

# Music for Plays

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*Musicology and the Theatrical Circumstance*

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I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

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## Abstract

The field of theatrical music is one that has been largely ignored by musicology, despite its long history. The constraints of the theatre present a composition with a set of peculiar circumstances which must be addressed in analysis. This thesis explores the theatrical origins of theatrical music in terms of environments and aesthetic techniques, before exploring the relationships between them through a musicological lens. This thesis devises a musicological methodology drawn from a wide range of existing approaches, including the positivist, formalist, new musicological, and ethnomusicological schools. It also assesses additional methods from disciplines such as Literary Studies and Theatre & Performance Studies. By narrowing the subject to focus onto music written for 'straight' (or mainstream/main-stage) plays rather than musicals or opera it is possible to shine new light on the field. After exploring the contexts and available methodologies the second part of this thesis applies these ideas to the study of specific compositions for the theatre. The nineteenth-century works examined are Felix Mendelssohn's music to William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Edvard Grieg's score to Henrik Ibsen's verse-play *Peer Gynt*. These are compared to the twentieth-century works: Benjamin Britten's score to J. B. Priestley's *Johnson Over Jordan*, and André Previn's contribution to Tom Stoppard's *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*. All these works are explored through the relationship that the works have with the practical and narratological landscapes of the theatrical environment.

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Translations of texts in score extracts for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Peer Gynt* are translated from the published German by the author with reference to translations available at Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/>). Translations used in text are based on published translations as cited.

## Introduction

In the broadest sense theatrical music can be defined as any music which takes place within (or adjacent to) a theatrical performance. Concepts like theatrical performance may be difficult to define in the face of the vast variety of theatrical genres and disciplines, but we can see our subject as one which moves away from the concert platform and into the arena of the narrative. It is difficult to determine when theatre was first accompanied by music, but the appearance of the combination in the earliest forms of performance is an encouraging sign. It is believed that the theatre of the ancient Greeks was a mixture of verse, dancing and music<sup>1</sup>, and most theatrical forms across history, from Shakespeare to Circus, have incorporated music into the fabric of their performance<sup>2</sup>. The difficulty in determining the importance of music within the theatrical framework arises from lack of notated documentation in the historical record, with scores either being improvised, interpolated from external sources, or lost. Modern-day theatrical genres which contain significant proportions of musical material include musicals, vaudeville, opera, ballet, variety shows, plays, and cabarets<sup>3</sup>, providing a substantial amount of musical material that could be examined. In addition to these western cultural genres there is also a substantial field of non-western performance genres, which present opportunities to ethnographers and ethnomusicologists.

The predominant form of writing on theatrical music takes the form of handbooks designed for technicians and practitioners, which provide instruction in the various technical mechanisms that are used in the theatrical environment. However, most of these studies (perhaps rightly) tie music into the realm of sound. Books on this subject, such as *Sound and Music for the Theatre* by Kaye and Lebrecht, discuss the process of designing a sound score for a modern play, from “Research, Resources and Selection” to “Running the Show”.<sup>4</sup> While there is some discussion of the role of music in historical sound design the main thrust of the narrative is of developments in technology and their use, from the earliest renaissance instruments to the invention of digital audio tape in the 1990s. This historical account, based on technological advances, is the main thrust of most theatrical handbooks, such as the *Phaidon Theatre Manual on Lighting and Sound*, which contain details on the operation of most technologies available at the time of writing but almost nothing on the artistic intentions behind any procedure<sup>5</sup>. Even books which examine music as an integral part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Deena Kaye and James LeBrecht, *Sound and music for the theatre: the art and technique of design*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Focal Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ross Brown, *Sound: A Reader In Theatre Practice* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 49–81.

<sup>3</sup> Kaye and LeBrecht, *Sound and music for the theatre: the art and technique of design*, 4–11; Neil Fraser, *Lighting and Sound: A Phaidon Theatre Manual*, ed. David Mayer (London: Phaidon, 1993), 62.

<sup>4</sup> Kaye and LeBrecht, *Sound and music for the theatre: the art and technique of design*.

<sup>5</sup> Fraser, *Lighting and Sound: A Phaidon Theatre Manual*.

theatrical aural landscape do not comprehensively discuss the compositional techniques or musicological features of the work, instead discussing it in terms of “the [dramaturgical] principles that govern musical structures”<sup>6</sup>.

This thesis will examine the construction and composition of music within the production of a ‘straight play’. This genre, which can be seen as the mainstream of serious drama in recent times, has been chosen because of the specific aesthetic and practical challenges it presents to playwrights, directors, and composers. In particular, this thesis will examine these challenges and the methods and techniques by which composers and playwrights have dealt with them.

Despite the large number of well-known composers writing music for plays, existing academic analysis centres either on the historic circumstances surrounding these compositions, or explores them simply as stand-alone concert platform works. Therefore, there is no established musicological methodology for examining compositions that are integrated into the theatrical fabric, with the specific relationships between music and the theatre largely unexamined.

After outlining the particular environment and challenges that the theatre provides to composers and directors, this thesis will construct a working methodology that can incorporate these circumstances into a musicological examination. This will be done by evaluating and synthesising several established musicological approaches and methodologies, which will create a hybrid musical methodology specifically for the examination of an integrated music.

The final two chapters of this thesis will apply this methodology to instrumental compositions written for the theatre by Mendelssohn, Grieg, Britten, and Previn. The particular works chosen are spread across musical and theatrical eras, allowing patterns to emerge that are not simply specific to the composer or period. In examining these compositions we shall see whether there are common approaches or techniques which composers have applied to their work in order to deal with the unique circumstances in which they are operating.

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<sup>6</sup> Brown, *Sound: A Reader In Theatre Practice*, 187.

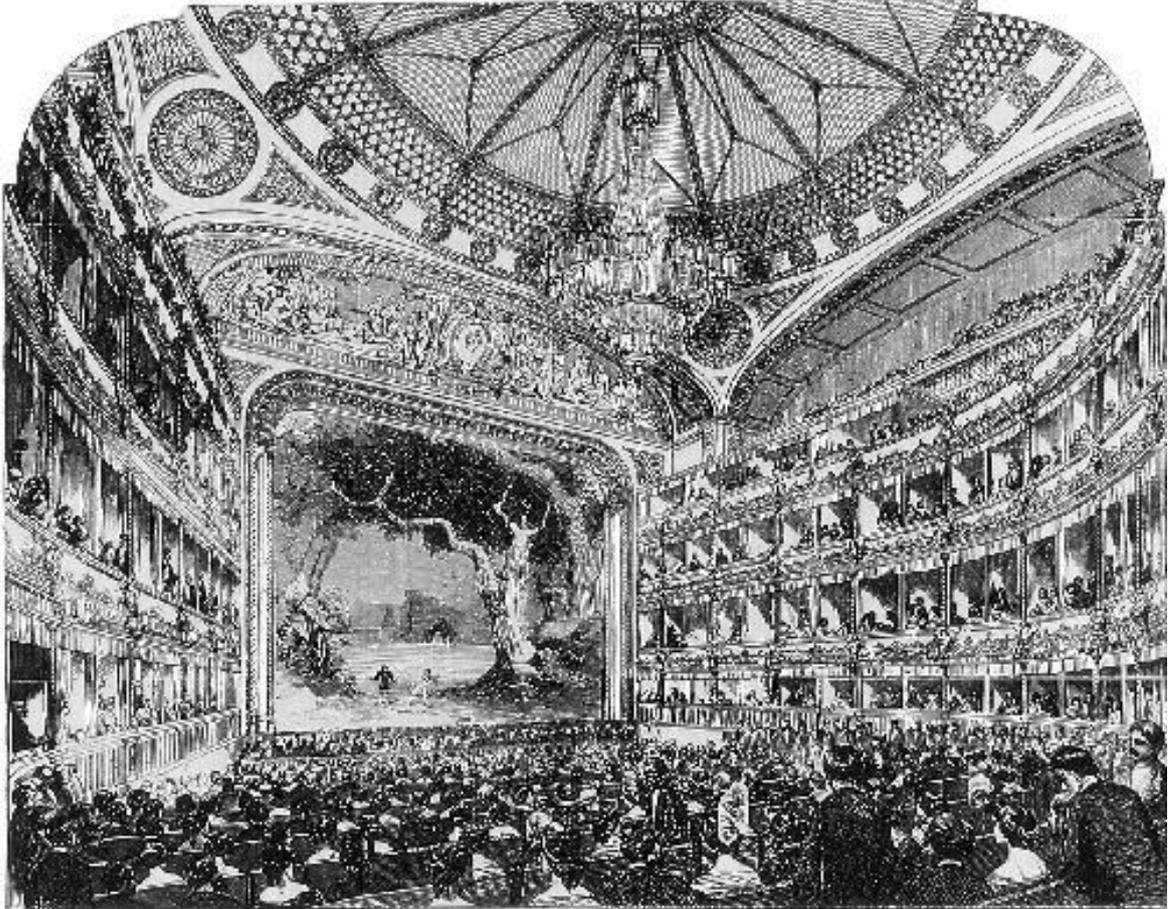


Figure 1 – Interior of the third Covent Garden theatre<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Motley Press, "Interior of the third Covent Garden theatre, designed by E.M. Barry and opened on 15 May 1858: engraving from 'The Illustrated London News' (10 July 1858)", *Grove Music Online* (2011), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/img/grove/music/F922193>.

## Chapter 1: The Nuts and Bolts of Theatrical Writing

The peculiarities of the theatrical environment and developmental process create both limitations and opportunities for theatrical composers. Just as directors and actors have learnt the conventional processes and technique of their artform, any approach of theatrical music must first ground itself in the protocols and methods of the theatrical world. This chapter will address the environment in which theatrical music is rehearsed and performed and the impact this environment has upon the act of developing and presenting the music. After brief definitions of common terms this chapter will then look at how musical conventions have arisen to deal with theatrical idiosyncrasies and problem areas. This examination will deal with the 'practical' definitions of these words, rather than the historical or conventional definitions, in order to examine their use in a specifically theatrical context. While the basic technological environment of the theatre will have already been touched upon, it is important to explore how various advances in both theatrical and musical technology have impacted upon this musical world, and so this thesis will examine the aesthetic strengths and weaknesses of the various technologies available to the musician. To conclude this chapter we will assay the theatrical developmental process: at what point(s) is music introduced to the dramatic process? This final examination of rehearsal practice, with its particular focus on the musical development of a production, will provide the historical foundation for later chapters, which will examine the implications of such developmental processes on the musical composition both in theory and in practise.

### The Constraints of the Environment

For the confined purposes of this thesis, theatrical music can be defined as music that is performed within a theatrical space. 'The Theatre' is a complex environment, providing a deep seam of material to many disciplines. For the anthropologist or ethnographer it has a richly hierarchical backstage environment, while the whole building acts as a 'liminal space'<sup>8</sup> during performance. For the electrician, engineer or mechanic the environment offers both simplicity and complexity of systems to be negotiated and utilised. For the dramatist it offers endless literary potential and a frame for the imagination. And for the musician it offers... what? An opportunity to be "of secondary importance to the speech"<sup>9</sup>? To play in an environment that is "cramped [and] packed close together"<sup>10</sup>?

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<sup>8</sup> Victor Turner, "Betwixt and between: The liminal period in rites of passage", in *Betwixt and between: patterns of masculine and feminine initiation*, ed. Louise Carus Mahdi (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 1987), 3–23, <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=Y0h00Ee19pcC>.

<sup>9</sup> Jane Bellingham, "Incidental Music", ed. Alison Latham, *The Oxford Companion to Music*, n.d., <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e3406>.

<sup>10</sup> Norman O'Neill, "Music to Stage Plays", *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 37 (1910): 85–102, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/765702>, 98.

Understanding this practical side of the theatre, as experienced by the musicians, is vital for our awareness of the music it produces. The theatrical environment has several peculiar features which have acoustic and musical impact, and so merit examination. The orchestra 'pit' is clearly the major feature of the theatre musician's career: the musician will spend the entire show in this place, usually in the dark. De rigueur in early theatre, and still found in many opera houses<sup>11</sup>, the orchestra 'pit' was simply an area at the front of the stalls at floor level where the orchestra sat. These stalls, and indeed the entire house, were lit from above throughout the performance. Wagner, in the creation of his theatre at Bayreuth, revolutionised the theatre in two ways: he plunged the entire theatre into darkness<sup>12</sup>, and he buried the orchestra pit below and beneath the stage<sup>13</sup>. These conventions quickly spread to dramatic theatres, and by the twentieth century the pit had become a standard theatrical feature. Mark Lubbock, writing in 1957, remarks that "in a Theatre the orchestra should always be hidden", and cites dramatic reasons: "otherwise the lights and movements of the conductor and players intervening between the audience and the stage prove very distracting. Apart from this, hidden music greatly adds to the illusion."<sup>14</sup> However, this impact on the dramatic meaning of the work, while vital, means the requirements of the performing musicians are sidelined: the pit is dark, has a "long narrow shape" where cramped musicians are "packed close together"<sup>15</sup>, and is the perfect receptacle for dust and debris rolling off the stage.

The pit also has unique and potentially problematic acoustic characteristics. The orchestra is playing within a space acoustically designed to bounce sound out of the pit and into the auditorium. A side effect of this internal reflectivity is an environment which presents musicians with a high level of noise. Over time this can cause damage to a musician's hearing, and performers have to carefully manage their exposure through hearing protection and careful scheduling to minimise decibel exposure.<sup>16</sup> Achieving a proper balance in the sound exiting the pit also presents a challenge to conductors or sound engineers. While technology is able to solve some of these problems now, diagrams of the Wagnerian pit show the strings section on raised platforms near the front, with brass

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<sup>11</sup> Such as *The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden*, See: Motley Press, "Interior of the third Covent Garden theatre, designed by E.M. Barry and opened on 15 May 1858: engraving from 'The Illustrated London News' (10 July 1858)".

<sup>12</sup> Tim Blanning, *The Triumph of Music* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), 148.

<sup>13</sup> John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw, "Orchestra", in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, 2011), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O903658>.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Lubbock, "Music Incidental to a Play", *The Musical Times* 98, no. 1369 (1957): 128–131, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/936528>, 130.

<sup>15</sup> O'Neill, "Music to Stage Plays", 98.

<sup>16</sup> Anders Christian Gade et al., "Acoustical Problems in Orchestra Pits; Causes and Possible Solutions", in *Proceedings of 17th International Congress on Acoustics* (Rome, 2001), [http://www.gade-mortensen.dk/files/downloads/ACG/Opera\\_halls\\_and\\_theatres/ICA\\_2001\\_Paper\\_6054.pdf](http://www.gade-mortensen.dk/files/downloads/ACG/Opera_halls_and_theatres/ICA_2001_Paper_6054.pdf).

and percussion pushed into the depths as far away from the ‘mystical chasm’ as possible.<sup>17</sup> Consequently the pit is dark, cramped and noisy: hardly the ideal working environment for a musician.

