

2018 SAA Seminar: Intermedia Approaches to Early Modern Song 1
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Notating Tune with Text

This essay involves a methodological reflection on the current state and/or possible future directions for intermedia approaches to English song including the presentation of a new digital tool, Minstrel, created for the online English Broadside Ballad Archive and demonstrated in its beta phase in my forthcoming book, *Moving Media, Tactical Publics: The Broadside Ballad in Early Modern England* (University of Pennsylvania Press). Specifically, through Minstrel's transcriptions of recordings and audio files, I'll demonstrate EBBA's early developments of a new musical notation tool that reflects the necessity of adjustment of text to tune and vice versa in any practical application of a song. Through this method we might gain an appreciation of the experience of an early modern singer of notated ballad tunes.

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The Space of Song in *The Tempest*, 1611 and 1674

The Tempest is typically seen as the most musical of Shakespeare's plays, an understanding already established in 1674, when Dryden and Davenant's 1667 revision of the play was turned into a hugely successful "opera." In this paper, I compare the function of the songs in Shakespeare's 1611 original and the 1674 opera, with special attention to how they shape the audience's experience of the theatrical space, both in terms of the fictional setting and of their place inside a theater. When does the audience perceive the songs as part of a unified island space, and when are they reminded that they are in a theater, watching the performance of professional musicians? These questions, I will suggest, can help us think about how songs could transform, permeate, and travel between different types of theatrical space.

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Sampling Broadside: Dialogue Ballads and *Much Ado About Nothing*

By taking an intermedial approach to textual and visual resonances between plays like *Much Ado* and ballad broadsides, modern readers can gain insights to how early modern audiences associated dramatic characters with figures from dialogue ballads. For example, when Beatrice laments that she will "sit in a corner and cry 'Hey-ho for a husband,'" her words are usually interpreted as the "proverbial sigh [...] of the woman on the shelf." Her line corresponds to a ballad entitled "Hey ho, for a Husband," which apparently solidifies this reading. But the resonances of this phrase with the lyrics of other early modern ballads also associates Beatrice with representations of women like Betty from "DICK the Plow-man," who cries "Hi-ho" in a

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sigh of thwarted sexual desire. She also joins the refrain of the “Maid of Milkstreet,” who worries that she will never be cured of greensickness and repeats “for a husband” not because she wants to be married, but because she longs for any remedy to the “sad itching which nothing will please.” Ballads from the period therefore complicate a straightforward interpretation of the “proverbial sigh” by emphasizing extramarital female desire, and provide an additional valence to Beatrice’s character in the process. This paper explores how results from digital tools like a document comparison program that highlights textual resonances and the impression archive on the *English Broadside Ballad Archive* facilitate scholarship investigating intermedial connections. Finally, I will include a prototype of a digital edition of *Much Ado* that strives to capture the textual and visual sampling that may have been available to seventeenth-century audience members.

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Music for/of the English Early Modern in the Silent Cinema

Shakespeare was a popular source for early filmmakers: his works were in the public domain, they helped the nascent film industry promote its offerings as high art, and they appealed to actors and audiences alike. During the silent era (c.1895-1927), more than five hundred adaptations of Shakespeare’s works—which could represent up to twenty-five percent of all studio-produced films made during the period—were made as silent films. But silent Shakespearean films, like most silent movies, would have been accompanied by music. The rise of the early music movement coincides with the silent film, and here I explore the confluences of these two phenomena. I examine silent film music used for silent Shakespeare that is derived from or designed to represent early modern English music and musical culture. Borch orchestrated “The British Grenadiers,” and other works including “The Hunt is Up,” and Dowland’s “Come again, sweet love” for use in accompanying Shakespearean film. Carrie Jacob-Bond’s 1910 arrangement of “Robin Adair,” and Reginald de Koven’s score for the 1899 stage musical *Robin Hood*—which was immensely popular with silent film accompanists—speak to the reuse of English and Scottish melodies and the creation of new pieces using traits from the period such as modality, ballad and lute song forms, and the sound of the Elizabethan broken consort, often using the oboe as a substitute for recorders and muted modern strings to replicate the texture of viol consorts. By studying the use of such music in early film, we can learn much about attitudes towards Shakespeare’s work and the issues his plays raise, such as those surrounding gender, religious, class, and ethnic difference; in addition, this use of such music in popular entertainment offers information on modes of transmission and connections with the early music revival.

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With Courtly Company:
Ballads in (the Study of) Early Tudor Drama

When John Rastell, the earliest printer of English drama, includes a ballad in his own 1520 play *The Nature of the Four Elements*, he follows its performance with a scene mocking the general use of such songs in theatrical productions. That he does so seems to support our current assumptions about how ballads appear throughout early modern drama: as enjoyable but nevertheless replaceable dramatic elements that, having emerged from folk and peasant culture, are often of low literary value. But this early dramatic ballad is not what it appears at first glance. Hardly seeing it as replaceable, Rastell prints its full musical notation within the playbook. To accomplish this feat, he even invents a new system of moveable matrices for printing music in a single pressing, an innovation that printers throughout Europe would imitate for more than two centuries.

