The Merging of Two Fine Arts: Sound Design for Anton Chekhov's Play The Seagull

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The Merging of Two Fine Arts:

Sound Design for Anton Chekhov’s Play *The Seagull*

A Thesis

The Honors Program

College of St. Benedict/St. John’s University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Distinction “All College Honors”

and the Degree Bachelor of Arts

In the Departments of Music and Theater

by

Chad Alan Clasemann

May 1999
PROJECT TITLE: The Merging of Two Fine Arts: Sound Design for Anton Chekhov's Play *The Seagull*.

Approved by:

1st line - Signature of your project advisor

2nd line - Signature of one of your department readers

3rd line - Signature of one of your department readers

4th line - Signature of the department chair

5th line - Signature of the department chair

6th line - Signature of the Director of the Honors Thesis Program

7th line - Signature of the Director of the Honors Program
Anton Chekhov’s *The Seagull*: A Brief Synopsis

The action takes place at Sorin’s estate. In the first scene, Treplev, Sorin’s nephew, presents an original play in which Nina, the woman he has fallen in love with, is the only actor on stage. His play shows the barrenness of a lifeless Earth in 200,000 years. When Arkadina, his mother and famous actress, makes light of the play, he stops the play and storms off in anger.

As *The Seagull*’s story plays itself out, we see that Nina is in love with Trigorin, a famous writer. The problem is that he is also Arkadina’s lover. Eventually, Arkadina and Trigorin go back to Moscow and Nina follows and has an affair with Trigorin.

The last scene of the play takes place two years after the rest of the action. Arkadina and Trigorin return to visit, while Nina sneaks in after them. Treplev, his love for Nina not forgotten, tries to persuade her to be with him, but she refuses. In despair, Treplev destroys his own literary works and commits suicide.
Anton Chekhov’s *The Seagull* (1896) tells a story of broken hearts, pining hearts, disdainful hearts, delicate hearts, and hearts that can take no more. In the CSB/SJU production of this classic play, one of the biggest challenges was to make the music surrounding the story tell the tale of these many hearts without a single word. The music I composed for this production is a metaphor for the entire production. This music spans the delicate emotional state of Arkadina to Dorn’s topsy-turvy outlook on love to the shattered and hopeless existence that Treplev thinks he leads. The play gives the music form while the music gives the play another avenue to the soul of the audience member.

This paper deals with three separate areas in the sound design for *Seagull*. The first section of this paper deals with the process of designing the sound, encompassing everything from initial reactions to doing the project to the actual work involved in the process. It also looks at reactions of both myself and others after the project was complete. The second section of the paper focuses on the sound effects used in *Seagull* and the difficulties every single one of them presented. The third section of the paper is a close examination of the heart of this project: the original music. All twenty minutes of original music are analyzed in terms of not only the musicality of each piece on its own, but also in each piece’s relationship to the play as a whole.
The Process

Before the Process

As a music and theater double major, I have had the opportunity to experience two very different arts programs. Dr. Kaarin Johnston, my advisor in the theater department, persuaded me to do the sound design for *The Seagull* when we realized that this would be an ideal way for me to combine both of my majors into one project. I talked to Professor Tom Darnall, the director of *The Seagull*, to see what he thought of the idea. He was very open to the project, thinking that this play would be well suited for original music. This proved to be the last push I needed. After receiving approval from Professor Kerry Lafferty, the technical designer for the department, I decided to do begin the project.

During the process

The process for composing the music looked to be daunting. The truth was that I had only minimal experience composing and was not even sure where to begin. I finally decided that the best way to start was by trial and error in order for me to get a feel for the project. I decided to start composing the music in the Macintosh computer lab in the Benedicta Arts Center (BAC).

The first night I sat down in the lab, I went to one of the Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) keyboards connected to the computers and started playing with only a vague idea in mind of what I wanted. The result was a preliminary version of *Treplev's Waltz*. Unfortunately, I could not figure out how to save the music I had just created. I could save it on that particular keyboard, but could not find a way to retrieve it once I put it there. I could do nothing in the way of saving onto the computer or even
onto cassette tape. In the end, I lost the music to insufficient knowledge of my equipment.

