

Early Modern Studies Journal



Volume 5 : Shakespeare and Performance

English Department | University of Texas | Arlington

Hearing the Scene : Approaches to Live Music in Modern Shakespearean Productions

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A number of productions and some companies incorporate live music into their performances using the actors as musicians. This essay examines two different kinds of music used in Shakespearean productions: music contemporaneous with the setting of the play, and music that is contemporaneous with the audience and performers of the play. Both methods help create the immediate fictional world in which the action of the play takes place as well as providing audiences with the widely recognizable production elements of both diegetic and non-diegetic music. Here I focus on several productions: the 2005 David Lan-produced *As You Like It* and the early modern works from the American Shakespeare Center's 2011 Fall season: *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, and *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I*. I compare and analyze these particular productions primarily because I was able to attend performances of all of these productions and to engage in dialogue with both the composer of the music for *As You Like It*, Tim Sutton, and with the casts of the ASC productions, who themselves select the music for their productions. The ASC and Lan productions also involve two distinct philosophies in selecting or creating music for live productions. The *As You Like It* production incorporated music of the time period of this particular setting, in this case an imaginary 1930s France, while the ASC's policy is to replicate early modern practices by using music contemporary to the players and the audience, just as actors at the original Blackfriars in London would have used popular songs of their own period.¹ While the relative successes of these methods is highly subjective, I argue that the use of live music, particularly the use of music that suggests the specific chrono-or geo-location of an individual production's setting, is an appropriate tool for assisting inexperienced audiences in understanding the setting of the play. Sonic signifiers of particular periods and/or places, such as the accordion for 1930s France, help create a sense of the temporal and geographic settings. In the context of Marvin Carlson's work on theater and memory, such a soundscape can function as a "ghost" in that the connection of sound and setting is a recurring production element that reiterates already

familiar sonic and visual tropes.² At the same time, the approach of using music known to the audience regardless of origin, genre, or style, such as classic rock or pop, is a tactic better suited to knowledgeable audiences or aficionados, who are perhaps attracted to more historically-informed productions. In these productions, the use of songs with lyrics that can be heard as references to the play, or music that is redolent of a play's setting, such as the use of ocean- and island-themed music for *The Tempest*, rewards experienced audiences, who appreciate the often clever connections between the play and the music.

Regarding inexperienced audiences, playwright and director Rod Carley writes, "There is only one reason to adapt a Shakespearean text to another setting, and that is to illuminate it more clearly for today's audience. [...] Because the visual is familiar, it is easier to get the audience to listen to Shakespeare's text and understand it. But one still has to find a modern setting that is removed enough from the immediate present so that it can serve as an analogy in a way that is not overly didactic."³

For knowledgeable audiences, however, such visualization is less necessary, and that audience is able to focus on the nuances of the performance. Thus, I would further propose that music that is indicative of a precise setting assists the audience in making the play's language and the players' actions more accessible to inexperienced audiences by providing context. In addition, when the players have the freedom to select from a wider range of music familiar to the audience, they have the opportunity to elucidate the text even further by making connections and providing commentary on the text and their interpretations.

In live theater, as in cinema, music is one of many elements that, separate from the script, is nonetheless part of the text of a performance. Everything that takes place on stage, including music, is what Umberto Eco describes as the "fictional world" of the novel, stage, and film. This fictional world is created not whole cloth, but is "*parasitic* on the real world. A fictional possible world is one in which everything is similar to our so-called real world, except for the variations explicitly introduced by the text."⁴ This notion applies to the case of early modern plays and the many productions that attempt to suggest or even recreate their "original" circumstances: the text is in fact not just a written text of a play, but also includes the music, visual elements such as costuming and set design, stage business, and other performative aspects. These aspects of the production are used to help establish, through a common language of modern signifiers, the chrono- and geo-locations of the action. Such elements, as individual entities, have previously been thought to function as what Gérard Genette calls the "paratext," or all of the material associated with a particular text that is "marginal or supplementary data around the text."⁵ However, music is not merely a paratext in the context of a staged production but an essential part of a complete work. Regarding music and film, theater's cousin, Anahid Kassabian observes that, "There is no more sense in calling an object of visual analysis a "film" than there is in calling a screenplay a "film." A film as perceived by any kind of audience—public or scholarly—has words, sounds, images, and music. [...] Music and film-goers engage each other in bonds that intersect other tracks of films in complicated

ways.”⁶ This affinity is equally true for music and the live stage performance: music in the performance is an essential part of the whole.

Particularly in films featuring historical settings, music can function for inexperienced audiences as what Genette terms a “threshold” (*seuil*) to a work in that it may serve as the “in between” of a theatrical production, assisting the audience in connecting the foreign, fictional world on stage with their own knowledge and understanding of that past. Through music, the audience, comprised of the combined viewer/listener (the *experiant*, to create a term more appropriate for film than the traditional literary *reader*), may be guided through the space separating past and present, the visual and the audible, thus mapping the multitudes of music/visual relationships.⁷

The creation of a musical world, both within and outside of the production’s diegesis, plays a large part in identifying and representing a particular fictional world. All plays and the music for them take place in an imaginary setting. As much as a director might want to create an “authentic” environment, doing so is impossible; the closest re-creation will owe some of its details to speculation, albeit by experts, and the interference of modern sensibilities and technologies. As Eco and Jaako Hintikka have written, the expectations of the real world cannot apply: functions of the doxastic world can be altered, removed, or otherwise manipulated at will.⁸ In the theatre, music is always performed with one foot in reality: the instruments and performers or recording exist in reality and need not—in fact, rarely—adhere to the constraints or freedoms of the fictional world.⁹ Indeed, productions that take on the past and commentary or criticism of it are necessarily presentist in the sense that, as Mark Thornton Burnett and Adrian Street have written, “the writing of history and historically minded criticism is produced in an ongoing dialectical struggle between past and present. But for Presentism, our understanding of the past is overwhelming mediated and determined by the demands of the present.”¹⁰

Accepting, then, that all productions of early modern texts are creations (often well-researched, but creations nonetheless) of modern minds means that the uses and functions of music within screen works is equally fictional in terms of exact performance histories, use, and sound. There is no complete authenticity, musical or otherwise, in the early modern screen production. Presentism assures us that the closest we can get is a recreation based on contemporary documents or other materials. Thus, music for live productions can and does range from that which is appropriate for the period used in the production to existing wholly outside of the diegesis. In order to understand a production, it is clear that we must also have at least a basic knowledge of the function and uses of music as an integral part of it.

