

Role of Songs and Music in Shakespearean Comedies

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Abstract: *Due to a great charm, music attracts the entire humanity. So, in this manner; the aim of this paper is to analyze the 'Role of songs and music' in the Shakespearean comedies. Songs and music seems as a life line to every Shakespearean play and especially for comedies. No one can deny with the existence and the role of the songs in the comedies of Shakespeare because they plays an important role during the portrayal of the plot of the particular scene or the story. In the Shakespearean comedies the availability of music, song and dance is analyzed individually where the main concern of the analysis can be seen in terms to discover the dramatic effects of the music during the whole play with the possible visual effects within the story. So, each occurrence of the music is related to its immediate context as well as to the broader themes of the play. In the Shakespearean comedies, during a play, the term 'music' is frequently used to include the three types of music which can be seen as instrumental music, vocal songs and the music which accompanies the dances. Some general patterns can be seen as emerged in the use of music, and that's why it is assumed that Shakespeare uses the music to forward the dramatic action of his comedies with a great conscious, no extra ordinary diversion is seen anywhere in the context of the running plot.*

Introduction:

During the analysis, it can be feel that- the use of music in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama seems widespread and its examples can be found in the works of all the major playwrights of the period like: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson and Webster. Music is the most important part of the seventeenth century life. So in this way, it is natural to use it as a means of forwarding the action plan in order to comment on the past events or the upcoming events. But if takes it in the general form then music, song and dance is used purely for the entertainment purpose in order to put the extraneous effects to the action of the play. Music works as a therapy for anyone and it is more appropriate to say that it is a sort to relax the distressed mind. It is evidently seen that during the Elizabethan era, the audience also takes the music as a therapy and due to this, 'a fairy song is more than a lullaby' for them. It is more appropriate to say it as a magical lullaby because it is a charm to ward off the evils because it takes the plot of the play in a moving direction where this lullaby extends the thematic contrast to a certain extent. Simultaneously, this lullaby

serves the purpose to demonstrate the type of the characters because the language, the subject matter and the structure of the roundel everything suggests a song and these songs show the traditional aspects of the lullaby. In the context of the preceding scene in order to examine the song, the Arden edition explains that, "Balthasar's song is more suggestive to the audience than to the characters on the stage because no one of them has any notion of the conspiracy against Hero and this seems true during the analysis. Thus the themes of love and deception can be seen as central to both of the major plots, by pronounced in "Sigh No More." However in these plots: the romances of Hero and Claudio, and Beatrice and Benedick-remains fully distinct until their respective wedding. It is clear to seen by everyone that each has likable characters and impelling motives, and only when Beatrice demands of Benedick "Kill Claudio" it is must that the audience compare the success of the latter plot with the ruin of the former. Considering now how "Sigh No More" serves to characterize the singer Balthasar because we find further a critical disparity. Here, Balthasar, nephew to the governor and attendant on the prince, is portrayed as a noble dilettante-musician and the actor, who sings the song, portrays the role of a nobleman and not that of a commoner or page. With both the lord Amiens in 'As You Like It', this technique occurs again and in each case Sternfeld accounts for the singer's reluctance by citing "the etiquette to be observed by noblemen in contrast to the behavior of professional musicians": specifically, "good manners would dispose a gentleman or lady to dissemble their musical abilities when in public" (Sternfeld,1963:54-57). Yet neither Amiens nor Balthasar hints at such disparagement, and so to establish as favorable Shakespeare's treatment of these characters, let us return to The Courtier. Akin to the injunction paraphrased above, one passage dictates to the performer: Because his reluctance to sing marks him as a nobleman and Balthasar distinguishes the scene and the start of the romance of Beatrice and Benedick, as a gathering of noblemen. Thus the separate romances distinguish between a noble, benign deception and a base, malign one, and the characterization of Balthasar by "Sigh No More" gives more emphasis to this theme. This conventional form of "Sigh No More," can be seen as teaching at least two lessons: first, for the songwriter, where the steady rhythm alternates four feet and three finds a variety both in those lines which begin on a stressed beat, and second: in the pattern of line endings which alternates stressed and unstressed beats. "Under the Greenwood Tree" from the comedy 'As You Like It', it shows all the aspects of Shakespearean song which contributes to the play by "establishing the setting in the forest of Arden". According to 'Long': "possibly the song is designed to assist the imagination of the spectator in creating a setting that has no substantial existence at all" (Long, John H, 1961:52). He adds that, if the songs are removed from the storyline then the plot suffers with little damage definitely. And it also can be seen as suggesting the superfluity of "Under the Greenwood Tree" is that both this and its companion song, "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind" (Act II, Scene vii.174-190), repeats the ideas which are pronounced by Duke Senior:

"Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?"

Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
the season's difference". (Act II, Scene i.3-6)

On the other hand, more than the fulfillment of the purpose of ornamentation, the songs articulate an important theme of 'As You Like It'; which relates to the gathering, "I thought that all things had been savage here" (II.vii.107). Here, Orlando too can be seen as expressing Duke Senior's contrast between the forest, stocked with cottage, fruit, and deer, and the court, corrupted by a treacherous duke because the court proves a mirror of heroic virtue which is a Renaissance commonplace and it is clearly seen to everyone in the play that all courtly qualities have moved to Arden where heroic Orlando and virtuous Rosalind are banished on account of their noble fathers- are there, and the refrain of "Under the Greenwood Tree" "no enemy"- reiterates the civility of the gathering in the forest. The song also contributes to this theme, through the aspects of characterization and form. To begin with the demonstration of the etiquette of 'The Courtier' with his reluctance to continue the song, Amiens, like Balthasar, presents himself as a nobleman and affirms the unanimity of the rank among the foresters. "Songs of the greenwood tree" are of the high antiquity in England, and these are possibly suggested by some medieval ballad or poem of a romantic character. A critic Halliwell cites a "greenwood" tale of Robin Hood as one such source, because Robin Hood and Duke Senior is both rightful nobleman, here meets with the contrast: where "Under the Greenwood Tree" bears the traditional associations with "noblemen-foresters". This study shows beautifully that each Shakespearean song contributes to the plot, theme, and characterization in the play, and that the formal elements of the song reflect both these aspects and the success of the song itself. For example, Sternfeld writes that "Shakespeare uses songs in two forms: firstly to express the character of the singer or the dramatic situation; and secondly to influence the disposition of the magic songs".

The skill which Shakespeare uses in the songs and with what dramatic effects in particular, is one of the major concerns of this paper because during incorporating the songs in the plays here becomes a common practice to use melodies or words of popular ballads or street songs because it helps a lot to the musically less-gifted actor during his performance. However, Shakespeare as an uncompromising detractor of the songs in Elizabethan drama has given the credit where it is due: 'undoubtedly Shakespeare is skillful in weaving together much incongruous matter into a unified whole'. The harmony of both songs and instrumental music is a symbol of the harmony between man and man, or between man and Nature and the harmony of a well-ordered nation also reflects in musical harmony obviously and the greater harmony of the Universe can be seen in the music of the spheres:

“Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears
(If ye have power to touch our senses so),
And let your silver chime

Move in melodious time,
And let the bass of heav'n's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up the full consort to th' angelic symphony”.

In order to bring the harmony, it can be seen that music has mystical powers and the proof of this is seen in the unexplained sympathetic vibration of similarly tuned musical instruments where the mystical nature of music makes it an ideal means of portraying the supernatural. On the other side of the pole, another powerful image of harmony and order can be found easily in the dance. Not only the harmony, but the orderly movements of the dancers can be realized easily which reflects the harmony and order in the world of human relationships to a greater extent. On the Contrary, if a dance is performed in a perverse manner then it would be a symbol of discord and both types of symbolism can be found effectively exploited in the Shakespeare's comedies. During the analysis, it can be feel beautifully that comedies and the Romances stand apart from the body of the comedies, but both must be seen as different solutions to the problem of blending of the tragic and comic elements in a comedy – and Shakespeare tackles this problem too seriously in ‘The Merchant of Venice’ and a little criticism can be seen as devoted to music in Shakespearean comedies. According to Edward W. Naylor's ‘Shakespeare and Music’ (1896:78): there must be a musical historian rather than the literary critic, and much of his study is consisting of catalogues of the various aspects of music in the plays with brief comments relating to their history. Another critic John H. Long's trilogy in ‘Shakespeare's Use of Music’, shows his concern for the historical accuracy where he tries to find out the contemporary musical settings for every occurrence of music in Shakespeare's plays by giving the detailed account that - how he feels many of the scenes should be staged, the dramatic effect of music being an important consideration.

