Sound Exploration: Text to Music

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Abstract
This sound exploration repurposes the familiar – written text – and literally translates it into music giving text a new form.

Author/Artist Bio
Raisa Park, BFA Art Center College of Design Raisa Park is process and research driven multi-disciplinary graphic designer practicing in visual communication, spatial, interaction, and emerging media with emphasis in branding and innovation with an educational background in BFA from Art Center College of Design. Her passion lies in rediscovering the meaning of innovation and strategy in the convergence of design and everyday life by crossing various disciplinary platforms through collaborating with other designers or specialists of other fields.

Annalisa Swank, BFA Art Center College of Design Annalisa Swank specialized in Motion Graphics at Art Center and – with a BA in English and Studio Art from Principia College – has a deep interest in language, writing systems, information design and their growing roles in interaction design. She is currently a freelance designer in Los Angeles.

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This study emerged from conversations around the theme of text and sound.

We rediscovered the text beyond what we’re familiar with—
This sound exploration repurposes the familiar – written text – and translates it into music. The aim of the exploration was to give text a form beyond the written and spoken language and create a literal translation from text to music. Additionally, the project sought to make the user a central catalyst in the experience. Preliminary ideation quickly revealed that simple physical tools, which the user could operate seemed most fitting to execute this concept.

Upon initial explorations within sound and code, it was found the dot patterns in Braille have the proper structural formatting to be used as physical input in sound devices, such as music boxes. Because of its physical tactility and its ability to substitute for visually driven communication, Braille was aptly equipped to be used as an input in the exploration.

During subsequent phases of the project, a variety of words and passages (selected for written length and letter pattern, as well as for spoken sound, tone and emotion) were translated into Braille, formatted into narrow columns and laser cut into strips of paper. Fed through a music box, these strips created the musical transcription of the words. Despite the variety within the input, the resulting music always reflected the tone and quality of the music box and no apparent musical patterns were discovered based on the texts' written or spoken properties.

Thus, the direction of the exploration then became less about finding the musical difference between specific words, but instead about highlighting the unique result in the translation of text to music through simple tools. In short, showcasing Braille and a music box as the intermediary between text and music.

This unique musical project was captured on film as a "conversation" between the two designers. The film and additional imagery can be viewed at www.raisapark.com and www.annalisaswank.com.