This struggle to find a way to save my information was prominent for the next couple of days. During my struggle on one of these nights, I ran into a friend of mine, Matt Merten. A student in a computer compositional class, he showed me a fantastic tool for composing electronic music: Vision. This computer program allowed me to use multiple keyboard voices as well as edit my work one note at a time if needed. This tool was one of the most vital in composing the music.

Over the following weeks, I spent many nights in the computer lab, composing, saving, deleting, and having fun designing the music for The Seagull. It was a way for me to relax and enjoy my own creativity. I had various people listen to the music as I progressed, including Mr. Merten and Professor Darnall, and received mostly complimentary reviews. However, there were two things which were bothering me: the lyrics for Dorn’s Love Theme and the use of the new Digital Audio Video (DAV) lab in the basement of the BAC.

The music for Dorn’s Love Theme had a different feel than the rest of the music, but was not incredibly difficult to write. The lyrics, however, took a little more work. The purpose behind the lyrics was to incorporate the four obscure lines that Dorn sings during the play into one song. I wanted them to fit together so that each one would have a different melody, but so that they would sound similar enough to be recognized as from the same song. I finally decided on a three-stanza song with a refrain. Even with this in mind, I had to eventually change one of the lines from “The moon swims by in clouds of night” to “The moon swims by in clouds tonight” so that it would make sense in the
context of the rest of the song. After this, I was then ready to teach the lyrics to the actor playing Dorn. I went to rehearsal soon afterward and was shocked to learn that not only did Professor Darnall like the melody and the lyrics, but that he wanted to read the lyrics to the cast. Having never had anything creative of mine used by someone else in this manner, I was not sure what to expect. I was very pleasantly surprised to learn that not only did the cast thoroughly enjoy the lyrics, but that I enjoyed them as well.

The DAV lab was a tool I had intended to use from the very beginning of the project. It was set up to be a multi-media studio that could be used to record and edit original music and video, burn Compact Discs (CDs), and mix media. It even featured a state-of-the art Kurzwell keyboard with 1000 sounds which were of much higher quality than those of the MIDI keyboard I was using in the Macintosh lab. However, it was not set up to the point of being usable until about one week before the tech rehearsal. Therefore, I was only able to record two songs with it: Nina’s Theme and Treplev’s Haunting Theme. The most important thing this lab allowed me to do was to record the music onto a Digital Audio Tape (DAT). This is the media I used for running most of the sound for the run of the play. I had wanted to use the CD burner in order to play everything off of a CD, but was never able to get the software for the burner to work correctly.

The Run / Others’ Reactions

I worked in the sound booth with Pablo Silveira, (stage manager) and Ellie Kohlbl (light board operator). The show’s run went well. We never had a completely full house, but the audiences we had were generally very receptive to the play. After talking to some of them afterwards, I realized that The Seagull is actually a very difficult play to
understand after only one viewing. On the other hand, my 10 year-old sister told me the basic plot of the play after she saw it only once, so I guess maybe it was not quite as difficult to understand as it may have seemed at first.

After opening night, I also talked to Professor Elise Robinson, the director of the theater department’s ’99 Spring production of *Arcadia*. She surprised me by expressing interest in having me design the sound for her play as well. Apparently, she was impressed by it. I also talked to Jack Dempsey, the Technical Director of the BAC. He admitted to having misgivings about having me design the sound for *The Seagull*, but was pleasantly surprised with the results. The other person I talked to whose opinion I wanted was Dr. Greg Walker, the advisor for my project. A music professor and composer himself, he had worked on other projects for the theater department, such as *King Lear*, and so knew the trials of the task I had performed. He gave me nothing but good comments. The best reaction I received, however, came from Ms. Koelbl in the light booth about halfway through the run of *The Seagull*. I walked by her as she was humming *Dorn’s Love Theme*. She was not humming the tune because I was there. I do not even think she realized I was there. I was flattered and awestruck that I had composed something that was genuinely pleasant and catchy for the audience.

The run of *The Seagull* did not go without its share of problems. I missed some cues and messed others up, but the biggest problem happened at the end of the first week. We were in the middle of the play and the levels on the soundboard did not sound right\(^1\). I tried to correct them, but my efforts only seemed to mess them up further. The next day, I looked it over with Ken Cartwright, the Assistant Technical Director at the BAC

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\(^1\) The levels for all of the sound cues were set at the technical rehearsal the Saturday before Opening Night. I used the same levels every night after that.
and we concluded that, whatever the problem was, we could not fix it. Therefore, we left it alone and for the rest of the run of The Seagull I had to rely on my ear more than I should have.