As You Like It

To paraphrase Hamlet, the Forest of Arden of *As You Like It* is neither French nor English but directors make it so: even as scholars have debated whether Shakespeare’s Forest is a nod to

his mother's family, the Ardens, a reference to the French Ardennes, or as Jan Kott has proposed, a utopian English Arcadia, it has been transposed to a number of diverse settings.¹¹ The source for the play, Thomas Lodge's 1590 *Rosalynde*, sets the action in a French duchy, but, like the seacoast of Bohemia or Prospero's island, the forest itself is an escape from reality, a place where the mores of the court are turned upside down, a place where lions roam, Greek gods preside over marriages of courtiers and rustics alike, and where the woods themselves offer protection from the winter of political exile and blossom into a welcoming spring.¹² Given the ambiguous and fantastical nature of the play's setting, it is no surprise that it has appeared in many diverse versions on the stage and on film. Locations both chronological and geographical have ranged from Ivan the Terrible's Russia (Richard Finkelstein, University of Denver, 1998) and nineteenth-century Japan (Kenneth Branagh, HBO, 2006) to the American Dustbowl during the Depression (Gavin Cameron-Webb, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, 2011) and urban London in the 1990s (Christine Edzard, Sands Films, 1992). However, perhaps the most frequently used setting, outside of a generic pastoral England, is the French countryside. In David Lan's 2005 production of the play, staged at London's Wyndham Theatre, an imaginary France is primarily created through the sounds of an original score by composer Tim Sutton.

Musically speaking, *As You Like It* contains more songs than any other play by Shakespeare. Ross Duffin has identified seven songs specifically named or alluded to in the play, the most well-known of which are "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind;" "Under the Greenwood Tree;" and "It was a Lover and his Lass." The original tune for "What Shall He Have That Killed the Deer" is still unknown.¹³ While some productions use arrangements of the original (or at least the most contemporaneous as possible) early modern sources for the tunes for these songs, such as Thomas Morley's "Under the Greenwood," other theatres and directors have commissioned new music for the songs to fit their own individual setting of and approach to the play. Still others use existing popular songs, fitting Shakespeare's words to them. In productions that take advantage of the capabilities of the fictional world to be both "parasitic" on our perceived real world and to allow for "the variations explicitly introduced in the text" that make the world of the stage unique, music can have a wide scope, encompassing multiple styles, genres, and other approaches.¹⁴ In Lan's production, which takes place in a fictional 1930s France where the war, notably, does not exist, the music is an important element in maintaining the illusion that this world is close to our own. Indeed, without the music created for this production, its settings, both chronological and geographic, would be difficult to place: the costuming and set design provides very few hints as to the exact nature of the setting. Thus, the music provides a kind of historical verisimilitude for the imaginary yet familiar setting.

Sutton's music for *As You Like It* uses several elements to locate the play in 1930s France. The score comprises incidental music including pieces that accompany Ceila and Rosalind's flight into the forest, a scene with the Duke's court-in-exile, music for the couples as they

enter before the wedding, and an epilogue titled “Rosalind’s Waltz.” In addition, Sutton composed new settings of “Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind,” “Under the Greenwood Tree,” “It was a Lover and His Lass,” and “What Shall He Have that Killed the Deer,” as well as writing a new tune for the text of “If a hart do lack a hind,” turning that bit of rhyme into a new song. Throughout, Sutton uses recognizable musical textures and gestures to emphasize the closeness of this fictional world and to set its internal locations apart as fantasies, one within the other. In this peaceful, prosperous France of the 1930’s, there is still political corruption in the form of Duke Frederick, and Duke Senior’s men represent a resistance to this government. But since it is a fantasy world, there are no occupation forces, no foreign army in the streets or woods, no trains forcibly moving citizens to camps, no aircraft bombings. Within this alternate reality is the Forest of Arden, itself a signifier of pretend even above its status as a place of refuge and relative safety for the resistance of the court in exile.

Sutton’s Prelude opens the play with the sound of the accordion and piano, staple sounds in theatrical and filmic representations of French café culture. The accordion alone goes a long way in establishing the French setting of the production: in the nineteenth century, the rural Auvergne *bal musette*—taking its name from the *musette* bagpipe that originally accompanied it alongside the hurdy-gurdy—found its way to Paris, where it became an enormously popular dance among recent immigrants from the countryside and others in their districts, particularly the 19th *arrondissement*.¹⁵ The dance later became linked to the chromatic button accordion, in particular, a model called an *accordéon musette*, which was more widely used in the capitol than the bagpipe or hurdy-gurdy. The dance features small steps and can be performed in limited space, making it the perfect dance for small bars, cafés, and dance halls in Paris. Over time, the lilting rhythms of the *musette* were paired with realistic, often bleak lyrics and the dance developed into a genre of its own. French *chanson* and *musette* performers, such as Edith Piaf, often worked in both traditions, building audiences through the first decades of the twentieth century and cementing the association of the *musette*’s harmonic language and instrumentation with France.¹⁶ (The association has continued, for example in the soundtracks to the films *Amelie* (2001), Jacques Tati’s *The Illusionist* (2010), etc.) At the beginning of the play, the Prelude, full of the *musette*’s traditional rhythmic devices and melodic gestures, accompanies Celia and Rosalind as they partake of café life, sipping coffee and smoking while watching passersby. The Prelude is a light waltz, which returns at the end of the play as “Epilogue (Rosalind’s Waltz).” After the Prelude’s first phrases are played by the accordion and piano, they are joined by flute and cello. The ABA musical form of the Prelude mirrors key aspects of the play: happiness and lightness give way to a more complex chromatic section in which the various instruments swap themes and voices, and the opening material returns to a clear resolution. As in any classic overture, the Prelude offers hints and fragments of music yet to come in the production. Later, when an unsettled motif from the second section of the Prelude returns music to accompany Celia and

Rosalind as they wait to learn their fate, it is familiar because it has already been heard once before.

