

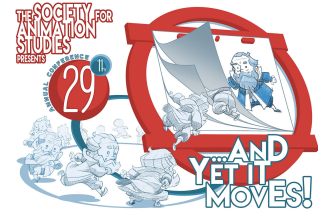
## Panel I3

Sala Emiciclo

### Sound, Music and Animation

Signe Kjær Jensen

#### *Sound as Animation*



This paper will discuss how sound design in animated films can be seen as essential for creating a sense of “perceptual realism”, following Langkjær (2010), enabling the viewer to engage and identify with the narrative.

To animate literally means “to bring to life”, and it is my purpose in this paper to discuss the way sound contribute to animate onscreen characters as well as virtual soundscapes and holds an indexical function of linking the animation to a sensoric real-life world.

Drawing on Murray Schafer’s soundscape terminology (Schafer, 1993) and insights from William Gaver’s ecological approach to listening (Gaver, 1993), I analyze the way sound can be seen as providing materiality to animated environments and as a tool for generating agency and intentionality to on-screen characters.

Sounds are determined and structured by their sources and thereby contain information about these sources decodable for human perception (Gaver, 1993). This relationship between sound and source also means that sounds can be looked upon as indexical references to their sources.

By providing environments and objects with synchronized Foley sounds, produced and recorded to make them live up to audience’s expectations of real, everyday sounds, virtual soundscapes are created to simulate everyday perceptual experiences (Langkjær, 2010). Furthermore, synchronized sounds provide the animation with materiality the same way as any given everyday-sound will “provide information about an interaction of materials at a location in an environment” (Gaver, 1993). For example, when a cartoon character drops a piano from the top of a high rock this action might be against the physical laws, but the Foley sounds created to go along with this unrealistic event do follow some general rules of perception and of sound as a physical, source-dependent phenomenon. Even if created in a studio or sound lab, sound provide the audience with realistic (within the narrative) information about material properties of the objects involved in an event. The sound may thus, among other things, tell us that the piano is heavy and that the ground of landing is hard (loud low timbered crash), that the piano, before the crash, had functioning strings that in the impact give out a cacophony of musical sounds, and even that the crash was near the spectator and happened in an open space (by loudness, the use of a wide scale of frequencies and a relative lack of reverberation).

Characters are as a result of this audible materiality given agency and intentionality because their actions have audible effects on the environment. We can for example hear if they are walking or running and if the ground is made of grass or stone. We can also hear the rustle of their clothes as they move. Sound thus makes it possible to not just see how the characters move but to hear it in relation to their surrounding world.

Even though all sounds can be seen as indexical, some sounds will stand out in this respect. Introducing sound signals, a term from soundscape theory referring to environmental sounds that call attention to themselves, into the virtual soundscape will for example create clear references functioning as indexes for everyday activities outside the screen. An example can be found in *Wall-E* when we all of a sudden, among the metallic sounds of Wall interacting with the garbage occupying the lifeless earth, hear the sound of a car door getting unlocked and we instantly recognize this sound as something familiar

from our own life. This sound of the car door unlocking does not just function as a sound signal but also as an indexical reference to life outside the screen thus enabling us to engage further with the film.

It has before been argued within film and TV music studies that we take these Foley sounds into serious consideration in terms of our listening modes and the physical qualities these sounds attribute to filmed objects (e.g. Chion, 1994, Have, 2008, Langkjær, 2010) this is nothing new in itself, but I want to explore what this audible perceptual reality means for the experience of the medium of animated films, a medium which often places the narrative in fantastical worlds ungoverned by psychical laws and a medium that doesn't have indexical footages as a prerequisite thereby leaving this kind of realism-reference to the sound.

**Keywords:** sound design, soundscape, realism, indexicality, animation

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Signe Jensen holds a BA and a Master's degree in Musicology from Aarhus University in Denmark where she finished her degree with a master thesis on the dialogic functions of music in animation films. She is now further pursuing her interests in sound, music, and animation as a PhD student at Linnaeus University Centre for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies where she is researching the ways sound and music affect children's reception of animation features.