TEACHING AND LEARNING SHAKEPEARE THROUGH SONG

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(LANGUAGE AND LITERACY EDUCATION)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April, 2006

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ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's plays are filled with music. Over 70 songs can be found in the Shakespeare canon, and no less than 32 of the plays make reference to music or musical matters in the text itself (Naylor, 1965, p. 3). In addition to songs that advance the action, known as mimetic music, performances of Shakespearean drama often make use of non-mimetic music – that is, the incidental music used at the start and end of the plays to entertain the audience (Duffin, 2004, p.11). While much innovative research has resulted in new and exciting ways to teach Shakespeare (i.e., O'Brien, 1993; Davis & Salomone, 1993; Gibson, 1998), the possibility of exploring musical settings in the context of teaching Shakespeare is often overlooked, possibly due to a lack of accessible information and resources.

This thesis explores how understanding of Shakespearean drama might be enriched through attention to the song texts. It is comprised of three main sections: 1) an examination of the history of song in Shakespearean text; 2) a presentation of the author's original arrangements for five song texts accompanied by discussion of how the composition process required sophisticated engagement with the text; and 3) a reflection on the author's experiences inviting Grade 10 English students to compose original settings for Shakespearean songs employing a computer-based music making application.

The print manuscript is accompanied by a hypermedia compilation for classroom use that features musical settings (both historical and original), song texts, and practical resources for teachers. Additional materials, including streamed music files of the author's original song settings, are available at www.shakesongs.com.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following individuals. First, my thanks to Jennie Emery, for lending your remarkable voice to several original Shakesong recordings, especially the chorus of fairies. Second, much appreciation to Mr. Angus Macdonald, for lending your vocal talents to the “Canakin Clink.” Third, I wish to thank Ashley Macdonald, for supplying your wonderfully sweet voice to two distressed female leads (Ophelia and Desdemona), even though you were incredibly busy performing The Secret Garden at the time. To Scott and Gerina Heath, thank you for assistance in all matters technical and computer related – your advice proved invaluable throughout and I am deeply in your debt. Lastly, a thank you to my parents, for innumerable piano lessons, guitar lessons, and your support throughout the years.

In addition, I would like to offer a very special thanks to my professors, Dr. Carl Leggo, Dr. Scott Goble, and Dr. Teresa Dobson, for bringing their own areas of expertise to this document. I especially wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Teresa Dobson, who made this entire project possible and oversaw it from start to finish. Your help, support, dedication, and gently guiding hand kept me going through some difficult times, and your scope and breadth of knowledge of the subject matter kept me constantly striving to do better. I hope the end product has exceeded your expectations. You are a truly gifted teacher and advisor. Many, many Thanks. I couldn’t have done it without you.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Preface

Shakespeare's plays are filled with music. Over 70 songs are in the Shakespeare canon, and no less than 32 of the plays make reference to music or musical matters in the text itself (Naylor, 1931, p. 3). In addition to the songs that advance the action, known as mimetic music, the non-mimetic music — incidental music — is used at the start and end of the plays to entertain the audience (Duffin, 2004, p. 11).

Following the rise of the printing press, printed ballads and songs infiltrated almost every aspect of Elizabethan life, including drama. The age of Shakespeare was a golden age of song. Elizabethan dramatists borrowed much of their music from a common body of folk song, so it is unlikely that Shakespeare wrote his own music, but perhaps no playwright understood the power of music to move an audience better than Shakespeare. The songs in his plays are not merely entertaining diversions; rather, they are used to reinforce thematic ideas, advance plot, foreshadow action, delineate character, localize setting, cover exits and entrances, and depict the passage of time. In Shakespeare's drama, then, music is almost always used for a specific purpose.

The Elizabethan audience had a voracious appetite for new productions: it is estimated Shakespeare's acting company performed 5 to 6 plays per week and 20 new plays over the course of a season (Greenblatt, 2004, p. 188). As a result of the intense demand for new material, and in keeping with the theatrical traditions of the times, music was often moved, changed, or re-used in different plays (Duffin, 2004, p. 13). Judging from the songs appropriated for use in the plays, Shakespeare clearly understood and appreciated music's significance for all social classes, and offered songs in numerous popular genres, from ayres and ballads to bawdy tavern songs.
Context and Purpose

Many students find early modern English difficult to understand and interpret; consequently, the study of Shakespearean drama presents a challenge to both teachers and students alike. In provinces like British Columbia, with a high population of new immigrants without English as a first language, this problem is compounded because many students are struggling with contemporary English grammatical structures and are doubly challenged by the complexities of early modern English. What methods might teachers use to help students come to appreciate and enjoy early modern texts? While much innovative research has resulted in new and exciting ways to teach Shakespeare (i.e. O’Brien, 1993; Davis & Salomone, 1993; Gibson, 1998), the possibility of exploring musical settings is often overlooked by school teachers, possibly due to a lack of accessible information and resources. As Duffin (2004) points out, the songs are often neglected in student productions:

I attended a student performance of *Twelfth Night*. The production was spirited and there were many talented players, but as I heard song reference after song reference go by, with either no melody at all or what seemed to me a terrible hodgepodge of arbitrarily chosen tunes, I wondered “Do they know that some of these things are songs rather than just verses?” (p. 40)

It is worth considering how the understanding of drama can be enriched by the inclusion of song. This thesis consists of a historical and theoretical discussion of song in Shakespearean drama followed by my personal reflections as a musician and teacher. To consider the possibilities for composing music in the English classroom, I designed a unit in which students considered variant musical settings for particular song texts and then composed settings themselves using Garage Band, a multi-track recording program. The aim of the thesis is threefold: 1) to examine the history of song
in Shakespearean text; 2) to discuss how my own knowledge of Shakespeare was expanded in the context of composing original settings for some of the song texts; and
3) to explore the potential for integrating music in the teaching of Shakespeare and outline the learning outcomes that might be achieved with this method. The reflective portions of the thesis draw on narrative research as defined by Connelly and Clandinin (1988). The thesis might be characterized as an arts-based method, in that it emphasizes modes of expression other than the verbal (cf Rapport, Wainwright, & Elwyn, 2005). Ultimately, I hope to provide a media-rich resource for practicing teachers that will promote interdisciplinary instructional approaches that integrate English and Music. The questions with which I began my exploration, and which guided me throughout the writing of my thesis, were these:

- What is the history of Shakespeare and song?
- What issues arise when one engages in the process of considering possible settings for Shakespeare’s song texts?
- What are the affordances of teaching Shakespeare to adolescents focusing on an activity of composing settings to the song texts?
- How does my own understanding of Shakespearean drama change as a result of engaging in this activity and reflection?

I focused my examination on songs from two plays: As You Like It and A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Both are widely taught in Grades 9 and 10, and contain some of Shakespeare’s most memorable song texts. As well, I have composed musical settings for some songs from Romeo & Juliet, Othello, and Hamlet, which shed light on different issues raised by Shakespeare’s song texts. This thesis is comprised of two components: 1) a print manuscript, and 2) a hypermedia compilation for classroom use that features musical settings (both historical and original), song texts, and practical resources for teachers. In addition to these elements, I have developed a Web site,
www.shakesongs.com, that provides additional materials, including descriptions and pictures of period instruments, biographies of important Shakespearean song composers, and streamed music files of my original song settings.
CHAPTER 2. HISTORY OF SONG IN SHAKESPEARE

The true concord of well-tuned sounds. –Shakespeare, Sonnet 8 (8.5)

To put the songs in context, I provide in this chapter a general overview of Elizabethan societal attitudes towards music, the musical traditions and sources that Shakespeare may have absorbed, the instrumental resources and performance venues available to him, and his musical ethos as evidenced in the plays. In addition, I profile two composers who were contemporaries of Shakespeare and who may have collaborated with him during his lifetime. (For biographies of other relevant Shakespearean song composers and descriptions of Elizabethan instruments, see the additional materials on the accompanying disc.) To provide an example of the rich musical history of Shakespeare's dramas, the chapter concludes with a brief musical history of one of the most commonly taught plays, A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Elizabethan Societal Attitudes Towards Music

The society into which Shakespeare entered as a young playwright in the 1590's was stratified by class, occupation, and family lineage. As an irony of Shakespeare's profession, he wrote about the lives of Kings and Queens, and no doubt impersonated the upper class as an actor on stage, yet he himself occupied a tenuous social position at best. As an actor, Shakespeare could be detained as a vagrant without cause and subjected to severe punishment (such as whipping, being branded, or being put in the stocks), if he were not sponsored by a noble family or by the monarchy itself (Greenblatt, 2004, p. 74). A similar attitude was evinced toward musicians; however, composers of music, who, if accomplished, were often held in high esteem. Elizabethan society at the time was a harsh world in which individuals had to show deference to their
social betters or risk imprisonment and torture. The monarchy required absolute loyalty of its subjects, and this loyalty included regular observance of the official state religion, Protestant Christianity. Any deviation from the norm could result in accusations of treason, which was punishable by torture, imprisonment, and death. For commoners, one of the few officially sanctioned outlets in this stern social hierarchy was music. Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford-Upon-Avon abounded with all types of folk music, including songs, ballads (story songs), catches or "rounds" and simple part singing. Certainly, Shakespeare must have absorbed the folk music tradition of his home town, for he frequently alluded to ballads and other popular music forms in his plays, and many lyrics from the popular musical literature form the basis of his jokes and puns.

At the same time that music served as release from the authoritarian nature of English society, music reinforced the existing social order; indeed, knowledge of music was considered a sign of a proper education as well as an indication of good moral character. A practical acquaintance with music was an essential part of the education of nobility, the higher middle class, and clergy (Naylor, 1931, p. 13). Shakespeare reflects the perceived relationship between music and character in the following passage spoken by Lorenzo to Jessica in *Merchant of Venice*:

Here we will sit and let the sounds of music Creep in our ears... There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st But in his motion like an angel sings, Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins... The man that hath no music in himself, Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils, The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted. (Merchant 5.1.83-88)

The reference to the "orb" in the night sky, to which "like an angel sings" alludes, is the Elizabethan concept (drawn from Ptolemaic astronomy) that the harmonious movement of planetary bodies produces a heavenly music inaudible to human ears – the "music of the spheres." Similarly, the ensuing lines about "treasons, stratagems, and spoils" and "affections dark as Erebus" rely on the Elizabethan concept of the humors or affections – the four fluids of the body thought to determine temperament.

It was customary in Elizabethan drama to include at least one song in every play. Even the most profound tragedies included music, usually in the form of military trumpets and drums (Springfels, 2004, p. 1), though Shakespeare broke with this tradition of sparse martial music in Othello and Hamlet. Of the 37 canonical plays of Shakespeare, no less than 32 had interesting references to music and musical matters. As Naylor explains in Shakespeare and Music,

there are . . . over three hundred stage directions which are musical in their nature . . . The musical references in the text are most commonly found in the comedies . . . while the musical stage directions belong chiefly to the tragedies, and are mostly of a military nature. (Naylor, 1931, pp. 3-4)

Music was an integral part of every performance, and Elizabethan actors were all expected to have some knowledge of it. One of Shakespeare’s fellow actors, Augustine Phillips, left a will indicating the range of musical skill Elizabethan actors had to possess: "I give to Samuel Gilborne . . . my purple cloak, sword and dagger, and . . . my bass-viol. I give to James Sands . . . a cittern, a bandore, and a lute . . ." (Greenblatt, 2004, p. 73). Clearly, actors were expected to have a strong knowledge of music and
the ability to play a diverse range of instruments, in addition to some knowledge of fighting and swordplay. As actors, they were required to impersonate the nobles and gentry, and a sufficient knowledge of music was part of making a convincing impression. No concrete proof exists as to whether or not Shakespeare was a musician, but the ample musical references in his plays suggest he had a working knowledge and appreciation of music. For example, he mentions the fingering of the recorder in *Hamlet* (3.2.352-380), and the *solfeggio* syllables (fa,sol, la, mi, or F G A B) in *King Lear* (1.2.141-145). In sonnet 128, he also refers to the keys of the virginal, Queen Elizabeth’s favorite instrument (Naylor, 1931, p. 52).

**Shakespeare’s Performing Venues and Musical Resources**

The musical resources available to Shakespeare would have varied greatly, depending on his performing situation. Essentially, three types of theatre venues existed in his day – public or “commercial theatres,” private theatres, and court productions.

Nine public playhouses were built in and around London between 1576 and 1642. The three most important – the Globe, the Fortune, and The Swan, were all outside the city limits, and, consequently, outside the jurisdiction of civic authorities (Trumbull, 2002, p. 2). These theatres were all “outdoor” style theatres with an open yard for the lower classes or “groundlings.” As Greenblatt (2004) explains,

> One penny would get you into the yard where you could stand for two or three hours with the crowd . . . Another penny would get you out of the rain and onto a seat in one of the covered galleries that ringed the playhouse; a third penny would get you a cushioned seat in one of the 'gentlemen's rooms' on the lower level of the galleries . . . where one not only sees everything well but can also be seen. (p. 185)

Some of these theatres had a music room located over the stage, where musicians could be hidden. Nevertheless, without an orchestra pit (indeed, the concept
of an “orchestra” had not yet been invented), most musicians would have appeared on
stage as part of the dramatic action. The musical resources of a public playhouse would
have been limited by budget constraints, probably to a small ensemble of musicians and
a couple of boy singers. The ensembles of Shakespeare’s time were known as
“consorts,” as depicted in the following witty pun from *Romeo and Juliet*:

Tybalt: Mercutio, thou consort’st with Romeo.
Mercutio: Consort! what, does thou make us minstrels?
An thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords:
Here’s my fiddlestick; here’s that shall make you dance.
Zounds, consort!” (3.1.46-50)

Shakespeare puns on both meanings of “consort,” while also providing some
phallic imagery that ties in with the swordplay in the ensuing fight scene. A reference is
also made to the low caste of the musician at this time.

The consorts of Shakespeare’s age were generally composed of one family of
instruments. Viols were the favored instrument in these consorts, and were sold to
music lovers in sets, so that a “chest of viols” usually consisted of six pieces: two treble
viols, two tenors, and two basses. The violin, as we know it, was not popular in the
Elizabethan period. The golden age of violin making did not begin until nearly 50 years
after Shakespeare’s death; indeed, it was regarded as a vulgar instrument by the
Elizabethans (Elson, 1901, p. 13). If another type of instrument came into the consort, it
was called a “broken” consort. The classic consort for theatre music was a broken
consort (consort of mixed instruments) comprising lute, pandora or cittern (guitars),
treble and bass viols, and flute or recorder (Stevens, 1966, pp. 223-24). Two main
classes of musicians were used on stage: royal consorts (musicians employed by
nobility) and city consorts or “waits” (musicians employed by the city). As time
progressed, the public and private theatres employed singer-actors more heavily (Stevens, p. 25). The beauty of the broken consort was that it was small enough to accompany a solo voice without drowning it out, but large enough to play music of six parts and be sung and danced to by a group of actors (as in the fairy scenes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

The other type of theatre in Shakespeare's time was the private theatre, which was distinguished from the public by being fully enclosed (i.e., indoors). Typically, these theatres were smaller (one-half to one-quarter the seating capacity of the public theatres) and roofed (Trumbull, 2002, p. 1). The actors could perform in the private theatres during the winter months, when it was too cold to perform outdoors. Many of these theatres, such as the famous Blackfriars, were located in precincts known as liberties. These liberties were the locations of former Catholic monasteries that had enjoyed exemptions from city codes. After the Reformation, the nuns and monks were expelled, but the legal exemptions remained, allowing the actors to flout any attempts by the civic leaders to stop the performance of plays, which the London authorities often viewed as scandalous or dangerous to public decency (Greenblatt, 2004, p. 165). Often, incidental music was played for a whole hour before the play began in such private playhouses, as indicated in the Diary of the Duke of Stettin-Pomerania in 1602:

> For a whole hour preceding the play one listens to a delightful entertainment on the organs, lutes, pandorins, mandolins, viols, and flutes, as on the present occasion, indeed, when a boy *cum voce tremula* sang . . . charmingly to the accompaniment of a bass-viol. (qtd. in Hartnoll, 1966, p. 11)

In addition to the music that prefaced every drama, non-mimetic music was played at the play’s conclusion, called a *jig*. Such jigs were essentially music and dance entertainments, and not directly related to the plot of the play, even if it was a tragedy.
Therefore, it would not be uncommon for the audience to watch *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, or *Romeo and Juliet*, which end in suffering and death, only to have the actors rise and perform a lively dance (Duffin, 2004, p. 12). While these mini-masques may seem to break the theatrical illusion for the audience, I would argue that the song and dance acted as a segue back into reality, much as the concluding song of a film does today. The audience rises, stretches, and contemplates what they have just seen, even as they continue to be entertained. As well, the music, even if it does not directly relate to the plot of the play, comments on the drama by virtue of the catharsis it induces.

In the public and private theatres, the instrumental forces available to Shakespeare would have been fairly sparse. Nevertheless, in the two plays produced at court, *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*, Shakespeare probably had access to court musicians and singers (Springfels, 2004, p. 3). The first recorded production of *The Tempest* was at the royal residence of Whitehall in 1611, and the second was for the wedding festivities of Princess Elizabeth (daughter of James I) in 1613. Similarly, *Twelfth Night* was performed at Whitehall in 1601 as part of a royal celebration of the twelfth day of Christmas, January 6 (Springfels, 2004, p. 3). Both of these plays contain three times the amount of music present in other plays, indicating that Shakespeare had access to more than the usual resources for these productions. Of course, Shakespeare may also have recognized the inherently musical nature of these two plays, and sought to have them performed in venues where he had the resources to realize them adequately. Both *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest* deal with the dualities of the everyday world and the world of magic, and music plays an important part in establishing this contrast. Many of the instruments had symbolic significance for Elizabethan listeners, so that when a particular instrument was heard, it immediately
conjured a mood for the audience. For example, the oboe was frequently utilized to foreshadow doom or disaster, such as the vision of the eight murdered kings in *Macbeth*. Here, as the witches enter and present Macbeth with a vision, he cries “what noise is this?” (4.1.145) and the stage direction calls for “hautboys” (from the French *haut-bois* or “high wood”), which was the medieval word for the predecessor of the medium oboe, with a tone that was harsher. It is also sometimes spelled “hoboy.” In contrast to the malevolent sounds of the hautboy, the lute and the viol were regarded as benevolent, harmonious instruments that eased melancholy (Springfels, pp. 3-4).

**Unusual Performance Practices**

One of the most bizarre practices of the Elizabethan period was to cut a door in the back of a violone (contrabass) and have a small boy stand inside the instrument. At the concert, the contrabass player would render the bass part on his instrument and sing the middle part, while the invisible boy would add a treble/soprano harmony. In effect, audiences heard a trio, but with only one performer in sight (Elson, 1901, p. 27).

**Shakespeare’s Musical Ethos**

**Collaboration**

Discussing Shakespeare’s musical ethos can be difficult, since we do not know that he actually composed any music himself. Much of the music in his plays was drawn from the popular music of the day – ballads and street songs – or provided by composer collaborators such as Morley and Johnson, whose genres I will discuss later. Collaboration, then as now, was not uncommon. As the chief writer-in-residence for the King’s Men after 1603, Shakespeare was responsible for bringing on new playwrights, such as Thomas Middleton, and overseeing other scripts besides his own plays (Wood,
A third of all shows in the period were joint efforts, and we know that, as Shakespeare got older, he collaborated more frequently, perhaps because of his other business responsibilities, or simply because he did not wish to work as hard. It is not unreasonable to assume, then, that when it came to songs, Shakespeare served in many cases as an overseer rather than writer. Therefore, in discussing Shakespeare's musical "ethos," I can base conclusions only on the evidence in the plays.

**Use of Popular Music as Source Material**

From the music contained in the plays, we can ascertain that Shakespeare was a writer of the people. Nothing in his plays indicates that he was interested in the art music of the period, such as the church polyphony of William Byrd or the madrigals of Thomas Weelkes. The complexity of such music was inappropriate for the resources at his disposal and above the understanding of most of his audience. In many of the plays, Shakespeare (or his composer collaborators) used the popular folk tunes of his childhood referentially. For example, in *Hamlet*, Ophelia's madness is depicted through her singing song fragments of popular ballads at an inappropriate moment in an audience with the King and Queen. The text of "How Should I Your True Love Know?" stems from the ballad "Walsingham":

As you came from Walsingham
from that holy land,
Met you not with my true love
by the way as you came?
How should I your true love know,
that hath met many a one . . . (Duffin, 200, p. 422)
Clearly, the text of “Walsingham” has some similarities to Ophelia’s song, as seen in the excerpt below:

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandal shoon... *(Hamlet, 4.5.23-26)*

To begin with, the reference to the Holy Land and the idea of a pilgrimage is mirrored in the text of “How Should I Your True Love Know” in the line “by his cockle hat and his staff/And his sandal shoon” *(Hamlet 4.5.25-26)*. Next, an obvious reference is made of the title itself *(Duffin, 2004, p. 422)*.

“Walsingham” also seems to have provided some source material for the Palmer’s Sonnet in *Romeo and Juliet*:

As I went to Walsingham
to the shrine with speed
Met I a jolly Palmer
In a Pilgrim’s weed.
Now God save you jolly Palmer
Welcome, Lady gay,
Oft have I sued to thee for love.
Oft have I said you nay. *(Duffin, 2004, p. 422)*

The banter between the suitor and his lady, as well as the repetition of key words such as “pilgrim,” “palmer,” and “shrine” indicate that Shakespeare may have been inspired by this material. Additionally, “Walsingham” was sung and performed as part of a stage jig, so Shakespeare may have performed it as part of the opening or closing to one of his plays *(Duffin, p. 423)*.
Another example of how popular music was appropriated is the famous ballad “Willow, Willow.” Although “Willow, Willow” appears in almost every collection of Shakespeare songs, it is not, strictly speaking, an original Shakespeare song at all, but rather a famous folk ballad of the day. In *Othello*, Desdemona sings “Willow, Willow” as a precursor to her murder at Othello’s hands. A portion of the text is reprinted below:

*Sing all a green willow must be my garland*
*Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve,*
*I call’d my love false love: but what said he then?*
*If I court moe [more] women, you’ll couch with moe men. (4.3)*

Here, the lyric integrity of the original song is destroyed intentionally, to show the feeling of reproach that Desdemona feels after Othello’s accusations of infidelity. The “Willow, Willow” love lyric has nothing to do with murder, but its melancholy tone takes on new meaning in the dramatic context Shakespeare has constructed.

**Music Moveable and Interchangeable**

Another important indicator of how Shakespeare and his Elizabethan contemporary playwrights regarded music is that the songs in his plays are moveable and interchangeable (within certain limits). A new song setting could be inserted whenever a play was revived, so that the music would sound fresh and contemporary (Duffin, 2004, p. 13). Furthermore, songs could “migrate” from play to play. For example, the clown Feste sings a song in Act 5.1 of *Twelfth Night*, entitled “When that I was and a little tiny boy,” which reappears in *King Lear* during Act 3.2, at the moment Lear raves madly during a storm accompanied by the Fool. Although the tragic Fool sings a different stanza, the key line of the song, “For the rain it raineth every day,” appears in both plays. In the case of “When that I was and a little tiny boy,” the song’s
bitter lyric, describing the life of an alcoholic, seems to dismiss the resolution of *Twelfth Night*'s romantic plot; in *King Lear*, the line "the rain it raineth every day" takes on a more tragic tone in light of the dramatic situation. The question remains as to whether Shakespeare viewed music as something purely interchangeable, or whether re-using music served as a kind of literary allusion, connecting the audience to a previous dramatic situation. For instance, what would be the effect on the *Lear* audience of hearing a song previously sung in a romantic comedy? What is clear is that the recycling of music was a common practice; the tune usually came first, and words were composed (or recomposed) to fit the music as needed.

