Sydney Undergraduate Journal of Musicology
Vol. 2, December 2012

Aural Sensibility and Interpreting Shakespeare: Developing Modern Approaches to Compositional Dramaturgy in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*

KATHRYN ROBERTS

The paradigms of dramatic representation have defined the role of music in theatre as they have shifted and developed throughout history. For conventional, narrative-based forms of theatre, music and other incidental sounds have been an effective means for drawing the audience into the fictional world of the play. The aural semiotic conventions in these representations are dependent on the surrounding cultural influences. Musical meanings in theatre are conveyed primarily through instrumentation and musical forms, which reflect their conventional use outside the theatre in our surrounding culture.

The plays of William Shakespeare serve as a useful point of reference for analysing the changing role of music and sound in the theatre. Since his works were first performed in a historical period far removed from our own, a close study of practices in the Elizabethan theatre reveals the marked differences in our modern aural understanding and serves to ground our future interpretations. Comparing Elizabethan theatre practice with modern representations of Shakespeare's dramatic works reveals the fundamental differences in our understanding and representation of meaning through sound.

This paper examines the aural semiotic conventions within the Elizabethan theatre evidenced in the First Folio of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*,[1] and compares these against modern semiotic developments found in recent productions by the Melbourne Theatre Company and Bell Shakespeare. The work of Bruce Smith,[2] John Long,[3] Wes

[1] Based on evidence around early performances of *Hamlet* circa 1602, and *Macbeth*, c. 1611 found in the Quartos and First Folio of the text.

[2] Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[3] John H. Long, *Shakespeare's Use of Music: Histories and Tragedies* (Gainseville: University of Florida Press, 1977).

Falkerth[4] and David Lindley[5] reveals how music and sound effects were utilised according to unique aural semiotic conventions on the Elizabethan stage, as influenced by conventions in early modern England. Smith argues that "since knowledge and intentions are shaped by culture, we need to attend also to cultural differences in the construction of aural experience."[6] As we develop our awareness of the cultural factors that define our modern soundscape, both in and outside of the theatre, we can begin to define the potential roles of sound and music in Shakespearean drama today. This will enable us to develop a modern compositional dramaturgy that is culturally aware, taking into consideration the differences in semiotics attached to music and incidental sound that contribute to the meanings conveyed in theatre.

The premise for this approach is centred on Clifford Geertz's model of interpretive anthropology. Geertz asserts that any approach to understanding art must always be a local matter,[7] taking the surrounding cultural influences into consideration. In this sense, a purely structural analysis of music and sound in the theatre does little to reveal its operational significance to audiences and practitioners. Essentially, the exploration of an art form is the exploration of a sensibility. Geertz classifies the wider field of cultural experience as a "matrix of sensibility."[8] This matrix includes the full range of our sensory experiences: sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing, and how these affect our understanding of the world. This understanding influences our reception of artistic forms, which is affected by locally situated meanings and associated with our bodily experience.

A person's matrix of sensibility consists of a series of explicit connections with practices in everyday life. Accordingly, our modern matrix of sensibility is invariably affected by the semiotic codes which have been built in our own society.[9] These meanings are established through the way in which signs are used, and our interpretations of these meanings are effectively situated within our own embodied experience of the world. To use Smith's term, our modern

[4] Wes Falkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
[5] David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2006).
[6] Smith, 8.
[7] Clifford Geertz, "Art as a Cultural System," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (London: Fontana Press, 1983), 97.
[8] Geertz, 102.
[9] Geertz, 119.

"phenomenology of hearing" is far removed from the experiences of people in Elizabethan England.[10] Smith bases his use of this term on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, which posits that human subjects are embodied agents, whose experiences are inescapably in the world, within a "field of meanings" which influences our interpretative practice.[11] Understanding the modern and Elizabethan matrix of sensibility in relation to embodied experience allows us to consider what meanings from Shakespeare's period are lost in today's theatre and what is needed to translate his work for modern audiences.

