

For my brother, Neil; thank you for the music.

# Shakespeare and Music

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Afterlives and Borrowings

JULIE SANDERS

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## Prelude

If music be the food of love, play on  
*Twelfth Night*, 1.1.1

As an overture to detailed discussions of classical symphonies, operas, ballets, musicals, and film scores, among other musical genres or forms, in later chapters, I should stress that, although this is a study of Shakespeare and music, it is not about the prevalence of music as either metaphor or aural presence in the Shakespearean canon, although the influence of these processes on the musical adaptations examined here is registered at various points in the discussion. Nor is it a study of the musical traditions and associations of Shakespeare's own culture and time. Both of these subjects have been admirably explored in David Lindley's peerless recent study, *Shakespeare and Music* (2006), to which I hope this work stands as a happy complement or continuation. Lindley's book shares its main title with mine, but the fundamental difference between them as studies, perhaps, is indicated by what comes after the main title in my own, that ever salient material after the colon. For this book is about afterlives of Shakespeare's texts in music, in the quotations, borrowings, conscious citations, settings, and wholesale adaptations of the lyrics, dialogue, plotlines, and characters of his drama and the lines of his verse. My interests lie, then, entirely in the realm of what comes after those first early modern performances of his plays, and in subsequent, rather than initial, audiences and readerships.

This is a book about the reception and interpretation of Shakespeare's work by later ages and cultures, and about the wholesale reimagining of that work in a musical idiom and context. As ever, terminology plays a crucial part in understanding those acts of interpretation. I am exploring acts of adaptation and appropriation in this volume of a kind that I have long been interested in, in relation to both Shakespeare and other canonical artists and forms of Western culture (see Sanders 2001, 2006). Having offered in other domains my personal definitions of those slippery terms

'adaptation' and 'appropriation' (see Sanders 2006), they proved somehow inadequate for the kinds of musical creations and cultural productions I was exploring here. If, in my research, 'adaptation' has been taken to mean those works which retain a kind of fidelity to the source-text but consciously rework it within the conventions of another alternative medium or genre – novel or film, for example – then it is certainly true that a number of the musical works discussed in these pages function as adaptations. Giuseppe Verdi's nineteenth-century operatic reworkings of *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are recognizably versions of their source plays. Similarly, film adaptations of Shakespeare plays by directors including Kenneth Branagh and Baz Luhrmann fit easily into this category, as do their accompanying soundtracks. Films that deploy Shakespearean texts as springboards for more contemporary themes as well as settings, often discarding his dialogue wholesale in the process, might well fall under the alternative heading of 'appropriation'. I am thinking in this field of works such as Gil Junger's 1999 *10 Things I Hate About You* or the recent *Twelfth Night*-inspired *She's the Man* (dir. Andy Fickman, 2006). Later chapters will focus on the scores to films that fall into both of these categories; others look at ballet and the musical as forms which might be located in terms of a similar epistemology, though all are active interpretations of their source material.

In truth, adaptation and appropriation seem somehow insufficient in an attempt to encompass the full range of musical responses to Shakespeare. How, for example, would we identify the 'fantasy overture' of Pyotr Tchaikovsky, based on *Romeo and Juliet* but offering nothing like a full version of the play or its *dramatis personae*? Or, indeed, Franz Liszt's *Hamlet*, a 'symphonic poem' which is really a rumination on a single character rather than the entire work from which that character derives (and based, as we will see in chapter 2, on one particular actor's interpretation of that role)? Into what column should we place the innovative jazz collaborations of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn in the 1950s, the suite *Such Sweet Thunder*, which played with particular characters and speeches, sometimes combining plays together in a fascinating act of creative juxtaposition, and even invoking the overarching concept of Shakespeare's generic range? And how do we place the 'presence', sometimes acknowledged, sometimes implicit, frequently partial, of Shakespeare or lines or characters from his work in contemporary popular culture? As the study moved into these realms, it seemed more productive to me as a literary critic to look to the discipline of musicology for advice

