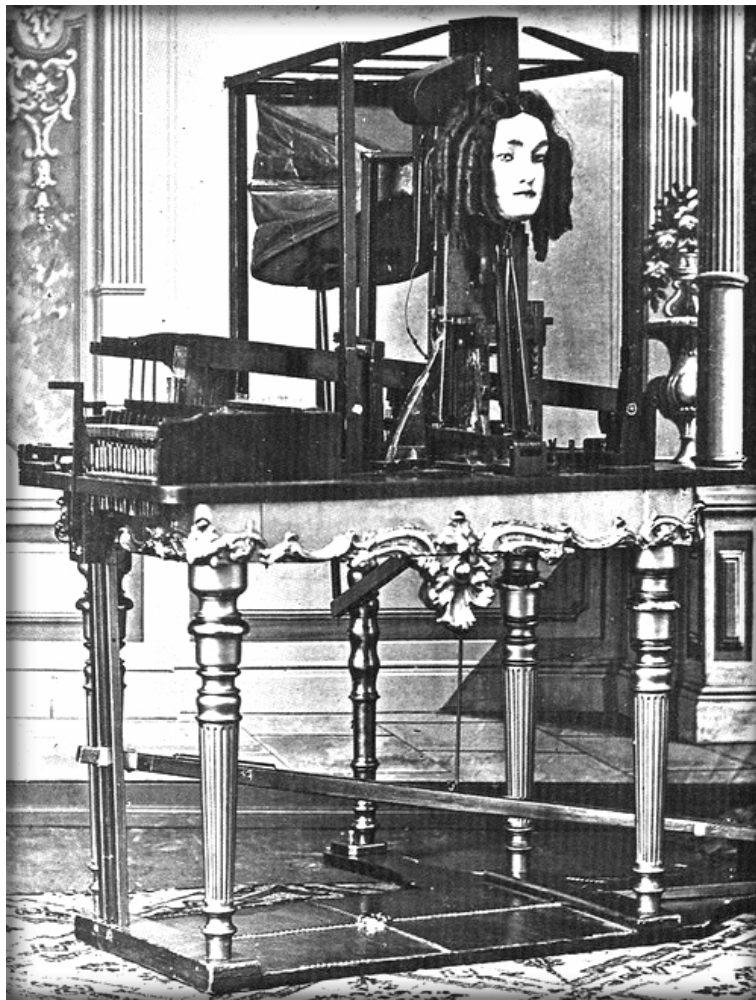


# Euphonia: A Talking Machine

## *Game Design Document*

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Document version 0: Created 17/03/2020



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# ***Game Design***

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## **Summary**

Joseph Faber's incredible speaking machine, long thought lost or destroyed, has been found in an attic room. But how is she still functioning, and what happened to her owner?

## **Gameplay**

When the player enters the room, Euphonia will open her eyes and spring to life, asking an opening line to initiate conversation. The player will then be able to ask Euphonia a variety of questions, with the goal of discovering where Euphonia came from and what happened to her creator, Joseph Faber. If the player strays from relevant questions, Euphonia will mechanically repeat the same question, repeatedly becoming more insistent until they return to relevant conversational topics or ask her to stop. Similarly, if they seem stuck or confused, she'll offer conversational nudges to get them back on track (See [narrative design](#) below for more detail on this). There will be two main outcomes – that the player uncovers the incantation required to free Euphonia from her mechanical prison or failing to do so and having her declare that they are trapped together forever. Each pathway could include further smaller variations, such as the player discovering the incantation but refusing to speak it, or uncovering one which exorcises rather than frees her. In future iterations, there could also be environmental cues to prompt conversation points. The full experience will be relatively short, taking only five to ten minutes to play through from beginning to end.

