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Enchanting Music: How English Playwrights Use Music in Renaissance Witchcraft Plays

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Enchanting Music: How English Playwrights Use Music in Renaissance Witchcraft Plays

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
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in
English

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Alyssa Anders

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Abstract:

Music is an integral aspect of the Early Modern theater, but because most of this music is lost, scholars and students typically only analyze these works using literary theories. This approach does not allow for a full understanding these plays, which is especially true of witchcraft plays because witches typically utilize music for their spells. In this thesis, I am exploring the interdisciplinary connection of music and literature in the Jacobean witchcraft plays *The Witch* (c. 1616) by Thomas Middleton and *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* or *The Wonder of Women* (1604-1606). From my analysis of the existing music from *The Witch* and the music's function in characterizing the witch, I recreated the infernal music from *Sophonisba* to gain new insights into this play's witch figure. From this project, I intend to emphasize the importance of musical analysis in discourses on Early Modern witchcraft plays and inspire interdisciplinary research into these works.

Keywords: Thomas Middleton; John Marston; witchcraft play; Renaissance; music; Jacobean

Introduction

Then, when I shall force
The air to music, and the shades of night
To form sweet sounds, make proud thy raised delight.
Meantime, behold, I go a charm to rear,
Whose power sound will force ourself to fear.

(Erictho [the witch figure], *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* 4.1.176-181).

During the Renaissance period, specifically the late 1500s to early 1600s, English playwrights, such as William Shakespeare, John Lyly, John Marston, Ben Jonson, and Thomas Middleton, wrote plays that examine the popular perspectives of witches and witchcraft in English society while capitalizing on the witchcraft craze influenced by witchcraft trials and pamphlets¹. Witches are not a recent phenomenon in Western literature, and we can trace the early witch to ancient Greek literature. These figures were demonized for a variety of reasons, such as their desire for power and fame and their ability and willingness to commit acts of violence to achieve their goals. The best known of these early witches are Medea², who helped Jason and the Argonauts retrieve the Golden Fleece and escape her father and his wrath, and Circe, the witch who turned Odysseus' crew into boars³. Throughout the classical tradition, these witches were consistently depicted as terrifying forces of power. Starting in the Middle Ages and moving into the Early Modern era, women typically accused of witchcraft were still seen as

¹ I will use the term "witchcraft literature" to refer to the witchcraft pamphlets, trials, treatises, and plays that were written about this subject in the Early Modern period.

² Medea is well-known for killing her children to gain revenge against Jason who abandons her to marry someone else, connecting infanticide to witchcraft.

³ Medea and Circe embody more masculine roles because of the violent acts that they committed which include murder. In most examples in ancient Greek literature, the woman, unless she is a goddess, does not commit violent acts against others to gain power or control.

threatening sources of power; but instead of seeing witches as people who used magic to gain authority, many people saw witches as women who practiced magic to satisfy their insatiable sexual desires. This illustrates an increased focus on women and their sexualities which is reflected in Renaissance witchcraft plays.

Playwrights portrayed witches in conflicting ways, influenced by the loose definitions of a witch and witchcraft which Diane Purkiss describes as “highly unstable terms, sites of conflict and contestation between diverse groups. The term ‘witch’ was labile, sliding across a number of different and competing discourses” (93). The oversexualization of the witch figure and the varying views of witchcraft are reflected in the witchcraft plays⁴. Some playwrights emphasized the witch’s power while others diminished it. In some cases, playwrights both stressed the witch’s power while also mocking it by having the witches perform comedic acts during their spells. In addition to having on-stage witches perform their magical rituals, playwrights, collaborating with composers, often had these characters perform music. As we can see in the opening excerpt, music is often portrayed as an integral part of the magical process. In many witchcraft plays, the witches manipulate music, a wide-spread pastime in Early Modern England, transforming it from a harmless art form to an evil incantation, so the witches and their threats feel much more immediate not only to the characters, but to the audience as well. While musical elements can be found throughout these plays, music is typically present when the witches discuss or attempt to satisfy their lust through their magic. As a result, the music in witchcraft plays not only highlights the witches’ power by allowing them to utilize music for their spells but also furthers the connection between witches and sexual desire as we see in in Thomas

⁴ I define a witchcraft play as any play during the Early Modern period that includes the witch character who is somehow important to the plot, even if the witch herself is sidelined by the other characters. For this project, I am just focusing on Jacobean witchcraft plays.

Middleton's *The Witch* (c. 1616) and John Marston's *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* or *The Wonder of Women* (1604-1606).

Witchcraft and Witchcraft Plays in Jacobean England

Many scholars believe that witchcraft and the fear of its effects for everyday citizens increased under James I's reign (1603-1625)⁵. The Jacobean era was governed by patriarchal rules that sought to control women⁶, and women who could not be controlled or who refused to follow the precepts dictated for them were considered to be witches and, therefore, monstrous (Çelik 28). Witches were portrayed in much of the media that Jacobean people consumed and were typically depicted in grotesque and highly sexualized terms, such as succumbing to their lust in public places, especially in the woods where they supposedly "prostitut[ed] themselves uncovered and naked up to the navill, wagging and moving their members in everie part, according to the disposition of one being about that act of concupiscence" (Scot 43). Depicting witches as women who participate in these sexual acts implies that these women can be characterized by bestial natures. Additionally, witches went against the stereotypical view of women by rejecting maternal roles, for example, when they were occasionally believed to murder infants during their Witches' Sabbaths, nights of orgies and maleficium⁷, when they performed group spells. This again connects witches with the barbaric, and this is also shown in artistic depictions of Witches' Sabbaths, such as that of Flemish artist Bartholomeus Spranger's "Description of the Assembly of Witches Called a Sabbath" (c. 1610).

⁵ James I of England was also James IV of Scotland. He became king of Scotland in 1567 and became the ruler of both countries when they were united in 1603. He was preceded by Queen Elizabeth I

⁶ "The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a burst of conduct literature that aimed at regulating women's behaviour and character. Ranging from how women should be educated, what they could learn, where or when they could speak to how they should behave in domestic or public place, women were forced into certain patterns of behaviour by church fathers or officials to keep them under patriarchal control" (Çelik 24).

⁷ Maleficium refers to any time a witch performs a spell in order to cause harm. This term can also refer to the resulting harm of the spell.

Figure 1: Bartholomeus Spranger (1546-1611) print "Description de L'assemblee des sorciers qu'on appelle sabbat" trans. "Description of the Assembly of Witches Called a Sabbath (c. 1610)



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In this image, witches are committing infanticide in the bottom left corner by boiling the babies in a cauldron, and other witches are flying on broomsticks toward the top-center of the print. The Devil, who supposedly controls witches, sits in a wooden throne at the center while the people in front of him move in unnatural positions. Off to the right side of the chaotic scene, two men seem to be watching the action but are not forced to participate which may indicate that they are unaffected by the maleficium. Spranger's print is clearly influenced by the witchcraft literature of this time, and his depiction of the witches highlights their supposed disorderly behavior. Many of the elements of the print can be directly related to the Devil's influence, such as flying and using infants for incantations. However, the people moving around in front of the Devil's throne can be interpreted in a way not related to evil. At first glance, their movements seem inhuman, but, after taking a closer look, their actions closely resemble lively, agile dancing. As a result, these people could be moving to the beat of the music as well as to the

⁸ This photo can be found on www.historymash.com.

Devil's behest. This type of portrayal reinforces the association of music with witchcraft acts and implies that music may be a form of magic.

Music is closely related with witchcraft, and from classical times, music has been characterized by magical properties. Ancient Greek philosophers, such as Aristotle and Pythagoras, introduced the theory that music can realign the four humors—black bile, phlegm, blood, and yellow bile—and alleviate any medical conditions. This classifies music as a medicine that can cure almost any illness. However, ancient classical philosophers combined medicine with the occult because the humors represented the harmony of the cosmos in the body. Music also represents this harmony as Gary Tomlinson finds that, “Of all the musical conceptions handed down from the ancient Mediterranean world, two more than any others have captivated European minds: the ideas of music’s ethical power to affect man’s soul and of the presence of harmony in the cosmos” (67). As a result, music not only has the power to restore balance in the body; it can also alter people’s minds and souls. This second ability firmly connects music with magic and demonstrates that music can be used for evil purposes because it can enact any change in a person. Just as music can bring balance to the body, it can also cause imbalance, and therefore illness. Even so, music must be used in a particular manner to cause these changes, either good or bad. As we can infer from Spranger’s illustration of the Witches’ Sabbath discussed previously, witches were probably successful in their application of music to enhance their magical practice. The connection between witchcraft and music is especially intriguing because witches were often described as ignorant, as they are by James I in his well-known 1597 treatise *Demonology, In Form of a Dialogue, Divided into Three Books*.