Music seems as ‘pervasive’ in the Shakespearean plays and according to J. L. Styan (1988): Shakespeare’s 32 plays and 500 text passages makes a reference to music and according to the critic there are 300 musical stage directions can be seen in the Shakespearean plays. Most of the emphasis can be seen on the importance of analyzing the songs in Shakespeare's plays in terms of their dramatic context and simultaneously the Commentators frequently treats Shakespeare's songs not as interruptions or delays in the dramatic action, but as a means of enhancing characterization and narrative development. The evaluation of the dramatic effects of the words and moods of various songs upon the onstage listeners as well as on theatrical audiences can be seen through the frequently turns by Shakespeare which may serves as merely a musical interlude into an element of dramatic structure. Some late twentieth-century studies of Shakespeare's plays can be seen as much focused on effects of music during the performance. Because it emphasizes the way by which Shakespeare exploits the disparate musical and theatrical effects of string, brass, and wind instruments where each song and each dance is artfully designed to control the audience’s response towards the dramatic action. If it is to say

that the brief introduction to commentary on Shakespeare's music is incomplete without reference to Lorenzo's speech about music and harmony at the beginning of Act V, scene i in 'The Merchant of Venice' is more apt where Greenfield offers a traditional reading of the passage by interpreting it as a Neoplatonic discourse in lyrical form, in the context of the music of the spheres and human virtue. But, Shakespeare mocks the Neoplatonic musical theory and portrays Lorenzo in a manner of attempting to mislead Jessica through "false music".

Music is an integral part of Elizabethan life and as it is today. London publishers can be seen as producing broadside ballads, madrigals, and consort pieces constantly, and most educated people could read the music and play a tune on a recorder, lute, or viola da gamba. The characters which Shakespeare presents are a reflection of his times and they too depends on the music to show the moments of comedy and poignancy, whether it could be a drunken sing-along at a crowded table or it could be a gloomy rhyme borne out of love's disillusionment. In order to performance by vocal music, it can be seen that Shakespeare uses all kinds of music and musical instruments referentially where the folk song and ballad tunes which he quotes frequently are equally well known to the groundlings as to the more distinguished patrons and scraps of these tunes creates jokes and evokes the other sentiments as well. The pathos of Ophelia's madness increases with the knowledge, which probably goes back to childhood, of the folk songs she croons in her distraction. There is no other means of communication other than music, which is adequately spoken to peoples of all nations and cultures because music satisfies the need of expression and fulfillment in the human personality. Music is a big part of Shakespeare's life and as well as all around him. The music of nature, continually speaks to him and man can never escape by the music of life. It is no wonder that Shakespeare said purpose fully through the character of Lorenzo by speaking to Jessica in "The Merchant of Venice" that: "*The man that hath no music in himself... Is fit for treasons stratagems' and spoils...*". Being a person of universal appeal, Shakespeare does not seems as overlooked by this universal power of music, whether he belongs to a century which considers music as a required culture and an integral part of man's life, Shakespeare finds it almost necessary to include it within his many masterpieces. Shakespeare, being a product of his time, incorporates the musical spirit into his work abruptly and due to this, signs of the estimate relation between music and poetry can be seen very easily. The dramatic admiration for music can be seen clearly in his plays. The last quarter of the sixteenth century, witnesses a tremendous growth of wealth and consequent luxury which leads to the vulgarity and it always accompanies a sudden access of wealth. "The fine taste that is inherent in the Elizabethan resulted not only in the composition of so much splendid music, but also in the widespread custom of singing and playing it."It is a well known fact that Elizabeth herself has been a great love for music. The following lines to a musical publication in 1573, shows her deep concern for the music:

“The queen, the glory of our age and isle,
With royal favour bis this science smile;

Nor hears she others' labor'd lays,
But artist-like, herself both signs and plays.”