After the Run

After closing night was over, we struck the set. I felt very relieved to see all of it come down. At the celebration afterward, I was very surprised at how many of the actors and crew members came up to me and complimented me on the music. I was literally overwhelmed. Yet, the compliments did not stop there. This spring when The Rise and Rise of Daniel Rocket opened in the Studio Theater, someone asked me if I had composed the music for it. Though I had not even heard it at the time, I was flattered that they had even considered me as the composer.

The oddest thing that has happened since the end of the run has been people requesting copies of the music. At least a dozen people have asked for it. I have not yet decided whether or not to distribute it or not, but if I do, I will do it in conjunction with music from the spring production of Arcadia, for which I agreed to design sound. I am honored that people want it.

The hardest thing for me to do has been to sit down and write this reflection paper. In retrospect, I wish I had done it sooner, but conversely I am able to think about the project in a new light now that it is completed and not so close to home. If I had written it immediately, I believe many of my outlooks on the sound design would have been skewed.
The Sound Effects

Environmental Sounds

The environmental sounds, which consisted of cricket sounds and bird chirps, were tricky not because the sound was hard to find, but because it was hard to implement. I had to use the CD player and stick it on a loop to continuously play the sound. Unfortunately, there was a lag time between the end and the beginning of the track. To get around this, I had to constantly fade the sounds in and out at different levels so that when I cut them out completely at the track loop point, the audience would not even blink. I missed it once or twice, but no one ever complained.

Peasants Singing in the Distance

This effect was meant to be the sound of peasants singing from across the lake. The hardest part was finding anything that could remotely be called singing by Russian peasants. What I ended up using was an old LP record of the Don Cossacks singing group, a group of about 2 dozen men who used to tour the world singing mostly Russian folk songs. The song I picked had a lot of hooting, hollering, and whistling, so it seemed appropriate. It had to be very clear, though, because it only came out of one speaker (Back of House Right) to give the impression of direction.

Dog Howling

I had a lot of trouble with this sound effect. Every sound I came across was either a whole bunch of dogs (the script calls for one) or else was close to nothing like a howl. I eventually gave in and had Professor Darnall listen to a couple of sounds with dogs, one of which was more of moan and yelp. He loved it. I still think that it sounded like the stupid dog was dying of some horrible disease, but Professor Darnall was the director.


Wind

The hardest part about this sound effect, which consisted of breezes of varying strengths and duration during the last scene, was that it was used the same way as the environmental sounds in the opening scene, except that they were used much more extensively. In fact, they were used all the way up to about 10 minutes from the end of the play. At first, it was very tempting to try to coordinate them with the opening and closing of doors on stage, but Professor Darnall would have none of that. His argument was based on the script calling for wind even when the doors were shut, so he won. Still, the temptation to ignore that part of the script and coordinate the sound effect with the doors was constant even through the run of The Seagull.

The Gunshot

Gunshots are always difficult in a play because they need to sound crisp, realistic, and loud. This gunshot was no different. Actually, it was more complicated because the target, Treplev’s head, was at close range. Luckily, the sound occurred off stage, which gave me a little more flexibility. After some consulting with some gun enthusiasts, I finally settled on one particular gunshot sound effect on CD. Though we had a scare at one of the final rehearsals because two shots were heard instead of one due to human error, it ended up working out just fine.
The Original Songs

Rain

The first song heard by the audience, Rain, creates the mystical mood surrounding the play. The Seagull, though written at the beginning of the 20th century, was not placed by the director or any of the designers into one specific period. This music was intended to convey this mystical and displaced feeling. The “Rain” setting on the keyboard gives off an echoing sound that makes its origin blurred. Yet, the chord progression it follows is a very simple Dm-Bb-Gm-Dm⁹-A-Bb-C-A-Dm. The reason for the one deceptive cadence in the progression is to signify the twists and turns the play takes in plot and in its characters. It is set as an Alberti bass to illustrate the fact that the plot of The Seagull is constantly moving and developing, though it tends to blend together with the rain effect much as the development in the play blends with other factors in order to move the story along without the viewer realizing it.

