

PAPERS 7 Latent noise / latent musicality

Chair – David Roesner
THUR 12.00-13.30 | RR3

Cruel vibrations: sounding out Antonin Artaud's production of The Cenci

Adrian Curtin

In an act of historiographical listening, Curtin performs a critical exhumation of Artaud's theatrical legacy by examining how he used sound in his 1935 production *The Cenci*, and attempting to listen back to this production to interpret it anew. By attending to Artaud's use of sound, we may better understand his theatrical aesthetic and philosophy, the interpretive cruxes that his work engenders, as well as his problematic placement in theatre history.

Curtin's methodology for reconstruction involves a close reading of the dramatic text, an audio analysis of an extant recording of music and sound cues composed for the play; and an examination of secondary materials – such as Artaud's director's notebook, press interviews, correspondence, theory – and newspaper reviews of the production. How did Artaud conceive of the theatrical soundscape of *The Cenci* and what relation does sound have to his philosophy of a theatre of cruelty? And what was the effect of the sound design of this production in performance?

Silence and noise – the performative limits of order

George Sampatakakis

If classicists were obsessed with the creation of order on every level (dramaturgical, theatrical, aural, visual), were the avant-gardes of 20th Century theatre and drama determined by an attitude towards silence or noise?

One could argue that silence and noise were traditionally considered anti-theatrical per se, and thus unacceptable in theatre until the first decades of the twentieth century. The synthetic performances of Futurists used noise and incomprehensibility as theatrical prerequisites, while Robert Wilson invented silent operas. Harold Pinter's pauses were considered a dramaturgical revolution, at the same time revolutionary performance groups made aurally-chaotic environments a performative cliché. Accordingly, this paper will attempt to provide an answer to the question of why noise has historically been avoided in classical theatre, or rather, if our cultural expectations lean towards normal sounds in theatre.

Noises on

Gareth White

Coughs, snores, rustling sweet wrappers and ringtones are the unwelcome noises on the dark side of the theatre's divide. But some companies have encouraged and invited these extraneous noises into the frame of performance. They encourage spectators to take notice of themselves, allowing audience behaviour to interfere in what might otherwise be thought of as the performance proper.

In productions by Shunt and others, the audience become liberated investigators of the performance. Is this a gimmick, or mere flattery? Certainly what many fringe sensations have in common is a knack for turning formal experiment into unchallenging performances and box-office gold.

Yet it is the formal experiment that investigates presence, liveness and the real that has dominated so much of the post-modern and the post-dramatic. The encouragement of the noises of the crowd is both a sign of the accommodation of these impulses into the expectations of contemporary audiences, and that they may retain their potential to provoke the 'irruption' of a content that revives the theatre event, rather than trivialises it.