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THE FUNCTION OF MUSIC IN THE ELIZABETHAN
DRAMA AND THEATER

A Paper

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by

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to determine the basis for the extensive use of music in the Elizabethan drama, to investigate the contemporary practices in regard to music in the theater and drama, and to clarify aspects pertaining to musical instruments and terminology of the period.

It will be shown that the musical practices connected with the Elizabethan theater and its drama were based upon traditional and currently popular practices; and that the extensive use of music in the theater and drama was a direct outgrowth of a close relationship sanctioned by rich tradition and cultural patterns.

It is hoped that the result may provide a basis for a better understanding and appreciation of certain passages in the plays themselves through acquaintance with the music, instruments, and nomenclature as they figured in the social structure and as their use was reflected in the drama.

CHAPTER I

TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS OF MUSIC IN THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

Histories of music and histories of the drama readily attest to the fact that the Elizabethan era was the most brilliant period in England for both arts. But the relationship between the two, the significant bearing that the one had on the other, has largely been left unnoticed. Yet at no other time in English history has there been a closer unity, or one so soundly rooted both in tradition and in the social practices of the time.

Investigation of popular amusement and entertainment of the medieval period makes it possible to account for the use of music on the Elizabethan stage on the grounds of established precedent.

As early as the eleventh century, and continuing through the thirteenth, the art of the minstrels combined music with impersonation and dialogue. Dramatization of familiar ballads such as Robin Hood and the Friar, accompanied by singing and dancing, also became a popular form of diversion at a time when there was little or no organized entertainment. The celebration of pagan seasonal rites became associated with the idea of 'festival' and with it came dance, song, and instrumental music as accompaniment.¹ Man's natural affinity for relaxation, self-expression, worship, and play spontaneously linked the medieval cultural resources.

In the early liturgical plays connected with the Christmas and Easter services of the Church, choral chanting in conjunction with mimetic action

¹ Chambers, E. K., The Mediaeval Stage. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1903), I, 161.

served as a means of unfolding the Biblical stories pertaining to the Nativity and Resurrection.² Originally, the Biblical episodes were staged in different parts of the nave, but as the proportions expanded to include the entire gamut from Creation to Judgment day, they became too large for the Church facilities and were taken onto the street. The idea of cyclic performance, stemming from the church productions, continued in operation with the Mystery and Miracle plays.³ Out of the hands of the Church, and controlled by the craft-guilds, these productions developed into elaborate and spectacular pageants. Worldly elements crept in, not the least of which were the addition of songs in the vernacular and certain incidents connected with the portrayal of the Devil. According to Chambers, the professional assistance of the minstrels was utilized in accompanying not only the preliminary announcements of the plays, but also the songs that were included in some of the texts, particularly those of the York and Coventry cycles. In addition, the minstrels were frequently called upon to furnish music at the conclusion or between the scenes.⁴

Late fifteenth-century religious drama included the Morality plays with their allegorical personifications of Good and Evil. Out of these

² Schweikert, H. C., Early English Plays. (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1928), pp.11-17.

³ Ibid., pp.16-17.

⁴ Chambers, Med. Stage, II, 140. According to Symonds, the choristers of the Cathedral schools such as St. Pauls, Westminster and Winchester, performed music for the liturgical and early Mystery and Miracle plays, which helps to explain the seeming anomaly of choristers being dedicated to the stage in the Elizabethan period and of religious foundations being used as "nurseries for actors." Symonds, J. A., Shakespeare's Predecessors. (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), p.283.

sprang the Interludes, which, in spite of their not always being distinguishable from the Morality plays, usually contained pronounced comic and even farcical elements, songs with instrumental accompaniment, and dances.⁵

"Here cometh in four viols and sing....", a stage direction from John Redford's allegorical-interlude, Wyt and Science, is typical of all the Interludes, even those that, a little later, were built on the adopted classical form.⁶ The farcical Interludes, with no trace of allegorical features, became a popular form of entertainment at the choral grammar schools of the Cathedrals, Chapels Royal and the University chapel schools of Oxford and Cambridge. The vocal and instrumental training of these choristers, for whom many of the Interludes were expressly written, was capitalized upon by such writers as John Heywood (1497-1587), master of the singing-school at St. Paul's.⁷

In view of the juxtaposition of music and dramatic action through the preceding centuries, it is not surprising that the first formal English comedy, Ralph Roister Doister (produced c. 1550), contained a quantity of music in the way of song and dance. While the interspersion of music never became so common to the tragedy as to the comedy, we nevertheless find in the first English tragedy, Gorboduc (1562), the dumb shows, preceding each of the five acts, accompanied by various combinations of instrumental music.

It has been shown that by the dawn of the Elizabethan epoch, music in conjunction with the drama had the sanction of precedent and tradition.

⁵ Reese, Gustave, Music in the Renaissance. (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1954), p.877.

⁶ Ibid., p.877.

⁷ Symonds, op. cit., p.148.

But had not English society of the sixteenth century nurtured this tradition or been amenable to it, its drama would have had quite a different flavor. There is, however, conclusive evidence that music was a vital and dynamic force in the social structure. As such, it was reflected in the drama both in textual reference and as a contingent aspect of entertainment through the interpolation of song and dance.

The musical proclivities of the royalty, noblemen, gentry, and common citizens not only promoted the acceptance of the traditional relationship of music with dramatic action, but encouraged its expansion. Queen Elizabeth, like her father, Henry VIII, attained some measure of musical accomplishment on the virginal (see ch.III), and to Henry is attributed the composition of several songs as well as ability to sing from music at sight.⁸ A large establishment of instrumentalists and singers, attendant to the sovereign and known as the 'King's Musicke,' was augmented by Henry VIII and continued by the less affluent Elizabeth on a slightly smaller scale.⁹ The Queen's affinity to music is described in an account by Gibbon:

During her progresses through the country, Elizabeth, not content with the music that might be offered by her hosts, took in her retinue a choir from the Chapel Royal, comprising six gentlemen and six children. The duties of a maid of honour included those of playing and singing to the Queen. On 24 February, 1601, the morning of the

⁸ Naylor, Edward W., Shakespeare in Music. (London, J. M. Dent and Co., 1896), p.10.

⁹ Chambers, E. I., The Elizabethan Stage. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1923), I, 49. Woodfill, Walter L., Musicians in English Society. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1953), p.183.

execution of her late favourite, the Earl of Essex, Elizabeth distracted her thoughts by playing on the virginals.¹⁰

Furthermore, Elizabeth gave substantial support to the theatrical enterprises of the choral schools connected with Chapel Royal and St. Paul's, both of which supplied dramatic entertainment for the Court on such occasions as Christmas, Twelfth Night, and Easter. She even went so far in 1586 as to give letters patent to Thomas Gyles, then Master of the choristers of Paul's, empowering him to enlist and press into service "likely lads."¹¹ In this, and in subsequent patents, according to Symonds, "... the employment of the choristers of Paul's and of Chapel Royal in dramatic business was always specially contemplated."¹²

Not only did music receive royal patronage, but the upper classes--in fact all who aspired to be ranked gentlemen--counted it a necessity in their education. In the sixteenth century, ability to sing music at sight and to extemporize the singing of a second or third part to a given melody was considered proper diversion or recreation for the University gentlemen. Thomas Morley's Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music (1597), considered the most valuable source dealing with Elizabethan musical matters, indicates that musical accomplishment was a necessary adjunct of one's social graces, and that inadequate musical proficiency was tantamount to social ostracism.¹³

¹⁰ Gibbon, John Murray, Melody and the Lyric. (London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1930), p.68.

¹¹ Symonds, op. cit., p.283.

¹² Ibid., p.284.

¹³ Morley, Thomas, A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music, edited by R. Alec Harman, (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1952), p.9.

The Renaissance ideal of the lady and gentleman as expressed by Castiglione in his Il Cortegiano, undoubtedly affected the inclinations and conduct of Englishmen who were, or wished to be considered, well-bred. This ideal, a product of centuries of assimilation of classical and Christian ideals, had many definitions, but Castiglione's, first printed at Venice in 1528 and translated into English in 1561, became the handbook of conduct for the Englishmen. Among the numerous attributes designated as befitting a gentleman and lady were the abilities to sing music at sight and to play the 'fretted' instruments, particularly the lute.¹⁴ Even though many gentlemen lacked musical accomplishment, they nevertheless considered it a worthwhile attribute, indicative of one's general culture. This attitude toward music was reflected in the drama, as the following examples prove: In Peele's Old Wives Tale, Sirrah Frolic suggests that the two rustics, Clunch and Frolic, sing (line 66-): "I am sure thou art not without some round or other; no doubt but Clunch can bear his part." To this Frolic retorts, "Else think you me ill brought up; so set to it when you will." In The Taming of the Shrew, Baptista explains to Hortensio and Gremio his interest in fostering his daughters' musical inclinations and his intention of engaging competent tutors for their "good bringing-up" (I i 90-):

Gentlemen, content ye; I am resolved:-
 Go in, Bianca;- (Exit Bianca)
 An for I know she taketh most delight
 In music, instruments, and poetry,
 Schoolmasters will I keep within my house,

¹⁴ Castiglione, Baldassare, The Courtier (Il Cortegiano), translated by Thomas Hoby, (New York, The National Alumni, 1907), pp.106-107, 203.