The second part of Rain is the counterpoint play of the two pan flutes in the foreground. The very interesting thing about this counterpoint is that the two lines were originally written and played completely separate from each other. After I played the voices together, I realized how well they actually fit together as one part. They played off of each other well, they both hit climaxes in good places with relation to the other part, and they even came together in the end of the piece before going their separate ways.
again to close it. It was only with some minor adjustments that they melded together as
one part to become the opening theme of the production.²

Eerie Song

*Eerie Song* was used as the backdrop for Trelev’s play where Nina is acting out
his vision of the world in 200,000 years. Trelev’s vision of the world is dark, bleak, and
void of life. Only the spirits of the earth remain. This spirit-filled world is embodied in
the background for *Eerie Song*. The basic background is a choir pad which goes back
and forth on eighth notes between F and Ab, giving it a minor feel. Within that basic
context, the Ab is exchanged with accented notes within the natural Fm scale at random,
thereby not allowing the listener to be grounded in one key center.

The other two elements of *Eerie Song* are meant to signify the role of nature, not
humans, as master of the earth. The melody is played on a pan flute, an instrument that is
very wispy. The pan flute is meant to bring the feeling of wind whisking over the
desolate earth. This image of barrenness is not a joyful one, as signified by the melody
also only being played on the natural Fm scale (with rare exceptions). I wanted to stay
away from the melodic minor because I felt that any hint of a normal minor progression
would help the audience get a foothold in Trelev’s world, a world he can barely
comprehend. The other element is the steady throb of the seashore, reminding us that
time continues steadily onwards, never ceasing, never caring.

² Though it was the opening piece, it was actually intended as the mysterious background music for
Trelev’s play in which Nina describes the future of the world. After consulting with Professor Darnall, we
decided that it made more sense as an opener because of its complexity and stability and that the music for
the play-within-a-play could be tailored better for the barrenness and hopelessness that Trelev’s play
conveys.
Arkadina’s Theme

Four of the songs for *The Seagull* were designed with certain characters in mind. The scene change in Act I showcased a theme for Arkadina, who is Treplev’s mother, Trigorin’s lover, and a woman outwardly sure of herself. Yet her mask of security breaks down in some of the scenes with Trigorin and Treplev. It then becomes apparent that her psyche is one of a woman walking on the eggshells of her own sanity. The music is meant to reflect this fragility. It consists of 3 twelve-bar phrases outlined by a light, plucky background using Gm with a flat 6th, Cm with a suspended 4th and a dominant D. The first section has a simple melody played on a high bass with a counter melody in the background on a flute. This interplay is meant to represent her fragile side. The second section is an entirely different melody on an English horn with a counter melody on a French horn that was meant to be the exact opposite of the one in the section before. This section is a little more robust, showing off her “public” face. The third section throws everything together so that we can see the completed Arkadina: fragile, robust, and yet very awkwardly held together.

Dorn’s Love Theme

Of all of the pieces in the play, *Dorn’s Love Theme* gave me the most trouble, though it is one of the simplest. Throughout the play, Dorn sings little tidbits of some song that only he knows. I looked extensively for any reference to any of the lines and only found the origin of one of them.\(^3\) The other four lines I put into an original song, basing the whole song around these four lines (the original four lines in **bold**):

\(^3\) The one song I found reference to was Schumann’s *The Two Grenadiers*. The line, “To France there returned two Grenadiers”, is not even sung by Dorn, but instead by Sorin, Arkadina’s “elderly” brother.
Verse 1:

In the darkness of the night
A night of my own making
I walk amidst the flowers of lost loves
And my heart is shaking

Tell her, tell her, pretty flowers
How my soul has craved
To see her, touch her, hold her always
This is what I’d say:

Refrain:

Once more I stand before thee love
We could not be apart
Oh never say that I forgot you
For you broke my heart.