## **Mindset**

The player should feel uneasy throughout and under pressure to keep the conversation flowing. This will be encouraged through visuals (Euphonia's uncanny appearance and the appearance of the room), audio (Euphonia's voice, which will likely be quite unsettling even if we don't do anything to it!; ambient sounds – Euphonia will creak and wheeze as she moves and speaks, there might be wind whistling outside, etc) and mechanics (Euphonia's repetitions perhaps coming faster and louder to encourage a sense of panic in the player).

# ***Narrative Design***

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## **Overview**

Egyptian Hall, London, 1846: astronomer-turned-inventor Joseph Faber shows his incredible talking machine, The Euphonia to the public. The head and torso of a Turkish man on a wooden framework, the machine speaks when Faber presses its keys. The audience are mildly entertained, but they find the machine's voice hard to make out and monotonous. Faber smashes his machine and begins again.

The new Euphonia is very different. Dark ringlets and a sonorous voice like the grave. She unsettles everyone who sees her. There is speculation regarding Faber's shabby, disheveled appearance and his obvious affection for this talking machine. Faber disappears, and his son-in-law adopts both his name and Euphonia. The new Faber strikes up a deal with PT Barnum to help Euphonia reach a wider audience, but the crowds are disturbed by Euphonia's wheezing voice and expressionless face, and interest dwindles. Eventually, Barnum tires of Euphonia's lack of public appeal, and Faber Jr tries to find a buyer for Euphonia. He apparently succeeds, but her location is unknown.

Until now. Abandoned in the attic room of a house up for auction, the player stumbles across the machine, only to find that she is perfectly capable of speaking without Faber's input. How is this possible? What happened to Faber all those years ago? How will the player leave now that the attic door has slammed shut?

## **Narrative Flow**

1. Euphonia says: "Oh! Did father send you?" to initiate conversation flow.
2. Player may say 'yes' 'no' or ask a relevant question such as 'who is father?' 'who are you?' or 'where am I?'
3. If player is silent, Euphonia will repeat: "Are you going to speak to me or not?" over and over to teach the player to respond verbally.
4. If the player asks an unrelated or unrecognised question or statement, Euphonia will repeat some other stock phrase such as: "Where is my father?" or "What year is it?" to return to relevant conversation topics.
5. The player may uncover elements of the backstory given above by asking questions and paying attention to Euphonia's answers, noticing when she lies and confronting her with it.
6. As mentioned in the Gameplay section, this will eventually result in one of two outcomes – freeing Euphonia or becoming trapped with her.
7. Full conversation flow available via Twine prototype.

# Technical

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## Screens

### 1. Title Screen

To include game title, settings button, help button, credits button

- a. Settings: [Presumably relating to Quest/VR set-up? Is this largely already defined by Quest/Unity or would we need to decide?]
- b. Help: To include very brief outline of goal, e.g. Find out how Euphonia came to be here.  
Could also include a few brief tips, E.g. Try asking Euphonia who her 'father' is.
- c. Credits: To include team, InGAME, partner universities, UKRI and relevant tools used, e.g. Spirit.

### 2. Pause Screen

- a. [Could either reuse the Title Screen, simply adding a 'resume' button, or create a custom screen.]

Any other screens required?

## Controls

Menu will be controlled with the Quest/VR controller. Once in game, all commands will be issued verbally, unless the player wishes to quit or pause using the control. [Might it also be possible to offer menu commands through voice recognition? Would this be an option within settings?]

## Mechanics

Euphonia's choice of conversational topics will all be handled via Spirit's Character Engine. Euphonia will be aware of various relevant people and events using Spirit's Entity system ([see Entities for a full list](#)). Conditional access to scenes will gate certain topics until either the player or Euphonia mentions them. The endings will branch from this gated content. Fragments will be used to provide non-branching variation in phrasing of conversational topics. Spirit will also provide Euphonia's voice in the first instance, and voice recognition. (Both these functions may later be re-implemented with bespoke features).