Once all of the characters are in the forest, Sutton uses traditional pastoral elements including modal harmonic language and folksong-like melodies to signify the change from the quasi-realistic urban, sophisticated, French surroundings of the court to the outdoor life in the fantastical, unreal Arden. The flute and cello, in parallel, lead Celia and Rosalind into the woods through a series of descending fourths, and this line, along with the simplicity of the intervals, repeatedly sequenced a half-step or step apart, captures the unstable nature of the situation they face. In contrast, "Lords in the Woods," which accompanies the first view of the court-in-exile, is redolent of peace and serenity. Unaccompanied voices rise together, creating a meditative sound that suggests the austere but not unpleasant life Duke Senior and his men have made for themselves. The court also has musicians with it: as *Guardian* critic Michael Billington commented, "we discover the banished Duke has gone into exile with a four-strong musical combo as if he were on leave from the Café de Paris rather than a political refugee."¹⁷ Billington's dismissal of the choice to have actors play and sing (or have musicians act, as the case may be) aside, the presence of musicians is by no means out of place here, and, in fact, strengthens the conceit of an exile from a sophisticated, cultured city. A court during the time Shakespeare was writing the play would have had a number of musicians capable of playing several instruments each. Wind and brass players were expected to play several instruments, recorder players were able to play all of the instruments in the recorder family, and string players often performed on different varieties of the viol or lute.¹⁸ As demand for musical entertainment grew with the development and rise of the masque and other entertainments, royal courts began to employ the personnel for an entire orchestra.¹⁹ Instead of removing context from the experience through the use of an unknown fictional world, Lan augments the sense of familiarity in his production through Sutton's immediately recognizable soundscape. The musical ensemble further emphasizes the setting of the action: Arden is part of France, and not far from Duke Senior's home.

Sutton makes the most of the "four-strong musical combo" in setting the play's songs. "Under the Greenwood Tree" is introduced by a flute solo, text-painting for the song's line "Unto the sweet bird's throat" (2.5.4). The piano enters at the end, followed shortly by the accordion, all three instruments accompanying first the court musician Amiens, and then the rest of the present cast. Instead of allowing for the spoken text to enter as directed in the playtext, Sutton continues the song as one unbroken element, jumping from 2.5.7 to 2.5.33. The satirical verse offered by Jaques (2.5.44-48) is omitted, allowing the song to finish with earnest good intentions instead of cynicism. The song has the sound of a Christmas carol sung by a lounge singer: the relaxed tempo and frequent use of rubato and an improvisatory approach captures the aesthetic of a Tommy Dorsey or Glenn Miller fooling around in the studio with a band and backup singers, a further set of familiar sonic identifiers of the time period in which the play has been set.

"Blow Blow Thou Winter Wind" begins with a descending, plaintive, minor-key introductory phrase on the cello, and then swings into a tango-like tune sung not just by Amiens but by all of the cast members present, accompanied by piano and accordion. Because not all of the cast are professional singers, the singing is sometimes rough and not always perfectly in tune, as it naturally would be in a bar or café by non-musicians. There is an attempt at harmonization by some of the singers, who while not (perhaps deliberately) always polished are nonetheless capable of singing in multiple-part harmony. Sutton repeats some lines and transposes others to create brief periods of imitation between voices. Duke Senior's passage, "If that you be the good Sir Rowland's son [...]" (2.7. 194-198) is placed between stanzas two and three of the song. The pronunciation of "wind," commonly thought to have used a long *i* sound here, is given the short *i* of modern pronunciation so that the language is easily understood even when sung. Frequent modal shifts from major to minor create an ambiguity in the song that fits the text's own mixed message, which Juliet Dusinberre aptly describes as "the modulations between mirth and melancholy."²⁰ The overall effect of this performance is that of compatriots singing together in the face of adversity, and hoping for a change of fortune. Such changeability in mood and attitude is characteristic of the entire play, with its joyful discoveries, disappointments, and alterations of station, and captures the work's tone well.

"If a Hart Do Lack a Hind" (3.2.98-109) continues the evocative instrumentation of the earlier songs, but picks up the tempo. Much like a music-hall song, "If a Hart" calls upon the singer to perform in a partially-spoken patter (a quick, semi-sung text, often with rhymes or tongue-twisters) in parts, and the accompaniment, played by the flute and accordion, swirls around the vocal line in an arabesque figure. For the first time in the production, the song captures the mania of the play's romances.²¹ Sung by Touchstone, "If a Hart" signifies the rustic life of the forest, shared by Corin, Audrey, and William, and its bawdiness, which is celebrated here by the fool. As Touchstone specifies, the song is set to "the very false gallop of verses": the music rolls along in an even 4/4 meter, with the accordion providing the beat. Touchstone's mention of "winter garments" is shadowed by a brief modulation to the minor key of earlier songs, aurally reminding the exiles of the winter setting, but returns to the major for the remainder of the piece. The first truly upbeat song of the show, it indicates that the love stories, rather than political machinations, are the primary plotlines and that wedded—or at least sexual—happiness is on its way.

The cue "Couples" deliberately mimics French composer Claude Debussy's "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun," featuring an undulating flute line that speaks to the sensuality of the "fake wedding" between Orlando and Ganymede. While it is recognizable as French musical impressionism and perhaps also functions as a reminder of the cultural divides between the forest rustics and the nobles exiled there, it is a departure from the more *musette*-inspired songs, which an inexperienced audience will likely recognize far more readily than Debussy's tone poem. The difference on display in the music here serves to remind exiles that while

the playacted wedding is marked by the desires of its participants, it does not take place in the real world of the play and must still be achieved in truth. The familiar sounds of the *musette* return with Hymen's blessing, a jaunty tune easily danced to as would be expected for the bittersweet reunion of Rosalind and her father, and her real marriage to Orlando. Finally, the Epilogue concludes the production by bringing back the waltz music from the introduction. All of the café instruments are involved, and the flute again represents the birds of the forest. Shifting harmonies create mild tension that is quickly resolved, and the repetition of the primary theme reinforces the concepts of stability and purpose given in the text.