Verse 2:

Flowers can you hear my plight?
Or is this love so wrong?
The moon swims by in clouds tonight
Just to hear my song:

Refrain x2
For you’ve taken my heart

Once the song was written, it was to serve two purposes. The foremost purpose was to give Dorn a direction in his singing. Many evenings were spent whisking him away from rehearsal for 10-15 minute practice sessions as each line carried a different melody. I had also hoped to have a version entirely sung by someone with a better voice than myself to use as scene transitional music, but never managed to work out the logistics. Instead, I recorded the song in instrumental form. The melody, played on oboe, starts out alone. Halfway through the first stanza, a light organ plays the bass line. Finally, the "oohing" choir comes in after the first stanza. It was meant to be very relaxing, lush, and beautiful.
Nina’s Theme

Nina was a character who seemed to fit the part of emptiness and loneliness that she expressed in Treplev’s play from the first scene. Therefore, I decided to use the same basic music for her theme as I did in that scene. I took the melody from Eerie Song and used it for Nina’s Theme changing only the instrument it was played on. To accompany it, I chose a very airy instrument whose two moving lines played with the first five notes of the Fm scale. I did this because although the melody is based on the Fm scale, it is a free melody with no relation to chord progressions. Therefore, the accompaniment could have no chord progression either. This kind of accompaniment actually confuses the ear as to the tonality and makes it seem less grounded than it actually is.

Treplev’s Waltz

This, the first piece composed for The Seagull, was one of the easiest to compose. I decided to put it on harpsichord because it seemed to remove Treplev from the idea of being rooted in one time period. The piece itself is based on a Cm progression of Cm-Fm\(^9\)-Cm-Fm\(^9\)-Cm-Fm\(^9\)-Cm-Fm\(^9\)-Bb-Ab-Cm\(^9\)-G-Cm. This progression along with the melody gives it a very Russian feel. It is very crisp and precise, yet sad and mournful. It is meant to give the audience an insight into the soul of this poet. This melancholy is accentuated by the dialogue surrounding the music as well as the fact that it is played twice in one scene. This is the last music we hear before Treplev shoots himself.

Treplev’s Haunting Theme

The last original piece for The Seagull is actually a reincarnation of Treplev’s Waltz. It is played on an odd electronic mix of church bells and electric piano. The melody is no longer crisp, but is instead drawn out, pulled, and agonizing. The
accompaniment is no longer waltz-like, but instead uses the chime feel by playing only on the downbeats. The chimes convey the feeling of a funeral procession and of death in general. This piece, which is played between the last line and the curtain call, is the last real song of the play. Treplev’s Haunting Theme signifies the hopelessness that Treplev felt as well as the emptiness of those who now know of his death. Though it speaks to many characters of having something missing in their lives, Treplev’s Haunting Theme was, ironically, almost cut from the play. It was intended to play when, at the end of the play, Treplev takes his plays and rips them to shreds before leaving to commit suicide. Professor Darnall thought it was a little too melodramatic in that spot, so we compromised and stuck it at the end of the play, a position that, in retrospect, seems most appropriate.
Concluding Remarks

The Merging of Two Fine Arts: Sound Design for Anton Chekhov’s Play The Seagull was the culmination of a college career that spanned two very deceivingly distinct majors. This project was a chance to use music and theater not as separate entities, but as a single art form in the way I think they deserve to be. Too often each of these arts neglects the other because each one operates on the assumption that art is all there is and that the only way to express ideas is through each medium separately. The challenge of using both music and theater for a project that is not distinctively one or the other was exhilarating. I was able not only to bring these two disciplines together for The Seagull, but also bring them together for myself.

Throughout my college career, I have taken many courses that were very distinctly music or theater, but never both. In fact, until this year there was never a mention of the other in any of my courses. However, the fact that they are both considered “fine arts” bound them in my mind. I could not put any other connection between them. I can do so now.

Theater and music are bound by their desire to reflect, comment on, and change the outlook of the world for the better. In their merging, their common goals become a catalyst for a force that is more powerful than either of them could produce alone. This force is what binds the soul of the audience member into believing that the message of the production is true and that the heart of the production is real. In effect, while each can tug at the intellect and the soul, only together can they make the audience pull themselves out of their own worlds into the world of the production and examine it for its
own truths, whether it is true to the world of the audience or not. If done right, their combined force makes the message of the play true.
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<td>Chad Clasemann</td>
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### Appendix B – Sound Cue Sheet

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<td>6 1/2 to 4</td>
<td>7 1/2</td>
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<td>Start Act 2 (Nina’s Theme)</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>BR, BL, CR, CL</td>
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<td>16 (Cross)</td>
<td>First Wind/Music Out</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>(2017)</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Out (at discretion)</td>
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<td>Out (Immediately)</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Ending Music (Treplev’s Haunting Theme)</td>
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<td>Tape</td>
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<td>Walkout Music (Rain)/Tape Out</td>
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Journal for Honors Thesis
Chad Clasemann

*Note, the actual date of this entry is April 1998, but in the process of reformatting this journal, the computer decided to eat my original date and give me this one. I'm not sure why.