Soundscapes in the Elizabethan World

The soundscapes of Elizabethan society consisted of a vastly different array of sounds to those heard in today's world. In terms of acoustemology and sound as it exists in "place,"[12] Elizabethan England housed a number of "acoustic communities" that shifted and overlapped with each other.[13] In his original use of the term, Barry Truax defines an acoustic community as a soundscape on a macro level, consisting of cues that keep the community informed about everyday events within it.[14] Smith illustrates how the most prominent of these within the Elizabethan soundscape were found within and around church buildings, such as in the constant ringing of the parish bells; inside the court where musical heraldry defined hierarchies and relationship structures; and on the streets themselves, where many people commuted, a range of trades operated, and several different linguistic communities were converging on a daily basis.[15] Our consideration of this is vital to the way we perceive music and sound to have operated in Shakespeare's theatre, as the acoustic character of the time formed a key part of the Elizabethan aural experience. In a climate where horse-hooves heard passing over cobblestones was indicative of the dynamic level of sounds regularly

[10] Smith, 4.
[11] Charles Taylor, "Embodied Agency," in *Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays*, ed. Henry Pietersma (Washington D.C: University Press of America).
[12] Holly Watkins, "Musical Technologies of Place and Placelessness," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64 (2011): 405.
[13] Smith, 56.
[14] Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication* (Westport: Ablex Publishing, 2001), 65–66.
[15] Smith, 51.

experienced, the acoustic horizons of the Elizabethan world were significantly reduced from that of the modern era.[16]

The pre-industrial, Renaissance soundscape was characterised by a significantly narrow dynamic range in comparison to the modern world, which meant that the early modern listener of the seventeenth century was able to identify sound on a much smaller scale than the listener of today. Smith notes that Truax's conclusions about sound in the pre-industrial world would have characterised audience experience in the Elizabethan theatre: Few high intensity or continuous sounds exist in the pre-industrialised world. Therefore, more "smaller" sounds can be heard, more detail can be discerned in those that are heard, and sounds coming from a greater distance form a significant part of the soundscape. In terms of acoustic ecology, one might say that more "populations" of sound exist, and fewer "species" are threatened with extinction.[17]

This is in comparison to modern listeners, who are used to electronic amplification and consistently louder sounds in every day life.[18] Smith argues that this shrinks our "acoustic horizons, giving the listener a restricted sense of space."[19] Now we are accustomed to hearing sound and music in the theatre which is recorded and cut off from the source of its production, disembodied from the musician creating the music or the onstage and offstage actions which produce sound effects.

When we read Shakespeare's dramatic works with this in mind, we begin to uncover the intricate and finely-tuned acoustic realm he utilised to frame the interpretation of his plays. The primacy of aurality meant that music and sound were of great significance to dramatic representation in early modern theatre and aural cues were notably diagetic. This meant that music and sound referred directly to the drama being depicted on stage, and did not contain any instances of underscoring directed at audiences' emotional responses. These differences of aural conventions within the Elizabethan matrix of sensibility meant that music had a different role in contributing to meaning in the theatre of this period, creating associations with

[16] Ibid.
[17] Truax, 70–71.
[18] Smith, 51.
[19] Ibid.

sounds heard in everyday life and linking directly with what was occurring on stage.

Soundscapes and Aural References in *Hamlet*

In Shakespeare's tragedies music was used primarily to direct the audience's understanding of setting and characterisation.[20] The stage directions given in the First Folio publication[21] of *Hamlet* indicate a number of "soundmarks"[22] that Shakespeare used to enable the audience to make meaning from the drama on stage. For Elizabethans, various classes of instruments had specific semiotic connotations, both inside and outside the theatre. The inventory recorded in Phillip Henslowe's diary entry from 1598 gives the following list of instruments used in the first Globe theatre:

1. A trebel viall [Renaissance violin], a basse viall [Renaissance cello], a bandore [lute], a sytteren [bass lute]
2. J sack-bute [Renaissance trombone]
3. iij tymbrells [3 hand drums]
4. iij trumpettes and a drum [3 trumpets and a kettle drum][23]

Together with the recorder and flute, these instruments made up a "broken consort" ensemble, so called because it includes instruments from different families: brass, percussion, woodwind and strings.[24]

In early modern England, audiences in London would have been familiar with the "city waits," a company of freeman musicians who were employed to provide music for ceremonial and festival occasions around the town.[25] The waits had a practice of marching around the city during the night for three months of the year, between Michaelmas (29 September)[26] and Epiphany (6 January).[27] In

---

[20] Long, 105.
[21] John Heminges and Henry Condell, *Shakespeare's First Folio* (Globe Education Publications, 2001), 101.
[22] Truax, 67.
[23] Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R.A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 101.
[24] Smith, 291.
[25] Lindley, 55.
[26] Traditional Christian feast day of St Michael the Archangel.
[27] Traditional Christian feast day celebrating the revelation of God the Son.