James I, who had a fierce hatred of witchcraft, encouraged the public’s interest in the subject through this work which focuses on the seriousness of the crime of witchcraft while

stressing certain characteristics of witches. James I designs this treatise as a guidebook to identify witches and characterizes the ways they might act or the types of crimes they might commit. He addresses most aspects of witchcraft, such as the higher rate of women convicted of the crime than men⁹, which James I attributes to the overall weakness of women. He sees women as “frailer than man is, so it is easier to be entrapped in these gross snares of the Devil, as was overwell proved to be true by the Serpent’s deceiving of Eve at the beginning, which makes him the friendlier with that sex since then” (James I 139). This reasoning implies that women’s willpower is not strong enough to overcome temptation, hence their increased appetite for sexual desires and evil deeds. However, this explanation adds another layer to the witch figure because many times her weak will is linked to her lack of education: she does not know what she should avoid. Therefore, she is ignorant as well. As a result, the witches’ association with music is interesting because music was typically performed by trained musicians, and people without an education could not perform music in a skilled manner. Because witches performed successful spells with their music, this challenges the notion of her overall ignorance, complicating the ideas about witches.

Witchcraft plays on the stage reflect the varying perspectives of witches during this time, and the actors on stage were tasked with portraying the complexities of the witch figure as someone who is uneducated but able to effectively perform music. As a result, the witch is actively evil while also nonthreatening, and these ideas are influenced by the witchcraft literature of the time. For instance, in *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487), Dominican inquisitors and witch hunters Heinrich Kramer (1430-1505) and James Sprenger (c. 1436-1495) state that witches are

⁹It is important to note that while women were demonized for using magic, men were typically not treated in the same way which is reflected in the literature of the time. Warlocks or sorcerers were treated with much more gravity without dehumanization. For more on the different treatment of magical practitioners, please refer to Austern.

bewitched by incubuses because they “voluntarily prostitute themselves to Incubus devils” (164)¹⁰. This implies that witches have a level of awareness to be active participants in their demonization. Because of this awareness, the witches would be able to use the information that the Devil gives them to perform successful spells, indicating a level of education as well. As a result, witches can be seen as women who are at least slightly knowledgeable, and since music is linked to the heavens, the Devil might be able to teach them how to use music for magic since he is a fallen angel. However, other writers, such as Reginald Scot (1538-1599) sees witches as people who are forced into their demonization, showing an element of ignorance. He declares in his skeptical work *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) that women who were convicted of witchcraft were frequently people who were mentally ill, and therefore used as scapegoats “to excuse and maintaine the knaveries and lecheries of idle priests and bawdie monkes; and to cover the shame of their lovers and concubines” (Scot 48). This analysis of witchcraft implies that women are not active participants, but victims instead, and while the women probably understood what was happening to them, they could not adequately fight for themselves because of their lack of education and agency. Therefore, witches do not have the knowledge to use music to successfully perform their evil deeds, or maleficium. These two theories create an ambiguous view of witches and their abilities which is supported by one of James I’s famous witch trials.

James I was the first to “stage” a witchcraft scene during a trial making a mockery of witches and their power. He forced Gillis Duncan, a convicted witch, “to perform the dance [witch’s dance] for him, summon[ing] her not as a witness but as an entertainer. She is asked to *act out* her behavior, to turn the case against her into a theatrical event, to transform a tune which

¹⁰ An incubus is a male sex demon, and a succubus is a female sex demon.

might have been freighted with occult significance into a pastime for a ruler” (Purkiss 200).

Knowing James I’s views of and belief in witches and their magic, it seems strange that he would want an accused witch to perform her spell for an audience. This can be read as James I’s way to show bravado in the face of the witches’ potential power while also removing this capability from these women who he secretly fears and outwardly hates¹¹. Even though James I believes that witches can be powerful actors of evil, he also sees them as ignorant and weak willed. However, as someone supposedly in league with the Devil, her spells should be powerful and able to affect those who are watching the action. Witches are represented in a similar way by dramatists of the era, such as Middleton and Marston who create witch characters who are occasionally characterized by ignorance but are powerful and successful through the music they perform onstage.

The Renaissance plays of the Jacobean era contain music that is in the Baroque style. The Baroque Era¹² (1600-1750) is considered a time of change in its early years and a time of extravagance in its later years. Renaissance music (1400-1600) was dominated by the tenants of *ars perfecta* (perfect art), and music was classified as a perfect art because of “the casting of the perfected style in permanent rules so that its harmony and balance might be preserved and passed along” (Taruskin 179). At the end of the sixteenth century, there was a rejection of these ideas and a push towards humanism¹³. This emphasis on humanism allows for the innovations in

¹¹ This theory can be supported by James I’s fierce campaign against witches which began during his reign in Scotland. Furthermore, since he believed that witches attacked his ship, James I feared another attack on his life. Even though he demeaned the intelligence of witches, fear still percolates under the surface, especially with the demonic and inhuman representation of witches in *Demonology*.

¹² The term “baroque” refers to the period’s “excess and extravagance” (Kerman 82) and was first used to describe Jean Phillipe Rameau’s opera *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1734) as an insult (Taruskin 239).

¹³ In this case, humanism refers to a “devotion to or expertise in the humanities, esp. classical scholarship” (OED). These ideas were introduced and revived by Girolamo Mei (1519-1594), an Italian historian and humanist, in his work *On the Musical Modes of the Ancients* (1573). Mei wanted to reinstate Greek drama and hypothesized that ancient Greek music was “not full of counterpoint,” a musical compositional technique where multiple melodies

music that provide a foundation for the music theater as we know it (Taruskin 240). We even see the birth of the opera during this time, and even though opera originated in Florence, Italy, we see elements of this genre in *The Witch* and *The Tragedy of Sophonisba*, such as music, dancing, and special effects¹⁴ (Kerman 83-84). We can see how the main features of the Early Baroque lend well to theatrical music because the music is easier for the listener to follow and digest aurally.

During the Jacobean era, plays needed music to be successful¹⁵, and the rhythmic structure of Baroque music allow it to be an asset to the play and the overall theatrical experience. Joseph Kerman and Gary Tomlinson find that “Rhythms become more definite, regular, and insistent in Baroque music; a single rhythm or similar rhythms can be heard throughout a piece or a major segment of the piece” (82). This means that there are repeated rhythms that the listener will be anticipating, so the rhythm acts as a way to guide the listener through the songs. The musical rhythm can either emphasize or detract from the action on stage. If the musicians play music with an upbeat, happy rhythm while the characters are on stage dancing and celebrating, then the music highlights the joyous atmosphere. However, if the musicians play the same type of music while the characters are mourning the death of someone, then the music can take away from the heaviness of the scene and even cause it to be humorous. Therefore, the rhythms guide the listener through the music and give the audience members useful clues of how the playwright wants the scenes to be perceived.

work together to create harmony. Instead, Mei called for a reinstatement of monophonic music (one melody) (Taruskin 240-241).

¹⁴ I am mostly referring to suspending the witches on stage so they appear to be flying, such as in Act 3 Scene 3 of *The Witch*, but the special effects could be much more dramatic, such as shipwrecks, natural and unnatural disasters, and gods descending to the earth (Kerman 84).

¹⁵ This is a feature of the theater that is a remnant from the Elizabethan era (Pattison 72).

The melodic structure of Baroque music augments the rhythmic structure and intensifies the intended atmosphere on stage. In addition to regular rhythms, there is only one melody playing at a specific time, so the music is not defined by the “floating rhythms...[that change] section by section” that we see in Renaissance music (Kerman 82). The melody line is often accompanied by simple harmonies, referred to as homophony¹⁶. Homophony is a useful tool in musical productions because people can connect to certain actions on stage to a clear melody line. Just like with the rhythm, the melody can affect the way that the audience experiences the play. For instance, the melody for a dance song would probably be in a major key because of its happy tonality. As a result, a major key would not be a good choice for a dirge in a funeral scene if the performers want to emphasize the sad scene on stage; instead, they might want to use a minor (sad) key. However, to create a certain mood for the music, composers need to utilize both melody and rhythm while adding harmony to the mix.

The ideas of harmony changed drastically in the Baroque era with the introduction of new compositional techniques. Harmony moved from being influenced by the cosmos to being influenced by the bass line. The bass line, performed by the lowest (bass) voices or instruments¹⁷, was commonly referred to as the basso continuo, and this technique is unique to the Baroque Period. The basso continuo¹⁸ plays continuously and “has the double effect of clarifying harmony and making the texture bind or jell” (Kerman 83). The continuo is another technique that guides the listener through the piece and provides functional harmony. With the

¹⁶ Homophonic does not mean that there is only one melody for the entire piece. However, it does indicate that only one melody will play at a time and is accompanied by some type of instrumentation. Much of the popular music (pop music) from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is monophonic.

¹⁷ The continuo could be performed by bass singers, cellos, bassoons, and keyboard instruments such as harpsichord or organ.

¹⁸ A couple of popular examples of musical pieces that rely on the basso continuo is Pachelbel’s “Canon in D” (1680), which is often performed at weddings, and “When I am laid in earth,” popularly known as “Dido’s Lament,” an aria from Henry Purcell’s opera *Dido and Aeneas* (1689), the first opera in the English language.

basso continuo, composers no longer relied on Church modes as Renaissance composers did; instead, Baroque composers “developed the modern major/minor system...Chords became standardized, and the sense of tonality—the feeling of centrality around a tonic or home pitch—grew much stronger” (Kerman 83). Additionally, composers “developed a new way of handling the chords so that their interrelation was felt to be more logical or coherent” (Kerman 83). Functional harmony also guides the listeners through the piece; as Kerman and Tomlinson suggest, “...the chords seem to be going where we expect them to—and we feel they are determining the sense or direction of the piece as a whole. Harmonies no longer seem to wander” (Kerman 83). Musical harmony in the theater can guide the audience through the play itself. Since music usually gives the audience more information about the scene on stage, the harmonies that lead to different sections of the play can let the audience know what will happen next. For example, if the harmonies start off in a major key and then transition to a minor key, this is a clue that something disastrous might happen on stage. Therefore, harmonies can advance the forward movement of the plot.