**Shakespearean Song Composers and Extant Settings**

Composers have long recognized and appreciated the quality of Shakespeare's song texts, and many musical luminaries of subsequent periods considered doing a musical setting of Shakespeare a test of their abilities. Some of the notables to tackle Shakespearean music, or to be influenced by his plays, include: Thomas Arne (sometimes called the "father" of bard song), Thomas Linley, William Boyce, Matthew Locke, Maurice Greene, Henry Purcell (the most famous English composer of all time), William Byrde, Felix Mendelssohn, and Ludwig van Beethoven. Distinguished modern composers who have contributed to the Shakespeare musical cannon include Benjamin Britten, Ralph Vaughan-Williams, Roger Quilter, Peter Warlock, and William Walton. Again, I emphasize that very little of the surviving music from Shakespeare's plays is of the period; those few musical settings that are contemporary with his lifetime may or may not have actually been used in the original productions of the plays. In terms of the songs, only about half a dozen exist in contemporary Elizabethan settings.
As regards to the instrumental/incidental music, not a single note survives, with the exception of the Witches' Dance from Macbeth, which was composed by another apprentice author, Thomas Middleton (Wood, 2003, p. 291). None of the plays' musical or vocal settings were actually composed by Shakespeare himself, but rather by composers who were hired by or associated with Shakespeare's company. Many settings were composed after Shakespeare's death – some for subsequent productions, and others as "stand alone" settings by art music composers. The songs that are often pointed to as being possible extant musical settings are Thomas Morley's "It Was A Lover And His Lass" (from As You Like It), and Robert Johnson's "Get You Hence" (The Winter's Tale), "Hark Hark The Lark" (Cymbeline), and his "Full Fathom Five" and "Where the Bee Sucks" (both from The Tempest). Both Morley and Johnson were contemporaries of Shakespeare, and are discussed below.

**Thomas Morley: Contemporary Shakespeare Collaborator?**

Thomas Morley was a gentleman of the Chapel Royal to Queen Elizabeth I, organist of St. Paul's Cathedral, and the most famous composer of secular music in England during his day. It is generally believed that Morley's "It Was A Lover And His Lass" was written especially for As You Like It. That some direct collaboration occurred between Morley and Shakespeare has long been speculated, but never proven. The reasons for these assumptions are listed by Long (1955, p. 155) as follows:

- Morley's lyrics, found in his First Book of Airs (1600), are virtually the same as those of Shakespeare.

- The publishing date of Morley's song is contemporary with the play's date of creation (circa 1600).
Shakespeare and Morley were neighbours, living in the same parish neighbourhood of Bishopsgate during the period when the play and Morley's book of songs appeared. According to Bridge, both Morley and Shakespeare were assessed by the city for taxes, which they took a long time in paying (Bridge, 1923, p. 19).

In spite of the evidence of a connection between the two men, no conclusive proof shows that Morley's song was composed specifically for Shakespeare's play, that it was actually used in a production during Shakespeare's lifetime, or indeed, that it was not simply a popular tune of the day borrowed by both composer and dramatist alike. Nevertheless, it remains an excellent setting of the text and, chronologically speaking, the oldest musical setting of a song used in a Shakespeare play. The song survives in both Morley's First Book of Airs in the Folger Library and in a manuscript copy of the vocal part in Edinburgh University known as the Leyden Manuscript (1639). I have reprinted a brief excerpt below (Duffin, 2004, p. 222) (CD Track #1) in modern notation:

![Music notation for It Was a Lover and His Lass by Thomas Morley]

Figure 1. It Was a Lover and His Lass – by Thomas Morley
Robert Johnson: Shakespeare’s Composer

Another possible extant musical setting is Robert Johnson’s version of “Full Fathom Five” from The Tempest. For a number of years some disagreement existed over the date of Johnson’s birth, and thus, over his age when he wrote the songs attributed to him. Wilson (1922) asserts that Robert Johnson was born in 1604, and would have been only 12 years old when Shakespeare died in 1616 (p. xi). On the other hand, Wood (2003) maintains that Johnson was 26 when he teamed up with Shakespeare in 1609 (pushing his birth date back to 1583) and that his music may have been utilized in original productions of The Tempest, The Winter’s Tale, Cymbeline, Henry VIII, and The Two Noble Kinsmen (p. 315). Robert Johnson was an indentured servant in the household of George Carey, the Lord Chamberlain (as in Lord Chamberlain’s Men, Shakespeare’s acting company, from 1596 to 1603 [Duffin, 2004, p. 159]), making it possible that he met Shakespeare at that time. Johnson was officially engaged by Shakespeare’s company, the King’s Men, in 1609, so it is unclear whether his songs were written (as Wood maintains) for original productions of the plays or for revivals of earlier productions done with the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. Regardless, Johnson’s settings are considered the closest we have to “original” Shakespearean songs (Wilson, p. xi). Although scholars have argued that Johnson was too young to have written the songs ascribed to him, he did come from a considerable musical tradition. His cousin Margaret Johnson married into the famous Italian musical family, the Bassanos. Robert’s father, John Johnson, was a famous lutenist, and Robert Johnson himself served as lutenist at court for 30 years, first to King James I and later to Charles I (Macy, 2005, ¶ 1), making it believable that Johnson was a precocious
adolescent composer. Johnson belongs to a group of English composers who emerged circa 1609 and developed a declamatory style of song for the stage that was more dramatic (Wood, 2003, p. 315). Johnson stated that he wished to “marry the words and notes well together” (p. 315). To achieve the unity of song and dramatic context he was seeking, he made a habit of working closely alongside the authors of the plays, including Shakespeare. Johnson's music is much different from that of other Elizabethan English composers like John Dowland – the music (Duffin, 2004, p. 157) emphasizes the rhythms and inflections of speech, and Johnson made a real attempt to capture the psychology of the scene in his music (CD Track 2):

![Figure 2. Full Fathom Five – by Robert Johnson](image)

The setting is somewhat sombre in character, but full of dignity. Although the piece may appear to be in the Key of C at first glance, because of the key signature, or in G major, because it is centered on the tone “G”, it is actually written in the G mixolydian mode (on the piano, all the white keys from one G to the next). In particular,
Johnson makes a special effort to dramatize the "sea-change" by briefly going to a new key area, or mode, at the end of the first phrase. (This is discussed in the next chapter at greater length.) One of the main points of contention surrounding Johnson's authorship is that several of his songs are attributed to Oxford music professor John Wilson, himself a talented composer of Shakespearean songs. Wilson included Johnson's "Full Fathom Five" in his own collection, entitled *Cheerful Ayres or Ballads* (1660) with an additional two voices composed by himself. Wilson clearly attributes the original melody to Johnson in his *Cheerful Ayres*, but subsequent collections attribute the song solely to Wilson. Likely, the attribution of the Tempest songs to Wilson is due to the fact that as an Oxford professor, Wilson's name had more commercial value to publishers than did Johnson's during his lifetime (Seng, 1967, p. 271).

One final footnote about Johnson's connection to Shakespeare: in an interesting twist, it seems Johnson's kinswoman Margaret Smith was also the mother of Emilia Lanier. Lanier is alleged to be the mysterious "dark lady" of the sonnets (Wood, 2003, p. 315).

**Genres of Song – Ballads, Tavern Songs, and Ayres**

Although he may have occasionally used professional composers, Shakespeare more likely mined the rich tradition of English folk ballad for musical inspiration for his dramas. If the term is used strictly, a ballad is an anonymous folk song that tells a story or tale of events (while a song deals with emotions only, rather like a lyric). Many of the ballads that are still known today have an ancient history – for example, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" can be traced to the old French tune "Malbrooke" and to yet another melody from the time of the crusades entitled "Mambron" (Elson, 1901, p. 233). More significantly, some English ballads actually present the plots of Shakespeare's plays,
lending credence to the question "which came first – the play or the ballad?" (Elson, p. 254). Among the group of "play ballads" are "Gernutus, The Jew of Venice," "King Lear and His Three Daughters," "Pyramus and Thisby," and "Titus Andronicus' Complaint" (Duffin, 2004, p. 21). The dates of composition for these ballads are speculative, making it difficult to prove that they were source materials for Shakespeare's plays. It seems likely that at least some of them existed before Shakespeare wrote his dramas, which means that these ballads may have provided him with partial source materials. The most important aspect about the ballads is their sheer ubiquity. Everyone knew these songs—the slightest reference or allusion to them would have been noted by both nobles and groundlings in the audience. Printed ballads were issued on broadsides (single sheets of paper printed on one side). In most cases, the actual music does not appear on the page; rather, directions to sing the song "to the tune of" (or something similar) were provided (Duffin, p. 17). Some ballads were not anonymous folk creations, but were penned by professional ballad writers whose work was commissioned by printers and publishers. John H. Long distinguishes these professionally penned ballads from folk ballads by calling them "urban street songs" (Long, 1955, p. 2). The subject matter of these street songs was usually topical, describing an execution or the capture and confession of a notorious criminal. Some of the street songs were even used for advertising, such as naming the wares of an itinerant vendor. Musically speaking, most street songs were for unaccompanied solo voice, while the folk ballads were often set in 3-part harmony or sung as catches—a composition similar to a round, in which the same melody started at different times produces harmony. The familiar nursery rhyme "Three Blind Mice" is a catch (Long, 1955, p. 2). Ballads were also occasionally collected and published in volumes, some of which still survive (Duffin, 2004, p. 21).
Because most of the ballad lyrics survive without their intended melodies, anthologists search for the tunes in other types of musical collections – usually as arrangements for solo instruments such as lute, cittern, or harpsichord. Often, such arrangements do not contain the lyrics, so scholars must conjecture about which lyrics correspond to a given melody.

**Tavern Songs**

Another form of popular music with which Shakespeare would have been familiar, was the tavern or drinking song. Taverns were the clubs and coffee houses of the time—places where people met and socialized. People could enjoy cakes and ale, gambling, card games, and a meal. The taverns became centers of social interaction as London's churches grew more puritanical. At the Mermaid Tavern, in Bread Street, many poets and dramatists of the day congregated, and possibly, Shakespeare was among them (Elson, 1901, p. 172). The circle of writers gathered there may have included Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Watson, Thomas Lodge, George Peel, and the now-infamous Robert Greene, most notable today for giving Shakespeare his first bad review (Greenblatt, 2004, p. 200). Many taverns and inns were located in Southwark, home of the *Globe Theatre*. In addition to offering food and drink, some of these taverns offered private rooms (Greenblatt, p. 176). The tavern musicians were regarded as vagabonds and considered to be on a level with professional beggars, as evidenced from the following excerpt from the famous puritan tract *Short Apologie for the School of Abuse*:

> London is so full of unprofitable pipers and fiddlers, that a man can no sooner enter a tavern, than two or three cast of them hang at his heels, to give him a dance before he depart. (Gosson, 1587, pp. 62-75)
This is not to suggest that their music was of low quality: On the contrary, even a simple catch or ballad was usually sung in 3-part harmony. Often, the third part would contain a bawdy reference that would be difficult for the inexperienced listener to hear. When music was asked for, it was generally played in the best room of the tavern, and the musicians could earn up to 20 shillings for a couple of hours work (Naylor, 1931, p. 102). These private rooms usually had names of their own. For example, in Measure for Measure (2.1), the clown speaks about the “Bunch of Grapes” – not a tavern, but a special room within a tavern. Shakespeare certainly enjoyed this lively style of music and the double-entendres that were part and parcel of the texts, as evidenced by his use of this repertoire in his own plays, from Othello to the King Henry cycle.

Ayres

A third type of song that was less commonly used in the plays was the ayre. Ayres were precursors of what we now term an art song. Like art songs, ayres were written by literate professional composers who normally wrote the melody for a specific lyric and accompaniment (Long, 1955, p. 2). The use of the ayre was largely popularized by the children of the chapels, young musician/singers who made up the acting companies of the earliest private indoor theatres (Long, p. 4). When it came to performance in the public outdoor theatres, however, ayres could pose a problem – their performance required trained singers who could not always be drawn from the ranks of the actors. In such cases, boy singers were often inserted into the production as pages or servants who would briefly appear, sing their song, and then depart. In As You Like It, the song “It Was A Lover and His Lass,” attributed to composer Thomas
Morely, is introduced in this manner: Two pages appear to Touchstone the Clown and Audrey and spontaneously perform for them, as seen below:

First Page: Well met, honest gentleman.
Touchstone: By my troth, well met. Come, sit, sit, and a song!
Second Page: We are for you. Sit in the middle . . .
Song.
It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
That o'er the green cornfield did pass . . . (5.3.4-16)

The scene concludes with Touchstone giving the boys a poor review, saying
"Truly, young gentlemen, though there was no great matter in the ditty, yet the note was very untuneable" (5.3.33-35). Presumably Touchstone criticizes the pages' performance in an effort to avoid any sort of payment or token for the boys, or perhaps simply as a means of exercising his wit.

**Brief Musical History – A Midsummer Night's Dream**

Attempting to trace the complete musical history of even one Shakespeare play would be a monumental task, as so many composers have attempted settings of his song texts. Nevertheless, to give some idea of the wealth of music generated by Shakespearean drama, here is an abbreviated history of one of his most frequently produced plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play calls for a great deal of music, and is quite complex, blending prose, poetry, masque, song, and dance. One of the reasons for this complexity is that Shakespeare had more than the usual resources at his disposal for this production. The play is believed to have been first performed in 1596 for an aristocratic wedding – possibly the marriage of Elizabeth Carey, daughter of
Sir George Carey, Lord Chamberlain (Long, 1955, p. 83). As one of Lord Chamberlain’s men, likely Shakespeare and his company contributed to the festivities. Lord Carey was a noted patron of the arts and had a considerable musical establishment in his household, including the famous composer/lutenist John Dowland (Long, p. 83). Notably, many other noble weddings have been considered possibilities by Shakespeare scholars, including the wedding of William Stanley, Earl of Derby (Cunningham, 1905, pp. 24-30), or the double wedding of Lady Somerset to William Petre and Lady Elizabeth to Henry Guildferd in November of 1598 (Long, 1955, p. 102). In addition, the play was revived and played at Court for King James in 1604. Regardless of the exact performance history, Shakespeare clearly had lavish musical resources available for *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and his musicians were probably drawn from the court or the noble household where the play was first performed. The actual song texts contained in the play are as follows:

- You Spotted Snakes (sung by the fairy attendants to Titania in a round in Act Two, Scene Two)
- The Ousel Cock (sung by Bottom in Act Three, Scene One)
- Now, Until the Break of Day (sung by Oberon, Titania, and the Fairies in Act Five, Scene One)

While no music survives from the original production of the play, it is possible that John Dowland, the house lutenist and a famous songwriter, composed the Elizabethan version of “You Spotted Snakes.” After the English Renaissance, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was not performed in its entirety again until the 1840s. In 1648, the public theatres in London were closed, and the Commonwealth era remained a largely barren period for Shakespearean drama and any music that might have accompanied the plays...
in performance. When the theatres finally reopened after the reestablishment of the monarchy, numerous changes were made, including the adoption of the proscenium or "picture frame" stage, the inclusion of female actors, and an increasing emphasis on elaborate sets and spectacle (Cudworth, 1966, p. 52).

When *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was revived, it resurfaced in several textually corrupt versions. The most famous of these 18th century alterations is Henry Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*, produced at the Dorset Garden Theatre in 1692 (Cudworth, 1966, p. 67). Although the libretto varies markedly from Shakespeare, this semi-opera is considered a Baroque musical masterpiece. Purcell writes in what is called *strict canon*, a difficult task, as it is the strictest form of contrapuntal imitation (Bridge, 1923, p. 58). The word *canon* means *rule*. In a canon, one melodic strand or idea gives the rule to all the others, which at varying intervals of time must imitate it. Strict canon is even more difficult, because the intervals of the imitating version must be exactly the same as the original motif. In other words, to use a literary analogy, no "half rhyme" is possible (CD Track 3, Purcell's *Fairy Queen*). The semi-opera also contains some very non-Shakespearean scenes that were in keeping with 18th century European tastes for exotic and far away lands: in one scene the stage is suddenly illuminated and discloses a Chinese Garden. A man and woman enter and sing a duet, while monkeys come from behind the trees and dance (CD Track 4). The score of *The Fairy Queen* was lost in 1701 and lay dormant for over 150 years, before being rediscovered in the late 1800s (Bridge, 1923, p. 59).

Other productions that altered the text significantly from early print editions are Richard Leveridge's *A Comique Masque of Pyramus and Thisbe* (1716), Charles Johnson's 1723 production of *Love in a Forest* (which also included songs from *As You*
Like It) and an extraordinary distortion of the play entitled, *The Fairy Tale*, produced by George Coleman and David Garrick and staged at Drury Lane Theatre in 1763 (Cudworth, 1966, p. 67). Much of the music for *The Fairy Tale* (1763) was by Michael Arne, son of the famous Thomas Arne, one of the first composers of Shakespeare song. Michael Arne was a gifted composer in his own right, but most of his settings had little relation to Shakespeare's own text. Arne's other collaborators included music historian Dr. Charles Burney, who contributed a setting of "The Ousel-Cock," and Jonathan Battishill, who set the "be as thou wast won to be" speech (Cudworth, p. 67). In 1777, *The Fairy Tale* was revived at the Haymarket with music by Michael Arne, Charles Dibdin, Charles Burney, James Hook, Theodore Smith, and Samuel Arnold (Cudworth p. 69). Arnold also wrote music for his own adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, entitled, *The Enchanted Wood*, staged in 1792. In many of these productions, not a single line of Shakespeare was set to music; in others, parts of the plot were excised to make room for additional musical numbers. In some versions of the play, Bottom becomes the main character.

In 1840, English actress and entrepreneur Lucia Elizabeth Vestris revived the play and staged it at Covent Garden. The Vestris version contained a relatively faithful text, but was padded out enormously with dance, music, and ballet numbers. In addition, Madame Vestris herself took the role of Oberon, and Puck was played by a woman – a tradition that would continue for the next 70 years (Nationmaster, 2005, ¶ 2). The Vestris production also utilized Felix Mendelssohn's incidental music, which would become standard throughout the rest of the 19th century, and which provided the world with the famous *Wedding March* (1826).
Perhaps the most intriguing modern musical setting of the play is Benjamin Britten's opera, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, recorded in 1966 (CD Track 5). In this version, the part of Oberon was played by famous countertenor Alfred Deller. (A countertenor is the highest possible male voice, which is a significant departure from the traditional casting of Oberon as a Bass.) Britten uses the modern orchestra to great effect, providing harp glissandos when Oberon says "I Know a band where the wild thyme blows" (1.6) and string slides (also known as portamentos) to depict the swaying branches of the forest. Woodwinds and strings are used to represent the pomp and ceremony of the court, while harpsichord, harps, celesta, and percussion evoke the magic of the fairies. The low strings, brass and bassoon are used to represent comic characters such as Bottom and the rustics. The role of Puck is scored as a spoken part and is played by a young teenage boy, while the fairies' chorus is a boy's choir (Han-Leon, n.d., ¶ 2). These are examples of how modern-day instrumentation and scoring can achieve musical effects that were unavailable to Shakespeare. Perhaps most significantly, the Britten opera is relatively faithful to the text (about one-half of it is used). Although it has been abridged and the order rearranged in some parts, the text used is not altered from the Folio version, which puts Britten closer to Shakespeare's contemporary Robert Johnson than to any of the 18th century composers.

**A Word About Textual Variance, Authority and Authenticity**

The publishing history of Shakespeare is long and complex, with many plays existing in multiple forms. Many of Shakespeare's plays were first issued in Quarto form, and then compiled in the First Folio of 1623. (Folio books of the 17th century were volumes achieved by binding large once-folded sheets of hand-made paper, such that each side of the paper, when printed, bore the impression of two book pages; Quartos
were smaller volumes achieved by binding twice-folded sheets of paper, such that each side of the paper bore the impression of four book pages.) The First Folio project was initiated by Shakespeare's fellow actors and shareholders in the King's Men, John Heminge and Henry Condell (Murphy, 2003, p. 41). Of the 36 plays presented in the Folio, 18 had never been published before. As well, the Folio began the time-honored tradition of dividing the plays into histories, comedies, and tragedies, though some of the editors' classifications of certain plays (e.g. *Cymbeline* as a tragedy) have since been overturned. Plays, at times, appear in compacted versions in the Quartos, and in more expansive versions in the Folio (Murphy, 2003, pp. 302-307). For this reason, editors wrongly labeled some of the Quartos as bad or spurious; today, editors prefer to use the terms "long" and "short" to distinguish between versions of the plays (Murphy, p. 25). Even the editors and printers of the First Folio, who had access to prompt books and possibly authorial papers of Shakespeare, consulted the Quartos, and in many cases, reprinted them with minor changes in their stage directions (Murphy, p. 49). Therefore, though the Folio edition of a play is often regarded as the best available source, it is really only one of many possible options.

Controversy over conflicting editions of Shakespeare shows no signs of abating. As Spevack (1996) points out in his somewhat ironical text, *The End of Editing Shakespeare*:

The past 60 years have seen the appearance of editions by Ridley, Kittredge, Neilson & Hill, Alexander, Harrison, Sisson, Munro, Craig, Harbage, Evans, Bevington, three by the Oxford team, as well as Arden 2 and Arden 3, Cambridge 3 and Cambridge 4, Yale 2, Pelican, Penguin, Signet, Bantam, Folger . . . to name just a few among the seventeen columns devoted to editions of Shakespeare . . . (p. 78)
Indeed, the arrival of hypertext has in some sense made everyone an editor, as hyper-readers can now pick and choose from a multitude of interpretations, editions, and source materials (Spevak, 1996, p. 79). Authority, then, is a key issue in regards to textual variance. While each edition brings a new perspective to Shakespeare’s work, and some editions are more respected in the scholarly community than others, none can truly claim to be more authoritative than others because of conflicting source materials, varying language, ideologies of the editors, and so on. Essentially, “any truth that is couched in a particular language is affected or distorted by that language” (Bonnycastle, 1991, p. 94). As soon as we admit the existence of alternate versions or interpretations, as we must do with Shakespeare, the text is open to debate and negotiation. As Murphy asserts,

perhaps the best – albeit unsatisfactory – explanation that can be provided for the divergent texts is that they offer up various conceptions of the plays, marked by complex theatrical and extra-theatrical histories and arriving into print by routes which are not amenable to a single explicatory narrative. (2003, p. 30)

In terms of Shakespeare and music, the concept of variance takes on an even broader definition. In the last section, I briefly discussed the numerous adaptations of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Certainly, the majority of Restoration productions took great liberties with what would be recognized today as the standard edition or typical versions of the plays. For example, for a production of *Macbeth* in the early 1660s, music from Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch* was inserted. Middleton may have worked as an apprentice playwright to Shakespeare; Middleton’s writing style is recognized in *Macbeth*, and he appears to have worked as a reviser on *Timon of Athens* (Wood, 2003, p. 291). In addition to Middleton’s music, extra music for this production of *Macbeth* was supplied by composer Matthew Locke, who also
provided incidental music for versions of *The Tempest* staged in 1667 and again in 1674 at Dorset Garden Theatre (Cudworth, 1966, p. 53). (Locke’s *Macbeth* music is sometimes attributed to his friend and protégé Henry Purcell.) Similarly, Samuel Pepys, who saw the 1667 version of *The Tempest*, describes an adaptation in which Miranda acquires a sister, Ariel a wife, and Caliban a female counterpart (Cudworth, p. 53).