Fit to instruct her youth. If you, Hortensio,
 Or Signior Gremio, you, know any such,
 Prefer them hither; for to cunning men
 I will be very kind, and liberal
 To mine own children in good bringing-up.

There is conclusive evidence that the common people enjoyed their music even more enthusiastically than the upper classes. On grounds which we may readily grant him, Woodfill, in his Musicians in English Society, attacks the assumption that the lower classes heard and appreciated sophisticated music. He points out that, lacking time, money and opportunity to acquire a taste for the more highly developed music of their day, the mass of the people were unable either to perform or appreciate it.¹⁵ But there was a wealth of folk music that could be sung and played without formal instruction or expense, and this constituted most of their musical fare. The simpler instruments such as the pipes, tabors, cornets and citterns, which might be made cheaply and easily at home or by local craftsmen, could be learned without formal instruction and played by ear for personal amusement, for entertainment at home or at village festivities. Writers of the period, including the playwrights, testify to the fact that the singing of rounds or 'catches', and 'three men's songs' was a popular amusement with blacksmiths, tailors, colliers, cobblers, and tinkers alike. So popular were they, that a London ordinance of 1553 curtailed the singing of craftsmen, who "leaving the use and exercise of their crafts and manual occupations and giving themselves to wandering abroad, riot, vice and idleness, do commonly use nowadays to sing songs called three men's songs in the taverns, alehouses, inns, and such other places of this city...." The

¹⁵ Woodfill, op. cit., pp.201,222,239.

ordinance required that no one, "whether freeman of the city or not, using to sing any songs commonly called three men's songs shall from henceforth sing in or at any tavern, inn, alehouse, weddings, feasts, or any other like place...any manner of such song or songs except the same be sung in a common play or interlude."¹⁶ This exception must have been important to Dekker in whose Shoemaker's Holiday are several 'three men's songs.' That he used them appropriately and according to prevailing custom can be deduced from a contemporary account of qualifications for craftsmen in the Shoemaker trade: "...any journeymen soever that cannot sound the trumpet or play upon the flute, and bear his part in a three man's song and readily reckon upon his tools in rhyme...shall forfeit and pay a bottle of wine or be reckoned for a colt."¹⁷ Ben Jonson indirectly refers to the singing of catches as a common pastime among cloth-workers in Epicoene (III iv 10-). Cutberd, explaining the Parson's inability to speak distinctly, says, "He got his cold with sitting up late, and singing catches with cloth workers."

Another significant aspect of music, in Elizabethan society, having direct bearing on the drama, were the town Waits. Originally these were night guards stationed at city gates for the purpose of signaling or sounding their trumpets and hautboys¹⁸ at regular intervals to proclaim 'all's well'.¹⁹ By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Waits had developed

¹⁶ Quoted from Woodfill, pp.14-15.

¹⁷ Gibbon, op. cit., p.43.

¹⁸ French name for oboe; see Ch.III on Musical Instruments.

¹⁹ Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, edited by J. A. Fuller Maitland, (Philadelphia, Theodore Presser Co., 1918), V, 421.

into bands of musicians supported by the towns and cities for the purpose of playing at civic functions, the annual ceremonies inaugurating the Lord Mayor, Christmas and other festival seasons. In addition, they were invested with the duty of welcoming distinguished visitors into town.²⁰ As their function as musicians increased, their duties as watchmen became secondary. Accordingly, after the middle of the sixteenth century, the variety of instruments for their groups was increased to include, besides the hautboys and trumpets, such popular instruments as recorders, sackbuts, cornets and viols. Furthermore, by late sixteenth century, ability to sing became a necessary corollary to their musicianship. Many towns had their traditional wait-tunes, simple airs suitable for playing on hautboys 'with very cold fingers' during night watches. But this was not the extent of their repertoire; their instrumentation and skill, especially in the case of the London Waits, was sufficient for performing any of the music of the time--madrigals, theater music, masque music, as well as music especially written for them to perform in concert or pageant.²¹

The importance of the Waits in connection with the drama has generally been overlooked in spite of the fact that their music is sometimes specifically called for in the stage directions in such terms as merely 'waits,' or 'waits enter,' following which, in the course of the scene, there is music that presumably was performed by them. It appears logical,

²⁰ Will Kempe, the noted comedian, is said to have been greeted by the Norwich Waits after his famous Morris-dance between London and Norwich.

²¹ Woodfill, op. cit., pp.35-53.

therefore, that Lawrence might rightly have made a positive statement to this effect, rather than one of a conjectural nature. He says, "The Southwark Waits were noted for the excellence of their music, and as the Globe wherein Shakespeare played was the leading theatre of that district, it seems not unlikely that the Southwark Waits were associated with that house."²² There is no doubt that the members of wait groups had musical proficiency, and that their repertoire was compatible with the type of music found in the plays of the period. But musical talent was readily available from other sources, and apparently without much additional expense. Had it been otherwise, the cost of including so much music would have necessitated its curtailment. However, the fact must not be overlooked that popular demand, generated by traditional use of music in the drama, and influenced by current popularity of music in all classes of society, was a force to be reckoned with by the playwrights and their companies. The plays were written expressly for the purpose of entertainment, and the circumspect dramatist, with an eye on the pocketbook, gave the audience what it wanted and expected.

²² Lawrence, W. J., "Music in the Elizabethan Theater," Musical Quarterly (New York, G. Schirmer and Co., 1920), VI, 201.

CHAPTER II

MUSICAL PRACTICES CONNECTED WITH THE THEATER AND DRAMA

It has been shown that music and dramatic action had been linked since the first efforts in English dramatic production, dating from the medieval period, and that the relationship had been fostered by the functional use of music in English society. Public sanction of the relationship was met by the Elizabethan playwrights in a quantity of song and musical textual reference in their dramas. In addition, practices became more or less stabilized as to the type of music that was used, and also, when and how it was employed on the stage and in the drama. Such differences as existed were dependent upon distinctions of the private and public theater, the length of the drama, and the type of production, comedy or tragedy.

The most important distinguishing features of the private theaters, such as the Blackfriars, Whitefriars, Cockpit and Paul's, consisted in the roofed structure of the buildings, the use of artificial light, the higher admission charges, and the exclusive use of singing boys, or choristers, as actors. The audience, too, was a more select one; the price of seats was of itself sufficient to keep out the 'groundling' or 'stinkard' type.¹ These distinctions had a direct bearing on the musical practices connected with the production of their drama.

¹ Chambers, *Eliz. Stage*, p.555. Also, Gayley, C. M., *Representative English Comedies*. (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1913), II, xxxiii: "high prices, select audiences, royal patronage, and unique entertainment made the Blackfriars one of the centres of London social life." Gayley further points out that the public theaters could each accommodate about fifteen hundred to two thousand people, and the Blackfriars not more than five hundred; that the Blackfriars attracted the patronage of the more wealthy and aristocratic playgoers--members of the Court and the Queen herself.

While the musical talent of the choristers was available to both the private and public theaters, it was especially capitalized upon in plays written particularly for them to be produced in their own and other private theaters.² There was a liberal interspersion of lyrics and the act intervals were filled with song, dance or instrumental music. And often, preceding the productions, there was musical entertainment ranging from an instrumental overture to a varied musical program, often of an hour's length. A contemporary account of a performance at the Blackfriars gives us first-hand information. An excerpt from the diary of Philip Julius, Duke of Stettin, Pomerania, written during his visit to London, reads:

For a whole hour preceding the play one listens to a delightful musical entertainment on organs, lutes, pandorins, mandolins, violins and flutes, as on the present occasion, indeed, when a boy cum voce tremulo sang so charmingly to the accompaniment of a bass-viol that unless the nuns of Milan may have excelled him, we had not heard his equal on our journey.³

However, in the public theaters such as the Globe, Fortune, and Bull, there is no evidence that a musical prelude was used. The public theaters seem to have employed nothing beyond three soundings of a trumpet, the last of which was the signal for the prologue to begin.⁴ Time was a limiting factor in the open-air public playhouses where natural light was the only source of illumination. This factor also, of necessity, curtailed

² The choristers of St. Paul's and Chapel Royal frequently presented their plays at the Blackfriars.

³ Quoted from Lawrence, W. J., Music in the Elizabethan Theater, Musical Quarterly, (New York, G. Schirmer and Co., 1920), VI, 193.

⁴ Chambers, Eliz. Stage, II, 542.

the use of inter-act music, especially during the winter season. Nevertheless, although its length varied, there seems to be no question that act-time music was common to both the public and private theaters. A writer of the time gives verification of the practice:

By our owne modern experience, there is nothing more frequent, in all our Stage-playes than amourous Pastorals, or obscene lascivious Love-songs, most melodiously chanted out upon the Stage between each several Action; both to supply that Chasme or vacant Interim which the Tying-house takes up, in changing the Actors' robes, to fit them for some other part in the ensuing scene...as likewise to please the itching eares, if, not to inflame the outrageous lusts of lewde Spectators.⁵

In spite of the fact that the prologues to Romeo and Juliet and to Henry VIII state that the duration of these performances was to be "two hours traffic of our stage" (Romeo and Juliet), and "two short hours" (Henry VIII), there is a preponderance of evidence that most of the performances lasted as much as an hour longer. Ben Jonson, in the induction of Bartholomew Fair, refers to the space of two hours and a half and 'some-what more.' Variation in the length of the performance was dependent on the length of the play itself, on the amount of inter-act music, the season of the year, and the extent of the afterpiece, called the Jig.

