

Chapter 18: If These Walls Had Ears: Applying Sound Rhetorics Through Audio Tours

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Though we've done our best to track down the sound assets and cite them for these sample projects, we found this process very difficult. Before this project, we go over fair use, copyright, and Creative Commons. All of these projects make use of sound files found via the Creative Commons search at <https://search.creativecommons.org>, which led us to many assets (if not all) found at Freesound (freesound.org). Since this project was for experimentation purposes only, students did not keep track of these files or provide citations. That said, I recommend incorporating this element in future iterations, so that students can practice this important element of digital composing.

Most of these samples focused on remediating a video tour created by the office manager of the Latimer House, Travis Gilbert. This video summarized several of the tour's speaking points for a general audience. During client visits, students looked for ways to rework some of these ideas for different audiences and purposes. The audio remediations tended to focus on transforming this text.

3. "Character Tour" by Mike Egan, Devon Peterson, Sharryse Piggot, and Devin Wensevic

This audio tour puts the listener in the presence of one of the main characters of the house: Zebulon Latimer.

Transcript

[Classical string music plays in the background throughout, giving the narration an elegant, classical feeling]

Female Voice 1: Welcome and thanks for listening. This is an audio tour of the drawing room at the Latimer House in Wilmington, North Carolina. For more information about the home or to schedule a visit, please go to the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society at www.lcfhs.org.

Female Voice 2: To walk through the doors of 126 S Third Street is to step into the middle of the 19th century. Today the house stands open to visitors. No remaining family live to call it home. This house was built in 1852 by Zebulon Latimer. Zebulon was known for his shrewd business dealings in the naval stores trade, and even shrewder marriage to Elizabeth Savage of the prosperous Savage family. Although unoccupied, it is far from empty; the Latimer's may no longer live here, but the furniture and decorations that remain in the home were once theirs.

Male Voice (actor playing Zebulon Latimer): Welcome to my home. Come in. Come in. Please, let's retire to the drawing room. Opulent, isn't it? Only the best that money can buy in this progressive age. This is the most modern technology available. Please don't mind the lack of crown molding. Not very proper for such a proper estate. But I digress. All of the sculptures we have here have been taken from areas that we have colonized. If I could draw your attention to the portraits just above your head? That is my wife and I—Elizabeth. Lovely, isn't she? On the opposite wall, you'll find a portrait of her uncle Henry. Brilliant businessman. I dare say, it was his deft navigation of the local economy that allowed us to live so comfortably.

Female Voice 3: The drawing room where Zebulon met important guests is to your right as you walk in the front door. As you enter the room, you'll notice the red velvet, burnished gold, and the gray white of marble. Gradually, the dark wood and rich colors

come into focus. This acted as a stage where Zebulon showcased his wealth and respectability as a contributing member of the new municipality of Wilmington. From the way the room is lit to an ornate porcelain punch bowl to a marble bust of Apollo, the artifacts in this room reaffirm Mr. Latimer's importance. Although the house now acts as a glimpse into the past, in its prime the Italianate-inspired architecture was a picture of progressiveness. A gasolier emits light from the center of the ceiling; its crystals dangle, casting light further, and the convex mirror on the wall, patchy now from age, also helps. For the gasoliers to work, gas traveled through tunnels from an upstream coal factory winding through and beneath Wilmington. The gas was piped right into this house. One of the Latimer's slaves would light the gasolier in the evening, using a wick that sits beside the fireplace.

Zebulon: I see you admiring the punch bowl. It is exquisite. A bit gaudy, perhaps. But such an interesting piece for visitors to wonder about. It has come a long way. All the way from the Orient. Is it not fascinating what all these new trade routes have made available to us? Makes one feel like the Marco Polo of his own time.

Female Voice 2: In the room is a porcelain punch bowl decorated in pinks and greens directly from the Far East. Other decorations in the room also have Oriental designs. Zebulon kept these items in his drawing room for a reason. These artifacts had to travel long distances through recently opened trade routes. Displaying these items showed that Zebulon was a man of means. What did the Latimers talk about in the time before radio and television? Maybe they discussed the bust of Apollo. Maybe that was an icebreaker for them. Or maybe they talked about the wild advancements in technology at the time, like the steam engine locomotive. There were no crosses on the walls or any iconography in sight. But the Latimers' faith was public knowledge. After all, Zebulon was one of the founders of St. Paul's Church and even had a reverend brought in to lead their congregation.

Female Voice 3: There's been so much said about the Latimers. Some of it is documented and you can feel pretty confident that it happened. So many stories have bubbled up to help us see the past in a better light. Wanting to believe the stories doesn't make them any less of a work of fiction. If you look at the top of the wall where it meets the ceiling, you will notice that the house lacks crown molding. In the 1980s, someone loosely connected with the Latimers claimed that instead of continuing to furnish her new home, Elizabeth was driven to purchase a slave family who would have been split up. It has been supposed that Latimer was an abolitionist; he took a slave to New York where she was emancipated. After his death in 1851, he left his children a handful of Northern investments. There's speculation about what Latimer did during the Civil War, leaving many of these interesting anecdotes with dead ends and little to no corroborating evidence.

Female Voice 1: For all this room tells us about the Latimers, there's much more we don't know. Upstairs in the archives are a row of filing cabinets—all the hard evidence we have about the family that once lived here. We can pick through the stories with a fine-tooth comb and separate the revisions and the hearsay from what really happened. The story will never be complete, though. In this drawing room, a busy oriental rug is underfoot. The wallpaper is thick, vertical stripes of alternating beige and a lighter beige. Four short-stemmed crystal glasses sit on a table in front of a fainting couch. Above them hang two portraits: one of Zebulon Latimer and the other of his wife Elizabeth. They sit composed, their expressions thoughtful.

Zebulon: I do hope you enjoy exploring the rest of my home. It is quite grand. This is where I raised my family. Elizabeth bore me nine children. Though sadly, only four made it to adulthood. This home is my legacy. It is a testament of its time. A modern marvel.