

Figures Pointing to an End: Operatic Analysis and Modern Sound Design

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Abstract

In a 2003 production of Jean Racine's *Phèdre*, the director Patrice Chéreau introduces into the play a bevy of sound effects. The sounds range from solo cello accompaniment to electronically produced crackling noises. This use of sound bears a resemblance to the way music functions in operas of Jean-Philippe Rameau and Richard Wagner. By interpreting these sounds according to models in recent work in operatic analysis, this paper shows how Chéreau's sound effects achieve new significance as leitmotifs and as commentary on the events of the play. The study of theatre semiotics also provides a pathway for interpreting these sounds as symbols of fate and indications of Hippolyte's death at the climax of *Phèdre*. Chéreau highlights the relationships among the tragedy's characters by surrounding certain words and phrases with specific sound effects, or by inserting sound effects at particular moments of turmoil and at the dramatic climax. In particular, Chéreau emphasizes the themes of forbidden love and deceit in connecting these moments throughout the play. This analysis provides a way for expanding research in sound design by incorporating methods traditionally used for analysing opera.

Keywords

Theatre Semiotics, Sound Design, *Phèdre*, Opera, Rameau, Wagner



Figures Pointing to an End: Operatic Analysis and Modern Sound Design

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Four minutes into Patrice Chéreau's April 2003 production of *Phèdre* at L'Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe in Paris, the audience hears the first sound effect of the performance.¹ A low drone, reminiscent of a foghorn, swells in volume and just as quickly fades away, as if something deep within the earth has just lurched forward in response to the events on stage. The sound occurs just after Hippolyte states to Thérémène, "I fly—if you must know, I will confess—from that young sole survivor of a tribe which fatally has long conspired against my family: Aricie."² The same sound occurs during Hippolyte's narrative later in the scene, as he laments the barriers between Aricie and himself. The sound occurs during his line, "And even if my pride could ever melt should I have been insane enough to choose Aricie for my conqueror?"³ By the end of scene 1, in which the sound

1. Jean Racine, *Phèdre*, DVD. Directed by Stéphane Metge. Arte France, 2004. [Mise en scène: Patrice Chéreau. L'Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe, Paris, April 2003.] 0:04:12.

2. Jean Racine, *Phèdre*, trans. Margaret Rawlings (New York: Penguin, 1991), 31.

3. Racine, *Phèdre*, DVD, 0:07:44.

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occurs three more times, it is clear that the presence of sound is related to Aricie, the object of Hippolyte's forbidden love. The sound gathers significance throughout the performance as a foreshadowing of the fate of Hippolyte and Aricie's relationship. This is exemplified in their first scene together in act 2, when two ominous drones are heard within twenty seconds of each other. The first occurs when Hippolyte addresses Aricie as "Madame" just before he confesses his love for her, and the second when she responds to him, calling him "Seigneur."⁴ Both instances suggest intimacy or spousal familiarity. Similarly in act 5, Hippolyte and Aricie's only other scene together, the ominous sound occurs after Hippolyte refers to himself as "your husband," as if the sound suggests that he will never be able to be called Aricie's husband.⁵

This drone is the first of many recorded sound effects used by Chéreau in his production. These effects range from synthesized industrial noise to melodic lines in the lower register of the cello. As the sounds occur in specific instances, one can interpret them as both an effect of an action on stage, in that they occur directly after a specific word or idea is mentioned, and as markers of something to come, understood by the occurrence of these sounds at the climax of the play. Examined in this way, the use of sound effects resembles the use of music in opera of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in the operas of Jean-Philippe Rameau and Richard Wagner. Drawing from current scholarship on the roles of music in the operas of Wagner and Rameau, as well as work in theatre semiotics, I will offer a

4. Racine, *Phèdre*, DVD, 0:41:04, 0:41:23.

5. *Ibid.*, 1:54:57.

new way of interpreting sound design in theatre that will allow for a more effective means of linking sound and dramatic event.