The terpsichorean Jig came into vogue during the fifteen eighties, during the meridian of Tarletan's career. Lawrence describes it as "a lewd musical farce of short duration, written entirely in rhyme for four or five characters and sung and danced to a variety of popular tunes."⁶

⁵ Quoted in Nicoll, Allardyce, The English Theatre. (New York, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1936), p.47.

⁶ Lawrence, Musical Quarterly, VI, 196; also Nicoll, op. cit., p.48.

It seems not unlikely that when a play of unusual length was performed, the Jig, despite its popularity, was cut short, if not omitted altogether, and that inter-act music was pared to the minimum.

The music that was to occupy the interval between the acts was sometimes alluded to by the last speaker. In the case of Gammer Gurton's Needle (II v 11-), Diccon's final words before the act closes are: "In the meantime, fellowes, pipe upp your fiddles! I saie, take them, and let your freyndes here such mirth as ye can make them!" Likewise, in Greené's James IV, at the very end of Act III, Boham says, "Yet to beguile the time, Tis interlaced with merriment and rhyme." The implication is clear that music followed, and being inserted at this point, served as the inter-act entertainment. Marston used rhyming tags at the end of his acts in What You Will to give the musicians their cues. At the close of Act II, Quadratus says:

...That's all my prayers exact;
So ends our chat; sound music for the act.

That dancing sometimes filled the interim between the acts is suggested by Candido's final speech in Act I of Dekker's Honest Whore Part II: "The straightest arrow may fly wide by chance. But come, we'll close this brawl up in some dance." These examples, as well as others that might be cited, show a textual preparation for the inter-act music with an apparent attempt, though somewhat naive, to integrate it with the action.

Similarly, inference may be made from analogous textual examples that there was sometimes music between scenes. This is clearly indicated in a speech by Leonato, at the beginning of a scene in Much Ado About Nothing (I ii 316-). He inquires of Antonio, "How now, brother? Where is my brother your son? Hath he provided this music?"

When Dumb shows were interpolated in the drama they were invariably accompanied by music, usually instrumental. Hautboys play for the Dumb Show in Hamlet (III ii 146-). "Music sounds" in the Dumb Show representing the dream of Endymion, in Lyly's Endymion (III i 63-); and a variety of instruments are called for in the Dumb shows preceding each of the five acts of Sackville's and Norton's Gorboduc.

When songs were sung on the stage in the course of dramatic action, musicians, in their own character, always came on to play the accompaniment. This was mere stage realism compatible with contemporary English life.⁷ Occasionally, as in a scene of Othello (III i 3-) the musicians were allotted a few lines after they played:

(Musicians play)

Enter Clown

Clown. Why, masters, have your instruments been at Naples that they speak in the nose thus?

Musician. How, sir, how?

Clown. O, thereby hangs a tail.

Musician. Whereby hangs a tale, sir?

Clown. By many a wind instrument that I know. But, masters, here's money for you; and the General so likes your music that he desires you, of all loves, to make no more noise with it.

Musician. Well, sir, we will not.

Clown. If you have any music that may not be heard to't again. But, as they say, to hear music the General does not greatly care.

Musician. We have none such, sir.

Clown. Then put up your pipes in your bag, for I'll away.

Go vanish into the air, away!

(Exeunt Musicians)

Another characteristic use of music in the drama was in connection with the entrance or exit of kings and other important personages on or

⁷ Lawrence, W. J., The Elizabethan Playhouse and Other Studies. (Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare Head Press, 1912), p.90.

from the stage. For this purpose, such phrases as 'loud music,' 'a flourish,' 'trumpets sound,' or 'horns from within,' were common stage directions. Sometimes such a person's own trumpeters preceded him and played a special call, a 'tucket' or 'sennet,' used only by him.⁸ In this way his approach might be anticipated, as in King Lear (II iv 185), Goneril's entrance is heralded by a 'tucket within;' Regan recognizes it as belonging to her:

Cornwall. What trumpet's that?
Regan. I know't--my sister's. This approves
 her letter,
 That she would soon be here.

Likewise, after a sennet is sounded, Gloucester indicates his recognition of it by the remark, "The King is coming." (I i 34). In Othello (II i 179), Iago hears the trumpet and immediately marks it as Othello's: "The Moor! I know his trumpet." Because of the types of characters usually involved, there are many more examples of this nature in the tragedies than in the comedies. Nevertheless, if the occasion required it, as in The Shoemaker's Holiday when the King and his nobles enter, there is a "long flourish or two" (V v).

There is nothing more characteristically Elizabethan in the dramatic use of music than the reliance on songs for the projection of various effects. This was partially due to the availability of choristers, not only for the productions of their own plays in the private theater, but for the public productions as well. Tradition and public taste were also influential factors.

⁸ Grove's Dictionary, IV, 414.

Examination of the plays reveals that the songs which they contain were of the popular variety, simple and melodious, rather than the more sophisticated, intricate contrapuntal type for which, at that time, England was preeminent. The majority of the songs used, or alluded to in the text, were well known to the general public. Some of the playwright's own lyrics were given setting by contemporary composers, and perhaps some, as in Iyly's case,⁹ were set to music by the dramatist himself. Other of the lyrics were written to tunes already in existence and popular at the time. Their characteristic strophic form made it possible for them to be sung to not only one, but several tunes; or, conversely, one tune might serve many lyrics.

Among the songs most frequently included or alluded to in the plays are catches, ballads, drinking songs and familiar 'ayres,' all of which were consonant with the musical capacity of the people, and were both sung and loved by them.

The catch, a term now obsolete, was simply a round, sung by three or more voices just as today we sing Scotland's Burning and Three Blind Mice. The 'catch' was for each succeeding singer to take up or 'catch' his part in time. Ludicrous and comic effects were achieved through gesture, mispronunciation or in the interweaving of words and phrases by different voices.¹⁰ A close look at the catch or round in Peele's The Old Wives Tale (I i 70-) shows the possibilities for effecting the comic:

⁹ Iyly was not only a playwright, but a musician as well. Many of his plays were written for the children at Paul's while he was vice-master of their singing school.

¹⁰ Grove's Dictionary, I, 481.

(catch)

Whenas the rye reach to the chin,
 and chopcherry, chopcherry ripe within
 Strawberries swimming in the cream,
 and school boys playing in the stream;
 Then, O, then O, then, O my true love said
 Till that time come again
 She could not live a maid.

The rollicking nature of the catch, as sung at that time, may be inferred from the conversation between Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Feste, the clown, in Twelfth Night (II iii 60-):

Sir Toby. ...Shall we rouse the night owl in a catch that will draw three souls out of a weaver?

Shall we do that?

Andrew. An you love me, let's do't: I am dog at a catch.

Clown. By'r lady, sir, and some dogs will catch well.

Andrew. Most certain. Let our catch be, 'Thou knave.'

Clown. 'Hold thy peace, thou knave,' knight? I shall be constrain'd in't to call thee knave, knight.

Andrew. 'Tis not the first time I have constrain'd one to call me knave. Begin, fool: it begins, 'Hold thy peace.'

Clown. I shall never begin, if I hold my peace.

Andrew. Good, i'faith. Come, begin. (Catch sung.)

(The catch is not given in the text, but may be found in Ravenscroft's collection of contemporary songs, Pammelia.)

One of the most popular catches of the time, Jack, Boy, Ho! Boy!, is the basis of Shakespeare's word-play in Taming of the Shrew (IV I 42-):

Curtis. Therefore, good Grumio, the news?

Grumio. Why 'Jack, boy! ho boy!' and as much news as thou wilt.

(This catch also found in Pammelia)

The use of the catch in the drama for attaining ribald comic effects was a reflection of its current popularity with the people who had learned to associate hilarity and fun with its singing.

Likewise, ballads of every description found their way into the drama, both in textual allusion or in actual song. From the eleventh century,

balladry had been an important part of the English cultural tradition, yielding in its wake a tremendous popular repertoire of ballad texts and tunes. It was only natural that their use in the drama should exceed all other types of song. It has been established that the same practice of fitting words to tunes already known existed for ballad texts as it did for other lyrics. A single tune with a little variation here and there served many ballads.

Fortune My Foe, a ballad often sung by the crowds waiting for public executions and therefore known as the 'hanging tune,'¹¹ is referred to in a speech by Sir John Falstaff to Mistress Ford in Merry Wives of Windsor (III iii 59). To the Elizabethan, even so casual a mention of the tune had a real significance and a ready association.

Winter's Tale contains a vivid account of a typical peddler, Autolycus, who has ballads among other wares to sell. After a tantalizing description of several of them, Dorcas, Mopsa and he sing a merry ballad to a tune they already know (IV iii 287):

Autolycus. This is a merry ballad, but a very pretty one.

Mopsa. Let's have some merry ones.

Autolycus. Why, this is a passing merry one, and goes to the tune of "Two maids wooing a man:" there's scarce a maid westward but she sings it; 'tis in request, I can tell you.

Mopsa. We can both sing it; if thou'lt bear a part, thou shalt hear; 'tis in three parts.

Dorcas. We had the tune on't a month ago.

Autolycus. I can bear my part; you must know 'tis my occupation: have at it with you!

They sing:

Autolycus. Get you hence, for I must go;
Where it fits not you to know.

Dorcas. Whither?

Mopsa. O, whither?