With functional harmony, the music’s and the play’s forward motion can be amplified by leading tones. A leading tone is most basically defined as a tone, or note, that leads to another that is typically a half-step, or semi-tone, higher than the leading tone. In many cases, the key determines how a leading tone will work in a specific piece. The ear instinctively knows where the leading tone is supposed to go, so composers can utilize the leading tone to invoke different emotions in the listener, specifically relief or unease. The leading tone naturally inserts tension in a piece because it lacks resolution. In most cases, the leading tone precedes the note it is leading to, making the listener feel relieved when the song reaches a resolution and breaks the tension. However, if the leading tone does not precede the “correct” note, the listener can feel unsettled

because there is a lack of resolution. Like the rhythms, basso continuo, and functional harmony, leading tones are another feature of Baroque music that guides the listener through the piece, and the tension in leading tones can emphasize the dramatic nature of the piece, especially if it is used on the stage. As we can see from the main features of Baroque music and the new harmonization techniques introduced during this time, composers want to guide the listeners through the piece which leads to an overall positive listening experience, translating well to the stage.

Even though there was a push against Renaissance musical theories, Renaissance thought still had a profound effect on Baroque music. We can see a direct correlation between Renaissance and Baroque dance music, a staple of Early Modern life in England. As a result, Renaissance music was still a common feature in many people's lives, and this direct correlation in dance music illustrates the relevancy of Renaissance musical ideas during this time of seeming rebellion against *ars perfecta* and polyphony. Renaissance thought did not just permeate in the common lives of English citizens, it also transferred in many of the practical theoretical texts, such as Ramos de Pareia's *Musica Practica* (1482). Bartolomeo Ramos de Pareia (1440-1522), a Spanish music theorist, composer, and mathematician, published this text to prove that one can "unite the chief medium of musical psychology, the humors, with the agents of heavenly music, the planets, through their common musical associations to the modes" (Tomlinson 78). Ramos achieves this goal by "attributing the Church modes [keys used in Church chants, popularly known as Gregorian chants] to the planets, and so connecting ethos to planet through practical music. Thus the Dorian mode, from D to D, relates to the Sun and has the effect of 'dispelling sleep', or the Lydian, from F to F, relates to Jupiter and 'always denotes joy'" (Voss 22). Ramos clearly lays out the connection of the three "types" of music at this time with the Church modes

familiar to composers and musicians: *musica humana*, which refers to the effects the music inspires in the listener, *musica instrumentalis*, which refers to the actual music itself, and *musica mundana*, which refers to the celestial connections with the planets and also the Muses.

Figure 2: Table from Gary Tomlinson's *Music in Renaissance Magic* Outlining *Musica Practica*

<i>Musica humana</i>			<i>Musica instrumentalis</i>		<i>Musica mundana</i>		
Color and element	Affect or ethos	Bodily humor	Modes	Notes (modal finals)	Planetary spheres		Muses
				coruph Γ (lowly note in <i>neumes</i>) proslambanomenos a	Earth δ		Thalia
	sad, doleful, sluggish	+ phlegm	Hypodorian		Moon D		Clio
	fawning, garrulous, flattering, lascivious without beauty	– yellow bile	Hypophrygian	hypate hypaton b	Mercury ζ		Calliope
	pious, tearful	– blood	Hypolydian	parhypate hypaton c	Venus V		Terpsichore
	sweet, peevish, morose	– black bile	Hypomixolydian				
crystalline water	rousing, suitable to all affects	– phlegm	Dorian	lichanos hypaton d	Sun \odot		Melpomene
fiery [fire]	severe, rouses anger	+ yellow bile	Phygian	hypate meson e	Mars M		Erato
bloody color [air]	delightful, joyful, modest	+ blood	Lydian	parhypate meson f	Jupiter J		Euterpe
yellow, semi-crystalline [earth]	pleasant, lascivious, inspires youthful behavior	\pm black bile	Mixolydian	lichanos meson g	Saturn S		Polyhymnia
	sweet, beautiful		Hypermixolydian	mese a	Firma-ment \ast		Urania

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Even though *Musica practica* was published in the late fifteenth century, Luanne Eris Fose finds that his treatise “remained at the center of heated debate well into the sixteenth century” (i). Fose further claims that “Although many of Ramos’s propositions were rejected by

¹⁹ This table is originally from Tomlinson's *Music in Renaissance Magic* on pp. 80-81.

his contemporaries, few other fifteenth-century theorists had such a monumental impact upon their musical community and the subsequent development of Western music theory” (2). Ramos did not introduce the idea that music can invoke different emotions, but his connections take the guess work out of composing. This allows composers to experiment with various keys to invoke specific emotions. Therefore, *Musica practica* can be useful for musicians, especially since he connects cosmic harmonies with concrete ideas rather than abstract ones allowing musicians to implement these ideas (Voss 24). We can see Ramos’ ideas reflected in Baroque music and in witchcraft plays because his ideas create a link between emotions that the characters experience and the keys the music is written in. Ramos’ connections bolster the relationship between musical and literary ideas which is integral for the stage.

Playwrights and musicians worked closely together and held a deep understanding of each other’s craft. Bruce Pattison notes that “the lutenists’ literary style is generally almost as good as that of prose writers...while the poets and playwrights of the period display a wide and accurate knowledge of musical terms and technique” (72). Therefore, the playwrights knew about the music theory and compositional ideas of the time and may have had input in the melodies and harmonies the composers utilized. Knowing that Ramos’ work is more accessible than previous music theoretical texts, playwrights may have used *Musica practica* to determine the musical key of the piece for certain actions on stage which can dictate the harmonies, rhythms, and melodies. This close relationship between the on-stage action and the music show that every harmony and melody are intentional. As a result, music is a necessary component of the work that is integral to the meaning that the playwright wants to portray to the audience. Playwrights and composers intended for the music to heighten the emotions of the characters which hopefully affects the audience as well and drives home the playwright’s intended message.

Therefore, music is a powerful tool on the stage because Renaissance thinkers and writers believed “that if the emotion were immediate enough it would lead speech into pure song” (Pattison 72). With witchcraft plays, the emotion that the playwright and composer want to heighten for the witch figure is lust. Because she can be moved to song with the strength of her sexual appetite, her lust might also frighten the audience since her sexual desire is so strong. However, even if the witch figure is moved to song, the music can be comedic, especially if the music does not match the atmosphere the audience would expect from a fearsome witch and her insatiable sexual desires. We see both of these possibilities in *The Witch*.

Musically-Induced Dancing: Music from Middleton’s *The Witch*

The Witch is a tragicomedy composed by Thomas Middleton (c. 1580-1627). There is much contention and speculation of the precise date Middleton wrote this play; however, one of the main plots echoes the Essex trial²⁰, which concluded around 1615. Therefore, many scholars believe that this play was written between 1610-1616 (Esche 19-21). This play, performed by the King’s Men of the Blackfriars Theatre²¹, was not particularly popular when first introduced to the public and was not turned into a manuscript until 1778 (Corbin 13). However, the lack of interest in this play may be more related to its subject matter—i.e., the scandalous Essex trial, and connected murders—and subsequent censorship, than its inability to entertain an audience (Corbin 14). We can assume that this play was at least somewhat entertaining because the music²² from this play was popular; these songs were included in the 1623 folio of Shakespeare’s

²⁰ The Earl of Essex was granted a divorce from the Countess of Essex on the ground that the marriage was never consummated because of impotence caused by witchcraft. The trial began in 1610, and the trial completed around 1615 with the execution of those included in the murder of Thomas Overbury (1581-1613). One of the conspirators was the former Countess of Essex, Frances Howard who had married the Earl of Somerset after the annulment of her marriage (Corbin 14). The trial, like the plot of the play, is complex and interconnected.

²¹ An English theatre group under royal patronage. Shakespeare was one of the principal playwrights for this group.

²² Two of the songs from this play “Come away, Hecate” and “The Second Witches’ Dance” survive. Another popular song, “Black spirits and white” is sadly lost.

Macbeth (Ewbank 1165). Scholars believe that Middleton was responsible for the musical additions and the Hecate scenes as well as “cutting one quarter or more of the original play [published in 1621]” (Ewbank 1165). Therefore, while *Macbeth* is still Shakespeare’s play, readers can see where Middleton added to the original text.