1475, the waits were six in number with one apprentice, operating as a company of shawm[28] and sackbut players. In 1561 the company expanded to include viols, and by 1568 recorders and cornetts[29] had been added to their number.

At the time of *Hamlet*'s first performance in c1602, the shawm had been replaced by the hautboy, a more advanced version of the instrument.[30] In the First Folio of *Hamlet* we find direction for hautboys to play as a prelude to the Dumb Show.[31] There is also direction for a recorder to be played by the Danish prince himself. With use of the city waits, performance makers in the original Globe playhouse would have been able to call on an array of aural significations from the world outside of the theatre, including meanings that were attached to each class of instrument for Elizabethan audiences.

The trumpet is one of the most significant soundmarks in *Hamlet*, establishing a regal setting in the royal Danish court by representing the aural semiotic codes that existed in the court outside of the Elizabethan theatre. The sounds that heralded the actions of the King were essential for establishing the power relations between the members of the court both in and outside the theatre. For ordinary Elizabethan theatre-goers, a direct experience of the music of the English Royal Court would have been a very rare occurrence. However, audiences would have been familiar with the trumpet calls that were sounded for state occasions and royal progresses, as well as other music that might accompany them.[32]

A common musical form used in the Elizabethan theatre was the *flourish*, a boisterous fanfare played by the brass players for the entrances of royal characters. Another word in the Elizabethan theatre for the flourish was the "tucket," a term for a trumpet call which identified a royal family, and hence signified the entrance on

---

[28] A double reed woodwind instrument, an early predecessor of the oboe. Originally played by a domestic wait to sound the watch in a local area.

[29] A wooden or bone wind instrument with mouthpiece similar to that of a trumpet, and finger holes similar to those of a recorder.

[30] Bruce Haynes, "The Eloquent Oboe: A History of the Hautboy from 1640 to 1760," in *Oxford Scholarship Online*, http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195337259.001.0001/acprof-9780195337259-chapter-2 (accessed 12/08/12).

[31] Heminges and Condell, 267.

[32] Lindley, 58.

stage of a particular class of character.[33] The tucket took other names when used in other parts of Europe during the Renaissance, being named the *toccete* in Germany and the *toccede* in Denmark.

Tuckets were personalised trumpet calls for royal families, and functioned as a more specific form of musical heraldry. We understand that musicians in the Elizabethan theatre would have had several tuckets at their disposal for use in performance. No doubt there would have been several tuckets that were familiar to Elizabethan audiences.

Tuckets, flourishes and fanfares are examples of musical forms that existed outside the theatre and were common soundmarks of everyday life in early modern England. While the Elizabethans may not have ever had a first-hand experience of the Royal Court in England, they would have been familiar with the sound of musical heraldry from instances of their passing by on the streets, and would have understood that these aural cues called for a mark of respect for the persons to whom the calls were made. Transporting these soundmarks into the theatre allowed reference to the soundscapes of the surrounding world. Since trumpet calls were an aural mark of royalty and life in the court, their function was to establish setting and characterisation in the Elizabethan theatre and they were a common occurrence in the stage genres of history and tragedy.[34] Throughout the text of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare indicates that trumpets should be used for the royal setting in his instruction of a *flourish* for Claudius' entrances onstage. However, in the First Folio the number of directions for a *flourish* to mark the entrances of Claudius are minimal. The first explicit direction for a *flourish*[35] is written for the entrance of the Players in II.ii,[36] and it is not until Claudius' entrance to hear the play performed in the same scene that the text of the First Folio contains the first direction for his own tucket to be sounded. It is hard to know whether the *flourish* was an assumed part of the aural framework in the drama, since we find use of directions for a *flourish*

[33] Long, 14.
[34] Long, 105.
[35] Heminges and Condell, 263.
[36] All references will be in this standard form (Act.scene.line), with line references according to the Oxford editions of the playtexts.

as early as I.i in the second Quarto (Q2),[37] and this direction is given for the majority of Claudius' entrances onstage. These changes in the First Folio from Q2 could indicate developments between early and later performances of *Hamlet*, or the lack of direction for flourishes in the First Folio may have been deliberate.[38] If so, the absence of flourishes accompanying Claudius' entrances and exits onstage would have caused Elizabethan audiences to question his authority as king very early in the play.