Dorcas. Whither?

¹¹ Gibbon, op. cit., p.49.

Mopsa. It becomes thy oath full well,
 Thou to me thy secrets tell:
Dorcas. Me too, let me go thither.
Mopsa. Or thou go'st to the grange or mill:
Dorcas. If to either, thou dost ill
Autolycus. Neither.
Dorcas. What neither?
Autolycus. Neither.
Dorcas. Thou hast sworn my love to be;
Mopsa. Thou has sworn it more to me;
 Then, whither go'st? say, whither?
Clown. We'll have this song out anon by ourselves....

Herein we not only find reference to the custom of fitting a ballad to a familiar tune, but also, the previously mentioned assumed ability to sing a part extemporaneously.

They are old and well-known ballads, or snatches thereof, that Ophelia, in her demented state, sings over and over again in Hamlet. Some of them have been traced; as for example, For bonny sweet Robin is my joy (IV v 186-) is extant in the collection known as Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book.

Besides the catches and ballads, songs of other varieties were incorporated in the plays. Their prevalence is apt to go unnoticed by the modern reader who, in his haste to get on with the plot, is prone to ignore them completely. This, perhaps, may be excused since a majority of the songs are inconsequential to the story element. But to the Elizabethan play-goer, they were an additional source of enjoyment. It seems plausible to suggest that some of the plays proved to be good entertainment, if not good drama, largely because of the copious use of song.

Added to those lifted outright from the common cultural repertoire were other lyrics written expressly for the particular play in which they appear. Contemporary musicians such as Byrd, Morley, Campion, Weelkes, Ford, Robert Johnson, and John Dowland are known to have set some of the playwrights'

lyrics to music. Since the exact music to the plays as it was performed is not extant, there is no way of ascertaining the tunes used for many of the themes unless the particular melodic settings are referred to, or the texts are found to agree with songs preserved in contemporary collections. This, of course, is most regrettable in the case of Shakespeare's works. With the destruction by fire of the Globe theater in 1613, most of the performing MSS., including the music, was irretrievably lost. None of the music to Lyly's lyrics in his plays has been found. It is possible that he composed some of it, if not all, since his musicianship in connection with the choristers of Paul's, and his musical training at Oxford could very well have qualified him to do so.¹²

While Greene and Peele were also University men, and presumably had the customary two terms of musical training, they have not been credited with the musical settings of their lyrics. No doubt many of them were written to be sung to existing melodies. As might be expected, more effort has been exerted in determining the music for Shakespeare's lyrics. It has been found that his "O Mistress Mine" in Twelfth Night (II iii 40-) was set to an old tune, and that both Morley and Byrd made arrangements for it,¹³ which one, if either, of these arrangements was used in the original production of the play, is a matter of conjecture. But Morley is conceded to have provided the musical setting for the duet of the pages, "It was a lover and his lass," in As You Like It (V iii 16-).¹⁴ Vincent attributes the

¹² Ibid., p.77.

¹³ Elson, op. cit., 209.

¹⁴ Vincent, Charles, Fifty Shakespeare Songs. (Boston, Oliver Ditson Co., 1906), p.43.

musical settings of the lyrics in The Tempest to Robert Johnson, a contemporary composer. He also credits him with that of "Take, O take those lips away" in Measure for Measure (IV I i-), and suggests that further search may result in discovering music he composed for other plays.¹⁵ The search continues, but unless sources can be found other than the existing available collections, there apparently is no prospect of positive achievement.

There emerges from the study of the whole body of lyrics and their relationship with the scenes in which they appear, the question as to whether the dramatists of the period perceived the close union of music and drama so strongly felt by their Italian contemporaries who were responsible for the origin of the opera. The answer in nearly every case is negative. The majority of the songs seem to have been inserted for pleasant diversion to please the public's taste for music rather than for any textual significance. A few exceptions may be cited. The first song in Lyly's Endymion (III iii 115-) is remarkable for its textual relationship. Tophas is asleep, and the three pages, Epiton, Dares and Samias decide to wake him with a song:

Epiton. Here snores Tophas,
That amorous ass,
Who loves Dipsas,
With face so sweet,
Nose and chin meet.

All three At sight of her each fury skips
 And flings into her lap their whips.

Dares. Holla, holla in his ear.
Samias. The witch sure thrust her fingers there.
Epiton. Cramp him, or wring the fool by th' nose.
Darias. Or clap some burning flax to his toes.
Samias. What music's best to wake him?
Epiton. Bow wow, let bandogs shake him.

¹⁵ Ibid., preface xvii.

Darias. Let adders hiss in's ear;
Samias. Else earwigs wriggle there.
Epiton. No, let him batten, when his tongue
 Once goes, a cat is not worse strung.

All three But if he ope nor mouth nor eyes,
 He may in time sleep himself wise.

Similar fitness of song with scene is apparent in the song to Celia in Valpone (III vi 175). Of the many lyrics in Shakespeare's works, there are surprisingly few that have any relationship with the plot. Autolycus' song "Will you buy any tape" in Winter's Tale (IV iii 318-), "Who is Sylvia" in Two Gentlemen of Verona (IV ii 38-), and "Tell me where is fancy bred" in The Merchant of Venice (III ii 63-) show some connection, though rather loose, between the lyric and the scene. But in most cases, another lyric would have been as appropriate as the one that is sung; for example: the songs of Winter and Spring at the end of Love's Labour's Lost, "Under the Greenwood Tree" in As You Like It (II v 1-), "Sigh no more ladies, sigh no more" in Much Ado About Nothing (II iii 64-), "Take, O Take those lips away" in Measure for Measure (IV i 1-).

That opera was not born in England at this time has been perplexing for music and drama historians alike, considering the brilliant talent of the musicians of the period such as Byrd, Weelkes, Morley, Dowland, Wilbye, Ford, Campion, Johnson, Gibbons, and the stellar array of dramatists such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, Lyly, Greene, Peele, Kyd, Dekker and others. It was not because the audience was inimical to music in their drama; on the contrary, it has been shown that they liked it and expected it. Musical preludes, inter-act and inter-scene music, and an abundance of song within the drama itself, testifies to the fact. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the music connected with the drama was merely supplementary entertainment

and not an intrinsic part of it. This loose relationship existed from the very beginning of England's efforts in dramatic production and tended to continue. And even when, in the Restoration period, English opera was finally born, there was no attempt to integrate the music with the action.

CHAPTER III

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND NOMENCLATURE IN THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

The numerous references to instruments and musical terminology in the plays of the period implies a mutual understanding of them by the playwrights and the audience. But because of radical changes that subsequently have been made, the modern reader's conception of them is usually vague, if not erroneous.

In orienting ourselves to the instrumental music of the Elizabethan era, we must bear in mind that most of the instruments of the modern orchestra, including the violin, 'cello, contra-bass, cornet, clarinet, flute, French horn and bassoons, are of a later period and that the violin, just making its appearance, was not popular in England until a half century later. Yet we find instruments of the Elizabethan period that correspond in principle, if not in sound, to the modern orchestral instruments. In fact, most of our present-day musical instruments are a direct out-growth of those used during this period. With the invention in the seventeenth century of mechanical keys for stopping the finger holes, and the still more important discovery, in the nineteenth century, of valves that made possible the production of the chromatic scale, many new instruments were developed. These included the clarinets, bassoon and flute with key mechanism, and the cornet, tuba, trumpet and French horn with valves. Consequently, concept based on knowledge of modern instruments is anachronous, and hence erroneous, even in regard to instruments bearing the same name.

The eighteenth century invention of the modern piano, with its hammer-struck strings and broader tonal range made obsolete such key-board

instruments as the spinet, virginal, harpsichord, and clavichord. Of these key-board instruments, by far the most popular, in Elizabethan times, was the virginal. It was not, however, a common instrument of the theater despite its popularity otherwise. It is, nevertheless, alluded to occasionally in the text of the drama, thus signifying a common knowledge of the instrument.

Their stringed instruments, the most popular of which were the lute, cittern and various viols, were also eventually replaced or improved upon. Whereas most of the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century stringed instruments were fretted, that is, having gut or metal crossbars on the fingerboard to facilitate finger position, and had as many as eleven strings, the comparable modern instruments are without benefit of frets (except the guitar, similar to the cittern, and not in the modern orchestra), and have only four strings.

Mention has been made of instrumental music in the entertainment preceding the plays at the private theaters, and also of its use between acts. (Ch. II) In addition, stage directions scattered throughout the plays specify that "recorders play," "hautboys play," "music sounds," "music of pipe and tabor," "horn winded," "a flourish of trumpets," etc. Such meager directions, however, give the modern reader little indication of what was actually heard. This is particularly true if he has no understanding of the instruments producing the music. The frequent allusion to the popular instruments of the time in the form of puns, witticisms and various kinds of word-play, makes even more imperative an acquaintance with them.

