



Sound Design in Contemporary Circus

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the subject of sound design within contemporary circus, emphasizing theoretical foundations and practical applications. The purpose of this study was to examine key concepts and techniques in sound design and music creation and to demonstrate their implementation through a case study in a contemporary circus performance.

The theoretical section focuses on the importance of sound design, its role in enhancing circus performances, and the interaction between technology and creativity. Building on these insights, the thesis presents a detailed case study on the implementation of sound design in a circus performance at Sorin Sirkus, highlighting challenges and solutions in the design of the immersive auditory experience.

Through this approach, the thesis provides a comprehensive understanding of contemporary circus sound design practices and underscores the role of sound design and music in circus productions. The findings contribute to the academic discourse on contemporary circus sound design and offer practical guidelines and ideas for future projects in this field.

Key words: sound design, music, contemporary circus

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

Act or a number	A circus act or performance segment containing various skills.
BPM	Beats Per Minute. A unit of measure for tempo in music.
Composer	An individual who writes and creates music, particularly for performances or productions.
Cue	Bits of information or instructions that are needed to trigger specific actions or events during a performance.
Discipline	Circus disciplines are various physical skills and routines that circus artists perform, such as juggling or acrobatics.
Fire	To play or activate a cue from computer or a mixer during a performance.
Residence	Refers to a period when artists or performers stay in one location to work on their production, often used in the context of artist residencies.
Sound cue	A specific piece or a combination of audio elements meant to be played at a specific moment during a performance.
Sound design	The art of creating soundscapes and audio elements to enhance a performance or production.
Sound designer	A creative and technical artist, who creates and controls audio elements in a performance or production.
Stage cues	Actions or events on stage that signals the need to fire a sound or lighting cue.

1 INTRODUCTION

When I began my journey as a circus sound designer, I found a lack of specific information on the topic of sound design in contemporary circus. In this thesis, I am diving into sound design and music composition techniques aimed to enhance and support contemporary and new circus shows with immersive soundscapes and music. I aim to answer fundamental questions of why contemporary circus shows need sound design, why is it significant, and how can audio technology help create an immersive experience for the circus audience. While not a step-by-step guide, this thesis is for anyone interested in contemporary circus and performing arts sound design.

Additionally, this thesis includes a practical project part, focusing on a circus production at Sorin Sirkus. Specifically, I conducted a case study of my sound design work for the 2023 Christmas show, *Kaila* (Sorin Sirkus 2023). Sorin Sirkus, established in 1985, serves as a hub for circus arts, dedicated to nurturing and showcasing the talents of young performers. The circus school boasts a performing group comprised of skilled individuals who represent Sorin Sirkus both nationally and internationally through various performances and events, including the annual Christmas show. (Sorin Sirkus n.d.)

My responsibilities for *Kaila* encompassed creating additional soundscapes, programming QLab and Ableton Live, and overseeing audio technical aspects. I delve deeper into the intricacies of the show within the project portion of this thesis. *Kaila* marks my second year as a circus sound designer at Sorin Sirkus, with previous experience including sound design for the Christmas show, *Xyper* (Sorin Sirkus 2022) and other circus school productions such as *Varokaa Rotjakaisia* (Sorin Sirkus 2023), *Sorin Sirkus Show* (Sorin Sirkus S2023), and *Aikamoinen Matka* (Sorin Sirkus 2024).



PICTURE 1. Korean cradle act in *Kaila* (Kristian Wanvik 2023).

My journey as a circus sound designer kicked off at Sorin Sirkus with the Christmas show *Xyper*, which also marked my first step into the world of circus. *Xyper* was Sorin Sirkus' grand return to live performances post-COVID, so it was a big production. My role in the show mirrored that of *Kaila*, but with the added task of mixing a live four-piece band. The music for *Xyper* was specifically composed for the show, featuring vocals written by a singer-songwriter.



PICTURE 2. Teeterboard act in *Xyper* (Kristian Wanvik 2022).

2 THEORY

In this section, I am exploring how sound and music can enhance contemporary circus performances. While literature specifically on circus sound design is limited, I have drawn parallels from studies on theatre sound design. To gain deeper insights, I conducted interviews with two professionals in the field of circus sound and music.

Joona Kukkola, a musician, composer, music producer, and band leader, has been creating original music for Sorin Sirkus' Christmas shows for over 14 years. Alongside his expertise in modern circus music and musician career, Joona is studying cultural production. Joona is used to working at bigger productions at Sorin Sirkus, where the creative team typically consists of over ten members for each Christmas show, in addition to the twenty performers.

Petteri Rajanti has been involved in composing, sound designing, and performing music for circus projects both nationally and internationally since the 1980s. Petteri also works as a sound design lecturer at TAMK and engages in a diverse range of projects, from record production to short films. He prefers smaller circus project teams of fewer than ten people and avoids the need to use Google Docs and attending formal meetings. (Rajanti 2022).

2.1 Defining circus

Common stereotypes often associated with working in a circus include assumptions of clowns, animal performances, strongmen, and the soundtrack "Entrance of the Gladiators." While these elements and stereotypes still exist and should be respected, they do not fully represent the diversity of circus today. According to Shana Kennedy (2020), the executive director of the circus college Circadium, circus can be divided into three aesthetics: classical or traditional circus, new circus, and contemporary circus. In this chapter, I will take a closer look at these aesthetics.



PICTURE 3. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's classical circus aesthetic (Becky Phan 2015).

Classical circus is performed in tents and features classically structured, satisfying, yet predictable acts. These shows often include animals, showmanship, and traditional gender roles. (Kennedy 2020.) Originating in 1768 in England by Philip Astley, circus gained popularity through performances in England and France for royalty. By the 1800s, circus had arrived in the United States, introducing family circuses and the inclusion of exotic animals. The American circus style later influenced European circus traditions. However, in the 1970s, the French government sought to revitalize traditional circus for broader audiences and started to provide financial grants to circus artists to develop shows. This marked a significant shift in circus dynamics, leading to the emergence of contemporary circus from the traditional circus framework. Circus schools also began opening to aspiring artists, democratizing access to circus arts. (Wensjoe 2019; Pāvula 2024.)

New circus includes companies such as Cirque du Soleil, which still perform under tents but place more emphasis on production elements, themes, and choreography. There can even be disciplines in new circus that are not typical circus acts. (Kennedy 2022.) I consider the aesthetic in the last couple of years at Sorin Sirkus shows a blend of new circus and contemporary circus.



PICTURE 4. A mix of new circus and contemporary circus aesthetic on Sorin Sirkus Christmas show *Kaila* (Kristian Wanvik 2023).

Contemporary circus is less focused on showcasing incredible feats and more interested in representing artistic concepts. It prioritizes the creation of meaning over the entertainment and spectacle-seeking of classical circus. Contemporary circus aims to create a cohesive show where the artists on stage share a relationship, and the notion of distinct acts tends to disappear. Shows can be playful, abstract, or serious, and they are performed in various locations such as theatre stages, streets, or even at someone's apartment. Contemporary circus is very human and diverse. (Kennedy 2022.) Performers in contemporary circus are often conservatory-trained, and the shows feature music composed specifically for each performance, emphasizing visuality and the integration of sound and movement (History of Circus, n.d.; Moisio, 2012). At the heart of contemporary circus is the body and its energy, with aesthetics leaning towards modern theatrical performances.