The Work

In 2003, Patrice Chéreau staged a performance of Jean Racine's *Phèdre* (1677). Taken from Greek mythology, the tragedy focuses on guilt and torment, especially of Phèdre, the wife of Thésée. In Thésée's long absence, Phèdre has fallen in love with Thésée's son, Hippolyte, and has, therefore, locked herself and her forbidden love in her chamber. Meanwhile, Hippolyte has fallen in love with Aricie, the captive daughter of an enemy tribe. After receiving news that Thésée has been killed, Phèdre resolves to confess her love to Hippolyte, only to find out that she has received false information; Thésée is alive. Phèdre's confidant, Cénone, not wanting to see Phèdre harmed, reports to Thésée that it is Hippolyte who has confessed his love to Phèdre. In a fit of rage, Thésée demands of Neptune that he punish Hippolyte. While preparing to flee with Aricie, Hippolyte is thrown from his chariot by a monster after his horses are startled; they drag him through briars and over rocks, killing him. On hearing the news, Phèdre kills herself and Thésée takes Aricie in as his own daughter. To this, Chéreau adds sound effects, which, after examination, serve to connect moments throughout the production in a way that is not immediately apparent.

Strategies

Both the study of semiotics in theatre and recent approaches to operatic analysis provide new ways to classify

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and interpret the sounds present in Chéreau's production. The following discussion of these theories will provide groundwork for the analysis of these sounds presented later in the article. In *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, theoretician Kier Elam draws from the work of two semioticians, Tadeusz Kowzan and C. S. Pierce, in his typologies of signs. In citing the work of Kowzan, Elam outlines the distinction between "natural" and "artificial" signs: "Natural signs are determined by strictly physical laws whereby signifier and signified are bound in a direct cause-and-effect relationship," whereas artificial signs "depend on the intervention of human volition."⁶ Elam demonstrates that this distinction is not absolute by outlining the principle of the "artificialization" of the natural sign. Artificialization occurs when a natural sign, which has no signifying function in nature, acquires significance on stage. According to Kowzan, a flash of lightning interpreted as a deliberate signification of fate typifies the artificialized natural sign.⁷ In *Phèdre*, the drone noise heard throughout the performance functions much like the flash of lightning, in that it achieves artificial significance as a sign of doom.

Elam divides the sign into the icon, index, and symbol, according to the work of C. S. Pierce. Elam defines the icon as a signifier related to its signified by their likeness. Elam cites Pierce's example of a photograph as signifier for the objects within the photograph; the photograph carries the meaning of the objects within it through its likeness to the

6. Kier Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 17–18.

7. *Ibid.*, 18.

objects, while being another object itself.⁸ The indexical signs resemble the natural signs of Kowzan in that the signified shares a cause-and-effect relationship with its signifier; however, Pierce's theory also includes signifiers that "point" to their signified in this index category. Elam cites the relationships between a pointing finger and its object, a knock at the door and the presence of someone behind it, as well as the demonstrative pronouns 'here' and 'now' as telling examples of the indexical sign made by Pierce.⁹ According to Pierce's theory, the symbol derives its significance from law or an association of general ideas, the most common of which is the linguistic sign.¹⁰ These distinctions, like that between natural and artificial signs, are not absolute, and Elam points out that often one object can act on multiple levels. For example, a stage costume may serve as an icon for the mode of dress of the time represented in the drama as well as an index for the social position or occupation of the character.¹¹ When analyzed according to the practices described by Elam, the first instance of sound in Chéreau's *Phèdre* functions as multiple types of signs. The sound carries indexical significance as it points to the untimely death of Hippolyte at the climax of the play. As an iconic sign, the sound signifies the monster that kills Hippolyte.

Contemporary theatre analysis offers another method for interpreting these sounds. In *Analyzing Performance*, theatre scholar Patrice Pavis compiles a list of functions of music in contemporary practices of *mise-en-scène*. Pavis asserts that

8. Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 18–19.

9. *Ibid.*, 19.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, 22.

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music, unlike language, is nonfigurative and thus its functions must be identified through description.¹² Chief among Pavis's list of music's functions is the ability to "create, illustrate, or characterize an atmosphere introduced by a musical theme, which can become a leitmotif."¹³ By considering the significance of sound effects as leitmotifs, Pavis suggests a comparison of the significance of sound in theatre with the music of Wagner. Wagner defines and recalls leitmotifs for the same atmosphere-creating effect described by Pavis. The sound effects of Chéreau's production also operate as leitmotifs, thereby providing a basis for similar interpretation as the music of Wagner.