Overall, the text and music of many Restoration productions tended to be a hodgepodge of various playwrights and composers; the 1667 production of *The Tempest* included textual additions by Dryden, some of the original music by Robert Johnson, as well as new music by composers: Matthew Locke, Pelham Humphrey, John Banister, James Hart, and an Italian composer living in London at the time, Pietro Reggio (Cudworth, p. 54).

Of course, such a collaborative process may not have been that different from Shakespeare’s own method of borrowing source materials, overseeing scripts written by others, and collaborating with composers and apprentice playwrights, so it is impossible to label these productions as any more or less authentic than others (Wood, 2003, pp. 290-91). As Wood points out,

> Working in tandem with less talented jobbers doesn’t fit in with our idealization of Shakespeare as the lone creator, but anyone involved today in scriptwriting for movies, comedy or television knows what it is like to work in a high pressure entertainment business. Often ‘authorship’ doesn’t exist . . . (p. 292)

The Restoration productions pose an intriguing question regarding textual variance, one that Margreta De Graza (1995) phrases succinctly: “When does something cease to be itself, and become something else?” (p. 245). The Platonic concept of an ideal form was kept alive for many years by the notion of Shakespeare as Author; the theory behind this concept was that skilled editors could know the intentions
of the author and thus reconstruct the ideal text (form) of a given play as Shakespeare

would have intended. As Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) observe, however, "critical
inquiries are not settled by consulting the oracle" (p. 9). Indeed the New Criticism
movement and later Barthes (1977) overturned the notion of the author as the ultimate
textual authority. As Barthes observes,

writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is
that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the
negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body
writing. (1977, p. 143)

Modern technology now makes multiple versions of the plays readily available to
the general public. Photographic and computer technology allows multiple versions of
the plays to be presented alongside each other. Multimedia multiform text editions are
perhaps closest to the notion of a contemporary idealized Shakespearean text; yet, as
De Grazia (1995) points out, "multiple texts may be no more historical than conflated
ones, dependent not only on a later technology and politics but also on later editorial
and hermeneutic practices" (p. 251). Nevertheless, with such technology available, it
seems reasonable to conclude that soon any Shakespeare edition that presents only
one version of the text will be considered ideologically suspect.
CHAPTER 3. WRITING THE SONGS

People often complain that music is too ambiguous, that what they should think when they hear it is so unclear, whereas everyone understands words. With me it is exactly the opposite...these too seem to me so ambiguous, so vague, so easily misunderstood in comparison to genuine music, which fills the soul with a thousand things better than words.

--composer Felix Mendelssohn (Werner, 1963)

Amiens: My voice is ragged. I know I cannot please you.
Jaques: I do not desire you to please me; I desire you to sing.

--As You Like It (2.5.13-15)

This chapter details my process in creating original musical settings of Shakespeare song texts from a number of different plays, and discusses how that process illuminated certain aspects of those texts for me, as both a teacher and a student of Shakespeare. The song settings I discuss in the following pages are found in a handful of commonly taught plays: As You Like It, Hamlet, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, and A Midsummer Night's Dream. In each case, I have attempted first to discuss the dramatic function of the song text and then to provide some historical context before detailing the particulars of my own song writing. For some of the songs included in this chapter, I was able to provide an overview of the earliest musical settings. For others I have not done so, since many of these settings have been lost.

The aim of this section is to explore the creative process of writing the songs, to detail the activities involved, and to remark on how those activities enhanced my understanding of the plays and influenced my personal response to the song texts. The question to be considered in the context of this section is: “What creative and pedagogical issues does the songwriting process encourage the composer to confront?”
I address the pedagogical implications of teaching Shakespeare through song in the chapter's conclusion and expand on them practically in Chapter 4. All textual references are either to the Signet Classic Editions (Barnet, 1986) or to the Folger Library Editions (Mowat & Werstine, 1993) of the plays, texts which are currently used in many high schools. I have chosen to reference these texts rather than more scholarly editions because they are the ones available to me in my teaching, which is the impetus for my Shakespeare composing efforts.

**Clarification of Important Musical Terms**

One distinction that I make before addressing the songs, is the difference between folk or popular music and *art music*. Although such terms are applied retrospectively by musicologists, a distinction has always been made in the popular consciousness between indigenous folk music and the music of the court and aristocracy. The term *art music* embraces many periods and styles, ranging from *Baroque*, *Classical*, or *Romantic*, to *Impressionist*, *Minimalist*, or *20th Century/Modern* (Machlis, 1984, p. 5). The forms and genres of secular art music are too diverse to cover here (they include *Symphonies*, *Concertos*, some *Oratorios* and *Operas*, *Madrigals*, and *Tone Poems*, not to mention the wealth of repertoire written for the piano), but all art music shares some common qualities. Typically, art music is written by a known professional composer, is highly structured, and is written for an elite or aristocratic audience. In contrast, *folk music* originates from the common people, usually has no known composer (and may have numerous composers add to it over the years), exists in many variations, and is much simpler in structure. Because of its complexity, most art music is notated in some fashion (written down) and thus much art music has been preserved over the centuries; conversely, our knowledge of early folk
music (especially before the era of magnetic tape recording and the commercial music industry) is more fragmentary because notation was usually not a priority (Grout, 1988, p. 98).

A second important point of clarification is the term key. In Western European music, a musical key is named after its tonic, or keynote, and may be defined as major or minor, depending on which scale pattern is used. Since the Baroque era and the development of equal temperament, composers have gravitated to the major-minor system of tonality, or key harmony, as codified by Rameau (Schulter, 2006, ¶ 2). Previous to this, Western music utilized a series of scales called modes. In Modality, a greater freedom is present to emphasize various degrees of a scale, compared to Major-Minor Tonality, and more freedom allows to mix modes (scales) within one piece without being limited to the notion of a key area or tonality. Some patterns and techniques are common to both systems (for example, the Major scale resembles the Ionian mode), and may be interpreted modally or in terms of key. The Baroque Doctrine of the Affections promulgated the notion that music could be used to express an emotion or "affection," and that particular scales or modes could be utilized to represent emotional states (Machlis, 1984, p. 360). For the purposes of this exploration, I use the terms mode, scale, and key interchangeably and frequently discuss songs in terms of a major or minor tonality. In doing so, I am imposing a contemporary Western sensibility on a concept that extends as far back as the ancient Greek musical system.

Another definition that may seem self-evident but should nevertheless be clarified is the word song. For the purposes of this thesis, I define a song as a short musical composition for voice, based on a written lyric (Machlis, 1984, p. 66). A single vocal melody is emphasized and given instrumental accompaniment that gives the melody
harmonic background and support. Here, I distinguish between three types or subcategories of song: folk song, art song, and popular song. As mentioned previously, folk song usually has no known composer and may exist in many permutations. Folk songs are usually strophic in structure, meaning that the same melody is repeated with every stanza of a poem, a scenario that does not allow for great variations in mood or atmosphere (Machlis, 1984, p. 66). Instead, the music establishes a general mood that accommodates itself equally well to every stanza of the poem, as in the popular drinking songs and ballads of the Elizabethan period. In the 19th century, art music composers appropriated the folk song genre and created the art song, as perfected in the work of such composers as Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms. The genre these composers consummated became known as the Lied or Lieder (plural), the German word for song (Machlis, 1984, p. 67).

Art songs are often through-composed, meaning that the text is set to music without musical repetitions, following the storyline of the poem and changing accordingly with the text. The German Romantic songwriters (e.g., Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms) were obsessed with fidelity to their interpretation of the text, and used a great deal of word painting (Grout, 1988, p. 669). Word painting is a musical technique in which the melody line and accompaniment mimic the literal meaning of words in the song. For example, ascending scales would accompany lyrics about climbing, a peak in the melody would accompany the mention of a mountain or hill, and a dip in the melody would respond to the word valley. Word painting was also used figuratively to show emotional states, such as using slow, plodding music to accompany lyrics about death. Many of the short lyric poems that the art song composers set to music in their Lieder, survive today only in their song-text forms (Machlis, 1984, p. 68).
The last genre of song I discuss here is *popular song*, which I utilize as a blanket term for songs of the modern mass-market recording era of the 20th century, including rock, country, and jazz styles. Popular songs have amalgamated aspects of folk and art songs, and usually combine the repetition of the strophic folk song with the complexity of the through-composed art song, introducing new material when the text seems to require it. The popular song is the model I have followed for my own music. Related to the popular song is the idea of the *melodic hook*. In popular songwriting, a hook is a recurring melodic idea that is designed to be memorable and thus "hook" the listener. A comparable concept in art music would be Wagner's use of the recurring *leitmotif* in his Ring cycle of operas, though pop song hooks do not normally have programmatic associations (Machlis, 1984, p. 167).

A musical term which may have different connotations in other fields, and which I also wish to define here for purposes of clarity, is *text underlay*. Underlay refers to how the syllables of lyrics or individual words are actually synchronized to the music. In the case of reconstructed musical settings of Shakespearean songs, where the text and melody exist in two separate sources, underlay can be one of the most difficult tasks and points of discrepancy among settings by different editors. As Duffin (2004) points out,

> long notes . . . in one version of a tune can be subdivided to fit [an entirely] different text. Similarly, unaccented syllables can be crammed together to make an accent fall on the right place in the tune... Performers should be aware that underlay is not cast in stone, and that there is frequently more than one acceptable way for subsequent stanzas . . . to be set. (p. 37)

A unique property of music that affects textual underlay is the composer's ability to assign several pitches to one syllable of a word. A long melodic passage sung on one syllable is known as a *melisma* (Grout, 1988, p. 27). In composing my Shakespearean
songs, I avoided long melismatic passages because they occasionally obscure the words. As a general rule, I assigned a maximum of three notes to any given syllable. Even when the melody has been refined to the point where significant changes are no longer possible, some areas may still exist where shifting the accent of a syllable or adding extra pitches to one syllable will shift the natural rhythms of the text. While no unyielding rules exist for text underlay, most composers would logically avoid inadvertently stressing words that communicate little to the listener, such as articles or conjunctions, unless they are attempting to increase listener anticipation of the subsequent word.

As with the reading of dialogue, shifting the emphasis of a single word can change the entire interpretation of a passage. This applies in poetic meter, but in music, the results are perhaps more obvious because of the addition of pitch. In music, the double conundrum is present in choosing underlay that will stress the words in accordance with the interpretation of the text, while keeping in mind the issue of singability for the performer. Stressing a particular word can emphasize meaning, but a passage that becomes physically awkward or impossible to sing for the vocalist can obliterate meaning altogether (at least meaning in a conventional sense) if the passage becomes too difficult to navigate.

Finally, I wish to caution the reader that all of the musical settings of my own included here are based on my own encounters with the texts. The settings are products of my own biases, musical background and training, and understanding of the texts. Many of the musical techniques utilized are culturally specific. For example, the notion of using particular keys or modes to set the mood of a song (major for a happy song, minor for a sad or mysterious song) is culturally situated, and such associations
may not exist for listeners of different cultural backgrounds. Indeed, many modern avant-garde composers have done away with the notion of key and its associations entirely. Similarly, notions of consonance (euphonious to the human ear) or dissonance (jarring to the human ear) are fluid and constantly changing (Machlis, 1984, pp. 13-15).

The First Song – Under The Greenwood Tree

Written in 1599 or 1600, As You Like It has as its generally recognized source a novel written by Thomas Lodge in 1590 entitled Rosalynde (Long, 1955, p.139). The play contains only six songs, spaced throughout the play, the first of which is “Under the Greenwood Tree” (2.5.1-55), the lyrics of which are reprinted below (refer to CD Track 6 for my arrangement):

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat
Come hither come hither come hither
Come hither come hither come hither [my addition]
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather

Who doth ambition shun
And loves to live in the sun
Seeking the food he eats
And pleased with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather
If it do come to pass
That any man turn ass
Leaving his wealth and ease,
A stubborn will to please
Ducdame, ducdame, ducdame, **

Here shall he see
Gross fools as he,
An if he will come to me.
**An invocation to call fools into a circle (according to the melancholy philosopher, Jaques) (2.5.53)

Folk Versus Courtly

All the songs, with the exception of the closing wedding masque song (a hymn to the god Hymen) have an appealing folk-like quality. More importantly, the songs have a unified structure that expounds on the play's major themes of human mortality, folly, alienation, as well as rural versus urban existence. The songs parallel the main themes at every stage, and establish setting and character (Long, 1955, pp. 139-140). For example, “Under the Greenwood Tree” establishes setting and depicts the merry utopian world of the exiles in the Forest of Arden, while at the same time scrutinizing that ideal and introducing the audience to Jaques’ sardonic wit and philosophical musings. “Under the Greenwood Tree” is written in a folk style, while the closing wedding song is courtly, reflecting the characters’ resumption of an aristocratic existence. Below is the oldest known setting of “Under the Greenwood Tree” (CD Track 7) provided by Gibbon (1930, p. 56) and arranged to a tune from Playford’s *English Dancing Master* (1650):
The folk-like melody is simple, designed for solo voice, and requires little in the way of accompaniment. A single-voice harmonic texture like this is known as a *monophonic* texture. If chords and accompaniment are added (as in the CD arrangement), the song becomes *homophonic* in texture, meaning that a single voice predominates and all of the harmony in the song is used in support of that principal melody (Machlis, 1984, pp. 296-97). In these types of harmonic textures, the text is never obscured by overlapping melodic lines. As well, the same tune is repeated for every stanza of the text, in keeping with the strophic folk song format.

In comparison, the last song of the play, “Wedding Is Great Juno’s Crown” (5.4.141-147) is clearly intended for several voices (perhaps all the actors together), as indicated in the text by the following lines:

While a wedlock hymn we sing
Feed yourselves with questioning
That reason wonder may diminish
How thus we met, and these things finish. (5.4.136-140)
The stage directions also call for *still music* (soft background music) to be played as the god Hymen makes his entrance. Peter Seng (1967) suggests that if Hymen made his entrance by descending to the stage, the *still music* may have been used to cover up the sound of the lift mechanism (Seng, p. 93). After the conclusion of the song, the Duke calls for everyone to dance, saying “Play, music, and you brides and bridegrooms all / With measure heaped in joy, to the measures fall” (5.4.176). The use of song and dance, combined with the allusion to Greek mythology, is reminiscent of a fashionable form of courtly entertainment of the time, the *Masque* (Grout, p. 415). If playwrights were indeed emulating a courtly masque, they probably would have chosen vocal music that was more complex and in keeping with aristocratic forms such as the *Madrigal* (Grout, p. 260). While no music survives for the final song text, I have supplied the following contemporary tune (CD Track 8) by John Dowland (Long, 1955, p. 159). In the excerpt below, the metre/time signature markings are a modern edition resulting from my notation software. Nevertheless, I believe it gives the flavor of what Shakespeare (or his collaborators) may have intended.
This setting differs from the earlier songs in its complexity; it has a dense homophonic texture that at times becomes polyphonic, meaning that two or more melodic lines are combined and no one melody or voice predominates (Machlis, 1984, pp.295-96). Polyphonic texture is based on counterpoint (that is, the combination of two or more simultaneous melodic lines). In a true polyphonic composition, all the lines are equally important; in the example above, the addition of the second tenor line gives the composition its polyphonic texture. The danger of a polyphonic setting, if one is aiming to make the lyrics clearly audible for listeners, is that words can become obscured in the
interweaving lines. The setting used in the original production of *As You Like It* was probably not as intricate as Dowland's, but the final song definitely would have been the most complex musical setting in the play. Consequently, in my own setting of "Under the Greenwood Tree" I opted for a simple ballad texture, but added some contrasting musical material in verse 3 to reflect the differing mood of the third stanza.

**Considering Key, Meter and Other Settings**

Because this was my very first setting, I wanted to write a piece that approximated my impression of what a Shakespeare song should sound like (i.e., something with a ballad or folk-like quality and melody) to prove to myself that I could respect the Shakespearean musical tradition before I began experimenting. The first setting of "Under The Greenwood Tree" that I heard was a modern day art song by English composer William Walton (1902-1983) (a brief excerpt can be heard on the accompanying CD, Track 9). Although I found the Walton song setting beautiful, my initial reaction was that it was too sombre for the mood of the lyric, in part due to the minor mode of the song. I wanted to capture the playful nature of the text, as well as all of Jaques' witty jests (the Walton setting completely omits the last stanza of the song.) Also, I felt the harmonic complexity of the composition and the *bel canto* style of singing made Walton's song less accessible for high school students, my proposed audience, because the words were difficult to understand and the tune could not be easily committed to memory.

The next setting of "Under the Greenwood Tree" that I heard, was by Sir Arthur Somervell (1863-1937), another composer of the English school (CD Track 10). This setting was more in-line with what I hoped to do: Somervell uses a compound meter (6/8) and a major key (F major), though he, too, avoids the third stanza, a point I shall
discuss later. Nevertheless, the song is written as a male-female duet and has many overlapping lines; once again, lyrics are obscured by the complex melodic texture and vocal style. I resolved to compose my own melody in a folk style, meaning my melody would be simpler, slightly slower, have more repeated material, and a non-operatic vocal style to ease perception of the words. I also settled on the key of G, which I experience as a bright, happy key, and borrowed Somervell’s 6/8 meter. At this point, I deliberately avoided listening to any more interpretations of the “Under the Greenwood Tree,” including the earliest settings (which I only listened to after the fact), to avoid being overly influenced by these other melodies. Below is a brief excerpt of the melody I ultimately composed (CD Track 11):

Under the Greenwood Tree—Verse

G Am7 G/B Em D C sus2 C D

Under the green-wood tree—Who loves to lie with me

Em D G Am G D

And turn his merry

note Un to the sweet bird’s throat—Come hither come hither come hither come hither

Figure 5. Under the Greenwood Tree Verse – by Michael Mikulin

As I discovered later, many similarities existed between what I composed and some of the traditional settings of the song (such as the Gibbon Traditional and Duffin’s reconstruction of “Sir Eglamore”). Part of the similarity may be due to my experience with Elizabethan music over the years, though it may also be a facet of the text itself,
which lends itself to a compound 6/8 meter. In part, this may be because compound meters like 6/8 and 6/4 naturally accent the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} beats, which follow the accented beats of the text for the most part.

**Context and Dramatic Function**

Each song in *As You Like It* is framed in its own individual scene. This has led many scholars to speculate that the songs were added after the play was complete (Long, 1955, p. 140). While this is possible, I prefer another explanation: that the songs were framed in mini-scenes by Shakespeare deliberately to give them prominence and continuity with regard to the themes of the play. Act Two, Scene Five begins with the first stanza of “Under the Greenwood Tree,” sung by the character of Amiens after some prodding by Jaques, and it provides a fairly straightforward exposition of the main theme of the play at this point (the joys of pastoral life):

> Under the greenwood tree  
> Who loves to lie with me,  
> And turn his merry note,  
> Unto the sweet bird’s throat,  
> Come hither, come hither, come hither:  
> Here shall he see / no enemy  
> But winter and rough weather. (2.5.7-10)

Amiens’ song invites the listener to participate in a pastoral existence free of the cares of urban life. According to Amiens, the only difficulties humans will encounter in the Forest of Arden are “winter and rough weather.” No musical directions or mention of instruments are given, so Amiens likely sang unaccompanied or with very simple instrumentation, such as accompanying himself on the cittern or lute. The setting is also localized here, and possibly, this song was the essential prop utilized to set the scene.
for the audience of a rustic banquet under the forest canopy. The second stanza of the song is accompanied by the Folio stage direction “all together,” suggesting that this song was intended for a group of untrained voices, not professional singers or musicians. The third stanza of the song plays with our expectations, and is sung by the melancholy Jaques as an extemporized addition to Amiens’ song:

If it do come to pass
That any man turn ass,
Leaving his wealth and ease
A stubborn will to please,
Ducdame, ducdame, ducdame:
Here shall he see
Gross fools as he,
And if he will come to me. (5.2.45-51)

Some speculation exists as to whether or not this last stanza of the song was originally sung (Long, 1955, p. 143). It is not marked to be sung as are the first two, and Jaques is not portrayed as being musical. The cynical, mocking tone of the stanza, however, definitely requires a degree of transformation in the music itself if the alteration in tone and mood are to be effective – even though the line scansion is the same and would underlay perfectly with a repeat of the same tune used in the first two stanzas. I elected to change to the parallel minor key (G minor) to reflect Jaques’ scathing tone, as demonstrated in the ensuing example (CD Track 12):
Nevertheless, the final three lines posed a dilemma: would it be best to continue with the minor key to reflect the text, or to return to the happy major tone of the opening to give the song a sense of cohesiveness and unity? Certainly a 19th century art song composer such as Schubert would have felt the need to dramatize the last three lines to be true to the “meaning” of the text (as previously mentioned, the German art song composers generally held the belief that superior songwriting was about reflecting the emotional gradations in the text through the use of music, for which they used the term word painting), but I had set my parameters differently. My main goal was to keep the music accessible to a mass audience and, generally speaking, that requires a certain degree of repetition of material so that the song is easily memorized (similar to the use of alliteration and rhyme in poetry). In the instance of these last three lines, the importance of maintaining a simple song structure trumped the imperative to dramatize the text. Consequently, I opted to return to the melodic hook of the opening for the final lines: “Here shall he see / Gross fools as he / And if he will come to me” (2.6.50-51).
A Word About Ducdame (Ducdamé)

Ducdame is a nonsense word that occurs in Jacques’ third stanza and has no traceable origins. It gave me considerable trouble in the composition process. First, what did it mean? In reading about the history of “Under the Greenwood Tree,” I discovered that much debate has taken place over the etymology of ducdame. Is it simply Shakespeare’s jest on the meaningless character of many Elizabethan song refrains, or is there a deeper intent? Possible explanations conveniently compiled by Elson are as follows: 1) Ducdame is a Latinization of come hither and is intended to be a pun on Amiens’ name and the French ami (friend); 2) ducdame is a duck call and connected to the old folk tune “Dame What Makes Your Ducks to Die”; 3) ducdame means “lead him from me,” the da being the Italian preposition for from, and therefore is a jest on the first stanza’s “come hither” (Elson, 1901, p. 64). Alternately, Seng (1967) offers this explanation:

The word is . . . a corruption of the Romani dukra me . . . The expression . . . means ‘I foretell’ . . . As the call of the Gipsy fortune-teller at fairs or public gatherings, it is a Greek invocation to call fools into a circle. (p. 74)

The intimation here is that the Duke and his followers are vagabonds forced to lead an uncomfortable life by their own stubbornness and pride. Another writer, Ingleby, points out that Duc da me is Italian for “Duke by myself” or “Duke without a Dukedom” (Seng, p. 75). Allen (1934, p. 126) suggests that Ducdame refers to Queen Elizabeth I: the circle is her court, and the fools within it her courtiers (Seng, 1967, p. 75).