2.2 Contemporary circus and sound design

Music and sound design are integral components that breathe life into contemporary circus performances. Rajanti's (2024) notion of sound suggest that anything, even the whisper of the wind, can be considered music, blurring the lines between sound design and music – a perspective I increasingly find myself embracing. In my view, sound design in contemporary circus should complement and intertwine the music. This approach supports the cohesive soundscapes crafted through composed music, maintaining a unified atmosphere throughout the performance.

While there are parallels between circus and theatre sound design, particularly in technical aspects, the auditory experience differs significantly. The main point of the sound design in theatre is to emphasize the clarity of the text, while circus sound design often aims to hide the sounds of performers and equipment (Rajanti 2024).

Circus shows like *Soilu* (Sorin Sirkus 2022) and *Corteo* (Cirque du Soleil 2024), utilize character-driven stories. Kukkola (2024) emphasizes that any narrative in circus shows should serve the performance and superfluous transitional scenes should be avoided if possible. These narrative elements pose unique sound design challenges in circus, especially if the artist need to be miked to amplify the dialogue through the speakers. Biggest obstacle miking artists is that it creates problems from a circus technical standpoint, with wireless transmitters getting in the way of the physical interactions between circus artists, increasing the possibility of the equipment breaking (Kukkola 2024).

In the Sorin Sirkus spring circus show *Aikamoinen Matka* (Sorin Sirkus 2024), I opted to utilize wireless microphones. One young circus artist wore a wireless transmitter with a lavalier microphone, while a handheld microphone was employed in various scenes. Additionally, I rigged a lavalier microphone in a megaphone, as depicted in picture 6. However, miking artists with dialogue parts only partially can be frustrating for viewers, as bits of dialogue may be lost.



PICTURE 5. A lavalier microphone and a transmitter rigged on a megaphone on spring circus show *Aikamoinen Matka* (Keinänen 2024).

Sound, when combined with lighting, can serve as an ethereal set design, offering performers freedom of movement without physical constraints. Rajanti (2024) exemplifies this through immersive soundscapes, such as simulating the interior of a whale's stomach, achieved through strategically placed speakers. While not always reliant on surround sound system, utilizing multiple speakers can enhance immersion in the performance.

Circus thrives on the perceived risk factor for audiences, contributing to its allure. Sound, employed strategically and through dramaturgical means, can heighten this sense of risk (Rajanti 2024). This was demonstrated in *Kaila* (Sorin Sirkus 2023) where a pulsating heartbeat intensified tension throughout the songs and transitional soundscapes, resonating with the overarching theme of the show. Kukkola (2024) underscores the role of sound design in maintaining ambiance and accentuating pivotal moments throughout the performance.

Effective sound design blends creative vision with technical expertise. A sound designer must translate conceptual sounds into reality while adeptly operating and programming various equipment and software.

2.2.1 Designing soundscapes

Having delved into the intricacies of sound design, we now shift our focus to the art of designing soundscapes. Soundscapes play a crucial role in immersing viewers into performances, providing auditory cues that help them connect with the scene unfolding before them. Just as the sound of rain transports us to a rainy day or the hustle and bustle of a train station evokes a sense of urban life, carefully crafted soundscapes guide viewers' imaginations and enhance their emotional engagement with the performance.

According to theatre sound designers Kaye and Lebrecht (2016) at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, simple soundscapes like seagulls help viewers easily identify the setting of a scene. Different sounds, such as birds chirping or thunderstorms rumbling, set the tone for the narrative. By analysing the qualities of different soundscapes, sound designer can then choose the right ones to complement the on-stage action, ensuring a seamless and immersive experience for the audience.

Whether it is ambient noise, impactful sounds, or futuristic effects, layering sounds can enhance the richness of the auditory landscape. Furthermore, layered sounds or soundscapes add depth and complexity to the auditory experience, creating a more textured and professional overall feeling. However, it is essential to strike a balance and avoid overcomplicating the soundscape—sometimes simplicity can be just as effective, like those seagulls.

Using small sounds for subtle actions and vice versa can be effective, but introducing a mix of large sounds or music with small objects or actions creates contrast and enhances the emotional impact on the viewer. This approach can be particularly effective in highlighting comedic aspects of a performance.

While sound libraries and the internet offer a wide range of resources, there is immense value in recording original sounds. Encouraging circus artists to participate in sound recording not only fosters a deeper appreciation for their environment but also adds a unique, handcrafted touch to the production. As Rajanti (2024) suggests, this collaborative approach not only enhances teamwork but

also adds value to the show by filling it with a sense of authenticity and artisanry, which is considered as a crucial factor in circus.

2.2.2 Mixing and acoustics

As we delve into the realm of mixing and acoustics it is essential to recognize the diverse challenges that arise in the mixing process for contemporary circus shows. Factors such as live bands can significantly alter the dynamics of mixing compared to playback shows. For productions rich in sound effects, splitting and exporting sounds into layers streamlines the mixing process, facilitating adjustments on location. Utilizing playback software like QLab offers flexibility during rehearsals, allowing for quick modifications if certain elements do not align with the desired sound (Kaye & Lebrecht 2016, 101).

Considerations of the performing space's acoustics further underscore the importance of meticulous mixing practices. What may sound ideal in a home studio environment may not translate accurately in larger venues with distinct acoustic properties. Experimenting with sound at varying distances can simulate a more realistic theatrical experience, minimizing the need for extensive remixing (Kaye & Lebrecht 2016, 100).

Initiating rehearsals with demo sounds for each act sets the groundwork for refining the show's soundscape from the outset. While immediate adjustments may not always be feasible during rehearsals, providing alternative sounds for the directors' consideration in later rehearsals ensures continuous improvement (Kukkola 2024). Moreover, maintaining unarmed cues in the QLab cue list allows for flexibility in revisiting and reevaluating cues as the production progresses.

Central to effective mixing is establishing trust in the sound system. A reliable system provides a stable foundation for making informed mixing decisions, eliminating unnecessary adjustments. While technical proficiency can be acquired quickly, mastering the art of creating an exceptional mix requires good listening skills and analytical reflection.

2.3 Contemporary circus and music

In addition to being integral to the thematic dramatization of a show, music plays a pivotal role in synchronizing the movements of circus artists. As noted by Rajanti (2024), music serves as a constant companion during residences and act creation, providing rhythm and energy that enhances the performer's connection with the audience. This symbiotic relationship between music and circus acts underscores the dynamic nature of contemporary circus performances.

Furthermore, the choice between original compositions and existing music can significantly influence the overall atmosphere of a circus show. While productions like Sorin Sirkus' Spring shows, utilize pre-existing music, specifically composed and tailored music for acts is always the more attractive choice to elevate circus performances. This handcrafted approach allows composers and sound designers to create music that seamlessly integrates with the narrative and enhances the emotional impact of the performance (History of Circus, n.d.).

Instrumental music emerges as the preferred choice for circus shows, offering versatility, and adaptability with the ease of making rearrangements to complement the show's acts and themes more suitably than music with lyrics. However, when lyrics are incorporated into the music, they play a crucial role in complementing the on-stage action. The success of integrating lyrics, as evidenced in the critique written by local newspaper for Christmas show *Xyper*, lies in its ability to resonate with the movements and emotions portrayed by the performers, amplifying the overall circus experience (Aamulehti 2022).