Modern Convergences of Music, Sight and Sound

In the 21st century, audiences no longer recognise the significance of the tucket as a marker of status. For Ian McDonald, sound designer for the Melbourne Theatre Company's (MTC) current production of *Hamlet*, the modern equivalent of the Elizabethan tucket is an excerpt from a Mozart Piano Concerto. By playing this excerpt during the scene changes preceding Claudius and Gertrude's entries onto the stage throughout the play, McDonald uses Mozart as a signifier of high culture. In contrast, McDonald uses a piece of indie rock music for Laertes and Ophelia's entries onstage, to mark their youth and social status.

The way that the modern soundscape has evolved indicates that the meaning found in the aural signifiers of the Elizabethan theatre are somewhat lost on today's audience. McDonald's choice in the MTC's production of *Hamlet* was to incorporate new aural signifiers and employ them for similar dramatic effect, which shows a way in which modern compositional dramaturgy can be negotiated.

---

[37] The problem with Q2 is that it was published by Nicholas Ling who also published the first, "bad" quarto (Q1) which was likely a pirate copy of the play. Q2 seems to have been printed in an attempt by the publishers to redeem their association with Q1, as Q2 begins with the opening disclaimer that it is "Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost againe as it was, according to the true and perfect copie" and seems at least to have been printed with the permission of Shakespeare's playing company. While the Q2 is indeed much expanded on Q1, the First Folio is considered a more reliable source. For a detailed discussion on this topic, see Allen and Muir's introductory notes to the Quartos (1982).

[38] There is a strong possibility that the lack of directions in the First Folio are deliberate, since Shakespeare uses a similar technique in *Macbeth* to cloud the legitimacy of the lords that usurp the King and claim his power see Long, 109 for a detailed analysis.

The choices made by McDonald show consideration for the aural semiotic codes that existed in Elizabethan productions of *Hamlet*. McDonald made use of what he considered to be corresponding or related modern soundmarks to make the MTC's production accessible for their audience. What remains to be discussed is how modern developments in theatre and other representational mediums such as film might be considered in modern performance of Shakespeare. Particularly since the growth of the film and television industries, modern audiences have become accustomed to the idea of musical accompaniment or "soundtracks" for dramatic representation. For example, a *tremolo* on a string instrument now commonly signifies to the audience that they are to feel "tense" at that point in the film.[39] When semiotic codes such as this one are understood and utilised with precision, the effect on the modern Shakespearean stage is significant.

An example of effective incidental music is in the accompaniment of Hamlet's soliloquies in The Royal Shakespeare Company's production of 2009. The television broadcast of this production is an example of how this explicitly visual medium influenced composers to develop more extra-diagetic music and sound to direct audience response.[40] Through a simple use of expressive techniques like the *tremolo* and a jagged, atonal melody, composer Paul Englishby places aural experience within a modern cinematic framework. In the third Act, Hamlet makes reference to the supernatural forces which influence the final progression of the tragic sequence in the play. In his fifth soliloquy (III.ii.349) Hamlet states that he will take advantage of the "witching time of night, when churches yawn and hell itself breathes out contagion to this world" in order to carry out his revenge on Claudius. Englishby uses an atonal melody consisting of widely-spaced intervals leaping up and down the stave as a reference to the supernatural in line with the theme of Hamlet's speeches. The RSC *Hamlet* indicates that music carries more influence for modern audiences of Shakespeare when used to make reference to the supernatural, even with slight contextual modifications. Paul Englishby uses an atonal melodic contour and intervallic tension to

[39] David Machin, *Analysing Popular Music: image, sound, text* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010), 99.
[40] Royal Shakespeare Company, *Hamlet* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 2009).

represent Hamlet's uncertainty about death and resurrection in this soliloquy and reveals the journey of his character. In doing so Englishby utilises the sounds of Western tonality and modern atonality along with the acoustic signifiers of film to connect with a modern audience.