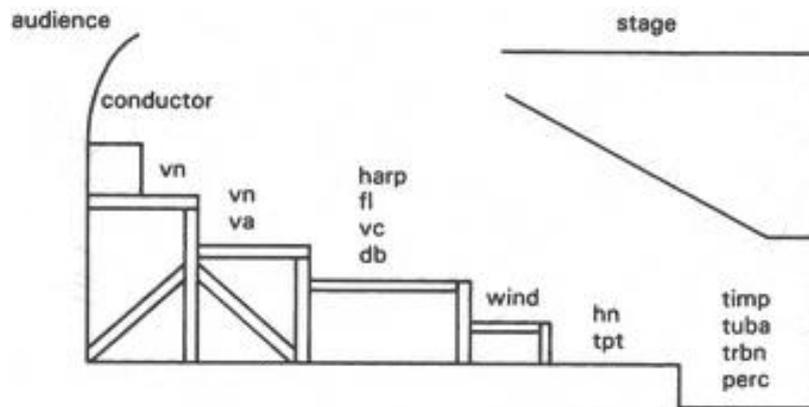


Figure 2 – Cross-section of the orchestra pit at Bayreuth, c1900<sup>18</sup>

The other main working environment for the theatrical musician is the stage itself. Throughout the development of theatre, productions have utilised “instrumentalists [who have] also appeared on the stage and in costume”<sup>19</sup> as part of the drama. Although these on-stage musicians were occasionally separate players (local military bands were popular<sup>20</sup>) they were usually drawn from the available musicians in the pit. Negotiating passage from a pit to the stage usually involves dealing with several sound-locks, avoiding delicate or high voltage electrical equipment, dealing with cumbersome or uncomfortable costumes, and scaling the set, often with a valuable musical instrument in tow. The backstage area is a dangerous space, with many regulations to prevent injury, and entering at the wrong time can be very dangerous.<sup>21</sup> Counterweight systems, suspending hundreds of tonnes of theatrical equipment, move around the stage on every axis. Occasionally heavy objects will be ‘flown’ over the pit, causing much consternation to the busy musicians beneath.

All this description is merely intended to show the extraordinary environment in which the subject of this thesis is born. The energy, complexity, and potential for risk in a theatrical production (including opera, stage plays, and musicals) are not found on any concert platform, and provide the foundation upon which the unique genre is built.

<sup>17</sup> A. Lavignac, “Cross-section of the orchestra pit at Bayreuth, c1900: after A. Lavignac, ‘The Music Dramas of Wagner and his Festival Theatre in Bayreuth’ (New York, 1902)”, ed. Stanley Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online., 2011), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/img/grove/music/OPERAF005532>; Blanning, *The Triumph of Music*, 148.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Spitzer and Zaslaw, “Orchestra”.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Helena Wulff, “Prologue: A Return to the Ballet World”, in *Ballet across borders : career and culture in the world of dancers* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 1998), 11.

## **The Constraints of Dialogue and Business**

Aside from the working environment, the literary environment—the script and score—also presents unique challenges to the theatrical musician. The interaction of music with dialogue and action necessitates the construction of intricate and piecemeal musical works. These works have built up a distinct vocabulary of terms and techniques as a foundation which must be understood before approaching the more aesthetic elements of the composition. Several terms are particularly pertinent for this subject, and these are outlined below. These are definitions based on technical practice, not historical or etymological definitions, as the key factor is their use within the theatrical context.

### **Vamp**

A vamp is a section of music that is repeated several times while dialogue or onstage action occurs. It is usually directed by the conductor's cue, and as such can cope with the unpredictability of long stretches of dialogue or indeterminable theatrical machinations.

### **Safety**

Similar to a vamp, a safety is usually a shorter optional passage designed to accommodate for unplanned hiccups in the performance. Usually added in the score as optional repeats, safeties can occasionally be improvised: "the wise conductor arranges a safeguard in the form of a repeat near the end of the number, which can be made if necessary. Then there is the question of music to bring characters on to the stage and actors who miss their entrances and do not appear till the music is nearly finished. One conductor's solution to this problem was to lean over to his cellos with the instruction, 'Tremble, boys, *ad lib.*', and the gap was filled."<sup>22</sup>

### **Business & dialogue**

These are theatrical terms for what happens onstage. Dialogue is an all-encompassing term for all categories of speaking, whether monologue, duologue, verse, or any of the other myriad forms of theatrical speech. Business is a slightly old-fashioned term which refers to physical actions onstage, or anything in which an actor deals with a prop or set-piece. The musical implications of both of these terms are clear: "when music is to accompany the dialogue the composer must know the tempo of the speeches, the pauses, the 'business' to be introduced so that his music may fit the stage performance in the smallest detail. Where there is no dialogue, the stage 'business' should be timed to fit the music."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lubbock, "Music Incidental to a Play", 130.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 130.

## Atmosphere

Rather than dealing with melody or structure, many theatrical writers speak of the importance of ‘atmosphere’. This rather nebulous quality is seen as an effort to reflect the setting and feel of the scene through music, and can be seen as the musical equivalent of scenography. Norman O’Neill, a prolific theatre composer, concluded: “Music should step in where the play itself, the actors and the stage effect, can no longer carry on the illusion. And it is just in such cases that the composer can work wonders and create atmosphere and effects which may be unique in their way.”<sup>24</sup>

## Underscoring

Underscoring refers to music which plays underneath dialogue and action, without ‘locking in’ with it or standing on its own. Generally quiet and unobtrusive, it supports the onstage action emotionally and atmospherically. It is not usually heard by the characters onstage.<sup>25</sup>

## Overture

A substantial (although often brief) standalone musical work played before the narrative starts. It usually introduces the musical and aesthetic themes of the proceeding drama.

## Intermezzo

An intermezzo is a piece of music played between scenes or acts. Designed for a practical purpose—to cover a gap while the stage is dark and the set and costumes are changed—it usually also evokes the following scene, or provides a musical reflection on the scene before it.

## Melodrama

Although this term can refer to a culturally specific theatrical genre, its literal definition (music-drama) means this term is often found in non-‘melodramatic’ scores. It is used as a term for a tightly interlocked sequence of words and music, in which the spoken word functions almost as a composed vocal part in the music.

The image shows a musical score extract from Peer Gynt, labeled 'Score Extract 1 – Excerpt from a ‘Melodrama’ in Peer Gynt<sup>26</sup>'. The score is in G major and 3/4 time, marked 'Andante'. It features a vocal line with German lyrics and instrumental parts for strings (Str.), clarinet (Klar.), and violin (Viol.). The lyrics are: Peer Gynt (lauscht): Welch ein Weinen wie von Kindern? Welch ein neuer Spuk und Greuel Und am Boden rollen Knäuel! (stößt mit dem Fuß danach.) Wollt ihr mich am Gehen hindern? (Er geht weiter.) The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, *fp*, and *trem.* (tremolo).

Score Extract 1 – Excerpt from a ‘Melodrama’ in Peer Gynt<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> O’Neill, “Music to Stage Plays”, 93.

<sup>25</sup> Kaye and LeBrecht, *Sound and music for the theatre: the art and technique of design*, 25.

<sup>26</sup> Edvard Grieg, “Nachtszene”, *Peer Gynt Op. 23*, ed. Gustav F. Kogel, Vocal Scor. (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1908), 80.

## Cue

The word 'cue' can be confusing as it has several meanings in the theatrical idiom, most of which apply to musical in some shape or form. The standard definition is of a "signal or direction to another actor to enter, or begin his speech"<sup>27</sup>. In musical performance terms this is often seen at points when the conductor waits for a cue, either in dialogue or from the stage manager, in order to give the signal for the musicians to proceed. The conductor can also give a cue to a singer or actor (or instrumental part) to begin so that they lock in with the rest of the music. 'Cue' is also used as a generic title for any music item in a performance: conventional theatrical musical typesetting has each musical item numbered sequentially. When referred to by the numbers, they are cues (rather than the pieces the often descriptive titles suggest). Cues of both kinds can be found written into a score, as well as given without documentation as part of the staging process.

## Sound Design/Soundscaping

With the advances of electronic processing the line between composition and sound engineering has become blurred. These often interchangeable terms have come to describe the process by which music is introduced to a production via electronic means. The creation of detailed electronic musical scores can be seen as a form of sound manipulation (sometimes similar in technique and construction to *musique concrète* or electronic popular music) and is often credited in programs as 'sound composition' or 'sound design'. This process of creating layered collages of sound to create a sonic environment was defined by Canadian electronic composer R. Murray Schafer as the creation of a 'soundscape'<sup>28</sup>, a term which has caught on in modern theatrical sound design.<sup>29</sup> Soundscaping, for the purposes of this thesis, can be seen as any sound design that moves beyond the traditional roles of sound design—reinforcement, amplification and special effects—and into more abstract or evocative realms.

## Technology

The theatre provides an arena for the latest developments in musical and theatrical technology to be used in a practical context. This technological integration has both advantages and disadvantages for the development of live performance. Moving away from the traditional roles of amplification and reinforcement, advances in electronic and digital technology have allowed designers to replace live musicians and instrumental music with electronically generated or pre-recorded music. The resulting

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<sup>27</sup> "cue, n.2", in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45574?rkey=MW0MZq>.

<sup>28</sup> Murray Schafer, *The soundscape: Our sonic environment and the tuning of the world* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994);

<sup>29</sup> Kaye and LeBrecht, *Sound and music for the theatre: the art and technique of design*, 18.

'score' can then be replicated perfectly for every performance, giving an accuracy and reliability not usually found in pit orchestra musicians.

Developments in modern technology have provided theatre-makers with several new avenues to explore, with technology having both strengths and limitations when compared to live performers. Seen by opposing sides as either technological tools or technological shortcuts, the unique opportunities that digital sound technology provides to the theatre have resulted in a wide range of uses within the theatrical realm.

### **The Advantages of Technology over Live Performers**

The most obvious advantage an electronic rig has over acoustic musicians is a physical one: in confined or limited venues a public address system reduces the amount of space needed to achieve a desired musical volume. It also enables designers to reduce the space needed by 'flying' the system above the stage or auditorium, a feat that is obviously impractical with live performers.

Aside from these physical advantages modern sound systems open up new resources for the sound designer. The developments of digital (and analogue) audio effects have enabled designers to 'process' live and recorded sound with ease. Applying audio effects such as reverberation, echo, and delay gives designers access to sounds and timbres that were previously unavailable. While this can be used to process live sound (to make it sound like a singer is in a cathedral, or an instrument is playing from the grave etc.) it is often used in the generation of soundscapes and completely artificial scores<sup>30</sup>. Using these resources as compositional tools allows composers to avoid the traditional requirements of conventionally structured music, and introduce 'atmospheric' forms which do not follow the traditional paths of harmony, rhythm and structure. Because of these possibilities, many modern productions now use computer-composed scores, using a combination of processed snippets of recorded sound and artificially generated noise to evoke tension and setting in the dramatic production.

Audio technology is also desirable in a theatrical context because it presents complete control and reliability. A case in point is volume control: unlike acoustic instruments, it is possible to reduce the volume of any recorded sound without altering the timbre significantly. In practical terms this provides composers with increased musical resources for underscoring, as any instruments which would previously dominate a spoken voice (such as a brass fanfare beneath a stirring speech) can be reduced in volume without losing the emotive qualities of the music. The use of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) as a mechanism to interact with music synthesisers, effects controllers, and with more unlikely mechanisms such as lighting, pyrotechnic, and hydraulic control allows for a

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<sup>30</sup> Kaye and LeBrecht, *Sound and music for the theatre: the art and technique of design*, 173, 180.

small level of interactivity between live performance and pre-coordinated technology.<sup>31</sup> This, combined with the high level of micro-control, provides opportunities for technological synchronisation, and replicates to some extent the vamps and safeties of the acoustic score.

Technological advances have also allowed economic reductions in theatrical music: systems available can replace the traditional jobs of copyists, arrangers, rehearsal accompanists, performing musicians and conductors. Although technology has provided some economic advantages to traditional composition (reducing the need for professional copyists and allowing exotic or multitudinous instruments to be synthesised in the pit) this technological approach to music presents many desirable advantages to the theatrical producer. The perfect replicability and accuracy of electronic systems coupled with the elimination of troublesome live musicians—with tea-breaks, pay-scales, and inevitable fatigue—makes any artificial system eminently desirable to the theatrical context at first glance.

### **The Advantages of Live Performers over Technology**

Despite these advantages, the replacement of live performers with technology—digital or otherwise—can remove several key elements of the musical experience. A major advantage of live performers, in any ensemble configuration, is the adaptability of the music to the idiosyncrasies of dramatic performance. As previously shown, musicians are able to compensate for technical or dramatic delays in a way a recording can not. Although a recording may be perfectly replicable, acting rarely is: minor variations exist in each performance, and audience reaction may throw off timed cues. The ability of live music to flex around these variations is its major strength. Also missing in a recorded score are the aesthetic benefits of a live performance. The satisfaction of a concert performance is partially dependent on live musicians and the communal experience of concert-going: replacing an orchestra with a recording seems counterintuitive in this context. Why do we have different expectations of theatrical music from concert music? Similarly, the physical presence of additional people in the performance, such as a pit orchestra or stage-band, imbues meaning in the performance. The communality of the performance ritual means we can get the same enjoyment from this involvement as from seeing large groups in coordinated activity<sup>32</sup>.

From a more formalist perspective, removing the instrumental or live nature of the performance removes many traditional elements of orchestration and arrangement. The development of such an environmentally limited performance style causes a specific set of challenges to arise for the composer. Listening to how the composer has dealt with these challenges can be just as satisfying as

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 181–183.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Levitin, *The World in Six Songs: how the musical brain created human nature* (London: Aurum, 2008), 42; Victor Turner, “Liminality and communitas”, in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambak, 2002, 358–374, [http://books.google.com.au/books?id=S\\_jZRPpy2jcC](http://books.google.com.au/books?id=S_jZRPpy2jcC), 371.

an atmospheric or emotional depiction. This appreciation of compositional skill can be side-stepped in theatrical electronic scores, as they often seem designed to be unobtrusive and forgettable. A well-constructed work that maintains standards of orchestration, arrangement and motivic development, while still interacting with and supporting the dramatic work can be a pleasurable and memorable composition. Examples of these successful works can be found as part of the symphonic literature as suites or in non-dramatic full recording.

## Rehearsal and Development

Although there is very little literature on the historical development of scores for performance, we can infer much of the process through the exploration of historical rehearsal practice in non-musical studies. By knowing how the production as a whole was compiled and developed we can therefore imagine how the musical score was developed for rehearsal. According to various sources<sup>33</sup> rehearsal practice underwent a dramatic cultural shift around the beginning of the twentieth century, but it is perhaps more useful to think of changing performance development processes as a more gradual continuum culminating in the practice with which we are familiar today.

The predominant method of theatrical rehearsal up to the end of the nineteenth century was individual rehearsal. Particularly individualistic was the Elizabethan methodology: actors would receive a script (often with only their lines and cues on it) and would then learn their own part in their own time. Ensemble rehearsals were therefore fairly inconsequential and haphazard occasions, as they concerned mainly the assembly and execution of the whole. The compiling of the production usually relied heavily on the prompter for coordination and stage management. Despite the influence and role of the prompter it shouldn't be equated to the role of director, as the modern conception of the 'Director' was not found in this period.<sup>34</sup> The lack of formal theatrical rehearsal process can be seen in the scripts themselves, as most stage directions and cues are prompted by the words of the characters themselves. Lines of dialogue act as obvious cues to the next action or spoken line, and similarly, calls for music from characters are acknowledged with musical cues. The frequency of music in Shakespeare's plays has been remarked upon<sup>35</sup>, but the extent of musical rehearsal must have been minimal. It is likely they relied on stock pieces and interpolated popular songs and so could quickly add appropriate fanfares or ballads with little notice.

Later theatres had similarly minimal ensemble rehearsal. Although the role of the 'actor-manager' was developed and more adventurous productions were mounted, the actual ensemble rehearsal

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<sup>33</sup> Tiffany Stern, "Introduction", in *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, vol. 3961 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6; Gay McAuley, "Towards an Ethnography of Rehearsal," *New Theatre Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1998): 75–85, 75.

<sup>34</sup> Stern, "Introduction", 8.

<sup>35</sup> O'Neill, "Music to Stage Plays", 86.

was insignificant. It is likely that in these circumstances any score would be written to the script, rather than developed to suit 'direction', well in advance of the production in order to efficiently mount the play. Actors in this period notably used stock characters in their preparation, so Hamlet could be identical to Macbeth in performance.<sup>36</sup> In this ad-hoc developmental situation the length of music written would largely determine the length of time for business or dialogue, as collaboration (in the modern sense) was not an option.