2.3.1 Circus disciplines

Moving forward with the discussion on music, it is imperative to consider the interplay between music and circus disciplines. Understanding the nuances of each circus discipline is crucial for composing music that harmonizes seamlessly with the performers' movements and energy requirements. For instance, high-energy disciplines like teeterboard demand precise BPM to synchronize with the performers' rhythm. Effective communication with performers is necessary to ensure

a seamless connection between music and act execution. Additionally, possessing knowledge of the styles, genres, and rhythms that complement specific disciplines is essential for composing tailored music that enhances the overall aesthetic of the show. As noted by Rajanti (2024), circus artists practicing within the same disciplines, often share similar preferences regarding the style of music that best complements their acts.

The term "circus discipline" serves to categorize and distinguish various actions within the circus world, ranging from ground-based to aerial and mixed acts (Sharpe 2016). Each discipline carries inherent risks, contributing to the thrill and excitement that characterize circus performances. According to Rajanti (2022), gravity serves as a unifying force across all circus disciplines, embodying the fundamental desire to defy its constraints and achieve feats of aerial prowess. Thus, circus as an art form not only explores the physical capabilities of performers but also delves into the profound relationship between humanity and gravity. (Rajanti 2022.)

2.3.2 Creating original music for a circus show

Creating original music for a circus show elevates a circus performance in a unique way and when the music aligns with the show's aesthetic and other design elements, it serves the show better than using existing music (Kukkola 2024; Rajanti 2024). One significant benefit of creating original music for a specific act is that it can be tailored to different sections of the act. Rajanti (2024) emphasizes more on the importance of communicating with circus artists to find the mood and rhythm that best suits their practice and performance needs. The energy and structure of each piece of music are key factors to consider. Kukkola (2024) points out, that at Sorin Sirkus, the experienced artists of the performing group often have a sharp vision of the act and the accompanying music for it. Simply discussing and asking for descriptive adjectives about their vision can help kick-start the composing process going. (Kukkola 2024.)

To create a cohesive and unified music compositions across the entire show, setting creative boundaries can be beneficial. According to Kukkola (2024), understanding the show's theme and using the same instruments across different

songs helps automatically unify the soundscape. These kinds of creative limits make it easier for the composer to identify what is essential for the show. To tie the show's songs together, Rajanti (2024) suggests producing thought-provoking creative limits, like exclusively using specific instruments or quirky elements such as a ukulele and the sounds of balloons. This approach can also function as a motivational boost for the composing process and furthermore engage the rest of the team when they understand the creative thought behind the music. (Rajanti 2024.)

2.3.3 Using existing music

In this section I explore the advantages and challenges of using existing music in a circus show. Existing music refers to anything that is not exclusively written for the show. One of the main challenges of existing music is that the audience might already be familiar with the music (Rajanti 2024). Using widely recognized songs requires careful planning and intention behind them, as it can distract viewers and shift their focus away from the performance (Kukkola 2024). When using existing music, the composition and arrangement are controlled by an external artist, which can present limitations. However, there are notable advantages as well.

For instance, Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" instantly signals a wedding scene to the audience. Composing a new piece to convey this message would take much longer, but the familiarity of just those three notes makes it immediately clear. (Rajanti 2024.)

Other advantages include cost-effectiveness and saving time. While authoring this thesis, I have worked on two spring circus shows at Sorin Sirkus, each featuring around forty acts rehearsed to existing songs selected by the directors. The approach of using existing music has been the only feasible way to include so much music in the show within the tight schedule of the rehearsal periods. Because of the songs original arrangements and length often did not support the acts, I had to make multiple edits and rearrangements for them. Ultimately, using existing music is justified if it also effectively serves the performance.

2.3.4 Playback software and safety loops

Playing back sound cues or music requires reliable software, as the show cannot afford to be jeopardized by software crashes. The industry standard for creating and running sound cues is QLab (Figure 53 2023). QLab allows for creating and playing back sound cue ranging from simple to complex, as well as other show-related cues such as lightning and video cues. QLab, along with Ableton Live, forms the best combination of software for contemporary circus shows, because of something called “safety looping,” used in all Sorin Sirkus productions nowadays.

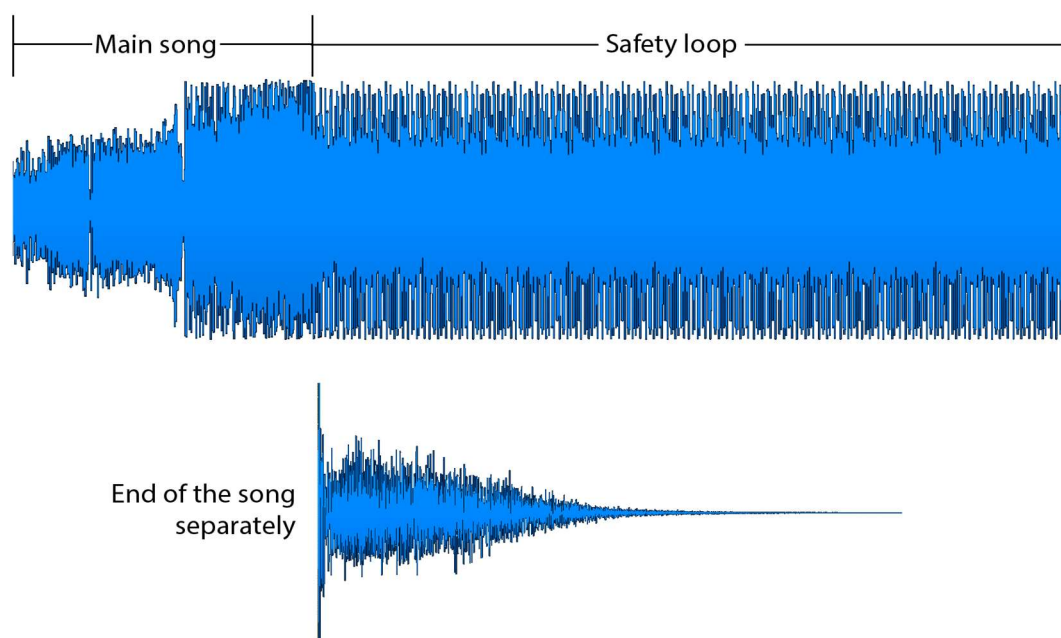
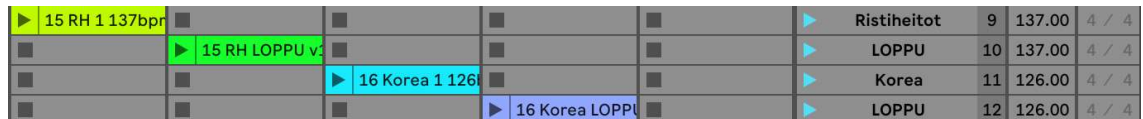


Figure 1. Visualisation of a basic safety loop song’s two sections (Keinänen 2024).

Safety looping is a technique where a song is divided into two or more parts. Typically, a safety looped song has separate start and ending sections. The ending section is triggered when a certain trick is completed. The technique is used in to serve the acts better, by giving the performers more time to retry their tricks. Examples of acts that might need a safety loop include juggling, jump rope or Rola-bola, which involve moving factors that have increased change of failing a trick or a combination of tricks. Safety looping can also be used to help build tension by dividing the song into more than two sections, with each looped section introducing new elements or melody changes. According to Kukkola (2024), the

starting point of the loop must be carefully considered in relation to the action happening on stage, keeping the loop time to a minimum of around half a minute. This requires the artist to know their song thoroughly and maintain tight synchronization. (Kukkola 2024.) While fixed-length songs require only one stage cue at the start of the act, safety loop songs call for the sound operator to be more alert, with intense focus required to track multiple stage cues during an act.



