SHAKESPEARE IN MUSIC

NOVEMBER 18, 2016 AT 11 AM
NOVEMBER 19, 2016 AT 8 PM

TEDDY ABRAMS, CONDUCTOR

Sullivan: Overture to Macbeth
Berlioz: Queen Mab Scherzo from Romeo and Juliet
Mendelssohn: Overture to A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Elgar: Excerpt from Falstaff
Bernstein: Mambo from West Side Story
Prokofiev: Excerpts from the ballet Romeo and Juliet

*Classics only
Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights regularly included popular ballads and dances into their plays. So it should be no surprise that composers have been equally inspired by the Bard for generations.

“Bardoletry” began in earnest in 1769 with the first Great Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford-upon-Avon and really took off with the Romantic era as more Europeans became aware of Shakespeare’s works.

Shakespeare’s influence on music spans all musical genres including works for orchestra, operas, ballets, and art songs. Even modern day songwriters like Neil Peart (Rush), Bob Dylan, Mumford & Sons and Rufus Wainwright have been inspired by the Bard.

For someone who was so influential to the English language and literature, Shakespeare himself remains a bit of a mystery with several large gaps in his historical record. William Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564 (so he was likely born a few days prior). His parents were John and Mary (née Arden) Shakespeare who lived in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, England. As the son of the bailiff, he probably attended the local King Edward VI Grammar School but there is no formal record of his education.

The next record we have is of his marriage at age 18 to Anne Hathaway (8 years his senior) on November 28, 1582. Their daughter Susanna was born 6 months after their wedding followed by twins Hamnet and Judith two years later. Of the three Shakespeare children, Hamnet would not live to adulthood, dying at age 11. The next mention of Shakespeare is via Robert Greene’s pamphlet Greene’s Groats-worth of Wit in 1592 referring to Shakespeare as an “upstart Crow” and “peasant”. It seems that between 1585 and 1592, Shakespeare moved to London (without his family who continued to live in Stratford) and began life as a working actor and playwright. Clearly he ruffled a few well established feathers to evoke such a comment from the drama critic (the publisher later issued a retraction). But 1592 was a good year for the Bard as his play Henry VI Part I was a smash hit and began a string of hits as well as the penning of his sonnets. And with his success, Shakespeare’s life becomes more transparent with records about his work life (payment for plays, dedications) and home life (the death of his son, purchase of a coat of arms in the name of his father, purchase of property). Along with actor Richard Burbage, Shakespeare formed the Chamberlain’s Men (later known as the King’s Men upon the arrival of James I to the English throne). And when a dispute with the Theatre’s landlord proved problematic, the troupe dismantled the Theatre and re-built it as The Globe Theatre. In 1603, the plague hit England with a vengeance and theatres were closed for a number of years. Near 1609, the plague abated and theatres re-opened. Shakespeare’s company bought Blackfriars as their first indoor theatre and greatly increased the company’s revenue.
By then, Shakespeare was starting to slow down and *The Tempest* (1610) was his last solely credited work.

He had spent much of his married life living and working in London with occasional trips home but his final years were spent in Stratford-upon-Avon. He died in April 1616 at the age of 51 (many believe he died on or just after his birthday). In 1623, the *First Folio* was published containing Shakespeare’s plays as well as a dedication poem by his friend Ben Jonson. The categorization of Shakespeare’s plays into histories, comedies and tragedies was defined in the First Folio. As Ben Jonson put it, Shakespeare was “not of an age, but for all time!”

“If music be the food of love, play on.” *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Scene i

The Composers

**Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)**

There was little doubt that from an early age, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was a prodigy. Born on February 3, 1809 in Hamburg, Germany, young Felix grew up in a wealthy Jewish family surrounded by intelligentsia and opportunity. He played piano and violin, studied the music of Bach and Mozart as well as the writings of Goethe and Shakespeare (Felix became friends Goethe in 1821 and set several of Goethe’s poems to music). By the time he was a teenager, Mendelssohn was already a prolific composer with works ranging from his First Symphony to the *Overture to A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (the overture was one of the first of its kind that became known as a concert overture). From 1826-1829, Mendelssohn studied at the Humboldt University of Berlin where he continued to expand his love of composition and classical literature. From 1829-31, Mendelssohn traveled throughout Europe gaining inspiration for some of his most famous works including the *Hebrides Overture* (Fingal’s Cave) and “Scottish” Symphony (both inspired by his visits to Scotland) as well as his “Italian” Symphony.