In Lan's production, the musicians are present on the stage as part of the cast, and the actors not playing instruments serve as singers. This practice, while common to early modern performances, is rarer on twentieth and twenty-first century ones. In this music-heavy production, showing the source of the music on stage further iterates the aesthetic of a 1930s Paris: no self-respecting café would have been without live musicians. As for amateur singers, Touchstone describes his audience as "tasters," or dilettantes, even as he sings for them (3.2.96); as mentioned above, they may sing, loudly and with fervor, and they do not need to be accomplished to achieve the effect of friends in a bar enjoying the music and singing along. This approach, combined with the collaboration of professional instrumentalists able to adapt as needed to the actors' performances, resulted in an enthusiastic cast not concerned with sounding professional as singers, and thus able to project enjoyment and other emotions as they sang.

Throughout the production, the score repeatedly reminds the experient of the setting: an imaginary France where the café life exists but the war does not, an imaginary France that contains both urban and rustic environments in which the aristocracy and proletariat can be equal in shared appreciation of the *terroir* and common cultural artifacts, including music, dance, and poetry. Furthermore, in changing the setting to something more recent but not exactly contemporary to experient attending the performance, Lan and Sutton are able to create images and sounds—especially through Sutton's use of instruments and musical forms associated with France and nostalgia—that enhance the closeness of the fictional world of this *As You Like It*. Sutton's music brings the action forward from what may be an inscrutable or intimidating past for many experient to one that is recognizable as more recent, familiar, and relevant without being overly instructive or condescending. Ultimately, in creating music that so thoroughly establishes the setting and is fully integrated with and supporting the text, Sutton creates a threshold through which experient can easily step into the world of Lan's Forest of Arden.

The Tempest, Hamlet, Henry V, and Tamburlaine the Great, Part I

One of the core philosophies at the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia, is its use of what it terms "the basic principles of Renaissance theatrical production."²² The theatre's recreation of the Blackfriars playhouse includes universal lighting, in which house

lights are up throughout performances; doubling, with which the company of 12 or so actors can cover all the necessary parts of every play; cross-gender casting; and quick pacing of speech and action in order to maintain performance lengths of about “two hours’ traffic on our stage.” The recreation also means that there are minimal and actor-selected props, sets, and costumes, and the use of music familiar to the audience during the pre-show, in the plays themselves, and during the intermissions. It is this last aspect of performance that I examine here. The ASC’s musical selections and the practice of dual-functioning actors/musicians provide knowledgeable experiants with a sense of the interpretative decisions made by the actors and directors. The pre-show music and play music not only establish a threshold for the audience but also serve as real-world referents within the fictional world in which the action takes place, making the text more relevant and immediate to an audience already familiar with the plays. In contrast to Lan’s production of *As You Like It*, in which the music was instrumental in creating the fictional world of the setting, music at Blackfriars helps elucidate the actors’ and directors’ approaches and attitudes the plays. While both practices assist all experiants in understanding the production, the ASC’s song choices are usually somewhat less obvious than the explicit- and chrono-location signified by the familiar aural codes in use in Sutton’s music, such as the accordion and café combos. In fact, some connections between play-texts and songs performed at the ASC are subtle to the point that audiences not highly conversant with the texts of the plays might miss the references altogether, suggesting that the ASC, while seeking to be accessible to inexperienced audiences, also deliberately caters to cognoscenti of early modern theater, while still working to initiate new audiences into that group.

The Fall 2011 season at the ASC saw four early modern productions: *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *The Tempest*, and *Tamburlaine the Great Part I*. For each show, the cast performed a thirty-minute musical pre-show to give the audience a taste of the tone of the production. Because the stage was taken up with a refreshments cart and an actor selling raffle tickets for a signed poster during the pre-show, the performers were confined to the balcony above the stage. Despite this limited space, the company fit about six people on the front of the balcony and more behind, as well as a drum set and keyboard. Almost all of the members of the company sing and most play at least one instrument: guitar, recorder, clarinet, trumpet, violin, or percussion. The pre-show leads immediately to the first act, so the actors are already in costume during their musical performance, which allows for audience conflation of specific songs and characters, depending on the specifics of the musical performance.

The choice of music for each production is left entirely to the discretion of the cast. During rehearsals, the ASC staff sets up a whiteboard in the rehearsal spaces beneath the playhouse on which cast members write their suggestions for appropriate songs for each production. The cast then meets to discuss its options, which include original songs written by cast members in addition to covers of current and past popular songs. For plays that include music, the cast also considers ways of performing the given lyrics; this diegetic music too involves both newly

composed music by the performers involved and the creation of *contrafacta*, in which new lyrics are set to pre-existing tunes. The list that emerges contains a number of options, which allows the cast to select different songs for each production, should its members desire to do so. The long list of possible selections also creates a certain amount of fluidity in each performance in that audiences for one show may hear a slightly different set than what is used at another performance. Typically, however, the set of chosen songs varies little from performance to performance, meaning that the tenor of the musical selections and their relationships to the play change little throughout the run of a particular production. Music used in the plays themselves, such as Ophelia's songs, does not change.