4-14-98 I talked to Tom Darnell tonight about being my advisor for my honors project. He said that he was open to helping me out, but wished to talk to Kaarin first. He stated that another possibility would be to have Kaarin’s replacement, who would be in charge of the directing classes, to be my advisor. One reservation he had was about me trying to do my project during January because he will not be around, but that works well for me since I will not be either. I hope to talk to Kaarin soon so that I can turn in my thesis proposal.

9-3-98 Well, a lot has happened this summer. After talking to Kaarin, I have decided to do my project as a sound designer for the fall production of Chekhov’s *The Seagull*. I have talked to Greg Walker in the Music department about being the chair of my faculty committee. Tom is also willing to be a faculty advisor as well as George Maurer, a friend of mine who is a professional musician from St. John’s. I talked to Kerry this week about the project after some prompting from Jack Dempsey. He sounded excited about the project and said straight out that the only thing he wants to be involved in is making sure it gets done. He didn’t want it to become his project. That is just fine with me. He also insisted that I do
both music and sound effects. I also wouldn’t have it any other way. To split up sound like that is a waste of time and leads to too many misunderstandings. I still need to turn in my proposal, but I hope to take care of all of that this afternoon. We’ll see by the end of the day how close I come.

9-21-98

Tonight we had the first read-through with the cast. Tom invited me to sit in so that I could get a feel for the interaction between the cast members and feel a part of the process. I tried to sneak over to the computer lab between acts to work out some ideas. I thought that maybe a bass line with arpeggios would fit the inside play well, but I didn’t get much time. The thing that I wasn’t suspecting was having to find lines the characters say throughout the play that they are really singing. These lines could be anything!! I guess I have my work cut out for me. I also made an appointment to meet with Tom on Thursday to go over some of this stuff. This is going to be a lot of fun.

10-4-98

Well, today not much happened. I am going to try to get into the lab three or four times this week to do some composition (and maybe even bring a disk this time.) I did do some research into those stupid lyrics for the characters, but I’m not coming up with more yet. I hope I fare better tomorrow. I want to get those to Tom by Wed.

10-5-98

Those lyrics are so evasive! I can’t seem to find them anywhere. I went to the library to try to find some hint as to where they might be, but I can’t seem to find them. I did find reference to The Two Grenadiers, but
nothing else. I'm starting to think that they aren't there. If they are, they are more trouble than they are worth. I think I am just going to write them myself.

10-6-98

I absolutely hate being sick. I had to miss the Steve Turre clinic this morning. Luckily, I was feeling better tonight, so I went to try to work on this composing thing again. Too bad I can't figure out Finale. I had a really nice waltz for Treplev, but couldn't save it. I am going to have to talk to George about it tomorrow. I think he's my best shot.

10-7-98

I didn't talk to George tonight. I got so bogged down (and injured) with other things that getting to St. Ben's to talk with him seemed to be a secondary concern. I do need to see him about both Finale and that waltz. Maybe I can get Greg to help me out with Finale. Right now, I just need a good night's sleep.

10-8-98

Tonight God sent me an angel to help me in my time of need. Matt Merten, a good friend of mine, happened to be in the computer lab tonight when I went in there. He's actually in George's class and showed me the program they were using: Vision. I've never used it before, but once I got started, there was no looking back. I composed Treplev's waltz and saved it on disk. I liked it on harpsichord. I hope Tom does. Oh, I also told Tom about the lyrics earlier this week (I forgot to write that.) I guess I'm writing lyrics. Yipee.

10-9-98

We had our first production meeting this morning. I'm glad I was there, though most of the stuff we discussed had nothing to do with me. I did,
however, receive some vital information regarding my songs. They all need to be about two minutes (with one exception.) I, for some reason, was thinking longer, so this is a big relief to me. I also realized I need two different gunshot sounds. Duh. Why didn’t I think of that before?