▶ 15 RH 1 137bpm	■	■	■	▶ Ristiheitot	9	137.00	4 / 4
▶ 15 RH LOPPU v.	■	■	■	▶ LOPPU	10	137.00	4 / 4
▶ 16 Korea 1 126bpm	■	■	■	▶ Korea	11	126.00	4 / 4
▶ 16 Korea LOPPU	■	■	■	▶ LOPPU	12	126.00	4 / 4

Picture 6. Screenshot of *Kaila*'s Ableton Live session, where main parts of two songs “Ristiheitot” and “Korea” can be seen in lime and cyan, with their ending parts seen in green and blue (Keinänen 2024).

As previously mentioned, the best way to utilize safety looping technique is using Ableton Live. It counts measures in the BPM of the song and thus allowing the next section of the song to be triggered seamlessly on beat. It also has the option to program different sections of songs to be triggered through MIDI messages, for example from QLab.

3 KAILA

This section delves into my thesis project, Sorin Sirkus' 2023 Christmas show titled "Kaila". I served as the sound designer for the show, and my primary responsibilities encompassing the oversight of all audio technical aspects, creation of transitional soundscapes placed between acts, programming using QLab and Ableton Live, and ensuring optimal sound system performance. The creative team consisted of approximately ten members, with around twenty artists from the Sorin Sirkus' performing group on stage. The premiere took place on November 17, 2023, in Nekala, Tampere. The show was performed for paying customers twenty-two times and overall, it was seen by over ten thousand viewers (Sorin Sirkus, 2023).

Unlike previous Christmas shows at Sorin Sirkus, which often featured a narrative storyline, *Kaila* departed from this tradition. Instead, the narrative was conveyed through the performers' skills, music, and visual elements. This decision was well-received by local media and newspaper, by praising the show's ability to captivate audiences, including fans of electronic music and dance, while maintaining its artistic integrity and surfacing the artists as themselves to the spotlight (Kulttuuritoimitus 2023; Aamulehti 2023).



Picture 7. Aerial silks act in *Kaila* (Kristian Wanvik 2023).

3.1 Planning phase

For me, the planning phase kicked off with meetings in October 2023. Our initial goal was to craft a seamless audio journey, supporting the performance and guiding the audience smoothly from one act to the next. Thematically, we centred our ideas around the colour red, reflective, and sparkling materials, and the rhythmic pulse of a beating heart. The director shared her vision for the soundscapes, envisioning elements like the tranquillity of a summer morning mist over a lake and subtle, familiar yet unidentifiable sounds.

Collaborating with the composer and the director, we brainstormed creative concepts, such as distorting sounds like crackling ice to create an otherworldly atmosphere. Despite investing hours in research and gathering processed ice crackling sounds, none quite captured the essence we sought for the show. This experience underscored the importance of purposeful sound design, even if a sound seems impressive, if it does not serve the narrative, it is best left out. Nonetheless, these sounds may find utility in future projects.

My approach to sound creation involved utilizing sample libraries, synthesizers as necessary, and Native Instrument's Kontakt. Kontakt's Playbox instrument, known for its distinctive sound, was utilized in the show's music, and sprinkled throughout the transitional soundscapes to maintain sonic coherence.

3.2 Implementation

In this section, I will detail the process of implementing the show plan during rehearsals for *Kaila*. Utilizing transitional set designs between acts, we employed sound design and music as essential tools. These transitional soundscapes had to harmonize with the upcoming song or alternatively, remain neutral in tone. This approach allowed for the creation of unique and anticipatory soundscapes, setting the mood for the next act, and ensuring a seamless transition between segments, keeping the show's momentum intact. To mask the movement of circus equipment in the background, the transitions were accompanied by lighting cues.

Additionally, some transitions featured short acts, such as acrobatics, or visual elements like a giant disco ball seen in picture 7. While this use of sound design was effective, there was a risk of repetition if similar soundscapes were overused. Fortunately, this was not the case in *Kaila*. A handful of transitions were variations of previous songs composed by the composer; a technique commonly employed in musicals to transition between scenes.



PICTURE 8. Screenshot of a transitional set design. A giant disco ball masks a transition to a next number, while a playoff of the previous act's song is playing on the background. (Keinänen 2024).

In the Christmas show *Xyper*, I had consolidated all sound effects into a single layer, resulting in more time-consuming mixing experience. Any adjustments needed to be made back at home if something did not sound right within the cue. However, for *Kaila*, I implemented a different approach by splitting sounds into layers. This adjustment significantly streamlined the mixing process, even for the most intricate sound cues within the space.

3.2.1 Rehearsals

As rehearsals for *Kaila* progressed, the pieces of the show gradually fell into place, but time was tight, with a tight two-week rehearsals schedule, in which all the sound design elements needed to be made. Music was almost finished

when the rehearsals started, with only some minor mixing adjustments left to do. Before the rehearsals kicked off, we had just integrated the lighting, sound, and circus technical elements onto the stage and front-of-house, while the circus acts were rehearsed months in advance and ready to be performed. Rehearsals began with slow walk-throughs of the first and second halves, gradually building up to full run-throughs.

During these rehearsals, the focus often centred on transitions between acts, which are crucial elements in Christmas show preparations. Personally, I paid close attention to their timing and my stage cues, noting them down directly into QLab for easy reference. For *Kaila*, the soundscape cues were straightforward: after each act, as the song ended, I triggered a soundscape. In preparation for the first rehearsal, I had basic initial sounds planned for each transition. Together with Joonas, the composer, we carefully listened to what worked and what did not and adjusted as needed. Additionally, I took notes on song mixing, ensuring that any issues were addressed for the following day's rehearsals by Joonas, the composer.

27. Anna kangas

- 27-28 sydän äänet feidaten samoin ambienssi

Vipu roudaus

- roudaus-28 vaihtuisiko hoverboard ambienssi erilaiseksi kun vipu alkaa? + rytmi sama kun syke
- mystinen ja jännitys fiilis hoverboardeihin, pyörivä ja hapsuinen
- tee uudet ambienssit
- ota organ pois kun vipulauta lähtee liikkeelle

28. Vipulauta

- vipulaudan loppu, hengästyneempää hengitystä, reverbiä ja feidaus pois heti alusta
- roudaukseen hiljalleen syke, roudauksen jälkeen volumenosto sykkeeseen, jolloin siitä tulee the main thing
- voc amb tee smoothimpi ja vähän nopeampi tahti, lisää myös toinen elävämpi layeri
- tee kaikkiin ambiensseihin fade in (prio 1)
- merkkää monitorien etureunat
- 24-25 tehoste peilien käännölle biisiin
- 24-25 ambienssi paremmaksi
- 25-26 ambienssi paremmaksi
- 6-7 aisa ambienssissa joku click ääni
- 21-22 ambienssi paremmaksi
- 4-5 kässäri ambienssi paremmaksi
- 17-18 looppi paremmaksi ja jotain bass dronee alle?
- 2-3 tolppa ambienssi parannus

PICTURE 9. Notes from the rehearsals of *Kaila* (Keinänen 2024.)

During run-throughs, my approach is to meticulously note down any details that require attention without making immediate changes, allowing me to stay focused on my cues. After the run-through concludes, we gather feedback from the director, and I take my notes home. That same evening, I review a part of the notes, continuing to refine them the following day.