and influence. If, as the introductory chapter to this book will argue, the models of 'riff', quotation, or 'signifying' in jazz music are redeployed to think about Shakespearean musical afterlives, we begin to release more of the potential for innovative and experimental creativity that I want to argue is frequently the inherent cultural agency of these supposedly 'referential' or secondary works (see, for example, Metzger 2003; Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000).<sup>1</sup> Other terms from musicology such as 'borrowing' or 'sampling', which have recently held much sway and influence in the realms of rap and hip-hop (see, e.g., Schloss 2004), prove equally helpful when applied to the musical afterlives analysed here. These works might come *after* Shakespeare in one regard, in that they find their creative impulse or impetus in his works – and there is undoubtedly much to be said about the choice of plays, or specific characters, in the process of understanding, historicizing, or contextualizing that impulse – but in many other regards they are works of art that stand alone as producers of meaning, often complex and plural meanings.

Admittedly, I am hyper-conscious of avoiding what I would describe as the various pitfalls of reductionism when looking at the relationship between Shakespeare and music. While identifying source-texts, passages, or characters will inevitably prove relevant and often revealing *en route*, this is not a source study *per se*. I am interested in the new meanings or (potentially) radical alternatives offered by the musical afterlives, rather than merely identifying acts of adherence or interpolation with regard to the source. Such processes are sometimes referred to by more loaded phrases as acts of fidelity and betrayal, but I would prefer to adapt Stephen Connor's helpful phrase about fictional works that use Shakespeare as a creative springboard for their own ideas and aesthetic experiments, 'fidelity-in-betrayal' (1996: 167). Similarly, in thinking about how music has thought about, responded to, and offered its own unique interpretations of Shakespearean texts, I am keen not to seek always for simple equivalences or substitutions by one mode for another. While at times in the argument it will prove fruitful to think about the ways in which the aria of nineteenth-century opera or the set-piece 'show-stopping tune' of the Broadway musical provide variations on the particular conventions and effects of dramatic soliloquy, such easy equations between the literary and the musical form will not always be possible or even desirable. Music is a genre with its own distinct practices and traditions; it is also a genre with very particular ideas about 'text', not all of which necessarily mean

the same as they do in literary criticism. Nevertheless, while acknowledging the slipperiness of terms, I hope to be able to respect the differences in the discussions which follow, despite my own literary standpoint and bias.

Equally, it is probably necessary to stress from the outset that this is a study written from the vantage point of a literary critic, one with an amateur's love of music and the forms invoked throughout, but one who is certainly not a trained musician or musicologist. To that end, this book may look rather different from one produced by a musicologist on the same theme. There will be no notational examples, and little discussion of particular musical issues such as the choice of specific notes or chordal sequences. That said, broader topics such as choice of instrumentation will prove insightful in the context of attempts to 'read' the musical works discussed and their approaches to, and negotiations with, their Shakespearean precursors.

Having declared at length what I think this book is not, I should perhaps take the time in this preface, or 'prelude', as I have opted to call it in a conscious gesture towards the encounter between the disciplines of music and literature that it seeks to effect, to say what I aim to do. One of my real concerns has been (and it is part of that attempt to avoid the reductionism already alluded to) to think about musical compositions with a 'Shakespearean' connection not in the abstract, as 'timeless' evidence of the supposed universality of Shakespeare, transcending all cultures, times, and disciplines, but in quite antithetical terms as works with their own specific cultural, historical, disciplinary, and socio-political contexts. Many of the works and composers discussed here will be studied in the context of their particular moment of cultural production. For example, the operatic 'adaptations' of Giuseppe Verdi and his librettist Arrigo Boito, or the symphonic compositions of Hector Berlioz, would not have come into existence without the Romantic movement in the arts and the particular versions, and indeed translations, of Shakespeare and his work that this produced. Similarly, the 'English pastoralism' traditionally associated with the compositions of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst in the 1920s is seen to affect their response to Shakespeare and their specific choices of song, plays, or characters to adapt, and the musical strategies, techniques, and traditions they bring to bear upon these choices. In turn, these musical creations impact upon the literary-critical response to Shakespeare. On several occasions in this study I will have recourse both to the agency of literary criticism in the sphere of musical composition and the undeniable impact of musical

interpretations of Shakespeare, from Henry Purcell to Garbage, on academic understandings of the same. Music, sometimes described by non-specialists as an abstract form that appeals directly to the emotions, is, I would argue, born out of cultural and intellectual contexts as identifiable as they would be for any work of literature.<sup>2</sup> If New Historicism and Cultural Materialism have had a significant effect on the ways in which we now think about, study, and even stage Shakespeare, so a similar process of deep contextualization may help us to unlock many of the meanings and effects of musical works which have themselves become canonical in discussions of Shakespeare's cultural impact.