# ***Environment Design***

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## **Attic**

### **1. Mood**

- a. Dark, uncertain, foreboding

### **2. Objects**

- a. Interactive
  - i. Euphonia
- b. Ambient
  - i. Window (indistinct dark view beyond)
  - ii. Candlesticks/ oil lamps
  - iii. Furniture (e.g. period-suitable table and chairs, artwork, ornaments)
  - iv. Furnishings (e.g. curtains, dust sheets)

## **Game Flow**

1. Player enters game
2. After a couple of seconds (or perhaps detecting when the player is moving their head away so as to be more creepy?) Euphonia opens her eyes and lets out a low wheeze
3. Euphonia says: "Oh! Did father send you?" to initiate [conversation flow](#).
4. Once conversation is complete, room will fade to darkness and credits will play. This will be skippable with player returned to menu after skipping.



# ***Development***

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## ***Spirit Character Engine***

### **Entities**

1. *Topic*
  - a. Euphonia's creation
  - b. Joseph's disappearance
  - c. Euphonia's reawakening
  - d. Fame
  - e. National anthem
2. *Person*
  - a. Professor Joseph Faber
  - b. Euphonia
  - c. Faber's niece
  - d. The New Professor Faber
  - e. P.T. Barnum
3. *Event*
  - a. The Exhibition
  - b. Joseph's suicide
  - c. Barnum and Bailey Circus
4. *Place*
  - a. The Attic
  - b. The Exhibition Hall
  - c. The Circus Tent
  - d. Faber's Home

### **Fragments**

[To be fleshed out during development phase – will be available via Twine prototype].

***Unity***

**[Requirements TBC]**

***Quest***

**[Requirements TBC]**

# Art Design

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## Style Attributes

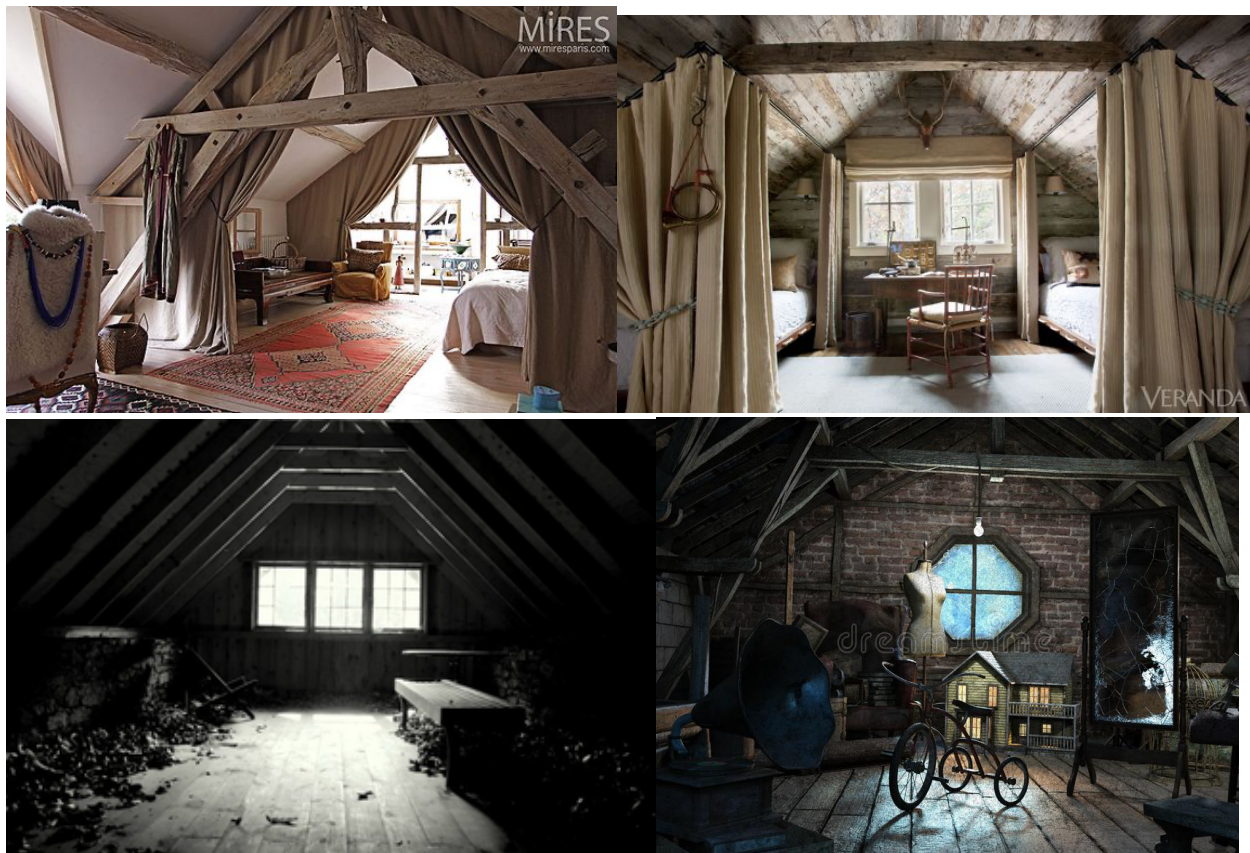
Can simplify or elaborate room as required to control scope (e.g. could stick to just items in the textures and characters sections to simplify and reduce the number of assets required)

