Shakespeare’s Musical Brain

The Great Hall and Chapel,
King’s College, Strand Campus, London WC2R 2LS

Saturday 16 April 2016

In association with
Shakespeare’s Globe
Music has inspired, entertained, comforted and moved us for thousands of years. But it is only recently that science has begun to shed light on the incredible impact that music and other art forms can have on the mind, brain and body. The Musical Brain is a registered charity committed to bridging the gap between the arts and sciences by encouraging discussion among neuroscientists, artists, medical professionals and performers, sharing and debating groundbreaking research with a public audience.

Welcome to the London Shakespeare Centre at King’s College London

It is a great pleasure for us here at King’s to welcome all of you to this year’s Musical Brain conference, which we are very happy to host and which is presented in association with our longstanding partners at Shakespeare’s Globe. The conference forms part of Shakespeare400, the consortium of leading cultural, creative and educational organisations that King’s has coordinated here in London to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death. Through a series of performances, exhibitions and creative activities in the capital and beyond, partners have been celebrating the legacy of Shakespeare during the Quatercentenary year.

That legacy reaches far beyond the original contexts for Shakespeare’s writing. He is of course thought of first and foremost as a man of the theatre, and it is in the theatre that his unparallelled fame has primarily been forged. But he was an unparallelled poet as well as playwright, and the influence of his writing across the genres has been extraordinary – and no more so than in the field of music. The Shakespeare400 season includes orchestral and chamber music, opera and ballet – from the London Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Opera House – from Mendelssohn to Prokofiev to Duke Ellington.

But music is not a Shakespearean afterthought. On the contrary, music was an integral part of theatrical performance in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean London, and Shakespeare’s own creativity was heavily engaged with music. You only have to think of A Midsummer Night’s Dream or The Tempest, of the songs of Feste or Lear’s Fool, of the ensembles that played between the acts in the Blackfriars theatre, to be aware of how deeply musical Shakespearean theatre was from the very beginning.

Shakespeare’s Musical Brain investigates and celebrates the importance of music in Shakespeare’s work and the role it played in the creative processes of his company as well as in the experience of audiences both in his own lifetime and now.

We hope you enjoy and benefit from this unique event; we hope to see you at the many events in the Shakespeare400 calendar that the year has yet to offer; and we encourage you, while you are here, to visit the ‘By Me William Shakespeare’ exhibition in the East Wing of Somerset House which we have curated with The National Archives and which includes some of the key documents of Shakespeare life, most notably his last will and testament.

Professor Gordon McMullan
Director, London Shakespeare Centre
Academic Director, Shakespeare400

The Music Brain is most grateful to The John S Cohen Foundation, the National Association of Deafened People and our Friends and donors for their generous support.

The importance of music in the work of Shakespeare should come as no surprise if we wind the clock back two thousand years from his own period of English Renaissance to the civilisations of ancient Greece and of Rome. Dionysian rituals of song and dance are thought to have been the well-spring of Greek theatre, with words coming into play further downstream (pathos preceding logos), nicely mirroring in art the life and development of every new-born person: from conception, our basic human impulses are music and movement and not the use of words and reason, which come later.

The large performance area at the centre of every Greek theatre was the Orchestra – literally ‘dancing space’ – on which the Chorus played music and moved to the words of the actors. In modern Western culture over-specialisation has tended to set different disciplines apart from one another, both within and beyond the arts scene, giving them distinct labels and rendering them less fertile. How many modern orchestras, ballet companies and theatres can match their own genetic material with the DNA of the inter-disciplinary ‘dancing spaces’ of the Greek theatre? This is not a question applicable to Shakespeare’s time: whilst the forms and functions of ancient Greek theatre differed from his own and may not have had much direct influence on him, music was nonetheless essential to Shakespeare and to his theatre of makers, players and audiences.

As we consider ‘Shakespeare’s Musical Brain’ and the importance of music in his work, we will see that there is much less in common between the verbal arts of poetry and prose than is to be found in the close relationship between poetry and music. With the benefit of modern neuroscience, we can understand the similarities and differences between words and music in terms of how they are both conceived and received within the human brain.

Shakespeare’s plays have inspired countless works in other art-forms and especially in music – ballets, operas, symphonies and song-cycles among them – and these are the examples generally used when people discuss or promote music relating to the playwright: that is, Shakespeare as represented in music. The Musical Brain decided to turn this perspective through 180° and look closely at the music in Shakespeare. Our annual conferences have often focused on particular composers to illuminate different aspects of music and the mind. It seemed entirely fitting this year, 400 years after his death, to put the spotlight on Shakespeare.

