

Music on the Stage



1. Our Revels Now

September 18, 2024

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THE COURSE WILL BE ABOUT MUSIC IN A DRAMATIC CONTEXT. It seemed easiest to start, therefore, by looking at the various ways in which music can function in the context of an actual play—*The Tempest*, Shakespeare's most musical—and how those functions may be extended in later adaptations.

Those whose memory of *The Tempest* is hazy will be relieved to know that only one strand of the plot is relevant to the present class. **Prospero**, the former Duke of Milan, has been usurped by his unscrupulous brother in league with the King of Naples. He has fled with his infant daughter **Miranda** and a selection of his books to a deserted island, where he has used his magical powers to dominate the inhabitants, including the spirit **Ariel** and slave **Caliban**. Now, many years later, he sets the stage for the denouement. He gets Ariel to conjure up a storm to wreck a ship carrying his brother and the King of Naples, and cast everybody up on shore, unharmed, but believing that all the others have been drowned. The first survivor we see is the handsome **Ferdinand**, heir to the throne of Naples. After undergoing trials set by Prospero, he will eventually marry Miranda. *rb.*

A. Musics in The Tempest

Yes musics, plural, because there are several different kinds: dance, song, and the music of poetry.

Johnson: *Country Dance*

Johnson: *The Tempest*, "Where the bee sucks, there suck I"

Shakespeare: *The Tempest*, "Our revels now" (David Threlfall)

B. Ariel's Songs

Five of the eight songs in the play are given to Ariel. One of them, "Full fathom five thy father lies," is the only song in the entire canon for

which we have the original music. We listen, then see it in the context of the complete scene in two different recent productions.

Johnson: “Full fathom five” (Stephanie Sheffield, Chicago Consort)

Shakespeare: *The Tempest* I/2 (Globe 2013; Jeremy Herrin, *director*; music by Stephen Warbeck)

Shakespeare: *The Tempest* I/2 (RSC 2016; Gregory Doran, *director*; music by Paul Englishby)

C. The Act IV Masque

Prospero celebrates the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda by summoning the goddesses Iris, Ceres, and Juno. They in turn summon nymphs and shepherds to dance, thus forming an interlude similar to the elaborate masques newly fashionable at court.

Shakespeare: *The Tempest* 4/1 (Lord Chamberlain’s Men)

Shakespeare: *The Tempest* 4/1 (Globe 201; Roger Allam, *Prospero*)

Shakespeare: *The Tempest* 4/1 (RSC, 2016)

Sibelius: *The Tempest* (1925) excerpts with Dulac illustrations

D. Restoration—and How!

The 1660 Restoration of Charles II to the throne after the Puritan interregnum saw the establishment of indoor theatres at which the plays of Shakespeare (and others) could be presented with altered texts, added characters, and music almost approaching opera.

Locke: *The Tempest*, Second Curtain Tune

Weldon: *The Enchanted Island*, “Arise ye subterranean powers!”
(Holland Opera, Sinan Vural)

Linley: *The Enchanted Island*, “Arise, ye spirits of the storm!”

E. Two Calibans

Moving from almost-opera to real opera, we listen to two settings by modern opera composers of Caliban’s speech about the magic of music.

Hoiby: *The Tempest* (1989), “Be not afeard” (Jacques Trussel)

Adès: *The Tempest* (2004), Caliban’s aria & ending (Alan Oke, Met)

F. When You Do Dance

Unfortunately, none of the several *Tempest* ballets is available complete. But we can watch trailers, and look in more depth at the therapeutic function of dance in Shakespeare’s previous play, *The Winter’s Tale*.

Shakespeare: *The Winter’s Tale*, Act IV; Gregory Doran, *director*

Bintley: *The Tempest* (2016), Birmingham Royal Ballet, trailer

Pastor: *The Tempest* (2014), Dutch National Ballet, trailer

G. Beyond the Fringe

Finally, depending on time, a recent production of the play and an older film that take it far beyond anything Shakespeare would have known.

Shakespeare: *The Tempest* (Globe 2022), trailer

Jarman: *The Tempest* (film 1979), ending

Thomas **Adès** (1971– , *English composer*), David **Bintley** (1957– , *English choreographer*), William **Davenant** (1606–68, *English playwright*), John **Dryden** (1631–1700, *English poet*), Edmund **Dulac** (1882–1953, *English illustrator*), Paul **Englishby** (1970– , *English composer*), Lee **Hoiby** (1926–2011, *American composer*), Derek **Jarman** (1942–94, *English filmmaker*), Robert **Johnson** (1583–1633, *English composer*), Thomas **Linley** (1756–78, *English composer*), Matthew **Locke** (1630–77, *English composer*), Krzysztof **Pastor** (1956– , *Polish choreographer*), Thomas **Shadwell** (1642–92, *English playwright*), William **Shakespeare** (1564–1616, *English playwright*), Jean **Sibelius** (1865–1957, *Finnish composer*), John **Weldon** (1676–1736, *English composer*)

The course website is www.brunyate.com/MusicStage
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