

Turai Tamás

The dramaturgy of audio plays

The hypnotic character as a dramaturgical effect.

An analysis based on Tibor Hajas's radio performance *Touch*

doctoral dissertation theses

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### Questions, premises and the aim of the dissertation

The research topic of the dramaturgy of audio plays covers a huge area. Audio play, as a radio-linked art form, dates back almost a hundred years. It has taken root wherever radio has reached, and various technical and aesthetic standards have been established in line with local conditions. In addition to the myriad variations there are common features. In the field of sound production, the attitudes and creative practices of actors, directors, playwrights, composers, sound engineers and sound designers working in different workshops represent a professional mindset that is aligned with the invisible heritage of tradition, technical innovation and value renewal crystallized in the history of its art form.

Can audio plays be considered an independent art form? How can the genre specificity be captured? Does it have its own dramaturgy? Are there any dramaturgical workshop problems that arise only on the sounding platform, and can an autonomous aesthetics be based on them? The dilemmas discussed in the dissertation are based on these questions.

Radio play, while declining relative to the visual media for decades, still holds important positions. Its obvious features, lack of visuality, ability to process large amounts of text, and special effects arising from the mediality of sound are sources of art form autonomy.

According to the premise of the dissertation, audio play can be defined not only by its shortcomings and limitations compared to other branches of art, but also by its surplus, which makes it suitable to express special effects and content, bases audience relations and media sensitivity that are its special characteristics, and thus entitles artistic and aesthetic autonomy, as well as creative and institutional reflexivity.

The aim of the dissertation is to establish this *invisible* dramaturgy, and to explore the perceptual foundations on which this dramaturgy is born and act. For a close examination, I found the hypnotic effect to be the most suitable phenomenon.

If by hypnosis we mean an interaction in which the subject who is listening with their eyes closed is encouraged by the voice(s) to ignore reality, to focus their consciousness on their inner experiences, and to imagine things that lead to changes in him or her — perhaps it is not difficult to recognize the similarity with the situation of listening to radio plays, and perhaps it is not entirely unfounded to arrange the most important key concepts of audio play dramaturgy, such as personality, intimacy, imagination, representation of consciousness, secondary orality and extended narrativity, around the hypnotic effect and to describe it in this context.

The current foreign literature approaches radiophonic art issues mainly from the perspective of the ways imagination and intimacy work, and through the experiments related to the new forms of aural medium. In accordance with this research trend, the dissertation starts from the phenomenology of sound. An attempt is made to take stock of the main features of the recipient's basic situation or attitude that arises when listening to audio plays and to identify dramaturgical themes that can be deduced from the way the sound exists; a detailed phenomenological description of one of these, the possibilities of hypnotic effects; the analysis hypnotic character and operation in specific audio plays.

Due to the multidirectional approach to the phenomena in question, the method of presentation is not discursive but circular.

## Content summary, structure

Following the structure of the explication, the results of the dissertation can be summarized as follows.

Starting from a minimalist definition of audio plays, the chapter on the dramaturgy of audio plays suggests the synonymous use of the terms “audio play” and “radio play,” and their distinction from “audiobook”.

Reflecting the findings of the literature, the dissertation distinguishes six topics in order to characterize the recipient situation when listening to radio plays. The main phenomenological characters, such as the *lack of vision*, the *constitutive complementary function of the imagination*, the *hermeneutics of the listening position*, the *audience born in orality*, the *mediality of the radio*, and the *potential of the hypnotic effect* are considered in short chapters. The characteristics of the radio play situation are based on the phenomenological context of the way sound exists. These are also discussed in six subsections. The chapters of *Respiration*, *Air, Phenomena and sensation*, *The Evolution*, *Intrauterine effects* and *Inner world* focus on those peculiarities, which are carriers of various artistic expressions, sources of receptive effects, in short, which have aesthetic consequences.

The dissertation arranges the specific phenomena, on which the dramaturgical effect of radio plays are based, around some major concepts, identified and analysed as dramaturgical themes. These are the *inner world*, the *temporality*, the *orality*, the *action with word*, the *narrativity* and the *adaptation*.