Throughout these early periods theatre was a hybrid form in which the 'straight' play would be combined with other entertainments: many actors would sing songs (as can be seen in scores such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Peer Gynt*), dances would occur, and stock slapstick routine could be interpolated. This use of standardised genres of entertainment is also reflected in the musical side of plays from the period. The great variety of stock entertainment gave the composer musical scope beyond that of the script itself. Consequently scores of the era include references to 'melodramas', 'dances', 'fanfares', 'songs' and many more cues which could be described as genre pieces. In the score of *Peer Gynt*, Edvard Grieg notes "If the actress is unable to sing the song herself, it can be carried forward behind the stage by a vocalist."<sup>37</sup> The necessity of having a song at this point is the important part: while writing the score Grieg may not know whether or not 'Solveig' can sing, and his compositional method has nothing to do with any particular portrayal or interpretation of the role.

In the twentieth century, however, we see a marked shift in rehearsal process. With the ascension of 'The Director', both in opera<sup>38</sup> and drama<sup>39</sup>, works can be matured in extended development and workshop periods. Many productions now spend many years in development and planning, and rehearsals can start as much as a year beforehand.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, music can now be written as part of the complete development process, evolving in tandem with the dramatic performance. There is far more focus on the 'uniqueness' of a production, often drawn from the director's 'vision', and as such music becomes much more tailored to the specific production and integrated with the narrative of the drama in the modern period.

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<sup>36</sup> Stern, "Introduction", 11.

<sup>37</sup> Grieg, *Peer Gynt Op. 23*, 70.

<sup>38</sup> Ross, "The rest is noise: Listening to the twentieth century", 13–18, 23–32.

<sup>39</sup> Stern, "Introduction", 2, 8.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Atkinson, *Everyday arias : an operatic ethnography* (Lanham; Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2006).

## Chapter 2: Applying Theory: Towards a Theatrical Musicology

After establishing the circumstances out of which theatrical music arose it is necessary to define the terms through which we approach the music itself. Because of the importance that the environment and context have upon the 'raw' musical work, a framework is clearly needed that is able to acknowledge these factors and incorporate them into an overall analysis. Theatrical writing or musicological writing does not seem able to grapple with the entangled nature of theatrical music, and so it often takes on a style that is either anecdotal<sup>41</sup> or un-contextual<sup>42</sup>. While musicologists are comfortable with the exploration of historical interactions (such as the placing of a work in a canon or repertoire),<sup>43</sup> traditional musicologists rarely seem equipped to deal with the interaction between the musical work and the specific production for which it was written. This chapter will attempt to assemble an approach that can be applied to theatrical musical composition that moves beyond basic literary or ethnographic analysis to create a 'grand unified methodology' for theatrical music.

Any such framework must be able to deal with the 'straight play' for it to be of use in this thesis. Although there has been some exploration of theatrical musicology with respect to opera and musical theatre, any appropriate framework must also be able to cope with the *absence* of music. The spoken word is as crucial as any musical content to the overall play, and must somehow be factored into a theatrical musicology. Many incidental scores include sung sections—with lyrics that can be analysed—and also include spoken cues within the manuscript. This multiplicity of textual genres blurs the distinction between the 'score' and the 'script' in a way that is often artificially redefined by musical scholars. Libretti and song texts are analysed<sup>44</sup>, but spoken parts (which are perceived by many writers as mere precursors to a more advanced form of sung-through drama<sup>45</sup>) are usually ignored. However, the interpretation of text was clearly in the mind of the composer during the construction of the 'musical' work, and so spoken word should be included in any musical analysis of the product of the composer.

The question must now be raised of the completeness of the subject of this musicological investigation. Just as literary scholars now acknowledge the distinction between a play and its

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<sup>41</sup> Oscar Thompson, "If Beethoven Had Written 'Faust'", *The Musical Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1924): 13–20, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/738255>.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Norman McKay, "Schubert's Music for the Theatre," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 93 (1966): 51–66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/765899>.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> A E Keeton, "Elgar's Music for 'The Starlight Express'", *Music & Letters* 26, no. 1 (1945): 43–46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/727808>.

<sup>45</sup> *Paraphrasing*: McKay, "Schubert's Music for the Theatre"; Edward J Dent, "The Musical Interpretation of Shakespeare on the Modern Stage", *The Musical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1916): 523–537, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/737936>.

script<sup>46</sup>, we (as theatrical musicologists) need to acknowledge that our subject is musicologically incomplete. Any focussed musical approach to the theatre must define the degree to which it is able to move away from the music itself. Any academic analysis of a score will miss crucial elements of the overall performance; a journalistic review of a performance will ignore crucial elements of practical theatricality, and so on. Should sung voice be included in such a musicology? Should spoken voice? Should stage business such as slapstick? Should sound effect, lighting effect, or theatrical mechanics be included in a musicological report? Ultimately these questions reduce to a matter of personal taste and of relevance. While this thesis has previously argued that all of these theatrical elements *can* be relevant to the understanding of the music, the degree that each factor impacts on the musical content of the specific work being studied should be reflected in the individual piece of academic writing.

Despite the wealth of theatrical and sociological information which is available for a study such as this, it is important to ground any analytic approach specifically in the music, otherwise any methodology is in danger of becoming a loosely focussed ethnography or a branch of literary theory. By turning the issue of relevance on its head the question can be viewed from a different angle: while it is clear that theatrical and performative elements are more relevant to the music than 'traditional' musicology has admitted, they are nevertheless less relevant to a dedicated musicologist than the music itself. Therefore musicologists are faced with the challenge of approaching this subject in a way that is both comprehensive and focussed. The development of a middle ground that can adequately meet the need of both the music and of musicologists can be seen as the primary goal of this chapter.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Established Frameworks**

To establish a 'new' methodology for theatrical musicological analysis the contribution of established musicological theories to this discipline must first be explored. Particularly, there is a need to evaluate the impact the theatrical context could have upon the presented musicological theory. By exploring a few key musicological movements as a representative sample, this section will evaluate the effectiveness of each movement at examining music within the contexts of theatricality. This selective review of pre-existing literature will also aim to ascertain which theoretical elements are particularly important to each school of thought, and therefore the compatibility of each school with the elements of theatrical music deemed important in this thesis.

Three general approaches to musicology will be discussed: positivism, the 'new' musicology, and ethnomusicology. By discussing these general theories in relation to theatricality I hope to be able to

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<sup>46</sup> Peter Holland, "Introduction" in William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Peter Holland, The Oxford. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 119.

assess the possible contribution of each field to a hybrid theatrical musicology. In addition to established musicological frameworks, this chapter will briefly examine the contribution that could be made by an alternative perspective: theatre and performance studies. These external methodologies are familiar with the analysis of theatrical performance, but may not necessarily be equipped to deal with the crucial musicological aspects of a theatrical score.

## Positivist

### *Context and Discussion*

As one of the first efforts to codify any musical methodology, positivism has had a special significance in the history of musical analysis. The method which founded the musicological discipline was codified in the publication of “The Scope, Method and Aim of Musicology” in 1885 by Guido Adler<sup>47</sup>, since when this brand of structural, analyses-based writing has been the foundation stone of ‘traditional’ musicology.

A fundamental premise of a structural musicology such as positivism is that all the needed musical information is contained within the score. Although Adler allows that musical information may exist outside the notated form, he is adamant that it must be documented graphically in order that the musicologist may study it: “If it is not written in our notation, it must be transcribed.”<sup>48</sup> Any analysis must then be based upon the notated structural nature of the work. This premise, which we may take as fundamental to traditional musicology, becomes problematic when dealing with the idiosyncrasies of incidental music.

As discussed above, theatrical music rarely follows the conventions of regular (i.e. concert) music as a theatrical score is written to external stimulus and cannot be examined in isolation. While positivism provides many practical avenues for music analysis, theatrical music does not fall within its limited criteria. Positivism can be seen as focussing primarily on melodic, harmonic, and structural form, elements which are radically transformed in theatrical music. This genre will frequently present music that has no distinct ‘melody’ (particularly in atmospheric cues as discussed in Chapter 1), providing limited material for detailed analysis. Similarly, harmonies can often be basic or repetitive, providing a musical foundation which does not necessarily have the necessary complexity to be subjected to positivistic analyses. For example, the entirety of ‘Peer Gynt at the Statue of Mammon’, in *Peer Gynt* by Edvard Grieg,<sup>49</sup> consists of an unremarkable unison string melody followed by two isolated brass chords. This sequence is then repeated in different transpositions over the course of

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<sup>47</sup> Erica Mugglestone and Guido Adler, “Guido Adler’s ‘The Scope, Method and Aim of Musicology’ (1885): An English Translation with an Historico-Analytical Commentary”, *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 13 (1981): 1–21, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/768355>.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Grieg, *Peer Gynt Op. 23*.

the two-minute cue. There is little melodic development, and the harmonies do not build to a natural cadence. This small repeated motif delivers little to a positivist musicologist, but is clearly vital in setting the tone of the accompanying drama. Positivism also has difficulties dealing with musical structure in the theatrical context. As musical structure is so flexible and unpredictable in the theatre (due to vamps, safeties and melodramas) it becomes impractical to draw inflexible structural conclusions from the notated score. The unknown length of rests, the variation of tempo, and the addition of spoken parts all provide elements which are not predictable enough for an empirically musical 'science'.<sup>50</sup> Positivist musicology provides a useful framework for examining notated music (under which many theatrical 'great works' can be categorised), but it does not seem up to the task of dealing with the flexibility and unpredictability of music written as part of a theatrical practice.

Positivist musicology does provide useful avenues, however, for the study of theatrical 'set-pieces' such as overtures and intermezzos. These more conventional musical works are designed to stand alone in performance and are played as miniature concerts separate from the theatrical narrative. Less unpredictable, these movements contain features that are appropriate to a structural study: they contain melodies, harmonic development, and (usually) a structure which develops thematic material in a way a formalist approach can grapple with. However, this seems like a method that side-steps the key issues of the genre when we take into account that these works are most often performed on the concert platform divorced of their theatrical context: by only examining the 'non-theatrical' sections of a theatrical score a positivist musicologist is able to deal with the music stripped of its original context. Similar problems arise with the analysis of theatrical music in suite form. The presentation of theatrical scores as concert suites is historically a common method for the public presentation of theatrical scores, removing them from the limitations of the specific production and thereby generalising them for a commercial market. These 'highlights packages' are particularly suitable for standard musicological analysis, but are devoid of the dramaturgical elements of the musical work. Although often supervised by the original composer (many were even published long before the original theatrical score<sup>51</sup>), these suites are invariably different versions of a work, translated into a different medium, and so could be seen as a different composition entirely. However, it is clear that these suites have influenced the popular understanding of theatrical music by presenting the *musical* ideas in a way that enables musicologists and performers to engage with them without the complicated entanglements of other disciplines.

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<sup>50</sup> Mugglestone and Adler, "Guido Adler's 'The Scope, Method and Aim of Musicology' (1885): An English Translation with an Historico-Analytical Commentary", 9.

<sup>51</sup> Edvard Grieg, *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Op. 46* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1888), [http://imslp.org/wiki/Peer\\_Gynt\\_Suite\\_No.1,\\_Op.46\\_\(Grieg,\\_Edvard\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Peer_Gynt_Suite_No.1,_Op.46_(Grieg,_Edvard)); Edvard Grieg, *Peer Gynt Suite No. 2, Op. 55* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1892), [http://imslp.org/wiki/Peer\\_Gynt\\_Suite\\_No.2,\\_Op.55\\_\(Grieg,\\_Edvard\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Peer_Gynt_Suite_No.2,_Op.55_(Grieg,_Edvard)). Grieg, *Peer Gynt Op. 23*, (1908).

Having discussed the strengths and limitations of a formalist approach to the analysis of music, we are left to evaluate the extent to which this methodology is equipped to account for the extra elements which exist outside the score. By consciously limiting itself to score-based analysis, positivism is ill equipped to deal with the interpretive and spontaneous aspects of this musical genre, and although it provides a useful tradition for musical empiricism, it lacks the interpretive or imaginative strand that this genre calls for.

### *Example Writing:*

In a largely positivistic analysis, Elizabeth McKay analyses the music by Schubert for a production of *Die Zauberharfe* [The Magic Harp] mounted in 1820.<sup>52</sup> She starts by outlining the historical context of the work: factual details about the composer's life, the first performances and so on. She also attempts to place the work in relation to the western canon, contextualising with theatrical works of the same era such as those that "appeared in Germany or Austria between *Die Zauberflöte* of 1791 and *Der Freischütz* of 1821, a period of thirty years."<sup>53</sup> After contextualisation and the establishment of the canon she moves on to detailed motivic analysis of a specific melodrama within the score. However, in doing so there is no acknowledgement of the role any actor (or other dramatic entity) could have in the performance of this melodrama. She analyses it purely as a musical work, with minimal dramatic interaction, challenging by omission the assertion of Chapter 1 that the melodrama is one of the most theatrically involved forms of a musical theatre. There is a strong emphasis on the analysis of motifs in McKay's writing, as she draws comparisons between motifs from *Die Zauberharfe* and other works by Schubert. Tracking the development of leitmotifs and highlighting the "truly Schubertian modulation and cadence"<sup>54</sup> are the strengths of this style of analysis, and although she does acknowledge the existence of extraneous factors as mitigation ("In descriptive background music to speech or short snippets of music to be interspersed with speech, beautiful melodies would have been quite inappropriate"<sup>55</sup>), her methodological framework does not allow her the scope to fully explore the implications of a performed genre.

## **New Musicological**

### *Context and Discussion*

'New musicology' was the buzzword for a collection of late twentieth-century musicological explorations which sought to include contextual and literary information in a discipline which was felt

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<sup>52</sup> McKay, "Schubert's Music for the Theatre".

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 56.

to have become too 'source based'.<sup>56</sup> It can be seen as a development on traditional musicology (rather than a parallel discipline) which allows for the presentation of musicological 'interpretations' rather than 'positivisms'.<sup>57</sup> While it does not exclude "note-by-note analysis"<sup>58</sup>, it usually steers away from this, preferring to explore the social and cultural 'meaning' of musical elements. 'New' musicology presents itself as a very flexible methodology incorporating extra-musical elements or disciplines. In particular it takes on a role as a musicology which is able to interact fully with theories in other departments of the arts and social sciences: literary theory, postmodern thought, "issues of race, gender construction and sexuality" are all "in".<sup>59</sup> It is this liberated musicology which could provide the second avenue for the development of a theatrical musicology.

The most important elements of the 'new' musicological theory, at least for the requirements of this thesis, are the additional areas of focus it introduces to the discipline. As it allows for the inclusion of the analysis of textual elements—such as lyrics or libretto—it would seem open to an examination of the extra-musical elements of a theatrical production in a musicological context. New musicology also introduces the musicological discipline to the debates in the mainstream of the humanities, which is an arena in which most theatrical, literary, historiographical, and performance study has developed. Because of this multi-disciplinary approach new musicology is able to "deal with matters of affect and expression"<sup>60</sup> as well as incorporate the literary or textual elements of the play into a musicological understanding.

The 'new' methodology has been criticised as a very literary approach to music<sup>61</sup>, which could cause problems when dealing with music as a performed medium (rather than as a text). Just as literary scholars have dealt with the differences between script and performance, musicologists need to address this divide. 'New' Musicologists seem comfortable in dealing with cultural elements that go into the composition of a score,<sup>62</sup> but less adept at dealing with the elements that go into a performance. Like 'traditional' musicologists, 'new' musicologists like to deal with documentary artefacts such as scores or libretti, and while meaning can be derived from these physical remnants they are not the same as the performance itself.

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<sup>56</sup> David Fallows, "new musicology", ed. Alison Latham, *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e4712>.

