

Dr. Teeth's Public Address System
A mixed up seminar on Federico García Lorca's El Publico, 17.10.01

Studio mix (70 min 30 sec) playlist:

Intro sample adapted from *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (dir. Baz Luhrmann 1996)
Basement Jaxx "Romeo" (XL 2001)
[incl. samples of "The Muppet Show"
and **Public Domain feat. Chuck D** "Rock the funky beats" (Xtra 2001)]
Basement Jaxx "Red alert" (XL 1999)
DJ Rap "Good to be alive" *Deep Dish RMX* (Work 1999)
[incl. sample of **Tchaikovsky** "Romeo & Juliet" *Hooked on Classics RMX* (K-Tel 1981)]
Donna Summer "I feel love" (Casablanca 1977)
S'Express feat. Karen Finley "Theme from S'Express" *Aquarius RMX* (Rhythm King)
Eurythmics "Sexcrime (1984)" (Virgin 1984)
Sneaker Pimps "Spin spin sugar" *Armand van Helden's dark garage RMX* (Clean Up 1996)
Nuyorican Soul "Runaway" *Mongoloids in space RMX* (Blue Thumb 1997)
[incl. sample from **Frankie Goes to Hollywood** "Two tribes" (Island 1984)]
Madonna "Nothing really matters" *Club 69 future dub RMX* (Maverick 1998)
Messiah "Temple of dreams" (Kickin 1992)
Capoiera Twins "4 x 3" (React 1999)
[Unknown] "9 pm till I break" (white label)
Sarah McLachlan "Fear" Hybrid RMX (Netzwerk 2001)
Bass Masters "Bass bug" vocal RMX (white label)
Rozalla "Everybody's free 2001" (TPC002)
Acen "Surrender" (white label)
Acen "Trip II the moon" *Kaleidoscopiklimax RMX* (Profile 1994)
Sinead O'Connor "I am stretched on your grave" *Dr. Teeth's 45 rpm RMX* (Ensign 1989)

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Dr. Teeth's Public Address System: An Annotated Playlist

"A rhyme I learnt even now
Of one I danced withal." --*Romeo & Juliet* 1.5.144-45

1. Intro sample taken from *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (dir. Baz Luhrmann 1996)

A sample that doesn't appear in the live seminar mix, this intro sample demonstrates the value of nonlinear digital sound editing (e.g. Sonic Foundry's Soundforge, with which this mix CD was recorded and produced) in interpreting source samples. In this case, the sample in question -- the first line of *Romeo and Juliet*, as spoken in Luhrmann's film -- was digitally rewritten to play with the sense of the word "house" in establishing context for the mix to follow.

In creating a prologue for this mix, adapting a sample from the prologue to this particular film also feels right to me inasmuch as the film has mediated the way I think about its source text ever since I first saw it. In a sense, Luhrmann's film became one of the critical tools with which I approached this "mixed up" seminar: in returning repeatedly to its two soundtrack albums in thinking through the mix, I discovered that one of the tracks under consideration (see Rozalla's "Everybody's free 2001" below) was featured in the film in an *a cappella* version.

2. Basement Jaxx "Romeo" (XL 2001)

-incl. samples of "The Muppet Show" and Public Domain feat. Chuck D "Rock the funky beats" (Xtra)

This is the track that made me think I could even *think* about approaching my seminar on *The Public* this way. By referring to her song's subject as Romeo, the singer situates herself as Juliet -- but a jilted Juliet, whose Romeo, it turns out, is more like the Hamlet that America now wishes not to be seen as: "You know I wish you'd make your mind up ... You're neurotic like a yo-yo." As he does in Lorca's play, the character of Romeo thus assumes a role other than the one with which Shakespeare's audience is familiar. And in the singer's choral identification of her lover as Romeo strictly in the past tense -- "You used to be my Romeo" -- the name Romeo is to be understood metaphorically, as an idealized (ironically so, after the popular manner noted by Andrew Anderson [70]) but transient subject position which the lover has since abandoned. The track thus resonates powerfully with the theme of frustrated love that so many critics interpret as one of the chief themes of Lorca's play (Nadal 82; Edwards 75).

In addition, as a woman's monologue, the lyrics of this track reminded me of the curious fact that in *The Public*, Romeo doesn't speak at all -- the character only figures in the play as an offstage reference (except in critical interpretations of the Red Nude in Scene 5 as Romeo [cf. Anderson 73 and Newton 133]). And as the monologue of an implied kind of Juliet, this track revived for me a notion I'd entertained (long before beginning this course) about putting together a mix of tracks featuring female vocals exclusively. The fact that such a mix would parody Lorca's parody of Elizabethan casting practices (Monegal 209; Soufas 78) decisively resolved the matter.