Why would he go to such effort to print a ballad's full notation within his playbook only to mock its very presence in the same? The answer is that his debasement of dramatic ballads is actually an ironic jest meant to flatter the English court. Rastell imports the tune for his ballad from a composition by his patron and intended audience: none other than Henry VIII himself. Bringing attention to a curiously ignored aspect of English ballad history, Rastell's play is one of many surviving documents that show the early Tudor court exerting as much influence upon early balladry as folk traditions. Further, it suggests how early dramatic ballads can act as intermediaries, helping to spread varied balladic influences throughout English society at a foundational period in their generic development, as well as serving as important correctives to more modern assumptions about the history of ballads within and without plays.

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Lawes' Ariadne

Methodological response paper on early modern song and media theory.

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'Playing In Time': Hearing the Future of the Past

Archival documents of early modern musical performances record examples of both exceptionally beautifully—and also remarkably egregious—performances. It is the latter to which this essay will turn in order to reflect upon early modern consumption of music, as well as present-day relationships to music. Actors in stage productions sometimes apologized in

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advance for their forthcoming singing, and the boy choristers were sometimes derided for not being musically prepared, besides the fact that in both performance venues changing bodies sometimes resulted in uncontrollable, and undesirable, sounds. Writes Gina Bloom, “in their displacement of squeaking voices, . . . modern performances diverge from early modern theatrical practice” (22). How might we, as scholars and practitioners of music, bridge the gap between the requisites for musical performance in the period and how that can relate to digital technologies (including aspects of recording technology, like autotuning) now? I also want to think about the possibilities that become open to scholars and practitioners when recordings are shared digitally—what does this do (if anything) to the music? How might having “on-demand” music as part of our lived experience color our relationship to music in a way different from that in Renaissance culture? Failure plays an important part in the process musical production at any stage or time period, but how does having pristine, retouched, autotuned recordings change our expectation of song? While undeniable that a wealth of information is gained in recording and disseminating songs, is there anything that we lose in the process? How might the social experience of song change with the “perfection” digital technology allows us?

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Singing Devils; or, the Trouble with Trapdoors:
Intermedia and Performance in the Restoration *Tempest*

In July 2017, I had the good fortune to serve as musical director and choreographer for a staged workshop of Thomas Shadwell’s 1674 operatic revision of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* at the Wanamaker Theatre, Shakespeare’s Globe. My collaborator, theatre historian Richard Schoch, and I have developed an iterative performance methodology as part of our ongoing AHRC-funded project, “Performing Restoration Shakespeare.” Our process involves the incorporation of feedback and suggestions from scholars as well as laypeople (in this case the ticket-buying public at the Globe) to develop best staging practices for these intermedia adaptations, which combine music, dance, visual spectacle, and dialogue in syncretic ways.

In this paper, I consider one scene that particularly illuminates the difficulties and pleasures of staging early modern intermediality—the “Masque of Devils,” composed by Pelham Humfrey and Pietro Reggio. I first discuss the tension between historical practice and present-day understandings of different media, including how audience expectations at our workshop were influenced by the Globe brand and its longstanding engagement with “original practices.” I then consider how the physical space of a particular theatre—in this case the Wanamaker—and the physical bodies of our singers and actors shaped the staging of music and movement. Finally, I analyze what was lost and what was preserved via the transmogrification of this theatrical experience into tweets by the Globe, the performers, the workshop participants, and the “showrunners” @awinkler90 and @PRShakes.

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Imagining the English Metrical Psalms and Their World

For this seminar, I would like to speculate about how to bring together a variety of media to investigate what the English metrical psalms may have meant in a post-Reformation world. An enormous part of the persuasive and imaginative power of the metrical psalms is to be found in the activity of congregational singing – participating in a service, outside at a sermon, singing at work or at home with family. The meaning of the sung psalms changed over time, transforming from an expression of radical protest with the Anglo-Genevan psalter to an accepted part of the establishment tradition. The psalms could have been sung to both official and common tunes, and the text of particular psalms in John Day's *The Whole Book of Psalmes* was subject to change.

My aim is to think broadly about how to explore these changes and ambiguities that need be heard, seen, and read about to be understood in context, and how a digital resource that delved into such an exploration would function. What textual versions of the psalms would be used? Which tunes chosen? At what speed would they sung? Who would be singing? Where would the singing take place? How, for example, would a congregation in church compare to a group of weavers when singing the same psalm? My paper will conceptualize a platform where all these various possibilities, imaginings and transformations could be explored to piece together what the psalms—in their surprising variety—may have meant to those who lived with them.

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‘Begone, begone, my Willie, my Billie’: Merrythought, Ophelia, and the Intentions of Songs

This essay examines Merrythought (*Knight of the Burning Pestle*) and Ophelia as possibly unwilling song media. Expressivist, social, and cosmological perspectives on music and singing emphasize, to varying degrees, the agency of solo or ensemble singers as well as their place in a larger harmonic design. These two characters, though, encourage us to consider non-intentional models of song circulation. So, to explore how their affective and mental states, their narrative and character-based wills and desires, and their textual-harmonic media landscape coincide in song performance, I will try out a variety of metaphors or other explanatory models for what is going on. Among them are: jukebox, virus / parasite, *quodlibet* (song medley), echo, and nonhuman actor.