In addition to its function as leitmotif, sound is active in theatre, Pavis suggests, by the "production of action through musical means."¹⁴ Carolyn Abbate describes a similar leitmotif function of music and its ability to produce action in the operas of Wagner. In *Unsung Voices*, Abbate examines the role of music as narrator in the operatic and symphonic works of the nineteenth century. In the chapters on Wagner's *Ring* cycle, Abbate adds further depth to the significance of leitmotifs by considering how these musical figures are used to comment on stage action. Abbate first focuses on the music that accompanies Wotan's monologue in act 2 of *Die Walküre*. She outlines the three cycles that constitute Wotan's history of the world as recounted to Brünnhilde. In the first cycle, Wotan describes the time before *Rheingold*, and in the second and third cycles, he describes *Das Rheingold* and the

12. Patrice Pavis, *Analyzing Performance: Theatre, Dance, and Film*, trans. David Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 140–44.

13. *Ibid.*, 143.

14. *Ibid.*

history of Brünnhilde. In comparing the cycles, Abbate contrasts the relative bareness of the first to the leitmotivic richness of the second. Abbate cites Thomas Mann's explanation for this difference in his essay on the *Ring* cycle: the tale of the time before *Rheingold* cannot have leitmotivic representation as the events recounted have not occurred on stage and thus do not offer primal musical material to be recalled.¹⁵ In this leitmotivic reading, the recollection of themes allows for a reinterpretation of the events of the previous opera as precursors to Siegmund's death in *Die Walküre*.

The second reading proposed by Abbate involves discarding the leitmotifs of the second cycle in order to compare the forms of the second and first cycles. This formalist reading exposes points of similarity between the two cycles, such as the opening descending motif, a recitation over a drone, and a recited close, which form a recurring musical sequence.¹⁶ According to Abbate, this sequence has higher order significance, commenting on the repetition of actions in Wotan's history, namely the "master trope" of the *Ring* cycle. Abbate defines this "master trope" as "the tale of power, love abandoned, the exchanges and agreements, and the disaster."¹⁷ This analysis of sequences exposes the significance of interconnected leitmotifs.

Considered semiotically, the leitmotifs approach the iconic sign, carrying the significance for the structures, feelings, or ideas that these motives first accompany.

15. Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 177–87.

16. *Ibid.*, 182–89.

17. *Ibid.*, 187.

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According to Elam, the significance is transferable despite the non-literal similarity between the leitmotifs, provided that the spectator acknowledges the link between icon and what it signifies, based on “the principle of similitude as highly flexible and strictly founded on convention.”¹⁸ This semiotic reading also aids in classifying the “master trope” of the *Ring* cycle by examining it as an indexical sign. While the first order significance of these leitmotifs refers to specific points in Wagner’s music drama, their chronological grouping points toward the endless cycle of power, love, and disaster that is repeated throughout the *Ring* cycle. Abbate suggests that music, through the grouping of leitmotifs, narrates this “master trope.” This narrative function of music is neither unique to the music of Wagner, nor to the genre of opera.

Pavis defines the production of action through musical means as one of the functions of music in theatre. Leanne Eleanore Dodge analyzes this same function in opera of the eighteenth century. In “The Sensible Listener on Stage: Hearing the Operas of Jean-Philippe Rameau through Enlightenment Aesthetics,” Dodge examines Rameau’s innovative use of jarring musical moments in his operas. She cites scene complexes during which music moves from the background of the fictional world to the foreground, often just before a cataclysmic event. In her dissertation, Dodge sets up a series of spaces in order to discuss this agency of music: the *diégèse* and *diégésis*. The first space is that of the story world, or *diégèse*, a term and concept drawn from the work of the film scholar Etienne Souriau, which Dodge likens to Plato’s definition of *mimésis*. The second space Dodge defines as *diégésis*, or the world of the narrator. According to these

18. Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 22.

definitions, Dodge states that the music that exists as part of the background of the story world (*diégèse*) is unheard by the characters within is mimetic, whereas music at the foreground of this story world and, therefore, heard by the characters, should be considered diegetic.¹⁹ Drawing from Abbate's argument in *Unsung Voices*, Dodge suggests that the music, in separating itself from its static role of imitating the fictional world with the use of dissonances, brings about the epic event on stage by assuming the dynamic role of narrator in the fictional world.²⁰ Both the work of Abbate and Dodge define functions of music in opera similar to the functions of sound in theatre as described by Pavis. Based on this similarity, the concepts introduced by Abbate, Dodge, and semiotic theory provide a new way to analyze the use of sound in modern productions such as Chéreau's *Phèdre*.