Sound and Signification in *Macbeth*

As a tragedy, *Macbeth* is a play which had a peculiar lack of music in its first performances. This could well be due to the fact that Shakespeare likely wrote the play with a royal performance in mind for King James, who was known to have little interest in music or dance.[41] Since the narrative is about ambition, kingship and treachery, the trumpet *flourish* often carries a body of meanings each time it is sounded. The first music to be sounded in the play is a flourish for the entrance and exit of King Duncan (I.iv). Notably, Macbeth never has the honour of a flourish, even while he wears the crown. Apart from the flourishes for Duncan, the only other instance of this royal music is heard when Malcolm is hailed as King of Scotland before setting forth for his coronation.[42] By shaping the music in this way, Shakespeare is able to direct the meaning around these key characters. Considering the play was written for a royal audience, the absence of a *flourish* for Macbeth would have given the Elizabethan audience cause to question his ascent to power, having lied, cheated and murdered his way to gaining the crown.

Another major signifier in *Macbeth* is attached to Shakespeare's direction for use of the Renaissance oboe, known as a "hautboy," for a number of scene changes in the play. After the *flourish*, the next sound to be heard according to Shakespeare's directions in the Folio is music played on the hautboy (I.vi). Woodwind instruments were rarely used in tragedy[43] and were considered to be "instruments of the spheres," [44] in the same class as viols and lutes. [45] Hautboys in particular were thought to "dance with the devil," and their use in the

[41] Long, 182.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] The "music of the spheres" is the term for music associated with the supernatural and the heavenly realm in Elizabethan philosophy.
[45] Clare van Kampen, "Music and Aural Texture at Shakespeare's Globe," in *Shakespeare's Globe: a theatrical experiment*, eds. Christie Carson and Farah Karim-Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 81.

theatre was considered to identify supernatural forces at play.[46] However, in *Macbeth* Shakespeare asks his audiences to accept that hautboys could be a part of the aural landscape of the city around the castle where Macbeth meets King Duncan at this point in the play. This is reflected in Duncan's own remarks when he states: "This castle hath a pleasant seat, the air / Nimble and sweetly recommends itself / Unto our gentle senses" while the hautboys are playing (I.vi.1-2). The difference in sound between the bright flourish on the trumpet and the mellow sounds of the hautboys serves to establish changes in setting, from the royal court to the city outside the castle. The sounding of hautboys then carries more weight when they are used again for the entrance of the witches, where on this occasion Macbeth asks "what noise is this?" upon their sounding (IV.i). The comparison between Duncan's consideration of the "pleasant seat" (I.vi) provided by the hautboys at the castle, and the eerie sounding of the instrument around the witches adds to the sense of discord and reinforces the dramatic chaos around the struggle for the crown.

Modern Aural Conventions and *Macbeth*

Both the use of the trumpets and hautboys signified defining elements of setting for the first audiences of *Macbeth*. For those composing music in modern productions of the play, the appropriation of these soundmarks poses a problem: they were very defined for Elizabethan audiences, but carry little meaning today. In the recent Bell Shakespeare production of *Macbeth* that played in the Drama Theatre at the Sydney Opera House in 2012, Kelly Ryall orchestrated the incidental music and sound as a combination of soundmarks connected to the drama and extra-diagetic music directing the audience response.

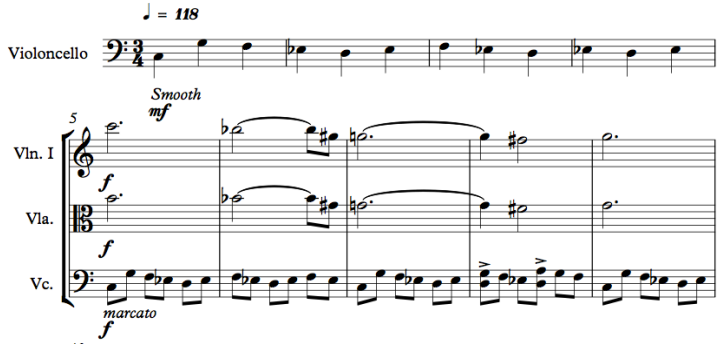
Key to the development of the character of Macbeth is his battle with reason and insanity. Ryall engages with this theme with the composition of what might be termed "insanity music" in a series of extra-diagetic, sustained violin lines pointing to the inner, psychological journey of Macbeth. Beginning with the first vision of the witch in Act 1, and continuing with each of her appearances in the play, the sustained string lines make direct reference to the residual effect she has on him. Ryall employs close, dissonant

[46] Ibid.

harmonies on the violin which he then manipulates with movement to consonant harmony to create a sense of tension and resolution, such as seconds moving to thirds and tritones followed by their resolutions.