Although many of the playwrights used the instruments, and their characteristics in figures of speech, Shakespeare outranks them all in respect to frequency, ease and aptness of expression. Naylor, who has evidently troubled himself with the count, says:

Out of the thirty-seven plays of Shakespeare, there are no less than thirty-two which contain interesting references to music and musical matters in the text itself. There are also over three hundred stage directions which are musical in their nature, and these occur in thirty-six out of thirty-seven plays.¹

Shakespeare's insight into the musician's temperament and technic, his knowledge of instruments, of singing, and of all the special terminology that goes with music making, is likely to mislead one into believing that Shakespeare was a musician. But a close examination of his works reveals that in every instance his use of musical allusion is squarely rooted in the popular musical practices of the time, and that it is inaccurate to impute to him a preoccupation with music in any sense more than with other fields in which his knowledge appears remarkable. All was grist to his mill; music served him in turning a pun, in making a humorous figure of speech, or in enhancing a scene. That he recognized its inherent possibilities more fully and made more liberal and accurate use of its potentialities is only saying that Shakespeare was Shakespeare. It is, however, remarkable in view of the fact that he had the advantage of only a grammar school education, and, as far as is known, no formal music instruction such as his early contemporaries, the University Wits, could claim. His knowledge was based on observation of common cultural practices, and

¹ Naylor, op. cit., p.3.

supplemented, there is every reason to believe, by association with musicians and writers on musical matters, particularly Thomas Morley, who set one, if not more, of Shakespeare's lyrics to music, and who was the author of A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music, published in 1597. It is logical to assume that he extracted any information that might suit his purpose from any source available to him.

Although he is consistently accurate in his plays with reference to musical instruments, there is evidence of his lack of familiarity with the virginal, one of the most popular instruments of the time. Only once is reference made, and then, in such a way as to suggest mere casual observation that it was a key-board instrument: in Winter's Tale (I ii 125), Leontes, jealous of Hermione's attention to Polixenes, angrily speaks of her "Still virginnalling upon his palm." But there is evidence in his one hundred twenty-eighth sonnet that he had a false concept of the virginal's mechanism. Its "jacks," which in reality stood at the back of the keyboard and whose attached quills strummed the strings, are spoken of as striking the palm of the lady's hand, which, of course, was impossible. Nevertheless his appreciation of the instrument is unquestionable, in spite of his imperfect technical knowledge concerning it:

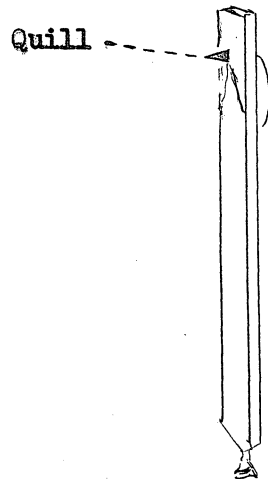
Sonnet 128

How oft, when thou, my music, music play'st,
 Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
 With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st
 The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
 Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap
 To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
 Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest
 reap,
 At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!
 To be so tickled, they would change their state
 And situation with those dancing chips,

O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait
 Making dead wood more blest than living lips.
 Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
 Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

Since the 'jacks' of the virginal supplied the substance of many figures of speech, further explanation should be given. Curt Sachs, in his History of Musical Instruments describes their location and function:

At the rear of each key stood a jack, that is, a small upright piece of wood, from which projected a small quill or a leather tongue. These jacks were not fastened to the keys, but stood free, and were held in an upright position by a kind of rack inserted in the soundboard, and across the full length of the box. When the key was pressed the jack jumped up, making the quill pluck the string, and then, owing to a springing device, fell back without plucking the string again.²



VIRGINAL JACK

That Ben Jonson understood the mechanism of the jacks on the virginal is indicated by his appropriately contrived simile in Volpone (II i 615-):
 Disguised as a mountebank, Volpone discourses on the merits of a secret

² Sachs, Curt, The History of Musical Instruments. (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1940), p.335.

powder which he says has the power "So that wherever it touches, in youth it perpetually preserves, in age restores the complexion; seats your teeth, did they dance like virginal jacks, firm as a wall; makes them white as ivory that were black as--."

Naturally, the most common instruments of the period are the ones referred to most frequently in the drama. And conversely, the drama gives indication of those that were currently popular. A passage from the early comedy, Ralph Roister Doister (II i 20-), shows how commonplace were the lute, recorder and gittern (or cittern). Dobinet, speaking of Ralph says:

With every woman is he in some love's pang,
Then up to our lute at midnight, twangledom twang,
Then twang with our sonnets, and twang with our dumps,
An heigho from our heart, as heavy as lead lumps;
Then to our recorder with toodleloodle poop,
As the howlet out of an ivy bush should hoop.
Anon to our gittern, thrumpledum, thrumpledum thrum,
Thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrumpledum, thrum.

No matter when or where a scene was to have taken place, if musical instruments are mentioned, they are invariably those of English culture. This fact is apparent in Shakespeare's anachronous list of instruments in connection with the Roman victory over the Volscians in Cariolanus (V iv 49-). The triumph is heralded by trumpets, hautboys and drums, while the messenger says, "...why, hark you!

The trumpets, sackbuts, psalteries, and fifes
Tabors, and cymbals, and the shouting Romans,
Make the sun dance. Hark you!"

Next to the virginal, the lute was the most popular; this alone might account for its being mentioned in the drama so frequently. But its characteristic features were such as to make it the object of humorous incident, word-quibbling, and punning, especially when attacked by the wit of

Shakespeare. Much of his intended humor pertaining to it misses the mark, however, unless one understands the status of the lute in the Elizabethan social structure, and appreciates the complexities of the instrument itself. Curt Sachs says of it:

The lute competed favorably with the keyboard instruments and having the advantage of being easier to carry about, as well as having a longer tradition, it became the universal instrument. It could replace in an ensemble any other instrument, high or low; it accompanied singers, indeed it could reproduce all parts of an instrumental or choral composition.³

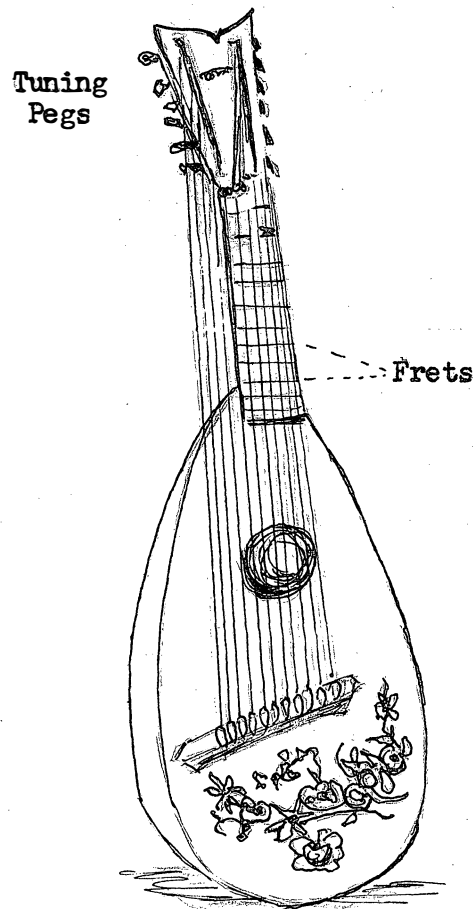
Castiglione sanctioned it as a suitable instrument for a lady as well as a gentleman. In practice, even the courtesan favored it; its subtle powers were appreciated by every rank! Thus we find playing it, not only Ophelia (in the 1603 quarto of Hamlet, according to Fitzgibbon),⁴ Queen Katherine's maid in King Henry the Eighth, but also Bellafront in Dekker's Honest Whore, and Fransechina in Marston's Dutch Courtezan.

The idiosyncracies of the instrument are of particular importance. Constructed with a flat front and a pear-shaped back, it had eleven gut strings, the lower ten of which were in pairs of duplicate pitch, while the string of highest pitch was single. Thus, the eleven strings were tuned to six pitches, each pair four tones apart. Every key change necessitated a complete retuning of the strings, which was often both annoying and time-consuming. A contemporary writer remarked, "If a lute-player have lived

³ Ibid., p.344.

⁴ Fitzgibbon, H. Macaulay, Instruments and Their Music in the Elizabethan Drama, Musical Quarterly, (New York, G. Schirmer and Co., 1931), XVII, 324.

eighty years, he has probably spent about sixty years tuning his instrument!"⁵ The strings were usually plucked with the fingers, although a small wooden or ivory plectron was used by some players. On the fingerboard were eight frets or metal crossbars that assisted the player in finding the



LUTE

proper notes. A special tablature, more elaborate, but not dissimilar to that provided above a piano score for the ukelele, was used instead of notes

⁵ Quoted in Elson, op. cit., p.47.

on a staff. The shape of the lute, its fretted fingerboard, and particularly its difficult tuning are the characteristics that seem to have elicited the most humor in dramatic textual reference.

In two different instances in The Taming of the Shrew, Shakespeare capitalizes on the comic potentialities of the lute. Baptista has engaged Hortensio to give his daughters, Katharine and Bianca, musical instruction. The incorrigible Katharine's first lute lesson has resulted in Hortensio's head going through the lute; she has not 'fretted,' but 'fumed'(II i 141-):

(Re-enter Hortensio, with his head broken)

Baptista. How now, my friend? why dost thou look so pale?

Hortensio. For fear, I promise you, if I look pale.

Baptista. What, will my daughter prove a good musician?

Hortensio. I think she'll sooner prove a soldier;
Iron may hold her, but never lutes.

Baptista. Why, then thou canst not break her to the lute?