For *The Tempest*, the pre-show's two most recognizable songs were Jack Lawrence's "Beyond the Sea," (1946), made popular by Bobby Darin with his 1958 release; and Cream's "Tales of Brave Ulysses." Although both of these songs date from more than thirty years ago, their use in television and film has kept them present in American popular culture. "Beyond the Sea" has been used in advertising for Carnival Cruise Lines and Chanel, in the movies *Apollo 13* and *Goodfellas*, and in the television series *The X-Files*, not to mention Kevin Spacey's 2004 bio-pic about Darin. "Tales of Brave Ulysses" is perhaps best known in recent popular culture from television's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, in which it is used in two particularly popular and notable episodes ("Band Candy" and "Forever") as a vehicle for emotional release by the character of Giles. Both of these songs thus court the baby boomers and Gen-Xers in the audience, while at the same time reminding them of the play's island location and hint at the travails of Prospero and his daughter Miranda before making their home there. For experientially less familiar with the play, "Beyond the Sea" broadly suggests the island and, the love story, positioning Miranda as the lover who "stands on golden sand / And watches the ships that go sailin'."²³ However, the lyrics from "Tales of Brave Ulysses," while clearly referencing sea voyages for those with only a little knowledge of the *Odyssey* or *The Tempest*, can be read more deeply by experienced audience members as more detailed but still oblique references to Ferdinand's experiences on the island: "you rode upon a steamer to the violence of the sun."²⁴ Ferdinand has arrived on the island through the shipwreck that Miranda describes as "Dash'd all to pieces" in the catastrophic storm Prospero has commissioned from Ariel (1.2.8).²⁵ In "Tales," Ulysses' "naked ears were tortured by the sirens sweetly singing," and he desires Aphrodite in the form of "a girl's brown body dancing through the turquoise;" in relation to the play, these lines can also describe Ferdinand's interactions with the singing Ariel, who is described as "a nymph o' the sea," and the nymphs who appear at the banquet (1.2.302); and Miranda, with whom he is instantly smitten and whom Ferdinand asks, on first sight, whether she is a goddess (1.2.422). References in the song to "trembling mermaids" and "tiny purple fishes [that] run laughing through your fingers" also resonate with the natural magic and wonder emphasized in the ASC production and echo the charm and beauty of the island as described by Caliban: "The isle is full of noises,/ Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not," (3.2.134); as well as the rich language of the goddesses Iris, Juno, and Ceres at the banquet.

The songs of the intermission were deliberately campy and cross-generational as well. The Beach Boys' "Sloop John B," which is based on a West Indies folk song, continued the sea-faring and island-living theme, and made connections with the play through the refrain of "I want to go home," as well as the parallel stories of Stefano and Trinculo's constant drunkenness and the song's lines "The first mate, he got drunk, broke up the captain's trunk, / The constable had to come and take him away."²⁶ The song "A Mighty Wind," from the eponymous 2003 mockumentary film by Christopher Guest, is a faux-folksy bit of Americana. Nonetheless, its message is that of a "mighty wind" that's "blowin' cross the land and cross the sea/ it's blowin' peace and freedom, it's blowin' equality": in this case, the mighty wind is the storm Prospero has had Ariel conjure that will lead to peace, freedom, and the restoration of his position in Milan.²⁷

These songs, along with the Act IV presentation of Iris, Ceres and Juno as drag queens doubled by the same actors playing Caliban, Stefano, and Alonzo and accompanied by Ariel playing a bluesy guitar piece, made it clear that this was not a *Tempest* of inevitable *sturm and drang*, but one with considerable levity. For newcomers to the play, the music assists in understanding the text and the approach of the production as one in which all of the jokes of the play have been rediscovered and highlighted. For those who knew the play before experiencing this production, the songs performed functioned as inside jokes or treats for those who made the connections set before them by the actors.

For the ASC's production of *Hamlet*, director Jim Warren explored the possibilities that arise from the various texts of the play: performances took cues as to length from the First Quarto, but actors memorized two different versions of the text: one based on the sequence of scenes in the First Quarto, and one on the sequence from the First Folio and Second Quarto. "In homage to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*," Warren wrote on the ASC website, "maybe we'll flip a coin each night and let an audience member choose our scene order by calling heads or tails."²⁸ The performance I experienced did just this and used the First Quarto's order of scenes. The music performed in the pre-show included covers of Everclear's "Santa Monica;" The Rolling Stones' iconic "Paint It Black;" "The Dark," by Thirty Minutes to Forget; and "Better Things" by the Kinks. The mix of classic and more recent rock addressed the wide age span of a typical ASC audience, and each song had at least a few lines that resonated either generally or specifically with the play. "Santa Monica" is based on songwriter Art Alexakis's personal experience with the suicide of his teenage girlfriend and his own suicide attempt by jumping from the Santa Monica pier.²⁹ The song begins with the line "I am still living with your ghost," an obvious correlation with the opening of *Hamlet*, and includes further lines that parallel Hamlet's experiences.³⁰ Just as Hamlet finds the world "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable" (1.2.133), the narrator of the song is "Hungry and hollow for all the things you took away." Later, the lyrics "I'll walk right out into a brand new day / Insane and rising in my own weird way," find echoes in Hamlet's decision to "put an antic

disposition on" and in his scene with Polonius in which Hamlet agrees with Polonius that he will "walk out of the air" (1.5.170, 2.2.203). Indeed, Hamlet's speech in Act Four, Scene Four, "How all occasions do inform against me," can be broadly summed up in four lines from the song (4.4. 31-65). Just as Hamlet tries to spur himself to action and justice for his father, the narrator of the song does not "want to be the bad guy" or "do your sleepwalk dance anymore" (the customs of the court) but yearns "to feel some sunshine" and "find a place to be alone." Or at least not surrounded by the corruption of Claudius's court.

The Rolling Stones' hit single "Paint It Black" further suggested Hamlet's dark and restless state of mind at the beginning of the play ("I see my red door and I want it painted black. /No colors anymore I want them to turn black"), and the lyrics connected to events in the drama, including the lines, "No more will my green sea go turn a deeper blue /I could not foresee this thing happening to you," which can be read as referring to Ophelia's death by drowning.³¹ According to popular lore, Mick Jagger, who wrote the text of the song, stated that it was about a man watching his girlfriend's funeral, and the song has been used in a number of other contexts in which it has signified death and mourning, particularly in relation to the Vietnam War. It became iconic through its use in the end credits of the film *Full Metal Jacket*; the opening credits of the television show *Tour of Duty*, and the Pivotal Games first-person shooter videogame *Conflict: Vietnam*. This connection also makes possible the reading of the song as one particularly associated with needless death and violence, as well as depression, loss, and grief.