During the 1830s, Mendelssohn traveled between Britain and Germany conducting numerous performances of works he helped to re-introduce to the public (Mendelssohn’s performance of J.S. Bach’s *St. Matthew’s Passion* revived the interest in the elder Bach). In 1835, Mendelssohn accepted the conductor position with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra with the intent of reinvigorating Leipzig’s musical and cultural life. Again Mendelssohn took the opportunity to promote and revive interest in the works of composers Robert Schumann and Franz Schubert as well as his own including the St. Paul oratorio. In 1842, sixteen years after composing the overture, Mendelssohn was commissioned by King Frederick William IV of Prussia to compose incidental music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Rather than starting from scratch, Mendelssohn decided to keep his youthful overture in its entirety and used its “DNA” throughout the rest of the incidental music. The musical intermezzo between Acts IV and V gained its own fame when Victoria, Princess Royal used it for her wedding to Prince Frederick William of Prussia (Mendelssohn had met her parents (Queen Victoria and Prince Albert) many times during his visits to Britain). Today, we know this intermezzo as the famous “Wedding March” that has accompanied many brides down the aisle. The following year, Mendelssohn founded the Leipzig Conservatory and continued composing, teaching and conducting until his death in 1847 at the young age of thirty-eight.
Sergei Prokofiev was born in 1891 in Sontsovka (eastern Ukraine) to soil engineer Sergei Alexeyevich and his wife Maria, a talented amateur pianist. Prokofiev composed his first piano piece at age five and his first opera at nine. He studied with well-known composer/pianist Reinhold Glière but found the methodology a little too "square" for his taste. From 1904-1909, Prokofiev studied at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory with notable professors including Anatoly Lyadov, Nikolai Tcherepnin and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Prokofiev’s early compositions were often harmonically dissonant and highly experimental but he was making a name for himself both as a composer and a pianist. In 1914, he met Ballets Russes impresario Sergei Diaghilev in London who commissioned him to compose a ballet. The result was Chout based on a Russian folktale and its premiere in Paris in 1921 was a hit. In May 1918, Russia was in turmoil and Prokofiev decided to try his fortunes in America. He arrived in San Francisco in August 1918 but struggled to establish himself and left for Paris in 1920. While in Paris, Prokofiev re-connected with the Ballets Russes as well as completed his Third Piano Concerto and the opera The Love for Three Oranges (premiered in 1921 in Chicago).

In 1923, Prokofiev married Spanish singer Carolina “Lina” Codina. The remainder of the 1920s included a tour of the Soviet Union (1927), completion of his Third Symphony, The Fiery Angel (opera), The Prodigal Son (ballet) and repairing his relationship with Igor Stravinsky. In 1934, Prokofiev was commissioned to compose music for the Soviet film Lieutenant Kijé; a project that Prokofiev would turn into a highly successful orchestral suite. A commission from the Kirov Ballet (formerly Mariinsky) would produce the ballet Romeo and Juliet in 1935 that Prokofiev arranged into three orchestral suites (though the ballet wouldn’t premiere in the USSR until 1940 when it became a huge hit). Finally in 1936, Prokofiev and his family returned to the Soviet Union and settled in Moscow. That same year, Prokofiev composed the family favorite Peter and the Wolf for the Central Children’s Theatre. As he was now in Stalin’s USSR, Prokofiev had to conform to the Soviet ideals and whether or not he agree with them privately, he did compose numerous pieces that reflected his new circumstances including film music for Alexander Nevsky, several mass songs (with approved Soviet poems), and Piano Sonatas 6 – 8.