While scholars do know the additions Middleton contributed to *Macbeth*, there are many questions about the ideas and events that influenced Middleton as he was drafting *The Witch*. Some scholars believe that Middleton wrote *The Witch* at the King’s Men’s behest because they wanted to perform a witch play after Ben Jonson’s masque²³, *The Masque of Queens* (1609), and others believe that Middleton wrote this play at his own behest to comment on the social scandals during the time (Esche 20-21). And like the origins of the play, Middleton’s personal life is shrouded in mystery²⁴. From *The Witch* and the additions to *Macbeth*, we know that Middleton had an interest in witchcraft and the ambiguity of the witch figure on stage²⁵. Because there is no written record of Middleton’s belief in witchcraft, we cannot be sure if Middleton believed that witches were powerful, evil forces in his world that can cause him maleficium. However, scholarship does suggest that Middleton was familiar with Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Instead of following in Scot’s lead and creating a witch figure that is based in skepticism of her supernatural powers, Middleton seems to want his audience to believe in the witches’ magical abilities to induce unwanted action and emotions on stage and, as a result, in real life.

²³ A masque is a play typically performed in royal courts that emphasizes the beauty of harmony. In *Masque of Queens*, there are witches who play “infernal music” and disrupt that harmony.

²⁴ We do not know the exact date of his birth, but we do know that he was baptized on April 18, 1580 and was buried on July 4, 1627 (Esche 1, 5). He did not finish university and instead started composing plays as an apprentice in 1602 and became one of the main playwrights for the King’s Men around the mid-1610s (Esche 4).

²⁵ Middleton added the line about the witches having beards in Banquo’s remark (1.3.43-45).

In *The Witch*, Middleton explores love, revenge, scandal, political power, and witchcraft in a play with a plot that seems informed by the scandals and gossip surrounding the Essex trial. Marion O'Connor proposes that *The Witch* also portrays the popular depiction of Frances Howard as "a maid, a wife, a widow, a whore, and [sometimes] a witch" (1124) in the various plot lines: The Duchess' desire and plan for revenge against her husband, the Duke, for tricking her into drinking wine out of her father's skull; Sebastian's objective to reunite with and marry Isabella, his betrothed, who married Antonio believing that Sebastian is dead²⁶; and Antonio's little sister Francesca becoming pregnant out of wedlock. *The Witch* follows the conventional comedy format of the time with multiple interconnected plotlines while dealing with tragic events and elements. Because of this combination of techniques, Middleton treats many tragic elements with a dark humor²⁷, and this translates to his depiction of the witch figure, Hecate.

Hecate is a dynamic character who is the leader of her coven of witches, her son Firestone, and Malakin, her familiar spirit²⁸ in the form of a cat. Hecate is named after the Greek goddess of magic, but instead of drawing from classical references, Middleton relies on the popular stereotypes of witches, such as "old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles; poore, sullen, superstitious, and papists...leane and deformed...doting, scolds, mad, divelish" (Scot 4). Edward J. Esche suggests that relying on stereotypes ensures that the "witches' actions and behaviour in the play conform in most respects to what a recent historian has called 'the

²⁶ Like the Earl of Essex in the Essex trial, Antonio cannot have sex with Isabella but can have sex with his mistress.

²⁷ A great example of this is the Duke's speech as he passes the Duchess's father's skull around the party for everyone to drink from (1.1.107-125). The scene is morbid, but the audience cannot help but find humor in the Duke's behavior, especially based on the director's choice to portray it.

²⁸ Familiar spirits usually take the form of an animal, such as a cat, dog, frog, mouse, otter, etc., and they do the evil bidding of the witch. In the witch trials, the supposed witches would be stripped naked and checked for "teats," most probably moles, that the spirit would feed from. Jeffrey Russell describes the witch's mark as "a protuberance on the skin thought to be a small teat used for suckling familiars, and which is not mentioned before 1480" (qtd. Garrett 50). The witch's mark is different from the Devil's mark which is "a small scar, birthmark, or other discoloration presumed to have been left upon the body by his [The Devil's] talon" (qtd. Garrett 50).

cumulative concept of witchcraft', a concept that was firmly established by the end of the sixteenth-century across Europe" (34). Unlike the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* who cause the actions of the play with their prophecy indicating that Macbeth will eventually become king (1.3.46-48), "[i]n no plot of *The Witch* do the activities of the witch and her coven of companions determine the outcome or even affect the actions of the human figures" (O'Connor 1126). The representation of Hecate and the other witches imply that these characters are meant to be comedic. Purkiss finds that "What Middleton mostly draws from Scot are *lists*—ingredients, familiars—and the list becomes...a principal way of signifying witches by metonymic logic" (218). O'Connor follows a similar perspective, declaring that "The witch, then, proves useless within the dramatic fiction, but she nevertheless serves to point up the contemporary significance of that fiction by bringing its several strands together around a single figure, Frances Howard" (1126). They see the witches as external and not necessarily awe inspiring or powerful. This hypothesis is supported by the stereotypical portrayal of Hecate and the other witches. However, this view ignores that the other characters go to Hecate for help, and they had heard of her power, indicating that people talked about the witch and her magic. Even so, Middleton does characterize the witches to turn them into comedic characters despite their magical abilities.

Hecate, and other witch figures, can be a comedic character, but Edward J. Esche believes that "Middleton is using his witches as credible potent forces of evil, and thus he is not writing in the sceptical English tradition of witchcraft. The witches control human actions and have complete success with their charms" (38). Even if the witches' spells do not influence the ending of the play like the Weird Sisters, Hecate and her coven do perform successful spells. This positions them as possible powerful forces in the play which is emphasized by Hecate's

confessions of her various crimes²⁹ As a result, Hecate and the other witches are influential because they cause lasting effects on the audience by entertaining the members. Therefore, Hecate and her coven are a force to be reckoned with even if their appearance and characteristics indicate otherwise. As they perform their spells, they can shock and horrify the audience because they are executing acts that are demonized and feared in Jacobean England.

The witch figure on the Early Modern stage is ambiguous, both horrible and hilarious, and this ambiguous depiction of the witches fits into the tragicomedy. Comedians³⁰ might also give an exaggerated performance of the witches' spells to cause the audience to laugh and mock their characters as the on-stage witches perform scary acts, such as cooking a baby—"There, take this unbaptised brat³¹; Boil it well; preserve the fat" (1.2.18-19). The actors could insert comedic elements in this scene, potentially causing a conflicted reaction in the audience: laughter at a horrific sight. This scene gives the comedians a great opportunity to overplay their roles to gain this response from the audience. Since the witches' characterizations are based on stereotypes, the actor portraying Hecate could throw the baby doll to the other actor on stage and even put on a disgusted face as he is throwing the baby doll around. This facial expression would probably remind audience members of the belief that witches scorn childbirth and motherhood, and while this might not frighten the audience, it could remind them of real-life witches being portrayed on stage. Since witches are widely feared in this society, thinking of the real effects of witches and their maleficium could have unnerved the audience. Even with this realization, the audience would probably still laugh if the comedic timing of the throw was correct, and this

²⁹ Hecate says that she "spoiled" the Mayor or Whelpley's son as an incubus and plans to do it again (1.2.33) and kills the local farmer's livestock (1.2.45-65). These are some examples of the events that many people believed witches caused.

³⁰ During this time, only men were allowed to perform on stage. Many times, comedians played the witch figure.

³¹ The unbaptized baby would be a prop baby doll, so the audience would know that no children were harmed in the production of the play. Just as with the Duke's speech, the level of comedy depends on the director as well because there are little stage directions dictating how the actor should perform his role.

humor could be emphasized if the other actor fumbles while catching the baby doll. As a result, Hecate is a useful character for a tragicomedy because her character could insert dark humor into the play. However, Middleton follows common witchcraft conventions and uses Hecate's character for her insatiable desire.

Sexual Desire, Witchcraft, and Music

While Hecate's spells helping the characters scheme and gain revenge would have terrified and entertained a Jacobean audience³², the most pressing fear for the men, especially upper-class men, of the audience would be the fear of a lustful spell that Hecate uses to fulfill her sexual desires³³. Middleton relies on the oversexualization of the witches from the first time the audience meets Hecate. She declares,

When hundred leagues in air, we feast and sing,

Dance, kiss and coll, use everything.

What young man can we wish to pleasure us

But we enjoy him in an incubus? (1.2.28-31).

Hecate's lust is surprising because she is an old woman who is past childbearing, but her appetite seems endless. Hecate and her coven perfectly fall into the "category of female characters who are most often elderly and/or lustful and who range from mysteriously empowered to comical but

³² The prices of the playhouse determined the social classes in the audience. The Globe Theatre's admission cost "a basic penny" but other playhouses' admissions cost "one-twelfth of the London artisan's weekly wage, was by amphitheatre standards truly a lord's price" (Gurr 215). So, people of all classes enjoyed going to the theatre, but, as with all types of entertainment, the audience members had to have extra income, proving that the people who could regularly attend the theatre were upper-class. Because of this class makeup, the audience could have been disdainful of the lower-class problems presented on stage, especially regarding witchcraft. It is also important to note that the women being accused of witchcraft were typically lower-class.