<sup>57</sup> Kofi Agawu, "Analyzing Music under the New Musicological Regime", *Journal of Musicology* 15, no. 3 (1997): 297–307, 301.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>62</sup> Philip Gossett, "History and Works That Have No History: Reviving Rossini's Neapolitan Operas", in *Disciplining Music*, ed. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman, paperback. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 95–115.

New Musicology has further disadvantages when dealing with our implicated, environmental theatre. It tends to focus on music as an interpretation of cultural meaning, moving away from evidence and analysis in the traditional sense. This can result in writing which strays away from the specifics of the musical work and into generalised cultural analysis. There is also a tendency for writing to focus upon music as a *representative* of external factors, rather than focussing on any *relationship* between such factors and the work. For a genre that is part of a complex external system, such as theatre music, this presents the danger of failing to address relevant *musical* issues of construction and performance, exploring the cultural periphery rather than addressing core musical problems. New musicology has been applied particularly effectively to Opera and to Lieder<sup>63</sup>. In these circumstances the combination of text and music can be explored through the literary influences. This interaction between the music and text, while crucial to the understanding of such genres is perhaps not comprehensive enough to encompass all of the facets of a musically or theatrically integrated performance.

Despite these shortcomings, new musicology does contribute one important concept to our hybrid theory of theatrical musicology. By looking at the formal musical elements in simultaneity with the literary components, new musicology enables musicologists to encompass a less limited set of data in their investigation, without the “surplus of detail that theory-based analysis produces”.<sup>64</sup>

***Example Writing:***

Philip Gossett, writing in the ‘new’ musicological idiom, highlights many of the shortfalls of the ‘old’ musicological regime. In examining the Neapolitan operas of Rossini he seeks to move away from the canon-forming methodological approaches, re-presenting works which were previously ignored under other systems. Taking as his starting point that musical categories are defined only by the approach and not by inherent musical ‘facts’, he argues that “not only is great music [or any canonical structure] susceptible a particular form of analysis, but it is defined by it”.<sup>65</sup> In attempting to reintroduce his subject material to academic analysis he takes an approach between what he sees as the two extremes of musical analysis. One extreme, which can be likened to the positivistic or Adlerian approach, describes a formalist approach as one in which one can “store the pitches and rhythms of a composition in a computer data base [sic] and run a program that sorts simultaneous sonorities into variously defined sets”.<sup>66</sup> The other extreme, which can be likened to ethnographic or anthropologic approaches, is described as being one in which one can “study the reception history of

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Agawu, “Analyzing Music under the New Musicological Regime”, 304.

<sup>65</sup> Gossett, “History and Works That Have No History: Reviving Rossini’s Neapolitan Operas”, 96.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

a 'work' without being concerned about its contents".<sup>67</sup> Essentially his opening section argues that any musicological approach, while inevitably reflecting the biases of its author, must respond to the requirements of the subject material, and not of some absolute external methodological framework.

However, in dealing with the historical production of opera Gossett rarely acknowledges any theatricality or even performative element. The majority of his investigation is devoted to textual context and analysis. Although Gossett argues that because Rossini was "[not] indifferent about the performance of his operas"<sup>68</sup> the individual performance (in which "composers altered their operatic texts to suit the needs of individual singers or instrumentalists") is vital to an understanding of a work. His analysis then revolves around elements of composition such as social history and libretto construction, side stepping "the primacy of performance"<sup>69</sup> which he then sees as a disadvantage to a generic approach to Italian musical history. The main thrust of his analysis consists of outlining the "formulaic relationships between vocal and dramatic types" where 'vocal' refers to composed vocal classifications and 'dramatic' relates to the written dramatic form. While the practicalities of singing or acting may have influenced these choices during composition, Gossett prefers to analyse these choices in a purely literary fashion, drawing similarities in musical character construction across multiple operas based on voice type. Rather than the unique practical elements of staging and performance, Gossett is instead biased towards the process of "transfer to the operatic stage [of] what is unique in [each work's] literary sources".<sup>70</sup>

Gossett only mentions the practical implications of performance twice in this (albeit short) article. Although his use of this information provides historical context for an essentially literary argument, both history and literary theory are impractical for analysis of a work from a performed theatrical point of view. The first mention, discussing the "interchangeability [sic] of elements in the design" of Italian opera, provides information about the social structures of the opera of the period, but does not adequately address the practical impact such 'facts' would have had upon the construction of the music or the development of the original musical performance. However, he does relate this interchangeability back to the compositional/literary device of *aria di baule*, a genre of interchangeable musical numbers which popular singers would insert into any opera they were performing in.<sup>71</sup> A later theatrical example used by Gossett does explain the impact of a practical theatricality upon musical production, but is flawed in both accuracy and impact. Gossett describes a stage moment using practical terms: "The curtain rises immediately, revealing the stage bathed in

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

darkness". Considering that the nature of theatrical lighting (and for that matter curtain counterweighting systems) in the early eighteenth century it seems unlikely that a stage "bathed in darkness" can be anything other than a literary device, achieved in the libretto but not through the historically limited theatrical systems.

Gossett aims to move away from the fact-oriented approach of the traditional musicologists into a discipline which can incorporate the "non-facts of musical history".<sup>72</sup> Rather than examine the 'non-facts' of practical performance, he instead links a literary study of the libretto into a detailed study of the music. He is particularly focussed upon the ideas of originality and convention, as they relate to the construction of musical canons, examining these works for points at which they follow the "social cultural and musical context" in which these works operate, and for points at which they diverge from the imaginary norms to become "mature independent works...with a definite character". He concludes that the inclusion of previously ignored factors, whether canonically ignored compositions or academically ignored elements of performance and social environment, forces us to re-evaluate already examined works, as these factors "become instrumental in leading us to rewrite the history in which they played no part".

## **Ethnomusicological**

### *Context and Discussion*

In broad terms, ethnomusicology can be defined as the study of musical cultures. This conventionally ranges from the examination of musical output of a culture to a more sociological analysis of the societies or groups from which the music emerges. In this discipline we can see a marked attitude shift from traditional musicology in that it views music as a product or activity, rather than as an aesthetic entity. Ethnomusicology can be seen as a hybrid discipline, with researchers having training in "music or in anthropology, sometimes in both."<sup>73</sup> Although it is a wide-ranging discipline, activities can include the collection, transcription, and categorisation of folk songs, of 'native' tribes' cultural output (including music and dance), of orally transmitted music, and in more recent times of popular music.<sup>74</sup> This methodological net has at various times been widened to also examine traditional 'art' music and western musical history, and in recent years has moved away from a preoccupation with the "exotically removed 'other'" towards a focus on "living music", presenting "both 'culture' and 'fieldwork' as problematics rather than givens".<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>73</sup> Carole Pegg et al., "Ethnomusicology", *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. (Oxford University Press, 2011), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52178>.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

This presents a very different perspective of music: rather than trying to discern ‘fundamentals’ of the music itself, ethnomusicology instead looks at the people who create, reproduce or consume music. Because of this ethnomusicology often feels more comfortable interacting with disciplines and methodologies other than musical analysis. A core methodology, at least of traditional ethnomusicology, is the process of fieldwork. This is a method which can also be seen in ethnography, anthropology, and sociology, and relies on observation and the experiences of the observer, rather than analytical frameworks or experimental variables. While individual methods and approaches can vary within fieldwork, ethnomusicology marks a discipline which breaks free from the tyranny of the text and examines social and cultural signifiers. As discussed above, both traditional musicology and new musicology are largely bound by the constraints of literary and textual analysis. Before dealing with performance, improvisation, or contexts they require transposition into a written medium. Ethnomusicology provides a method of analysing a work without translation, able to incorporate non text-based information into an academic study.

An ethnomusicological approach allows investigators to examine the society from which the music emerges, which or our purposes is the social and physical environment of the theatrical complex. This represents a marked shift in theoretical attitude, as the factors discussed in Chapter 1 can suddenly be incorporated into an academic discussion. However, in making this shift musicology moves away from the score and the script. This could potentially leave it incapable of dealing adequately with the written musical elements laid down by the composer and playwright. In our historical-theatrical context ethnomusicology could therefore be seen to examine only the peripheries of the theatrical form, ignoring the written core that underpins the theatrical endeavour.<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps because of this anthropological strain within ethnomusicology there is a tension between ethnomusicology and documentary sources. Although comparative musicology—the precursor to ethnomusicology—was established along the same text-analysis methodologies as historical musicology<sup>77</sup> it regards written artefacts as transcriptions of live events or social situations. The ethnomusicological methodology, therefore, does not necessarily work with the kind of documentary evidence we are presented with as a part of a theatrical musicology: scores and scripts and occasional recordings. While some scores may be edited *post facto* to reflect the idiosyncrasies of the performance, the majority of scores and scripts are intended as precursors, shaping and guiding the performance. This raises problems when examining historical performance because a performance is an inherently more ephemeral object than a score or script. This transience makes it difficult for an

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<sup>76</sup> Paul Atkinson, *Everyday arias : an operatic ethnography* (Lanham; Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2006).

<sup>77</sup> Muggleston and Adler, “Guido Adler’s ‘The Scope, Method and Aim of Musicology’ (1885): An English Translation with an Historico-Analytical Commentary”; Pegg et al., “Ethnomusicology.”

ethnomusicologist to attempt 'fieldwork' upon an 1829 theatrical performance. Because fieldwork is impossible retroactively it is easy to ignore sources such as the score and focus instead upon cultural ephemera such as programmes, reviews, and budgetary figures. While these primary sources may be informative and interesting, they do not furnish a musicologist with data about the construction and creation of the music itself. While it can tell us the names and pay-scales of the individual performers, and give some sense of the success of the performance through critical journalism, we are unable to answer how a certain motif or technique was handled in performance. Because the vast majority of theatrical performances have occurred outside a feasible fieldwork timescale (i.e. in the past) we are faced with the problem of producing specifically musical results from this methodology. Although some have argued that these difficulties can be reconciled, it seems that the problems specific to an ethnomusicological approach to theatrical music complicate a comprehensive analysis of the subject. However, the strengths of the ethnomusicological approach correspond to the weaknesses of the historical or literary musicological approaches, as ethnomusicology incorporates the context and motivations of musical creation and is able to include the influence that social and cultural aspects have had upon the musical artefacts which remain.

### *Example Writing*

Although most ethnomusicological writing focuses on examples of the 'exotic' or the 'other', a few ethnomusicological writers discuss the application of ethnomusicological methodology or theory to the aspects of western musical culture relevant to this study. Bruno Nettl, in a discussion of ethnomusicological theory, argues that ethnomusicology is defined predominantly by its methods and frameworks, and so the ethnomusicological techniques are equally applicable to less 'foreign' social circumstances.<sup>78</sup> Due to the relative paucity of ethnomusicological analyses of western theatrical performance we can feel justified in implementing this argument as part of the ethnomusicological discussion in this thesis. Nettl allows us to explore an ethnomusicological account of non-western theatrical music with the same approach as we would apply to a western discipline. Andrew Killick, in *Road Test for a New Model: Korean Musical Narrative and Theater in Comparative Context*, explores the different metaphors that can be applied to his musical subject. Killick argues that any musicological model is only useful "in proportion in its applicability to different cases, its ability to identify recurring patterns"<sup>79</sup>. His exploration of the ethnomusicological method balances geographic, historic, and cultural context with a detailed description of the music tropes and techniques found in his subject. His chosen discipline, traditional Korean musical theatre, is relevant

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<sup>78</sup> Bruno Nettl, "A Technique of Ethnomusicology Applied to Western Culture (Comments on Merriam, 'Purposes of Ethnomusicology')", *Ethnomusicology* 7, no. 3 (1963): 221–224, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/924583>.

<sup>79</sup> Andrew Killick, "Road Test for a New Model: Korean Musical Narrative and Theater in Comparative Context", *Ethnomusicology* 47, no. 2 (January 2003): 180, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3113917>, 181.

to our study due to the fact that, despite existing outside the western tradition, music “forms only a part of each genre, alongside verbal and visual elements”. Killick addresses similar questions to those raised above, asking whether a musicological model “should be applied only to the strictly ‘musical’ components”, or whether each other component should be examined separately using a literary (or dramatic) analogue for the musical theory.<sup>80</sup> He concludes that examining each of these elements in isolation “would seem counterproductive as well as cumbersome, since the [ethnographic] model seeks to understand musical experience in all its complex interconnections and not in isolation.”<sup>81</sup>

Despite the professed desire to integrate the study of the various component disciplines of a musical theatre, Killick explores each facet separately, discussing it in commendable detail but not linking each element together with the strength he calls for in his introduction. He discusses the traditional narrative components (such as vice and virtue<sup>82</sup>) and the performance environment (both historical and physical<sup>83</sup>), but does not seem to link these to the musical output of the performers. This output is described in detail, analysing techniques in true positivistic style: “rhythmic cycles (*changdan*) ... based on compound meters with triple subdivision of the main beats” coupled with “performance techniques that include a broad palette of vocal timbres” based on “versions of the anhemitonic pentatonic scale”<sup>84</sup>. He then goes on to talk about the impact of geographical and cultural space in the development of the genre. What is lacking is an explanation of how these detailed and specific musical idiosyncrasies developed in relation to this history and environment. Without these relationships we are left with a complete but incoherent understanding of the key elements of this genre. Although he introduces his article by arguing that the non-musical factors must be incorporated into an understanding of these genres, he avoids discussing the impact of the various factors upon each other, leaving the reader to draw their own conclusions about the relationship between the musical environment and the musical product.

## Theatre/performance studies

### *Context and Discussion*

Performance Studies can be seen as a non-musicological effort to study live performance through academic frameworks such as semiotics, ethnography, phenomenology, sociology, and anthropology.<sup>85</sup> It is a hybrid discipline which draws ideas from many other disciplines within the humanities in order to approach the development and execution of theatre as a primarily social

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 185, 186.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>85</sup> Chair of the Department of Performance Studies, “Department of Performance Studies”, *The University of Sydney*, 2011.

activity. It shares many elements with ethnomusicology, and draws on many of the same theoretical sources, but lacks the musical focus of ethnomusicology. Although it draws on some literary traditions of examination it is a primarily non-literate subject, examining real-world occurrences and interactions with the focus on overt or unacknowledged performances.

The main benefits an approach such as performance or theatre studies can supply to a musicological approach to the theatre is a fluency and comfort with the implications of the theatrical environment. In particular several key writings discuss the impact that the social and physical environment has on the development and perception of theatrical works. Particularly useful for a dissection of non-contemporary musical performance is Tiffany Stern's exploration of historical rehearsal and development processes.<sup>86</sup> By using the traditional tools of the historian and theatre scholar Stern recreates the rehearsal environment in a variety of different theatrical environments. Unfortunately, without a special study it is sometimes difficult to infer the role that music took within the rehearsal process. She suggests that "roles were learnt in isolation not only from other performers, but from the rest of the play".<sup>87</sup> From this we can assume that music, and composition, functioned in a similar way: a composer would rehearse any music with the musicians only, putting everything together only at the last minute. It is perhaps for this reason that Shakespeare places his musical cues so overtly: a cue is "referred to it in the text, or when it is not referred to by one of the characters it is usually introduced in a perfectly natural way and at a point where music can be legitimately used."<sup>88</sup> This clarity of construction could imply that, like the actors, musicians did not 'workshop' their parts and relied upon obvious verbal and visual cues to interject their music with little collaborative preparation.

Like dramatic rehearsal, musical rehearsal is not a product of some mystical process,<sup>89</sup> but represents the culmination of a concerted effort and dedicated approach to what can be seen as *work*.

Performance studies is particularly experienced with exploring this aspect, and many writers choose to explore the personal commitment and effort put in by theatrical (and very occasionally musical<sup>90</sup>) practitioners. Helena Wulff explores the personal exertions of members within an esteemed ballet

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<sup>86</sup> Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>88</sup> O'Neill, "Music to Stage Plays".