During World War II, Prokofiev continued to compose in spite of being evacuated due to Germany’s invasion. By this time, Prokofiev began a relationship with writer Mira Mendelson and became estranged from his wife (she opted to stay in Moscow with their sons). After the War, Prokofiev (along with Shostakovich) came under fire via the Zhdanov Doctrine as not prescribing to the Soviet cultural ideals and had several of his pieces banned from performance. And in 1948, his wife was tried and convicted of espionage (she tried to send money to her mother in Spain); she spent the next eight years in the Soviet gulag. Prokofiev’s health was failing but in 1949, he completed his Cello Concerto for Mstislav Rostopovich. Prokofiev died on March 5, 1953, the same day as Josef Stalin.
Shakespeare wrote the comedy *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* between 1590 and 1597 and it became one of his most popular plays both during and after his lifetime. The four parallel stories center around the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta in the realm of the faeries. Egeus wants his daughter Hermia to marry Demetrius but Hermia is in love with Lysander. Helena was Demetrius’ girlfriend and is still in love with him. Oberon, King of the faeries, wants his wife Titania to give him her foundling as a knight but she refuses. Oberon enlists Puck to make a love juice and instructs him to put it on the eyes of a young Athenian man. Puck mistakenly puts the juice on the eyes of Lysander, who falls in love with Helena, as well as Demetrius, who also falls in love with Helena. Meanwhile, a set of actors is working on their play *Pyramus and Thisbe* for the wedding. One of the actors, Nick Bottom, ends up the subject of Oberon’s fury at Titania by giving him the head of a donkey and having Puck put the love juice on Titania’s eyes. Eventually Oberon gets the changeling and all the love potion effects end with everyone convinced that their experiences in the woodland were but a dream.
Shakespeare wrote the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* between 1591 and 1595; it was published in two quarto editions (1597/1599) as well as the First Folio in 1623. The story of the star-cross’d lovers dates back to antiquity and the Montagues (Montecchi) and Capulets (Cappelletti) are first referenced in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Set in Verona, Italy, the play begins with another brawl between the two feuding households that results in the Prince laying down the law (whoever causes the next brawl will be put to death). Romeo crashes the Capulet party with his friends. He and Juliet meet and fall in love; they meet again later that night in the famous balcony scene “Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?” They marry the next day (thanks to Friar Laurence) but there will be no happy ending for these two—it is, after all, a tragedy. And like *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, this play also has a high body count.
Shakespeare was a master of words and word-play, and not only transformed English drama but the English language as well. Aside from the Bible, Shakespeare is the most often quoted English writer. He added more than 3,000 new words to the lexicon as he was the first to write them down – although it should be noted that not all had their origins with Shakespeare but became better known because he wrote them down. And this at a time before the first official dictionary was published - Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language wasn’t published until 1755. Just a few of the words he coined include "arch-villain," "bedazzle," "dauntless," "fashionable," "go-between," "honey-tongued," "inauspicious," "lustrous," "nimble-footed," "outbreak," "pander," "sanctimonious," "time-honored," "unearthly," "vulnerable," and "well-bred."

In addition to the new words, Shakespeare also penned more than a few phrases that have found their way into everyday language including 'eaten me out of house and home' (Henry IV, Part II), 'in a pickle' (The Tempest), 'neither here nor there' (Othello), 'wild-goose chase' (Romeo and Juliet), 'dead as a doornail' (Henry VI, Part II) and 'brave new world' (The Tempest). And then there are the direct quotes from Shakespeare plays and sonnets from "To be or not to be, that is the question" or "Neither a borrower nor a lender be" (Hamlet), "If music be the food of love play on" (Twelfth Night), "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players" (As You Like It), "Once more unto the breach, dear friends" (Henry V). Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (Sonnet 18), "But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun", "Parting is such sweet sorrow", or "A plague o' both your houses!" (Romeo and Juliet), "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (Richard III) and "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" (Henry IV Part II).

Shakespeare’s literary devices

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Iambic pentameter describes the rhythm (or groups of syllables) of the words in a line, typically in verse or verse drama. Breaking it down to the individual words; **iambic** meaning the type of foot used (an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable) and **pentameter** meaning how many “feet” (penta = five) in the line. The opening from **TWELFTH NIGHT** is the perfect example of iambic pentameter (the stressed syllable is in bold): “If music be the food of love play on.”

**Trochaic Tetrameter**—according to Shakespeare on-line “Trochaic tetrameter is a rapid meter of poetry consisting of four feet of trochees. A trochee is made up of one stressed syllable followed by one unstressed syllable (the opposite of an iamb).”

“The opening from THE TEMPEST (Shakespeare’s final play) contains several uses of onomatopoeia.

“Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears . . .”

“Hark, hark!
Bow-wow.
The watch-dogs bark!
Bow-wow.
Hark, hark! I hear
The strain of strutting chanticleer
Cry, ’cock-a-diddle-dow!’”