In crafting the sounds, I sometimes borrow a technique acquired from light designers who film run-throughs to help their design work outside of rehearsals. I use these videos to assess timing, duration, and the overall feel of my sound cues. Early each day before rehearsals, I review the new cues I have added on location to ensure they are working and sounding as intended. This entire process repeats throughout the two-week rehearsal period.

I had considerable freedom in shaping the overall soundscape of the show, with the director offering only occasional small notes. In the days leading up to the premiere, all songs and soundscapes were finely tuned, everything was programmed, and the show was ready for performance.

3.2.2 Programming

Programming a two-hour show demands meticulous attention and ideally it needs to be done outside of rehearsal time. For *Kaila*, I utilized QLab to manage soundscapes and fixed-length songs, while employing Ableton Live for safety-looped songs. The most intricate aspect to program was the final teeterboard act and its preceding transition.

The transitional soundscape featured three stage cues, each heightening anticipation for what unfolded next. Within the act itself, comprising four series of tricks, a new section of the song needed to be triggered after each series. This approach sustained energy levels and crafted a compelling dramaturgical arc throughout the act. As depicted in picture 9, each blue-colored cue corresponded to a new section of the teeterboard song fired in Ableton Live via internal MIDI routing.

	Number	Name	Target	Pre-Wait	Duration	Post-Wait
🔊	44.5	▼ ambienssi		00:00.00	03:14.29	00:00.00
🔊		fade and stop kävely	28.2	00:00.00	00:07.00	00:00.00
🔊	33.5	fade and stop 27 Kangas 78bpm.wav	27 Kan...	00:00.00	00:08.00	00:00.00
🔊	34.5	stop LTC_01300000_10mins_30fps_44100x24.wav	31.5	00:08.00		00:00.00
🔊	43.5	Vipulauta Sydänäänät 84bpm v1.0.mp3		00:00.00	03:14.29	00:00.00
🔊		fade Vipulauta Sydänäänät 84bpm v1.0.mp3	43.5	00:00.00	00:18.00	00:00.00
🔊		> amb		00:00.00	00:45.71	00:00.00
🔊		▼ hoverboardit sisään		00:00.00	01:44.06	00:00.00
🔊		Vipulauta alku Ashlight.wav		00:00.00	01:06.38	00:00.00
🔊	41.55	27-28 voc amb V2 (168bpm) dryer.wav		00:00.00	01:44.06	00:00.00
🔊	45.5	hoverboards in.wav		00:00.00	00:09.74	00:00.00
🔊		fade Vipulauta Sydänäänät 84bpm v1.0.mp3	43.5	00:00.00	00:07.00	00:00.00
🔊		▼ hoverboardit pois		00:00.00	00:20.00	00:00.00
🔊		fade Vipulauta Sydänäänät 84bpm v1.0.mp3	43.5	00:00.00	00:07.00	00:00.00
🔊		fade and stop 27-28 amb.wav	38.5	00:00.00	00:20.00	00:00.00
🔊		fade and stop Vipulauta alku Ashlight.wav	Vipula...	00:00.00	00:07.00	00:00.00
🔊		fade and stop 27-28 voc amb V2 (168bpm) dryer.wav	41.55	00:00.00	00:07.00	00:00.00
🔊		fade and stop 27-28 organ.wav	40.5	00:00.00	00:07.00	00:00.00
🔊	41					
🔊	44	▼ 28 - Vipulauta 1 / aksun voltit ja aplodit / 1. sarjan jälkeen		00:00.00	06:45.71	00:00.00
🔊		fade and stop 27-28 ambienssi / siirtyä kansioon	44.5	00:00.00	00:03.00	00:00.00
🔊	43	28 Vipulauta 1 164bpm.wav		00:00.00	06:45.71	00:00.00
🔊		MIDI note on		00:00.00		00:00.00
🔊	46	▼ 28 - Vipulauta 2 / aksun tuplavolttien jälkeen / 3. sarjan jälkeen		00:00.00	06:40.00	00:00.00
🔊	48	fade and stop 28 Vipulauta 1 164bpm.wav	43	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:00.00
🔊	45	28 Vipulauta 2 164bpm.wav		00:00.00	06:40.00	00:00.00
🔊		MIDI note on		00:00.00		00:00.00
🔊		▼ 28 - Vipulauta loppu / paavon kierrevoltit / 4. sarjan jälkeen		00:00.00	00:28.57	00:00.00
🔊		MIDI note on		00:00.00		00:00.00
🔊	49	fade and stop 28 Vipulauta 2 164bpm.wav	45	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:00.00
🔊	47	28 Vipulauta LOPPU 2.wav		00:00.00	00:11.43	00:00.00

PICTURE 10. Screenshot of teeterboard act and the transitional scene programmed in QLab. One cue of the sequence is left outside the picture. (Keinänen 2024.)

When structuring a QLab session, I find it helpful to organize each cue into a group, highlighted in green as shown in picture 9. This ensures better organization and a clutter-free playlist, especially when dealing with multiple fade cues and layers within the groups.

To maintain clarity for myself and other sound operators, I employ a color-coding system for cues. I designate blue for songs in Ableton Live triggered via MIDI, yellow for fixed-length songs played directly from QLab, and neutral for any other cue types. Notes are typically marked in red or orange.

Furthermore, I include specific details for each cue, such as the numerical order of the act, the discipline or action involved, and the stage cue to press GO. Other cues may not require extensive written details, certain aspects become evident as rehearsals progress. For instance, it becomes clear that transitional soundscapes should be triggered after every song during applause breaks, as depicted in picture 10 at cue 17-18, which simply indicates its ambiance content.

Number	Name	Target	Pre-Wait	Duration	Post-Wait
8.9	> 12c - Onnin jonkka 2 - onnin hidias pyörähdys +2sec (odota aplodeja)	00:00.00	00:00.00	02:32.47	00:00.00
13.5	> 13 - Hyppis - onni poistumassa / ableton	00:00.00	00:00.00	03:58.08	00:00.00
	> 13 - Safety pois - kolme jätää tulee eteen korkeaan polviasentoon	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:23.32	00:00.00
13.05	> 13-14 - Nuoran pystytys	00:00.00	00:00.00	01:42.00	00:00.00
13.6	> 14 - Nuora - kun aleksanteri podestilla	00:00.00	00:00.00	04:03.00	00:00.00
13.605	> 14-15 - Nuoran purku ambienssi (hoverboardit)	00:00.00	00:00.00	01:09.75	00:00.00
13.7	> 15 - Ristiheitot - roudaus valmis, lonssit takana / ableton	00:00.00	00:00.00	09:34.60	00:00.00
14.7	> 15 - Safety pois - takaa lähtee kävelemään kaksi eteen	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:14.20	00:00.00
	> Kuulutus - Väliaika 20 min	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:09.52	00:00.00
35	VÄLIAIKA	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:00.00
	> Kuulutus - Jatkuu 10min	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:07.29	00:00.00
	> Kuulutus - Jatkuu 5min	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:07.29	00:00.00
	> Kuulutus - Jatkuu tuossa tuokiassa	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:07.29	00:00.00
	> Ableton clock stop	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:00.20	00:00.00
	STANDBY	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:00.00
17.5	> 16 - Korea - verhojen avauksen lopussa / ableton	00:00.00	00:00.00	09:08.57	00:00.00
42.5	> 16 - Korean purku biisi - koreografian alusta 4x8	00:00.00	00:00.00	02:10.04	00:00.00
18.1	> 17 - Tanssi - diskopallo pois, koko roudaus valmis, purku biisi hidastunut, aksu vaihtaa...	00:00.00	00:00.00	01:28.42	00:00.00
18.6	> 17-18 - ambienssi	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:35.57	00:00.00
18.5	> 18 - Wera ilmatolppa - roudarit poistumassa	00:00.00	00:00.00	03:41.89	00:00.00
26.5	> 18-19 - Tolpan roudaus ambienssi	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:32.00	00:00.00
20.5	> 19 - Pyörä (1 tahdin välein) - kaikki kolme keskellä ja roudarit menossa pois / ableton	00:00.00	00:00.00	08:32.00	00:00.00
	> 19 - Safety pois - satulat maahan jälkeen joakimin tempun jakeen	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:08.20	00:00.00
	> 19-20 - Annan kävely 1 - pyörän aplodien perään	00:00.00	00:00.00	02:00.00	00:00.00
21.5	> 20 - Pyrtsi - kaikki paikallaan sermien takana ja sermit alkaa kääntymään / ableton	00:00.00	00:00.00	09:43.53	00:00.00
47.5	> 20 - Safety pois - lähtevät kävelemään ulos	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:15.20	00:00.00
37.5	> 20-21 - ambienssi	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:28.86	00:00.00
33	> 21 - Paavo Cyr - kun cyr pyörä paavolla	00:00.00	00:00.00	02:32.11	00:00.00
25.5	> 22 - Taitopyörä 2 - paavo menossa cyrin kanssa ulos / ableton	00:00.00	00:00.00	05:55.79	00:00.00
	> 22 - Safety pois - aiassa ulos	00:00.00	00:00.00	00:08.20	00:00.00

