

Six songs and dances from Shakespeare's time

(Notes for Taborers Workshop -- Bill Tuck)

Solo song: O, Mistress Mine
3-voice madrigal: Strike it up Tabor
Country Dance: Greensleeves (and Yellow Lace)
Pavan: Earl of Essex Measures
Galliard: Alta Mendoza (after Negri)
Basse Dance: Jouissance vous donneray (Arbeau)

O, Mistress Mine (attr. Thomas Morley 1599)

Of the six items listed, only O, Mistress Mine actually occurs in Shakespeare's plays – it is sung by the clown Feste in Twelfth Night. Even in this instance it is uncertain if the music generally used has any relationship to what might have been sung in the original stage production at The Globe. Nor do we know for certain who might have composed it – it is likely to have been a popular song of the time, attributable only to 'anonymous'. The tune first appears in an instrumental arrangement for 'broken consort' (six instruments: treble viol, lute, cittern, bandora, flute and bass viol) in Thomas Morley's Consort Lessons (published in 1599 and dedicated to the London Waits) and it is from this that the usually heard lute-song version was created by Frederick Bridge in 1890.

Given its uncertain provenance, it seems very reasonable to do whatever we want with it – including perform it, as Feste might have, on pipe & tabor. What we do have some certainty about, however, is the words. My suggestion for this tune therefore is to start with the words and work out their implied rhythm to create something that is both musical and a plausible interpretation of Feste's song. To this end we might use any parts of the common melody we like, without slavish adherence to the 19th C version!

In our version the last three lines of each verse are repeated. The text also implies that certain notes are omitted from the sung version, but played on the instrumental one.

Feste's song in Twelfth Night (Shakespeare)

O Mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O stay and hear your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low.
Trip no further pretty sweetening.
Journeys end in lovers meeting
Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter:
What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty,
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty:
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

O mistress mine

[G pipe]

D.C.

Strike it up Tabor (Thomas Weelkes)

This tune is number 18 in Weelkes' collection of part-songs published in 1608 under the title *Ayres Or Phantasticke Spirits for Three Voices*.

Clearly this piece – although vocal -- is intended as a celebration of the pipe & tabor and its role in dance accompaniment. It therefore seems a very good choice for playing on pipe & tabor. As far as we know it is not actually referenced in any of Shakespeare's plays, but given its date and popularity – along with the fact that most actors would be able to play the pipe & tabor -- it might well have found a place as interlude music.

Its structure is musically interesting: the first section is written in 6/4 as a canon, with the second voice (perhaps on a lower instrument) starting one bar early; the rhythm changes to 4/4 in the second section as all three instruments join together in a lively contrapuntal style.

Strike it up Tabor

[G & D pipes] Thomas Weelkes
(1576 - 1623)

Cantus

Altus

Tenor

S. 4

S. 1. 2.

T. 1. 2.

S. 9

S. 14

T. 1. 2.

Country Dance: Greensleeves and Yellow Lace (from Playford)

Despite its popularity as a universal renaissance tune, there is no indication that Greensleeves was ever referenced in a Shakespeare play. Despite this, it has probably featured in innumerable amateur productions of Romeo & Juliet (as well as serving to announce countless ice-cream vans!). But it has been used as the basis for several Country Dances (Playford), and a 'country dance' -- or 'country footing' -- is occasionally called for in several of Shakespeare's plays (cf. The Tempest Act IV Scene 1 – see below). It is generally held that some of the dances in Playford's collection date from early 17thC, so might plausibly have appeared in Shakespeare's plays.

Harmonically it is based on a form of the *passamezzo antica* ground – probably the most common chord progression of the renaissance period. Interestingly, this is not a progression that works readily on pipe & tabor, which tends to be happier with modal tunes – usually Dorian (minor) or Ionian (major).

Perhaps for this reason, the usual (and perhaps by now rather hackneyed) version of Greensleeves does not fit well to the pipe & tabor. Nor does its form as a romantic lovelorn ballad go very well with the role of taborer as a dance accompanist. There are, however, many different versions of this old tune and the example we have here is a striking variant of the familiar one that also makes for a lively dance. Dancers will insist that it be played quite fast.

