

Rossini's *Otello* in Restoration Paris: Shakespeare, Cosmopolitanism, and Race
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Histories of Shakespeare reception in nineteenth-century Paris typically emphasize the 1827 arrival of Harriet Smithson and the *Théâtre-Anglais* as the pivotal event. Yet, years before Smithson's arrival, the 1821 premiere of Rossini's *Otello* at Paris's Théâtre-Italien, as well as the opera's sustained popularity throughout the decade, played a crucial and underappreciated role in winning over the French public, hitherto highly skeptical of the English poet. I argue that a key to this success may have been its peculiarly cosmopolitan vision of Shakespeare, drawing overwhelmingly on French sources while speaking to larger political concerns of post-Napoleonic Europe.

I focus particularly on Rossini's version of Desdemona's famous act 4 willow song. Whereas troupes like Smithson's cut this entire scene (following contemporary English practice), in Rossini's opera the song becomes an impressive high point. Importantly, this scene received heightened scrutiny in France, where Shakespeare's willow song (in versions by Rousseau and Grétry) had already achieved broad popularity. In its most consequential departure from Shakespeare, Rossini's willow song is explicitly positioned as learned from a slave, which reinvents the song as a musical artifact of slavery. In fact, *Otello*, with its emphasis on race and slavery, arrived in France at a moment when the cosmopolitan ideals of the revolution—*égalité* for all *citoyens*—were contradicted by France's leading role in the transatlantic slave trade and colonial slavery. To contextualize this aria within the contemporary racial imaginary, I draw particular inspiration from Marguerite Duras's 1823 French novella *Ourika*, which dramatizes a comparable scene of transatlantic performative exchange in the dancing of the *Comba* from Senegal for a white Parisian audience.

In highlighting a celebrated Shakespeare scene whose enthusiastic early reception shows musical culture taking a leading role (even above printed translations or spoken theater), I trace a key musical pathway in continental Shakespeare reception. By reconstructing the aesthetic and racial context of 1820s French reception, I offer a reading of *Otello* that integrates it into some of the most pressing Restoration debates, perhaps explaining some of the opera's controversy and popularity in France.

Nicholas Bellinson

“A Song the whilst...”: Shakespeare’s background and foreground music

Portia calls for a song while Bassanio makes his choice of the caskets – but for whose benefit? The song evidently conceals some of Bassanio’s deliberations; why does Shakespeare give us the song instead, and how does the song (“Tell me where is fancy bred...”) relate to what it covers up? What, in other words, is the relationship between background and foreground? How and when in Shakespeare does singing (and perhaps dance) delineate these two planes (auditory, but also visual) in a scene, and how do these planes relate to each other? What is the audience meant to see, and not to see? To hear, and not to hear?

Patricia Fumerton Abstract: **“Broadside Ballads and Rejigging Shakespeare’s *Winter’s Tale*”**

Since Charles Read Baskerville’s 1919 study, it has become common knowledge among early modern drama scholars that a “jig”—typically a lusty dialogue accompanied by dance and perhaps instrumentation—followed upon late Elizabethan and early Jacobean stage performances, no matter the play’s genre. At the supposed end of the play, Desdemona might leap up from her death bed and accompany Iago in a high stepping lusty dialogue-song-and-dance; Romeo and Juliet might similarly exit their imagined tombs to dance and dialogue song, as would other characters of comedy, tragedy, or a mixture of the two genres. In sum, the last page of the play we read in a play-text, is by no means the finale of the staged performance.

Roger Clegg and Lucie Skeaping, in *Singing Simpkin and other Bawdy Jigs* (2014) study ten surviving dramatic jigs in lusty dance and dialogue song that further feature stage directions, as if they were mini plays after the play. Even more recently, in the contributions to my e-edition, *Ballads and Performance* (EMC Imprint, 2018), [“Ballads+: The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet and its After-piece Jig.”](#) Matthew J. Smith and Julia Reinhard Lupton build upon a performance by members of my [English Broadside Ballad Archive \(EBBA\)](#) team to argue that features of song, dance, and music permeate Shakespeare’s (and others’) plays of the period to the extent that a comic jig following a tragic play would have been recognized as a continuation rather than a disruption of the dramatic narrative.

Taking these new revelations yet one step further, I argue in this paper that Shakespeare deliberately draws specifically on the multimedia that constituted the mass-marketed broadside ballad. His plays intermittingly but persistently feature song (often in dialogue), black-letter (or, as it was also known in the period, “bastard” text), eye-catching illustrations and other ornamentation, together with music (extending to dance outright or viscerally as toe-tapping) to capitalize on, experiment with, and even critique his own comparatively more medially and spatially restricted space of the stage, as we see especially in *The Winter’s Tale*.

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Musical and Generic Commonalities in Shakespeare's Festive Dramatic Oeuvre

In his festive comedies, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*, William Shakespeare makes extensive use of musical allusions and interludes. This project seeks to examine the three Shakespearean comedies listed above – and particularly the relationship between genre and music – to demonstrate that music is part of the constitution of each of the plays' literary genre, and that the dramatic action that unfolds on stage does so in part by means of the plays' soundscapes. Music, as an aesthetic category, underpins the dramatic genre of these works. Bridging the gap between the musicality and the comedy of these works is the archetype of the clown. The clowns of these plays, including Feste and Nick Bottom, perform a variety of functions within their respective works. While the character of the clown contributes to the comedic tone of these plays, I will argue that the function of the clown is further complicated by his role in the enhancement of the musical soundscape in each of these festive comedies. Through close readings and analyses of the musical instrumentations and genres used within the plays, this project will explore the ways in which the clowns reinforce the generic musical aesthetic – and, through their musical performances, both vocal and instrumental, contribute to the depth and complexity of the comedic nature of these Shakespearean plays.