3. Basement Jaxx "Red alert" (XL 1999)

"Ain't nothing going on but a history," sings the vocalist of another fine Basement Jaxx house track. In the context of a track whose title and lyrics are rife with references to panic, this line sounds to me like a dismissive defense of house music to its detractors as perpetrators of a "moral panic" that scapegoats house and techno culture as a symptom of debauched youth. That this history is rooted so firmly in gay club culture lends the song a wry defiance as a testament to the fact that disco never died, it continues to survive -- it has indeed flourished -- as house.

"And the music keeps on playing on and on." Not unlike the repetition of the white horse's mad ditty in Scene 3. Another thematic resonance here is in the song's unsettling juxtaposition of an ebullient, upbeat track and lyrics whose repetition of assurance in the face of some unidentified menace leads us to doubt the guarantee of any such assurance.

4. DJ Rap "Good to be alive" Deep Dish RMX (Work 1999) -incl. sample of Tchaikovsky "Romeo & Juliet" (K-Tel 1981)

I included this track (featured in the soundtrack to the post-*Trainspotting*, pre-*Groove* ravesploitation film *Go!* [dir. Doug Liman 1999]) as much for its rich texture of beats and samples (the signature sounds of Deep Dish's brand of so-called "progressive" house) as for its lyrics, which I still can't fully discern. But the line "I love to love you" (a reference, perhaps, to the eponymous Donna Summer disco classic) is repeated, filtered, looped and tweaked to such a degree that it assumes some of the orgasmic feel of its disco intertext and also resonates strongly with the first line of White Horse 1's song: "Love. To love. Love" (Lorca 114).

I mixed in Tchaikovsky's "Romeo & Juliet" theme (as performed for *Hooked on Classics* by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and, I strongly suspect, a drum machine) here, mostly because I could

(there aren't enough connections made between techno and classical music, in my humble opinion), but also because I'd like to signal that I'm well aware that the lion's share of musical adaptations of Shakespeare belong to vastly different genres: classical music, which has the handicap of history going for it; and rock ballads. However, Lou Reed's "Romeo had Juliet" (*New York* [Sire 1989]) did not lend itself nearly as well to the flow of this mix.

5. Donna Summer "I feel love" (Casablanca 1977)

It only made sense to follow up the previous number with Donna Summer, but I far prefer this track to the aforementioned one. Widely recognized -- both for Giorgio Moroder's innovative electronic instrumentation and for the looped, non-lyrical discontinuity of Summer's improvised vocals -- as techno before its time (Reynolds 25), "I feel love" amplifies the orgasmic tone of the previous track with an almost autoerotic atmosphere eerily enhanced by the track's minimal beat and mechanistic pulse. The song retains for me a deeply surrealistic sound, inasmuch as the warm, lush tones of Summer's voice begin to sound disembodied in a soundscape that's arguably more fitting for car commercials or deep-sea wildlife documentaries.

6. S'Express "Theme from S'Express" Aquarius RMX (Rhythm King)

That performance artist Karen Finley supplied the original vocals for this track lends it a note of theatrical interest. The theme of love and desire becomes explicitly sexual here; one thinks of how Juliet turns the tables on the horses' amorous advances (Lorca 115).

This track includes the first of only two intrusions of a male voice into the mix; as the track cuts out, a male voice replies to a chorus of "Aw, that's bad" with "No -- that's good." Presumably, what is being debated as bad or good here is the acid house sound of which this track was both a seminal anthem and an insider's campy critique (Reynolds 57). In the UK, acid house marked the crossing over of a music genre previously identified exclusively with gay (and predominantly) black America to massive pop-chart success and thus sparked all the usual debates about "keeping it real" versus "selling out" (Bussman 33) -- a debate also negotiated by Lorca's "unperformable" play: "The experimental plays witness a significant realignment of the theater functions by means of a strategic retreat to a private theater that makes no concession to the "horizon of expectations" of public audiences (Soufas 69).

7. Eurythmics "Sexcrime (1984)" (Virgin 1984)

Like disco, the "synth-pop" that has retroactively been marketed as "retro" or "'80s" music harbours many instances of "techno avant la lettre" (Reynolds); unlike disco, it doesn't usually get mentioned in histories of techno, rave and DJ culture. This isn't to say it should be included. But it's interesting to me not only that songs like "Sexcrime" were pop chart hits in 1984, when house music was a nascent form, but also that mainstream commercial success continues to evade most house and techno producers, despite the best efforts of A&R types to put Fatboy Slim tracks in every new teen film (or of iconoclastic self-promoters like Moby to supply the audio wallpaper for every TV ad).