Anyway, Tom wants to hear the waltz with both harpsichord and piano to see which he likes better. He wants this on Monday. I don’t know if I can find a way to put them on tape by then, but I guess I will have to try.

10-10-98

Today was a long day at work. I had hoped to work on some stuff after work, but it just didn’t happen. Oh well, I needed a day off anyway.

10-11-98

Computers stink. I couldn’t get the waltz to play back for me tonight except in the way it shouldn’t. Argh! I was so preoccupied with trying to fix it, I didn’t get anything new done. In fact, I feel like I just wasted the night because I didn’t even fix the problem. I guess this stuff isn’t going to be ready for Tom tomorrow. Maybe by Wednesday or so…

10-12-98

I worked some more on the play in a play theme tonight. Once again, the computers were driving me batty for a while, but I think I’m getting used to that. I think I am going to use the *Rain* instrument as a background accompaniment and possibly a flute or violin in the foreground with a possible trumpet accent somewhere in the middle. However, because of all of this, I still haven’t finished the character lyrics. I wrote about half of the words today, but I have yet to write the music. I have a good idea for the theme of it, but nothing concrete. I wanted to finish that tonight as well, but instead was forced into a much needed distraction by my
roommates. Tomorrow night I plan to spend at least 2-3 hours working on this stuff so that I can confer with George on Wednesday. Also, the best part of the day was that I finally got my proposal in. It was sitting on my desk for almost two weeks, but it is finally done.

10-13-98

Tonight I worked on a couple of things. First of all, I cleaned up the waltz. There were a few parts in it that just weren’t quite in sync. So, I fixed them as well as found out how to permanently program the various instruments into the songs. Then I started on the dreamy sequence (play-in-play). I’m trying to decide now whether to use a rain sound or another sound (the name escapes me). Oh, I know. It was a newage pad. The problem is that I started simple and then grew more complex in my chords and I had a hard time putting a melody over it. So, I’m going to have to be a little more organized in the song and/or write a little bit more down than I did.

10-14-98

Today was a good day. I did some more work on the dream sequence. In fact, I redid the entire thing. I went to a straight progression which is hard to write on a computer. It’s basically a i, VI, iv, V, VI, VII, V I progression, but the time frame makes a difference. Anyway, then I added to the melody a pan flute which sounded pretty good. Then, I turned the flute off and added a warm pad to it and it sounded pretty good (but not fantastic). When I played them back together, they sounded decent. I found Tom after rehearsal and had him listen to them both. He definitely liked the waltz, so I will probably leave that alone for the most part. He
also liked the "Dreamy Sequence", but thought it would work better as
transitional or even opening music. I asked him about having the actor
playing Dorn singing the entire song, but he didn't like the idea. So,
scratch that. I still need to finish that. The other problem is still being
able to record onto tape. I think I will have to call up Greg tomorrow and
see if he can help me out on this one. I know there has to be a way to do it
in that lab, but I'm just not sure how. Matt and I worked on it for a good
hour, but couldn't figure it out. However, he did tell me where I can find
those recordable CDs. Best Buy! Yea! Actually, he said that with their
rebate right now I can get 20 for 99 cents. I like that!

11-8-98

Dress rehearsal was tonight. This, somehow, went even more smoothly
than tech did last night. Tom delayed Eerie Song a bit in the play which
basically cut an 1½ hours of my work, but what can I do. The costumes
were very well designed. Overall, I am very pleased with how the play
looks and sounds. From what the profs and actors are saying, they are just
as pleased. I do want to work with Matt a little more as well as possibly
Nate a bit. Otherwise everything is going great. Opening night is only 4
nights away!!

11-9-98

Tonight was both a joy and a disappointment in rehearsal. Let's start with
the bad and end with the good so I can sleep tonight on a good note. First
of all, we were just off tonight. The cues were late, the timing was just
off, and that's just the way it was. Then, Tom cut my haunting theme for
Treplev. He said it was too melodramatic. That was my favorite piece.
To me, it tied his whole character together musically. Grrr... However, I received what was probably the greatest artistic compliment I have ever received. I heard someone offhandedly humming one of my songs. She wasn’t doing it to impress me nor did either of us even mention it. There was no real reason for her to be humming it, but yet as I walked by her, I could hear her. I had to do a quick, but discrete double take, but I wasn’t mistaken. She was humming the love song. I have never been so honored before. Wow. Thanks Ellie.

