and sound reinforcement. Unlike speech (the voice of the actors, the text) with which no conflicts appear to be greater than those intrinsic to the meaning, sound and music appear as phenomena apparently only for initiates, a hidden language to which not everyone can access and that consequently leaves the directors at the mercy of one of these initiates, human interface: the composer. According to the results, personal and professional experiences with the latter, the directors decide to continue on this sound path or choose to abandon the problem.

But in spite of the decision they make, the sound remains, in the voices of the actors, in the sounds that their bodies produce, in the manipulation of objects, in the subway that passes under the hall, in the dimmers and much more. Everything, EVERYTHING that happens in the scene, and what happens is also sound, is part of the work in question for the viewer.

Edgardo Rudnitzky (Arg. 1956)
Main reference of the composition and sound design for Argentine Theater and Cinema. Until 2001 (year in which he moved to Berlin where he currently resides) composes music for works directed by Fernandez, Alezzo, Szuchmacher, Tantanian, V. Cosse among others. Winner of awards such as Florencio Sanchez, ACE, Trinidad Guevara, Teatro del Mundo, Pepino el 88. Since 2001 his works have been presented at Art First Bologna, Hunter College Galeies, New York, Galerie Mazzoli, Berlin, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Yokohama Triennale, Jafre Biennial, Argentine representation at the Venice Biennale with the play *La Ascensión*, in collaboration with Jorge Macchi, Kunsten Festival des Arts, Brussels, Istanbul Bienal, Theater der Welt, Cologne, among others. www.rudni.com

Mirko Mescia chose to start this book with an old and well-known Zen story. That quote is what allowed me to glimpse how and why this "outsider" who arrived in Argentina without more contacts than his knuckles to knock on doors, questions and puts on the table a long-standing problem, forgotten, dodged and / or ignored, according to the conveniences of the occasion both by directors and playwrights as well as by the composers themselves. Sounds problems in the theater. I cannot help but think, as has already been said in an infinity of prologues, that this book is filling an enormous void. In this case I would say, a huge silence. Discussing the problem of sound in the theater does not imply anything, it is not about vindicating the presence or absence of music in the theater, it is not an attempt to justify the use of noises and sounds,

We can stop seeing when we stop looking but we cannot stop listening when we stop hearing. We live surrounded by sound, always, and we are not equipped to close our hearing channel. Just as the visual is an organized continuum that we can modify with our eyes or obstructing it with our eyelids, the auditory is a world of simultaneous relationships, invasive and unstoppable. The sound is presence, consequently present. We hear it here and now. Our visual perception influences or modifies our auditory perception, the same happens in reverse and although we can stop seeing to surrender to listen, we can never stop listening. Sound is perceived, on the one hand, as a referential phenomenon to issues outside of it when it is signal / language (phone ring, words), in this case the sound is more valuable for what it transports or represents and not so much for what it is. And on the other hand it is perceived as what it is when it is pure sound, without linguistic meaning, a stimulus in itself. Both ways of perceiving it work simultaneously and interact in a combination of verbal and nonverbal events that articulate and influence each other. The theater is absorbed by the spectator as a whole, with no possibility or disposition to dodge or sublimate. If something is there it has been set with intention. And in that dramaturgical intentionality, the light, the scenery, the costumes, seemed more docile than the sound. It is basically that they do not interfere with the text, with the understanding of the meaning, in case of spaces that obstruct the vision, or a blinding light, the voice of the actor, the text, would continue to reach our ears. Coexists with space. But the world of simultaneous relations, which is the auditory, is

not so easy to organize. The sound world forms a complex web of superpositions that must be balanced to maintain the attention where we want and without forgetting that we cannot “erase” the other sounds of the scene that come from the events and at the same time it proposes another axis, that of time . This is where the composer has or would have some advantage derived from the practice and in some cases from the understanding of auditory perceptual phenomena. Music is itself a complex sound construction. Within music there is simultaneity of discourses, tones or types of voices and expressions and this does not mean that when we listen to a musical group, regardless of the genre, the melodic line is lost. And even more, in spite of not lost it, we can distinguish the lines of the other instruments, without this the message does not become confused, on the contrary, it is enriched. I propose that you listen to the music you have at hand right now and verify that, along with that “melody” that you remember, many other things sounds, simultaneous, different, that have some kind of relationship with each other and that, in spite of them, you keep listening clearly and remembering the melody that you hum in the shower.

The question is: Where, How and Why each sound is where it is. It does not matter if I talk about music or any structure of simultaneous sounds. If there are two actors speaking simultaneously on stage, the information that I will receive is relative, if one is on the back and another in the front, it changes; if one speaks faster than the other, it changes; if one speaks louder than the other, it changes; if the voice of one of them is much more serious than the other, it changes; if one says monosyllables while the other has long monologues, it changes; if ... I believe, undoubtedly, that if we take possession of these “compositional” possibilities, we will be able to generate a coherent sonic dramaturgy that cohabit and submit to the director’s dramaturgy, while we can destroy it if, by mistake or by leaving them at random, the various planes sound disturbances and / or cancel each other unpredictably. In order to advance on this, only one step is necessary: to make our listening conscious

EDGARDO RUDNITZKY
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“OCTOPUS” by Rudni