PICTURE 11. Screenshot of *Kaila's* QLab session, where the colour coding and naming system can be seen (Keinänen 2024).

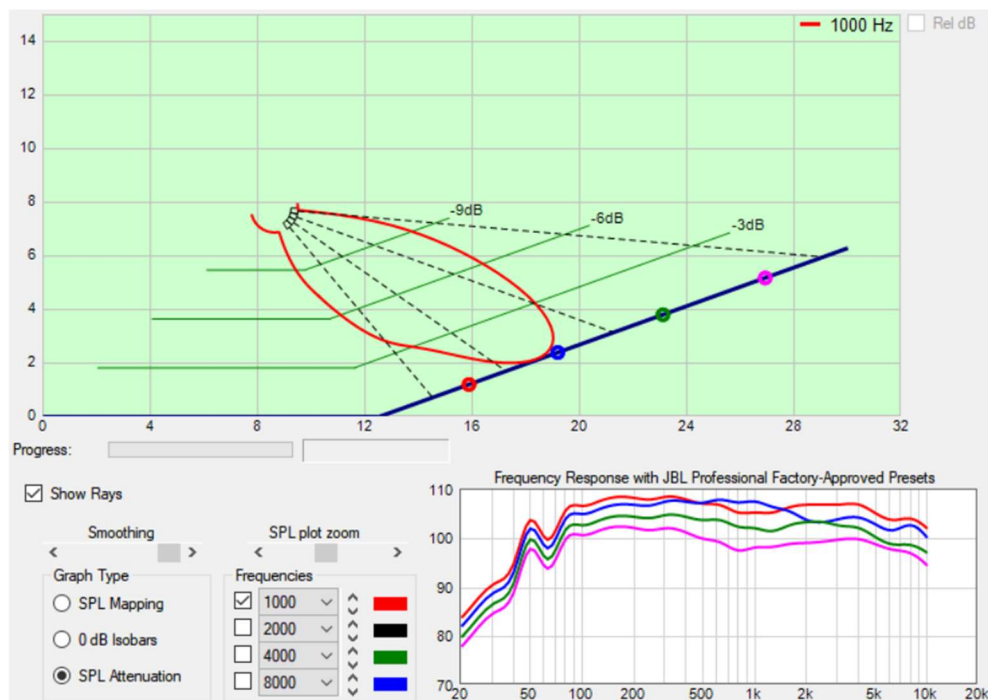
I prepared a QLab show file, containing all Ableton Live songs, in the case that something would happen to the software. The backup show file had the same principle as in Ableton, but the safety looped songs sections had to be beat matched and triggered manually. This was a fool-proof way of running the show, unless QLab would have failed.

Separating each song and soundscape into distinct group cues, rather than automating them to start immediately after a song ends, serves a specific purpose. It allows for a hassle-free way to skip a song in case one of the performers falls ill or gets injured during the show season.

In today's context, backing up our work is paramount. I made it a practice to create backups daily after each rehearsal to ensure that everything was preserved as intended. Additionally, it was my responsibility to ensure that everything ran smoothly for the other sound operator during the show. To this end, I prepared a QLab show file containing all Ableton Live songs as a backup plan in case of software failure. While this ensured a fool-proof way of running the show, careful timing was required to beat-match and manually trigger sections of the otherwise BPM-synchronized safety looped songs.

3.2.3 Sound system

Sorin Sirkus boasts a modular auditorium for up to 450 viewers, designed with an upward slope to ensure clear sightline to the stage for all audience members. To deliver the sonic experience, the auditorium is equipped with JBL's constant curvature line array, VRX-928LA. The combination of the constant curvature line array and the sloped auditorium layout presented challenges during the implementation. Despite trying to achieve uniform sound coverage with this system before, certain areas experienced high volume levels, while others suffered from insufficient amplification as depicted in picture 11. Deploying front-fill speakers on the floor for the three first rows certainly helped, but the back of the auditorium still suffered from the same problem. As a sound designer it has become evident that these issues need to be addressed for future shows in this audience configuration.



PICTURE 12. Frequency response simulation of the auditorium. Red line indicates the distribution of sound pressure level at 1000 Hz. (Keinänen 2024).

4 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This thesis has been exploring the intricate world of sound design and music in contemporary circus, blending theoretical exploration with practical application. Through the examination of existing literature, insightful interviews, and a detailed case study of Sorin Sirkus' Christmas show performance, *Kaila*, a deeper understanding emerged about the relationship between sound design, music, and the circus experience.

The most important finding illuminated itself throughout my interviews with the seasoned circus musicians, composers, and sound designers Joonas Kukkola and Petteri Rajanti; sound design and music goes hand to hand with each other in circus shows and they should always be used to support the circus performance, not for the sake of sound designing or making music.

Through this exploration, I have witnessed how *Kaila* blended elements of new circus and contemporary circus aesthetics with a classical circus charm and underscored the role of sound design and music in elevating the performance. While larger productions like Christmas shows at Sorin Sirkus usually separate roles for sound design and music creation, smaller circus ensembles often trust one individual to oversee both tasks. However, regardless of the team size, effective collaboration and communication with circus artists remains of paramount importance.

Understanding of circus disciplines has emerged as a cornerstone for crafting soundscapes and compositions to enhance the performance and the circus artists' energy directly. Whether through music tailored to a show, or pre-existing music, circus will always need music to transmit energy to the performer and giving the ability to synchronize their movement to something. When understanding the needs for a circus act, music can be divided into parts, to create dramaturgical arcs and build tension. Through software combinations such as QLab and Ableton Live, it is possible to program cues that create seamless transitions between different sections of a song live. Utilising outputs for multi-speaker configurations

even more immersive experience, closer to that of a theatre can be created for the circus audiences.