11-10-98

Well, I have to admit that rehearsal tonight went much better than last night. Although, apparently Treplev shot himself twice tonight in the end. Oops. Anyway, we did the curtain call tonight so basically it’s just a matter of doing one more run before opening night. The only possible change is that I want to stick Treplev’s theme into the curtain call. Tom was a little hesitant, but will listen to it again tomorrow just to appease me. I really liked that song and I don’t want to lose it completely. What can I say??

11-11-98

We had the final rehearsal of The Seagull tonight. Of course, it didn’t go off without any hitches. I came up with an idea to incorporate Treplev’s haunting theme with the ending by writing it on CD, then cross-fading it with the DAT player. Well, the computer in the DAV lab laughed at me and just made me think that it had written stuff on the CD when it didn’t. So, I did some fast thinking and put it on CD. Well, this messed up settings on the board and so everything was a little off tonight level-wise,
but I think we have it all straightened out now. I like the new ending. I can’t wait until tomorrow night. Woo-hoo!!

11-12-98
Opening night!!!! It went very well. I did miss a cue in the last scene, but that was the biggest mistake anyone made all night. As a matter of fact, I was talking to Elise after the show and she wants to talk to me about doing the music for Arcadia in the spring. I don’t know if I will take it, but then again maybe I’ve found something I have a talent for here. I mean, I’ve gotten nothing but praise for my work here. I’ll think about it and write more tomorrow.

11-13-98
Tonight’s run went very well. Heidi, my parents, my sisters, two aunts and other friends were there as well. There were no big errors, no tension moments or anything. Afterward, we went out to the Meeting Grounds and celebrated. Greg was there and said he was pleased with the music. Jack Dempsey admitted that he was a little unsure when I first stated I wanted to do the project, but was very pleased as well with the outcome. I have to admit I was a little unsure at first as well. But, I am glad I did it. Who knows, maybe this will become a habit…

11-14-98
I think I’m starting to hit the long haul of the play. Tonight seemed to take forever. Plus, the splitter on the headsets was acting up. And, the trough started to leak a little bit. Of course, none of this has anything to do with my music or project, but they were really the only interesting things to happen with the play tonight. Well, I shouldn’t say that because we did have a pretty good crowd, but aside from that things were pretty mundane.
11-15-98  Well, basically, tonight stunk. The sound board was tempermental all
night. First, it played stuff too loud. Then, it was okay. Then loud, then
okay. I need to look at it this week and make sure everything is set up
right. Plus, we had other difficulties technically. Karine gave us a profile
and the fog machine did not work right. We covered up the leak, but that
also needs to be fixed this week. *sigh*.

11-16-98  Well, there’s not a lot to report. Ken and I looked at the sound board
today and figured there really wasn’t anything wrong with it that we could
find. So, in the end, we left it alone. I guess I’ll have to play it by ear on
Wed. and see what happens.

11-17-98  Took the day off.

11-18-98  Well, tonight could have gone better. I messed up about 3 or 4 sound
cues, the audience was silent and small, and I am very tired. That’s what I
get for not sleeping enough the night before. Three more nights…

11-19-98  Tonight was much better than last night. First of all, I’m not as tired.
Second, we had our best audience so for tonight. Third, I didn’t miss cues
(or mess them up). Finally, we only have two more runs. Why do I feel
like I am on autopilot?

11-20-98  One more night to go. I had one consolation tonight about the sound
board. Jack said that the levels on it had done the same thing to him as
they are doing to me. At least I know I’m not going out of my mind. Hey,
one more night. (Anyone noticing a theme?)
Well, the play is finally over. We struck the set tonight in about two hours. It’s hard to believe that it’s over. There are only a couple of wrap up things I need to do. First, I need to get my music on CD. Second, Tom said he wants to talk to me about the music and get a copy of it. Third, I need to decide if I want to do anything about the requests for music. I simply cannot believe all of the requests I’ve gotten for the music. I never in my wildest dreams thought that it would be so popular. I am almost ashamed that people like so much. Does that make sense? I don’t know. It’s late. I just got back from the production party. I need to be up again in less than three hours. I’ll write more tomorrow.