Beyond meaning, was the question of pronunciation. After making my best guess at a French pronunciation of the word (duc-dam), and composing music to suit this pronunciation, I discovered that most Shakespeare song scholars (Chappell, Elson,
Knight, Collier, et al.) agree that ducdame is tri-syllabic (duc-dam-é). After discovering this, I decided to go back and re-record the song to suit this pronunciation.

Musical Form and Repetition of Text

The general rule I set for myself regarding repetition of words in the song texts was that I would not repeat an individual word that was not already repeated in the original song text; nor would I add an extra individual repetition that did not conform to the phrase structure of the text (e.g., I would not add a fourth “come hither” to the original three). Nevertheless, I freely repeated entire lines, usually altering the music each time a line was repeated. For example, with respect to the line “come hither, come hither, come hither,” I decided to extend the existing repetition and repeat the entire line, using an A B or A1 A2 phrase pattern (question and answer), thus making a total of six repetitions of “come hither.” This seems to keep the original feeling of the text without unbalancing it, and yet prevents the listener from getting bored by too much musical repetition. In comparison, the line “But winter and rough weather” had no precedent when it came to repetition. Nevertheless, I felt that since it occurred in Stanza 1 and was reiterated in Stanza 2, it should be repeated to add musical interest and emphasis. In retrospect, some of my decisions regarding repetition of textual material were purely arbitrary and the result of an erroneous belief that I could be faithful to an absolute meaning of a given text, a viewpoint that underwent significant revision as I progressed with my research.

Reviewing the Earliest Settings and Comparing

For my first Shakespearean song effort, I felt I had achieved my goal of writing something structurally and melodically simple with a genuine folk flavour, while adding
enough material to keep the song interesting for a modern-day listener. As a test of my ability to achieve so-called authenticity, I looked up the oldest existing setting of the song, to compare with my own. As with many of Shakespeare's songs, a great deal of conjecture was present over what is "original." In the case of "Under the Greenwood Tree," the possibilities are endless because Greenwood songs were common in the 16th and 17th centuries. Most scholars (Long, Seng, Elson) concur that the oldest known setting is provided by Gibbon, set to a Greenwood tune from Playford’s *The English Dancing Master* (1650). This tune, set forth in an earlier example above, is contemporary with the Elizabethan period, but it may not have been actually used in the original production. In *Shakespeare’s Songbook*, Duffin (2004) conjecturally sets the Greenwood lyric to a tune called “Sir Eglamore,” (CD Track 13) the source of which is a manuscript at Edinburgh University dating from the 1660s (p. 416), shown in Figure 7:

![Under the Greenwood Tree— Sir Eglamore Tune](image)

Figure 7. Under the Greenwood Tree – Sir Eglamore Tune

In both cases, the editors had indeed chosen tunes in the key of G with compound meters (Gibbon's is in 6/8, Duffin's is in 6/4). In contrast, my melody and
chord changes are different, and neither one of the folk settings dramatizes Jaques' final stanza, suggesting that it was indeed spoken rather than sung. Setting "Under the Greenwood Tree" to music highlighted issues of context, vocabulary, style/genre, and textual authority – issues that are pursued further in the following chapter. The next song text I chose to set, "Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind," provided other challenges, including using key and meter to represent mood and tone.

The Second Song – Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind

Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you not overstep the modesty of nature. For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. –Hamlet (3.2.17-2)

The above passage, from Hamlet's speech to the first player in Hamlet's play within a play, may be the closest we get to a dramatic treatise from Shakespeare. If the author does indeed try to 'hold up a mirror to nature,' he often does so by attempting to embody the contradictions and moral ambiguities of real life. The second song of As You Like It, excerpted below, demonstrates the conflicting ideals that have been a source of intrigue for generations of audiences (refer to CD Track 14 for my arrangement).

Verse 1
Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

Chorus
Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly.

Verse 2
Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
That does not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remembered not.
(To chorus) (2.7)

Interpreting and Responding to the Mood of the Lyrics

"Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind" contains the jaunty refrain of a typical Elizabethan song, as exemplified in the lines “Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly” (2.7.180); however, the remainder of the lyric is a condemnation of humanity, asserting that “most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly” (2.7.181). The song, sung by Amiens, parallels Jaques’ famous speech, “All the world’s a stage . . . ” located in the same scene, a sardonic account of the stages of human life with a morbid description of old age as being “sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything” (2.7.166). In light of these lines, the final line of the refrain, “this life is most jolly,” must be taken as a sardonic witticism (2.7.182). The first decision of the composer, then, is
whether to treat the song as a superficial entertainment designed to lighten the mood after Jaques' soliloquy, or to explore the underlying mood and atmosphere of the lyrics, which reflect the themes of human vanity, mortality, and alienation. I opted for the latter, but this approach presented its own problems. As well, the stage directions never specifically mention Amiens as the singer – though he is assumed to be the singer based on his earlier performance of "Under the Greenwood Tree."

Choosing a Key to Reflect Mood and Tone

My choice of a key for "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind" was made more difficult due to the lack of any historical melody that could be used as a precedent. None of the scholars of Shakespeare song have pinpointed an original melody for "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind." Most melodies in textbooks are reconstructions based on conjecture and the meter of the words. For example, Duffin (2004) claims that "Blow, Blow" may have been set to a tune entitled "Goddesses" (CD Track 15) from John Playford's *English Dancing Master of 1651* (Duffin, p. 70), shown in Figure 8:

![Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind - Goddesses Tune](image)
Nevertheless, Duffin's conclusions are based largely on his belief that the word *ivy* in the original Goddesses tune and the word *holly* in Shakespeare's lyric fall on the same beat (p. 71). In my opinion, Duffin's “holly and the ivy” theory is a tenuous connection at best. The earliest known setting by Thomas Arne dates from 1740, but this setting, though famous, is technically incomplete, because it does not include music for the refrain of the song. After looking at various settings, among them Roger Quilter's brilliant setting in C Minor (1905), I elected to write my version of the song in the key of G Minor, taking a hint from Quilter's choice of a minor key and the minor mode of the Goddesses tune. I wanted to create a song that would carefully balance both the jollity and cynicism of the lyrics. Quilter does this by literally refusing to commit to either major or minor tonality – he alternates constantly between the two modes, leaving the piece in a continuous state of harmonic flux. I desired something more musically accessible, but still wanted to capture this duality in the music. For the verse, I constructed a melody in the minor key that elicited melancholy. When reaching the “heigh-ho” refrain, however, I felt that some change was needed to keep musical interest and to reflect this more positive (at least superficially) part of the song; consequently, I moved to the relative major key of Bb Major for these lines, before returning to G Minor for the concluding lines of the refrain. By revisiting G minor for the last line of the refrain, I was able to create an ironic contrast between the positive statement of the lyric – this life is most jolly – and the mournful mood of the music.
Choosing a Meter to Reflect Mood and Tone

The other area that posed a unique challenge in setting "Blow, Blow" to music was the meter of the text. A brief analysis reveals that the first and second-to-last lines of the refrain are metrically variant from the verse, as illustrated below:

**Verse**
Blow, blow, / thou win / ter wind,  spondee, iamb, iamb
Thou art / not so / unkind  3 iamb
As man's / ingrat / titude.... 3 iamb

**Refrain**
Heigh-ho! / sing, / heigh /-ho!  metrically variant
Unto / the green / holly:  3 iamb
Most friend / ship is / feigning,  3 iamb
most lov / ing mere / folly:  3 iamb
Then, heigh-ho, the holly!  metrically variant
This life / is most / jolly.  3 iamb

As a result, many settings of the song alternate between one time signature in the verse and another in the refrain. Musically, this translates into 4/4 meter for the verse (counted 1-2-3-4) and a 6/8 meter for the refrain (counted 1-2-3-4-5-6 or 1-2 if only the 1st and 3rd beats are accented). John H. Long (1955) offers an example of this musical approach. He writes the verse in 4/4, and supplies a new refrain in 6/8 in his reconstruction of the melody (p. 149), based once again on a tune in Playford's *English Dancing Master*, as excerpted below in Figure 9 (CD Track 16):
Blow, blow thou winter wind, Thou art not so unkind As man's in gratitude;

Heigh ho, sing heigh ho unto the green holly; Most friendship is feigning, Most

loving mere folly: Then heigh ho the holly This life is most jolly.

Figure 9. Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind – Long’s Reconstruction

Many Elizabethan dance tunes have changes of meter, but I found this approach rather jarring; I wanted to achieve a more fluid expression that would not break from the mournful and cynical mood of the lyric. Therefore, I decided to keep my version of the song entirely in 4/4. To do this, the rhythm of the refrain had to be elongated to fit comfortably into a 4/4 meter without giving the impression of the singer stumbling over the words, as demonstrated in Figure 10 (CD Track 17):
Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind—Chorus Excerpt

Heigh ho! sing heigh ho! un to the green

Most loving mere foll y Then, heigh ho, the holl y

Figure 10. Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind (Chorus) – by Michael Mikulin

This elongated version of the melody also seemed beneficial because it allowed for a sharper, more forward, placement of the vowel sound. For the same reason, I opted to pronounce the refrain as “hi-ho” rather than “hey-ho.”

Seen and Unseen: Dramatic Context

Seng (1967) points out that “Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind” is a song designed to suit the Duke’s exiled condition in the play (p. 147). Indeed, Shakespeare foreshadows the song earlier in the play in the words of Duke Senior, who says:

Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here we feel but the penalty of Adam,
The season’s difference, as, the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter’s wind,
Which, when it bites and blows upon my body
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile, and say
“This is no flattery; these are counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am.” (2.1.3-11)

The key line of the song is “thy tooth is not so keen / because thou art not seen” (2.7.177), suggesting that an unseen enemy is somehow less bothersome or hurtful than the enemy one knows (i.e., the invisible agitations of the winter wind are preferable to the visible deceit of human beings). Of course, a paradox occurs in the line: the deceit of human beings can be just as invisible as the winter wind. Shakespeare may have been referring to the frequent machinations of the royal court, in which courtiers could flatter their superiors while plotting against them. Ironically, many aspects of “Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind” are unseen by the audience – the idealization of rustic life and vilification of society are espoused in the song text, but the dramatic material surrounding the song undercuts these ideals. When Amiens concludes his song, Duke Senior offers refuge and hospitality to Adam and Orlando – hardly the sort of behaviour in keeping with “man’s ingratitude.”

Ophelia’s Song

The first two song texts with which I dealt offered opportunities to examine mode/key, meter, and text underlay. Before discussing the pedagogical implications of the composing process in the context of the English classroom, I will touch briefly on my experiences setting three additional songs to music. These songs raised questions of interpretation, style, genre, form and performance that are vital to the teaching of Shakespeare. Ophelia’s mad song from Hamlet, entitled “How Should I Your True Love
Know," is one of the most well-known songs in the Shakespeare canon (refer to CD
Track 18 for my arrangement):

   How should I your true love know
   From another one?
   By his cockle hat and staff
   And his sandal shoon.
   He is dead and gone, lady.
   He is dead and gone;
   At his head a grass-green turf,
   At his heels a stone.
   White his shroud as the mountain snow,
   Larded with sweet flowers;
   Which bewept to the grave did go
   With true love showers. (4.5.23-40)

Reviewing Historical Settings

Most scholars agree that Ophelia's first song is an allusion to the popular ballad
"Walsingham," the melody of which I have recorded and reprinted below with one
particular set of original words (CD Track 19), though literally hundreds of variations
also exist:

Ophelia's Song—Walsingham Tune

\[
\text{As you came from Walsingham, from that holy land,}
\]

\[
\text{Met you not with my true love by the way as you came?}
\]

Figure 11. Ophelia’s Song – Walsingham Melody
The melody given here is based on William Byrd's setting in *My Ladye Nevells Booke* of 1591 (Duffin, 2004, p. 423). The "Walsingham" tune, in turn, evolved into another melody set to a text in *Hamlet* that also survives. The most common song performed on stage today is a version of this secondary melody from the 18th century. According to Louis Elson (1901), the traditional tune survives in at least two versions, thanks to the efforts of two different composers, as related in the following:

When Drury Lane Theatre was burned in 1812, the old transcription of the melodies, which had been handed down from the original sources, was lost; an enthusiastic musician, however, to whom all Shakespearians owe thanks, Doctor (Samuel) Arnold, sought out Mrs. Jordan, who had often played the part of Ophelia, and from her lips transcribed the tunes that she had so frequently sung. Mr. Linley also wrote down the melodies from memory, having heard Ms. Field . . . sing the tunes in the above mentioned theatre. (Elson, 1901, p. 234)

Elson goes on to explain that the two versions match closely enough to prove one another, suggesting that the melodies are authentic Drury Lane tunes. What remains in question is whether or not these Drury Lane melodies originated from the original production of the play, since Drury Lane was established well after Shakespeare's lifetime. One hypothesis suggests that Shakespeare was the natural father of William D'Avenant, who passed them onto his protégé Thomas Betterton, who in turn brought the tunes to Drury Lane – a contentious theory at best. A more likely explanation is that the 18th century tune is a badly corrupted version of the original Walsingham ballad, which was endlessly parodied because of its immense popularity (Naylor, 1931, pp. 189-90). Figure 12 shows the Drury Lane melody, as reprinted from Kines' (1964) *Songs from Shakespeare's Plays* (CD Track 20):
Ophelia's Song—Drury Lane Tune

Am E Am Dm E F E C Am G C

How should I your true love know From another one?

Em Am Dm E Am F E Am Dm Am E Am

By his cockle hat and staff, And his sandal shoon.

Figure 12. Ophelia's Song – Drury Lane Tune

Evidently, a number of changes were made over the years from stage use. The song seems to have changed key (though it is still in a minor mode) and has metamorphosed from Walsingham's compound time signature – 6/4 in Duffin's reconstruction and 3/2 in Naylor's – to a straight 4/4.

Interpretation, Context, and Dramatic Function

Working with Ophelia's song posed numerous challenges in regards to integrating the song into the dramatic context, considering multiple possibilities for interpretations of the song text, and my choice of performer, which in turn affected the overall interpretation. Unlike the thematic songs of As You Like It, the songs of Hamlet are utilized to establish character and dramatic motivation. "How Should I Your True Love Know" is the opening song in Ophelia's display of madness before the King and Queen in Act Four, Scene Five. Bradley (1904) points out,

In the latter part of a tragedy...Shakespeare often appeals to an emotion different from any of those excited in the first half of the play... As a rule this new emotion is pathetic... (p. 60)
The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1990) defines pathos as "the emotionally moving quality or power of a literary work, appealing especially to our feelings of sorrow, pity, and compassionate sympathy" (Baldick, p. 163). I believe a pathos is present in this scene that is simultaneously sublime and terrible. The stage directions for Ophelia's song in the First Quarto read "enter Ophelia playing on her lute and her hair down singing," (Best, 2003). In the Signet edition, which is based on the First Folio, the stage directions are simply "enter Ophelia, distracted." I wanted to write a song that would encapsulate this feeling of beautiful derangement. I do not feel Ophelia is completely insensible to her misfortunes; rather, she is unable to bear them and descends into madness. The song, then, is a glimpse into her feelings as I understand them, albeit a view cloaked in metaphor.

Numerous interpretations may be found of what Ophelia's coded lyrics mean, but I have chosen Peter J. Seng's (1967) rendering as provided below:

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandal shoon. (4.5.23)

On the surface, the song tells the story of a pilgrim who has journeyed beyond the sea to a place of devotion. The cockle shell was a symbol of having visited a holy shrine, because the chief places of devotion were located on the coasts. As well, in the early church, cockle shells were used to pour out the waters of baptism (Seng, 1967, p. 134). In any case, as the song continues, the singer learns from a traveller that her lover has died on his journey and has been buried without the proper rites or "true love showers":

...
He is dead and gone, lady.
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.
White his shroud as the mountain snow,
Larded with sweet flowers;
Which bewept to the grave did not go
With true love showers. (4.5.23-40)

Most explanations suggest that the song is about the death of Ophelia's father, Polonius (Seng, 1967, p. 133); however, the lyric can also be construed as a recognition of the death of Ophelia's love for Hamlet himself. Since the song is sung directly to Queen Gertrude, Seng (p. 133) goes so far as to suggest the song is an accusation: the song's lyric can be interpreted as suggesting that Queen Gertrude once had a true love that she failed to properly mourn – a poison dart aimed at the Queen by Ophelia for her hasty remarriage to Claudius, and possibly other more serious offences. This, then, is a song of leave-taking on many levels: a farewell to Ophelia's father, the collapse of her relationship with Prince Hamlet, and an adieu to the stable world she once knew when King Hamlet and her father were alive.

The context of Ophelia's song in the play is important to understand as well. Elizabethan society was intensely hierarchical, and singing in public by the nobility would not be considered proper behaviour except under special circumstances. In Act Five, however, Ophelia sings one song after another before the court of Denmark. Such behaviour would be contrary to all propriety for an Elizabethan noble, man or woman. Although knowledge of music was seen as desirable at every social rank, performance operated within strict rules and limits. Baldassar Castiglione, whose book The Courtier
Castiglione (1528) set the standard for court behaviour and manners, condemning the unsolicited performance of music by aristocracy, arguing “class distinctions between a nobleman and his music-performing servants would be broken down” (Castiglione, 1528, Book 2). Castiglione advises women to cultivate modesty, saying “when she cometh to dance, or to show any kind of music, she ought to be brought to it with suffering herself somewhat to be prayed, and with a certain bashfulness . . . ” (Book 2). This code of etiquette permitted Desdemona to sing in the familiar company of Emilia, but would not support an unsolicited performance for the king and queen at court. The Elizabethan audience, therefore, would have recognized Ophelia’s public singing as another indicator of the breakdown of her sanity, along with her dishevelled appearance and incoherent speech.

**Textual Variance in Ophelia’s Song**

The writing of Ophelia’s song led to my first encounter with a significant Shakespearean textual variation. Although some modern editions phrase lines 39-40 in the affirmative – “Which bewept to the grave did go” – the two distinct early versions of *Hamlet* (the short Quarto of 1603 and the longer Quarto of 1604-05), as well as all other quarto texts and the Folio of 1623, insert a negative into the line: “which, bewept, to the grave did not go” (Murphy, 2003, pp. 294-302). The omission of the negative is apparently the result of an editorial decision by Alexander Pope and other early editors, who regularized the line without any textual authority for this decision (Long, 1971, p. 124). Kittredge (1939) puts forth the theory that the use of “not” is Shakespeare’s own personal interpolation – a deliberate attempt to remind the audience that the traditional words of “Walsingham” (on which the tune is based) do not entirely fit the circumstances of Polonius’ hasty burial or Ophelia’s impending death. Composing this song required grappling with textual variance and making decisions about possible wordings.
Musical Form and Repetition of Text

Instead of following the original ballad formula, which simply repeated the same music for every stanza, I opted to make stanzas one and two *verses*, and stanza three a *chorus* or *middle eight* (as opposed to a refrain, which usually happens after every verse). In popular songwriting, this is sometimes called an A-B-A form, and is used in many 30s and 40s jazz standards, such as *Stormy Weather*. The actual plan of the form is more elaborate than a simple A-B-A, following a pattern that I would document as A1-A2-B1-A1-A2-B2-A3/Coda. I have attempted to label both the textual and musical form below, including my own lyrical adaptations/repetitions:

**Verse 1 or A1**
How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandal shoon.

**Verse 2 or A1**
He is dead and gone, lady.
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

**Chorus or B1**
White his shroud as the mountain snow,
Larded with sweet flowers;
Which bewept to the grave did [not] go
With true love showers.
With true love showers. {my addition}

Repeat Verse 1,2 and Chorus {my addition}
Coda or A2

How should I your true love know, {my additions}
From another one?
How should I your true love know,
From another one?
Piano coda to close (4.5.23-40)

By following such a form, however, I created a problem: when reaching the end of the chorus (B2) for the second time, the melody sounded unfinished. Consequently, I made the first stanza of the text a Coda, repeating the first line of the song as a question for the audience to ponder, “How should I your true love know/ From another one?” For me, this line is the key to the song, if it is interpreted as an address from Ophelia to Hamlet. While I was pleased with all these changes from a musical point of view, I felt I was losing control of the dramatic impact. As my setting grew and developed, it became apparent that my version of Ophelia’s song was becoming too much a “musical theatre number,” isolated from the dramatic context. In the context of the scene, I felt it would be more appropriate to have Ophelia hum snatches of a folk ballad than to launch into a musical soliloquy. Furthermore, since the music of Ophelia’s song has been traced back to “Walsingham,” clearly, the original genre of the song was a folk ballad. In Act Four, Scene Five, the song is presented in between snatches of spoken dialogue, with plenty of interruptions from the Queen and Ophelia herself.

Below, I have only italicized the song lyrics:

Enter Ophelia [distracted]
Ophelia: Where is the beauteous Majesty of Denmark?
Queen: How now Ophelia?
Ophelia: How should I your true love know / From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff, / And his Sandal shoon.
Queen: Alas, sweet Lady: what imports this Song?
He is dead and gone Lady / He is dead and gone,
At his head a grass-green turf, / At his heels a stone. (5.4.21-31)

As a result, Ophelia’s song retains its informal, ballad-like quality. By making the form more elaborate and removing the textual interpolations, I felt the song was in danger of overwhelming the audience. On the other hand, if my setting of the song was reinserted into the scene with interruptions of dialogue, and the accompaniment removed entirely, it would be more effective and avoid being overblown. Artistically, the contrast of the light, inconsequential ballad music with Ophelia’s internal agony would have more of an impact than a dramatic outpouring of grief.

**Performance Decisions**

From the outset, the most important performance decision in the case of Ophelia’s song would be the choice of singer; in particular, the type of voice and the delivery of the performance. Initially, I desired to follow tradition and create a character that sounded unhinged, being concerned that a singer with too pleasant a voice might detract from the context, and that a more ragged voice might better capture the mood. Certainly, an element in the performance should make the audience uncomfortable. At the same time, the song’s dramatic function is to reveal something about Ophelia’s character, and as such, it must remain true to the character established earlier in the play. As John Long asserts,

> the performed [vocal] music is aimed primarily at characterization... The vocal music... is fragmentary and incoherent and therefore an outward sign of the inward character of the singers. (1971, p. 105)
The song also serves as a mirror for the other characters, and we are anxious throughout the scene that Ophelia may overstep her bounds with the King and Queen by mentioning personal subjects that she should not broach with them. Ophelia is comically pathetic, and all the other songs in *Hamlet* are assigned to clowns and fools—characters who are allowed to speak their minds with impunity. Ultimately, I used a young singer with a sweet voice in an attempt to capture the beauty, youth, and innocence of Ophelia. The result seemed to be increased pathos and a greater feeling of tragedy. To maintain the song’s function of serving as a mirror for Claudius’ and Queen Gertrude’s thoughts and motives, however, the dialogue of those characters really must be interpolated into the music.

**Desdemona’s Song: Willow Willow**

She had a song of willow,
An old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune,
And she died singing it. That song tonight
Will not go from my mind.