We are grateful to Professor Gordon McMullan, the mastermind of Shakespeare400, for inviting us to contribute to the programme and welcoming us into King’s College. Special thanks are due to our guest curator Dr Simon Smith, and to Bill Barclay, for guiding us through the contemporary world of Shakespeare, the prevailing culture, his theatre, his players, and his audiences, and leading to a greater understanding of music’s place in the creation, performance and enjoyment of his work. We are indebted also to Bill Barclay and his group of musicians and actors from Shakespeare’s Globe who, with our other guest speakers, add up to a truly ‘Shakespearean’ company of multi-talented people, bringing words and music together into a harmonious whole for our pleasure and enlightenment.
10.10  **Dr Freya Bailes**  
**Psychological Time-Travel: Exploring Audience Responses to Music in Shakespeare's Theatre**

In this presentation I will be using music psychology as a tool to explore how Shakespeare's contemporaries might have experienced music in the theatre. While much has changed for theatre audiences since the 16th/17th centuries, and our appreciation of music is tied to the physical and cultural context in which it is heard, 21st century research is now providing answers to questions raised during Shakespeare's time as to how it is that music has such power to move us. I will review the so-called 'universals' of emotional responses to music in a bid to understand the potential for dramatic impact of incorporating music on Shakespeare's stage. However, these universals do not acknowledge important cultural distinctions between the historical and the contemporary ear, and I will consider the relevance of recent psychological theories to understand these differences. Finally, I will discuss the ideas of Thomas Wright writing in 1604, who argued that the nature of the hearer, rather than the nature of the music, holds the most explanatory power as to music's ability to rouse the passions.

Q & A

11.15  **Coffee**

11.35  **Bill Barclay**  
**Music of the Spheres – both as it relates to Shakespeare and its meaning from the ancient times through modern physics**

Ancient beliefs in the music of the spheres proves true in surprising ways and help us to understand our emotional relationship to music. From acoustics to astronomy, Kepler to Cleopatra, Bill Barclay will use the science and philosophy of planetary harmony to bring together musics from around the globe.

Q & A

12.40  **Panel discussion**

13.10  **Lunch**

14.30  **Professor Michael Trimble**  
**The Bard, his Brain, his Music and his Skull**

Professor Trimble will begin by describing how the brain processes language. He will go on to discuss differences in brain activity when poetry vs prose is examined. The presentation will then consider the way that Shakespeare's language affects brain responses including discussion about the Shakespearian functional shift. The aesthetic and emotional effects of metre and rhyme in poetry will be points for discussion.

Q & A

15.35  **Dr Simon Smith**  
**Early Encounters with Shakespeare’s Music: Writer, Performer and Audience in the Early Modern Playhouse**

How did early modern subjects – playgoers, playwrights and actors, as well as specialist composers and musicians – understand musical affect and responses to harmony? This talk traces ideas about musical response that were familiar even to non-specialists in early modern England, in order to suggest how playgoers’ encounters with playhouse music might have contributed to the dramaturgy of Shakespeare’s plays. For instance, how would writers, performers and audiences have understood hidden harmony, in a culture that overwhelmingly watched as well as listened to music? How might the experience of touching a musical instrument be significant to a performing actor or musician, but also to playgoers who themselves may be intimately familiar with handling a lute? What kinds of imaginative or emotional adoptions might take place when hearing or performing a playhouse song that voices someone else’s perspective? Drawing on canonical Shakespearean examples as well as moments from less familiar early modern plays, this talk will suggest ways in which the cultural perspectives of early modern England shaped playhouse engagements with music that held particular dramatic significance for the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Q & A

16.40  **Tea**

17.00  **Panel discussion**

17.30  **Drinks reception in Great Hall**
Dr Freya Bailes is an Academic Fellow in Music Psychology at the University of Leeds. She was a Lecturer in Music at the University of Hull (2012–15), before which she held research positions in France (Université de Bourgogne), the USA (Ohio State University), and then Australia (University of Canberra and the MARCS Institute), combining her experience in experimental psychology with her education and insight as a musician. Her publications reflect her broad research interests in topics that include the perception of emotion in music, the role of loudness in music perception, musical imagery (i.e. imagining music in the ‘mind’s ear’), music and memory (including memory for music in oral traditions), mental representations in musical creativity, the effects of musical expertise on music perception, the cognitive processes involved in musical improvisation, and the role of synchrony in pro-social behaviours. Freya is an oboist with a particular enjoyment of orchestral and chamber music performance.