³³ There are witchcraft cases from this time where women were convicted of witchcraft because upper-class men were attracted to lower-class women, which would have caused many scandals in their social circle. In one of the more famous witchcraft pamphlets, *The Wonderful Discovery of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip(pa) Flower*, where the victim family was of royal blood, Phillippa is accused of being "lewdly transported with the love of one Th. Simpson...[who] had no power to leave her and was as he supposed marvellously altered both in minde and body" (Gibson 286).

are rarely of genuine menace to the heroes of the plays” (Austern 200) because they do not alter the plot and seem to only be concerned with their own desires. Luckily, Hecate has the means to continuously feed her lust through her magic. Female sexual desires and Hecate’s straightforward commentary about her sexuality could have been repulsive and horrifying to the audience, especially the audience members who believed that they were at a higher risk of being targeted with maleficium³⁴. The audience even gets to see Hecate’s lust in action, and how it controls her when Almachildes, a minor character, goes to Hecate for help.

When Almachildes wanders into Hecate’s coven, she tells the audience, “‘Tis Almachildes—fresh blood stirs in me—/ The man that I have lusted to enjoy./ I have had him thrice in incubus already (1.2.200-203). Hecate’s statement fits into the popular depiction of witches, but instead of saying that she possessed him as a succubus, Hecate takes on the male role as an incubus. This switch of gender-based sexual roles can highlight the unnaturalness of Hecate’s robust appetite and her sexual inversion. Instead of being a demure woman who is pursued by a man, Hecate chases after the men that she wants. Middleton most likely includes these lines to further scare the audience, but remembering how witches were portrayed, this aside might have induced laughter from the audience even if they were horrified, providing another example of the play’s dark humor. Almachildes’ meeting with Hecate may have caused the most worry within the audience, especially since her weapon of choice was not a potion, but music, an art that many people in the audience enjoyed.

At first, Almachildes avoids all of Hecate’s invitations to supper until she offers him “The best meat i’t’h’ whole province” (1.2.233). Almachildes replies that he will stay if she

³⁴ These members could be from any class, but since upper-class people tend to have more power and influence in their societies, it makes sense that these people would believe that they are likely targets for witches.

proves it to him, and in response “*She conjures, and enter a cat*³⁵, *playing on a fiddle, and spirits with meat*” (1.2.235 stage directions). The music, along with the food, convinces Almachildes to stay with Hecate, so we can argue that music is an effective spell, especially considering that Almachildes is disgusted by the events the next day. He exclaims, “What a mad toy took me to sup with witches!/ Fie of all drunken humours!” (2.2.1-2). Therefore, Almachildes was enchanted to spend the night with Hecate, and being forced to do anything against one’s choice can be terrifying. In witchcraft plays, the witches have terrifying roles, but “composers and playwrights consistently marked witches as disorderly by rendering them incapable of producing harmony, portraying them as rustic bumpkins bereft of graceful movement or music” (Winkler 24). We do not know why this was the popular depiction, but this idea is most likely residual from the 1400s and 1500s³⁶. It makes sense that people do not want to consider music as a tool for evil because it is a vital part of most societies. Hecate wants to put on a good show for Almachildes, so it is difficult to imagine that she conjures a cat playing discordant music. Music can entrance the listener; however, if there is a wrong note that breaks the harmony, the musician’s spell is broken, and the listener’s experience is interrupted. So, Hecate needs to conjure harmonious music to ensure the success of her spell to trap Almachildes. The audience is listening to this same music, making the threat of the spell much more immediate than just reading about it in treatises and witchcraft pamphlets. Not only does the music make the threat feel more immediate, but it also disguises the threat, especially if the music is harmonious and nice to listen to. Based on Almachildes’ response to his night with the witches, the music was

³⁵ The cat would be a man dressed as a cat playing the fiddle. This could invoke contrasting feelings in the audience. Seeing a man dressed as a cat could be humorous, but it could also be unnerving because it could cause the scene to feel like a strange dream. There are instances of witches being accused of altering people’s dreams

³⁶ Henry Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535), a German philosopher and occultist, writes about the incapability of witches and harmonious music in *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (*The Three Books on Philosophy*) (1531): “...there is nothing more efficacious to drive away evil spirits then Music Harmony (for they being fallen from the Celestial Harmony, cannot endure any consent, as being an enemy to them, but fly from it)” (151).

probably not disharmonious³⁷, and this harmonious music adds another dimension to the witch character.

Witches depend on music for their spells, so “they become associated almost immediately with the spectacular music of paranormal forces, but for them this powerful, soul-affecting and theatrically effective music is a key ingredient in the ritual magic they practise together” (Austern 201). We do not have access to this music, but we can employ ideas from *Musica Practica* and the clues Almachildes provides to imagine this music. The audience knows that after his dinner with Hecate, Almachildes goes “to my lodging, I remember/ I was as hungry as a tired foot-post” (2.2.6-7), so either the food that Hecate created was just a vision, or he and Hecate spent the night together and satisfied her lust. Because witches are mortal beings, they need to eat. The audience knows that the coven does not receive any kindness or food from their neighbors because Hecate laments “They denied me often flour, barm and milk/ Goose-grease and tar, when I ne’er hurt their charmings” (1.2.53-54). So, the food that Hecate conjures is in fact real and is the food that she and the rest of her coven survive on. She has the power to conjure real food since she can conjure powerful spells. As a result, Almachildes’ exhaustion was likely caused by the night’s activities with Hecate, so the music that the cat plays would need to be something that causes Almachildes to feel more amorous. In *Musica practica*, Ramos notes that the mixolydian mode can cause lasciviousness (Figure 2), something that Hecate would want to increase for her night of passion. So, we can assume that Hecate uses the

³⁷ While there is not much evidence that the music was harmonious, this music was most likely harmonious because these plays are productions to show the talents of the actors and musicians. Furthermore, atonal music with musical notation was not formally introduced until the twentieth century. As a result, during this time, when the actors and musicians had to perform disharmonious music, they probably played their instruments without musical instruction.

mixolydian mode for her lustful spell, and as we analyze the song “Come away, Hecate” from *The Witch*, we gain a clearer picture of the type of music that entraps Almachildes³⁸.

“Come away, Hecate”: Joyful Rhythms and Sweet Melodies

“Come away, Hecate,”³⁹ composed by Robert Johnson (1583-1633), is a dance song⁴⁰, as well as a theatrical song. Johnson was a lutenist⁴¹ and composer, and he composed almost exclusively for the King’s Men from around 1607-1617 (“Robert Johnson” 110). We do not know exactly how many pieces Johnson wrote for the company, but we can infer that he wrote the music for *The Witch* because of stylistic similarities between these pieces and those definitively linked to Johnson, especially because of the “same technique and emphasis on verbal rhythm” (“Robert Johnson” 116). Johnson’s musical settings fit well for the stage due to “his approach to the lyric: it is always fresh and forthright, but the melody becomes more and more clearly defined...[and] he achieves an expressive interpretation of words by unusual accentuation” (“Robert Johnson” 125). As we see on the Early Modern stage, “the songs are integral parts of the texts of the plays and demand individual settings” (“Robert Johnson” 125). Since Johnson worked with a variety of playwrights at the Blackfriars, he was aware of the playwrighting process and knew the messages and themes that Middleton wanted to portray to the audience. So, we can assume that even though Johnson was in charge of the music and wrote the final version, there was collaboration between the two throughout the process, just as it was

³⁸ This is speculation. However, because music in plays and operas are typically in the same key throughout, analyzing the other songs supports this speculation.

³⁹ I was able to find this sheet music in John Stafford Smith’s *Musica Antiqua*. At times, the lyrics on the sheet music does not match with the lyrics in the play. For most of these examples, I altered the lyrics to fit with the text.

⁴⁰ Witches often dance on stage, and this has shaped the popular view of the witch figure because many people imagine witches dancing around a fire for their spells or something of that manner. This is popularly depicted in *Macbeth*.

⁴¹ The lute is a stringed instrument that is plucked. It typically produces a crisper sound than the modern guitar.

for the other plays written during this time. The piece is in F major, typically an upbeat key, which is a variation of the mixolydian scale because it has a Bb in its scale.

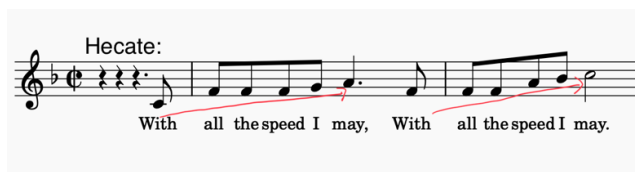
Figure 3: F Major and C Mixolydian Scale



As I previously noted, the mixolydian mode was believed to promote pleasantness, lasciviousness, and youthful behavior (Figure 2). Therefore, using the mixolydian mode enhances the intended effects of a dance song in a theatrical setting.

The song follows functional harmony, challenging the idea that witches cannot make harmonious music, and Johnson cleverly utilizes rhythm and melody to further emphasize the witches' goals. For instance, Johnson uses eighth notes (usually notated as ♪ or ♪♪) throughout the piece. Eighth notes are faster than the standard unit⁴², the quarter note which equals two eighth notes (♩ = ♪♪), so this adds forward momentum and motion to the piece, pushing the music along. Johnson employs an eighth note rhythm when Hecate sings, "With all the speed I may/ With all the speed I may" (3.3.42-43).

Figure 4: Music for The Witch 3.3.42-43



⁴² I am referring to the quarter note as a standard unit because it is one of the first notes music students learn, and most pieces are in common time where the quarter note equals one beat. So, quarter notes are a common component of music.