Sounds

In addition to the foghorn-like drone examined earlier, Chéreau also uses pitch-based sounds in his production. These are sounds that can be notated and are either played on a synthesizer or with acoustic instruments. One such example appears in act 3, scene 2, at which point Phèdre is on stage alone and offers a prayer to Venus: "Implacable Venus, oh Thou who seest to what a depth of shame I am brought low, am I not low enough?"²¹ A synthesized chord that sounds throughout this scene

19. Leanne Eleanore Dodge, "The Sensible Listener on Stage: Hearing the Operas of Jean-Philippe Rameau through Enlightenment Aesthetics" (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2011), 53–60.

20. *Ibid.*, 57–59.

21. Racine, *Phèdre*, 99.

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underscores her first line in this monologue.²² As seen in example 1, the chord does not possess a strong sonority, as it has no third and is in open position. The notes form a simultaneity built on C with an implied unresolved fourth above the bass. The unresolved fourth and the openness of this sonority gives it a shimmering quality that sets it apart from the unpitched sounds that have proliferated in the production up to this point.

As this is the first moment in which Phèdre directly addresses Venus, it is fitting that her address is elevated through sound. In *Hippolyte et Aricie*, Rameau makes the same distinction between a dialogue and prayer. In act 2, scene 4, after Thésée's line, "Since Pluto will not yield, god of the sea, it is to you I must turn," the music changes.²³ The texture changes suddenly from *récitatif simple* to the *récitatif accompagné* (ex. 2).²⁴ According to the concepts laid out by Dodge, this sudden shift in musical texture from figured bass to orchestral accompaniment allows the music to assume a dynamic role in which Thésée's speech is elevated to prayer. The pitch-based sound Chéreau uses in *Phèdre* accomplishes the same goal, though in this case the transformation is more striking as this sound effect occurs amidst silence, whereas Rameau's music changes in texture.

Another musical sound effect Chéreau uses in his production is a low cello line that appears twice in the production, in scene 6 of act 4 and again in act 5, scene 1.²⁵ Its

22. Racine, *Phèdre*, DVD, 1:06:03–1:07:00.

23. Jean-Philippe Rameau, Act 2, Scene 4, *Hippolyte et Aricie* (Paris: L'auteur, Boivin, Le Cerc, 1733), 71.

24. Charles Dill, "Eighteenth-Century Models of French Recitative," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 120, no. 1 (1995): 233–34.

25. Racine, *Phèdre*, DVD, 1:44:40, 1:54:57.

basic form is notated in example 3. In both instances, the characters speaking refer to the judgment of the gods; Phèdre laments that she cannot escape the gaze of her father, “master of the gods,” while Hippolyte refers to a sacred temple in which he and Aricie will take “solemn vows before the God who there is worshipped.”²⁶ This cello line, analyzed as a leitmotif, fulfils the first function of music in theatre outlined by Pavis in that it creates an atmosphere of divine supervision of the characters on stage. The sound functions as both an indexical sign by signifying judgement and a leitmotif due to its association with the same idea.

The final and longest example of a pitch-based sound effect in Chéreau’s production of *Phèdre* comes in the form of an identifiable musical theme. This theme is first stated as Panope rushes on stage to relay the news of Thésée’s supposed death to Phèdre and Cénone, in act 1, scene 4.²⁷ Following the use of a few unpitched-sounds, the theme, notated in example 4, is played on the synthesizer. The theme returns, this time in full, as Thésée enters in act 3, scene 4.²⁸ This statement is the most profound given that it plays during Thésée’s first appearance onstage and that the theme plays without interruption; no one is speaking at this moment. The third and final use of what we may characterize as Thésée’s theme comes in act 4, scene 3; Thésée is alone on stage and has just sealed Hippolyte’s fate by asking Neptune to punish him for supposedly luring Phèdre into infidelity.²⁹ By using this theme to accompany the news of Thésée’s death,

26. Racine, *Phèdre*, 139, 149.

27. Racine, *Phèdre*, DVD, 0:25:28.

28. *Ibid.*, 1:14:10.

29. *Ibid.*, 1:35:13.