Finally though, to return to my statement of what this study determinedly does not seek to do. As well as avoiding a reductionist consideration of musical afterlives in terms of how loyal or disloyal they are to their source, I was determined to resist any foolhardy attempt to offer a comprehensive survey of the huge number of adaptations and interpretations of Shakespeare in music that there has been. In practice, such an attempt would always have proved too much for any single study, and would run the risk of reducing a book to the status of a mere list or catalogue. Phyllis Hartnoll and others did provide a helpful catalogue of this kind in 1966, although even that was exclusionary in some respects (jazz, my first subject here, for example, was virtually ignored in their accumulation of data). The world-wide-web now offers a rich and accessible means for bringing that material up to date, and there are various catalogues to Shakespearean music available (see, e.g., Gooch and Thatcher, 1991). I have therefore opted instead for a case study-based approach here, selecting within each generic category what I consider to be particularly salient examples of the diverse and informing practice of musical interpretation and creativity in the wake of Shakespeare. Having raised the issue of genre, it remains to add that while the chapters here are ostensibly organized by generic category – jazz, classical songs and symphonies, ballet, musical, opera, film scores, and contemporary and popular music – the historicist approach favoured by this study also serves to highlight numerous occasions when those generic boundaries are blurred, consciously transgressed, or willingly confused. Adaptation and appropriation studies, let alone the study of afterlives and borrowings, always need to be alert to complex processes of mediation, cross-fertilization, and filtration, and on many occasions the compositions and musical events described here have as deep an intertextual relationship to each other as to the originating drama and poetry of Shakespeare.

Many overtures to longer symphonic compositions and film scores offer an overview of what is to come, and this 'Prelude' aims to do something similar in terms of the focus and approach of this study, by offering a walk through the chapters that follow with the aim of highlighting the approaches, examples, and claims that are found there, as well as indicating ways in which the separate chapters might interlink. This Prelude also provides an opportunity to clarify the terminology that I am using, though this is further supported for those less familiar with the kinds of theoretical languages being deployed by the provision of a glossary at the back. This glossary, which is necessarily selective, has been aimed at the non-specialist in both musical and cinematic terminology; I hope that it will provide a helpful key to some of the more specialized material in the book. With similar intentions in mind, a detailed index is also provided, with the aim of assisting individual readers in making connections between chapters and navigating their own paths of interest through the material.

The book begins with a study of the relationship between Shakespeare and jazz music, which, as well as looking at specific examples of twentieth-century jazz adaptations of Shakespeare, such as the collaborations of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn in the USA and Cleo Laine and Johnny Dankworth in the UK, argues that we might think of jazz's citational and allusive processes as a useful model for thinking about adaptation as a practice. Jazz's complex relationship with the source material that it readily quotes but also improvises and innovates upon provides a rich template for the multiple ways in which Shakespeare and the Shakespearean canon have signified – often in contradictory ways – across periods and cultures, as well as across different disciplines, including music. Jazz's assimilatory and incorporative strategies offer an example that can tell us much about Shakespearean adaptation and appropriation, although, as the introductory chapter indicates, jazz has its own precedents for this practice in early modern baroque music and its investment in patterns of developmental variation.