The Age of Elizabeth is an age of music truly but the music is not the music of great composers, but the native song, the familiar playing of instruments, the continual breaking out into country rounds or court measures. It is clearly seen that each and every house has its own lutes and viols; even in every barber's shop an instrument can be seen as ready to sell. On the other side of the pole, the value of music in schools can be seen as demanded by most writers and their reasons are gravely heard because of the feeling that “original sin had closed the ear to heavenly harmonies and education might possibly correct the deficiency.” Whether interconnected with education, music has become as an intimate portion of home life because it adequately expresses that the Elizabethan tenaciously held to two faiths: “faith in home and faith in music.” These two faiths are the essential means by which thoughtful Elizabethans sought to order their private lives. From 1560 on, pious homes of Puritans can be seen as more depended upon singing of psalms for their enjoyment of music and this custom continued until the long in the home gardens, however, the singing is bound to be more informal. But some exceptions exists everywhere, and in that period also few households are so poor that among the servants no singers or musicians could be found to entertain the master or mistress and music has become a popular and favorite means of relaxation for husband or wife. The example of this is:

” “Mistress, while sitting busily sewing with her maids, often calling one of them to entertain their group by singing or playing on some instrument, particularly the lute, which served as both instrument and decoration in the house”.

It is undoubted that the Elizabethans have music in their soul because each village has its own choir as well as a team of bell ringers which seems likely to be the chief pride of the community and during the dinning by the guests, they contributes to the madrigal singing between courses or at the end of the meal. In this way, it is the magic of music which makes life go around for these people, and it is the effect of music in one form or the other that they takes it on the shelves of their libraries” in their rooms so it is seen that musical life overflows into the social life of the Elizabethans.

“They had music at dinner, music at supper, music at weddings, music at funeral, music at dawn, music at night. He who felt not, in some degree, its soothing influences, was viewed as a morose unsocial being whose converse ought to be shunned and regarded with suspicion and distrust”.

However, it is evidently seen that musical life is not restricted just to the upper and middle classes of the society. There is plenty of evidence, which shows the enthusiasm of lower classes about music on a large scale. A large number of passages show the zeal of blacksmiths, colliers, cloths workers, tinkers, watchmen, country persons and soldiers.

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Conclusion:

For the conclusion, it can be said that: The songs are incantation and Shakespeare's main concern is with the poetry which is related to music. So, in this way, 'writing of songs' becomes a curious joy and a sort of expression of thoughts other than the story for Shakespeare. And finally it can be said that according to the views of Shakespeare music promotes human and social reconciliation and songs and music plays an important role in this task. Nobody can say in a single way that Shakespeare is famous or his songs are famous then him. Obviously, the response is that his works, the elements which he uses in the play and he himself are tremendous and unreachable to anyone. In fact, Shakespeare pays his frequent tribute to the power of music by the use of musical terms and his many allusions to musical instruments in the comedies. His excursions in the musical providence inculcates a great joy while watching the comedies and he remains always happy in terms of speaking on music and its place in life. According to him, it is the human side which attracts him towards the music. No one can write like this sensitively whether he is influenced by the music, but it is Shakespeare, who regards it seriously during the depiction of songs and their incorporations. His art of writing the songs and knowledge about the songs astonishes at once and he does the thing about which the other dramatists talks only. For Shakespeare, music is a natural and powerful means of expression because he uses it to carry his purpose a little further than the spoken word. Songs, in Shakespearean drama particularly plays a useful and significant role. And the element like 'Songs and music' plays an important role in creating him as a genius in the history of English Literature because these songs and music proves oxygen for the comic plays for Shakespeare:

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