<sup>89</sup> Gay McAuley, "Not Magic but Work: Rehearsal and the Production of Meaning", *Theatre Research International* 33, no. 3 (2008): 276–288, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:iipa:&rft\\_dat=xri:iipa:article:citation:iipa00489337](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:iipa:&rft_dat=xri:iipa:article:citation:iipa00489337).

<sup>90</sup> Atkinson, *Everyday arias : an operatic ethnography*.

company, although there is very little observation of the obvious musical components of the balletic world<sup>91</sup>.

**Example Writing:**

*Everyday Arias: An Operatic Ethnography* is an account of Paul Atkinson's experience as ethnographic observer of the Welsh National Opera. Over an extended period of time Atkinson explores the everyday workings of the opera company. His focus is on 'unframed' performance: times when the company 'performs' to the outside world, when it creates the cultural image of an opera company rather than simply rehearses and performs operas.<sup>92</sup> Despite his focus being upon the social interactions within the company he does explore elements in the construction of this musical genre. He focuses on the developmental process of performance—the rehearsal—and explores the relationship between the physical or practical explorations in rehearsal and the textual elements of the composition. He explains the impact that small practical issues have upon the artistic elements of a work, which can become a negative aspect of the production: "opera rehearsals...become preoccupied collectively with the...solution of practical problems that are...indigenous to the production itself."<sup>93</sup> He nevertheless argues that practical questions of this nature must be addressed, otherwise they will "cause problems that have to be overcome or circumvented before a performance can take place, before their aesthetic and dramatic effects have a chance to become visible in the theatre."<sup>94</sup> Atkinson critiques the 'traditional' approach to opera, arguing that it only discusses idealized versions of the opera, divorced from its performed contexts rather than paying attention "to the everyday work that goes into the realization of an opera *in the theatre*"<sup>95</sup> (emphasis added). While he does not want to present opera purely as an exercise in physical labour, he sees the need to incorporate a wider range of 'performative codings' than previously admitted by cultural or new musicology. While these schools have seen various operas as being 'about' various different cultural perspectives—such as gender, sexuality, politics, orientalism, nationalism, or ideology<sup>96</sup>—Atkinson argues that any analysis of theatrical work must incorporate performative codings such as the physical body, the music, the dramaturgical gesture, and the enactment of characters.<sup>97</sup>

Despite these strengths in dealing with the theatricality of theatrical music, Atkinson's ethnographic approach lacks a sense of specificity and detail when discussing the actual compositions which provide the basis for the operatic endeavour. His approach deals with a specific *cultural* context,

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<sup>91</sup> Wulff, "Prologue: A Return to the Ballet World".

<sup>92</sup> Atkinson, *Everyday arias: an operatic ethnography*, 137.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

acknowledging that he writes primarily as “a social scientist” and not as a scholar of music. Perhaps because of this background the musical content is largely ignored, and while we see many instances of exploration into how performers or designers deal with the practical problems of the theatre, there is no examination of the process by which composers deal with the theatrical constraints, seeing the composition as a fixed entity. This is perhaps due to the specific situation within which he works, in which the composer is a long-dead supreme entity, and the work is a fixed composition of ‘great importance’, an attitude which recalls some of the of the earlier positivist musicologists. Atkinson’s focus upon the role and construction within wider society sidesteps issues specific to the individual works, exploring music as a generalised, yet important, force within the theatrical environment: “music is a constant presence throughout the process... It sets stern limits to the possibilities of action. Action and gesture are negotiated and coordinated through the temporal orderings of the music” However, despite the robust presence of music within opera, and indeed within this ethnographic study, the lack of musical detail and specificity results in an analysis in which individual musical works are almost interchangeable: while talking about a particular opera Atkinson could almost be talking about any opera, or of opera as an elevated or generic form.

### **A Hybrid Approach**

In developing a musicological approach for the examination of theatrical compositions I have argued for the synthesis of pre-existing musicological methodologies into a hybrid analytic approach. This approach aims to synthesise more generalised literary and theatre study methodologies—such as those found in other branches of the humanities—with a close musicological and technical examination of the ‘text’ of the music, drawing from traditional structural forms of musicology and used in past positivistic analyses of theatrical works. This aims to conjoin the musical ‘content’ with the musical ‘context’ to create a portrait of a work which reflects the unique circumstances out of which it arose. This ‘super-theory’ could therefore combine the in-depth musical analysis of the score, the literary examination of textual and musical elements of the composition, and the cultural or social consequences of the involvement of the theatrical experience. This can therefore examine both the important elements contained within the musical score, and the effect and affect this has upon the theatrical work and upon the audience in performance. In a concluding simplification, the key factors that contribute to musical meaning within the theatrical world can be seen as the music, the playtext, and the performance. A musicological approach to theatrical music should aim to address these three elements and the relationships between them, as well as to explore the relationship between the music (which must always remain central within the musicological discourse) and the play for which the work is written.

## Chapter 3: Analysis of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Works

In this chapter I aim to demonstrate some of the issues discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 through the discussion and analysis of two specific nineteenth-century compositions—Mendelssohn’s incidental score to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the music written by Grieg to accompany *Peer Gynt*.

Conventionally these works would be analysed through a music-based framework (such as dividing the composition into different ‘concepts of music’ or into historical contexts), but in this instance the analysis will be done through an exploration of the relationship between the music and different areas of the theatrical environment. In general terms these areas are defined by the relationship of the music to the fictional characters, the real-life actors, the scenography, and the rehearsal process. Both compositions will be examined simultaneously, as we are looking for communal theatrical approaches rather than the individual compositional techniques of the two well-known composers.

It is important to note that these two specific works function as works which are representative of a much larger field of nineteenth-century theatrical compositions. They do not represent, however, a comprehensive survey of the field. There are likely to be as many different musical approaches to the theatre as there are styles of theatre, but in examining these two works I aim to look for common techniques or approaches to seemingly common problems that may help shed light on the field as a whole.

Despite the fact that both works are perhaps most well known as concert pieces (in suite<sup>98</sup> or overture<sup>99</sup> form) it is necessary to clarify that this chapter will examine their theatrical renderings. Although these concert pieces are in many respects similar to the theatrical versions, we are aiming to explore theatrical music as a genre distinct from concert music. In many instances the concert music is notationally identical to the theatrical composition; however, our focus is upon the relationship between the music and the other elements of the theatrical process, and so concert music falls outside the scope of this investigation.

### A Midsummer Night’s Dream

The play of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, upon which Mendelssohn’s incidental score is based, was written by William Shakespeare, probably in 1594.<sup>100</sup> As an established and frequently performed play it requires little in the way of introduction or detailed plot analysis. What is perhaps more useful in the context of this chapter is an outlining of the elements which have attracted composers to use the story as the basis for their musical output. The *Oxford Dictionary of Music* lists at least four

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<sup>98</sup> Grieg, *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Op. 46*; Grieg, *Peer Gynt Suite No. 2, Op. 55*.

<sup>99</sup> Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Overture to a Midsummer Night’s Dream, Op.21*, ed. Julius Rietz (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1874),  
[http://imslp.org/wiki/A\\_Midsummer\\_Night's\\_Dream,\\_overture,\\_Op.21\\_\(Mendelssohn,\\_Felix\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/A_Midsummer_Night's_Dream,_overture,_Op.21_(Mendelssohn,_Felix)).

<sup>100</sup> Bill Bryson, *Shakespeare* (London: Harper Press, 2007), 96.

composers who have used this play, including Purcell, Mendelssohn, Orff, and Britten.<sup>101</sup> Themes which lend themselves to musical exploration include Dreams and Dreaming, Fairies (and all associated magic and fantasy), Love as a unifying factor, and Theatre and Performativity as meta-theatrical preoccupations.<sup>102</sup> The characters of this play are divided into two categories—the fairies and the humans—and much of the dramatic tension arises from the forced interaction between the two groups. There are two settings within the play: the forest (home of the fairies) and the Athenian court (where the courtly humans reside). The performance history of the play has been explored in detail<sup>103</sup>, as has the literary history and academic impact<sup>104</sup>, so further discussion of the non-musical impact of this play can be found elsewhere.

Felix Mendelssohn's relationship with Shakespeare, and with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, started at an early age. Although anecdotal evidence exists for his fascination, in which Felix and his sister Fanny read and acted Shakespeare's plays together<sup>105</sup>, perhaps the strongest argument for this early interest is the existence of his *Midsummer Night's Dream* concert overture, written when he was only seventeen (but formally published later).<sup>106</sup> Although this piece was a rapid international success, premiering in Poland in the presence of an eighteen-year-old Mendelssohn, it was another seventeen years until the incidental score to the play was written. This was done in 1843 while Mendelssohn was musical director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.<sup>107</sup> *Ein Sommernachtstraum* was part of a range of commissions for his patron King Frederick William IV of Prussia,<sup>108</sup> and by far the most enduring and successful. He based this new composition on the themes and motifs of his original overture, enhancing and expanding the musical ideas to create a sonic imagery which

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<sup>101</sup> Michael Kennedy, ed., "Midsummer Night's Dream, A", in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford Music Online, 2011), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e6786>.

<sup>102</sup> Based on the contents and introduction of Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Marian Wilson Kimber, "Reading Shakespeare, Seeing Mendelssohn: Concert Readings of A Midsummer Night's Dream, ca. 1850-1920", *The Musical Quarterly* 89, no. 2-3 (August 8, 2007): 199–236, <http://mq.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/doi/10.1093/musqtl/gdm002>; Dent, "The Musical Interpretation of Shakespeare on the Modern Stage"; Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*.

<sup>104</sup> Holland, Peter, "Introduction" in Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Kirsten Hastrup, *Action: anthropology in the company of Shakespeare* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2004).

<sup>105</sup> Yvonne Frindle, *Program: A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Sydney: Sydney Symphony Orchestra, 2009), 8.

<sup>106</sup> Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Overture to a Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op.21.

<sup>107</sup> Kennedy, "Midsummer Night's Dream, A".

<sup>108</sup> Jason Geary, "Reinventing the Past: Mendelssohn's Antigone and the Creation of an Ancient Greek Musical Language," *Journal of Musicology* 23, no. 2 (April 8, 2006): 187–226, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/10.1525/jm.2006.23.2.187>; Jason Geary, "Incidental Music and the Revival of Greek Tragedy from the Italian Renaissance to German Romanticism," in *Ancient Drama in Music for the Modern Stage*, ed. Peter Brown and Suzana Ograjenšek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 460, <http://books.google.com/books?id=XVFNvujitAMC>.

sparked the imagination.<sup>109</sup> The combination of the original overture and the updated score meshes together due to this motivic integration, and the two works, although separated significantly in the composer's maturity at time of writing, can be examined as a coherent whole. The original overture remains as the overture to the incidental work, supplemented by intermezzos, marches and dances, a melodrama-style finale, and two songs for a fairy chorus for high voices. The full orchestral setting is scored with notated parts for both spoken and sung voice, and contains indications for integration with both the original Shakespeare text and the practicalities of the performance style of the era. While taking certain cues from spoken dialogue, it also provides musical cues for both scenic effects and dramatic incidents, supporting the argument that music of this kind is tightly integrated into the theatrical fabric.

## Peer Gynt

Henrik Ibsen's verse-play *Peer Gynt* is very well known in Norway, although it wants for international attention in the English-speaking world. Ibsen is seen as one of the more radical or experimental playwrights of the nineteenth century,<sup>110</sup> laying the foundations for the later modernisation of theatrical practice. Although *Peer Gynt* is an early work, bearing many of the hallmarks of the spectacle-based productions popular at the time, it nevertheless plays with narrative structure and realism in an unusual manner. The fantastical story revolves around the eponymous 'hero', focussing upon his tendency to evade heroism and run away from ever-more-outrageous situations. Northam sees this work as "exploring... the negative side of [heroism] with as much conviction as [Ibsen] would apply to the positive viewpoint".<sup>111</sup> Peer, as anti-hero, represents Ibsen's "fascination with heroism", and the literary structure of the play reflects this: it follows a traditional hero narrative, depicting the 'hero' in a variety of exotic or challenging situations, but balances this against the unheroic and irresponsible antics of the primary character. This draws on the tradition of the 'everyman' story which can be found in many literary and musical works. Written in an extended poetic form, *Peer Gynt* taps into a Norwegian nationalism and folklore; based upon supposedly real characters, it reflects the folk traditions of Ibsen's native country.<sup>112</sup>

The play premiered in 1876 in Oslo with incidental music composed by Edvard Grieg. The involvement of Grieg from an early stage in the writing process resulted in a tightly integrated score, as it was possible for the two men to collaborate in bringing this play to production, a process

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<sup>109</sup> Kimber, "Reading Shakespeare, Seeing Mendelssohn: Concert Readings of A Midsummer Night's Dream, ca. 1850–1920", 202.

<sup>110</sup> John Northam, *Ibsen: a critical study*, Archive. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), <http://books.google.com/books?id=zzk5AAAAIAAJ&pgis=1>, 3.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>112</sup> Michael Meyer, "Introduction" in Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, ed. Michael Meyer (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 11–12.

unavailable to Mendelsohn and Shakespeare. The score is a complex one, requiring pit, offstage, and onstage musicians, as well as singers, dancers, and a singing chorus to represent the more imaginative moments of Ibsen's text through musical underscoring or word-setting. Grieg struggled to write music to external stimulus but explored the music of Norway through nationalistic expressionism and folksong, using it as a method to outline both setting and character. This writing-to-external-stimulus caused him some distress, but he understood that the music must serve to reinforce ideas present in the play: "For the Hall of the Mountain King I have written something that so reeks of cowpats, ultra-Norwegianism, and 'to-thyself-be-enough-ness' that I can't bear to hear it, though I hope that the irony will make itself felt."<sup>113</sup>

## Analysis

### Relationship with the Fictional Characters

Perhaps the most straightforward way to discuss the relationship of musical expression to the characters of a play is to examine how a composer utilises different musical palettes to represent different characters within the narrative. The clearest example of this can be found within the score for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which Mendelssohn ascribes different tonal landscapes to characters of different species and classes. By comparing the 'Elfenmarsch' [Fairy-march] at the beginning of Act II with the famous 'Wedding March' that precedes Act V we can see a marked contrast in the musical portrayal of the fairy and human characters. Although both cues are ostensibly marches, their atmospheres are very different. The fairy march, written in the Aeolian mode with the exotic passing-note of the sharpened fourth in the melody, is scored for light woodwind and upper strings, with the delicate tinkle of the triangle to further enhance the fairy-like qualities of the characters onstage. The second half of the first subject modulates into the chord of the flattened sixth, using the Phrygian mode, with the tension of the raised second again creating an underlying sense of otherworldliness. The second subject cycles through cadences, continuing a through-line of notes that are outside the conventional harmony to maintain the feeling of tension. This tension is underpinned by a dominant pedal-note, which when placed against the flattened-sixth triads creates major-seventh chords. This pedal also acts as an added fourth in a supertonic minor seventh chord, and as a non-harmonic note in a tonic diminished chord, thus assisting the harmony to resolve into the dominant triad which initially started the subject. This harmonic tension is supported by the staccato articulation, the rapid semiquaver trills, and the dotted rhythms which give the march a sense of quiet daintiness. Later in the cue the uneasiness is reinforced by the off-

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<sup>113</sup> In: Peter Watts, "Introduction" in Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, ed. Peter Watts, *Peer Gynt* (Penguin Books, 1966), <http://books.google.com/books?id=3wasr5JWeic>.

beat echoing of the main melodic contour by a section of pizzicato strings, which gives it a light-hearted and energetic quality. This unearthly energy evokes the words of Puck: “I am that merry wanderer of the night.”<sup>114</sup> This musical language (of dotted rhythms, chromatically moving harmonic lines, and trill-like accompaniment) is also found throughout the fairy-song ‘Ye Spotted Snakes’, emphasizing the fairylike character of the female chorus singing it.