The chapter titled *The Hypnotic Effect* is an examination of one of the most specific areas of the radio play situation, which is rooted in the empirical conditions of the sound phenomenon. This part is based on Katalin Varga’s work *The Phenomenology of the Hypnotic Situation*. After clarifying the use of the term “modified consciousness”, starting from the various motifs that appear in the definitions of hypnosis, the dissertation makes an attempt to read the phenomenology of the hypnosis situation dramaturgically, that is, to think about the

components of the hypnosis-situation from the perspective of the possible dramaturgical effects. In doing so, the dissertation discusses the moments relevant to artistic expressions, arranged under the chapter headings *Interaction and Synchronicity*, *Rite*, *Closed Eyes*, *Fairy Tales*, *Imagination*, and *Self-Suggestive Medium*.

After outlining the radio play situation, the phenomenology of sound, the dramaturgical topics, and the dramaturgical reading of the hypnotic situation, the focus of the dissertation shifts to specific audio plays. The analysis of Tibor Hajas's 1979 radio performance *Touch* is carried out parallel with the complex media review of the author's theoretical oeuvre. The dissertation attempts to explore the evolvement process of media awareness, following the changes in Hajas's media interest. It shows the connection between the traumatic moments of biography and the artistic application of sound effects, it shows the appearance and unfolding of the mediality of sound in the texts *Sound Replacement /Sound Prosthesis/*, *[THEATER]*, *The Beauty of Cathode Radiation* and *An Outline of Animated Film Project*.

The relationship between Tibor Hajas and the radio comes to focus of the analysis as a special case of the revealed system of connections. The analysis of the radio-conceived pieces of the oeuvre arches from early poems and the script *Neszték, nyár!* [There you go, summer!] - made for the Hungarian Radio - through an interview with Róbert Barna, which was re-written as a fictional radio play, to the historical and aesthetic processing of the creation of *Touch*, to the mapping of the functioning of the hypnotic character. The chapter concludes with a network-like *reading together* of the text of *Touch* and the call words of the analysis.

As part of the dissertation, a separate chapter deals with the relationship between the attached work and the issues of the dissertation. The radio play version of Antal Szerb's *Journey by Moonlight* and the stage adaptation made from it provide an opportunity to study the phenomenon of the hypnotic effect in two different genres. Following a historical overview of how the radio play was created, the dissertation discusses the functioning of the hypnotic effect in terms of *alignment*, *rhythm*, *narration*, *absorption*, and *self-suggestive reception*. In the case of the theatrical performance, the dissertation examines the same through the roles of *playback*, *time perception*, *darkness*, and *visuality*.

### Professional publications on the topic

Turai, Tamás: Posztumusz jelenlét. A hipnotikus jelleg dramaturgiai hatáslehetőségének vizsgálata Hajas Tibor rádióperformansa alapján. Az életrajzi háttér [Posthumous Presence. An examination of the possible dramaturgical effects of hypnotic character based on Tibor Hajas's radio performance. The biographical background] *Theatron*, 2020/3.

Turai, Tamás: Önzörejkritika – Hajas Tibor rádiója [Self-noise-criticism - the radio of Tibor Hajas] *Balkon*, 2020/4. 14-24.

Turai, Tamás: Káin és Ábel hangszerei – egy költői mítoszértelmezés nyomában [Instruments of Cain and Abel - in the footsteps of a poetic interpretation of myth] *Szombat Online*, 14. 05. 2020. - <https://www.szombat.org/kultura-muveszetek/kain-es-abel-hangszerei-egy-koltoi-mitoszertelmezes-nyomaban> - accessed 06. 09. 2020.

Turai, Tamás: Huszárok Csillaghegyen - Esterházy Péter Így gondozd a magyarodat című hangjátékáról [Hussars on Csillaghegy – on Péter Esterházy's radio play entitled How to care for your Hungarian] *Élet és Irodalom*, LXIII. Volume 46, 15. 11. 2019. 9.

Turai, Tamás: "Nem, ez nem lehet rádiójáték..." - Török Tamás műhelynaplója a Musza Dag negyven napjáról (1969) ["No, this cannot be a radio play ..." - Tamás Török's workshop diary about The Forty Days of Musa Dagh (1969)] *Symbolon*, special issue of the 18th year, 2017. 195-216.

Turai, Tamás: Időm Eörsivel - kirúgásom története. [My time with Eörsi - the story of how I was fired] *Élet és Irodalom*, LXI. Volume 47, 24. 11. 2017. 6.