In this setting, the word “may” lasts the longest; this could be because it is the last word of the phrase/line, but Johnson is actually employing an early form of text painting⁴³ here. The section of the line dealing with speed is set to eighth notes, so the rhythm feels faster. Since “may” is the landing spot, the eighth notes might feel faster because the listener can feel that the eighth notes are leading somewhere, and the melody adds to this feeling. The melody rises as it leads to the word “may” in each phrase, which again accentuates the landing point.

Another great example of rhythm and melody working together is when Hecate starts flying. She sings, “Now I go, now I fly” (3.3.65) as she is actually rising in the air.

Figure 5: Music for *The Witch* 3.3.65



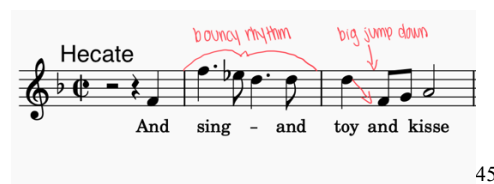
From the music, the listener can tell when Hecate is supposed to start flying because of where the melody leads the ear. These two measures are a pentascale (a five-note scale), which leads the ear to the word “fly.” There are two instances where the pitch ascends: the first instance, the pitch ascends gradually, and in the second, the pitch ascends quickly. Johnson’s use of the scale plus the faster rhythm on the word “I” creates tension and anticipation for the audience, especially because the audience can tell that the music is moving upwards to a landing point. As a result, when Hecate starts flying, the ear feels relieved because the correct note in the sequence sounded so the audience feels relief when seeing this sight. Of course, seeing a witch fly on stage

⁴³ Text painting is a technique where composers write music to invoke a specific image. This technique was more formally introduced during the Romantic Era (1820-1900) in Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830) particularly in the fifth movement “Dream of a Witches’ Sabbath.” However, we do see early versions of text painting in the Baroque period, such as in Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons* (1723) when the violins play notes that sound like chirping birds in “Spring.”

might be frightening for a Jacobean audience, reminding them of her supernatural qualities, but the audience should be prepared for this sight because the music leads the ear upwards in pitch.

Even though melody and rhythm can work together to portray the composer's intentions, these elements can be effective separately. In most cases, eighth notes cause a piece to feel lyrical and flowy, which is not necessarily the best rhythm for a dance song that fits with the imagined image of witches. For a dance song, you want the beat to be peppy, and one great way to make a song bouncier is to use dotted rhythms, which Johnson utilizes repeatedly. There is one example that shows the importance of the dotted rhythm with certain lyrics. In this example (3.3.70), Hecate extends the word "sing" while using this bouncy rhythm⁴⁴. The dotted rhythm makes "sing" sound lighter; however, the witches are singing about toying with men during their maleficium in the form of incubuses, an idea that is introduced in Act 1 Scene 2 when we first meet the coven.

Figure 6: Music for *The Witch* 3.3.70



This bouncy rhythm highlights the fun the witches have performing their lustful deeds. Through this example, we can see Middleton's ambiguous depiction of witches reflected in the music because the witches' music is fun, but the lyrics can be frightening.

Usually when musicians analyze the notes of a melody, it is always connected to rhythm; however, melody can be a powerful tool without a rhythmic structure.

⁴⁴ This example also shows how rhythm and melody work together, so I did note the large jump in the example. Also, the higher notes for the words "sing and" emphasize the light, bouncy feeling of the rhythm. However, this feeling would still exist if the melody was lower in pitch.

⁴⁵ I noted the large melodic jump between the words "toy" and "and" because it is another interesting way to draw attention to certain words, especially after the dotted rhythm.

Figure 7: Music for *The Witch* 3.3.15



In the music setting for 3.3.15, we can see how a leading tone can heighten the emotions of the phrase. As we can see, this phrase circles the note C, and this note is repeated often. On the word “sip,” we have technically landed on the C, and Johnson could have had the next two notes be the same tone because the progression⁴⁶ is complete. Instead, Johnson extends the progression by going a half-step down, taking us to the leading tone to C, which is B (indicated in the image). This is really clever of Johnson because he extends the progression when the witches and spirits, who are already flying, sing about drinking blood. The leading tone accentuates the tension of the idea of this unnatural act, and this tension is resolved on the word “blood” which lands on the C. Just as the audience should not feel relief when Hecate starts flying because the aural and visual experiences align, the audience also should not feel relief when the flying spirits on stage sing about their evil deeds. Johnson invokes ambivalent emotions in the audience as they watch the coven in their flight; they should not experience ease at the sight of witchcraft, but the music intentionally relieves the tension.

This section of “Come away, Hecate” is a dance song, so Johnson highlights the frightening aspects of the witches’ magic in an upbeat piece. This adds to the complexity of the witch figure because the dance portion is intended to entertain an audience, and knowing that Johnson regularly composed for the theater, this section accomplishes this task. So, the witches

⁴⁶ Progression refers to the chord progression which is the progression that a piece will follow as an element of functional harmony. In the case of the last measure, the chord on “sip” does not feel complete, but Johnson could have had the bass note on this word also be a C which would strengthen the chord. As a result, he purposefully extends the progression on the words “sip of blood.”

are entertaining as they perform terrifying feats. However, the last section of this song, which is only four lyrical lines in the text, emphasizes the ominous power that the witches possess.

“Come away, Hecate”: Tolling Bells

After Hecate sings, “We fly by night ‘mongst troops of spirits” (3.3.74), the music suddenly changes into a new section⁴⁷. The mood of the piece goes from joyful and playful to ominous and foreboding, and since the key stays the same (F Major), this sudden change can be attributed to the time signature. Time signature⁴⁸ indicates how many beats are in a measure and what type of note equals one beat. The dance section is in $\frac{2}{2}$ (Φ), so there are two beats in each measure; the bell section is in $\frac{3}{2}$, so there are three beats per measure. So, “Come away, Hecate” goes from two beats to three beats per measure, and most pieces with three beats per measure have a very distinctive rhythm that is difficult to replicate in other meters. The time signature affects how the audience feels the rhythm of the piece which determines how they perceive the music. As a result, time signature is another useful tool to summon a specific emotion.

Johnson invokes an atmosphere of dread with this change of the overall rhythmic pattern, and the heavy downbeat⁴⁹ of $\frac{3}{2}$ is necessary to accomplish this.

⁴⁷ The director of the play may have inserted a transition here, such as with the action of the play, and the music notation also indicates a break with the double bar lines in between these two sections. However, the text itself does not indicate any break or transition.

⁴⁸ The terms time signature and meter are commonly used interchangeably. In a time signature, there are two numbers: the first refers to how many beats are in each measure, and the second refers to the type of note that gets one beat. In both $\frac{2}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{2}$, the half note (\downarrow) equals one beat.

⁴⁹ The downbeat refers to the first beat in the measure. In most pieces, the downbeat is emphasized, but in pieces with three beats per measure, the next two notes are much lighter. We see this rhythm most often in waltzes.

Figure 8: Music for *The Witch* 3.3.75-76



At this sudden change, the witches⁵⁰ sing “No ring of bells to our ears sounds” (3.3.75), and this line is why Johnson changes the meter: he is implementing text painting again. After establishing the meter in the first measure, Johnson uses a whole note⁵¹ and a half note rhythm mimicking the tolling of a bell. This creates an ominous atmosphere to the piece and treats the witches with gravity instead of comedy. Instead of seeing the witches’ ritual with a fun dance song, the audience now sees the scene with music that seems more appropriate, especially considering the demonization of witchcraft during this time.

Even with this repeated rhythm, Johnson still draws our attention to certain words, such as “bells,” “sounds,” “howls,” and “wolves,” highlighting the witches’ power while also inserting spookiness into the section. The witches tell the audience that when they are flying above the towns, they are completely removed from the world of other people, emphasizing their supernatural qualities⁵². Middleton reinforces the witches’ supernatural abilities and the danger they pose using the wolf symbolism. He connects the image of wolves howling in this bell section to the witches which is an interesting choice since wolves are associated with danger because they might eat and attack a person. This is an intriguing connection to make because

⁵⁰ The text indicates that this section is still sung by Hecate; however, knowing that this is the end of piece, it makes theatrical sense for all of the witches and spirits are all singing here, not just Hecate.

⁵¹ In this example, each whole note (○) is two beats, and each half note (◐) is one beat.

⁵² This idea is emphasized by Firestone’s bitter remark: “...you must be/ gambolling i’t’h’air, and leave me to walk here like a fool and mortal” (3.3.8-81).

witches are often portrayed in a cannibalistic way emphasizing the danger of them⁵³.

Interestingly, Hecate has been associated with the wolf from the time of the ancient Greeks.

Karen Elizabeth Bukowick notes that “Hecate is the goddess of the darkness of the moon and is associated with all that darkness implies. The ultimate witch, she is a symbol of evil, a harbinger of death and destruction” (28). The wolf represents Hecate “and her connection to evil and hell” (Bukowick 28). This fear and hatred of wolves was passed down to the Middle Ages when people “shot wolves and displayed them or buried them at the edges of their property” (Bukowick 26). As a result, the connection between Hecate and the wolf is classically informed but also heightens the sheer fear of Hecate by connecting her to another more immediate form of danger. Now that the witches are actually flying off to drink people’s blood and maybe become incubuses to feed their sexual hunger, it might feel more difficult to have fun with the song.