I included this song because I like how its deconstructed vocals anticipate the "vocal science" of current UK garage, and because it speaks to the pervasive culture of repression that made Lorca's explicitly gay play so daring, controversial (and impossible to perform) for its time -- a time in which homosexuality would literally have been a sex crime (if not the kind of sex crime depicted in Orwell's *1984*).

8. Sneaker Pimps "Spin spin sugar" Armand van Helden's dark garage RMX (Clean Up 1996)

With its lyrical problematization of naming, persona and identity, this track echoes not only Juliet's famous "What's in a name?" speech (2.2.43), but also Newton's critique of the critical consensus on the folding screen (Lorca 108) as a "discovering process" whereby characters "reveal" their "true" identities. Newton correctly observes that this screen actually dramatizes "a succession of costumes that fail to reveal a true identity or essence while foregrounding the form as an empty sign" (130).

With its baleful bassline, this track was initially included to amplify the affective turn away from "happy" sounds toward "dark" sounds with which I intend to suggest (rather pathetically, I realize) the tragic turn common to *The Public* and *Romeo & Juliet*. However, the track's lyrical troubling of identity supplements its moody melody with lyrics that I find extraordinarily rich for dance music -- the result is no less than a speed garage analogue for Antonio Monegal's persuasive argument that the "real" tragedy represented in is the tragedy of representation (214).

**9. Nuyorican Soul "Runaway" Mongoloids in space RMX (Blue Thumb 1997)
-incl. sample of Frankie Goes to Hollywood "Two tribes" (Island 1984)**

"Mongoloids in space" is an alter ego for Armand van Helden, which explains the similarity of this track to the previous one, and why they mix so well together. But this tune made me think of Romeo's exile (3.3), but the generally peppy sound of this track's bassline makes running away sound like a vacation. So I added the air-raid siren sample from Frankie Goes to Hollywood to sustain the "dark" sound toward which the mix gradually moves.

Obviously a lot of the interpretive extrapolation offered here supplements, in a secondary fashion, a mix that was initially put together on feeling, intuition and that nebulous unknown quantity, "vibe." I mention this now in order to preface an early realization in drafting this mix: that the "tragic turn" I was striving for in music had a lot to do with "playing out" my mood and emotional state after the horror of 9.11. Despite the fact that the concentration required to spin a tight set has become, for me, a blissful respite from the dread and anxiety that can so easily preoccupy me these days, the set I was working on began to articulate (in turns, so to speak) my reaction to our precipitous new world disorder. Hence the rewinds to tunes like "Two tribes" and "Sexcrime" -- references to the Reagan-era cold war, to the last time I recall having been acquainted with the dread of global conflict on a day-to-day basis. But I digress...

10. Madonna "Nothing really matters" Club 69 future dub RMX (Maverick 1998)

Selected initially because no mix of female vocal tracks should fail to represent Detroit's greatest export, and because I needed a spare, "dubbier" track to introduce the relatively busy one that follows, this remix of Madonna's 1998 chart hit nevertheless presents an oddly equivocal lyric on the theme of love, combining punk nihilism with a Beatles quote: "Nothing really matters/ Love is all we need."

11. Messiah "Temple of dreams" (Kickin 1992)

This is not only one of my favourite tracks of all time, it also happens to sample This Mortal Coil's cover of Tim Buckley's "Song to the Siren" and the resulting loop evokes an odd *mise en abyme* of subconscious desire, which I feel ties in nicely with both the reading of *The Public* as the Director's dream (Delgado & Edwards 11) and with Mercutio's famous speech about Queen Mab (1.4.53-98).

12. Capoiara Twins "4 x 3" (React 1999)

Foregrounding the breakbeats that are present but muted in the prior track, this "jazzcore" UK garage cover of an apparently familiar standard (not familiar to me; I'd love it if the class could help identify this track's

source) sets its philosophy of love and life to an ebullient bassline. It's an unarguably happy track, apparently moving against the grain of the emotional trajectory I'm going for, but its introduction is sufficiently minimal so as not to bite the track being mixed out, and the breaks are introduced to disrupt the 4/4 house beat that has given the set until now a propulsive sense of momentum.