**Onomatopoeia** is using a word that sounds like (imitates) what it means or it can be a series of words that when spoken aloud produce a similar effect. The Tempest (Shakespeare’s final play) contains several uses of onomatopoeia.

**Metaphor** is “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them” (Merriam Webster Dictionary). The soliloquy in Hamlet Act III, Scene 1 is perhaps one of the most famous uses of metaphor:

“To be, or not to be- that is the question:
Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them.”
There are numerous theories about whether or not William Shakespeare wrote his own plays. Keep in mind that none of these theories arose during Shakespeare’s time and it wasn’t until the mid-19th century, that these theories appeared. If one is particularly cynical, the rise of these theories could be seen as a way to create a career in opposition to the increased popularity/idolatry (George Bernard Shaw called it “Bardolatry”) of Shakespeare by the Victorian England population.

According to the Oxfordian theory, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford was the true author of the works attributed to William Shakespeare (the 2011 film Anonymous was based on this premise). And this is not the only theory to arise questioning Shakespeare’s authorship (it should be noted that a vast majority of scholars agree that Shakespeare did indeed write the plays and sonnets attributed to him). Several other candidates have been considered over the years including Christopher Marlowe and Francis Bacon. The real question is why the doubt of authenticity of Shakespeare’s writings? Some believe that a man of such humble origins would not have any understanding of the political intrigues of court that are often on full display in his plays. Certainly Shakespeare was not the only writer of his time who came from humble origins. Ben Jonson’s stepfather was a bricklayer and no one has suggested that he did not write his plays.

Or perhaps it is because there are no personal letters or original manuscripts of his works that survived. While many of the details we do have are fairly mundane in nature (birth and marriage records, taxes, purchase of property), there are certainly sufficient records of his plays being printed, dedicated title pages, as well as other documentation from fellow actors and writers acknowledging Shakespeare as a playwright and author.

And then there are the six known signatures and his will . . . of course if you love a good conspiracy theory, then every little detail can be picked apart to support whichever camp you find yourself. Was Marlowe really murdered in a tavern brawl or was his death faked for him to go underground and write as William Shakespeare? Were the details of court only something a man like Edward de Vere would know? Were the legal allusions a giveaway that Francis Bacon was the true author? Other names linked to potential authorship included William Stanley (6th Earl of Derby), Roger Manners (5th Earl of Rutland) and even Sir Walter Raleigh. However the real evidence lies in the eulogies and testimonies of his friends and the dedication of Ben Jonson in the First Folio "To the Memory of My Beloved the Author, Mr William Shakespeare and What He Hath Left Us".
The original theatre was built in 1599 on the south side of the Thames out of lumber from the Theatre. At the time, it was the most elaborate theatre of its kind and was specifically designed for the Chamberlain’s Men by Cuthbert Burbage (son of one of the co-owners). The Globe became the summer home of the Chamberlain’s Men (later The King’s Men) and produced many of Shakespeare’s works (and became one of the sources of his wealth). The Globe was a hexagonal structure, three stories high, no roof and could seat approximately 1500 patrons. And like most Elizabethan style theatres, the Globe was “in the round” meaning that audiences saw everything. No curtain in between acts, and limited set pieces and props meant that the production relied heavily upon elaborate costumes and audience imagination.

In 1613, during a performance of HENRY VIII, misfired cannon shot caught the thatching on fire, and destroyed the building. The Globe was quickly re-built and opened in 1614 but 30 years later was demolished. The Globe Theatre now standing is a reconstruction of the original that opened in 1997. Spear-headed by actor/director Sam Wanamaker, the re-building of the Globe was no small task given that no official designs of the original building existed. Historians poured over sketches of the building contained within cityscapes as well as design elements from other Elizabethan era theatres (including the Theatre).

In 1608, the winter home of Shakespeare’s troupe became the indoor Blackfriars Theatre, a lease they held for 21 years. Blackfriars cemented Shakespeare’s hold on the theatrical community and increased his wealth. In 1642 with the onset of the English Civil War, theatres were closed and Blackfriars was eventually demolished in 1655. In 2013, Blackfriars Theatre was re-created and named in honor of Sam Wanamaker.