“Come away, Hecate” illustrates the ambiguous nature of the witch figure who can be evil while also being magnetic and even fun, and the dance portion of this song is enough to show this dichotomy. However, the bell section is incredibly important to infer more information about the music of witchcraft plays. Much of the music from these plays of the early 1600s have been lost, and “Come away, Hecate” has elements that one would see in a comedy (dance) and in a tragedy (bells tolling). Therefore, this song can give us a good foundation for our understanding and imagining of other witchcraft plays which is pertinent when discussing John Marston’s *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* or *The Wonder of Women*, a witchcraft play that relies heavily on music that has been lost.

⁵³ It is also interesting to note that wolves are dangerous creatures, but one would not expect to be eaten by a wolf in their home. So, a man-eating wolf would be more by chance than by intention. However, the witches are flying to people’s homes to drink people’s blood, so their danger is designed by intention.

Musically-Induced Fear: Imagining the Infernal Music from the Tragedy of Sophonisba

The Tragedy of Sophonisba or *The Wonder of Women* (1604-1606) was John Marston's last complete play before his retirement (Corbin 4). Marston (1576-1634) is best known as a satirist, who started composing mostly poems and transitioned to playwrighting in 1599. He became heavily invested in the theater, becoming a shareholder of the Blackfriars around 1603, but he ended up fleeing for his life after the royal crackdown on the theater, officially ending his connections with the Blackfriars in 1608 (*John Marston* 18-20, Gurr 53). After leaving the theatrical company, Marston became a priest in 1609 and remained in the career until the end of his life (*John Marston* 20). While this career change might seem extreme, Marston wrote satirical plays that explored morality and its place in society.

Marston employs his satirical wit to comment on the immorality that he sees in his society. Paul M. Zall characterizes Marston as a moralist who “was attempting a philosophic analysis of the implications of faculty psychology...[which] because postulating a tenuous balance between reason and the passions, could be a basis for suspicion and distrust of passion” (Zall 186). This focus is not surprising for a writer who cultivated his sharp wit in a “close-knit group of literate, cultured, lively men” (*John Marston* 17) and whose early satires featured “young men of the sort who lived at the Inns” (Finkelpearl 89). His early targets primed him to comment on moral values and satirizing his peers in his youth allowed Marston to remark on the societal values of his generation, specifically those relating to love, lust, and sexual deviation. These themes become central to Marston's oeuvre, especially his theatrical works. Marston wrote his plays specifically for the boys' theater, so this focus is intriguing because many of the actors—it is believed that the ages ranged from around ten to seventeen (Blake 475-476)—would

not have experienced these kinds of emotions⁵⁴. Through these comedies and the young actors' performances, Marston is able to mock people in the audience while also imparting his beliefs, one of the hallmarks of satire. Young actors playing roles that point "out a distinction that had to be taken into consideration by those who would administer moral dictates to his contemporaries" is Marston's way of satirizing adults and their actions which turns the performance from a "burlesque" to a successful drama (Zall 192-193). This idea can closely relate to Scot's belief that those in power use their influence to commit acts that go directly against the moral values they supposedly uphold (Scot 48). Marston's satires question the morality of the most powerful, an idea that Marston explores in *Sophonisba*, his only tragic play, using the themes of love and lust.

Sophonisba follows the title character's quest to stay true to her husband, Massinissa, a Carthaginian general, during the Punic War between Carthage and Rome. While some of the material is based on Appian's *Roman History* Book VIII (Corbin 5), many scholars find that Marston takes a more literary approach, especially with his moral emphasis⁵⁵. Sophonisba, a Carthaginian princess, is given to Syphax, a powerful ruler fighting to Rome, as a "spoil" of war, and he lusts after her for the entirety of the play. While reading this work, the reader might begin to wonder why it is considered to be a witchcraft play because of the intense focus on Sophonisba's passionate love and loyalty for her husband and how the war keeps them apart and endangers them simultaneously. This play is not a typical witchcraft play; in fact, the witch figure, Erictho, is only present for around 110 lines, and she is minor to the overall plot.

⁵⁴ Even though children were seen as adults during this time, we know from recent studies in psychology that children do not achieve full maturity until around 25 years of age.

⁵⁵ "No dramatic source for this play is known to me. Despite the astounding popularity of the Sophonisba theme...no extant play on the subject that I have seen bears more than a superficial...resemblance to Marston's remarkable tragedy" (Wood xi). However, we can see elements of Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603) in which Othello suspects his wife, Desdemona, of infidelity, and there is a clear emphasis on the marital bed as we see in *Sophonisba*.

However, she is important to the audience's understanding of the play because she mirrors Syphax's potent sexual desire. Syphax summons Erictho to force Sophonisba to have sexual relations with him through her maleficium. However, Erictho tricks Syphax, and instead of uniting with Sophonisba in the marriage bed, Syphax has sexual relations with Erictho who is in the bed disguised as the princess. Erictho desires for power and mischief, and she achieves that by using Syphax's lust against him to gain what she wants. Erictho escapes unharmed, but Sophonisba kills herself to maintain her faithfulness and chastity. As a result, lust and sexual deviance win, while chastity loses, possibly illustrating Marston's dire view of his society or showing the audience the tragedy of allowing sexual desires to take control. Even though Marston uses Erictho to represent sexual desire and power, she is a complex character who is based on a classical figure in ancient Roman literature.

Erictho was first introduced in Lucan's⁵⁶ epic poem *Pharsalia* (61-65 C.E.) as a powerful force who has the ability to perform maleficium on the world, not just individual people. She is a member of the Thessalian witches, but unlike Hecate and the Weird Sisters, Erictho performs her spells on her own. Also, unlike the Weird Sisters, the Thessalian witches are almost all powerful. The narrator describes them as supernatural beings who "can halt Nature's changes: day will stall, delayed/ by distended night; sky will disobey its law" (Lucan 6.461-462). Erictho is the most powerful of the coven, and the gods⁵⁷ fear her so much that they "grant her every evil the moment/ she invokes Them—They fear to hear her second prayer" (6.527-528). She can summon lightning bolts from the sky, and "Her footfall blights grain in a fertile wheatfield;

⁵⁶ Lucan (39-65) was a Roman poet who was favored by Emperor Nero. However, he fell out of favor with the emperor and was forbidden to write anymore poetry which caused Lucan to join a conspiracy to assassinate Nero. Once found out, Lucan was forced to commit suicide. *Pharsalia* was left unfinished ("Lucan").

⁵⁷ It is important to note that Lucan does not seem to give the gods much power like his classical contemporaries, and they are largely absent from the work (R. W. Johnson 3).

breezes/ that brought no death her breath turns to deadly poison” (6.519, 6.521-522). While the Weird Sisters are associated with thunder, specifically for their entrances, they cannot alter nature and are not feared by omnipotent beings. Therefore, Erictho is a dominating force who has the ability to perform her spells without the help of the coven.

Even with this incredible power, Erictho is primarily concerned with causing mayhem and is “a witch’s witch, a pure artist in the black arts” (Johnson 20). She has aspirations that go beyond the domestic (i.e., woman’s) sphere and is involved in the public sphere of war and victory. We see this in *Pharsalia* Book VI, the only book where Erictho is present⁵⁸, when she performs a spell to keep the fighting in Thessaly to ensure that she has access to enough dead bodies which she uses for her spells and sexual pleasure and that she and her coven can continue performing evil deeds⁵⁹. Erictho gains her power from the carnage of war, which places her in the public sphere, dominated by men. However, like most witch characters, Erictho is concerned with fulfilling her sexual desires, positioning her in the feminine sphere as well. As a result, Erictho is a witch that is not confined in certain spheres, particularly the woman’s sphere, as we see in witches of the Early Modern era. Instead, she is a single entity of evil with enormous power that makes her character difficult to mock as we see with other witch figures in literature.

Erictho’s magic is not the only thing that terrifies the reader; she looks terrifying as well. Lucan narrates, “Her face/ is foul, wasted to evil leanness; unseen by serene/ skies, her terrible features are stricken with Stygian pallor,/ plastered with matted hair” (6.515-518). Lucan focuses more on her actions, detailing how she uses soldiers’ corpses for her spells and divination. He

⁵⁸ This mirrors Erictho in *Sophonisba* who is only present in the work for a short amount of time (Act 4 and the beginning of Act 5).