13. [Unknown] "9 pm till I break" (white label)

The bastard spawn of 2 Live Crew-style hip hop and Afrika Bambaata-style electro, the Miami bass sound gets no respect from serious techno heads. But its bowel-shaking beat, practically onomatopoeic as the urban soundtrack of libido, can make for phenomenally catchy party music, and it informs a lot of production among techno's breakbeat subgenres (as the rhythm to Rio funk's rap, it has also spread like wildfire throughout Brazil's favelas at the notorious funk balls). This track is more of a techno crossover than strictly raw bass, sampling ATB's acoustic house anthem "9 p.m. till I come" (*Movin' Melodies* [Radikal 1999]).

For my purposes, the raw bass rhythm and the cheesy porno vocal sample combine in a track that couldn't sound less like it was actually produced by a woman; Yolanda Rivera's vocal loop sounds like a woman's croon but reads like a blatant scream about what men (or male club music producers) think women want. This track also mixes wickedly with the subsequent track (which was actually produced by a woman).

14. Sarah McLachlan "Fear" Hybrid RMX (Nettwerk 2001)

My problem with "Good to be alive" repeats here – I can't make out all the vocals in Hybrid's gorgeously remixed version of Sarah McLachlan's "Fear" (the original version of which appears on *Fumbling towards Ecstasy* [Nettwerk 1994]). But the track certainly does conjure the tragic turn I want the set to take, and it also provides a number of beatless moments that allow me to increase the pitch (in order to mix in records I couldn't include otherwise). McLachlan's evocation of morning also resonates for me with that found in *Romeo & Juliet* (2.2.2).

15. Bass masters "Bass bug" vocal RMX (white label)

A remix of Ramsey & Fen's UK garage anthem "Love bug" (2000), this track typifies what "vocal science" is all about -- serious lyrical deformity that takes an otherwise gushy cliché like "Lover, it's a crazy thing

you do to me" and makes you wonder what crazy is doing what to whom. And, unlike its snappy source, this remix's bassline is quite disorienting, nearly queasy.

16. Rozalla "Everybody's free 2001" (TPC002)

This track is the nod to Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*. A textbook deconstruction of classic "rave" hardcore (circa 1992 -- see the Messiah track above), this song has it all: the air sirens, whistles, high-end stabs, thundering ragga bassline and feebly utopian lyrics. It's more parody than tribute. And it's funky as all get-out.

17. Acen "Surrender" (white label)

A different type of vocal science surfaces here, where lyric fragments from some other song I can't identify have been sped up and tweaked. This has been a signature of Acen's production since their UK hardcore crossover hits in 1992 and 1993, but whereas the earlier tracks featured chipmunks -on-helium vocal samples to speak to a culture that was turning from rave to pure rush (Reynolds 212), the use of pitched-up vocals in a track about sexual desire is a lot less clear. Are we listening to love infantilized? At any rate this track also stands on its own as a deeply surreal bit of music.

18. Acen "Trip II the moon" Kaleidoscopiklimax RMX (Profile 1994)

A more poignantly melodic remix of an irresistible rave crowd-pleaser, I included this track because it meshes well with the other Acen number (it even sounds to my untrained ear like it may be in the same key) and because the *double entendre* of its refrain (explicated provocatively by Reynolds in relation to Ecstasy culture as a simulacrum of genuine emotion [211]), like that of "Spin spin sugar", also points to Monegal's tragedy of representation: "I can't believe these feelings."

Of course, in its title this track is also an intertextual nod to Lorca's eponymous screenplay.

19. Sinead O'Connor "I am stretched on your grave" (Ensign 1989)

I should turn this into a dub plate or I'll wreck the album. This sign-off sounds a lasting tragic note that needs little by way of thematic explication. But on a formal level, the deliberate playing of records at wrong speeds is a reference to the low-tech innovations by which house music evolved into jungle

(Reynolds 136) and by which new genres continue to take shape (e.g. ghetto tech, a blend of techno, booty house, hip hop and jungle).

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Some contexts for Mark McCutcheon's seminar on Federico García Lorca's *The Public*

2:30-5:30 pm, 17 October 2001
Lower Massey 100, University of Guelph

Welcome to the front porch.

As a Surrealistic adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet*, Federico García Lorca's *El Público* (*The Public*) drastically defamiliarizes its source text (Fischlin & Fortier 105). In doing so, *The Public* refers to other intertexts (notably *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and ultimately stages the problem of theatrical representation itself. In the context of our course, Lorca's play offers a clear challenge to question -- indeed, to defamiliarize -- the parameters of the seminar as its own kind of staged performance. So the question that immediately occurred to me when considering how to produce a seminar on Lorca's play was this:

How might a Surrealistic adaptation of *The Public* take shape?