The sonic palette of the fairies is contrasted with the musical language used to introduce the presence of the humans within the court of Athens, as represented by the ‘Wedding March’. This cue’s opening brass fanfare recalls in character the short music following the earlier line “Go bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns”.<sup>115</sup> The ‘Wedding march’ is much louder than the ‘Elfenmarsch’, using woodwind to overlay a shimmer onto a brass-and-string-driven sound. The rhythms in this instance are transformed from the light dotted quavers into the repeated triplets or double-dotting of the imperial setting. Although the first chord of the first subject is an unusual one (the relative minor with the addition of a sharpened sixth), the chord progression resolves quickly through the subdominant and the dominant before restating the fanfare in the tonic key, giving a sense of grandeur and pomp. The call and response section of the first-time bars leading into the repeat reinforce both the public and the ostentatious characteristics of the human characters and builds up to a re-statement of the first subject. The second subject keeps the tonality of the fanfare, revolving around alternate tonic and dominant chords, and the addition of the sixth to the dominant in this case is a reinforcement rather than a challenge to the tonality. Although the development modulates with some regularity, it generally keeps the same key for each repeated section, and when the style starts to move away from the declamatory display and into softness (such as towards the end of the second development) the brass fanfare ‘interrupts’ to bring the music back to the brash tonic (See SCORE EXTRACT 2).

Score Extract 2 – Mendelssohn – A Midsummer Night’s Dream – Wedding March

<sup>114</sup> Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 2.i.43.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.i.137.

In *Peer Gynt*, however, Grieg takes a far less straightforward approach to the musical depiction of character. Grieg makes his musical decisions based upon vocal characterisation (including voice type) and orchestration rather than on a motivic depiction, perhaps as a way to differentiate between characters in the large number of sung cues. Two of the more characterful cues, 'The Thief and the Receiver' [in the sense of dealer or fence] and 'Anitra's Dance', are examples of cues in which the principal characters are represented through musical means. To create the sense of a furtive and hushed conversation in 'The Thief and the Receiver' Grieg scores the vocal parts predominantly around the pitch G3, repeating this note quietly with minimal variation. All of the dramatic tension, therefore, comes from the harmony and timbres that move around the vocal line. This accompaniment combines a presto compound-duple time signature with pianissimo spiccato strings and muted horns to create a sense of suspense, instantly characterising these people as furtive and secretive. The harmonies, moving around the sung pedal note—which is doubled by French horn—are based upon an undulating four-note chromatic bass line, and move through non-diatonic chords from G major to C7, before returning to G major again (See **SCORE EXTRACT 3**). Rather than being based upon traditional cadential harmony, this accompaniment is based on parallel and contrary chromatic lines, which results in a series of tri-tones and semitone clusters which defy regular harmonic analysis. This unsettling indeterminability and subdued energy allows the music to portray these two characters, whose appearance in the play is limited to just this song, as furtive and stealthy in an efficient a way as possible.

THIEF: FENCE:

My fa-ther, he thieved so his son must bethiev-ing. My fa-ther received, so his son keeps re - cei-ving.

Str Hrn

*pp*

THIEF:

Thy lot \_\_\_\_\_ shall thou bear still. Thy self \_\_\_\_\_

*dim.*

\_\_\_\_\_ shalt thou be still. Steps in the brush- wood!

*pp*

*pp*

Score Extract 3 – Grieg – Peer Gynt – Thief and Receiver

The two musical cues which establish the character of Anitra present her as an exotic and romantic figure, but with a softer edge than many of her harem-sisters. She is cast primarily as a dancer, although she (optionally) sings the middle section of 'Arabian Dance'. Her first musical entrance, or at least the first where the music specifically supports her, is during this Arabian dance, an exotic and percussive piece orchestrated with pipes (piccolos) and percussion. Her chorus, however, is softened with a string melody and a warmer accompaniment, with a cello countermelody which swells underneath the melody. This melody, supported by lush violins, starts with a sustained octave leap, before dancing downwards to outline the tonic and dominant of A minor. The tempo becomes more flexible at this point, with markings of *poco ritenuto* as well as other expressive markings such as *dolce* and *diminuendo*. The pulsing pizzicato accompaniment also fades in and out of hearing, giving the song a natural heartbeat which underlines the passion and emotion of the character. The harmony, based in a minor key, gives it a mournful feel through the use of the chromatic step to the leading note (and later to the F-sharp in the supertonic of B minor) which outlines the strong dominant chord. Like cues written for many of the exotic characters in this play, this one maintains a bass

pedal-point underneath the changing harmony to enhance the later climax, giving the music—and therefore the character—a sense of exoticism and excitement. ‘Anitra’s Dance’, an instrumental cue used to properly establish her character, is a lilting waltz that nevertheless retains many of the tropes of the ‘exotic’. It retains the same key (A minor) and contains a similar descending chromatic motif (see **SCORE EXTRACT 4**). Interesting additions, however, include the frequent use of trills and the slight hemiola effect of the cross rhythms played by the pizzicato and bowed strings (see second and third staves of **SCORE EXTRACT 4**). The second subject (not shown), now in the dominant E major, enhances the mournful elements of the song and the character. The melody is based around the non-triadic note of the diminished second, and is harmonised with the minor third below, creating a dominant seven with a flattened ninth. This is a musical effect which gives the character both a sense of sadness and a touch of exoticism taking into account the musical styles of the period. The thematic development presents the first subject in a variety of transpositions, both in the minor and a more hopeful major, before introducing a cello countermelody which ‘mourns’ by alternating between C and B and then F-natural and E, adding texture in the build-up to the recapitulation. This wailing effect reminds us that Anitra is a slave-girl in an Arab harem by balancing the outward happiness of the waltz with a hidden sadness. This musical representation of her situation reinforces the character of Anitra despite the lack of dialogue or stage direction.

Score Extract 4 – Grieg – Peer Gynt – Anitra’s Dance

### Relationship with the Non-fictional Actors

Each composer explores the relationship between the written score and the practical constraints of performance in different ways. Grieg notates a variety of concessions and allowances to reduce the pressure for musically inexperienced actors, while Mendelssohn takes a less proscriptive path by composing around the text, simply leaving pauses during which the actors can explore the script. When these composers explore with the border between music and acting many of the techniques

outlined in the first chapter (such as vamps, underscores, atmospheres, melodramas and cues) come into effect or are dealt with in interesting ways.

Mendelssohn, at least in the full commercially published score for the incidental music,<sup>116</sup> leaves many of the individual details of the interaction between acting and music to the developers of the specific production. To achieve this he refrains from complex or prescriptive stage directions and establishes his music as a flexible framework. While there are some sections of the score in which the actor is limited by the musical composition, Mendelssohn usually incorporates a quantity of ambiguity to allow for the unpredictabilities of live theatrical performance. An example of the former—of tightly integrated music and text—is the incantation of Oberon in Act III. During this speech, written in a tight rhyming verse, each line of seven syllables is underscored with a different chord. Although these chords are notated without pauses and with just a small and ambiguous marking of *ritardando*, it can be assumed that there is a certain level of flexibility in these full-bar semibreve chords. Essentially at this point the speed, delivery and (to a certain extent) volume of the spoken words is constrained by the practicalities of the music. This can be contrasted with the ‘Tempo’ section immediately following (see **SCORE EXTRACT 5**), in which Puck’s free-flowing dialogue is underscored with tightly rhythmical music; in this case each musical phrase is concluded with a safety fermata to permit the language to catch up if needed. This configuration of rhythm and pause occurs twice, establishing it not as a coincidence but as a specific technique used by the composer to accommodate the text and its performance. By not closely prescribing rhythmical speech patterns Mendelssohn leaves individual character interpretations and decisions to the actors or director.

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<sup>116</sup> Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream Op. 61*, ed. Julius Rietz (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1874), [http://imslp.org/wiki/A\\_Midsummer\\_Night’s\\_Dream,\\_Op.61\\_\(Mendelssohn,\\_Felix\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/A_Midsummer_Night’s_Dream,_Op.61_(Mendelssohn,_Felix)).

PUCK: *f* Helena is here at hand; Pleading for a lover's fee.  
 Captain of our fairy band, And the youth, mistook by me, Shall we their fond pageant see? Lord what fools these mortals be!

OBERON: *dim.*  
 Stand aside: the noise they make Will cause Demetrius to awake.

PUCK:  
 Then will two at once woo one

That must needs be sport alone; *f* And those things do best please me That befall preposterously.

Score Extract 5 – Mendelssohn – Midsummer Night's Dream – No. 6

Grieg, in contrast, integrates the spoken word tightly into his musical score. He frequently chooses to score spoken lines as recitative-style chanting, and even extends this to the backstage chorus for prolonged instances of unison singing. He makes many concessions towards the potential lack of musical ability of the performers, utilising single-note 'melodies' for full choruses when the accompanying orchestration is complex, or sacred-style hymn tunes to be sung unaccompanied. In the latter case he provides a harmonised rehearsal piano or organ part, but this part would not be used during performance. Unlike Mendelssohn, who predominantly uses the orchestra in the pit as the main sound source, Grieg explores many different physical locations for the production of music. Along with the conventional pit orchestra he uses backstage choirs and ensembles, onstage performing musicians and singers, and unusual combinations of both onstage and offstage performers. Grieg is prepared for the musical inexperience of the onstage performers, and so advocates that they mime and be 'dubbed over' by backstage musicians. Instances of this can be found in cues such as 'Halling und Springtanz' (which contains the stage direction "played behind the peasant musician performing actor [who] mimics the strike on the Hardanger fiddle"<sup>117</sup>), the 'Arabian Dance' (which instructs that "this piece can, to avoid the involvement of a women's choir, be played only by the orchestra"<sup>118</sup>), and in the famous soprano aria 'Solveig's Song' (which indicates that "if the actress is unable to sing the song herself it can be carried forward behind the stage by a vocalist with the orchestra behind the stage"<sup>119</sup>). Like Mendelssohn, Grieg uses the technique of a rhythmic

<sup>117</sup> Grieg, *Peer Gynt* Op. 23, 14.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

accompaniment followed by safety pauses, but also combines this with other melodramatic techniques such as tremolo and repetition to generate flexibility in performance. An example of this melodramatic style of writing can be found in the 'Scene with the Goatherds': the first section (in which the characters need to enter whilst running, singing, and shouting simultaneously) is orchestrated with sustained horn chords and tremolo strings, creating an elasticity to allow the performers to orient themselves within the stage and musical spaces. This section concludes with a short pause, allowing the following entry to be clearer and more rhythmical, therefore assisting onstage performers who may be some distance from the source of the sound. He uses this same technique again during the 'Scene with the Boyg', in which a short two-bar phrase (consisting of a tremolo chord based on the tritone and a fermata underscored by a low B-flat tremolo) is repeated in a rubato manner to accompany a large section of dialogue. This then moves into the strict compound-duple time of the Allegro and the unison chorus. The unison chorus nevertheless includes short pauses at ends of phrases to accommodate the spoken words of the 'unseen voice' of the Boyg, again finding musical solutions to the practical problems of staging a dramatic character which does not require musical experience and in all likelihood does not have clear line of sight.

### **Relationship with the Scenes within the Narrative**

It has been argued that theatrical music, particularly the output of Mendelssohn, is "grounded in an imagined sense of place".<sup>120</sup> The ability of music to evoke the setting of a scene which has not yet been seen makes music a useful tool to both playwrights and composers. The methods by which composers establish different locales and environs within the play are the subject of this section, although there is a degree of overlap between the establishment of setting and the establishment of character. The methods by which Mendelssohn differentiates between the land of the fairies and of the humans has already been discussed, but of particular scenographic interest is the 'Nocturne' that takes place between the third and fourth acts. The scene which precedes the Nocturne depicts both fairies and humans fighting off urges to sleep, and after concluding words from Puck the scene ends with many of the characters falling into a deep healing sleep, after which "nought shall go ill ... and all shall be well."<sup>121</sup> The extended 'Nocturne' which follows this line is almost a scene in itself, illustrating the restorative slumber with a gentle Andante Tranquillo. The dolce horn solo, supported by quiet strings, establishes the sleeping atmosphere, while the agitato section with its pulsing triplet chords gives a sense of momentum, leading towards the next scene. The octave leap in the horns evokes the fanfaric ideas used to 'wake up' the huntsmen, but in this context the 'hunting horns' seem more distant, unobtrusive, and restful.

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<sup>120</sup> Kimber, "Reading Shakespeare, Seeing Mendelssohn: Concert Readings of A Midsummer Night's Dream, ca. 1850–1920", 1.

<sup>121</sup> Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.ii.462–5.

The play-within-a-play seen in the fifth act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*Pyramus and Thisby*) contains musical cues which, possibly with a parodic inflection, establish the theatrical setting of the amateur dramatics. The 'Allegro comodo' offers snatches of brass and timpani in canon, acting as a simple fanfare to punctuate the beginning and the end of the prologue to this play. The 'Marcia funebre' has a similar punctuating effect, using bassoon and timpani to underscore a clarinet lament in the harmonic minor. This is interspersed between lines from the play to 'enhance' the dramatic effect. The bergamask [sic] that is then called for in the script<sup>122</sup> is executed as 'Ein Tanz von Rüpeln' [A Dance of the Clowns] which maintains the renaissance feel of woodwind and percussion used earlier while adding strings to present a more 'polished' performance. The three musical cues contained within the play-within-a-play help establish this scene as comic and of a genre, and give it a certain 'unoriginal' character to match the performance which is occurring onstage.

As both plays contain fantastical or magical plot elements, the composers (and playwrights) use music to illustrate or embody the magical intonations of the script. A particularly prominent example in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the development of the famous opening tetrachord into the underscoring of all magical verse (such as enchantments and spells). This sequence is a frequently recurring motif, and is applied in a way that blurs the boundaries between melodrama and underscore, allowing the music to represent the unseen magic of the spell. This effect occurs many times during the melodrama of Act III, but perhaps most strikingly under Oberon's "Flower of this purple dye" monologue<sup>123</sup>. Here the motif is distilled into a simple repeated F major chord with an internal step-wise chromatic motion, resolving into the open C major chord that characterises the cadence of the main tetrachord. A later variant of this motif is the hempen-homespun motif. This is used to represent the 'translation' of Bottom's head into that of a donkey, maintaining the same paucity of chords but with a more rustic feel (supplied by the bassoon) to match with the less delicate human characters. This rustic rendition transitions into the pure 'magic' motif as Titania awakes to see Bottom (and the spell that was cast upon her earlier by Oberon takes effect). Here a diminished variation of the last two chords of the tetrachord is augmented with a shimmering strings effect, quietly establishing that some unseen magic has taken place.

*Peer Gynt*, while not containing magical rituals or incantations, nevertheless includes a range of mythical or fantastical characters. The words or actions of these (which include a Sphynx, a 'Boyg', and various usually inanimate objects) are almost invariably supported by music. In the 'Night-scene' Grieg combines melodramatic techniques (such as tremolo, repeated motifs, and a rapidly swelling dynamic range) with the muted sounds of a backstage choir and a backstage organ. The unseen

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<sup>122</sup> "But come, your bergamask. Let your epilogue alone. / *they dance a bergamask*" in Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.i.462–5.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.ii.102–109.

characters of the “Withered Leaves flying in the wind” are created through the combination of unison singing on a drawn-out chromatic scale—which evokes liturgical or ritual chant—with rapid whirling scales on the flute, piccolo and violins. These scales, in combinations of triplet quavers and sextuplet semiquavers, create a dramatic tension and represent the elemental or unearthly qualities of the magical characters they represent. The chromatic bass line (shown in **SCORE EXTRACT 6**) combines double-dotted rhythms with non-harmonic chromatic accents to represent the magical nature of the onstage events, using the scale to outline a diminished chord to maintain tension without obvious resolution. This evokes enchantment through the ungrounded unearthly harmonic palette and shimmering textures. The swelling chromatic motif can also be found embedded into the slow-moving organ chords which accompany the subsequent singing, maintaining a magical through-line through a variety of orchestrational effects and atmospheres.