Other songs of the preshow continued to establish Hamlet's mood. "From the Dark," by Thirty Minutes to Forget (date unavailable), hints at Hamlet's sense of anxiety, his loss of position and power under Claudius' rule, his inability to act quickly, and his possible mental decline under the stress:

Taking back what's mine
I'll make sure to leave the scene of the crime
The time is ticking, people have gone missing
[....]
I try to keep it back
But I'm always under attack
Playing it on the down low, so that nobody knows
Getting out of control, but now I'm getting cold
The thought of this happening to me
My thoughts have taken over me.³²

The preshow also included Prince's "Let's Go Crazy,"³³ which contains lyrics that, like the songs above, can be read referents to *Hamlet*. "Let's Go Crazy" tells the listener that "life / It means forever and that's a mighty long time [....]in this life / Things are much harder than in

the afterworld / In this life / You're on your own," and that, "U better live now / Before the grim reaper come knocking on your door." All of these can be heard as citing Hamlet's beliefs that death would be easier than facing his predicaments and that, as the Ghost tells him in its appearance in Gertrude's chamber, that Hamlet cannot dally in taking action. Finally, the Kinks' "Better Things" introduced the sense of irony present in the production, or perhaps the point of view from Gertrude at the beginning of the play, when she is a happy new bride and hoping that her son will withdraw from mourning, stay with her at Elsinore, and become what Claudius calls "our chiefest courtier" (1.2.117):

Here's hoping all the days ahead
Won't be as bitter as the ones behind you
Be an optimist instead
And somehow happiness will find you
Forget what happened yesterday
I know that better things are on the way.³⁴

All of these songs, many of them well-known to the audience, located this *Hamlet* as a little edgy, a little dark-humored, a little hip. And the performance was all of these things: fast-paced, it featured an intelligent Hamlet whose dark humor played especially well to an audience of academics at the theater for the ASC's biennial conference. The production took risks by preparing two texts and changing between them at the toss of a coin and by playing with the texts themselves: Hamlet's "words, words, words" to Polonius became "word, sword, swords," an altogether unexpected reading and connotation. It also took a chance in mixing the modern and the medieval, even tipping a hat to the film of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* beyond the coin toss in the cast's diegetic use of recorder, drum, and tambourine—the same instruments used in the film's soundtrack—in a number of scenes.

Music played by the cast at the intermission continued the dark, mordant atmosphere. The intermission set began with the Avett Brothers' "Murder in the City," a kind of anti-revenge ballad that is easily associated with Hamlet's instructions to Horatio at the end of Act Five, Scene Two. Hamlet forgives Laertes and asks Horatio to 'report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied. [...] If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart / Absent thee from felicity awhile, / And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain, / To tell my story." Similarly, the protagonist in "Murder in the City" sings:

If I get murdered in the city
Don't go revenging in my name
One person dead from such is plenty
No need to go get locked away
When I leave your arms
The things that I think of

No need to get over alarmed
I'm coming home.

The narrator then asks the addressee to tell his sister and mother that he loves them, and speaks of the value he attaches to his family, saying, "Always remember there was nothing worth sharing like the love that let us share our name."³⁵ Lori McKenna's "Hardly Speaking a Word" seems to frame the second half of the play, particularly the closet scene, from Gertrude's position. Here Gertrude is confronted by Hamlet and initially holds her own against him in a furious argument, but finally is reduced to silence when he sees the Ghost and pleads with her not to sleep with Claudius, her first husband's murderer, again. The lyrics can easily be read as Gertrude's account of the scene. First she may wonder about the root of her son's distemper, which correlates nicely with the lyrics "Maybe the problem is me not letting go" of her son. The lyrics then describe a "little boy who's smarter than me," and "who can't sit still and sees things differently." At the beginning of the scene, she is "yelling when I should be whispering / I'm pushing when I should be carrying;" this devolves into her admission that "I don't understand anything I've heard." Finally, as a mother, Gertrude knows "I should be yelling I love you," but she is too scared to do so, and is "hardly speaking a word."³⁶

The intermission music ended with a heavily ironic hard-rock rendition of "The Sound of Silence" by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, played so quickly and so loudly that some patrons could not immediately identify the usually quiet and melancholy hit. In addition to the song's lyrics, which could be appropriated by Hamlet in decrying Claudius's corruption and the ghost's second, silent visitation, the song was written by Simon as a response to the assassination of John F. Kennedy; older or more musically knowledgeable listeners might have recognized the connection between this and the murder of Old Hamlet. Overall, the music introduced experients without knowledge of *Hamlet* to some of the main themes of the play, while offering up subtler connections as knowing winks to theater-goers with deeper understandings of the text.

The musical theme for *Henry V* was a 1960s-heavy take on togetherness as a means of self-preservation. "Five to One," by The Doors (*Waiting for the Sun*, 1968), threatened the band of brothers that "no one here gets out alive" and reinforced the concept that the play was about war for new audiences. For those who already knew the play or remembered their history, the lines "The old get old / And the young get stronger / May take a week / And it may take longer" rewarded listeners for understanding the rise of young Hal into his position as King and his defeat of the aged, ill King Charles VI of France. The following lines, "They got the guns / But we got the numbers" can be read multiple ways.³⁷ For listeners who learned in school or from the play that the French heavily outnumbered the English in the battle, it can be heard as either a sarcastic aside on the part of the English, or a claim by the English that their larger group of archers would carry the day. For those familiar with newer research

that indicates that the armies were not so uneven in terms of raw manpower on the field, the lines speak to this fresher information.³⁸

The theme of brotherhood and cooperation continued with The Beatles' song "Come Together," which exhorts the audience to join together through the aegis of one individual, as Henry asks of his weary forces in the St. Crispin's Day Speech. This song was followed by The Decemberists' "Sixteen Military Wives," which, like "Five to One," reminds the experiants of the tolls of war. Despite Hal's blustering and the ultimate victory at Agincourt, many of the soldiers involved would never go home again: "Seventeen company men / Out of which only twelve will make it back again."³⁹ Fans of The Decembrists would have known that the song was written by lead singer Colin Meloy as a protest against the Iraq War; newcomers of *Henry V* would have recognized the military connections, and experienced listeners could easily have connected the song's anti-war and anti-glamorization of war messages with Henry's exhausted bluff at Harfleur and his reaction to the slaughter of the luggage boys (4.7). As with *The Tempest* and *Hamlet*, familiar popular music provided all experiants with tools to understand the tenor of each production, and how issues—such as war—might be treated.

