
A Shakespeare Miscellany

Robin Blaze *counter tenor*
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Actor readings

Clear or cloudy Reading — The Passionate Pilgrim	John Dowland (1563-1626)
Kemp's Jig Reading — The Taming of the Shrew Sweet Kate	Anon Robert Jones (c.1577-1617)
Reading — As you Like It It was a lover and his lass The Countess of Pembroke's Paradise	Thomas Morley (1557/8-1602) Anthony Holborne (c.1545-1602)
Fantasia Reading — Othello The poor soul sat sighing Reading — King Lear/Tom O'Bedlam	Philip Rosseter (1568-1623) Anon
Like as the lute delights Loth to depart	John Danyel (1564-c.1626) Dowland
Reading — Two Sonnets Can she excuse my wrongs?	Dowland
If music be the food of love	Henry Purcell (1659-95)
INTERVAL	
Prelude Take o take those lips away (<i>Measure for Measure</i>)	John Wilson (1595-1674) Wilson
Reading — A Midsummer Night's Dream One charming night Reading — A Midsummer Night's Dream Night (<i>The Fairy Queen</i>)	Purcell
Readings — The Tempest Full Fathom Five Where the bee sucks	Robert Johnson (1583-1633) Johnson
Arise,, arise ye subterranean winds Full Fathom five	Pietro Reggio (1632-85) John Banister (1630-79)
Galliard When that I was a little tiny boy (<i>Twelfth Night</i>)	Robert Johnson Anon

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### **A Shakespeare Miscellany – a few words**

Shakespeare plays are filled with music and songs at every turn, some written specially for specific plays, and others adapted from the varied diet of songs circulating in the form of ballads, of lute-song books. The language we associate with Shakespeare permeates also the lute songs which burst into print at the same time. Phrases and ideas echo each other, as in our first two poems, one with music, (*Clear or Cloudy*) one without (*Sonnet to Sundry Notes of Music*, from *The Passionate Pilgrim*). The Shakespeare canon is unstable: now only two of the poems from *The Passionate Pilgrim* are recognized as his, but we include Shakespeare-infused songs from revivals and adaptations as well as those written for original productions.

Like all successful Jacobean theatre companies, the Kings Men included musicians and actors side by side. “Players” collected songs in manuscripts as well as musical instruments on which to play them. Actors such as Edward Alleyn were known for their singing abilities and exploited them in their roles, and jesters like Will Kemp built parts around their dancing as well as singing abilities: when the parts began to dry up for him, Kemp embarked on his famous *Nine Daies Wonder*, dancing all the way from London to Norwich accompanied by a pipe and tabor.

Sometimes dramatic moments called for the kind of artifice in singing that was becoming a feature of intimate courtly song performance, and at other times drunken shout-song was the thing. Shakespeare jokes about good and bad singing in a way that suggests his actors could switch from one to the other at will: in *As You Like It* two pages suggest that a bit of singing technique rather than authentic rustic vocal production would go down better in a courtly forest:

**First page:** *Shall we clap into't roundly, without hawking, or spitting, or saying we are hoarse, which are the only prologues to a bad voice?*

**Second page:** *I'faith, i'faith; and both in a tune, like two gipsies on a horse.*

Intriguingly, although Shakespeare is indelibly associated with the Globe Theatre and later the indoor theatre at Blackfriars, the first performance of this play may have been at Wilton House near Salisbury in 1603 at the behest of the Countess of Pembroke. The Countess, Mary, sister to Sir Philip Sidney, presided over a mini-court famous for its art, culture and letters. Musicians such as Anthony Holborne celebrated her in their works, hoping to share in the bounty of this Arcadia.

Musical performance was part of the attraction at the Globe and also the Blackfriars theatre. The latter was the home of the Kings Men from 1599, and provided them with an intimate acoustic, indoors and lit by focus-enhancing candles. Before the plays at the Blackfriars musical performances were given often by troupes of choirboy-players such as the Children of St Paul's (Hamlet isn't too impressed by the popularity of the “little eyases” ), one of whom impressed the Duke of Stettin-Pomerania *cum voce tremula*. Choirboy actors grew to become musically useful adult players. The late plays such as *The Tempest* feature music that would have been heard to good effect in these acoustics, and the range from intimate highly ornate singing to create magical effects (Ariel's songs in *The Tempest*, written by Robert Johnson for the 1611 performance are a lovely example).

We have included songs by Shakespeare's contemporaries, which connect with his preoccupations or his professional circle: Philip Rosseter and John Danyel were both involved in the running of travelling children's companies, and Jonathan Bate has even speculated that Danyel's sister Anne might have been the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. The Danyels were certainly at the heart of a feverish outpouring of sonnets around the same time as Shakespeare. Brother Samuel's were set by John and presented with the same kind of ornate panache as Shakespeare's collection; Danyel's book was dedicated to Mistress Anne Greene, in honour of the musical patronage he enjoyed while giving her lessons in her father's house. Many of Shakespeare's tragedies wrestle with the irony of using beautiful words to express actions and emotions that are often ugly and downright inexpressible: Othello's incoherence as he murders Desdemona shortly after her beautiful Willow Song is a harrowing example,

Revivals of Shakespeare plays called for new songs by the next generation of composers. Entrepreneur and publisher John Playford remarked that musical skill was in decline as a result of the trauma of the Civil War, but he realised that there would be a market for theatrical and professional repertoire for amateurs to perform at home, once it was over and the theatres re-opened. Some of John Wilson's settings survive in simple forms for this market, but others such as the setting of *Take o take those lips away (Measure for Measure)* come from manuscripts compiled by a small group of professional singers re-learning the arts of ornamentation and Italianate expressiveness that had been a feature of pre-Civil War masques. As well as Wilson, Henry Lawes and the compiler of this manuscript, John Hilton, kept professional singing technique alive and well until the Restoration.

The re-opening of the theatres and the musical tastes of Charles II opened up the way for Shakespeare revivals filled with new characters, sometimes violent plot changes, (most notoriously a happy ending to *King Lear*...) and a lot of music and dance. The hugely successful 1674 *Tempest*, "operatized" by Dryden, Davenant and Thomas Shadwell called for songs by the Italian virtuoso (and Shadwell's lute teacher) Pietro Reggio as well as dance-influenced lyrical songs by John Banister.

*If music be the food of love* is the most famous song Shakespeare never wrote. Only the first line was set to music, but the rest of the made-up text translates well to the idiom of Henry Purcell, *Twelfth Night* hovering in the background. In a similar way, Purcell's *Fairy Queen* makes play with the audience's knowledge of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, transmuting it through comedy and music into a different kind of entertainment in which music, comedy and special effects keep the bard alive.