Bill Barclay is the Director of Music at Shakespeare’s Globe where he has collaborated on over 75 productions and 150 concerts since 2012. He composed the music for Hamlet Globe to Globe, a tour to every country in the world (2014–16) and Romeo & Juliet in 2015, both directed by Dominic Dromgoole. Broadway and West End credits as Music Supervisor include Twelfth Night, Richard III, and Farinelli and the King, all starring Mark Rylance. He has directed or adapted concerts for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic (Hollywood Bowl), the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the British Film Institute, and the Tanglewood Music Center. He has given lectures on Shakespeare and the music of the spheres on three continents, and composed music for the Duke of Edinburgh at The Globe, Buckingham Palace and next week at Southwark Cathedral, as well as for the progression of the Olympic torch. He held 10-year engagements as composer, actor, and director with both Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Massachusetts and the Actors’ Shakespeare Project in Boston. He is co-editor of The Jon Lipsky Play Collection, Volumes I and II (Smith & Kraus). An alumnus of Vassar College, the National Theatre Institute and Boston University, his fellowships, residencies and awards include a Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowship (the largest grant for actors in the United States).

Dr Simon Smith is Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Faculty of English, University of Oxford and Junior Research Fellow of the Queen’s College, Oxford, specialising in Shakespeare and early modern drama. As Early Modern Music Research Associate of Shakespeare’s Globe, he has contributed to the design of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, sourced historical music for Globe Theatre and Sam Wanamaker Playhouse productions, and co-ordinated practical experiments in the Playhouse. He co-edited The Senses in Early Modern England, 1558–1660 with Jackie Watson and Amy Kenny (Manchester University Press, 2015), and has written on music in Shakespeare for a number of collections and journals, including Shakespeare Survey (2014), and Bill Barclay and David Lindley’s forthcoming edited volume, Shakespeare, Music and Performance, 1590–2015 (Cambridge University Press, c. 2017). His first monograph, Musical Response in the Early Modern Playhouse, 1603–1625, will be published by Cambridge University Press.

Michael Trimble is Emeritus Professor in Behavioural Neurology at the Institute of Neurology and Honorary Consultant Physician to the department of Psychological Medicine at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, London. His research for many years has been on the behavioural consequences of neurological disorders, especially epilepsy and movement disorders. He has a lifelong research interest in neuroanatomy, hence his ability to explore the neuroanatomical basis of crying. He is also a psychiatrist with much clinical experience of mood disorders, and has investigated the latter in patients using neurological techniques, such as brain imaging. His book The Soul in the Brain (Johns Hopkins, 2007) explores the cerebral basis of art and belief and Why Humans like to cry: Tragedy Evolution and the Brain (OUP 2012) discusses emotional responses to tragedy and the arts from an evolutionary and neurobiological perspective.
The composer, Johnny Flynn, is a contemporary musician and actor, working in a folk tradition that may echo the widespread use of popular songs and tunes and the potentially improvisatory culture of Shakespeare's playhouses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
Will Mannering, actor, musician and singer, whose many appearances at Shakespeare’s Globe range from Bottom in A Midsummer Night’s Dream to Touchstone in As You Like It. His television roles include Alan Turing in Breaking the Code. He writes: ‘Not having attended drama school myself, I discovered Shakespeare primarily through performance. Early on I realized that like a composer he wrote to be heard not read. Although analysis of his work in rehearsal is vital for context it never seems to undermine his music and as actors, we are shown through his music that a beat here or a breath there can drastically alter the arc of a story. His emotional score has defined our narrative landscape forever as he was truly a poet for the people. His songs are to be sung, his sonnets sighed and stories heard.’

Ellie Piercy, Music and Shakespeare have always been together for me, starting with my first part being Feste at school. As music was such a huge part of my childhood, when I first came across Shakespeare, the rhythm and poetic form was immediately accessible and through drama I was able to learn how to understand it. This totally enhanced my studies and began my love of Shakespeare, Greek drama and now inspires all the stories I come across to work with. I started playing Juliet in the first touring production of Romeo and Juliet, then Merry Wives of Windsor, Liberty by Glynn Maxwell, All’s Well that Ends Well, Blue Stockings by Jess Swale and last year As You Like It and Heresy of Love by Helen Edmonson. I have also played Salisbury Playhouse, Unicorn Theatre, Manchester Royal Exchange, Orange Tree Theatre, Arcola Theatre alongside touring. This spring I will be starting Sideways at St James Theatre. ‘The World of the Impressionists’ and ‘Doctors’ for BBC and ‘Brothers of War’ and ‘Mr Duncan’ are my filming credits.