---Desdemona to Emilia (*Othello* 4.3.26-29)

**Reviewing Historical Settings**

After the study of Ophelia’s song, I became interested in the expropriation of pre-existing melodies and ballads in Shakespeare’s plays. I looked at one of the most popular tunes from the plays— the Willow song in *Othello*, sung by Desdemona in Act Four, Scene Three. Scholars have long been aware that this tune is not original in terms of either text or lyric, but rather, a clever adaptation of a popular ballad to the dramatic purposes of the play (Seng, 1967, pp. 196-98). As with all of Shakespeare’s song sources, some discrepancy is present over exactly what constitutes the original melodic
source. Duffin (2004, p. 470) puts forward the following tune, taken from a combination of the *Lodge Lute Book* (1559) and fragments from the Drexel Collection (CD Track 21):

Willow, Willow—Lodge Lute Book Melody

The more famous and generally accepted melody, however, is from the Pepys collection, entitled *The Complaint of a Lover Forsaken*, dating from 1614 (Elson, 1901, p. 290). This source, a book of lute songs, preserves the text with the music. As is evident in comparing the two versions below, the text of the original ballad is not exactly the same (Early Modern English spelling notwithstanding) as the lyric found in the Folger Library edition of Othello:

*Othello Version*

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow

The fresh streams ran by her, and murmured her moans
Sing willow, willow, willow;
Her salt tears fell from her, and softened the stones;
Sing willow, willow, willow.
Sing all a green willow must be my garland.
Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve,
I call'd my love false love; but what said he then?
If I court moe [more] women, you'll couch with moe men. (4:3)

Traditional Version
A poore soule sat sighing under a sicamore tree;
O willow, willow, willow!
With his hand on his bosom, his head on his knee:
O willow, willow, willow!
O willow, willow, willow!
Sing, O the greene willow shall be my garland
The cold streams ran by him, his eyes wept apace;
O willow etc.
The salt tears fell from him, which drowned his face.
O willow, etc.
Sing, O the greene willow shall be my garland. (Elson, 1901, p. 290)

In addition to the pronoun changes (from his to her), the lyrics follow a slightly different structure, and the last two lines “I call'd my love false love; but what said he then?/ If I court moe [more] women, you'll couch with moe men” (4.3.60-61) are completely new additions, suggesting that Shakespeare wanted to emphasize Othello's accusations of infidelity. Which melody (the Drexel or Pepys’ collection) was used with Shakespeare’s text in productions during his lifetime is open to conjecture, but clearly, with the lyric, Shakespeare was not attempting to intensify the pathos or tragedy with a light piece of music, as in Ophelia’s mad songs. Rather, the song presents a straightforward expression of the melancholy mood of the scene, in which Desdemona contemplates her own premonitions of death and her loss of Othello’s affection. The
lyrical integrity is also changed: The original plaintiff ode to lost love is undermined with the paranoia and suspicion that prevails throughout the rest of the play.

Interpreting the Song Text

The text of the Willow song is recommended, from a musical point of view. It has a great deal of alliteration – “the poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree” – along with the repetition of the refrain “willow, willow, willow,” which makes for a pleasing phrase structure. Nevertheless, the text is also highly ambiguous, operating on three levels simultaneously. First, an anonymous lover narrates the folk ballad. Next, Desdemona is a narrator, offering her thoughts about her relationship with Othello. Lastly, Desdemona refers to her handmaiden, Barbaray, who sang the song to her as a little girl and who, according to Desdemona’s account, “died singing it” (4.3.32). The song effortlessly shifts from one narrator’s account to another, but the line “let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve” (4.3.56) seems particularly appropriate for Desdemona’s reaction to Othello because it reinforces the innocence of her character, and increases the sympathy for her undeserved suffering. Irony is also present in the line, because the audience knows that Othello, as a soldier who has waged campaigns in far-away lands, has probably not been faithful to Desdemona, even though he is demanding a pure wife. While Elizabethan audiences undoubtedly accepted this double standard, Shakespeare seems to be calling it into question with the line “If I court moe [more] women, you’ll couch with moe men” (4.3.60-61). I interpreted the aforementioned line to be Desdemona’s paraphrase of Othello’s angry words to her in the previous scene (4.2), where he openly accuses her of infidelity. The naïveté that Desdemona demonstrates in the Willow song is echoed in the ensuing passage, when she asks the worldly Emilia, “Dost thou in conscience think – tell me, Emilia – That there be women
do abuse their husbands/In such gross kind" (4.3.67-69)? Emilia astutely responds that if women are unfaithful to their husbands they have learned this behaviour from watching men: “And have not we affections/Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have? Then let them use us well. Else let them know,/ The ills we do, their ills instruct us so” (4.3.112-115).

**Key, Meter and Musical Form**

In writing my own version of the song, I had to make some decisions. Would I observe the melancholy tone of the original lyric? Both Rossini and Verdi composed operatic versions of Othello, and both used melancholy folk-like melodies for “O Salce, Salce” (O Willow, Willow). It seemed reasonable to preserve this melancholy mood, but I wanted to do something unique with the structure of the song. After hearing Ivor Gurney’s setting of “Under the Greenwood Tree” (1923), I realized the possibilities for putting a song, traditionally written in 3/4 time, in 4/4 time. I also liked the A minor mode used in the piece, and wanted to write something similar. Most importantly, I wanted to get away from the 6/4 folk-ballad feel of the *Lodge Lute Book* melody (see Figure 13), which I felt was too languid to express the underlying anger and frustration Desdemona would likely feel after being falsely accused by Othello. In essence, I wanted to portray a more active Desdemona. Consequently, I opted to differentiate my setting from the *Lodge Lute Book* melody in the following ways: 1) divide the song into three sections – verse one beginning on “The poor soul,” verse two beginning on “The fresh streams,” and a chorus beginning on “Sing all a green willow”; 2) change the time signature from a compound meter to 4/4; 3) change the key signature from the folk ballad’s traditional minor to major at the chorus, as a kind of musical surprise and to emphasize the change of mood on the line “sing all a green willow must be my garland…”; and 4)
reverse the last two lines of the song, so that the two most important lines ("I called my love false love . . ." and "If I court more women . . .") would have more impact without being interrupted by the "sing willow, willow, willow" refrain. This also allowed me to end the song with the refrain. These changes to the lyric are documented below (refer to CD Track 22 for my arrangement):

Verse 1
The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree, (MINOR KEY)
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow

Verse 2
The fresh streams ran by her, and mumur'd her moans
Sing willow, willow, willow
Her salt tears fell from her, and soften'd the stones;
Sing willow, willow, willow.

Chorus
Sing all a green willow must be my garland. (IN MAJOR KEY)
Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve,
I call'd my love false love; but what said he then? (MELODY ASCENDS)
If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men. (PAUSE)
Sing willow, willow, willow (REVERSED FROM ORIGINAL ORDER)
Sing willow, willow, willow (THESE REPETITIONS ADDED)
Sing willow, willow, willow.

The purpose of subdividing the song into sections was to allow for more musical variety, and to build musical tension at the approach of the chorus and the lines "Sing all a green willow must be my garland/ Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve." (4.3.55-
which I associated with feelings of frustrated passion, resignation, and sadness at
the break in the relationship. Nevertheless, the conversion to 4/4 time posed some
problems for me as a melody writer. When a lyric, normally performed in triple meter
(3/4), is shifted to a 4/4 meter, the words tend to bunch up into clumps, and the singer
will trip over them without enough space in the melody line. I struggled a great deal over
where to put the rests in the melody so the singer would have time to catch her breath
between phrases. I am still not entirely satisfied with the line “the fresh streams ran by
her,” which proved to be a real tongue twister.

Still, I was pleased with the change to major at the chorus, and felt it was worth
the effort of the previous build-up. For the climactic line – “I call’d my love false love; but
what said he then?” – I made the melody sweep upwards to give it more emotional
impact, in yet another example of word painting. The most biting and satirical line, “If I
court moe women, you’ll couch with moe men” is isolated from the rest of the song with
a dramatic pause. I then returned to the refrain of “Sing willow, willow, willow,” reversing
the last two lines of text to provide a feeling of closure.

With the Willow song, I was able to exploit the contrast between major and minor
tonality and affect of each on mood or tone to a greater extent than I had done in any of
the previous songs. I also played with the musical form of the song and faced the
challenge of interpreting a somewhat ambiguous text. Having set four ballad texts in a
row, I was now eager to try a different song genre. The last song I discuss in this
chapter is one of the drinking songs in Othello.
The Canakin Clink Pub Song

A good sherris-sack . . . ascends me into the brain.... makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes, which delivered o'er to the voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes excellent wit.

– Falstaff (2 Henry IV 4.3.95-101)

Drunk? And speak parrot? And squabble? Swagger? Swear? And discourse faustian with one’s own shadow? O thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil!

– Cassio to Iago (Othello 2.3.298)

Drinking Song as Genre

Without doubt, Elizabethan audiences enjoyed a good drinking song. At Stratford-on-Avon, visitors are shown a chair whereon Shakespeare himself “is said to have sat at the tavern and joined in the jovial singing there” (Elson, 1901, p. 171). The clowns and vagabonds of Shakespeare’s plays often recite a line or two from a drinking song (Elson, 1901, p. 171), a technique that the dramatist may have borrowed from the morality plays he watched as a youth (Greenblatt, 2004, p. 31). Taverns abounded in London, and were the clubs and coffee houses of the period. Ale was an important part of the diet of the day, even for children (Wood, 2003, p. 267), and an apocryphal story is told that Shakespeare died of a fever he contracted brought on by a drinking session with Ben Johnson and the poet Michael Drayton (Wood, p. 335). At the Mermaid Tavern, in Bread Street, many of the poets and dramatists of the late 16th and early 17th centuries congregated, and Shakespeare was likely one of the writers’ circle. What makes “And Let Me the Canakin Clink” so intriguing is that some version of it probably
was performed in the bars and taverns of Shakespeare's day. Shakespeare or one of his composer collaborators simply expanded upon it or borrowed it wholly from its natural pub environs.

**Text and Origins of Canakin Clink**

Textually speaking, "And Let Me the Canakin Clink" is a straightforward drinking song, which, like most songs of its type, praises the joy of drinking and insists that life is too short to do without ale. The canakin itself is a little can or cup used for drinking, hence the title of the song. (The word is spelled differently in the Folio and Quarto versions of the play: in the Folio, the drinking cup is spelled cannakin, while in the Quarto and Folger Library editions, it is spelt cannikin. The Dover Edition spells it canakin.)

The song, which occurs in a pub, is sung by Iago, who is attempting to get Casio drunk and discredited in the eyes of Othello. The tune provides comic relief while simultaneously building dramatic tension as the audience waits for Casio's inevitable fall from grace. The scene concludes with Casio brawling drunkenly with Roderigo and then wounding Montano in an intoxicated rage, an offence made graver by Montano's rank as a former governor. Othello then enters to find Casio inebriated while on guard duty and dismisses him. The ensuing tragedy is precipitated when Desdemona attempts to intervene on Casio's behalf, thus increasing Othello's paranoia over her fidelity, which is being fueled by Iago's ongoing innuendo. As Iago remarks:

"For whiles this honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his [Casio's] fortune,
And she for him [Casio] pleads strongly to the Moor... And by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor" (2.3.374-379).
Below is the full text of the song (refer to CD Track 23, for my arrangement), which appears uninterrupted by dialogue in Act Two, Scene Three:

And let me the canakin clink, clink; [second clink omitted in my version]
And let me the canakin clink:
A soldier's a man;
A life's but a span;
Why then let a soldier drink.

The exact sources of the text and original music for Iago's first drinking song are both unknown, but some interesting connections can be made. It is both fitting and ironic that the key line of "And Let Me the Canakin Clink," "a soldier's a man, a life's but a span," is derived from the cautionary words of Psalm 39:6: "Behold, thou hast made my days as it were a span long . . . and verily every man living is altogether vanity . . . he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them." Iago's first drinking song serves as both a rousing call to carousing for all in the theatre (actors and audience alike), as well as a foreshadowing of doom. In terms of the melodic origins, Chappell sets the text to an old ballad tune called "Wigmore's Galliard" (Long, 1971, p. 151) dating from 1602, while Sternfeld (1963) suggests a tune called "Joan Sanderson" (p. 146) from Playford's English Dancing Master, dating from 1651. Neither of these settings can be proved to be contemporary with Shakespeare. Both Sternfeld (1963) and Duffin (2004) suggest a tune called "The Soldier's Life," a ballad frequently referred to by playwrights of Shakespeare's time (Sternfeld, 1963, p. 63). Figure 14 shows a brief excerpt of Duffin's reconstruction (Duffin, 2004, p. 50) of "Canakin Clink" (CD Track 24), set to the "Soldier's Life" melody:
Duffin points out that the line "a solider's a man/ a life's but a span" may have been part of a lost stanza of the original Soldier's Life song (p. 50). All of the traditional settings are in 6/8, 6/4, or 3/4, so my own setting in 4/4 is a slight departure from the traditional versions of the song, but the 4/4 time signature better accommodated the jazz/klezmer style that I was aiming for in this setting.

**Dramatic Function**

Moore observes that drinking songs frequently appear in Shakespeare's plays as a "foreshadowing of peril" (Moore, 1916, p. 85). Indeed, of all the drinking songs in Shakespeare's plays, only those of Falstaff and Sir Toby are free from impending disaster (though Falstaff does eventually meet his end in the off-stage deathbed scene of *Henry V* [2.3]). Nevertheless, the Canakin Clink pub song also serves a practical dramatic purpose: the actual stage time of the drinking episode in *Othello* is short, and Cassio must become drunk quickly; therefore, by employing a song, the necessary bawdy atmosphere is conjured and stage time is suspended, making Cassio's instant drunkenness plausible to the audience. In Shakespeare's plays, music is frequently
employed for the purpose of suspending or stretching stage time, such as in *As You Like It*, when the Duke hears Orlando's story of how he came to be in the forest of Arden during Amiens' performance of "Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind." Moreover, the audience members themselves might well be imbibing during the drinking scene, as "one penny would get you into the yard where you could stand for the two or three hours with the crowd, milling about, buying apples, oranges, nuts, and bottled ale . . ." (Greenblatt, 2004, p. 185). One can imagine that at the mere mention of drinking, many audience members would have heartily raised their own bottles and joined in with the on-stage carousing.

In addition, the song allows Iago to disguise his true nature from Cassio. As Sternfeld (1963) puts it, "... by pretending to be full of song, as good-natured and kindly people were supposed to be, "honest" Iago disarms any suspicion Cassio may have harboured" (p. 145). By singing, Iago is able to cover up the fact that he is not drinking as much as the others. Long (1971) points out that Shakespeare uses Cassio's commentary on the quality of the music to show the audience the deterioration of his judgement, stating "when at the end of the second song Cassio judges it 'a more exquisite song than the other', we may be sure that his critical faculties are considerably less keen than before" (p. 151). All of the aforementioned techniques relate to preserving the theatrical illusion for viewers, allowing them to accept Cassio's rapid intoxication and the ease with which the lieutenant is lured to his doom. Without the two pub songs ("And Let Me The Canakin Clink," followed by "King Stephen Was A Worthy Peer"), the scene would fall flat.
Performance and Instrumentation: Tone and Mood

Of all the songs I comment on in this chapter, this one was the easiest to write, and definitely the most fun to record – though it also turned into an incredibly complex multitrack recording session. For this song, I utilized the full resources of my recording studio. Because the lyric was so slight, and the accompanying melody a fairly straightforward drinking ditty, I found myself delving deeper into the scene to realize the dramatic situation and make each of the three principal characters come alive for the listener, through the use of varying voices and sound effects. I was aided by the talent of Angus Macdonald, an exceptionally gifted actor and voice-over artist who has worked on numerous local film and television productions. Angus was able to provide different voices for Iago, Casio, and Montano – something I never could have done if I performed the song myself.

I wrote my version of “And Let Me the Canakin Clink” in about half an hour, but it took me several days to record it. After recording the basic piano part and singing the song, I felt that something was missing. All of the song texts in Shakespeare’s plays are tied to locality (often used to set the scene and suggest a particular environment, time, or place), and a drinking song that takes place in a tavern seemed to require something that made the location real for the listener. In a sense, these background noises that formed the ambiance of a pub were part of the instrumentation. I began sifting through sound effects libraries looking for a pub environs. While the addition of the sound effects such as an out-of-tune piano, crowd noise, clinking glasses and breaking dishes helped, I realized that what I really wanted to do with this song was take the next step: rather than writing a song and having it performed in isolation, I wanted to make it part of the dramatic fabric and have it sung by the characters. I knew I was not a good enough
thespian to accomplish such a task myself, so I enlisted the aid of a professional actor. When I elected to intersperse snatches of dialogue from Act Two, Scene Three, during the song to include Casio and Montano, I did not anticipate the task I had set for myself. I realized that to record dialogue from each of the three characters – Casio, Iago, and Montano – for a three minute song, my actor and I would have to come up with a character description for each of them. One could not simply sit down and read the lines – each had to have a distinctive voice, personality, and back story to make him convincing, even as comedic caricatures in our Kurt Weil-esque tavern/cabaret scenario.

Ultimately, our performance may have been too comedic, but each character comes across distinctly: Iago as a low-class ruffian and bully; Cassio as a ridiculous fop (certainly, the element of the ridiculous is associated with Cassio, though he does redeem himself at the play’s end); and Montano as a snivelling bureaucratic official. All in all, “And Let Me the Canakin Clink” was an excellent experience in exploring characterization in relation to song.

**Concluding Thoughts on Composing Song Settings**

Contemplating my experiences of researching and recording various Shakespeare songs led me back to the primary question of this thesis: What are the possibilities for a pedagogy of teaching Shakespeare through song? In the ensuing chapter, I focus on aspects of the songwriting process that were particularly valuable for enhancing my understanding of the plays, and for linking these moments of process to the general outcomes of the high school English curriculum. In addition, I address those concepts that might take students beyond the curriculum, or encourage them to reinterpret the existing curriculum in new ways. While many moments of the process
were interesting, I feel that most of my songwriting activities could be represented in four main areas: 1) Music and Memory; 2) Context and Synthesis; 3) Multimodality; and 4) Tone and Mood.

CHAPTER 4. TEACHING SHAKESPEARE THROUGH SONG

Those that do teach young babes,
Do it with gentle means and easy tasks.

--Desdemona to Iago (Othello 4.2.113-114)

In the preceding chapter, I related my approach to Shakespeare through song, as well as some of the concepts and issues raised during the creative process, including memory, context, authority, interpretation, mood, and tone. In this chapter, I describe a potential instructional method for teaching Shakespeare through song, reflect on my teaching practice and classroom experiences using this instructional method with an English 10 class, and highlight those elements that would benefit other educators who may be contemplating using song in teaching Shakespeare. I also attempt to answer the questions I originally posed at the beginning of this thesis (refer to page 3). Although my primary purpose is reflection, throughout this chapter I try to use a language with which my teaching colleagues would be familiar, in terms of instructional goals, learning objectives, outcomes, and evaluation. I have made a conscious choice to adhere to the existing British Columbia Ministry curriculum as a standard, though I recognize that it is but one possible approach. This is done out of the desire to appeal to a broader audience, not only of scholars, but of fellow British Columbia (BC) teachers, who must work and teach within an existing framework. Davis (2000) notes,
Formal curricula that are structured around these assumptions of accumulation and linearity are tied to popular conceptions of ‘lessons’ and ‘lesson planning’... ‘learning objectives’... Teaching and planning for teaching are, in this frame, truly conceived as complicated (that is, mechanical) processes. (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p. 58)

My desire here is not to reduce the teaching of Shakespeare to a mechanical process, but to approach it within the existing structure and reinterpret the curriculum in new ways. As well, I wish to demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of teaching Shakespeare through song. To this end, the chapter concludes with a summary of my own thoughts and implications for future Shakespeare curricula.

**Developing an Instructional Methodology: General Goals**

In designing my method for teaching Shakespeare through song, the first step was to formulate some general instructional goals before moving on to specific learning objectives and outcomes related to the existing BC curriculum. The first group of goals dealt with accommodating various skill levels and providing background and context for the play. I also had basic skills and material for the students to master so that they could have more time for critical thinking. I regard many of the artistic choices students make while engaged in the creative process as examples of critical thinking.

In addition to the practical goals above, I had *metacognitive goals* as well. Metacognition refers to learners' awareness of their own knowledge and of the cognitive processes they use to construct knowledge. When students reflect on their process and the reasons for their decision-making, much as I did in the previous chapter, they are engaging in metacognition. My two main goals in this area were as follows:

- to emphasize process and critical thinking by giving students opportunities to revisit the texts and to consider how they arrived at their understandings
to facilitate synthesizing activities by helping students: a) make connections between the various elements of Shakespeare's poetry, and b) understand how those elements combine to make a creative work.

Regarding the first of these metacognitive goals, I knew that the activity would only be successful if it had a component that encouraged the students continually to critique, revise, and perfect their work. The English and Music Instructional Resource Package (IRP) lists the ability to revise and critique as an important learning objective, stating that students should be able to "revise and edit their communications to improve content, organization, and effect to suit specific audiences" (English IRP, p. 68). This outcome is echoed in the Music IRP, which states that students should "demonstrate an ability to critique the work of self and others" (Music IRP, p. 46). In writing the song settings, students would have multiple opportunities to delve into the text to consider their own approaches, as I did in composing my Shakespearean songs. They would have to make critical choices, edit their own work, develop their own criteria for what constitutes a "good" composition, and compare various versions of the same song by other composers, as well as compare settings of their own design. I felt that computers would be an ideal vehicle for encouraging revision and analysis. As Hammett (2002) points out, "technologies . . . can be used to juxtapose texts to express particular meanings or to open pedagogical possibilities for critical questioning" (p. 143). In other words, technology can be utilized for more than its own sake; personal response and engagement with the text can be developed through the use of technology that encourages students to "make connections between the ideas . . . presented in literary and mass media works and their own experiences" (English 11/12 IRP, p. A-5).
In relation to the second metacognitive goal - synthesis - I wanted students to be able to appreciate various aspects of Shakespeare's poetry. Ezra Pound described three elements of poetry: "melopoeia" (music, sound and rhythm), logopoeia (logic or intellectual content), and phanopoeia (imagery as related to memory and imagination) (Luce-Kapler & Sandhu, 2002, p. 71). In particular, I wanted to focus on the phanopoeia and melopoeia of Shakespeare's poetry because, in my experience, these elements are often neglected in classrooms in favor of concentration on the logos of the poem. As Luce-Kapler points out "what is considered less often is the power of images to evoke our imaginations and memories..." (Luce-Kapler & Sandhu, p. 72). My intent was to have students consider how melopoeia, logopoeia, and phanopoeia come together to make a creative work. This goal draws on that outlined in the Music IRP, which suggests that students should "analyze how the elements of expression are combined to achieve specific effects" (p. 40).

**Goals for Evaluation**

The last group of goals I devised were concerned with documentation and evaluation. The two main goals in this area were:

- to supply effective evaluation by designing a suitable means of evaluation for both process and product and providing opportunities for self-evaluation.

- to avoid the pitfalls of complicity in regards to documenting the creative process.

