

Music and Narrative in Radio Drama: A hybrid intermedial form

The output is my score to the 2016 BBC Radio Drama adaptation of John Wyndham's 1953 science fiction novel *The Kraken Wakes*, which was used to drive the narrative. Many of film historians refer to music's equal role in film in creating the audience's experience, citing Bernard Herrmann's work with Hitchcock, or John Williams' music for the *Star Wars* series as examples.

In the 19th century debate over the priority of music or narrative form, Nietzsche went so far as to claim that music 'chooses' the text, claiming Beethoven's choral symphony, as examples of music claiming priority over text. Similarly, Greg Redner's 2013 Deleuzian analysis of film music gives a number of examples of films in which music 'drives the narrative'.

Generally, in radio drama music plays a subordinate role to sound effects and recorded soundscapes. UK-based Savvy Productions' *The Kraken Wakes* for BBC Radio 4 is an attempt at a hybrid radio drama/ orchestral concert piece, in which the normal priority of text and sound effect over music in projecting the narrative was reversed. The writer Val McDermid, and composer Alan Williams agreed sections of the novel which would be appropriate for musical treatment before either score or script had been written. The music, performed by the BBC Philharmonic orchestra, took a leading role in creating the narrative, and the final product existed as a live event, and subsequently, with minimal editing, as a broadcast. Sections of the music appeared in a live broadcast from the BBC Proms in 2015, and in Radio 4's Wireless Nights feature programme. A concert suite was created with accompanying programme for later performance by the orchestra.

Footage from the event and interviews with writer and composer can be seen on this [BBC R and D interactive video](#)