Hortensio. Why, no; for she hath broke the lute to me.
I did but tell her she mistook her frets,
And bow'd her hand to teach her fingering
When, with a most impatient devilish spirit,
'Frets call you these?' quoth she, 'I'll fume with them.'
And, with that word, she struck me on the head,
And through the instrument my pate made way;
An there I stood amazed for a while,
As on a pillory, looking through the lute;
While she did call me, --rascal fiddler,
And --twangling Jack with twenty such vile terms,
As she had studied to misuse me so.

In the next Act, Lucentio, who has been engaged to teach the two daughters academic subjects, including Latin and philosophy, argues with Hortensio as to who should be the first to give Bianca her lesson. The whole scene is given over to quibbling about music, but the portion that deals with the time-consuming job of tuning the Lute is quoted here (III i 1-). Mention is made of the higher and lower pitched strings as 'treble' and 'bass;' Lucentio's suggestion to "Spit in the hole, man, and tune again"

refers to the fact that moisture applied to the tuning peg helped to make it stick:

Lucentio. Fiddler, forbear; you grow too forward, sir:
Have you so soon forgot the entertainment
Her sister Katharine welcomed you withal?

Hortensio. But, wrangling pedant, this' the patroness
Of heavenly harmony:

Then give me leave to have prerogative;
An when in music we have spent an hour,
Your lecture shall have leisure for as much.

Lucentio. Preposterous ass, that never read so far
To know the cause why music was ordain'd!
Was it not to refresh the mind of man
After his studies or his usual pain?
Then give me leave to read philosophy,
And while I pause, serve in your harmony.

Hortensio. Sirrah, I will not bear these braves of thine.

Bianca. Why, gentlemen, you do me double wrong.
To strive for that which resteth in my choice:
I am no breeching scholar in the schools;
I'll not be tied to hours nor'pointed times,
But learn my lessons as I please myself.
And, to cut off all strife, here sit we down:-
Take you your instrument, play you the whiles;
His lecture will be done ere you have tuned.

Hortensio. You'll leave his lecture when I am in tune?

Lucentio. That will be never:--tune your instrument.
(Hortensio retires)

Lucentio proceeds with Bianca's lesson, and after a time,

Hortensio interrupts:

Hortensio. Madam, my instrument's in tune.

Bianca. Let's hear. (Hortensio plays)

O, fie! the treble jars.

Lucentio. Spit in the hole, man,
and tune again.

Bianca and Lucentio go on with their Latin, but are again interrupted:

Hortensio. Madam, 'tis now in tune.

Lucentio. All but the bass.

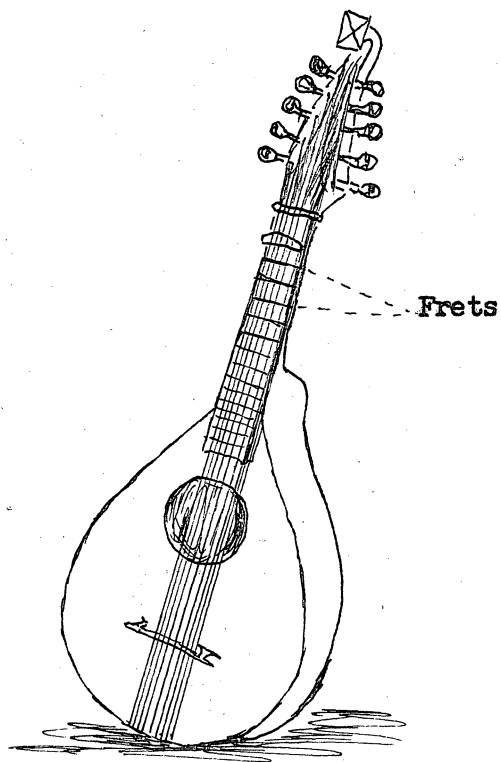
Hortensio. The bass is right; 'tis the base knave that jars.--

The pun on 'bass' (base) in the last line here, and on 'fret' in the fore-going quotation from Act II Scene I, are typical of Shakespeare's use of terms connected with musical instruments for turning a pun. While these

are both of a comic nature, Shakespeare as deftly contrives one to suit a dramatic scene. For example, in Hamlet's scathing rebuke of Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, he metaphorically refers to himself as a 'pipe,' or recorder, and then changes to a pun on 'fret.' (III iii 386-):

'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me."

Less frequently mentioned in the drama, but still an important instrument of the time, was the Cittern, or Gittern as it was sometimes



CITTERN or GITTERN

called. It is mentioned by Chaucer, and from his day on down it had been one of the most common instruments for accompanying songs. Although eight of them are listed in the long inventory of musical instruments

belonging to Henry VIII,⁶ the cittern was more especially the instrument of the common people; just as the guitar, to which it is closely related, is one of our more humble instruments. Every barber shop had one or more hanging on its wall for customers to entertain themselves while waiting their turn. Reference is made to this custom in Jonson's Epicoene: Morose, who hates noise, finds after he has married Epicoene, the silent woman, that she has a sharp tongue; and, cursing the barber whose shop he had avoided because of its noise and music, he says, "I have married his citterne, that's common to all men." (III v 54).

Of the bowed instruments, the Viols, rather than the violins, were more popular in England during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. There were two distinct families of them: leg-viols or viola da gamba and arm viols or viola da braccio, and each family consisted of three sizes with corresponding pitch ranges: treble, tenor and bass. They were generally sold in 'sets,' so that a 'chest of viols' usually contained two trebles, two tenors, and two basses. Such a homogeneous ensemble was referred to as a 'whole consort' whereas a mixed combination was known as a 'broken consort.' Thus a group of instrumentalists playing nothing but viols was a 'whole consort,' but if a virginal, recorder, lute or any instrument outside a particular family entered the ensemble it became a 'broken consort' and its music 'broken music.'⁷ Shakespeare evidently had a consort of viols in mind when, in Romeo and Juliet

⁶ Grove's Dictionary, II, 173.

⁷ Sachs, Curt, Our Musical Heritage (New York, Prentice Hall Inc., 1948), p.192.

(III ii 48-), the double meaning of 'consort' becomes an immediate cause of the street fight between Tybalt and Mercutio. Mercutio twists Tybalt's meaning of the word to a musical connotation, and is insulted by his own interpretation of it:

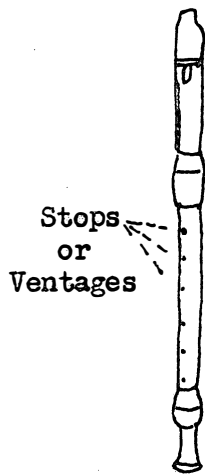
Tybalt. Mercutio, thou consortest with Romeo.
Mercutio. Consort? What dost thou make us minstrels?
 An thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords:
 Here's my fiddlestick; (draws sword) here's that shall make
 you dance.
 Zounds, consort!

In As You Like It (I ii 133-), after Rosalind has listened to Le Beau's account of the Duke's wrestler breaking the ribs of three of his opponents, she asks, "But is there any else longs to see this broken music in his sides? is there yet another dotes upon rib-breaking?...."

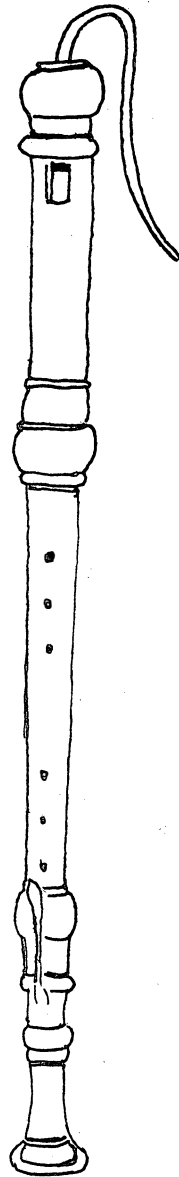
In Twelfth Night we find that Sir Andrew is accomplished "on the vol-de-gamboys," indicating that he probably was able to play on all three: treble, tenor, and bass. This ability among others, according to Sir Toby, should serve to recommend him to Olivia, Maria's mistress (I iii 25):

Maria. ...he's a very fool and a prodigal.
Sir Toby. Fie that you'll say so! He plays o' th'
 viol-de-gamboys, and speaks three or four languages

Of the wind instruments, the Recorders deserve special attention, not only because their music figured significantly in society, especially in connection with the town Waits (see ch. I), but particularly because they had an important relationship with the drama: in the external music--prelude, inter-act music and Jig afterpiece, music within the drama itself, and in numerous textual allusions. The finger holes, called 'stops' seem to have shared equally with the 'frets' of the viol and lute as material for punning. It should be understood that the names flute, pipe and



TREBLE RECORDER



BASS RECORDER

ONE-HANDED FLUTE,
or PIPE, used with
the Tabor (drum)

recorder were used interchangeably and referred to the same family of instruments. This is confusing for those who associate the modern, transverse-blown flute with the sixteenth-century instrument of the same name with which, otherwise, it has nothing in common, either in acoustical principle,

structure, or method of tone production. From the above drawings, it can be seen that the structure of the instruments varied as to size and shape. This variation governed both the tonal range and quality of tone. Each had a mouthpiece similar to that of an ordinary tin whistle; and none of them had a bell, the absence of which caused them to have a pale tone. Although we have no instrument in our modern band or orchestra comparable to them, the little instruments such as the tonette, flutophone, and recorder, that are now commonly used in pre-instrument classes in our elementary grades, are very much like the treble recorder. (# 1 drawing) According to Sachs, they were very adaptable instruments, blending well with the voice as well as with other instruments in 'broken consort,' and were "unsurpassed in dignity" in 'whole consort.'⁸

Throughout the plays of the period there is frequent mention, both in stage directions and text, of the 'pipe and tabor.' This combination is of especial interest because one person could perform on both instruments simultaneously. This seemingly difficult feat was possible because the particular pipe of the recorder family that was used could be fingered with one hand while the tabor, or drum, slung from the shoulders, was played with the other. Although this pipe had only three finger holes or 'stops,' it was possible to obtain a wide range of tones and to perform very pleasing music on it, as those that have heard the Basques, who still use the pipe and tabor for accompanying their folk dances, can testify. In sixteenth-century England, it was also the pipe and tabor combination that usually furnished the music for the folk dances. And whenever they

⁸ Sachs, History, p.309.

are mentioned in the drama, we can be almost certain that there was dancing. In Dekker's Shoemaker's Holiday there is absolute evidence of it (III ii 23):

(a noise within of tabor and pipe)

Lord Mayor. What noise is this?