This thesis underscores the importance of both the technical and creative aspects of sound design. It is not just about creating sounds; it is about blending them seamlessly into the performance. In the end, sound design emerges as a powerful force to captivate circus audiences. Hopefully, this thesis will be a beacon of practical insight for those embarking on their own sonic adventures into the world of contemporary circus. For a person who is interested in further research on the subject, I suggest looking into aspects about copyrights of music use in circus shows.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Sorin Sirkus: Kaila

Recording (private): <https://vimeo.com/902153208>

Trailer: https://youtu.be/ur2A5hf256Q?si=TXW9cvmx_4beN519

Critique (Kulttuuritoimitus): <https://kulttuuritoimitus.fi/kritiikit/kritiikit-tanssi/sorin-sirkuksen-joulushow-kaila-syntyy-suurista-tempuista-ja-pienista-yksityiskohdista/>

Critique (Aamulehti): <https://kulttuuritoimitus.fi/kritiikit/kritiikit-tanssi/sorin-sirkuksen-joulushow-kaila-syntyy-suurista-tempuista-ja-pienista-yksityiskohdista/>

1. Mikä on äänen ja musiikin rooli sirkusesityksessä?

Sillä on muutamakin rooli, mutta tärkeintä on tahdistaa sirkus artisteja, jotta he pystyvät tekemään joitakin asioita tahdistetusti, sillä se on turvallisuudenkin kannalta tärkeää. Äänellä voidaan myös luoda tilanne tai lavaste, esimerkiksi trapetsille voidaan luoda "lavaste", joka ei haittaa trapetsin liikettä. Sillä on myös dramaturginen merkitys, eli kerrotaan yleisölle asian merkitys, vaikka maalaamalla riski jollakin musiikilla.

2. Mikä on esitystä varten sävelletyn musiikin painoarvo sirkusesityksessä?

Esitystä varten sävelletty musiikki todennäköisesti palvelee sitä esitystä paremmin kuin se, että siinä olisi käytetty valmista musiikkia. Valmiissa musiikissa on myös hyvät puolensa, koska se on todennäköisesti tuttua yleisölle. Esimerkkinä on Mendelssohnin Häämarssi, josta kaikki ymmärtää heti, että nyt mennään naimisiin. Menisi paljon enemmän aikaa saada se viesti perille yleisölle, jos pitäisi säveltää semmoinen naimisiinmeno kappale, kun ei siihen tarvitse käyttää kuin ne kolme nuottia, niin se kaikille on ilmiselvää. Jos ajatellaan, että sirkusesitys on kokonaistaideteos, niin kyllä se on enemmän kokonainen silloin kun ääni ja musiikki on myös osa sitä teoksen estetiikkaa.

3. Mikä on mielestäsi nykysirkuksen määritelmä?

Ehkä nykysirkus on määritelmällisesti monen mielestä, että sirkuslaiset tekevät sitä. Jos nykysirkusta tekee teatterinäyttelijä, niin se ei ehkä ole nykysirkusta, koska heiltä saattaa puuttua tietty perinne, fyysisyys ja ymmärrys siitä kuinka paljon asioita harjoitellaan. Olen haastatellut dramaturgia Cirque du Soleililta ja hänenkin mielestään sirkuslaiset tekevät nykysirkuksen.

4. Miten lähestyt yksittäistä sirkusnumeroa musiikin säveltämisen kannalta?

Sirkuslaiset käyttävät koko ajan musiikkia. Yksittäisen sirkusartistin kanssa puhutaan ja hän on todennäköisesti käyttänyt jotakin tietynlaista musiikkia missä on jokin tietty moodi tai rytmi ja sitten koittaa palvella sitä (sävellyksen kautta). Sirkusartisteilla on myös erilaisia toiveita ja konventioita siitä, että millainen musa sopii mihinkäkin lajiin. Esimerkiksi köysinumeroon on vaikea ympätä sellaista kauheata biittiä ja trapetsi tyypit taas tykkäävät, että on biittiä. Jonkka tyypeille pitää aina laittaa jotain seitsemän kahdeksasosaa. Nämä ovat tietysti vain yleisiä havaintoja mitä olen tehnyt.

Sirkusartistit saa myös kiinnostumaan äänestä ja tekemään sitä kautta enemmän yhteistyötä, kun laittaa heidät äänittämään omia sirkusvälineitään. Vaikka niitä äänitteitä käyttäisi harvoin tai muokkaisi ihan tunnistamattomasti, niin sillä tavalla se prosessi syvenee ja syntyy lisäarvoa niille artisteille, kun se ääni on lähtenyt heidän vehkeistään. Sinne syntyy myös sellaista käsityön leimaa, joka tuntuu olevan sirkuksessa aika tärkeää.

5. Minkälaisia vaiheita sirkuksen sävellystyössä ja äänisuunnittelussa on?

Ensimmäinen vaihe on varmaankin, että joku kysyy, onko sulla aikaa ja halua tulla mukaan ja silloin on yleensä myös jo jokin idea. Sitten keskustellaan yhdessä, jonka jälkeen on ensimmäinen residenssi, jossa kokeillaan asioita. Sitten on toinen residenssi, johon olen ensimmäisen pohjalta pystynyt tekemään jotakin demoja. Sitten on vielä muutamia residenssejä matkan varrella, jossa todetaan, että alkaa muodostua jokin tietynlainen kohtaous. Kun kohtauksia on vaikka kymmenen, sitten aletaan miettimään, että missä järjestyksessä ne olisivat.

Tässä vaiheessa tärkeää olla äänen ja musan kanssa jeesaamassa sitä kokonaisrakennetta. Eli residensseissä asiat etenevät nopeasti ja sitten on pitkiä aikoja, jolloin voin itse kokeilla kaikenlaista.

6. Kuinka nidot esityksen kappaleet yhteen?

Yleensä yritän keksiä jonkun mielenkiintoisen rajoitteen itselleni, vaikka että käytetään pelkkiä kontrabassoja tai että tässä jutussa en saa käyttää muuta kuin ilmapallojen ääniä ja ukulelea. Se automaattisesti mielestäni nivoo niitä yhteen. Se myös lisää omaa motivaatiota, kun tulee etsittävää tai pohdiskeltavaa. Jos keksii jonkun rajoitteen, niin yleensä se on myös muulle työryhmälle kiinnostavaa, kun kertoo että tässä on tällainen ajatus.

7. Miten prosessi eroaa verrattaessa livebändi esitystä playback esitykseen?

Prosessi on todella erilainen. Livebändin kanssa voi hölmöillä, kun taas valmis nauha pitää olla valmis. Valmiiseen nauhaan täytyy koittaa keksiä mahdollisia tapoja reagoida siihen esitykseen, kun taas livebändi elää koko ajan sen esityksen mukana. Prosessi bändin kanssa on paljon nopeampi. Siinä on enemmän inputia ja enemmän varianssia ja mahdollisuuksia.

8. Miten löydät yhteisen sävelen ohjaajan kanssa?

Yleensä työryhmä ohjaa yhdessä, mutta se riippuu myös työryhmän koosta. Jos menee yli viiden hengen, niin sitten on katsottu joku kuka ohjaa. Mutta miten löytää yhteinen sävel, niin täytyy vain ehdotella. Hyvä vinkki varmasti on, että älä yritä tehdä yksinäsi kauheasti vaan kysy ajoissa, että onko tämä nyt oikea suunta.

9. Minkälaisia tarpeita sinulla on äänisuunnittelijalta säveltäjän näkökulmasta sirkuksessa?

En ole tainnut olla säveltäjänä niin, että olisi erikseen ollut äänisuunnittelija. Jotenkin se käsitykseni äänestä on, että se mikä tahansa tuulen ulinakin on musaa. Tiedän kyllä mikä on musan ja äänen raja, mutta mielelläni haluaisin kyseenalaistaa ja haastaa sitä siihen tyyliin että, eikö tämäkin tavallaan ole musiikkia ja eikö tuo ole myös tavallaan äänisuunnittelua.