The second chapter, entitled 'Classical Shakespeares', deals with orchestral, choral, and symphonic responses to Shakespeare's work, as well as taking significant detours into the realms of *Lieder* and song settings, as well as the particular intimacies and conventions of chamber opera. Labels, as ever, raise their own difficulties. The term 'classical' is much contested in a musical context. Nevertheless, anyone seeking to purchase music in this category in a shop or online will invari-

ably find themselves in a section labelled 'classical music', and in that section they will undoubtedly find the work of many of the composers discussed here: Hector Berlioz, Edward Elgar, Gustav Holst, Felix Mendelssohn, Antonín Dvořák, and many others. But the title of the chapter is also in some respects playful, echoing as it does the establishment, at least in the UK, of so-called classical radio stations, chief among them one called 'Classic FM', which play music that falls into this notional category.

As the subsequent chapter on ballet indicates, however, labels can only ever be facilitating categories, and there will always be overlap, interaction, and blurrings at the boundaries of any discipline or genre. As readers of this book will soon come to realize, it is my intention to celebrate rather than criticize those blurrings, regarding them as perhaps the most productive of cultural interstices. In this vein, in the discussion of ballet in chapter 3 – a dance form that, incidentally, has its own understanding of the designation 'classical' – Mendelssohn's incidental music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* resurfaces in a new context, as indeed it will recur, further revised, in later discussions of film scores. The example of Mendelssohn is useful, since it captures one of the effects of musical adaptation across a wide range of time periods, genres, and contexts, which is that seminal works persistently resurface, albeit in altered form, and become in themselves exemplary of the cultural processes of adaptation, appropriation, and signification under discussion. Exploring how and why Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been reworked, revised, echoed, and even parodied is a means to explore the diverse ways in which Shakespeare's text has also been made to signify differently across ages and cultures.

As already noted, I have chosen to be highly selective in this study, offering examples of musical adaptation both familiar and unfamiliar within the different fields and genres discussed. That selection has a clear rationale, which is to select those works which best exemplify the process of interpreting Shakespeare in different contexts that this study aims to make visible. They are facilitating examples, ones which it is hoped readers will use as springboards for their own considerations. With that in mind, at the end of each chapter there is a section headed 'Further examples and reading' with suggestions of where to go next.

After the discussion of ballet we move into another realm of musical drama that incorporates the language of dance into its performative

frame. The American musical is often regarded as a distinctly twentieth-century phenomenon, although, as this chapter stresses, important precedents and links can be found in the semi-opera that was popular at the end of the seventeenth century in the English Restoration theatre. Nevertheless, the examples concentrated on here, Shakespearean musicals, which include such iconic shows as *Kiss Me Kate* and *West Side Story* in both their stage and screen identities, do locate us firmly in the modern era. Musicals are seen to shade into the world of the cinema, not just in terms of filmed musicals such as those mentioned above, but also in the use of allusion and pastiche in references to the form in Shakespearean films as varied as Richard Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995), Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost* (1999), Julie Taymor's *Titus* (2000), and Tommy O'Haver's *Get Over It* (2001).

Chapters 5 and 6 are also about musical drama, but this time the focus is opera. As well as making larger arguments about the context for nineteenth-century opera that can be found in Romantic theory and the translations of Shakespeare's work that were produced in Europe at this time, the method of analysing instructive case studies is once again deployed. In chapter 5 Shakespeare's female characters provide a focus for discussion, enabling analyses of operatic interpretations of texts as varied as *Othello* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; then in chapter 6 we zoom in in even more detail to offer specific examinations of Giuseppe Verdi's nineteenth-century Shakespearean operas, *Macbeth*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*, as well as Benjamin Britten's and Peter Pears's ground-breaking 1960 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is seen to have deep roots in the English theatrical tradition, consciously reaching back as it does to the work of Henry Purcell at the end of the seventeenth century.

Following the discussion of opera, we move to a wholly different medium for the next two chapters: that of motion pictures, and the very specific acts of adaptation and interpretation that are involved in the composition of film scores. The first of these chapters (7) looks at more traditional symphonic and orchestral film scores, concentrating on the work of William Walton and Dmitri Shostakovich, as well as the rather more controversial attempt to re-create their epic and lush scores in the work of Patrick Doyle for Shakespearean actor-director Kenneth Branagh. Chapter 8 then moves into the realm of 'compilation' scores, which deploy songs, often from the genres of rock and pop, to provide atmosphere, as well as additional layers of meaning for the films they accompany. As ever, the category proves permeable, since in the work of

Baz Luhrmann and Tim Blake Nelson a productive blend of the symphonic or 'classical' alongside these more contemporary musical references is seen to be a driving force of their films' narrative and aesthetic. The chapter ends with an extended analysis of the role and function of music both in the overlaid soundtrack and within the film world of *10 Things I Hate About You*, a US High School remake of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1999).