Eyre. Oh my Lord Mayor, a crew of good fellows that for love of your honour are come hither with a morris-dance. Come in my Mesopotamians cheerily.

Shakespeare's references to the recorders have caused some to conjecture that he played them himself.⁹ This is entirely possible, but not necessarily probable; his metaphoric use of the conventional terminology connected with the instrument, while accurate, is not remarkable from the standpoint of musicianship, but nevertheless shows that he had a familiarity and appreciation that transcended mere casual observation. His easy command of the terminology pertinent to the recorders is apparent in the conversation between Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern following the tense scene of the Dumb Show and play. The musicians with their recorders have come on stage, and at the sight of them Hamlet interrupts his own speech to Rosencrantz (III ii 360-):

Hamlet. ...O, the recorders! Let me see one. To withdraw with you--why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as you would drive me into a toil?

Guil. O my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

Hamlet. I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guil. My lord, I cannot.

Hamlet. I pray you.

Guil. Believe me, I cannot.

Hamlet. I do beseech you.

Guil. I know no touch of it, my lord.

⁹ Fitzgibbon, op. cit., p.328.

Hamlet. It is as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumbs, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

Guil. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony. I have not the skill.

Hamlet. Why look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me.

In contrast, Shakespeare used the same instrument and terminology to point up the comic in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Quince has spoken the prologue to the Pyramus and Thisby show with the punctuation all in the wrong place. This is cause for remark by Theseus, Lysander and Hippolyta (V i 118-):

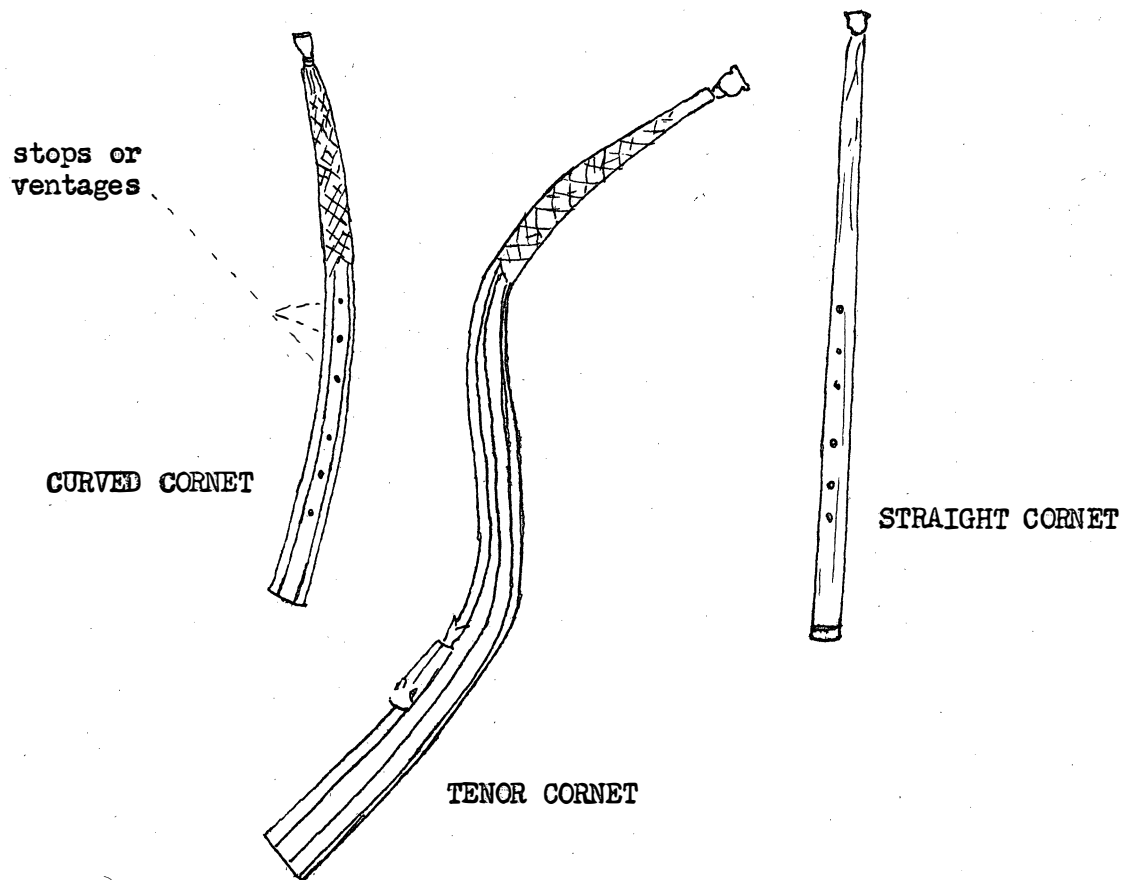
Theseus. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lysander. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

Hippolyta. Indeed he hath play'd on his prologue like a child on a recorder-- a sound, but not in government.

It has been pointed out that the flutes of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century belonged to the family of recorders and should not, therefore, be confused with the modern instrument of that name. They are mentioned by Enobarbus in his description of Cleopatra's barge in Antony and Cleopatra (II ii 197): "...the oars were silver, which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made The water which they beat to follow faster, As amorous of their strokes."

The Cornet of this period, like the flute, had no resemblance to our present-day instrument bearing the same name except that it had a cupped mouthpiece. Otherwise, it differed completely in shape, material, and the quality of tone it produced. Constructed from strips of wood or ivory,



its tone was more tender and less obtrusive than that of the brass valve-instrument which has replaced it in the modern orchestra. It not only blended well as accompaniment to the human voice, but as a substitute for it when a 'voice' was not obtainable for one or more parts in a song. According to Sachs, "a good cornetist was able to adorn melodies with all

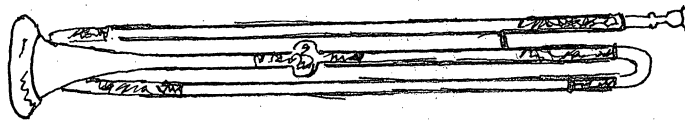
the graces in which singers excelled."¹⁰ The cornet was often simply called 'horn;' therefore, the same instrument is referred to in such stage directions as "horns winded" or "cornets sound." They are the exclusive instrument specified for accompanying the masque within Marston's play, The Malcontent (V v 70-125), and for the Dumb show preceding the Second Act of Gorboduc, which seems to indicate that there was no change in the traditional use of the instrument in the drama throughout the latter half of the century. Although practically all references to the cornet, or horn, are found in the stage directions, occasional textual recognition is given, as in Peele's Old Wives Tale (1.825): The Ghost of Jack says to Eumenides, "Master, wind this horn, and see what will happen." Eumenides 'winds the horn,' and Venalia enters.

The Trumpet differed from our modern instrument until the nineteenth century when the valve mechanism was invented. Prior to this important invention, the trumpet was merely a long, curved brass tube with a bell at the end; similar to, though longer than, our military bugle, and likewise capable of producing only open tones. Serving a corresponding function, it was the appurtenance of every herald attached to a sovereign, nobleman, or person of rank. In this capacity it was used to announce the approach of royalty or other characters of unusual importance in the drama. Since characters of this type were more common to the tragedies, stage directions such as "trumpets sound" and "a flourish of trumpets" are less frequently found in the comedies. Yet here also, if the occasion required, the trumpets were called upon to serve the same purpose. A comic effect,

¹⁰ Sachs, History, p.324.

based on incongruity, that was not likely to have been missed by the Elizabethan theater-goer, was achieved through the ostentations heralding of the Pyramus and Thisbe show in Midsummer Night's Dream (V i 106). (For further discussion of 'flourishes' see Ch.II)

TRUMPET



The Sackbut is the prototype of the modern trombone and resembles it both in structure and tone quality. The only important difference is the Sackbut's shorter length of slide and consequent smaller range of pitch.¹¹ Although relatively few references to them are made in the drama, there is no reason to doubt that sackbuts were among the instruments played when music was indicated in general terms as "music" or "musicians play." The English name 'sackbut' was a derivative of the French sacqueboute meaning pull-push, while the name 'trombone' was derived from the Italian Tromba, or broken trumpet.¹² The regard that the Englishmen had for this instrument can be estimated from a contemporary writer's statement: "Nowadays there is no workman so humble that he does not wish to have hautboys and

¹¹ Grove's Dictionary, V, 162.