BACKSTAGE CHOIR (SATB unison) THE BALLS *f*

*p* *fz* *p* Backstage Organ

We are the thoughts

PEER: I have given life to one;-  
'twas a bungled, crook legged thing  
thou should have thought us; feet to run on, thou should have given us!

Hrn  
*pp*

Score Extract 6 – Grieg – Peer Gynt – Night-Scene

*Peer Gynt* contains a wide variety of exotic or foreign settings within the narrative, although Grieg’s musical illustration of these settings prefers to establish the emotional rather than the physical landscape. If we look at the cue that is popularly used as an accompaniment to images of Norwegian fjords or European forests, ‘Morning Mood’, we find that it is actually an introduction to a scene that takes place on a Moroccan beach. Rather than evoking a specifically ‘Moroccan’ sound, it establishes the sense of refreshment and of time passing after the intense sadness of Åse’s death in the preceding scene. This is evoked through the use of a major key and an undulating flute melody, which contrasts against the minor key and thick string chords of the death-scene underscore for the previous scene. Likewise the setting of the Egyptian desert<sup>124</sup> is scored not in ‘oriental’ style but with a soaring major horn line, encapsulating the history and majesty of the Sphinx and of Memnon but

<sup>124</sup> Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, ed. John Northam (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1993), 111.

not instantly providing a cultural or geographic location. These scenes generally occur at times of emotional stress for the principal character, and Grieg chooses to enhance the emotional rather than physical environment in the music he writes to illustrate these moments.

In more performative contexts, however, Grieg allows the music to establish the cultural setting, often before the scene has even started. The term 'performative contexts' refers to the various instances in which a 'performance' takes place within the narrative of the play. In *Peer Gynt* these set-pieces are usually accompanied by either song or dance. Grieg's conception of an 'Arabian' feel in 'Arabian Dance' is created by the establishment of a percussive pulse and the strong statement of the C myxolydian mode, played by unison woodwinds, which is then followed by a repeated motif in the B-flat myxolydian mode. This utilisation of an unexpected modal harmony and the recreation of 'Arabian' instruments using the resources of the symphony orchestra establish this scene as a departure from the prior cultural frame of the narrative. On the other end of the spectrum of cultural musical setting are the cues of 'Halling' and 'Springtanz', both played in accompaniment to a rural Norwegian wedding by an onstage peasant musician-violinist. These draw from a folk-dance tradition, using up-tempo rhythms, extensive ornamentation, and double stopping which is primarily based on the open strings or on the natural fifths of the instrument. This style also uses rapid alternations between pizzicato and arco to create an energy which conjures up in the imagination of the listener a setting which is later described by Peer as a frolic that "flies over the grass"<sup>125</sup>.

### **Relationship with the development process**

The final aspect that will be examined in this exploration of the techniques of nineteenth-century theatrical composition will be the relationship between the score and the rehearsal process for the production. While this area will be subject to more speculation than the other more technical areas of the score, it should nevertheless be possible to make an educated guess as to the origins of particular moments in the score during the writing and rehearsal process. Both compositions were written to commission and towards a performance deadline, allowing us to assume that certain time pressures were present for the composers. Therefore this chapter will investigate how the composers possibly dealt with these constraints and pressures. Techniques which will be examined in this section include the reuse of material, borrowing from outside sources, and the use of simple repetition or transposition.

Analysing this facet of theatrical composition is perhaps harder than other facets in that it is difficult to distinguish between authorial choice and practical necessity. While it is perhaps possible to argue that Mendelssohn reused the themes and motifs of his earlier overture in the construction of his incidental score out of necessity, it seems more likely that he used this concert overture (which is

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<sup>125</sup> Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, 42.

included as the overture for the incidental score) as the musical foundation for the rest of the score. This creates a presumably conscious coherence in the score, as a limited set of musical ideas are developed throughout the course of the composition. It is harder to argue this perspective when discussing the incidental score for *Peer Gynt*. In this score Grieg acknowledges his use of outside material, reuses complete cues note for note, and re-presents shorter sections in transposition or repetition. This could perhaps be due to the contemporaneous and collaborative nature of the production development process. The staging and production elements in the original production would not be able to be predicted far in advance, and so a range of stopgap measures are introduced into the composition to counter this unpredictability. The second cue in the score, 'Norwegian Bridal Procession', includes the footnote: "This well-known piano piece (Op. 19 No. 2) was inserted by the composer at this point in the Peer Gynt music."<sup>126</sup> Along with this external addition, Grieg also repeats cues (in instrumental arrangement) to cover for obvious production difficulties. An example of this is the inclusion of 'Solveig's Song' as an additional prelude to Act III, "to play if need arise due to a longer change of scene"<sup>127</sup>. This admission is an acknowledgement that the supplied prelude may be of insufficient length to cover the extensive scene change from the exterior of a mountain hut on a mountain to "deep inside the pine forest" with falling snow.<sup>128</sup> Grieg also reuses a cue identically in his use of the cue 'Åse's Death' as a prelude to Act III, Scene Four, allowing for another complex transition. This music was presumably originally intended for use as the underscore to the death of Åse. This can be deduced from the directions as to exact points of dialogue at which the speech should begin and end, and directions that instruct that it should be played pianissimo behind the stage to accompany the scene. However, the music was obviously reused without changes when the need arose at the beginning of the scene. Smaller scale reuse occurs throughout the work in the form of the repeated accompaniments in the 'Night Scene' or 'At the Statue of Memnon' or the repeated verse structure of 'Peer Gynt's Serenade'. However, these smaller scale repetitions can be seen as a part of a compositional technique central to the narrative, much in the manner that the 'Prelude to the Second Act' develops musically upon the ideas from the first 'Prelude'. These last two cues are also linked through their settings, as they both involve characters from the same Norwegian wedding, and so the adapted musical material enhances the structure of the narrative.

## Conclusion

This chapter, through the highlighting of musical elements both inside and outside the narrative of the plays, shows that theatrical composers must write to a two-fold brief: they are required to support the fictional narrative artistically, and to support the performance logistically and

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<sup>126</sup> Grieg, *Peer Gynt Op. 23*, 9.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>128</sup> Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, 55.

aesthetically. Although conclusions may not be definitive with such a limited sample this dual-role seems to have resulted in a range of compositional techniques and approaches to drama on the part of composers. These techniques are designed to operate within the limited constraints of the practical theatre and to aim for the lofty ambitions of the dramatical narrative. The final chapter of this thesis will examine two twentieth-century plays to see if similar techniques or approaches can be found in the areas of more contemporary theatre and more contemporary music.

## Chapter 4: Analysis of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Works

In this final chapter we shall be examining two theatrical compositions of the twentieth century. Although the two works chosen, *Johnson Over Jordan* and *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, are as distant chronologically from each other as they are from the works of the previous chapter, they nevertheless represent a shift in both theatrical and musical practice. Over the turn of the century there was a shift, started by Ibsen and others, away from the representational performance style of the nineteenth century. The old-fashioned style, characterised by a love of spectacle in both theatrical effect and acting style, saw plays as a conscious portrayal of external events rather than internally 'true' situations.<sup>129</sup> This acting style was characterised by an established series of gestures that were executed in sequence, like choreography, to represent certain established emotional states. The key development around the turn of the century was to move away from this externalised spectacular and towards psychological realism. While this new style is arguably no more 'real' than any other theatrical style, the introduction of internal character emotions and the focus on emotional landscape represents a shift in theatrical practice. Most readers will be aware of the shifts that occurred in musical style in the early twentieth century, with the development of new approaches to harmony and musical construction. The two works looked at in this final section are representative of modernity in both theatrical and musical construction, and so these compositions show immediate stylistic differences both in concept and execution to the works of the previous century.

### Johnson Over Jordan

The play *Johnson Over Jordan* was written by J. B. Priestly on the eve of war in 1939, and was described by his son as "the most obviously experimental of all his plays, combining all the resources of theatre available at the time".<sup>130</sup> Although the play starts out as a conventional 'everyman' story, the story transitions into the strangeness of the main character's afterlife. The central premise is of a biographical-morality play which depicts a main character whose life is so ordinary as to be boring. The production was designed to use the full theatrical resources available at the time, including ballet choruses, a twenty piece orchestra, custom-made grotesque masks, and over forty characters including a gorilla and Don Quixote.<sup>131</sup> This extravagance, reminiscent of the resources found in *Peer Gynt*, was frowned upon by audiences and critics as being old fashioned. Priestly later acknowledged

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<sup>129</sup> Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), <http://www.getcited.org/pub/102215338>; G. Taylor, "Chapters 9 and 11", in *Players and performances in the Victorian theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=0xoNAQAIAAJ>.

<sup>130</sup> Tom Priestly, "J B Priestly" in J. B. Priestly, *Johnson Over Jordan* (London: Oberon Books, 2001).

<sup>131</sup> Paul Taylor, "Johnson Over Jordan" in *ibid.*

that “if the play should ever be revived [he] should have it done in a simpler fashion”, expressing the modernist trend from external spectacular to internal complexity.

The incidental score for this play was written by Benjamin Britten when he was just twenty-five years old. The score was composed towards the end of a particularly prolific period during which Britten wrote more than forty scores for theatre, BBC radio-plays and early BBC television. Britten was “intensively involved with the spoken theatre”, collaborating extensively with W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood and Montagu Slater in the years preceding this particular commission.<sup>132</sup> The score that he produced for *Johnson Over Jordan* is a substantial one, with a very great number of mostly unnamed musical cues, which Eric Walter White describes as “the most ambitious score that Britten wrote for the theatre prior to [the operetta] *Paul Bunyan*.”<sup>133</sup> This play was developed over a relatively short period of time, with three weeks between the workshopped draft and the regional premiere performance,<sup>134</sup> although it is unclear at what stage Britten became involved in the production. Due to the collaborative and rapid nature of the play development process, Britten worked with an orchestrator, arranger, and band-leader to create a large number of musical cues that range from serious composition to jazz and pastiche numbers. In this eclectic collection of musical styles we can nevertheless see Britten flexing his compositional muscles (the work has the distinctive Britten stylistic ‘voice’) while maintaining fidelity to the requirements of the play and of the production.

### **Every Good Boy Deserves Favour**

*Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, a 1977 collaboration between playwright Tom Stoppard and composer/conductor André Previn, is a play arising out of comparatively unusual circumstances. The play’s most striking feature is that it is to be performed on the concert platform alongside a full symphony orchestra. Despite this context, the writers were determined that this “was going to be a real play...bound up with a symphony orchestra”, temporarily converting the concert hall into a completely theatrical environment.<sup>135</sup> The opportunity for orchestral involvement provided the initial impetus for the project, but it was the political background of the Cold War that provided the driving force for the completion of the play. Stoppard chose to place his narrative inside a Russian lunatic asylum, in which two prisoners are interred. The first (who is genuinely mad) believes that he can see and is in charge of a full symphony orchestra (that he is also the orchestra’s triangle player simply adds to the foolishness). The other is a political prisoner who is being forced by the authorities to

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<sup>132</sup> Eric Walter White, “Britten in the Theatre: A Provisional Catalogue”, *Tempo (New Series)* 3, no. 107 (1973): 2–10, [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S004029820005796X](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S004029820005796X), 1, 6.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>134</sup> Tom Priestly “J B Priestly” in Priestly, *Johnson Over Jordan*.

<sup>135</sup> Tom Stoppard, “Introduction” *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour and Professional Foul* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), v.

admit that his dissident tendencies are purely the symptoms of an undisclosed mental illness. The focus on the emotional, political, and psychological landscape of the characters provides the main thrust for the dramatic action. Stoppard saw these two principal characters as discordant notes in a carefully orchestrated society, using the orchestra as a recurrent metaphor within a fictional environment in which “your opinions are your symptoms”.<sup>136</sup>

André Previn’s involvement with this project started significantly before the period in which the score was actually composed. According to his personal account, he suggested the idea for the performance (being chief conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra at the time) and helped develop the practical elements of the performance (“where to put the actors, how to design acting areas on a concert stage, how to hide the conductor, how to cope with sight lines”<sup>137</sup> etc.) before actually composing the score. It is interesting to note that many of these theatrical problems, which had previously been solved by the invention of the pit and the playhouse (cf. **CHAPTER 1**), had to be re-examined with the use of a performance space that does not have a clearly established tradition of theatrical performance. The music sounds quite avant-garde, and consciously blurs the boundary between the music and the play, integrating them together in an acknowledgement of the play’s subtitle: “A Play for Actors and Orchestra”. This work developed out of an intimately collaborative relationship, and so the score and play are inextricably integrated, an important fact that defines the score and provides much of the ‘meaning’ of the play.

## Analysis

### Relationship with the Fictional Characters

Perhaps the most straightforward way to analyse Britten’s representations of the fictional characters of *Johnson Over Jordan* is to examine the musical cues ascribed to the entrance or exit of the key characters in Act I. These take the form of a series of variations upon a dotted march-like theme (See **SCORE EXTRACT 7**), with each set of characters portrayed differently. In this respect the structure for these cues could be likened to the *Enigma Variations* by Edward Elgar, as Britten uses the same idea of representing a series of (in this case fictional) characters through variations of an unstated theme. The character of the ‘old man’ is expressed through a *marcato e staccato* woodwind march pattern accompanying pizzicato bass, *staccatissimo* pianoforte, bass drum and a ‘*portamento ed espress.* (vibrato)’ trombone solo. This gives the cue a comic and eccentric character which contrasts with the character of the cue called ‘Entrance of the Examiners’. In this cue a more insistent march is

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., vi.

<sup>137</sup> Andre Previn, “Introduction”, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, Large Vers. (New York: Edition Wilhelm Hansen/Chester Music New York Inc., 1982).

expressed in the woodwinds without any harmonic movement and doubled by a Chinese wood-block. This is supported by strings playing either pizzicato or tremolo sul ponticello, and features a more rhythmical brass-section fanfare melody. Both the ‘Examiner’s Second Exit’ and ‘Clayton’s Exit’ use similar ideas and orchestrations, with variations only in the length of cue and the complexity of the theme.

Score Extract 7 – Britten – Johnson Over Jordan – Entrance Theme

These entrance variations can be contrasted against the first ‘Examiners’ Exit’ which is a march based on an irregular pulse filled with triplets, accents, and arpeggios.<sup>138</sup> The ‘Exit of [the] Policeman’ is an altogether more whimsical affair, consisting only of a timpani solo, performed with wooden sticks, angular rhythms and frequent trills. These character introductions can also be compared to the character pieces which occur in the final act. Although these are now ‘fictional characters’ (i.e., characters that are fictional even within the narrative of the play), they are still presented through detached, named, musical cues. ‘Don Quixote’ consists of a Saraband played by muted strings, giving it a dignified lilting character, while ‘Falstaff’ is accompanied by simultaneous compound-duple military drum and simple-duple muted trumpet fanfare. ‘Sinbad’ is a slightly more complex musical cue, consisting of an ostinato pedal in the bass, timpani, and bassoon, with a sinuous chromatic melody played in canon by oboe and clarinet. The accompanying strings create an exotic texture though the pairing of tremolo violins and non-tremolo violas which double each violin part two octaves below. Although the foundation of this music is relatively simple, the combination of a chromatic tonality with canon and ostinato creates a complex musical portrait of a very specific character.

<sup>138</sup> Benjamin Britten, “I/10”, *Johnson Over Jordan* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939).