László, Zsuzsi – Molnár, Péter – Peer, Krisztián – Turai, Tamás – Vajdai, Vilmos: *Keresők* [Seekers] (*Anxiety Ltd.*), Budapest, Scolar Kiadó, 2007.

Turai, Tamás: Petőfi Sándor minden verse. Beszélgetés a Magyar Rádió műsorsorozatáról Szebényi Cecília és Katona Imre József szerkesztőkkel, valamint Csizmadia Tibor rendezővel [All the poems of Sándor Petőfi. Conversation about the Hungarian Radio series with editors Cecília Szebényi and Imre József Katona and director Tibor Csizmadia] *Beszélő*, 1999/3.

Turai, Tamás: Adni jobb, mint kapni - Tilos Rádió [Broadcasting is better than receiving – on the Tilos Radio] *Beszélő*, 1998/6.

Turai, Tamás: Szidpa Bardo - Hajas Tiborról, [Sidpa Bardo – on Tibor Hajas] *Nappali Ház*, 1991/1-2.

### Related artworks

Canter, Jon: *Freud élete Boswell szerint* [Boswell's Life of Freud] (translator/playwright: TT). Director: Vilmos Vajdai. Premiere: TÁP Színház - January 2021. - postponed.

Szerb, Antal: *Utas és holdvilág* [Journey by Moonlight] (playwright: TT). D.: Vilmos Vajdai. Premiere: TÁP Színház - Trafó, 19. 09. 2017.

*Bónusztrek az Utas és holdvilág zenéiből* [Bonustrack from the Music of Journey by Moonlight] (editor: TT) Parts 1-4. CD-077544. First broadcast Petőfi Rádió 29. 01. 2008.

Molnár, Péter: *Keresők, avagy a lány neve* [Seekers, or the girl's name] (*Anxiety Ltd.*) (playwright: TT). D.: Vilmos Vajdai. Premiere: Katona Kamra, 24. 11. 2007.

Molnár Péter: *Keresők, avagy a lány neve* [Seekers, or the girl's name] (*Anxiety Ltd.*) radio play (playwright: TT). D.: Vilmos Vajdai. CD-066775. First broadcast Kossuth FM 11. 03. 2006. 20:35

Erdély, Miklós: *Idő-möbiusz* [Time Möbius] radio play (editor/director: TT). A-806509. First broadcast Petőfi Rádió 28. 11. 2003. 21:04]



*Ne mondj le semmiről! Babits Mihály és Hajas Tibor versei* [Don't give up on anything! Poems by Mihály Babits and Tibor Hajas] radio play (editor/director: TT). A-801563. First broadcast Petőfi Rádió 21. 02. 2003. 21:04

Szerb, Antal: *Útas és holdvilág* [Journey by Moonlight] radio series (playwright: TT). D.: Vilmos Vajdai, CDA-045595 – CDA-045604. First broadcast Kossuth FM 23. 09. 2002. 20:35

*Világok harca -- a hangjáték* [War of the Worlds - the radio play] radio play (editor/director: TT). A-797031. First broadcast Petőfi Rádió 11. 07. 2002. 21:04.

*Bardo Tödöl - Tibeti tanácsok halandóknak és születendőknak, összeállítás Hajas Tibor és Hamvas Béla írásaiból, valamint a tibeti "Halottak könyvéből"* [Bardo Tödöl - Tibetan Advice for Mortals and Those to be born, a compilation of the writings of Tibor Hajas, Béla Hamvas and the Tibetan "Book of the Dead"] radio play (editor/director: TT). A-776892 First broadcast Petőfi Rádió 23. 03. 2000. 21:04.

Györe, Balázs: *Mindenki keresse a saját halálát* [Everyone should seek their own death] radio series (playwright: TT). D.: Gábor Máté. A-718078. First broadcast Bartók Rádió 17. 11. 1995. 14:05.

Molnár, Gergely: *Dream Power – Tudatalatti rét. Válogatás Molnár Gergely írásaiból* [Dream Power - Subconscious meadow. Selection from the writings of Gergely Molnár] radio play (playwright: TT). D.: Monika Bognár. First broadcast Petőfi Rádió, 29. 04. 1995. 17:40

*Merénylet - összeállítás Hajas Tibor szövegeiből* [Assassination - compilation from the texts of Tibor Hajas] radio play (editor/director: TT). A-702248 First broadcast Petőfi Rádió 10. 12. 1994. 17:39