

The woman in black sound analysis



How Sound is Used in *The Woman In Black*

I saw a production of the play *The Woman In Black* at the Theatre Royal in Windsor. The play is set in England in Victorian times. This play really put me on the edge of my seat in some scenes and terrified the life out of me in others, the sound in the play really did go a long way to achieving this.

Sound is very important in this production as it creates tension, makes the play nerve-shredding and really helps to tell the story as the stage is set as a minimalistic stage so the sound is vital to the story telling. The director (Robin Hearford) hired Rod Mead as the designer of sound. One scene Rod Mead uses sound effectively is where Kipps was sleeping at Eel Marsh house. The sound used here was non-diegetic and was a low rhythmical thudding. This was a very good use of sound as it created an eerie atmosphere. This sound was played from speakers positioned around the audience to make the audience feel involved in the play. I thought this was a great use of sound as it really created a sense of mystery and the audience didn't know what would happen next.

Rod Mead used sound effectively in many ways. Often he used it to legitimise the location of a scene for example in the graveyard where Jerome and Kipps are paying their respects to Mrs. Drablow. There was a recorded sound of ravens which is a noise associated with death and hauntings. The non-diegetic sound was played from speakers which were behind the actors. This makes it realistic for the audience because Rod Mead is making us use our senses to make us more in depth and into the story, it's making the audience experience what 'The Actor', who in this scene is playing Kipps,

experienced. This is clever as it builds tension because it is bringing the audience deeper and deeper into the story and is enhancing the separation from the real world and as it was a minimalistic stage setting the sound was really important as it was the main sense the audience had to picture the scene. I thought this was a brilliant use of choosing to place the sound and it really supported the action that was going on, onstage. Also there is a reverb on the vicar's voice. This is implying that the church was mostly empty and makes the audience wonder about why Mrs. Drablow was so unpopular.

Another way sound is used effectively is in the office scene where Kipps and Jerome are talking at Jerome's desk. In this scene Rod Mead uses non-diegetic sound really well to create an extremely clear atmosphere. In the background there was the sound of the busy market place, which include the voices of traders, the footsteps of people walking through the market and in the office there were sounds of light murmuring from employees and chairs being moved etc. This was very smart from Rod Mead as it gave the sense that the audience were really in an office scene and it drew the audience in to the story. These distant sound effects had been mixed cleverly to create a background and atmosphere for the scene. I think this was a very good way of supporting the action of this scene and I think it really helped the audience paint a picture in their heads.

Near the start of the play when Kipps and Sam Dailey are in the train, Rod Mead creatively uses non-diegetic to give real sense of the atmosphere of the train carriage. If you listened, you could hear sound effects that had been mixed cleverly to create a background for the scene. There were sounds of the steam puffing out of the steam engine, the *clickety clack* of the wheels

rolling away on the track, and the gentle hum of the engine. These sounds were amplified around the room with a speaker at the front. This was a very clever technique as it gave the impression that we were really in a train carriage in these scenes. I thought this was a brilliant use of choosing where to place the sound. It also gave a brilliant atmosphere for the upcoming jump scare because it involved you in the play and it felt as if you were actually there on the train and it seemed normal. So when the climax, a loud train horn (which was recorded sound coming out from the speakers), accompanied by a straw gelled rotating gobo, which simulated a passing train, actually came it was extremely scary because it came from nowhere and was a sudden unexpected shock. Also there was very little on so the location and the atmosphere was created through sound.

So in conclusion, I can see how recorded music as well as live and recorded sound effects are all used together to communicate and tell the story of *The Woman In Black*, Robin Hearford and Rod Mead clearly worked together well to help one another and the overall effect was fantastic.