Obviously, there's no single answer here. Surrealism's signal feature as an aesthetic practice is improbable juxtaposition; this is perhaps best summarized in what Alexis Lykiard calls "the most famous of all Surrealist touchstones" (23): "the chance meeting on a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella" in Lautréamont's *Maldoror* (193). Furthermore, Rafael Martínez Nadal argues that Lorca's surrealism is better understood as an "auxiliary tool" (29) in his writing, not as an expression of the psychoanalytic and revolutionary program detailed in the manifestoes of André Breton (Balakian 131).

To my pop-culture-addled brain, Lautréamont's Surrealist touchstone resonates (perhaps improbably) with a comment by Derrick May that has become a touchstone for defining the sound of techno: "George Clinton and Kraftwerk caught in an elevator with only a sequencer to keep them company" (quoted in Shapiro 111). As an amateur DJ, I began to wonder what kind of set might take up Lorca's challenge.

So I've planned next week's seminar as a DJ set in which the track selections and mix will comprise the commentary on *The Public* and its Shakespearean sources. Ideally, class participation in the context of this seminar would take the form not only of post-performance discussion, but also of dancing, conversing and socializing during the performance. (Of course, the actual nature of participation remains to be seen.)

Because the nature of the commentary may initially seem inaccessible to those unfamiliar with house and techno music, I'm providing this outline to ensure that we have some common ground for discussion.

(I would also direct anyone who's curious to <http://www.ishkur.com/features/music/guide.htm> for a thorough and thoroughly irreverent guide to the myriad genres and sub-genres of electronic music, complete with illustrative sound samples.)

I can't tell you how to listen to house music and I certainly can't tell you to like it, but I can point out a few things about it that will be relevant for us:

1. Contrary to popular belief, it's not at all devoid of words and lyrics -- house music may have distinguished itself in its mechanistic emphasis on beats and bass over lyrics and melody, but the genre's first seminal tracks articulate, in gospel-style monologues, hedonistic exhortations and

vocal loops, a philosophy of community, acceptance and love. Many of the tracks I've selected feature vocals that resonate with the themes and scenes of *The Public* and *Romeo & Juliet* (as it turns out, one selection is a version of a song featured in Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film *Rome + Juliet*). Having said this, it should be noted that a lot of innovation in the vocal content of recent house music has been devoted to what Simon Reynolds ("Feminine Pressure") calls the "vocal science" of deconstructing and defamiliarizing lyrics and samples through sound editing.

2. It is especially critical for understanding a house music set as commentary on Lorca that we recognize house music's gay origins. (Brewster & Broughton's *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life* and Simon Reynolds' *Generation Ecstasy* are just two of several books that provide detailed accounts of house music's development in Chicago's gay underground of the early 1980s.)

3. The folding screen in *The Public* -- as "a machine that produces transformations" (Monegal) -- finds a parallel in the practice of mixing records, inasmuch as "transforming" is understood in DJ culture as a technique of rhythmically inserting a fragment of one track (i.e. the record the DJ is cueing up) into the sound system's main signal (i.e. the record the audience currently hears). It's an accidental synonymy of language, but one I find interesting nevertheless.

4. This seminar will thus juxtapose two aesthetic practices of juxtaposition: that of surrealistic theatre and that of the house DJ. May's comment about techno's formal properties apply equally well not only to house music (techno's midwest US cousin), but to the medium in which these genres (and the sub-genres they've spawned) remain most compellingly communicated for their core audiences: that is to say, turntablism, the craft of the DJ, in which a series of records are sequentially juxtaposed and sometimes superimposed as a process that May describes as "making music with music."

5. The compelling momentum of Lorca's play seems to inhere, at least in part, in how his characters interact with and react to each other according to the forms of recognizable human conduct, despite the fact that the familiar content of those forms (logical discourse, emotional articulation) has been displaced by a system of highly figurative and lyrical language. Similarly, a house music set tends to work best for its audience not as a staged spectacle (in which the DJ's machinations somehow command the crowd's unbroken attention with all the drama of an electrician soldering a circuit board), but rather as an affective context that facilitates community and communication among audience members through a shared experience (in all the generality that term implies) of music. It's in this spirit that I offer my seminar on *The Public*, and I look forward to funking up the place with you all next week. Thank you for indulging these prefatory remarks.

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Playlist (punctuate with bare-bones Act/Scene references):