The extra-diagetic, insanity music directs the aural experience of Bell's audience to feel tension in the interaction between Macbeth and the witch. During the banquet scene in the final act of the play (III.iv), Ryall's choice of music operates both diagetically and extra-diagetically as underscoring in the establishment of setting the scene. Ryall composed a string quartet to commence in a blackout between scenes 3 and 4 and continue into the banquet to establish a feeling of pompousness and arrogance.

Kelly Ryall, String Quartet for *Macbeth*, bars 1–9.



The frivolous music on the stringed instruments continues as the scene begins, adding a sense of melodrama and colour that supports the action happening on stage. As Macbeth's feet hit the stage, the music comes to an abrupt end, leaving the high-pitched sound from the witch scenes and the murder of Banquo resonating in the audiences' ears. The intervallic tension brings the audience aurally inside Macbeth's own head, making reference to his past while proclaiming a warning of deeds to come.

Disparate Similarities in the World of Aural Experience

These recent productions of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* provide useful case studies for exploring the disparities and similarities between Elizabethan and modern culture in terms of aural experience. While

use of trumpets and hautboys aided in the establishment of characterisation and setting in both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* in Elizabethan practice, these instruments no longer carry the same level of significance for modern audiences. Ryall's composition of insanity music in *Macbeth* reveals a sympathy for the Elizabethan experience of sound in his use of music to refer to a character's inner journey. Ryall uses modern, extra-diagetic conventions of music developed in cinema to make this connection with Shakespeare's characterisation of Macbeth. As he employs compositional styles used in cinematic music to direct the emotional experience of his audiences, Ryall gives clarity to the drama onstage in the modern theatre.

The literature on Shakespeare's use of music and sound reveals how Shakespeare manipulated the soundscape within the theatre by using a number of soundmarks that connected to the wider aural experience of his audiences. What this achieved was a direct connection to the wider matrix of sensibility of the Elizabethan theatergoer, providing semiotic points of reference with their embodied, aural experiences.[47] All of the examples discussed from modern interpretations of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are instances for which the composers crafted this same connection with the wider soundscape outside of the theatre. In the MTC production of *Hamlet*, use of music from various genres outside the theatre acted as particular cultural references in the changes of scene. Englishby causes his audiences to associate the royal court in *Hamlet* with "high culture" through his use of Mozart Piano Sonatas in these scenes, similar to the way Elizabethan audiences would have associated the *flourish* with royal processions in the Renaissance.

These examples of musical references in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* reveal how aural meanings in performance of Shakespeare's tragedies can take vastly different, yet complementary forms. While Shakespeare's own use of incidental sound and music operated primarily as a vehicle of direct reference to what occurred on stage, our own conventions require a reversal of this convention in tune with the wider frame of aural experience in modern culture. The reversibility that results from engagement with these dramatic works within a modern aesthetic might act as an embodied exchange of meaning to some extent as it directs audiences' implicit understanding between Elizabethan and

[47] Folkerth, 15.

modern ways of perceiving the world. What this reveals is a "reversibility of perception," what Merleau-Ponty describes as a "unique space which separates and reunites, which sustains every cohesion."[48]

Developing Compositional Dramaturgy in Modern Theatre

The compositional approaches of Englishby and Ryall indicate some key differences in the way modern listeners perceive meaning in performance of Shakespeare's dramatic works. This is due to a number of cultural differences that inform our modern aural experience. These differences exist on both a semantic level, in the meanings found in instrumental qualities and on a pragmatic level, in the use of musical forms and concepts. The semiotic meanings of instrumentation and musical forms are shaped fundamentally by the soundscape of the surrounding culture. In the Elizabethan theatre, these meanings were specific, housed primarily in instrumentation and set musical forms that existed in everyday life and referenced on stage. In the 21st century, meaning is embedded in musical concepts that contain a high number of metaphorical layers and are consequently subject to a number of interpretations when used in performance.