George Bartle studied trombone and singing at the Royal College of Music and sackbut and singing at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland. He has performed and recorded with many period ensembles and orchestras across the globe including Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, The City Musick, Monteverdi Choir & Orchestra, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, The King’s Consort, His Majesty’s Sagbutts and Cornetts, Ex Cathedra, the Gabrieli Consort, the RSC, the OAE and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and worked with a diverse range of artists, from Sir David Willcocks and Kurt Masur to Harry Secombe and Manfred Mann. George is also a composer and MD for Shakespeare’s Globe Education. He performs regularly on TV and radio and can be heard on numerous film soundtracks and album recordings.

Sam Goble is one of the UK’s most prominent cornetto players. A member of QuintEssential, Sam regularly performs and records with some of the most influential groups in Europe including Cantus Cölln, Academy of Ancient Music, Gabrieli Consort and Players, Dufay Collective, Musica Fiata, the OAE, English Concert, I Fagiolini, and the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra. He studied cornetto for his undergraduate degree at Trinity College of Music under Richard Thomas and Jeremy West. Sam’s research and experimentation into historical instruments and mouthpieces has led to making historical copies for all sizes of cornetti, serpents, baroque trumpets and sackbuts. Based or copied from surviving originals they have given new insights into the sounds and capabilities of these instruments, and they are being used by a rising number of professional and amateur players all over the world.

Robin Jeffrey studied at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge and the Royal College of Music. He has played and recorded with many well-known names in early music, opera and theatre, including The Sixteen, English Baroque Soloists, The Purcell Quartet, Red Byrd, English National Opera, Glyndebourne, Opera North and the National Theatre. He has performed in several productions for Shakespeare’s Globe, including The Merry Wives of Windsor, Othello, The Taming of the Shrew and The Malcontent. Robin is also active in the performance of Middle Eastern classical and traditional music, playing the oud and laouto. He has performed traditional Jewish music internationally with the Burning Bush and folk music of the British Isles with the New Scorpion Band. He regularly gives recitals as Etrusca, accompanying soprano Alessandra Testai in a wide-ranging repertoire covering both the folk and classical traditions of the Mediterranean lands.

Alastair Warren studied bass trombone, ophicleide and conducting at the Royal College of Music, London. An interest in historically informed performance led to further specialised study of Baroque and Classical trombone at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Switzerland. Alastair now enjoys a varied performing career encompassing jazz, classical and early music, having played and recorded with many of this country’s major ensembles including the RPO, Syd Lawrence Orchestra, the OAE, the Gabrieli Consort and the Hanover Band. Alastair is a regular participant in productions at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, and in the West End.

Adrian Woodward has a varied career playing early music, modern music and improvisation. He studied the trumpet, piano and old instruments at Trinity College of Music, the Royal College of Music and the Musik Akademie, Basel. He has played or recorded with all of the UK’s well-established period instrument orchestras, but most regularly with the Gabrieli Consort, the OAE and the King’s Consort. Since 1997 he has worked as one of the most in demand Musical Directors and multi-instrumentalist performers at Shakespeare’s Globe, playing period and modern scores. Recent work includes Twelfth Night (2013, Globe and West End), Macbeth (2013), Titus Andronicus (2014) dir. Lucy Bailey, Broken Heart, As You Like It, and Pericles, Prince of Tyre (dir. D Dromgoole). He worked with Sir Paul McCartney and Giles Martin at Abbey Road Studios on a track for his latest album ‘New’.
There are three common factors in Musical Brain events: multi-disciplinary programming, bringing together leading experts from different fields; accessible communication of fascinating but often complex ideas; and performances of the highest calibre to illuminate and conclude each day’s discussions.

The Musical Brain is regularly invited by organisations as a partner and contributor to events, which can be enhanced by combining music with medical, scientific, philosophical or historical subject matter. Some people travel considerable distances to attend our London-based conferences, but we know that there are many music-lovers with wide-ranging curiosity who are interested but cannot easily attend. Therefore our teams welcome invitations to tour and collaborate.

Our next two annual conferences in 2016/17 will be devoted to the question: Why Sing? – a vast topic which we look forward to exploring.

The Musical Brain® Registered Charity Number: 1159843  www.themusicalbrain.org
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