¹² Ibid., 162; Sachs, History, p.326.

sackbuts at his wedding."¹³

The Hautboy is the counterpart of the modern oboe, and differs from it only in respect to the latter's key mechanism and perfected pitch on certain notes. Their prominence is evident in the early forms of dramatic presentation, and it continued undiminished throughout the sixteenth century and into the next. The hautboys accompanied the Dumb Show preceding Act IV in Gorboduc and also the one in Hamlet (III ii 145-); and it is their music that is generally connected with a Royal banquet, masque or procession as they occur in the dramas. Although Shakespeare's works contain many stage directions involving them, there is only one textual reference, according to the concordance of his dramas, and this occurs in King Henry the Fourth Part II (III ii 351-). Falstaff, soliloquizing on Justice Shallow's lying and prating, scornfully remarks, "...for you might have thrust him and all his apparel into an eel-skin; the case of a treble hautboy was a mansion for him, a court:--and now has he land and beefs." This reference is interesting in that it presupposes Shakespeare's knowledge of the fact that there were three sizes of hautboys with corresponding ranges of pitch--treble, tenor and bass. Jonson's mention of them in Epicone indirectly substantiates, in humorous context, their customary use by the Waits. Morose, who cannot bear noise, has paid a pension to keep the Waits out of his section of town (I i 146-):

Tru-wit. A trumpet should fright him terribly, or the hau'boyes.

Clermont. Out of his senses. The waights of the city have a pension of him not to come neere that ward....

¹³ Arbeau, Thoinot, Orchesographie, English translation by C. W. Beaumont (London, J. M. Dent and Co., 1925), p.51.

All of the common musical instruments of the period were significant to the Elizabethan drama in furnishing supplementary music, in serving as a basis for word-play, figures of speech and allusion to prevailing social practices.

In addition, musical terminology pertaining to singing techniques, and to their system of music notation, supplied the playwrights, especially Shakespeare, substance for their wit. As such, it must necessarily be assumed that both audience and playwright had an easy familiarity with the nomenclature involved. Since most of the musical terminology of that period is now obsolete, explanation is essential for realizing the humor on the same basis as the Elizabethan.

Mastery of the 'gamut' system of syllabic singing (ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la) was considered essential in developing ability to read music at sight. This was a complicated plan of musical scales consisting of hexachords, or six successive tones with the half-tone occurring between the third and fourth intervals. 'Ut' was a contraction of the word 'gamut' and denoted the first tone of the hexachord, corresponding to 'do' in our present-day syllabic system of scale singing. Their 'ut' became 'fa' when modulating to the dominant key of the original hexachord. For instance, 'ut' in the key of C, became 'fa' in the key of G; then 're' became 'sol,' 'mi' became 'la' etc.¹⁴ That Shakespeare understood this system, as did everyone else of the period who laid claim to a liberal education, is made evident in the lute lesson scene of The Taming of the Shrew (III i 69-):

¹⁴ Grove's Dictionary, II, 141, 390.

Hortensio. Madam, before you touch the instrument,
To learn the order of my fingering,
I must begin with rudiments of art;
To teach you gamut in a briefer sort,
More pleasant, pithy, and effectual,
Than hath been taught by any of my trade:
And there it is in writing, fairly drawn.

Bianca. Why, I past my gamut long ago.

Hortensio. Yet read the gamut of Hortensio.

Bianca (reads). 'Gamut I am, the ground of all accord,
A re, to plead Hortensio's passion;
B mi, Bianca, take him for thy lord,
C fa ut, that loves with all affection:
D sol re, one cliff, two notes have I:
E la mi, show pity, or I die.'
Call you this gamut? tut, I like it not:
Old fashions please me best; I am not so nice,
To change true rules for old inventions.

The sol-fa-ing and the vocal gamut, of course, had nothing to do with the fingering of the lute, and therefore made Hortensio's application the more amusing. Bianca, surmising his motive, protests his method of teaching with, "I am past my gamut long ago," and suggests that the old gamut pleases her better than Hortensio's alteration of it.

Shakespeare's frequent and accurate use of musical terms taken from the singer's technique shows at once that he was more certain of his ground in the vocal than in the instrumental field. This might very well be attributed to his association with Thomas Morley whose book A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music (1597) describes in detail the rudiments of the art of singing and the technicalities connected with it.

Another scene in which the humor rests on the understanding of vocal terminology may be cited from Two Gentlemen of Verona, (I ii 79-):

Julia. Some love of yours hath writ to you in rhyme.

Lucetta. That I might sing it, madam, to a tune.
Give me a note: your ladyship can set.

Julia. As little by such toys as may be possible.
Best sing it to the tune of 'Light o' Love.'

Lucetta. It is too heavy for so light a tune.

Julia. Heavy! belike it hath some burden then?
Lucetta. Ay, and melodious were it, would you sing it.
Julia. And why not you?
Lucetta. I cannot reach so high.
Julia. Let's see your song. How now, minion!
Lucetta. Keep tune there still, so you will sing it out:
 And yet methinks I do not like this tune.
Julia. You do not?
Lucetta. No, madam; it is too sharp.
Julia. You, minion, are too saucy.
Lucetta. Nay, now you are too flat
 And mar the concord with too harsh a descant:
 There wanteth but a mean to fill your song.
Julia. The mean is drown'd with your unruly bass.
Lucetta. Indeed, I bid the base for Proteus.

"Give me a note your ladyship can set" meant for Julia to indicate the proper pitch within the range of their voices. Setting a lyric to a familiar tune was common practice; here Julia suggests setting Proteus' rhyme to the popular melody known as 'Light of Love.' It was considered a 'light' tune because it went without 'burden' or refrain such as a 'hey, nonny-non,' or a 'hey, trolly, loly,' at the end of a line, couplet, or stanza.¹⁵ The 'descant' of which Lucetta speaks pertained to the extempore improvisation of additional parallel melodies in harmony with the original, or given, melody, sometimes called the bass. The 'mean' referred to the second descant which constituted the third part. Julia's proposal that they give the bass, or melody, to Proteus implies that the two girls will furnish the two descant parts. Sachs describes the usual procedure for singing the song in the way Lucetta and Julia indicate:

The three singers performing a descantus, sang from the same one staff notation, the first singer as it stood, the second in meane-sight, a third higher, and the third in treble-sight, a sixth higher. There was an exception

¹⁵ Shakespeare refers to 'Light O' love' going without burden in Much Ado About Nothing (III iv 40). See, also, Grove's Dictionary, I, 422.

only for the first and the last note of a piece; these were accompanied in the fifth and the octave, to make the beginning and the end perfectly consonant.¹⁶

It was generally assumed that a lady or gentlemen could sing a descant extemporaneously or to read such a part at sight. (See Ch.I) Songs with printed or 'pricked' descants were commonly known as 'prick-songs.'¹⁷ The term was a familiar one, and it is interesting to compare Shakespeare's use of it with Lyly's. In Romeo and Juliet (II iv 21-), Mercutio likens Tybalt's skill with the sword to Benvolio's ability to sing a prick-song; "He fights as you sing a prick-song, keeps time distance and proportion; rests me his minim rest, one, two, and the third in your bosom." Lyly's much less remarkable reference to the term in Campaspe (V i 45), becomes still more noticeable when we consider the fact that Lyly had musical training and that Shakespeare probably had none whatever.

(Trico singeth)

What bird so sings, yet so dos wayle?
O', 'tis the rauish'd nightingale!
"Iug, iug, iug, iug, tereu," she cryes,
And still her woes at midnight rise
Braue prick-song! who is't now we heare?
None but the larke so shrill and cleare.

....

The terms 'crotchet' and 'minim,' nomenclature of the medieval system of musical notation, signify the same value of tonal duration as the modern terms, quarter-note and half-note. In the above quotation from Romeo and Juliet (II iv 22), Mercutio figuratively speaks of the minim in praise of Tybalt's precise timing with the sword: "rest me his minim rest,

¹⁶Sachs, Our Musical Heritage, p.99.

¹⁷Grove's Dictionary, III, 813.

one, two, and a third in his bosom." But more often the terms are the object of humorous word-quibbling, as in Much Ado About Nothing (II iii 59):

Balthazar. Note this before my notes,--
There's not a note of mine worth the noting.
Don Pedro. Why these are very crotchets that he speaks:
Note, notes, forsooth, and noting. (Music)

The easy and frequent reference to these and other terms shows that the Elizabethan play-goer could be depended upon to grasp the meaning and appreciate the humor of any witticism built upon them. No modern playwright would risk the construction of metaphor and characterization, or the turning of a whole scene upon musical allusion, even were he, himself, sufficiently acquainted with music to do so.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, it may be concluded that the prevalence of song, dance, and allusion to various aspects of music in the drama reflect the significance of music in the lives of the people in sixteenth-century England.

The dramas were written expressly for entertainment purposes, and their success and popularity must have been, in some important measure, due to the fact that they contained a quantity of music the audiences had learned to enjoy. Projected interest could be relied upon because the songs were either familiar to them, or sung in the currently popular idiom. The Elizabethans did not merely accept the traditional practice of music being incorporated into dramatic production, but, through their own musical proclivities, fostered its continuance.

The musical preludes, inter-act music, and terpsichorean Jig afterpiece, together with the frequent use of song, dance and textual references to musical nomenclature, indicate beyond doubt, that music in the Elizabethan period was a dynamic and vital force in the social structure.

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