It is worth noting that this production, the only one directed by Ralph Alan Cohen and not Warren, also used more diegetic musical cues than the two previous shows: a number of trumpet signals and voluntaries signaled Henry's entrances and exits at court, and actors playing a melodica, a wind instrument with a free reed and keyboard, offered up musical accompaniments for individual phrases from the text, such as a sea chantey for "sea" and the traditional racecourse call to races when the text mentioned horses. While for some audience members, these common—even clichéd—musical tropes seemed condescending to the audience, they were also received by nods or laughs from some the audience, indicating that, perhaps, more inexperienced theater-goers found them useful, appropriate, or entertaining.

Tamburlaine the Great, Part I, is, of course, by Christopher Marlowe, but deserves mention here as part of the season's selection of early modern plays. *Tamburlaine* is a less-often performed work and thus less well-known as the plays by Shakespeare presented as part of the season, and it was clear from the cast's choice of music that they wanted to make the production as comfortable for new audiences as they do Shakespeare's works. As with the ASC's productions of Shakespeare, Marlowe's play also had a thirty-minute pre-show and intermission of music. Again mixing classic rock and more recent songs, the musical selections focused on Tamburlaine's quest for power and its consequences, including the suicides of Bajazeth and Zabina, the captured Emperor and Empress of the Turks. Much of the music the ASC actors chose for the play's preshow and intermission dealt with the uses, abuses, and consequences of political power. "Eve of Destruction," a Cold War protest song made famous by Barry McGuire, cites violence in the Middle East, China, and the United States and the disintegration of civilization because of hate, frustration, and a lack of trust between people

and nations. The song functions as both a nod to Tamburlaine and his all-consuming passion for power and to the naivety of leaders who futilely sent thousands into battle against him. U2's "Peace on Earth" was originally written as bitter commentary on the August 1998 Real IRA bombing in Omagh, Ireland; as part of the preshow for *Tamburlaine*, it references the bloody conquest of Tamburlaine and offers commentary on the brutality of his reign, specifically that such violence may be on display, but that the production's intent is not to revel in the glorification of it.

"Come As You Are" by Nirvana is a highly repetitive work with a very limited set of lyrics that outline contradictions: "Come as you are, as you were, as I want you to be. /As a friend, as a friend, as an old Enemy."⁴⁰ For those who know the play well, the lyrics suggest one of Tamburlaine's approaches to conquest as depicted by Marlowe: turn your enemies into friends, and when they least suspect it, remove them from power. As Techelles says of the shepherd-king:

As princely Lions when they rouse themselves,
Stretching their pawes, and threatning heardes of Beastes.
So in his Armour looketh *Tamburlaine*:
Me thinks I see kings kneeling at his feet,
And he with frowning browes and fiery looks,
Spurning their crownes from off their captive heads. (1.2.52-57)⁴¹

Audiences new to the play may have found that the lyrics gave them hints as to what was to come, or simply laid out conflicting concepts as a way of establishing a theme of strife. More obvious was the use of Tears for Fears' "Everybody Wants to Rule the World." From the title to the penultimate line, "Nothing ever lasts forever," the New Wave song captures the heart of Tamburlaine's pursuit of power. "Welcome to your life /There's no turning back," sings the narrator at the beginning of the song, and the welcome is true for Tamburlaine as well: once he has begun his quest to conquer the world, he is relentless, driven by his own megalomania and need for security by making all of his enemies client kings over whom he has power. The reason for this domination is, as the song continues, "all for freedom and for pleasure"—at least for Tamburlaine's freedom and pleasure. But he too realizes that "Nothing lasts forever," and makes a final last stand while passing the reins of power to his sons.⁴² "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" is also connected to the concepts of authority and takeover through its use in a number of movies, television shows, and video games, including *Watchmen*, *World in Conflict*, and *The Powerpuff Girls*.

Two folk or folk-rock style songs were used during the intermission performances: "Ain't No Mountain High Enough," made famous by Marvin Gaye's 1967 recording, and Moby's "Run On," which uses lyrics from the traditional folk song "God's Gonna Cut You Down." "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" can be heard innocently by inexperienced audiences as speaking

to Tamburlaine's devotion to his wife, shown in the play, and ironically by knowledgeable experiants as a continuation of his lust for power and love of battle. The chorus

Don't you know that there ain't no
mountain high enough,
ain't no valley low enough
ain't no river wide enough to keep
me from getting to you babe.⁴³

could also be read ironically as a very real threat to Tamburlaine's enemies and the lands he desires to gather into his empire. Finally, Moby's "Run On," which mixes "Run On" by Bill Landford and the Landfordaires with overdubs of other material, suggests to all audiences that Tamburlaine's eventual death, before which he has declared himself greater than any god, is divine retribution. The chorus,

you might run on for a long time
run on, dunkin' and dodgin'
run on, children, for a long time
let me tell you God Almighty gonna cut you down,

leaves no doubt in the listeners' minds as to the cause of Tamburlaine's final illness and death. For experienced audiences, the song's further lyrics, "sure as God made you rich and poor / you're gonna reap just what you sow," refer to Tamburlaine's origins as a poor shepherd and the vast devastation he spread across Asia.⁴⁴

In selecting contemporary songs, and in performing them in an informal manner as the audience enters the theater, the cast at the ASC attempts to bridge differences between the early modern and the present. Because the language of the past—and the music of the past—could easily be understood as foreign or exotic to audiences, the company has a mandate to make both aspects of their performances as immediate as possible. By relocating the music from the early modern to the present, inexperienced audiences are prepared for equally recognizable speech, and are perhaps less likely to experience the anxiety about comprehension that many audiences report when attending productions of early modern works. At the same time, knowledgeable members of the audience who listen closely are rewarded for their experience through the cunning use of music that can be read in multiple ways relating to the production and details that relate to the particulars of each play. Where the Lan production made audiences comfortable through the use of familiar sounds for the setting, the ASC's use of music helps situate experiants to the plot, language, and tenor of a production.