Chapter 9 brings us in some respects up to the present day with its overview of contemporary songs that allude to Shakespeare and Shakespearean texts, and contemporary performers who have offered their own arrangements of songs from his plays. But, fittingly in a study so concerned with connection and interaction, this chapter brings us full circle in terms of its discussion of settings of Shakespearean songs and the intrinsic 'musicality' of his work – not least his sonnets – since this is where the introductory chapter on jazz begins.

I have stressed elsewhere, and it is worth reasserting in this context, that 'Shakespeare' and the Shakespearean canon do not come to us – as spectators, performers, readers, critics, or listeners – free of the subsequent cultural heritage they have fostered and enjoyed. Many people today will have seen a production of *West Side Story* before experiencing a 'straight' production of *Romeo and Juliet* on the stage; certainly many may well view both through the prism of Baz Luhrmann's explosive cinematic rendering of that play. As Barbara Hodgdon (1983) has remarked, Shakespeare's plays and poems are 'expectational texts'; audiences at different times bring different or alternative sets of expectations both to Shakespeare and to musical (and other) responses to his work (cf. Rothwell 1999; Kidnie 2005). It is these complex processes of reading, reception, interpretation, understanding, and response that I have set myself the considerable task of acknowledging, and, indeed, celebrating, in the chapters which follow. Play on.

#### Notes

- 1 I am grateful to my colleague Ron Carter for discussion of, and inspiration on, the topic of creativity. See, e.g., R. Carter 2004.
- 2 Daniel Barenboim's 2006 Reith Lectures for the British Broadcasting Corporation (first broadcast on Radio 4, April–May 2006), entitled 'In the Beginning was Sound', were a fascinating and thought-provoking discussion of this and related ideas.

#### Further examples and reading

There is a considerable body of work now emerging on the general theme of Shakespearean adaptation and appropriation. For helpful introductions to the field, see Jean I. Marsden

(ed.), *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and Myth* (London: Prentice-Hall, 1991); and Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (eds), *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 1999). For a general discussion of the field of adaptation studies, which includes a chapter on Shakespeare, see my own *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006).

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## 'All That Jazz': Shakespeare and Musical Adaptation

And as you trip, still pinch him to your time  
*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, v.v.91

Writing about the identity of jazz music, David Horn observes that it is defined by its very contradictions:

Diversity and connectedness; distinctiveness and conformity. In the complex cultural history of the twentieth century, jazz emerged to live as one music among many, one moreover that bore the imprint of its connections with other musics – musics as diverse as the blues and Broadway show tunes. (2002: 9)

This description could just as easily serve as a summary of the contents of this book. This study of the music influenced by and responsive to the work of Shakespeare is divided generically into chapters on opera, ballet, musical, and film soundtrack, all seemingly distinct and discrete categories with their own attendant sets of conventions and practices, but, as the 'Prelude' to this volume has already made clear, these distinctions are difficult, even impossible, to sustain for long. Certain composers and compositions resurface in and across several of the chapters – Felix Mendelssohn and his Overture and Incidental Music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, gain mention under 'classical music', 'ballet', 'film soundtrack', and even here in a chapter ostensibly on jazz adaptations; similarly, Duke Ellington emerges and re-emerges in a range of contexts. What is at stake here, beyond the mere observation of the pervasive influence of specific composers or compositions, is a sense that we can 'read' musical adaptations of Shakespeare and their influence as indicative of, even as metaphorical for, all manner of artistic, cultural, and ideological processes. In this regard, Mendelssohn's work and the compositions of Duke Ellington matter not only as significant artworks in themselves, but also as a rich means for understanding Shakespearean adaptation as a process of cultural signification.