With respect to the second goal, I wished to document the creative process, but not to affect or stunt the process by making students overly self-conscious. Supplying an effective means of evaluation thus meant not only evaluating the end-product, but also evaluating the journey students took to get there. As well, I felt that some component of self-evaluation ought to be present that involved students in setting their
own criteria for what would constitute a worthy composition, as well as in deciding whether or not they achieved their own standard. Intrinsically related to the evaluative process was documentation, because students needed to be able to look back at their process and see its evolution.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

After considering my own general instructional, skill-related and metacognitive goals, I referred to the English 8-10 Instructional Resource Package (1996), to get a clearer sense of the Ministry guidelines, learning objectives, and outcomes. I utilized the BC Ministry of Education’s Grade 10 prescribed learning outcomes for English Language Arts. As well, I consulted the Music and Technology Integrated Resource Packages. A list of the learning objectives that were most relevant to this enterprise is included in Appendix A. The Ministry’s general learning objectives that were most interesting involved students developing their experience with electronic media, developing and utilizing elements of creative expression, revising and exploring a process rather than generating a product, working towards a collective goal, and synthesizing the elements of form and expression to represent their interpretation of a text. Of course, I also had specific learning objectives in mind, based on my songwriting experiences detailed in Chapter 3. These are outlined in Appendix B (Unit Plan Learning Objectives). With my general instructional goals articulated, and my learning objectives refined, in light of the Ministry’s learning outcomes and my initial teaching experiences, I began to search for an activity that would promote these outcomes.
Designing Activities: Garage Band Shakesongs

With the release of the Garage Band software application by Apple in 2004, I finally had a tool that would help me teach Shakespearean song the way I wanted to. The connotations of the software’s title are clear to anyone with a rock music background: Garage Band allows individuals to do what they may have done in the garage as a teenager – make music, undisturbed by unappreciative others – so it seemed a natural fit for my secondary students. The program came free and pre-loaded with Apple Macintosh computers, and a reasonable number of these were at the school where I taught, so student access would not be a problem. Perusing the company’s educational Web site, I saw a lesson plan entitled Garage Band Poetry. The idea was simple enough: students would compose their own poems and set them to music using the Garage Band software. I immediately considered applying this technique to Shakespearean songs. Initially, that was the extent of my idea, but the more I investigated, the more I became convinced that this could be a full-fledged multimedia experience, with students adding stills and/or moving images to their Shakesongs and, most importantly, creating multiple versions of the same song. As Neil Postman (1993) wrote, “Every technology is both a burden and a blessing; not either-or, but this-and that” (p. 5); therefore, a teacher’s decision to utilize a new piece of technology in the classroom should be based on whether or not the perceived benefits outweigh the deficits (p. 9). In other words, “when we admit a new technology to the culture, we must do so with our eyes wide open” (Postman, p. 7). Examining my instructional goals and learning objectives, I considered how I would address them with this new activity.

The software allowed students to overdub limitless tracks of audio, combining voices, instruments, and percussion as they chose. As well, the learning curve was
relatively gradual – the interface was not complicated to master. Best of all, students had a library of music loops from which to choose, including pre-sampled snatches of guitar, percussion, and other sounds that students could arrange and layer. All of these aspects suited my goal of accommodating varying skill levels and allowing students to “develop imaginative or creative responses to share their ideas” (English IRP, p. 60). Since this was a first attempt, no models of student-produced Shakesongs were available; however, examples of other student works had been created with the program, from “composer raps” (raps about the lives of famous composers), to other poetry projects. The potential existed to take an existing model by a famous composer, or myself, and “sample” it into the program as part of the new performance. By beginning with a variety of small projects to familiarize students with the software and some simple assignments, I hoped that they could build confidence in their own creative abilities without feeling overwhelmed.

The computer offered the potential for students to revise their work and edit it; therefore, the focus was on process rather than performance. I believed that electronic media would allow students to try different approaches to the same line of text without erasing previous attempts, making them more willing to engage in a variety of interpretations and to “consider more than one interpretation of different communications” (English IRP, p. 60). If textual variations arose, such as the dilemma I encountered when setting Ophelia’s song, students had an opportunity to explore an alternate version of the song text or to create an alternate musical setting without dismantling their first attempt. One resource that was extremely useful in exploring textual variances was Michael Best’s Internet Shakespeare Editions (Best, 2005). The site publishes high quality texts and multimedia materials of relevance to Shakespeare
studies, and presents multiple quarto and folio versions for comparison. Also, the possibility existed of building a component into the assignment that would ask for multiple versions or "remixes" of the same Shakesong. Accordingly, I could ask the students for several mixes of "Under the Greenwood Tree" that varied in tone and mood. Further, because students could save their music, they could work on compositions over several periods rather than having to recreate them from scratch every class, encouraging them to "revise and edit their communication to improve content" (IRP, p. 68). Best of all, students could save multiple versions of the song in various stages of development, to show the nature of the process. Again, my plan was to have the students focus on process rather than product.

The deficits of using the software that were anticipated were as follows. First, the novelty factor, while exciting, had to be channeled effectively. Another issue that could be construed as a benefit or a deficit, depending on one's perspective, was the element of choice: students now had the ability to make multiple versions/interpretations, but such choice also could prevent them from making tough artistic decisions and committing themselves to a particular approach or vision for their work. In my experience, students sometimes "hedged their bets" by producing two versions of a work, only to discover that neither interpretation was understood by the audience in the way anticipated (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1946).

**Garage Band Shakesongs**

The unit that I finally designed took approximately three weeks and involved many aspects of Shakespearean song, from historical perspectives, to the composition process. All of the assignments were criterion-referenced and students were given an opportunity to self-evaluate. For an outline of the Unit Plan, as well as Evaluation
Rubrics and Standards, see Appendices B and C. I used the Garage Band Shakesongs Unit with a Grade 10 English class that consisted of a mixed population of male and female students with a wide range of abilities. The class also contained a sizable portion of English as a second language (ESL) students. All of the students were unfamiliar with Shakespeare; in fact, in most cases, students were encountering his work for the first time. Classes were 75 minutes in length. The students were broken up into groups of 3, as we had a class of 27 and only 9 computers. We had been working on the play *As You Like It* for two weeks, and students were now at a point where they knew the basic plot of the play and the major characters. I decided to use the songs from *As You Like It* as a gateway to exploring the themes, characters, and settings of the play. In the course of teaching the Garage Band Shakesongs Unit, I found that many of the same issues I encountered as a songwriter were also of interest to the students, and these became key topics for questioning and debate as they progressed with their own compositions. In the ensuing section, I detail some of the lessons that provided intriguing topics for further study. I wish to emphasize, however, that this is not an experimental study. What follows is a reflection on my own teaching practices – practices which extended out of research and musical exploration of text undertaken in the context of my own composition process.

**Classroom Highlights**

**Effect of Instrumentation on Mood and Tone**

Instrumentation, at its core, involves the relationship between musical timbre – the distinct quality of a musical sound – and its ability to evoke emotion. Gabrielsson and Lindstrom (2001) suggest a scientific explanation: tones with many harmonics or
partials may evoke anger, fear, activity, or surprise, while tones with few partials may suggest boredom, happiness, or sadness (p. 241). The precise cause of the relationship between timbre and emotional response remains unknown, but it is nevertheless clear that the associations are related to the listener's own internal biases and cultural background. For example, when Hindustani music was judged by Western ears, listeners associated stringed instruments with feelings of anger (Balkwill & Thompson, 1999); in comparison, Western listeners perceived the violin (as utilized in much Western art music) to express sadness (Behrens & Green, 1993). While none of the aforementioned studies are conclusive, my own students became interested in instrumentation and its emotional effects early on in our unit.

The purpose of the first part of the Garage Band Shakesong Unit was to get students making music and feeling comfortable with the software. I began by having the students input existing songs and melodies into the program. As a prerequisite, students were familiarized with how to read music notation in treble clef and how to identify the notes on a piano keyboard (Garage Band's interface is a virtual piano keyboard that students "play" with a mouse). Students were given a diagram of the piano keyboard to label and keep as a reference. Originally, I had intended to give the class an Elizabethan tune to input into Garage Band as their trial run, but instead opted for something simple and familiar: "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." The children's song proved to be a good confidence builder for the students. I had anticipated that learning the software, combined with the difficulty of interpreting music notation and locating it on a piano keyboard would take at least two class sessions, but by the end of the first class most of the groups had finished inputting "Twinkle Twinkle" and were asking me for other music to input (the chorus of "Twinkle Twinkle" filled the room). Their enthusiasm
for this activity seemed boundless. They also began to play their songs with different instrument sounds, suggesting that they were ready to consider the effect of instrumentation in their musical arrangements.

I then gave them a choice between two Elizabethan tunes: "Greensleeves" and "Heart's Ease." I had avoided these tunes in the initial lesson because they were longer, more complicated, and less familiar. I played recordings of both songs done with period instruments, as well as an Elizabethan dance tune, "Green Garters," performed by the Deller Consort. Most of the students opted for "Greensleeves" because they had heard it previously and therefore knew the rhythm. (Indeed, "Greensleeves" remains the most popular song of the Elizabethan period surviving to the present day. Shakespeare mentions it twice in The Merry Wives of Windsor, in Act Two, Scene One and Act Five, Scene Five.) The use of the "Heart's Ease" and "Greensleeves" melodies proved to be an excellent segue into a discussion of Elizabethan instrumentation, including period instruments such as the cittern, lute, recorder, virginal and viol, as well as the concept of the "broken" consort. From the outset, it was fascinating that the students wanted to recreate the instrumentation of the period rather than simply inputting the melody into their computer and have it play back with a generic midi piano sound. They recognized that instrumentation played a key role in the mood and atmosphere of dramatic music. The students' desire to be authentic was so impressive that I went back to one of my own songs and re-thought the instrumentation. The result was not merely a new arrangement of my existing setting of Oberon's song from A Midsummer Night's Dream, but an entirely different musical setting, replete with electronic reproductions of recorder, harp, viols and harpsichord (CD Track 25). This second setting of the song
was different from the first attempt, which had been accompanied solely by piano (CD Track 29).

Undoubtedly, the new setting was no less authentic, in terms of genuine period instrumentation, but had a stronger musical rationale. Now, the harp and harpsichord were used to represent the fairy world, while the recorder, viols, and piano represented human existence. As well, the addition of instrumentation permitted a reconsidering of the vocal performance – voices, after all, were instruments too – and I reassigned much of the song text to other characters besides Oberon, including Titania and her retinue of Fairies. Adding characters, in turn, affected the music; I decided to introduce a stately, slow-moving melodic line to represent Oberon and Titania's commanding status, while the Fairies received a more fluid, fast-moving line to suggest their ethereal nature. Such choices were, of course, arbitrary, but consistent, and gave the song more cohesion.

The listener can respond well to this, much as a viewer might subconsciously respond to a choice of color scheme in the art direction of a film.

By the middle of the class period, most of the groups had finished inputting "Greensleeves" and used various instruments to convey their ideas and moods. In many cases, the students set up binary oppositions, where one association of a sound depended on a direct contrast with its opposite. For example, one setting of "Under the Greenwood Tree" used electric guitars to represent the urban world and acoustic guitar sounds to represent the rural landscape. Another group took a character approach, using a fiddle sound to represent the rustic characters and happy noblemen, and a solitary flute to represent Jaques, whom they perceived as a lonely, isolated individual. As with my own instrumentation, these were arbitrary choices based on the students' own cultural biases and experience, but they had a logic that was undeniable to the
intended audience of their peers. I had not anticipated that the students would accomplish their orchestrations so quickly, so I expanded the parameters of the assignment by encouraging each group to produce an alternate arrangement of their song utilizing different instrumentation. The alternate arrangements also offered the students an opportunity to explore the music loops (digitally sampled musical motifs and rhythm patterns) of Garage Band, expanding their sonic possibilities.

**Logopoeia, Phanopoeia, and Melopoeia**

Jane Hirshfield (1997) reminds us that poetry can express the inexpressible, in which the “conceptual mind and the inexpressible presence of things become one” (p. 32). Teachers often teach character, setting, and theme as if these were concrete elements to be found, rather than textual constructions that result from interaction between factors, and which may be interpreted and rediscovered on every new reading of the text. Songs, because of their coupling of text with music, allow students to see how the melopoeia (rhythm and sound) of a text combine with its phanopoeia (imagery related to imagination) and logopoeia (intellectual content), to create the substance of character, theme, and setting (which includes locality and time). Music makes visible those contextual aspects that are largely hidden from students – time, rhythm/metre, form, and tone – thus allowing them to deal with abstract concepts in a more concrete fashion.

For this lesson, the class was introduced to the texts of two songs from *As You Like It*, “Under the Greenwood Tree” and “Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind.” We read through the scenes in which both songs were presented (Act Two, Scene Five and Act Two, Scene Six, respectively), discussing at length the character of Jaques, who plays a prominent role in both scenes and articulates several of the main ideas of the play. At
this point, I decided to play recordings of the songs. I began with my own settings of "Under the Greenwood Tree" and "Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind" (CD Tracks 6 and 14), followed by other historical adaptations, including the Thomas Arne version of "Under the Greenwood Tree" (1740), and Roger Quilter's "Blow Blow" Opus 6, No. 3 (1905) (Track 26). The immediate result was that the song text was highlighted for the students – they began to talk in their groups about the song as a distinct entity, rather than as simply more text to be analyzed. I believe that this recognition of the song text as a distinct entity is the result of a response to musical form; specifically, the song form, which is small and compact enough to be recognized by students without them becoming overwhelmed. This is strictly my own hypothesis; studies in musical form indicate that global musical structure is a much less influential aspect of musical expression in comparison to elements such as tempo or pitch (Konecni & Karno, 1994). Nevertheless, I believe the consequence of perceiving the song text as an integral yet separate part of the scene motivated the students to revisit the surrounding text and ask more questions about the dramatic function of the song in the play.

The students also became more conscious of the element of time and the ability of songs to stretch or condense time for the audience. Music, after all, is a time-based art, as John Cage pointed out so eloquently in his 4′33″ (1952). (In this famous avant-garde piece, composer John Cage sits at a piano with a stopwatch for 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence. Of course, the piece is not really silent; Cage plays with the audience/performer relationship by making the audience aware of themselves and the ambient noises of the performance hall.) There was recognition on the part of the students that musical time was somehow different from the hours, minutes, and seconds of Pacific Standard Time, because musical time had the unique property of
being able to speed up stage time, slow it down, or even make time seem to stand still. Another benefit of the students hearing the song text as music was the way in which this presentation contributed to their understanding of locality. Both “Under the Greenwood Tree” and “Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind” localize differing aspects of the Forest of Arden in As You Like it. The students began to use more specific words like utopia and paradise to describe the settings, and they seemed to recognize the locality as another character in the play. For example, some of the students listed comparisons between the harshness of winter in the Forest of Arden, depicted in “Blow Blow,” and the more pastoral setting of “Under the Greenwood Tree,” recognizing the contrast between the two songs.

In terms of character, Jaques is usually assessed in terms of his intellectual contributions to the play, but in the song “Under the Greenwood Tree” his ironical third verse reveals as much about his character as his philosophical musings. (I will return to this thought in this chapter’s concluding section on tone and mood.) Theme is always difficult to teach, but the students could connect with the character of Jaques through the songs, identifying many thematic ideas in his words and attitudes that they felt were mirrored in the song texts. All in all, I felt that the introduction of the musical settings was a positive step that made the dramatic function of the song texts more tangible for the students, much as seeing a live performance of a Shakespeare play gives students a perception different from reading the text.

**Key, Rhythm, Tempo, and Text Underlay: Mood and Tone**

The activities discussed previously were largely devoted to encouraging students to consider possible dramatic functions of the text relating to the literary elements of character, theme, and setting. I next wanted to concentrate more fully on musical
aspects by having students consider and develop criteria for what they considered a "good" composition or musical setting of a Shakespearean song text, and having them consider more fully the elements of expression relating to mood and tone. I began by defining some musical terms for the students, including key, rhythm, tempo (speed), and text underlay. I then played my own setting of "Under the Greenwood Tree" (CD Track 6), set in G major, followed by composer William Walton's version of the same song (CD Track 9) set in G Minor, asking students to pay close attention to the musical elements. The class was particularly fascinated with the notion of mode as it affected the mood/atmosphere of a song. Most agreed that the Walton setting of the song made it seem much more somber in tone, though the text was identical. As another example, I played my own version of "Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind" (CD Track 14) set in G Minor, followed by composer Roger Quilter's version (CD Track 26) of the same song Opus 6 No. 3 (performed by Welsh baritone Bryn Terfel on the album Silent Noon). Once again, students generally found my own version to be more melancholy than Quilter's, which alternates between various keys (technically, in C Minor but it generally stays in the relative major key [Eb] throughout.) I emphasized to the students that notions of associating particular keys with a mood or state of mind were largely conditioned, and that in other cultures, these distinctions might not apply. Certainly, much more can be said on the notion of key, but as an initial introduction to the subject, I did not want to confuse students by introducing too many exceptions to the traditional conventions of Western European music. This would certainly be worthwhile to explore further in future classes.

Other important musical elements that students felt affected their interpretation of a song text were rhythm and tempo (speed of the music). While these are actually two
separate elements, most students did not make a distinction between the two. The general consensus, as mentioned earlier, was that my version of “Blow Blow” was more somber than the Quilter setting, not only due to key, but also partly due to its slower tempo and fluid rhythm of undulating arpeggios in the accompaniment. Interestingly, scholars (Hevner 1937; Juslin 1997; Scherer & Oshinsky 1977) consider tempo one of the most important factors influencing emotional expression in music. Juslin’s (1997) summary of studies on tempo suggests that fast tempos are usually associated by listeners with excitement, activity, joy, or anger, while slow tempos tend to suggest serenity, dignity, sadness, boredom, or even disgust (p. 239). Of course, tempo, like many other aspects of music, is relative to what is going on around it. For example, a passage of music in 4/4 time at 120 beats per minute with only one pitch per bar would not seem terribly fast, while the same passage, played with 16 pitches/notes per bar (as in some electronic and minimalist music), would seem incredibly rapid. Tempo, then, is contextual and largely a matter of perception.

Playing the songs opened up discussion about musical interpretation of the text that was not anticipated and, for a change, the class was asking me questions instead of vice versa. For example, my decision to set the third stanza of “Under the Greenwood Tree” was questioned by the students, who noticed its absence in the Arne version. I explained that these lines were assigned to Jaques and some question existed as to whether they were spoken or sung. We also discussed the difference in tone between the initial two stanzas and the third, which was now more evident as a result of my musical setting. Similarly, in “Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind,” the irony of the lyrics was more apparent in a musical version. After hearing my fairly straightforward rendition of the song, the students immediately picked up on the contrast in folk singer Joe Hiller's
very happy major key rendition of the song on his *Bard Americana* album (1998). Some of the students attributed the contrast to a deliberate attempt at irony, while others argued that it was simply a bad setting of the song, which paid no attention to the content of the lyric. In this case, music was effective in assisting students with detecting the mood/tone of a text in a way that conventional analysis could not.

In introducing the concept of text underlay, I used my own chorus of "Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind" as an example. Here, I had set the words "heigh-ho" to three notes and elongated the "heigh" syllable. Conversely, Quilter assigns the same words two pitches in rapid succession. The consensus seemed to be that elongating the syllables made the tune sound more plaintive than did short rapid-fire syllables. The students also noticed differences in pronunciation (Bryn Terfel uses the pronunciation for "wind" that was common before the Great Vowel Shift, pronouncing it to rhyme with "kind"), and debated my change from "heigh-ho" to "hi-ho." Some of the students liked Terfel's attempt at restoring the original rhyme, while others found it disconcerting. (I speak of the "original" rhyme here in reference to the way in which this vowel sound would have been pronounced prior to the "Great Vowel Shift," a large-scale modification of English language pronunciation in the 15th and 16th centuries whereby long vowels shifted upwards [i.e., the short "eh" became the long "aye"] [Pyles & Algeo, 1993]).

At this point, I gave the students some time in their groups and asked them to formulate a list of criteria that they felt a 'good' musical setting of Shakespearean song text should have. I found their discussions reflected, in a large degree, the rules of interpretations I had set for myself in composing songs:

- Key – should be appropriate to the mood of the music and should change with a significant change in mood
• Melody – should be memorable and easy to hum, but not boring or repetitive

• Rhythm – should match the natural rhythm of the text (i.e., if the text seems jumpy or excitable, the rhythm should reflect that feeling; if the text is reflective, the rhythm should be less frenetic)

• Tempo – in general, faster tempos should be utilized for “happy’ songs; slower tempos for melancholy songs

• Instruments – appropriate instrumentation should be used to reflect the mood of the song

• Pitches – high notes create excitement and should be used on the most important words

• Text Underlay – must be set in such a way that important words are emphasized and the vocal line is physically comfortable for the singer

The students also talked about text underlay. Most of the students agreed that underlay was important, but could not come up with a set of “rules” to govern it, other than to say that unimportant words should not be allocated too many pitches/notes. Some students questioned the whole notion of governing art with rules, arguing that any regulations were an infringement on personal response and interpretation. Certainly, these issues (authority, interpretation, rules governing art) were topics I wanted to raise with the students, and I was pleased that they brought them into the discussion, independently. By this point, I felt I had achieved my goal of encouraging students to consider some of the musical elements that affect mood and tone when setting a text to music.
Singing Shakespeare: Music and Memory

In my experience as a music teacher, getting adolescents to sing in public can be difficult. Part of the student reluctance seems to be perpetuated by the influence of the modern mass media. Similar to the airbrushed images of fashion models and celebrities that many teenagers wish to imitate, the sounds of modern music are highly produced, technically altered and almost impossible to recreate in a performing environment outside a recording studio. When students hear their own music alongside the professional creations, they often feel self-conscious about their own efforts.

Nevertheless, home recording software like *Garage Band* has in some sense put music making back in the hands of individuals. The students had already seen that they could construct and record their own musical arrangements of tunes. The next step was to convince them that their own singing could and should be a part of this form of music-making. Part of the challenge was to get the class to differentiate between the public images of particular singers, bands, and genres of music and the technical aspect of the actual music-making.

We began our activity by listening to examples of different singing styles – from opera, to pop, to R&B, to heavy metal. We talked a bit about what all these singers shared in common—elements such as phrasing, pronunciation, diction, breathing, and interpretation of the lyric. We also discussed how the musical styles differed, in terms of both vocal technique and cultural origins. I wanted to free the students from the notion that one musical style was “superior” to another and to have them develop their own criteria for what constituted “good” singing. Some of the students argued that technical criteria such as singing on pitch and clearly pronouncing the words were stylistic choices that singers make, while others argued that these were the basis of good
singing, because not being able to understand the words limited their emotional effect, while singing flat (off pitch, out of tune) in any circumstance was distracting to the listener and showed a lack of ability. Of course, in many kinds of art music, singing "off key" would be acceptable, so the exercise was really about students developing their own criteria and being faithful to those criteria, rather than about determining absolute principles.

Next, I divided the students into groups of six students each. Fortunately, I had a few students in this class with some piano lessons and music reading ability. (This is not always the case, however – in completing this exercise with other classes, I have simply provided each group with a CD of the song in question and encouraged them to learn "by ear." Musical ability is not a pre-requisite for these activities.) In this case, however, I gave students both a CD of the song and a notated sheet music, which the group leader could follow and use as a teaching aid. The song I had chosen for them to learn was my own setting of "Under the Greenwood Tree," which they had heard previously. After giving the students about 20 minutes in which to practice in small groups, I recalled everyone and we did a class run-through of the song, with myself accompanying on the piano. This proved to be modestly successful, and we did several more run-throughs before breaking. I then asked the students to write a reflection describing their experience of singing the song in which they listed their criteria for good singing and stated how singing had affected their understanding of the text.