Conclusions

The method of communicating location, other aspects of the setting, and/or tone through live music, particularly when performed by the actors on stage, can be a powerful tool in establishing the fictional world of the production while advancing a sense of shared cultural referents, knowledge, and experiences with the audience. This is not to say that all productions involving large amounts of music need professional musicians; stagings with actors who are able to read music and perform even to a limited extent vocally or instrumentally could work for some settings and scores. Improvised music for the stage, now largely out of fashion, could also serve for many of the songs in *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, and other early modern plays that call for music. In any event, the fact of the music's presence, and the carefully considered use of music in all its variety can bring an extra dimension to any production, set in any fictional or real world.

¹ Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 25.

² Marvin A Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: the Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 6.

³ Rod Carley, "Bardomania: Adapting Shakespeare within a Canadian Political Context," *Borrowers and Lenders* 3, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2007), <http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/cocoon/borrowers/request?id=781514>.

⁴ Umberto Eco, *Confessions of a Young Novelist* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 81.

⁵ Gérard Genette, trans. Jane E. Lewin, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 163. Quoted in Burt, 8.

⁶ Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 5.

⁷ See also <http://academicronin.wordpress.com/2012/03/06/experiant-a-replacement-for-ableist-terms-of-experience/>.

⁸ Umberto Eco, *Confessions of a Young Novelist* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 80; and Sture Allén and Nobelstiftelsen, *Possible Worlds in Humanities, Arts and Sciences: Proceedings of Nobel Symposium 65* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1989), 55.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁰ Mark Thornton Burnett and Adrian Streete, eds., *Filming and Performing Renaissance History* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 5.

¹¹ Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York: Norton, 1974), 262.

¹² William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre, Third Series (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), 2.

¹³ Ross Duffin, *Shakespeare's Songbook* (New York: Norton, 2004), 521.

¹⁴ Eco, *Confessions of a Young Novelist*, 81.

¹⁵ Gilles Montcoudiol, "Identité Nationale," *VST - Vie Sociale et Traitements* 94, no. 2 (2007): 121.

¹⁶ Barbara Lebrun, "René, Ginette, Louise et Les Autres: Nostalgie et Authenticité Dans La Chanson Néo-réaliste," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 27, no. 2 (July 30, 2009): 47.

¹⁷ Michael Billington, "As You Like It—Wyndhams Theatre, London," *The Guardian*, June 22, 2005.

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- ¹⁸ Greville Cooke, "Queen Elizabeth and Her Court Musicians," *The Musical Times* 79, no. 1144 (June 1938): 419. See also Michael Fleming, "An 'Old Old Violl' and 'Other Lumber': Musical Remains in Provincial, Non-Noble England c. 1580-1660," *The Galpin Society Journal*, vol. 58 (June 2005), 95.
- ¹⁹ A. R. Walkling, "Masque and Politics at the Restoration Court: John Crowne's *Calisto*," *Early Music* XXIV, no. 1 (February 1, 1996): 27.
- ²⁰ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 230.
- ²¹ A classic example of a patter song is "I Am the Model of a Modern Major-General" from Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *The Pirates of Penzance*.
- ²² American Shakespeare Center, "About Us: What We Do," website, <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=49>. Accessed June 19, 2012.
- ²³ Charles Trenet and Jack Lawrence, "Beyond the Sea," *That's All* (Atco, 1946).
- ²⁴ Eric Clapton and Martin Sharp, "Tales of Brave Ulysses," *Disraeli Gears* (Reaction, 1967).
- ²⁵ All line numbers are taken from William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Methuen, 1999) (Arden Third Series).
- ²⁶ Traditional, arranged by Brian Wilson, "Sloop John B," *Pet Sounds* (Capitol Records, 1966).
- ²⁷ Eugene Levy, Christopher Guest and Michael McKean, "A Mighty Wind," *A Mighty Wind* (Sony, 2003).
- ²⁸ Jim Warren, "Which *Hamlet* is *Hamlet*?" ASC website, <http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com/v.php?pg=1186>. Accessed June 19, 2012.
- ²⁹ Scott Mervis, "Everclear's Art Alexakis goes from Iraq to the Hard Rock," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 26, 2009.
- ³⁰ Art Alexakis, "Santa Monica," *Sparkle and Fade* (Capitol Records, 1995).
- ³¹ Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, "Paint it Black" (Decca 1966).
- ³² Author unknown, "From the Dark," producer/date unknown.
- ³³ Prince, "Let's Go Crazy," *Hits and B Sides* (Warner Bros., 1993).
- ³⁴ Ray Davies, "Better Things," *Give the People What They Want* (Arista, 1981).
- ³⁵ Scott Avett and Seth Avett, "Murder in the City," *The Second Gleam* (Ramseur Records, 2008).
- ³⁶ Lori McKenna, "Hardly Speaking a Word," *Paper Wings and Halo* (Catalyst Disc/ Signature Sounds, 1998).
- ³⁷ Jim Morrison, Robby Krieger, Ray Manzarek, John Densmore "Five to One," *Waiting for the Sun* (Elektra, 1968).
- ³⁸ "Agincourt—exploding the myth," University of Southampton, <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/research/southamptonstories/lawartsoc/agincourt.html>. Accessed June 19, 2012.
- ³⁹ Colin Meloy, "Sixteen Military Wives," *Picaresque* (Rough Trade, 2005).
- ⁴⁰ Kurt Cobain, "Come As You Are," *Nevermind* (DGC, 1992).
- ⁴¹ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine, Part 1* (Tufts University, Perseus Digital Library, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0002%3Aact%3D1%3Ascene%3D2>). Accessed June 19, 2012.
- ⁴² Roland Orzabal, Ian Stanley, and Chris Hughes, "Everybody Wants to Rule the World," *Songs from the Big Chair* (Phonogram Records, 1985).
- ⁴³ Nickolas Ashford & Valerie Simpson, "Ain't No Mountain High Enough," *United* (Tamla, 1967).
- ⁴⁴ Traditional, "Run On," *Play* (Little Idiot, 1999).