The score to *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* contains many interactions between the music and the characters of the play, although it is perhaps most interesting to examine the way in which the orchestra is transformed into a character within the narrative. Whereas in the nineteenth century plays the orchestra was hidden either under or behind the stage, the unusual staging circumstances of this play place the orchestra as a significant character within the narrative frame. Perhaps the most interesting ‘portrayal’ of the character of the orchestra occurs in cue 10,<sup>139</sup> which follows the realisation by Ivanov (the genuinely insane inmate) that he does indeed ‘have an orchestra’.<sup>140</sup> After each of Ivanov’s brief declarations a short motif is cued in the orchestra. The first starts with a rapidly ascending clarinet solo before more instruments are added. On the second cue the lead trumpet plays a *leggiero* solo over a tremolo string foundation. On the third cue sustained woodwind notes are added, highlighted by a high G on a glockenspiel. After the final line of the scene (“I always knew I had an orchestra”) the orchestra breaks into a ‘feroce’ presto placing a rapidly ascending G myxolydian scale above a pounding C-G bass line. The key motif of this section, however, is a pairing of adjacent tones (C $\sharp$ +D $\sharp$ →D $\natural$ +E), which takes the role of a pseudo-leading note in this section (See **SCORE EXTRACT 8**). This motif takes over the rest of the music in this cue, becoming more and more repetitive and pervasive, before transforming into other intervals or scalar passages. This motif, although eventually hidden amongst other ideas, remains present for the rest of this cue. The combination of the scale passages and the harsh intervals gives it a frenetic childlike quality, shifting the focus of the cue from a musical portrayal of the character of the orchestra to a dramatic representation of the character of Ivanov.

Score Extract 8 – Previn – *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* – Cue 10 (Presto)

<sup>139</sup> Previn, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, 50.

<sup>140</sup> Stoppard, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour and Professional Foul*, 17.

### Relationship with the Non-fictional Actors

When discussing the relationship between the music and the actors, we can argue that Benjamin Britten takes a view similar to O'Neill's: that the music takes its cues from the words, but then the actors must learn their business from the music.<sup>141</sup> This attitude can be seen through Britten's chosen method of annotating entrances and cues. Most of the musical cues in his score are prefaced by a spoken line indicating what precedes the musical entrance, but after this point few concessions are made for the actors. There are no melodramas in this score, so there is no scoring for spoken voice, and vamps are not clearly indicated in Britten's score. Minor concessions to the flexibilities of theatrical performance can be found at the end of cues such as 'Single Clerk'<sup>142</sup>. This cue ends with a single bar bracketed by repeat bar-lines, perhaps indicating that the bar should be repeated until an unknown staging or dialog cue. A similar ambiguity can be found in the first two bars of the 'Examiner's Exit', which are also bracketed with repeat bar-lines, but it is unclear as to whether this music is repeated indefinitely during an exit or simply once, using a traditional shorthand method for notating a four-bar passage. Other examples of music-actor interaction in this score concern dramatic situations in which the onstage characters are able to hear the music being played. Examples of this include the traditional comedy punch-line "boom-tish" of the percussion in II/4 and the three-bar 'romantic' cue of II/5 which tightly follows a spoken cue. Other cues which are definitely heard by characters are dance numbers, which require obvious musical involvement from the actors, and 'II/8' which is a distant (muted) string waltz cued on the spoken line of "Listen!". Perhaps one of the only cues that actively requires interaction between actor and musicians is 'II/6 Approach of Death' in which each of the first four bars is repeated on cue. Although the notation is ambiguous it seems that each bar of the music is intended to underscore a specific movement or action, and it is only after each action has been completed that the music proceeds to the coda which provides a dramatic climax to the entire play. This complex series of checkpoints and vamps would require non-verbal communication or interaction between the performers and conductor to ensure that each onstage action aligns with its designated musical expression.

*Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* contains a more complex approach to the interaction between the actor and the music, perhaps due to the thematic content of the play. Two of the actors have to play musical instruments within the play, at varying levels of synchronicity within the rest of the complex score. In order for the Doctor to play his violin he must either play the part as it is written in the score, or make use of the direction in cue 8: the solo violinist in the score (presumably concertmaster) is instructed to "accompany actor miming". This last skill requires a level of coordination between the actor and solo violinist in order to synchronise these parts into a

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<sup>141</sup> O'Neill, "Music to Stage Plays", 94.

<sup>142</sup> Britten, "I/7 Single Clerk", *Johnson Over Jordan*, 43.

convincing performance. At the other end of the difficulty spectrum is the character who plays the triangle. Mostly, his performance consists of manic arrhythmic beating, but cues such as the ‘Entr’acte’ that introduces the play require the actor to perform a simple notated part integrated into the orchestration (see **SCORE EXTRACT 9**). The strict quavers are shifted rapidly (through a semiquaver sextuplet) into a tremolo, indicating the break-down of the part and the madness of the character. The orchestra continues playing after this arrhythmic outburst, and so the arrhythmic character action becomes a cue for the stage manager, who cues the lights, which provide the “CUE: FULL LIGHTS UP” to the orchestra. After this point the orchestra races into a Subito Allegro which continues without actor involvement until bar 49, which is a vamped timpani solo. At this point the actor ‘takes charge’ of the orchestra, instructing them to retry certain moments or go back to certain bars. This requires an intricate interlocking of the action and music, and as such the score contains the vocal cues (the beginning and end of each section of speech) and various notated ‘mistakes’ and ‘repeats’. This character in particular, due to his mental state, interacts frequently with the orchestra, meaning that the actor has to give and take cues from instruments or the unacknowledged conductor.

**Very Slowly (in 8)** Tgl. played by Actor

The score extract shows a complex rhythmic pattern in 4/4 time. The top staff is for the Triangle (Tgl.), marked 'played by Actor'. The bottom two staves are for Strings, marked 'con sord.' and 'ppp'. The score includes a semiquaver sextuplet and a tremolo section. The bottom right section shows a transition to 2/4 time with a timpani part marked '+Trb.' and 'p'.

Score Extract 9 – Previn – Every Good Boy Deserves Favour – Cue 1

### Relationship with the Scenes within the Narrative

In *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* Previn uses his music to set the scene of a 'play for orchestra' as well as for smaller scenes within the narrative context. One of the more evocative cues is No. 6, which follows the line "how did it all begin?".<sup>143</sup> This movement starts with a solo cello playing a melody based on semitone intervals and on major sevenths (the inversion of the semitone). This is then joined by a muted cello section playing in four-part semitone-based harmony. This call-and-response structure is repeated after the second cue, but with the addition of divisi violins and violas to the divisi cellos, thickening the sound. This lush but discordant music is maintained underneath a substantial speech, providing a sad and mournful underscore and transporting the narrative outside the asylum to which it is confined. At the end of the speech a sustained discordant chord is outlined in the strings, providing a foundation for a five-piece battalion of percussion instruments. This percussive addition is then vamped until the cue "I did something real crazy", upon which a "loud ad lib Cadenza" is taken by the snare drum player. These final bars of the cue pull the narrative back into the chaos of the asylum, grounding it again in the percussive energies of the cues that bookend cue 6 and shattering the romantic image of the distant fugitive in the story.

In *Johnson Over Jordan* Britten uses music to either explicitly describe or to implicitly evoke a specific atmosphere or scene. His score contains many examples of evocative cues, such as cue '1/16', which reflects upon the line "they say in church we are all brothers"<sup>144</sup> with gently undulating muted strings accompanying a mournful descending soprano vocalisation, or the brief mournful descending statement that follows "...without regret...without regret"<sup>145</sup>. However, it is Britten's descriptive cues that are the most engaging, providing a scene with an instant sonic fingerprint. The cues which foreshadow and underscore the nightclub scene in the second act are excellent examples of this technique as they establish an instantly identifiable sleazy jazz sound which provides both an aural scenography and, in practical terms, opportunities for dancing and other practical nightclub activities. The first of these cues, 'End of Act I', presents a snatch of syncopation following the main character hearing the distant music. This is performed by brass and lower woodwind, utilising a syncopated chromatic arc that builds to a high tremolo screech by the full orchestra at a fortississimo dynamic (See **SCORE EXTRACT 10**). This snappy dance riff is accompanied by bass, piano, cello, and timpani outlining the tonic and dominant of the chord. 'End of Act I' is a short cue, with no harmonic modulation or movement, but it sets up themes that get fully developed in the nightclub number 'Spider and the Fly'. This extended cue starts with an ascending bass clarinet solo which recalls the introduction to Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and leads into a lazy stride-style jazz. A swung solo is

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<sup>143</sup> Stoppard, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour and Professional Foul*, 18.

<sup>144</sup> Priestly, *Johnson Over Jordan*, 52.

<sup>145</sup> Britten, "11/5½", *Johnson Over Jordan*, 106.

played on a smoky alto saxophone before being taken up by the full strings. This moves into a highly syncopated energetic swing style, using the same motif as ‘End of Act I’ but developing it into a full dance theme. After a gentler string bridge the first theme is restated in a staccato Broadway style before the second theme is played from a distance by muted trumpets and tremolo lower strings. This rapid alternation between subjects and performance styles creates a disorienting effect, which is further enhanced by the development of these themes in the lead-up to the climactic ending. Britten initially modifies these themes subtly, by inserting or delaying beats in the melody or by repeating bars with harmonic modulation. This creates a ‘skipping record’ effect which conveys the setting of a nightclub that is slightly awry. He builds on these unsettling harmonic and thematic techniques with the addition of fortissimo tremolo gong, timpani, and bass, and through the addition of rapidly descending triplet chromatic scales, contributing to a ‘winding down’ effect that maintains the air of malevolence until a final tutti crescendo ascending run which combines semiquaver chromatic scales, timpani trills, string glissandi and bass tremolo to build to the final two notes: a high fortissimo chord and an accented unison statement of the tonic.

**Allegro Vivace**

The musical score extract shows two systems of music. The first system has a treble clef staff with a complex, syncopated melody and a bass clef staff with a simple accompaniment. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, ending with a final tutti crescendo (fff) and an accented unison statement of the tonic.

Score Extract 10 – Britten – Johnson Over Jordan – End of Act I

### Relationship with the Development Process

An analysis of the score development process for these modern specimens is complicated by the fact that the composers would have had significant assistance with preparing their score for performance. It is known that Britten collaborated with an arranger, a copyist, and a bandleader in the writing of *Johnson Over Jordan*.<sup>146</sup> This would obviously make the development process of *Johnson Over Jordan* more efficient, but by analysing the score we can explore additional ways in which Britten adapted his compositional methods to the practical and logistical constraints of the production. Several short cues are repeated almost identically, such as ‘I/15 Clayton’s Exit’ and

<sup>146</sup> White, “Britten in the Theatre: A Provisional Catalogue”, 7.

'1/15½', in which the instrumentation and material is the same except for the removal of the bass and the trombone in the reprise. Other cues, such as 'Mr Pickwick', rely on indications such as *Da Capo* or other traditional forms of repeat. Aside from these stock-in-trade examples there are two areas of reuse which are of perhaps more musicological interest. The first is the use of orchestral arrangements of works by other composers. Although these are prompted by the script, the specific cues are often not, leaving the composer to select and appropriate existing works as they see fit. Britten's score contains arrangements and transcriptions of compositions by Liszt, Mozart, and Alfred Margis (a virtually unknown composer of light music in the beginning of the twentieth century). The work by Margis, *Valse Bleue*, occurs twice in the third act at the request of the script,<sup>147</sup> demonstrating a construction which is based on achieving the required musical content as efficiently as possible, while using existing music to create a recognisable sense of place, cultural context, or social setting within the narrative.

Insight into the score's composition process can be inferred through an analysis of the use of the subtle 'Death Motif' throughout the music. This is a four-bar leitmotif that occurs at many points in the score, and is characterised by the fanfare played by the brass accompanied by the tremolo-and-trill effect in woodwind, strings or piano (See **SCORE EXTRACT 11**). It is notable that this motif is executed in the same key and with the same rhythm at every occurrence. As the melody is played in unison by the brass it becomes a simple matter to simply copy the motif note-for-note wherever it is needed. Thus we can see this motif (or entire cue) attached to the end of 'II/6 Approach of Death' and the opening of the 'Overture', and embedded in several other cues throughout the score.

Score Extract 11 – Britten – Johnson Over Jordan – III/13 Death Motif (Version 1)

Like *Johnson Over Jordan*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* includes an external contribution to the score. In this instance it takes the form of a brief transcription of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. Aside from this snippet, however, the score contains very little indication as to the influence the development process had upon the score. This lack of obvious impact could perhaps be due to the long development period for this play, or to the complex relationship between the orchestra and the

<sup>147</sup> Priestly, *Johnson Over Jordan*, 91.

action. Although there is some reuse of material, such as the repeated vamps of the percussion sections or the heavy scalic passages of cue 10, it is hard to justify this as a developmental shortcut rather than as a series of artistic choices. We can nevertheless use the details of this score to infer a certain style of developmental process, albeit a different one from the Britten or even the Grieg and the Mendelssohn. In this composition the composer seems to have had the luxury of both time and a certain level of creative control in the developmental process, constructing a play in which the relationship of the music to the director, playwright, or script is collaborative rather than subordinate.

## **Conclusion**

In these twentieth-century compositions we can see certain trends develop in the relationship between the music and the theatrical environment. The new-era composers seem more comfortable dealing with a wider range of musical styles, incorporating jazz, popular, classical and 'modern' musical ideas into their scores. A shift can also be observed in the way that music is integrated into the play: although there are fewer instances of melodramatic-style integration, the music becomes a significant component of the dramatic 'meaning' of the play. This shift in role from accompanist to collaborator mirrors many of the transformations within theatrical practice that occurred during this time. Although there is little change in the techniques used to musically represent narrative aspects which can be 'seen', we can observe a development of the musical methods used to portray the 'unseen' in the modern compositions. Whereas the nineteenth-century pieces explore supernatural elements or atmospheric states through music, these more modern compositions shift the musical focus to an examination of the psychological landscape of the characters and the narrative. This 'emotional' or 'psychological' music becomes tightly integrated into the fabric and the meaning of the play without necessarily using traditional integrative techniques such as melodrama or ballet.

## Conclusion

By analysing theatrical works this thesis has argued that composing for the theatre requires the development of an array of techniques and approaches. This toolbox allows composers to deal with the unusual aesthetic and practical circumstances of the theatrical environment. Despite the strict limitations that theatrical production place upon a composition, a string of well-known composers have written music specifically designed for theatrical performance, although these works have gone largely unexamined. This thesis aimed to develop a musicological approach that was able to incorporate non-musical factors into an analysis so that these compositions could be analysed musicologically. A goal of the thesis was to approach this music in a way that was flexible enough to deal with the entwined nature of the genre. Because one cannot escape the fact that these are *theatrical works*, these pieces cannot be examined in academic isolation or solely through traditional musicological analysis. Instead, any factor which may have influenced the composition or reception of a performance must be at least partially examined.

Within the limited frame of this thesis we have examined music written for plays through a specific methodology. However, further study could be devoted to this subject, broadening the area of investigation. Avenues for further discussion could be created by applying this musicological methodology to works which have a larger proportion of documentary evidence for their development and production, although such analysis would be limited for the most part to modern productions due to the fact that such productions tend to be generously documented. Alternately, this methodology could be applied to works which exist in other theatrical musical traditions, such as opera, pantomime, melodrama, or ballet. Finally, the compositions examined already could be re-examined through the lens of different musicological schools, either those discussed in Chapter 2, or other ethno- or historico-musicological methods. Additional analysis of these works would build up a more comprehensive picture of the compositions themselves, while examination of additional pieces in the field would place these works into a wider context and construct a more detailed overview of the field as a whole.

While the methodology used in this thesis is applicable to a wide range of musical disciplines, it is important to note the circumstances out of which the methodology was developed. The need for such a methodology arose from a desire to study a range of theatrical works which had not received a great deal of academic attention or affection. Theatrical compositions are musically and culturally significant, and the fact that they are relatively unexamined does not reflect their complexity or sophistication in composition and construction.

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