Shakespeare’s geography

Shakespeare set a number of his plays outside of England, though it is unlikely he ever traveled outside of his own country. Though many of the locales were exotic by Elizabethan standards, the stories were very “English” at heart. See if you can locate the various cities and countries where Shakespeare set his plays (you may need to look at maps of the ancient world for some of the locations).
COMEDIES

All's Well That Ends Well—Roussillon, Paris, Florence, Marseilles
As You Like It—the forest of Arden (near Warwickshire, England)
Comedy of Errors—Ephesus (ancient Greek city)
Love's Labour's Lost—Navarre (Basque region of northern Spain)
Measure for Measure—Vienna (Austria)
The Merchant of Venice—Venice (Italy)
The Merry Wives of Windsor—Windsor, England
A Midsummer Night's Dream—Athens, Greece
Much Ado about Nothing—Messina (Italy)
The Taming of the Shrew—Padua (Italy)
The Tempest—an island in the middle of the sea
Twelfth Night—Illyria (ancient kingdom in the Balkan Peninsula)
Two Gentlemen of Verona—Verona, Milan, Mantua (Italy)
Winter's Tale—Sicily, Bohemia
Pericles, Prince of Tyre—Tyre (ancient Phoenician city in Lebanon), Antioch (ancient Greek-Roman city), Tarsus (Turkey), Pentapolis (Libya), Ephesus (ancient Greek city)

HISTORIES

Henry IV, Part I—London and various cities in England
Henry IV, Part II—London and various cities in England
Henry V—England, France
Henry VI, Part I—England, France
Henry VI, Part II—England
Henry VI, Part III—England, France
King John—England, France
Richard II—England, Wales
Richard III—London, Bosworth Field (England)

TRAGEDIES

Antony and Cleopatra—Rome (Italy), Alexandria (Egypt), Syria
Coriolanus—Rome, Corioli, Antium (Italy)
Cymbeline—Ancient Britain (this play is sometimes listed in comedies)
Hamlet—Denmark
Julius Caesar—Rome, Philippi, Sardis
King Lear—Ancient Britain
Macbeth—Scotland and England
Othello—Venice (Italy), Cyprus
Romeo and Juliet—Verona, Mantua (Italy)
Timon of Athens—Athens (Greece)
Titus Andronicus—Rome (Italy)
Troilus and Cressida—city of Troy (during the Trojan War)
Many attempts (some successful, some not) have been made to update Shakespeare in a variety of genres. The successful versions have been able to capture the essence of the play in an updated setting—some using the original text and some using more modern text.

So here is your opportunity to update the Bard. Take the original texts below and translate them into modern day language and meaning—the italicized phrases are the most often quoted.

Take the opportunity to identify the types of literary devices Shakespeare used and make sure when you translate into modern day language, you keep these devices!

From **As You Like It**

*All the world’s a stage,*
*And all the men and women merely players:*
*They have their exits and their entrances;*
*And one man in his time plays many parts.*

From **Julius Caesar**

*Blood and destruction shall be so in use*
*And dreadful objects so familiar*
*That mothers shall but smile when they behold*
*Their infants quarter’d with the hands of war;*
*All pity choked with custom of fell deeds:*
*And Caesar’s spirit, ranging for revenge,*
*With Ate by his side come hot from hell,*
*Cry ‘Havoc,’ and let slip the dogs of war;*
*That this foul deed shall smell above the earth*
*With carrion men, groaning for burial.*

From **Twelfth Night**

*If music be the food of love, play on;*
*Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,*
*The appetite may sicken, and so die.*

From **Hamlet**

*This above all — to thine own self be true;*
*And it must follow, as the night the day,*
*Thou canst not then be false to any man.*

*Neither a borrower nor a lender be:*
*For loan oft loses both itself and friend.*

*Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.*

From **Romeo and Juliet**

*That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.*

*My only love sprung from my only hate!*
*Too early seen unknown, and known too late!*
*Prodigious birth of love it is to me,*
*That I must love a loathed enemy.*

*But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?*
*It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.*

*O! she doth teach the torches to burn bright!*

*Good Night, Good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say good night till it be morrow.*

*A plague o’ both your houses!*
*They have made worms’ meat of me.*

*Then I defy you, stars!*

*Tempt not a desperate man.*

*A glooming peace this morning with it brings.*
*The sun for sorrow will not show his head.*
*Go hence to have more talk of these sad things.*
*Some shall be pardoned, some shall be punished.*
*For never was a story of more woe,*
*Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.*