Defamiliarizing Shakespeare in David Gordon's *Dancing Henry Five*

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This paper will focus on choreographer David Gordon's 2004 dance work *Dancing Henry Five*, which adapts Shakespeare's *Henry V*. While his piece is dance-focused, he also uses spoken word narration and recordings of various actors performing portions of Shakespeare's play, combined with parts of William Walton's film score for Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944). The juxtaposition of dance, text, and music creates a complex and multi-layered work that, as Sally Banes notes in her analysis of American modern dance of the 1960s, makes "familiar things strange." Gordon defamiliarizes Shakespeare's play by challenging narrative coherence through repetition and meta-theatricality. He prioritizes choreography over narrative, placing less emphasis on telling the story and more on the expressive potential of the dancer's body and movements. While his use of Walton's music suggests an inter-textual relationship with Olivier's film version to some extent, Gordon also literally takes his cue from the structure of the score more than from the visual language of the movie. Choreography and music work together in his re-vision of the play, taking up the Chorus' injunction to work on the spectator's "imaginary forces." Gordon and his own Chorus (embodied by his wife, dancer and actress Valda Setterfield) spur their audiences to think analytically and feel kinesthetically the potential of dance to defamiliarize Shakespeare's play.

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Seminar 4: Shakespeare, Music, and Dance

Abstract

Dance, Music, and Silence in Cheek by Jowl's Productions of Shakespeare

Linda McJannet, Bentley University (Emerita)

I propose to examine music, dance, and silence in recent productions by Cheek by Jowl, a celebrated movement-inflected company directed by Declan Donnellan and his designer-partner Nick Ormerod. My initial observation is that while their choices of music related to dance and other movement sequences merit greater attention, it is also the case that some movement is performed in silence—or rather to the sounds and rhythms created by the choreography itself. I will explore when, how, and whether movement is accompanied by music, and I will consider what effects these choices create. My sources will include my own viewing of their version of *Measure for Measure* (in Boston in the fall of 2018) and the edited filmed version of this and two other productions (*The Winter's Tale* and *Périclès, Prince de Tyr*), which the company has generously made available to educators. I will supplement these resources with a survey of reviews in order to see how often music, dance, or a bodily created soundtrack catches the eye—and ear—of observers of these and other Cheek by Jowl versions of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Cymbeline and Musical Possibility

Scott A. Trudell

Of the seventy songs listed in Peter Seng's *The Vocal Songs in the Plays of Shakespeare*, fewer than two dozen can be securely linked to specific tunes. Of these two dozen, not a single one survives in an arrangement specific to the theater, with a definitive sense of its pitch, vocal timbre, or accompaniment onstage. This dearth of extant evidence has resulted in a longstanding lack of attention to musico-textual relations in Shakespeare studies, with scholars continuing to pay more attention to musical allusions and ideas in Shakespeare's plays than to vocal and instrumental music as such.

This paper outlines some tactics for discussing intersections between words and music when musical notation has been lost. My focus is *Cymbeline*, a highly musical play suited to the musical culture of the King's Men's second Blackfriars theater—but a play with only one extant musical source. That source is a setting of “Hark, Hark, the Lark” extant in a manuscript postdating the play by two decades, with a missing attribution and two missing lines. Scholars tend to imagine that that this setting, probably by Robert Johnson, is “original” to Shakespeare. But it is just as likely that the music is for a later revival, or even for a domestic performance arrangement not directly connected to the commercial theater. What tends to be lost such discussions are the many moments in *Cymbeline* that appear to cue or respond to musical performance—moments that have been written over or ignored in the history of textual transmission and literary interpretation. By looking at *Cymbeline*'s musical gaps—a musical source with suggestive omissions, a song that claims not to have been sung—I aim to show how we can imagine literary texts less as written documents that have lost their musical contexts than as worlds of musical possibility.

Matthew Zarnowiecki
SAA 2020 – “Shakespeare, Music, and Dance”
Abstract

Tentative Title: “‘I know no touch of it’: Musical Ability and Inclusivity in *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*”

When Guildenstern professes that he cannot play the recorder (“I know no touch of it, my Lord”), whether he answers Hamlet’s request truthfully is somewhat beside the point. It is a strange request, strangely proffered. Yet some musical ability would have been expected of this courtier, Hamlet’s fellow if not his peer. Is it strange that Guildenstern cannot play, or would it be stranger if he could? The answer to this question may partially depend on the instrument’s cultural cachet; Guildenstern may have taken singing or lute lessons, but a pipe? This essay instead seeks to examine musical ability and dancing ability as potential sites of social cohesion or disruption. Disability studies in Shakespeare have understandably focused on characters and situations like Richard III’s maniacal and deformed conquering or the bodily traumas of *Titus Andronicus*. Yet musical ability and grace, or their opposites – tone-deafness and clumsiness – are regularly figured in much the same way as congenital beauty and defects: as visible indicators of inward beauty or foulness (then) or as unchosen states given meaning through cultural stigma or acceptance (now). My goal is to examine scenes of musical ability in *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* to determine how they define inclusion and exclusion within the confines of song and dance. I seek to understand how both the invitation (or demand) to take part and also the acts of acceptance, refusal, and participation / performance can be seen as moments in which a collectivity is defined, enforced, denied, or celebrated.