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Thésée's appearance on stage, and Thésée's monologue, Chéreau binds Thésée in the same way Wagner uses different leitmotifs in his *Ring* cycle. This theme operates like Wagner's "Ring" leitmotif. A simple form of the leitmotif appears when the Rhinemaidens mention the ring in the first scene of *Das Rheingold*, but the leitmotif is not stated in its entirety until later in the cycle. The core form of the "Ring" leitmotif as identified by J.K. Holman is represented in example 5.³⁰ Chéreau follows the same pattern in his production of *Phèdre* by using Thésée's theme when another character mentions Thésée; he withholds a full statement of the theme until Thésée appears on stage. Though this theme is not developed to the same degree as Wagner's leitmotifs, Chéreau employs it in a way that creates a similar bond between character and musical gesture. Further, the positioning of this theme achieves a higher significance, much like the cycling of leitmotifs suggested by Abbate. In addition to coinciding with allusions or the appearance of Thésée, each occurrence of this theme is associated with action based on an assumption. The first assumption is that Thésée is dead; the second, that Thésée will not act rashly when punishing Hippolyte;³¹ and the third, that Hippolyte has seduced Phèdre. The theme then can be interpreted as echoing the mistake of acting on one's assumptions. Much like Abbate interprets the cycling of leitmotifs in Wotan's story as music emphasizing the "master trope" of the *Ring* cycle, this theme serves a function of emphasizing the cardinal sin committed repeatedly in *Phèdre*.

30. J.K. Holman, *Wagner's Ring: A Listener's Companion & Concordance* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996), 114.

31. Racine, *Phèdre*, DVD, 1:13:00. Just before Thésée appears, Œnone states: "All else, I'll speak! Thésée, even enraged, will do no worse than banish him."

Having analyzed the pitch-based sounds of Chéreau's *Phèdre*, the first examples of the low-drone and other unpitched-sounds deserve investigation.³² Such unpitched-sounds include a sharp cracking noise, much like the sound of electricity. This sound is first heard at the end of Phèdre's confession of act 1, scene 3 and becomes associated with touch.³³ Another example is the rattling sound first heard in act 1, scene 1, which only occurs in tandem with other sound effects.³⁴ Of these unpitched-sounds, the low drone occurs most frequently in the production, with twenty-three separate occurrences, while the other unpitched-sounds occur fewer than seven times each.

Though this low drone in *Phèdre* gains much of its meaning from its ties to the relationship of Hippolyte and Aricie, it is not linked exclusively to these characters as it is also connected to Phèdre. In fact, Phèdre's entrance and first line, "No further, dear CEnone! Let us stay," is underscored with multiple groans from this unseen terror.³⁵ Later in Phèdre's confession of love for Hippolyte, the sound swells in volume at multiple points in the narrative, most poignantly when she states, "I hate my life; my love is horrible."³⁶ Much like the previous examples, the ominous sound acts as a symbol, in the Piercian sense, of a love fated to never be fully realized. The drone, having no immediately intelligible semantic value, achieves meaning through its constant

32. Here I differentiate unpitched-sounds, those that cannot be accurately notated musically, from pitch-based or musical sounds.

33. Racine, *Phèdre*, DVD, 0:25:58.

34. *Ibid.*, 0:05:20.

35. *Ibid.*, 0:11:16.

36. *Ibid.*, 0:23:18, 0:24:16, 0:25:09.

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juxtaposition with doomed love, first of Aricie and Hippolyte and then of Phèdre and Hippolyte.

The low drone reaches a climax in tandem with the very end of act 5, scene 5 after Thésée's line, "Oh Heaven! C'enone dead, and Phèdre bent on death?" when all of the unpitched-sounds occur simultaneously.³⁷ This event gains more significance through the abrupt change in state of sound from non-diegetic to diegetic, evidenced by Thésée and Panope's reaction of fear and surprise as the sounds intrude on the drama, in addition to Thésée's shift in declamation from one of stunned realization to one of panic. This change and the following narrative by Thérémène define the sonic event as the moment of Hippolyte's presumed death, adding a new dimension to the previous occurrences of these sound effects. The sounds achieve an indexical value in this scene in that all the sounds preceding the climax become, in retrospect, figures pointing to the ultimate end of Hippolyte.