Greensleeves (version 2)

[G pipe]

7

12

From Wikipedia:

A broadside ballad by this name was registered at the London Stationer's Company in September 1580, by Richard Jones, as "A Newe Northen Dittye of ye Ladye Greene Slevs". Six more ballads followed in less than a year, one on the same day, 3 September 1580 ("Ye Ladie Greene Sleeves answere to Donkyn hir frende" by Edward White), then on 15 and 18 September (by Henry Carr and again by White), 14 December (Richard Jones again), 13 February 1581 (William Elderton), and August 1581 (White's third contribution, "Greene Sleeves is worne awaie, Yellow Sleeves Comme to decaie, Blacke Sleeves I holde in despite, But White Sleeves is my delighe"). It then appears in the surviving *A Handful of Pleasant Delights* (1584) as *A New Courtly Sonnet of the Lady Green Sleeves. To the new tune of Green Sleeves*.

There is a persistent belief that Greensleeves was composed by Henry VIII for his lover and future queen consort Anne Boleyn. Boleyn allegedly rejected King Henry's attempts to seduce her and this rejection may be referred to in the song when the writer's love "cast me off discourteously". However, the piece is based on an Italian style of composition that did not reach England until after Henry's death, making it more likely to be Elizabethan in origin.

The Tempest, Act IV, Scene I

PROSPERO

Sweet, now, silence!
Juno and Ceres whisper seriously;
There's something else to do: hush, and be mute,
Or else our spell is marr'd.

IRIS

You nymphs, call'd Naiads, of the windring brooks,
With your sledged crowns and ever-harmless looks,
Leave your crisp channels and on this green land
Answer your summons; Juno does command:
Come, temperate nymphs, and help to celebrate
A contract of true love; be not too late.

Enter certain Nymphs

You sunburnt sicklemen, of August weary,
Come hither from the furrow and be merry:
Make holiday; your rye-straw hats put on
And these fresh nymphs encounter every one
In country footing.

Enter certain Reapers, properly habited: they join with the Nymphs in a graceful dance; towards the end whereof PROSPERO starts suddenly, and speaks; after which, to a strange, hollow, and confused noise, they heavily vanish

Pavan: Earl of Essex Measure

This is the tune for a dance from the collection of 'Old Measures' preserved in a number of manuscripts from the Inns of Court and dated roughly between 1580 and 1620, during which period they were presumably current. The 'measures' are mentioned several times in Shakespeare plays. We interpret 'pavan' as meaning any slow and stately dance done as a processional for as many couples as will. This one is in a steady 6/4 rhythm, but has an interesting phrase structure.

[G pipe]

Earl of Essex Measure

5
9
12

Da Capo

Galliard: Alta Mendoza (after Negri)

A slow pavan was often followed by a galliard. This was a more up-tempo dance in triple time, the music for which was often based on the same thematic material as the pavan. The rhythmic structure is very characteristic and generally lends itself to improvisation. Galliards are frequently mentioned in Shakespeare plays and were a dance for men to display their athletic skills.

The example chosen is from an Italian dance by Cesare Negri called *Alta Mendoza* and published in *Le Grazie d'Amore*, 1602. Unlike most galliards its phrase structure is not based exclusively on repeated 8 bar sections, but has an interesting 12 bar section in the middle of repeated 8s.

[G pipe] Galliard: (after *Alta Mendoza*) after Negri

The musical score is written in 3/4 time and consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. It contains 12 measures, with a repeat sign after the 8th measure. The second staff starts at measure 11 and contains 8 measures. The third staff starts at measure 20 and contains 12 measures, also with a repeat sign after the 8th measure. The notes are primarily quarter and eighth notes, with some dotted rhythms.

Basse Dance: Jouissance vous donneray (Arbeau)

The pavan was derived from the older basse danse, another stately dance but often done by just one couple. The *basse danse* itself went through a kind of evolution in the course of the 15th century from a high level of complexity in its phrase and step structure to a relatively standardised form (the *basse danse commune*). The most important role of the court taborer in the late 15th century was to be able to play (from memory!) any of the thirty or more complex basse dances that might suddenly be called for by the dancers. There is likely to have been a competitive element involved as it typically followed a jousting tournament.

The example chosen here is the (very regular -- and much later) *Jouissance vous donneray* basse dance from Arbeau (1589). Although the phrase structure in this case is very regular, much can be made of the potential for using hemiola to vary the rhythmic pattern. The defining characteristic is the 3/2 rhythmic pattern of minim followed by four crotchets.

Although it was almost certainly obsolete in England by Shakespeare's time, the *basse danse* can probably be equated with the pavane or 'old measures' then current. There may be no specific references to 'basse danse' in Shakespeare, but it would not be inappropriate to perform it in certain contexts (such as the ball in *Romeo & Juliet*).

[G pipe]

Jouissance vous donneray

after Arbeau