For music and sound to be an effective carrier of meaning in modern theatrical performance, a level of awareness is required about the soundscape that informs the audience's point of aural reference. This means that we need to be aware of the characteristics of the Elizabethan soundscapes both in and outside of the theatre, in order to consider how these might relate or differ to the modern soundscape which affects our interpretation of Shakespeare onstage today. Consideration of the differences in the matrix of sensibility for today's audiences in comparison with Renaissance audiences allows for a greater cultural awareness to be developed in modern compositional approaches and makes Shakespeare's works more accessible to audiences today.

---

[48] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," trans. Carleton Dallery, in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 187.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my Honours supervisor, Dr Glen McGillivray for his ongoing support with my larger project relating to this article. Thanks also go to Bell Shakespeare and in particular to Kelly Ryall for his practical insights and for supplying me with his original scores. Thanks also to Dr Chris Coady, Peter Smith and the Musicology department at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music for mentoring me through the process of writing this work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Michael J.B. and Muir, Kenneth. *Shakespeare's Plays in Quarto: a facsimile edition of copies primarily from the Henry E. Huntington Library.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982.

Brooke, Nicholas ed. *The Tragedy of Macbeth.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Falkerth, Wes. *The Sound of Shakespeare.* New York: Routledge, 2002.

Foakes, R.A. ed. *Henslowe's Diary.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Geertz, Clifford. "Art as a Cultural System." In *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology.* London: Fontana Press, 1983: 94–120.

Haynes, Bruce. "The Eloquent Oboe: A History of the Hautboy from 1640 to 1760." In *Oxford Scholarship Online*, http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195337259. 001.0001/acprof-9780195337259-chapter-2 (accessed 12/08/12).

Heminges, John and Condell, Henry. *Shakespeare's First Folio.* Globe Education Publications, 2001.

Hibbard, G.R. ed. *Hamlet.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Lindley, David. *Shakespeare and Music.* London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2006.

Long, John H. *Shakespeare's Use of Music: Histories and Tragedies.* Gainseville: University of Florida Press, 1977.

Machin, David. *Analysing Popular Music: image, sound, text.* Los Angeles: Sage, 2010.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Eye and Mind." Translated by Carleton

Dallery. In *The Primacy of Perception*, edited by James M. Edie. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

Royal Shakespeare Company, *Hamlet*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 2009.

Smith, Bruce. *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Taylor, Charles. "Embodied Agency." In *Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays*, edited by Henry Pietersma. Washington D.C: University Press of America, 1989.

Truax, Barry. *Acoustic Communication*. Westport: Ablex Publishing, 2001.

Watkins, Holly. "Musical Technologies of Place and Placelessness." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64 (2011): 404–408.

ABSTRACT

Today we consider theatre to be a visual performance medium, relying primarily on imagery for the creative expression of ideas. However, in conducting a historical study we find that theatre's prioritization of imagery over sound is a relatively late development in dramatic style. Prior to the twentieth century, practitioners on the stage relied heavily on the medium of sound and auditory experience to communicate with their audiences. This raises some important dramaturgical questions when producing historical plays for modern audiences: what role do soundscapes and music play in accompanying dramatic representation on stage? Moreover, how should sound and music be used with a historical play to make it accessible and engaging for a modern audience? The dramatic works of William Shakespeare are useful sources for answering these questions. This paper will examine the evidence of aural conventions in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* in the Elizabethan theatre, and compare these against recent productions of these plays. This will demonstrate differences in our modern interpretation of meaning in sound, and offer solutions to how we might make Shakespeare's work accessible to modern audiences.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Kathryn recently completed a Bachelor of Music Studies/Bachelor of Arts (Honours) with a first class award. This article relates to her Honours thesis, which examined differences in aural experience between early modern and current audiences in *Hamlet*. Kathryn's broader research interests are in examining the relationship between music and audience response in theatre and in particular the way music affects our interpretation of language in performance.

Kathryn is interested in producing research useful to practitioners who are currently presenting early modern works in theatre and other mediums. She has worked as a dramaturg for ABC Radio National and other emerging theatre companies in Sydney, and is interested in developing interpretive processes in theatre and music.