

SOUND DESIGN CHALLENGE

1. Check out WHAT IS SOUND DESIGN? (below). Our activity will focus on identifying how different music and sounds make us feel, and what kind of story they might be connected to.
2. Listen to the various sound clips on the ACT Spotlight page. Choose 2-3 that you like or that are intriguing to you.
3. Read and complete the SOUND DESIGN WORKSHEET (below) for help organizing your ideas as you listen.
4. Get some feedback! Play the sound clips you've chosen to a family member and talk to them about how the sound makes you feel and what story it might be telling. Does it make them feel the same way? Do they have any suggestions or ideas?
5. Make some videos! Record a video of yourself discussing which sound clip you chose, what mood/atmosphere or emotion it creates for you, and what story or moment might go with the sound, and why. Make sure to tell us in your video which sound clip you're listening to so that we can play it on the show. Additionally, it would be helpful if you chose at least 2 clips to discuss; that way, if someone else submits a video about the same clip, we have more than one to choose from for The Intermission Show. Thanks!
6. Upload and Share! Follow the link on the ACT Spotlight page to upload a your video(s). Make sure to title your submissions with your name!

WHAT IS SOUND DESIGN?

Sound in theatre goes beyond finding the right sound effects for a production. Sound can be used to establish the **time** or **location** of a performance, or to create and enhance **mood** and **atmosphere**.

Time and Location are the “when” and the “where” of a production. Sound designers need to consider the period and genre of the play so that their sound choices are socially, historically, and culturally accurate. For example, the sound of a car or airplane will be very different according to the period of the play and the type of vehicle.

Mood and Atmosphere is the feeling that the production creates for the audience. Sound plays a very important role in creating mood and atmosphere, and audiences will associate different sounds with different moods. Mood and atmosphere can be created through the use of music or through a **soundscape** or choice of sound effects. Moods and atmospheres can also be achieved through the alteration of sounds, for example adding reverb or echo.

Soundscapes are the background sound to any situation. Soundscapes can be used effectively in performance to create a location or an atmosphere. For example, a play set in a seaside town might need a soundscape of waves, families playing and seagulls to tell the audience where the action is taking place. Watching a horror film can give you a clear idea of how sound can create atmosphere: creaking doors and sinister music are used not only to tell the audience where the film is set, but also how they should feel about that setting!

WHAT DOES A SOUND DESIGNER DO?

Theatre productions use a wide variety of styles. Sound can be **realistic** (as close as possible to real life) or **symbolic** (made to communicate an idea to the audience). Sound may be used in a minimalistic production to suggest a change of location, or a fantastical world. It is a sound designer’s job to make deliberate decisions about what the audience hear during the performance.

Sound designers can use a range of different types of sound, including **music**, **sound effects** or **soundscapes**. Music can be used to accompany the action (called **underscoring**), or can be called for by the play text (perhaps a character turns on the radio onstage). It can be created live on stage or **pre-recorded**. Sound effects are often called for by the play (for example a telephone ringing), but can also create a mood or comment on the action: a comedy might use a certain sound every time a character falls over, for example. Soundscapes either set location or create a mood. Most designers will use a combination of these types of sound to create the design for a performance. Sound designers must also consider the sound level (volume), reverberation, echo, and where the sound is coming from.

Remember: Everything’s deliberate!

Good sound design is a series of deliberate decisions. Always assume that anything onstage has been put there for a reason and contributes to the audience’s experience.

SOUND DESIGN WORKSHEET

1. Which sound clip(s) have you chosen? Remember, choose 2-3.
2. How does the sound clip make you feel? How did it effect you? You may feel several things at once!
3. Does the sound clip suggest a particular time or location to you? If so, when and where?
4. What kind of mood or atmosphere does the sound clip create? Do any images come to mind when you listen to it?
5. What short story, scene, or moment do you imagine this sound would be set to, and why? You may choose a scene or moment from an existing story or play, but try to avoid iconic scenes that are already well-known for their music. Instead, try thinking about how the music makes you feel and what kind of atmosphere it creates, and see where your imagination takes you! Remember to tell us *why* you made your choice.