In *Hippolyte et Aricie*, the entire scene of Hippolyte's "death" is shown onstage.³⁸ In act 4, scene 3, an outburst of tremolos and rapid scalar figures interrupts a pastoral divertissement praising the goddess Diana. This sound is closely followed by the appearance of a monster, sent by Neptune to kill Hippolyte. Dodge suggests in her study that the appearance of the monster is not only signalled by the sudden change in musical texture, but is itself caused by the sudden shift.³⁹ Dodge asserts that the music of Rameau pushes its way to the foreground by moving from *diégèse* into the *diégésis* by means of the hunting horn used to introduce

37. Chéreau, *Phèdre*, 2:01:57.

38. Rameau, "Bruit de mer et vents," *Hippolyte et Aricie*, 151.

39. Dodge, "The Sensible Listener on Stage," 59–70.

the pastoral *divertissement*; the inclusion of instrumental material in the parts of the chorus completes this foregrounding effect. Whereas Dodge frames this effect as a deliberate act of music itself, it is more readily interpretable as Rameau speaking through music. As the orchestra becomes more and more a part of the foreground of the *diégèse*, the music of Rameau, by operating within the world of Hippolyte and Aricie, becomes a narrator. Rameau briefly exercises narrative control over the events on stage by gaining the attention of the audience through strategically placed dissonances and sudden changes in musical style.

Dodge interprets the shift in musical texture to tremolos and scalar ascents in this passage as narration of the wind and waves that signal the coming of the monster. It is through this narration that music brings the monster onstage. This scenario operates in a similar narrating capacity as Abbate's form-based reading of the music of Wotan's monologue; however, Wagner's music narrates more quickly. Whereas the music of Rameau enacts its motion over the span of a scene complex, Wagner's music begins to narrate in a single monologue. Wagner's music achieves this streamlining process through the use of leitmotifs, which push themselves to the foreground of the *diégèse* when recognized by the audience. The use of sound in Chéreau's production exhibits further compression of this process. The presence of these sounds in theatre, rather than in opera, increases their significance due to the lack of music on either side of their appearance, thus pushing the sounds to the forefront of the *diégèse*. Although sound design and the musical techniques of Rameau and Wagner differ, they operate on the same principle: sound or music has the ability to narrate after it has achieved the attention of the audience.

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This interpretation also functions in semiotic terms, as the instances operate as indexical and symbolic signs. The scalar figures and tremolos of Rameau's music that precede the appearance of the monster operate as indices, in that they achieve much the same significance as the Piercian example of a knock on the door. In the same instance in *Phèdre*, Chéreau uses similarly disruptive sound effects to signal the arrival of the monster and attributes indexical significance to unpitched sound effects in the same Piercian fashion as Rameau. These sounds in Chéreau's production of *Phèdre* also suggest an interpretation as symbols in that their final juxtaposition with the arrival of the monster defines their sign as Hippolyte's fate. In this interpretation, the sounds resemble the leitmotifs of Wagner in that they undergo a defining moment in which they achieve their significance.

Sound effects can take many forms in theatre. The significance behind these sounds is as diverse as the forms they can take. This diversity makes the application of the analytical concepts of Abbate and Dodge problematic. Can the musical themes present in Chéreau's production of *Phèdre* achieve the same level of semantic value as the leitmotifs of Wagner's *Ring* cycle in one-eighth the time? Analysis according to Dodge's theory of musical narration poses a similar problem of time. Whereas Rameau achieves narrative control over the course of a scene complex, the sound effects in Chéreau's production seldom last longer than one minute. Returning to Pavis, the significance of these sound effects relies on description. Though these sounds may not often resemble or undergo the same developmental processes as the music integral to the operatic tradition, their dramaturgical function may not be so different. If the process of description has streamlined over the centuries that separate Rameau from

Wagner and Wagner from Chéreau, then the modern spectator does not require more than sixty seconds to grasp the meaning of a sound effect. In such cases, operatic analysis may provide a new way of interpreting sound effects, elucidating how these sounds interact with the dramas that they suggest and animate.

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Appendix

Example 1: *Phèdre*, Act 3, Scene 2, 1:06:03-1:07:00.



Example 2: *Hippolyte et Aricie*, Act 2, Scene 4, 71.

Puis que Plu-ton est in-flé-xible, Dieu des

Mers c'est à toi que je dois re-cou-rir;

i v⁶ VI i⁶

iv ii³ $\frac{6}{5}$ V

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