## Colour palette

Dark purples and reds for furnishings; dark wood for floors, furniture etc; mushroom shades for dust sheets, with only Euphonia's face being starkly white.

## Graphic Style

[TBC – some potential reference images included below]



# Art Needed

## 1. Characters

- a. Human-like
  - i. Euphonia's head (idle, talking, blinking, rolling eyes, screaming)
- b. Player?
  - i. Hands? Or will there be a default for this?

## 2. Textures

- a. Wooden flooring
- b. Brick walls (or 1840s era appropriate wallpaper)
- c. Wooden eaves
- d. Curtains [I'm aware there will also be models required for these, just splitting it very approximately for the purposes of being able cut items as mentioned above]
- e. Night sky (view from window)

## 3. Objects

- a. Euphonia's mechanical framework/'body' (idle, juddering)
- b. Candles
- c. Oil Lamps
- d. Table, chairs covered with dust sheets
- e. Bookshelves (some with leather-bound books)
- f. Ornaments with an occult and/or medical look (e.g. skull, phrenology head, ouija board)
- g. Window

# ***Sounds/Music***

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## **Style Attributes**

Music isn't strictly necessary, but opening music would be nice, and ambient sound is essential. Should be creepy and unsettling without being too intrusive or too obviously looped. Something which would fit with Euphonia's origins in 1840's London. This is also true of other sound effects, despite the game being set in the present (e.g. no digital or other 'modern' technological sounds)

## **Sounds/Music Needed**

### **1. Music**

- a. Title/Credits music – eerie, somber

### **2. Effects**

- a. Weather – howling wind, perhaps rumbles of thunder and cracks of lightning
- b. Mechanical creaking (occurring when Euphonia is operational but idle)
- c. Wheezing (occurring when Euphonia is talking)
- d. Howling winds (long loop throughout)
- e. Screaming (occurring when Euphonia is 'exorcised' in one of the end states)
- f. Door slam (occurring in one of the other end states)

### **3. Feedback**

- a. Button press for menu (typewriter click? Something 1840s appropriate, anyway)
- b. [Anything else?] e&f above could potentially be considered feedback rather than effects?

# ***Schedule***

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## **Pre-production:**

End of March: Complete design document draft  
Begin Twine narrative draft, share for testing throughout

## **Production:**

Mid April: Twine narrative version complete  
Begin implementation into Spirit  
Creation of Github repository for storing/sharing work  
Begin key art (e.g. environment, Euphonia head)  
Begin initial audio work

End of April: Spirit narrative version complete  
Begin integration into Unity/VR (including sound, art, etc)  
Begin speech recognition integration/testing

Mid May: Revisions to Spirit narrative based on testing  
Confirmation of remaining art