As an unintended consequence of the singing session, students memorized the text. For many of the students, this proved to be a great confidence booster, and had other positive repercussions as well, which I will discuss shortly.
Writing The Shakesongs

The aforementioned activities could be as far as a teacher wants to go with a class, in terms of Shakespearean song, particularly with the severe time constraints of many high school English programs. Nevertheless, I wanted to take the concept to its logical conclusion, and have students write song settings of their own. Until this point, the students had largely been listening to the music of others, getting comfortable with making their own music and singing, and learning how to use the Garage Band software. At this juncture, they had the opportunity to put what they had learned to use and to make their own musical settings of a Shakespearean song. Originally, the students were to work in pairs, but the number of computers did not permit this computer-student ratio, and so they worked in groups of three. In retrospect, three was actually a better number – it gave the students more opportunity to bounce ideas off one another and avoided a creative deadlock if two partners could not agree with each other. It also increased the chance that one person would be able and willing to sing. Singing was not a compulsory element of the students’ musical setting of the song text, but I encourage it. Students were also given an option to use voice-over narration of the text, accompanied by music in lieu of singing. The actual song length was limited to five minutes. For a copy of the original assignment sheet, see Appendix B.

Many of the students were already familiar with video editing software such as i-Movie, as well as digital photo programs like i-Photo, which I hoped to integrate into the assignment after the initial compositional process was complete. The students spent a total of three class periods developing their music, during which time I supervised and gave feedback on their works-in-progress. Most of my feedback revolved around trying to get the students to capitalize, as much as possible, on any imagery in the song texts,
feeling that this would help them when it came to adding visuals. I did not insist on any particular musical style, for example, a restriction to Elizabethan style music, nor did I insist on any specific instrumentation (though I made suggestions based on whatever musical style the students seemed to be pursuing). My other major concern was to remind the students to be faithful to their own criteria for what they considered a “worthy” composition. As soon as the students’ compositions were at a stage where their artistic direction was clear, I encouraged one or two members of the group to begin collecting stills or filming images to accompany the music.

**Multiple Interpretations: Alternate Versions and Textual Variances**

One of the goals of the Grade 11 English IRP (1996) is for students to “demonstrate a willingness to take a tentative stance, tolerate ambiguity, explore multiple perspectives, and consider more than one interpretation” (p. 2). One of the earliest meanings of “interpret” is “to expound the meaning of” (Oxford English Dictionary Online 2005, ¶ 1). Not until the 1800s did the word take on the connotation of an *individual* artistic rendering (i.e., personal interpretation). Challenging students to take up the learning outcome iterated in the IRP required finding different settings of the song texts that clearly illustrated to the students the breadth of interpretation possible. Essentially, my view of the song texts was *deconstructive*, in accordance with the views of philosophers such as Derrida, who believed that any truth expressed in a particular language is affected by that language (Bonnycastle, p. 95). As Leggo (2002) reminds us, “There can be no univocal, authoritative response to a text. There is always something more. Deconstruction encourages a multiplicity of responses” (Leggo, 2002, p. 170).
One of my original goals had been to have the students produce multiple versions of the same song. Initially, I abandoned this goal in the assignment parameters, feeling that we were too pressed for time to accommodate it; however, the students spontaneously made their own alternate versions of their songs. Working in groups may also have contributed to their desire to express different interpretations and points of view. I also attribute the alternate versions to our previous lessons, in which the students had clearly seen that more than one way was possible for setting a Shakespearean song to music. Another factor may have been the decision to accompany the songs with images; when students began setting images to their music, they recognized that some images were suitable for their music and others were not. Often, the students became tied to a particular visual image or shot and composed the music to suit the image, rather than vice-versa. In their book *Engaging Minds*, Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2000) point out a similar phenomenon when asking students to write poems based on their own photographs, stating:

> What students noticed as they created their pictures and text and presented them to classmates was the strong interconnection between image and word... When they considered both [words and images] they used visual and verbal skills interacting with each other to gain a fuller understanding of the book. (p. 29)

The students took three additional periods to add images to their music and edit those images. In some cases, their alternate versions of their compositions were completely different arrangements; in other instances, they were rearrangements or remixes of the same material.

As noted earlier, several versions exist of a number of Shakespeare plays and much debate has taken place about which are "authoritative" – or even whether or not it is possible or desirable to establish authoritative texts. The activity of comparing variant
texts goes well beyond the Grade 10 learning outcomes, relating more closely to Grade 12 learning outcomes such as “Interpreting and synthesizing information from more than one source” and “Interpreting ambiguities in written, oral or visual works . . . ” (English Language Arts IRP, p. 5). Certainly, introducing students to textual variants can be a beneficial experience. Luce-Kapler maintains that “the vital quality of an interpretation is that it enables one to draw connections from one set of experiences to another” (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p. 91). Students undertaking a similar task will have to confront numerous historical musical adaptations of the songs by composers of all schools and abilities, multiple stage and screen adaptations, and varying versions of the song texts, all of which provoke conflict and critical decision-making of the highest order.

**Film and Television: Re-cognizing Shakespeare**

When I first began teaching Shakespeare through song, I avoided film and television interpretations of Shakespeare for fear of compromising the originality of my students’ work; however, in progressing with the project, I realized that this was inconsistent. Alternate versions of song settings had informed my own compositions: likewise, exposure to alternate versions could be useful in broadening students’ perspectives. As Coursen (1997) points out in *Teaching Shakespeare with Film & Television*, “Students who are shown two or three different versions of the same moment in a given script can see some of the options in that moment and how the decision has been conditioned by the medium in which the production is occurring” (p. 13).

In addition, like film and television, songs can be used to view modern-day issues through the lens of Shakespeare’s work, or to view Shakespeare’s work from a modern
perspective. Films such as *10 Things I Hate About You* (Junger, 1999) and *Romeo and Juliet* (Lurhman, 1996) explore both options, looking backward while imposing modern sensibilities on Shakespeare's work. As Ariane Balizet (2004) explains,

This particular experience can be summed up as what is termed *recognition*: in this way, these films [teen oriented Shakespeare films] fit a Shakespearean lens over the modern world depicted on screen, offering an understanding of the high school prom through a familiar framework of Shakespeare's names and themes.... The opposite perspective is equally important. A film like [Baz Lurhmann's] *Romeo & Juliet* literally re-cognizes Shakespeare; that is, it uses a contemporary setting as a means to know again the play at the heart of the film. (p. 123)

Similarly, in the performance of a song, students have an opportunity to highlight the text in new ways, or to address contemporary issues within the framework of the plays. For example, students who produced rap and hip-hop versions of the Shakesongs were able to loop the music, play it backwards, change the speed, and deconstruct the text in numerous ways. Alternately, they were able to use the rap genre in combination with Elizabethan English to address modern concerns. Going through this process changed my view of Shakespeare: I became much more willing to experiment with the text and to take chances. After working with the students and seeing the ways in which they freely experimented with Shakespeare's song texts, I came to a new appreciation of the value of multiple interpretations.
CHAPTER 5. MOMENTS OF PROCESS

He hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book. He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink: his intellect is not replenished.

— Love’s Labour’s Lost (5.1.74)

My purpose in researching Shakespeare and song was in part to see if multimodal learning involving music indeed enhances students’ engagement with and comprehension of Shakespearean drama. My original research questions, as outlined in the introduction, were as follows:

- What is the history of Shakespeare and song?
- What questions and issues arise when one engages in the process of considering possible settings for Shakespeare’s song texts?
- What are the benefits of teaching Shakespeare to adolescents focusing on an activity of composing settings to the song texts?
- How did the act of composition change my own approach to and understanding of the plays?

Having addressed all of these questions to some extent in the previous sections, I now wish to highlight a few key points with respect to the affordances of teaching and learning Shakespeare through song: 1) music and memory; 2) context and synthesis; 3) imagery; 4) multimodality; 5) tone and mood; and 6) key and mode.

Music and Memory

Heaven and earth,
Must I remember? — Hamlet (1.2.142-43)
One of the first things I noted in using the Shakesong method — something that I
had not observed in classes I taught without using song — was that students
unintentionally memorized the song text. I do not consider memorization to be a
significant accomplishment in itself, but the subsidiary benefits of memorization —
increased ownership of the text, increased student confidence, and recognition of the
song text as a distinct entity within the play — have significant implications for teachers.
Many teachers seek ways to boost student confidence and to give them a feeling of
ownership of Shakespeare's text, and some assign memorization activities, such as
memorizing a soliloquy or acting out a scene from memory for these purposes. Singing
and listening to music is a useful way to approach this activity.

The link between music and memory has long been of interest to researchers,
but exactly how music contributes to memorization is not entirely understood. Basic
models of memory (which are all simply metaphorical) divide auditory memory into three
areas: echoic, short-term, and long-term (Snyder, 2000). Sound is initially processed
through echoic memory, which only lasts about 250 milliseconds before it is forgotten or
transferred to short-term memory (Massaro & Loftus, 1996, pp. 73-80). Short-Term
Memory (STM) can be defined as what is immediately available to conscious
awareness at any given time (Snyder, 2000, p. 51). The number of different elements
that can persist simultaneously in STM is, on average, seven (Snyder, p. 54); however,
short-term memory can be extended through the use of chunking: that is, consolidating
previous small groups of associative patterns into larger elements (Snyder, p. 54). The
length of such chunks is typically quite short (3-5 seconds is the average length of most
sentences and phrases), and therefore limited. Chunks, in turn, can form larger units in
memory (Baars, 1988, p. 37). Musical phrases are an example of such hierarchical
chunking, where numerous previous patterns are combined to form a larger unit. Once a pattern exceeds the limits of STM, it must be handled by long-term memory (LTM). LTM works on some of the same associative principles as does chunking; one long-term memory or pattern is typically cued by another memory with which it has formed an association (Snyder, 2000 p. 70). According to Fuster (1995, p. 11), long-term memories may be permanent; when we “forget” an LTM, what we have actually lost is the associative connection or cue for recalling the memory.

Despite the fact that we sang some songs only a few times in class, many students remembered the songs and the accompanying texts, suggesting that musical settings of text are extremely effective at producing the kind of associative long-term memory cues that result in retention over an extended time. More significantly, as a result of the involuntary memorization, the students felt that they had ‘mastered’ Shakespeare. When students feel comfortable with the text, they are more willing to engage in other activities as well, such as acting out scenes from the play, reciting passages in front of the class, and engaging in discussion about the meaning of the text. For some of the students, who were ESL learners, getting up in front of the class and saying anything, let alone reciting Shakespeare, was a significant achievement and appeared to increase their feeling of self-esteem and their overall confidence in their ability to master English.

Nevertheless, the connection of music with memory is not only a technical process, but an emotional one as well. At least three schools of thought pertain to music and emotion: One suggests that music inherently produces emotional responses, while another maintains that music simply represents emotions that the listener imposes on the music (Scherer & Zentner, 2001, p. 361). A third school suggests that music
provides an associative link to implicit memories – cognitive processes not available to consciousness and not requiring conscious recollection – priming the memory to recall an emotional response to a previous experience (LeDoux, 1996, pp. 200-204). In such cases, music is used to help the brain recall a memory of an emotion; in other words, a memory of a memory.

Of course, students listening to Shakespearean songs had many opportunities to link to implicit emotional memories through the content of the song text, the various musical styles and examples they were exposed to in class, their own choices of timbres and instrumentation in their compositions, and later, the accompanying images they added to their own compositions. In addition, there were emotions evoked that I had attempted to convey to the students through the music, as well as emotional content that the music itself conveyed to the students, apart from anything I had intended, through expressive elements such as tempo, pitch, and rhythm. Grafted onto these emotional memories were yet two more layers: the emotional experience of sitting in class and listening to the music, as well as later recollections of that experience. To sum up, music seems to provide a powerful cue for resurrecting past emotional experiences, and the strong link between memory and emotion suggests that music that is emotionally stirring will be memorable as well. As we form a mental representation of a piece of music, each subsequent performance is informed by the technical nuances and emotional layers of those that preceded it, suggesting that music is a powerful force for remembering both the intellectual and emotional content of a text.

Dramatic Function, Context, and Synthesis

Context is defined as “the whole structure of a connected passage regarded in its bearing upon any of the parts that constitute it” (Simpson, 2005, ¶ 1). Writing
Shakespearean songs proved to be an involved task that highlighted the importance of context. One of the first challenges was to fully understand the lyric of the song in the context of the dramatic scene. The Grade 10 English Language Arts IRP (1996, p. 58) suggests that students should be able to "interpret the main ideas, events, or themes of a variety of novels, stories, other print material, and electronic media." In attempting to find the main ideas and themes of the songs, I began to realize how well integrated the songs were with the dramatic action. For example, out of its dramatic context, "Under the Greenwood Tree" seems like a simple, charming English song; however, when inserted into the context of Jaques' philosophical musings, it takes on the quality of a diatribe against a materialistic urban society that has mistakenly idealized the joys of rural life.

After hearing the texts in musical settings, the students were better able to relate them to character, locality, time, and theme. In part, I think the students' improved understanding of these elements was related to an increased focus on the surrounding contextual material created by the artificial boundaries imposed by the music. For instance, when first reading through the song texts, students have a hard time identifying thematic material in the songs, and few can link the themes they found in the song texts to the overarching themes of *As You Like It*. After hearing the musical settings of the song texts, the students were making stronger connections to thematic elements. I cannot say that the music was directly responsible, especially since the students listened to a number of different musical arrangements besides my own. The increased connections may not be attributable to the music itself, but rather to the close reading that the music encouraged the students to do. In essence, the music highlighted the passage for the students in a way that I could not have done simply by asking
students to read it carefully. As well, particular lines in the song texts were highlighted by formal musical groupings, rhythms, and phrases. The music automatically broke up the song texts into small digestible and memorable chunks. Snyder (2000) speaks of the establishment of grouping boundaries in music as closure. Closure is the quality that makes a musical phrase seem self-contained from another, and therefore easy to remember (p. 33). Various degrees of closure can exist: the ultimate, of course, is the closure we experience as listeners, when tonality is resolved and a piece ends on the tonic (main note) of the key area in which it is written. In music, motion to a harmonic goal that creates such a sense of closure is called a resolution (Aldwell & Schacter, 1989, p. 31). Interestingly, such disparate disciplines as memory research and musical theory use similar terms (closure and resolution) to describe the ordering of patterns into cohesive units.

In many cases, the students recognize that a song develops a particular literary element, such as a specific character or setting of the play, and are able to glean a better understanding of that element as a result. It seems logical that once students gain greater insight into one particular character, locality, or theme, they can utilize this knowledge as a springboard into other aspects of Shakespeare's drama. The implication for teachers is that the songs are plays within the play that often address some of the broad themes of the drama. Also, focusing on the songs removes the distraction of plot and action. Students who are not preoccupied with "what's going on" can devote their attention to other facets of the play that they might otherwise overlook in their desire (or lack of desire, depending on their comfort level with Shakespearean language) to follow the story. Further, songs often occur just before key moments in Shakespeare's drama, and can be used to reflect on the action to come, thus
introducing students to techniques such as foreshadowing, and which can encourage
them to make predictions about the text. The notion of using one component of the play
as a gateway into the play as a whole is not new – Shakespeare instructional methods,
including those espoused in the well-known Folger Library series (O’Brien, 1993),
routinely concentrate on the teaching of famous speeches, soliloquies, and passages as
a means of introducing students to characterization, theme, or setting. In using song,
however, teachers have the advantage of presenting something to students that is
immediately entertaining and captivating apart from its context in the play, and that also
presents a fully realized performance. Playing a recording of a song in class is similar to
the effect of showing a film clip of an important scene, but with the advantage that the
song is a self-contained unit requiring little immediate explanation for enjoyment. The
memory or “retention” factor cannot be underestimated either; a memorable song will
stay with an individual all day (whether or not it is wanted).

A third area related to synthesis and context, having a beneficial outcome, was the students’ appreciation of historical context. Throughout our Shakespearean song unit, class discussions frequently digressed onto such topics as types of Elizabethan instruments, historical composers of Shakespearean song, boy singers, musical requirements for actors, performing conditions of the public, private and court venues, incidental music, ballads and drinking songs, and the closing stage jigs. Invariably, discussions of music led to discussions of the society that produced the music, and the result of these discussions in my classroom was a deepening of students’ interest in all things Elizabethan. The significance for teachers is that songs can provide a sense of history and tradition for students of Shakespeare, just as they do in many other facets of life. Songs are artifacts of the society that produces them. In hearing “Shakespearean”
music, students come to realize that Elizabethan England is not only a fictional world of the plays, but a real society that existed in time.

In my experience, understanding a song in its dramatic context encourages students to appreciate the component elements that come together to make the play. Studying the songs in context also encourages them to make connections to other songs and speeches in the play in question, which, in turn, allows them to revise their understanding of the play as a whole. Essentially, this is the process of synthesis the composer must go through when writing music for a production. No matter how artful the songs, the composer must be attentive to the possible interpretations of the production; a lack of understanding of the context may result in a song that is aesthetically pleasing but does not advance the dramatic action. When writing a song, I often found that I had to envision the entire scene and how it might be performed. In lieu of an interpretation of my own, I frequently watched film versions to get a sense of how a scene might be staged or how the song could operate in context. Of course, television and film productions each have their distinct limitations; ultimately, I had to make my own choices in regards to interpretation. As Coursen (1997) points out in Teaching Shakespeare with Film and Television:

The space – stage, film, television – defines what can occur within it . . . . Students see the script through production. They see it as a script, full of options and decisions that must be made. The genius of the Shakespeare script is that it was designed to be interpreted – not just presented – by Shakespeare’s company . . . (pp. 12-13)

Researching historical settings of particular song texts frequently aided in understanding context and providing insight into different approaches and interpretations. When exploring settings of Shakespeare’s song texts, students encountered a multiplicity of interpretations and had to reconcile these with their own
personal responses to the song. As a result, their understanding of how the elements of
the play combined to make a whole was expanded as they struggled to form their own
interpretation, in light of an alternate paradigm.

**Imagery**

The third area where I observed more student comprehension and engagement
with the text, compared to classes I had taught without the song-composition unit, was
in students’ ability to engage imagery. After listening to musical settings, I felt the
students in my class were able to more clearly articulate descriptions of locality in *As
You Like It*. I attribute the students’ increased appreciation for the setting to the choice
of the songs we studied in class – “Under the Greenwood Tree” and “Blow Blow Thou
Winter Wind” – both contain a great deal of imagery delineating the play’s setting. It
would be intriguing to see how students would react to the more lyrical and emotional
songs depicted in other texts we did not look at in class, such as Desdemona’s Willow
song.

**Multimodality**

One aspect of multiliteracy is the variability of meaning-making in different
cultural or social contexts; a second aspect is the ability of technology to facilitate
communication and meaning-making in ways that are increasingly *multimodal*. Today’s
students have multiple modes of communication at their disposal, including writing,
music, images, and speech. With the aid of digital tools, contemporary students can
easily interface traditional written-linguistic modes with visual, audio, gestural, and
spatial patterns of meaning. In my experience, the use of music in teaching
Shakespeare resulted in more in-depth responses and a broader approach to these
responses, wherein students used varying modes of communication (writing, images, music, sound effects, graphics, and speech) to convey their ideas. Indeed, I argue that, by its very nature, a response that utilizes a variety of modes of communication is a more in-depth response than one that uses a single medium. Students, in utilizing different modes, may be encouraged to question their assumptions about each medium. As Gunther Kress (2003) states so eloquently, “the world told is a different world to the world shown” (p. 1).

In part, the multimodal responses of students can be attributed to the parameters of the Garage Band Shakesongs Unit, which asked students to use music, text, images, speech, and sound effects in their responses. In most cases, students went beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment. I believe that these in-depth, multimodal responses can be attributed to the nature of music itself. Music is always multidimensional; musical sound has many parameters – key, pitch, rhythm, volume, tempo, loudness – all of which are being processed by the listener simultaneously, and which may be in various stages of completion at any given time (Snyder, 2000, p. 61). In the process of doing their assignments, the students could observe first-hand the interplay between various modes: the original song text that had inspired their music, the music's effect on the song text, the additional meaning conveyed by images added to the music, and the resulting changes in their musical compositions after examining differing images, performances, and instrumentation of the music.

Although mentioned in the previous section, the role of imagery in the assignment cannot be over-emphasized. Adding visual images to the Shakesongs created another layer of interaction that greatly influenced the music produced by the students. As Kress (2003) notes,
...the screen is now the dominant site of texts; it is the site which shapes the imagination of the current generation around communication. The screen is the site of the visual, of the image. (p. 166)

Students were influenced by images that they had photographed or imported from stock sources and made attempts to represent them using the expressive elements of music, including tempo, rhythm, and pitch. In many cases, these interactions appeared to change the students’ interpretations of a song text. Moreover, this did not seem to be a one-way interaction. Music is well documented as having the ability to conjure visual images in the minds of the listener apart from any textual or programmatic associations, a feature that is greatly exploited in music therapy (Bunt & Pavlicevic, 2001, p. 185). In a type of therapy known as Guided Imagery in Music (GIM), the music used is selected on the basis of its potential to evoke these kinds of reactions. As with all musical expression, however, a one-to-one correspondence between musical elements and images does not take place, as Bunt (2000) explains:

This [imagery] does not happen in any simplistic one-to-one symbolic or causal correspondence between one musical gesture and the creation of an image but in an on-going organic and interactive way... is as if the client is experiencing the music at different levels from the surface to the deep structural, reaching into the music to find the level that matches and resonates with the image. (p. 46)

The addition of music to the modes of expression opens up a virtually endless cycle of interactions in which text containing imagery influences musical composition, which, in turn, inspires new images, which then causes us to reinterpret the music in light of these images. The addition of music to literacy opens up a multitude of possibilities beyond the music itself; as Kress notes, “music is analyzed into this digital code just as much as image is, or graphic word, or other modes. That offers the potential to realize meaning in any mode” (Kress, 2003, p. 5).
In addition to the areas already mentioned, some tangible evidence exists for more in-depth and multimodal responses from the students in my Shakesong classes. As mentioned earlier, in the context of my teaching I interpret attempts to go beyond the parameters of an assignment as being a more “in-depth” response. When students provided alternate versions of their Shakesong compositions for which they had not been asked, I felt they were showing greater motivation. As well, the enthusiasm and depth of their written reflections and documentaries of their creative process led me to believe that the songs succeeded in engaging the students’ interest.

Other interesting outcomes of the Shakesong activity were the Shakesong compositions themselves, which constituted multimodal responses to the plays. When we began the unit, I was not entirely sure students would be able to complete the assignment. I had never asked a class to write songs before, and I was uncertain they would be able to do so. The final compositions demonstrated that students had indeed absorbed enough of the musical elements of the song – melody, harmony, and rhythm – to respond effectively. In many cases, the groups also devised their own systems of music notation. These ad hoc musical scores were essentially graphic representations of their compositions, and another sign that students were no longer thinking purely in the written-linguistic mode.