Teatteri taas on niin toisella tavalla auditiivista, koska teatterissa yleisö seuraa sitä tekstiä ja kuuntelevat koko ajan tarkasti. Teatterissa yleisö voi valita sen mitä he katsovat, mutta sen sijaan he ei voi tavallaan valita sitä mitä he kuulevat, niin jonkun pitää hoitaa se. Teatteri on niin tekstipainotteinen, että siinä äänisuunnittelun pitää palvella sitä, että teksti on kuuluvaa ja ymmärrettävää. Sirkuksessa se on taas päinvastoin, kun siinä yritetään peittää yleensä kaikki se ääni mikä artisteista lähtee.

10. Mikä on mielestäsi tärkeintä sirkuksen äänisuunnittelussa?

Tehdä teosta. Eli ei pelkästään äänisuunnittelua tai musiikkia vaan tehdä sitä kokonaisteosta kaikki yhdessä.

1. Mikä on äänen ja musiikin rooli sirkusesityksessä?

Sillä on mielestäni iso merkitys. Äänisuunnittelu ylläpitää haluttua tunnelmaa ja tarvittaessa korostaa asioita. Joskus viime vuosikymmenen alkupuolella Sorin Sirkuksella oli äänisuunnittelu sitä tasoa, että pelkästään merkattiin jotain tempuja efekteillä. Mutta numeroiden välissä halutunlaisen tunnelman ylläpito on mielestäni tosi tärkeää ja musiikin osalta, sen tarkoitus on tukea sitä liikettä ja numeroa. Ja totta kai myös osaltaan ylläpitää sitä haluttua tunnelmaa.

2. Mikä on esitystä varten sävelletyn musiikin painoarvo sirkusesityksessä?

Mielestäni se nostaa esityksen uudelle tasolle ja siitä tulee uniikimpi kokonaisuus. Kun tekee musaa esitystä varten ja jokaiseen numeroon erikseen miettii sen, että millainen biisi tässä nyt on hyvä niin ensinnäkin kokonaisuudesta tulee ehyempi ja sirkusnumero ja biisi kulkee paremmin käsi kädessä.

Olemassa olevan musan kanssa pitää olla silleen varovainen. Ellei se ole jotenkin tosi hyvin suunniteltu, niin siinä on riskinsä, että se vie katsojan ajatukset harhaan. Etenkin jos käyttää tuttuja biisejä niin silloinhan jokaisella on joku mielikuva siitä biisistä ja se vie esimerkiksi johonkin fiilikseen mikä on ollut, kun on kuullut sen biisin ensimmäisen kerran. Sitten on taas teoksia mihin olemassa oleva musiikki sopii.

4. Miten lähestyt yksittäistä sirkusnumeroa musiikin säveltämisen kannalta?

Tähän on oikeastaan kaksi vastausta. Joka vuosi menee silleen, että teen vaikka kymmenkunta demoa ja ohjaaja sanoo että, tämä saattaisi sopia siihen ja siihen numeroon ja se jatkotyöstö tapahtuu sen perusteella. Käyn katsomassa harjoituksia ja fiilisteleen niitä. Totta kai olen myös kontaktissa esiintyvien

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kanssa ja kyselen heiltä fiiliksiä. Kokeneemmat esiintyvät ovat mielessään jo rakentanut mielikuvan numerosta ja mitä he haluavat musiikilta, ennen kuin sitä on edes tehty. Joidenkin kanssa voi jutella ihan kahdestaan ja on ollut tapana, että kysyn heiltä vähintään viisi adjektiivia. Kelaan energioita ja mikä on numeron rakenne tosi paljon. Sieltä tulee helposti joku sellainen arvio, että vaikka puolen-toista minuutin kohdalla alkaa joku suvantovaihe ja lähes poikkeuksetta lopussa tulee hienoin tempu ja sinne tehdään yleensä isoin kertosaie.

5. Minkälaisia vaiheita sirkuksen sävellystyössä ja äänisuunnittelussa on?

Vaihe numero yksi on varmaankin se, että pitää tietää teema ja sitä kautta muodostaa päässä ehkä sellainen ajatus siitä mitä instrumentteja voisi käyttää ja minkälainen soundimaailma on. Pysin siihen, että soundimaailma on kautta linjan aika sama ja viljelen paljon samoja instrumentteja. Sen jälkeen alan tekemään demoja, ja syksyllä kun esiintyvillä on harjoitukset käynnissä, niin asiat tarkentuvat ja mahdollisesti tehdään kokeneempien kanssa ”mittatilaus” biisejä. Ja teen tietenkin ihan sinne ensi iltaan asti pieniä muutoksia mitä välttämättä ei kukaan muu edes huomaa, mutta sellaisia mitkä nähdäkseni kuitenkin tukevat sitä numeroa.

6. Kuinka nidot esityksen kappaleet yhteen?

Riippuen esityksestä, niin instrumenttien sekä teemojen kautta. Eräässä Joulushow'ssa oli viisi teemaa mitä viljeltiin koko esityksen läpi. Kailassa oli yksi selkeä toistuva asia ja tarkkakorvaisimmat saattoi huomata ensimmäisen ja toisen puoliajan alussa olevien kappaleiden yhtenevät melodiat.

7. Miten prosessi eroaa verrattaessa livebändi esitystä playback esitykseen?

Eroaa tosi paljon. Kyllä se on paljon isompi homma miettiä kaikkia asioita niin että se on oikeasti soitettavissa. Kelaan sävellysvaiheessa esimerkiksi sellaista, että miten itsellä tulee menemään soundivaihdot keskellä biisiä ja tosi tekniseltä kannalta mietin niitä asioita.

8. Miten löydät yhteisen sävelen ohjaajan kanssa?

Siihen on oppinut 14 vuoden aikana. Sen myötä on tullut hyvä yhteinen päämäärä mihin aina tähdätään.

Tärkeää äänisuunnittelun kannalta on tarjota alusta alkaen läpimenoissa jotain ääniä, ettei missään vaiheessa pudota kuoppaan vaan että siellä on aina jotain. Kyllä se ohjaaja sitten tarkentaa ja korjaa jos se on ihan väärä ehdotus. Ja kukaan ei odota, että siinä hetkessä tarjoat jotain muuta mutta että on ainakin joku lähtökohta mistä sitten seuraavaan päivän treeneihin on joku toinen ehdotus.

9. Mitä mieltä olet tarinan kertomisesta sirkusesityksessä?

Periaatteessa se on hyvä asia, koska sekin on omiaan tekemään esityksestä kokonaisuuden, mutta mielestäni väärä lähtökohta olisi käyttää tarinaa peittämään siirtymiä numeroiden välillä ja eikä lähteä siitä, miten se palvelisi esitystä. Jos ajattelee miten vaikka Cirque du Soleililla käytetään tarinaa, niin se johdattaa koko ajan eteenpäin. Sirkusteknisesti ajateltuna esiintyjän mikittäminen on vaikeaa, sillä langattoman lähettimen saa helposti hajalle, kun yrittää tehdä se selässä temppuja. On myös tehty niin että dialogi oli ennalta äänitettyä ja vain liikuteltiin suuta. Mielestäni dialogi ei kuulu sirkukseen.