Some of the benefits to students of this multimodal work were apparent in the reflections, self-evaluations, and documentaries they produced. In their reflections, many students demonstrated a Level 4 or 5 response (Worsnop, 2002, p. 97), meaning that they integrated their personal feelings, experiences, and reflections with their understanding of the text. Some of the students were able to make connections with other outside texts, and many connected the song texts within the play to each other
and to the play as a whole. The responses were also metacognitive in quality, as students frequently examined how they had developed a particular melodic idea or chosen instrumentation for a song. Even some of the lower level responses were surprising, with their epistemological tone. Many of the students, in the process of composing their own songs and creating evaluation criteria, had posed questions such as “How do we know what makes a good song?” or “How can we know if we are reflecting the text honestly?” Some of the students, of course, simply paraphrased the text and could not explain their own composing process. This does not mean that they did not benefit from their musical experiences – many of these students demonstrated great creativity and originality in their compositions and in their use of text and image. They merely had not yet reached the stage of being able to examine their own praxis or of translating those responses into the written-linguistic mode. One way to encourage students to reach this stage would be to promote more written reflection throughout the composing process.

Tone and Mood

The emphasis of my third research question (refer to page 9) was on the affordances of the activity of composing settings to the song texts. Specifically, did the activity help students comprehend difficult elements of Shakespeare’s text? The area in which I noted the most dramatic outcome in comprehension was in the students’ understanding of the tone and mood of a song text. In BC, the Grade 10 curriculum states that students should be able to “describe how tone and mood affect the drama of a story, play, or film” (English Language Arts IRP 8-10, 1996, p. 56). In working with music, my students clearly moved beyond the curriculum, discovering for themselves how literary, mood, and tone are created through the compositional process.
Tone is defined in its original musical context as "a musical or vocal sound considered with reference to its quality, as acute or grave, sweet or harsh, loud or soft, clear or dull" (Simpson, 2005, ¶ 1) The word tone can also be defined as "a sound of definite pitch and character, produced by regular vibration of a sounding body; a musical note" (Simpson, ¶ 2). In the 17th century, tone began to appear in non-musical capacities, being applied to the inflection of the human voice, regional accents, and vocal expression. The term mood first appears as a technical term in the writings of the Stoic philosophers, derived from the Latin modus, meaning measure, manner, or method, and was used to refer to categories of logical syllogisms (Simpson, 2005, ¶ 4). In music, the term mood was used interchangeably with mode to refer to the Greek concept of the seven musical modes (scales). By the 19th century, however, the term mood had become associated with heart, feeling, and tumultuous emotion (Simpson, ¶ 1). Clearly, tone and mood were long recognized to begin with technical and intellectual concerns, though resulting in an emotional reaction.

The elements of musical expression that appear to contribute to tone and mood include mode or tonality, pitch, harmony, rhythm, tempo, and timbre. Other lesser elements include volume and dynamics, articulation, and musical form. Of course, viewing the creation of tone and mood as purely a mechanical procedure that utilizes musical elements to evoke emotional responses and drawing a one-to-one correlation between an element and an emotion does not account for the interaction between all of these musical elements. For instance, the notion of tempo relies on the concept of beat, which is itself an "imaginary" underlying pulse superimposed on the music by the composer. As Juslin (2001) states "No factor works in isolation: its effects are dependent on what other factors and levels are present. Music abounds with
interactions . . . " (p. 243). Many of the elements of musical expression are not well understood. For example, little research has been done on how the timbre of different instruments affects emotional response (Juslin, 2001, p. 242), yet the students paid a great deal of attention to this area in the instrumentation of their compositions.

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the Elizabethans had an entire system of musical associations for different instruments, and used such associations to great effect in their theatre music.

Clearly, music facilitates emotional responses, whether they are the students' own (evoked in conjunction with the stylistic features of the text), elicited by the composer through skilled use of musical structures, or inherent in the musical structures themselves. For example, students listening to my setting of "Willow, Willow" were able to identify the sadness and tragic mood of the song text much more easily after hearing the music. Furthermore, some students were even able to identify the song as an example of foreshadowing (predicting Desdemona's eventual doom at the hands of Othello) as a result of hearing the musical setting. What caused this comprehension? In part, I believe that a direct emotional response was occurring to some of the musical decisions I had made when setting the song text: the choice of minor key tonality, the harmony/chord patterns, and melodic direction. The song's minor key is an obvious cue for sadness; as Gabrielssohn and Lindstrom (2001) have shown, minor mode may be associated with sadness from as young as 7-8 years of age (p. 239). The downward sweep of the melody also suggests melancholy (Gerardi & Gerken, 1995). The song is fairly complex, harmonically speaking, venturing into the major mode in some passages and introducing chromatic chords (chords outside of the traditional tonality). In general, complex harmonies are more often associated with anger, sadness, tension, and
unpleasantness (Gabrielsson & Lindstrom, 2001, p. 241). Nevertheless, the song is not particularly slow, even though slow tempos are more often associated with sadness. Apparently, the interaction of the choice of mode, harmony, and melodic direction were more important than choice of tempo in influencing listeners’ perceptions of sadness in this case. As well, the music may have highlighted the passage so that students paid more attention to the surrounding contextual material, such as Desdemona’s discussion with Emilia, which in turn may explain their ability to identify a contextual device like foreshadowing.

Another more complex element related to mood and tone that was initially missed by the students, was irony. In our first readings, most students did not catch the irony in “Under the Greenwood Tree” or “Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind.” Following their listening session, the students became aware that the musical settings sometimes opposed the lyric, making them more aware of ironic elements in the songs. The clearest example of students discovering irony was in “Under the Greenwood Tree.” After hearing Jaques third verse set to music, for example, the class recognized it as a spoof of the earlier verses, and thus picked up on Jaques’ sarcasm. Once the students recognized that Jaques’ verse was not literal, they began re-reading the rest of the song in light of that discovery and were more attuned to ironic contrasts. In general, I do not believe that music has an ironic tone, but I feel that students recognized the incongruence between the music and Jaques’ text in the third verse (in comparison to the music used in the rest of the song), because of the noticeable change in the key and rhythm of the music. The mode of the music in Jaques’ third verse changes from major to minor, and the rhythmic articulations become short and abrupt. Although minor mode can be used to suggest sadness, it can also be used to suggest playfulness, especially
in conjunction with rapid rhythm and *staccato* (short and detached) articulations. (For an excellent example of minor tonality used to suggest whimsy and playfulness rather than sadness, see Mendelssohn's *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream* [1826].) Students recognized that in this third verse the musical setting was not in keeping with a serious song about being under the greenwood tree, and concluded that they could not take Jaques' words at face value. The contrast between music and text, juxtaposed against the surrounding material, highlighted the contrast between expression and meaning that is at the heart of irony.

**Key: Illuminating Tone and Mood**

As this thesis deals in part with music and its relationship to text, I cannot ignore the importance of *key* as a significant element in illuminating the tone of a text. In composing songs, the students found one of their first decisions in choosing a tonality or key area that suited the overall tone and mood of the text as they interpreted it. Interestingly, in music, the terms “pitch” and “tone’ are used virtually synonymously; in music, key is the organizing principle of these pitches and tones. A piece of music is said to be in a given key when all of its pitches relate to one central governing pitch – the pitch that has the same name as the key area – and when the functions of the other pitches derive from *how they relate* to the central pitch/tone (Aldwell & Schacter, 1989, p. 6). To give a brief and somewhat oversimplified example, a song written in the key of C major derives all of its pitches from the C major scale (C, D, E, F, G, A and B) and all of these other pitches gravitate, or resolve, back to the central pitch of C, sometimes called the *tonic*. Many musicians use the term *tonal* to describe any type of music organized around a central pitch or tone. In the 20th century, some avant-garde composers (e.g., Schoenberg, Webern, Cage) attempted to subvert the dominance of
the major/minor system of tonal music, and American Jazz certainly pushes the boundaries and rules of traditional tonality; however, very few types of music can truly be labelled *atonal* (i.e., without a central organizing tone). Most music follows some tone-centered organizational principles (music that does not, plays against the audience’s expectations of form and organization).

Certainly, the association of particular modes and scales with emotions is an old one: In *The Art of Counterpoint*, Gioseffo Zarlino (1558) states that melodies featuring a major scale sound happy and those with a minor scale sound sad (pp. 21-23). While many musicians today would argue that such associations are arbitrary or culturally created, they are nevertheless influential, and audiences clearly respond to tonality and the use of various modal scales within a tonal framework.

In composing my own songs, I utilized the most common Western musical scales – major and minor. In general, I reserved major keys for “happy” song texts, and minor keys for conveying sad, mournful, or mysterious moods. To expand, songs with more cheerful texts, such as "Under the Greenwood Tree" and the “Palmer’s Sonnet,” were composed in a major mode. Songs with a mournful quality, such as “Willow Willow” and “A Plague on Your Houses,” were composed in the minor. Nevertheless, I made exceptions to this rule: Ophelia’s song, “How Should I Your True Love Know,” was composed in C major, even though it seems to be quite a sad song. The juxtaposition of key and text was intended to give the song a poignant quality. Conversely, the pub song, “And Let Me the Canakin Clink,” was composed in A minor, but it has a jazzy burlesque feel to it that is anything but sad and is at times even comical. Perhaps the most interesting exception is Oberon’s song, “Now Until the Break Of Day.” The first version of the song was composed in Bb major, and seems to have the tone of a
bittersweet lullaby. The second version of the song was composed in Bb minor, and has a more magical quality, reflective of the fairy world in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Although it is in a minor key, it seems to be a more cheerful song than the major key version.

Does this mean that the associations of major and minor do not apply under all circumstances? As with other aspects of tone and mood, the *musical conveyance* of tone and mood is largely contextual. Depending on the text, the vocalist, the surrounding material, the characterization, the setting, and the individual listening, a given melody can take on different associations and characteristics. At times, composers can rely on the cliché and allow the audiences’ normal pattern of culturally-produced associations to do the work for them; at other times, it becomes necessary to venture further afield and suggest new associations. Of course, areas of discrepancy will always be found between what the author or composer intended and what the audience perceives. Nevertheless, such an exercise looks at the curriculum in a new way; students must deal with tone and mood not merely as an audience responding to the text, but as composers creating the tone and mood themselves.
FINAL THOUGHTS

No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs
No excuse.

– Theseus to Bottom, A Midsummer Night's Dream (5.1.356-57)

In the preceding two chapters, I attempted to highlight the most significant issues and concepts raised in my classroom as a result of teaching Shakespeare through song, and to theorize them while also providing some practical insights into how they may be applied to the existing school curricula. At this point, I offer some final thoughts on the most significant areas as they relate to my original thesis questions.

The history of song in Shakespeare's dramas involves the contribution of numerous anonymous writers, composers, and actors, all of whom have enriched a repertoire of Shakespearean music through a cumulative process of musical practice and performance tradition. This long and remarkable history reminds us that Shakespearean texts are not fixed, immutable artifacts that may not be questioned; rather, these texts exist in variant editions and have been subject to interpretation by directors, musicians, editors, and scholars for centuries. The range of textual interpretations and adornments available in multiple media is an excellent source for classroom teachers wishing to tackle questions of interpretation, textual variance, authority, and so on.

The composition process raised numerous issues of interest, but the most significant of all was music's ability to evoke emotion. My understanding of Shakespeare's drama changed during the composition process, in part because I became aware of how I was attempting to use the materials of my art (music) to elicit emotion. Further, while I initially perceived myself to be writing original compositions, I
came to realize that many of my materials were derivatives from the repertoire of folk ballads utilized by Elizabethan dramatists, in the sense that I was relying on the musical system, scales, and modes that I was taught in the Western European tradition. Nevertheless, the process required sophisticated interaction with the song texts and afforded me opportunity to learn much about both the nature of those texts and the ways in which music might be employed as a mode of response to text.

From a pedagogical perspective, the benefits of teaching Shakespeare utilizing a musical methodology were many. Some of these included an enriched understanding of dramatic context, character, and setting, synthesis of the various expressive elements of the text, and retention (in memory) of the text. The activity of having students write their own musical settings to song texts gave them an opportunity to encounter many of the issues that I had encountered as a composer, which proved valuable for classroom discussion. These included such topics as authenticity, authority, textual variance, authorial intention, and what constitutes artistic originality. Tone and mood, and the ability of music to evoke emotion in the listener, also proved to be of considerable interest to both my students and myself.

The process of writing musical settings to Shakespearean song texts, teaching through song, and writing this narrative of that process, has been a journey of discovery for me as a composer, educator, and student. As a composer, many of the choices I made were the product of my background, cultural conditioning, and musical training. Similarly, the general listeners and students who responded to my music possessed their own biases, preconceptions, and paradigms that filtered their views of the songs I composed. Engaging students in a musical exploration of Shakespeare is clearly an
invaluable exercise that can open up new avenues of discussion and interpretation, both in the classroom and in the scholarly community.

As a writer, I could not help but be astounded at the sheer ubiquity of narrative surrounding Shakespeare and his dramas. From the narratives of Shakespeare's life, times, and theatre, to the tales of his friends and fellow actors, to the stories of composers who have scored his plays, I have been inundated with a series of overlapping, intertwining narratives, of which my own has now become a part. As Barthes points out, narratives exist everywhere in the world under all conditions (1982, pp. 251-296). Through the last 400 or so years, Shakespeare's plays, which themselves emerged from the rich narrative of the Elizabethan age, have passed through a process of repeated performances and interpretations and suffered a "sea-change" into something "rich and strange" (*The Tempest*, 1.2). The songs themselves are but a tiny thread of this ongoing narrative, and serve as an excellent gateway into the works of Shakespeare.
REFERENCES


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Appendix A – Ministry Learning Objectives and Outcomes

The following are a list of relevant objectives from the BC Ministry of Education Integrated Resource Packages for the English Language Arts, Music, and Music Technology curricula.

It is expected students will:

- Describe how tone and mood affect the drama of a story, play, or film

- Make generalizations about key concepts, characters, and themes of written, oral and visual works

- Consistently consider more than one interpretation of the communications that they read, view, and listen to

- Compare the features and relative merits of different communications, including those created by the same author, designer, or director

- Develop imaginative or creative responses to share their ideas

- Analyze and assess the impact of specific techniques and designs used by the media

- Use a variety of technological functions and computer software to publish original work

- Apply specific criteria to assess and revise communications

- Revise and edit their communications to improve content

- Create communications for an increasing range of audiences and purposes including pleasure and entertainment

- Demonstrate their commitment to collective goals
• Establish and use criteria to evaluate group processes, their own contributions to them, and the results of their work.

(English Language Arts IRP, 1996)

The Music curriculum also contained numerous learning outcomes that I felt would be enhanced by teaching Shakespeare through song, many of which were interdisciplinarily related to the English outcomes, including the following:

• Create, perform, and notate complex rhythms in a variety of metres
• Create and perform melodic patterns to enhance expressive phrasing
• Analyze how the elements of expression are combined to achieve specific effects
• Purposefully apply a variety of music forms and principles of design in composition
• Relate form and principles of design in music to those in other arts
• Analyze how thoughts, images, and feelings are expressed in music within a variety of historical, cultural, and stylistic contexts

(Music 8-10 IRP, 1996)

I found some of the most intriguing prescribed learning objectives and outcomes in the Composition and Technology 11/12 curriculum. Several of the key issues from Chapter 3 such as mood/tone, style/genre, and performance were encompassed by the Music Technology IRP, as indicated by the following:

• Compose music that represents a broad range of thoughts, images, and feelings
• Compare musical expression of thoughts, images and feelings to other forms of expression

• Explain how music can be used to manipulate thoughts, images, and feelings

• Use other forms of expression to represent thoughts, images, and feelings evoked by their own compositions

• Use a variety of music technologies to manipulate sounds in compositions

• Explain how performance can alter the effect of a composition

• Compose music incorporating a variety of forms and principles of design

(Composition and Technology IRP, 1996)
Appendix B – Unit Plan Outline

Garage Band Shakesongs Unit Plan: Focus On As You Like It

OVERALL OBJECTIVE: To increase student comprehension of Shakespeare's song texts and extend that understanding to the rest of Shakespeare's drama As You Like It.

Specific Learning Objectives/Referenced to Outcomes:

Students will learn to/will be able to:

➤ Develop awareness of the dramatic function of the song texts in Shakespeare's plays as they relate to locality, time, theme, and characterization

➤ Demonstrate/discuss the dramatic function of a song in Shakespeare's play as it relates to character, locality, time, or theme using musical or written expression

➤ Consider multiple interpretations of a given song text in relation to varying personal responses, individual performances, and textual variations

• Provide different musical settings of the same song text to demonstrate various possible interpretations and personal responses

• Revise, edit, and critique their own musical compositions in accordance with pre-determined criteria

➤ Create an original musical setting of a song text that integrates into the overall dramatic fabric of the play, as a director would do in a professional production

• Consider how choice of musical style/genre, form, instrumentation, and text underlay affect their personal response to and interpretation of the song text

• Film a video that documents their own artistic process and creative decisions

• Add instrumentation to an Elizabethan song that reflects the mood/tone of the song text and be able to justify their choices of timbre/instrumentation
Compose their own musical setting of a Shakespeare song text based on their personal response to the text and using appropriate style, instrumentation, and text underlay

- Establish and use criteria to evaluate group processes, their own contributions to them, and the results of their work

- Develop their own criteria and standards for their artistic efforts

- Use musical elements (key, metre, melody, harmony, rhythm) to evoke thoughts, images, feelings, and mood/tone of the text

- Compose an original musical setting of a song text and make critical choices regarding key, metre, and other elements of musical expression

Make connections between the melopoeia, phanopoeia and logopoeia of the song text as they combine to make a creative work

- Write a reflection that explains how the logopoeia, phanopoeia and melopoeia of a song text combine to make a creative work

Outline Of Lesson Plans


Lesson 2 – 2 periods – Textual analysis of the song texts; listening to musical settings of Shakespeare song and comparing them; developing criteria for what constitutes a "good" composition

Lesson 3 – 1 period – Singing a Shakespeare song; developing criteria for what constitutes "good" singing; comparing different singing styles

Lesson 4 – 3 periods – Composing a Shakespearean song setting – Developing a personal response to the song text; exploring imagery in the
song text; understanding the dramatic function of a given song text; using music to heighten the emotional expression of the text and making choices about style, instrumentation, and text underlay.

Lesson 5 – 2 periods – Adding Images to the Shakesong – Finding or creating appropriate images to enhance the imagery of the song text

Lesson 6 – 2 Periods – Documenting the creative process and decisions – Reflecting on how various elements of the poetry combine to make a creative work.

Major Assignments:

- **Garage Band Arrangement**—Students will use the Garage Band software to arrange an Elizabethan tune with appropriate instrumentation  

- **Presentation on Text Analysis & Criteria**—Students will present a brief analysis of one of the song texts to the class. They will compare two versions of the same Shakespearean song and present criteria for what constitutes a “good” composition

- **A written response to a Shakespearean song text**, outlining its dramatic function and concentrating on its connections to character, theme, and setting. /20

- **Composing and Original Song Setting**—Based on a personal response to the text and utilizing the previously developed criteria, students will compose an original musical setting of one of Shakespeare’s song texts from *As You Like It* and add appropriate imagery to their version of the song

- **Documentary Featurette**—Students will film a brief video and write a reflection on their creative process, outlining the reasons for their artistic choices and explaining their interpretation of the song

Evaluation:
All of the assignments will be criterion-referenced. The criteria for the song/composition assignment will be based on what the students themselves develop as a class. For the final assignment, students will also have an opportunity to self-evaluate their work.
Appendix C – Evaluation Rubrics/Scales

In terms of designing an evaluation procedure for the unit, I opted for a division of student self-evaluation and my own evaluation rubric, with the criteria based on standards we constructed together as a class. Despite having two modes of evaluation at my disposal, I did not feel entirely comfortable evaluating the students' creative work. I had listened to countless Shakespearean song settings during the course of my own research, and knew that for every setting that matched a particular criterion or musical rule, we could find an example that broke it. In the end, the only reliable criterion for judging a song setting seemed to be that the musical setting was faithful to the composers' understanding of and personal response to the text. Consequently, I used the degree of faithfulness to the composer's own response and intentions as my primary benchmark for all the criteria. In addition, I opted to offer marks for some of the procedural and presentation elements of the task, such as meeting deadlines, group cooperation, and the care and attention paid to the recording and editing. I also awarded additional grades separately for the written reflections and self-evaluations, which I used to determine how the group had responded to the text. The rubric I designed is based on Worsnop's analytical scale (1996). Worsnop uses five categories – content, organization, voice/audience, technical competence, and effective use of media language – on a five-point scale with one grid devoted to each area. For my more compact version, I compressed the five categories onto one grid, opting for a four-point scale and eliminating the "zero points" window, but added an extra category of my own – personal response to the text. Below is my evaluation rubric for the creative aspect of the project:
From the rubric above, it is no small task to evaluate creative work effectively.

Moreover, at the high school level, where the teacher is responsible for encouraging good study habits, some attention must be paid to non-creative elements, and the
limited space of a grid does not allow a teacher to define the standards in depth, such as what constitutes "appropriate" instrumentation. Worsnop equates this scale with a writing rubric, except that it offers a tool for assessing many kinds of expression, including video, audio, and photographs (Worsnop, p. 95). While my rubric is certainly not exhaustive, I am pleased with it in one sense: I know that the students were involved in generating the criteria and had a good idea of what was expected of them by the time they received this assessment tool. In terms of the students' personal reflections (i.e. their response to the text), I chose to use the following assessment scale, developed by Chris Worsnop (Worsnop, p. 97), with some slight modifications of my own:

Assessment Scale For Personal Response To A Text

Level 5

The student integrates personal feelings, experiences, hopes, fears, and beliefs with the text. The personal response is rooted in the text and clear understanding of the whole text, and makes connections to other texts.

Level 4

The student connects personal feelings, experiences, hopes, fears or beliefs with the text. The personal response refers to the text and conveys a sense of understanding of the text.

Level 3

The student explores personal feelings, experiences, hopes, fears and beliefs, but makes a superficial connection to the text.

Level 2
The student retells or paraphrases the text or identifies devices in isolation, making only superficial reference to personal experience or feelings OR The student writes about personal feelings without connecting them to the text.

Level 1

The student's response shows little or no interaction with the text OR The student's response is incomprehensible.

Again, I eliminated the "zero" option and simplified some of the expectations. In addition, I used a slight variation of the above scale in a rubric form to mark the "making of" documentaries the students made about their Shakesong Projects.

Documenting the Process

I wanted to document the creative process of the students, but did not want the act of documenting to color that process or intrude upon it. While it is never possible to completely avoid influencing events with documentation, I wanted to find a less disruptive method than videotaping the class. The solution seemed to be to have the students document themselves. I asked them to produce a short three minute documentary that would accompany their Shakesong, similar to the "extras" one finds on DVD's of popular films. The teens definitely enjoyed talking about their own work and why they had made particular choices in regards to instrumentation, singing, musical style, text underlay, tempo, key, and so on. Some of the groups were organized enough to document their routines in-progress, while others simply reflected on the process after the fact. Of course, parts of the group's workings were omitted or could not be observed on video; however, much of the 'gap' in my observations was closed by having each member of the group submit a written reflection on their work. Between the
two literacy modes, I found that I was able to get a more detailed account of each group's modus operandi and an understanding of each student's response to the song text.