⁵⁹ “She was trying out words unknown to wizards or Gods/ of wizardly, fashioning a spell with bizarre intent:/ for she was afraid that Mars might stray to some district/ far from Emathia, thus depriving her land of much gore” (6.577-580).

writes, “But when remains are laid to rest in stone.../...she greedily savages all/ their parts— working her fingers deep into sockets, gleefully/ digging out ice-cold eyeballs, gnawing the long yellowed nails/ from a withered hand” (6.538-543). The narrator creates a strong image of Erictho’s appalling appearance that depends not only on her physical appearance but also her actions. During the scenes in *Pharsalia* with Erictho, the reader can see where “Lucan’s imagination runs with riotous discipline through the conventions of witchcraft and finally surpasses them. His Erictho is now absurd, now horrifying, now both horrifying and absurd simultaneously; but she is always as plausible as she is richly comical” (Johnson 22). This description of Lucan’s Erictho closely resembles the conflicting portrayals of witches in the Early Modern witchcraft plays. On-stage witches were concurrently portrayed as powerful figures that were usually somehow laughable in some way⁶⁰. We can see this interconnectedness of appearance and deeds in the discourse on Early Modern witches as well, especially with depictions of the Witches’ Sabbath. Supposed witches, who are ugly in appearance, perform evil acts that can cause many people to question the witches’ humanity. As a result, Lucan’s physical description of Erictho fits well into the Jacobean understanding of witches and witchcraft. Marston uses this source material for his version of Erictho and takes her from her classical roots and transports her into the Jacobean era, demoting her power.

Instead of being a prophetess, as she is in *Pharsalia*, Erictho is depicted as a lustful witch, following popular ideas of witches at the time. While Early Modern witchcraft was associated mostly with sexual desires, “Erictho’s necrophilic practices also place her within contemporary witch belief, since the Act of 1604 specifically cites such activity as incurring the death penalty...[indicting] witches who ‘take up any dead man, woman, or child out of his, her,

⁶⁰ We see this idea in the in *The Witch* with Hecate as a powerful witch that is also portrayed as a bumbling old woman who almost misses her flight in Act 3 Scene 3.

or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth...used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment” (Corbin and Sedge 7). Erictho is a useful witch figure to adapt for the Early Modern stage because her necrophilia can be easily associated with her lust. Even though Marston solely presents Erictho as a lustful witch who is mainly concerned with satisfying her desires, she still maintains her knowledge of what is possible within the world’s balance. In *Pharsalia*, Erictho informs Sextus, a soldier who goes to her to receive a prophecy for the future, “If you were fussing with fates less grand, it would be/ simple enough, young man, to force even unwilling Gods/ to act as you wish” (6.605-607). Erictho maintains her knowledge and wisdom in *Sophonisba* and mocks Syphax, declaring, “Why, fool of kings, could they weak soul imagine/ That ‘tis within the grasp of heaven or hell/ To enforce love?” (5.1.4-6), but this wisdom is undercut by her insatiable sexual desire. Like Hecate and her fellow witches, Erictho uses music to complete her spells and induce the sexual passion in others that she craves. However, Marston does not limit his use of music just to the witch figure; it is an element that is present throughout the plot.

Music is an important, and sometimes neglected, aspect of Marston’s plays. Ingram believes that Marston includes music in his plays to allow the boy actors the “scope to display their musical talents” (“Use of Music” 154). In fact, the “background of...the post-1599 boy companies was...more academic than that of the professional adult players” (Gurr 96). The young actors and musicians practiced often, so playwrights would want to create works that showcase the boys’ hard work and dedication. However, this is probably not the only reason why Marston includes music. Music was an essential part of the lives of all people in Early Modern England. Vic Gammon states “One thing of which we can be certain is that singing was ubiquitous in pre-industrial society. If it is appropriate to speak in such terms, it was the only

significant form of society” (10). Since music was a vital aspect of Early Modern societies, we can assume that most people had some ideas of music and its effects because they sang and performed different songs for different tasks, such as working, dancing, and mourning. The degree of knowledge depended on education, so while people would understand the difference amongst these types of music, they may not have the technical language or Renaissance theories to explain it. However, playwrights and composers would have the knowledge of certain theories to apply them in theatrical works to highlight specific elements of the plot.

Marston utilizes music and the common ideas around it to intensify the important themes of the plot, creating a deeper meaning to his plays. Because music is commonplace in Early Modern society, there are many ideas about music and its effects from Renaissance thought. For instance, “One of the most commonly held beliefs concerning the effects of music upon man was its ability to both ease sorrow and to cure madness,” and we see this element in Marston’s play *Jack Drum’s Entertainment* (c. 1599-1600) (“Influence II” 293-294). In the play, Pasquil believes that he has lost the love of his life forever and has gone crazy, prompting the other characters to discuss the healing power of music. In this exchange, one of the characters, Brabant Junior announces, “Let Musicke sound, for I have often heard/ It hath such sweet agreement with our soules/ That it corrects vaine humours, and recalls/ His stragling fancies to faire union (III 235, qtd. in “Influence II” 294). Then, music plays in the background, and Pasquil looks toward the woman he loves, signaling the magical healing of his madness through music⁶¹. While this example is not one of Marston’s heavier subjects, it does show how music can amplify themes. Through Pasquil’s episode, Marston shows the dangers of allowing an emotion to overcome

⁶¹ While we do not have this music, we can use the ideas of *Musica Practica* to posit the musical key. Because Pasquil’s madness is cured with this music, the music might have been in the Dorian mode which is known for being “rousing” (Table). Pasquil was roused from his insanity while listening to this music.

someone because it can cause temporary insanity. He ensures that the music is integrated into the thematic material while utilizing it in ways that “are in agreement with Renaissance ideas about music, ideas which have too often been ignored with Marston’s works” (“Influence I” 123). The music in Marston’s plays not only adds to the themes, but also guides the audience, and the actors, through the production.

Sophonisba is somewhat an outlier from Marston’s other plays because the “musical directions...are unusually full” (“Use of Music” 154). The number of musical cues in the work have proven problematic for many scholars. This work contains more musical cues than its contemporaries, and this can cause the play to feel more like a farce than a serious tragedy. However, the music supports the seriousness of what is presented on stage in the same way that movie soundtracks make the watching experience more intense when the music matches the action. Harvey Wood believes that Marston desperately wanted to establish himself as a tragedian, but “his style in *Sophonisba* is almost grotesquely strained and inflated in its attempt to match the dignity of the subject and the importance of the occasion” (xii). As we see in *Jack Drum’s Entertainment*, Marston sees music as a way to elevate his thematic material. Since this is Marston’s only tragedy, he may want to emphasize these themes even more to underline the gravity of the action on stage, calling for more musical cues than his satirical plays. In fact, Marston includes music in *Sophonisba* utilizing a different technique with music that matches not only the themes but also the action.

Marston includes music from the very beginning of the play. In the prologue, the “Cornets sound a march” as the royal parties enter the stage, emphasizing the influence of royalty, another prevalent theme throughout the play. This musical cue is repeated with the entrance of various royal characters in the play. There are musical cues for the marriage scene of

Sophonisba and Massinissa (“*Enter four boys...dancing to the cornets a fantastic measure*” [1.2.36 stage directions]), and there are different cues for the war music (“*Cornets sound a charge*” [2.2.1 stage directions]). These cues, like the royal march, represent different themes, love and war respectively, and are repeated when these themes reoccur. Marston specifies different music for certain actions on stage, so the audience can associate a specific type of music with a specific type of action. These connections ensure that the audience knows what is supposed to be happening on stage while furthering the significance of various themes, such as betrayal, war, power, and lust. Marston constructs a stirring production with the plot, highlighted by the music. However, the most dramatic, and spectacular, scene of *Sophonisba* is Act 4 when Syphax summons Erictho and she enters the stage.

Imagining Infernal Music

Based on the characterization of Erictho, we can see why Marston would want to include music, specifically “infernal music,” during her entrance. This music may be described as infernal for differing reasons. It could be a description of Erictho herself because in *Pharsalia*, the Roman soldier Sextus “believes that Thessalian witches have a direct line to Hell, and...he is not mistaken in this belief” (Johnson 21). It could also be a description of where the music comes from because the orchestra is below the stage, hence of hell. With any of these explanations, the music would need to reflect Erictho’s horridness and increase the drama of her entrance and subsequent maleficium. Wood notes that “many critics have dismissed [the Erictho scene] as revolting” (xii), but this scene is striking and remarkable because the music is described as “infernal.” However, the impact of the infernal music would not be the same without Syphax’s description of Erictho as the audience waits for her to ascend from her underground home. Syphax is apprehensive of calling “Dreadful Erictho...whose dismal brow/ Contemns all roofs or

civil coverture” (4.1.98-99). However, he feels that he must call on her to help him because “A wasting flame feeds on my amorous blood/ Which we must cool or die” (4.1.90-91), highlighting his strong sexual desires. As a result, before Erictho even enters the stage, the audience is cautious of the sight they will see. This trepidation can easily turn to terror as Syphax describes her appearance.

Syphax’s description closely resembles Lucan’s depiction of Erictho, but the image is amplified by the infernal music playing in the background. Right before Syphax starts his description of Erictho, “*Infernal music plays softly whilst Erictho enters and when she speaks ceaseth*” (4.1.101 stage directions). Marston wants the audience to connect this infernal music with Erictho and her maleficium, so this is not the only place where the audience hears this infernal music. The infernal music plays again while Erictho is performing her spell for Syphax, so Syphax does not just narrate Erictho’s entrance: he also narrates her maleficium. As a result, the audience relates this music with the terrifying nature of Erictho, not only for sight, but for action. When Erictho begins her spell, Syphax calls, “Hark, hark! Now rise infernal tones,/ The deep-fetched groans/ Of laboring spirits that attend/ Erictho” (4.1.191-194). This narration adds to the terror portrayed on stage because the audience does not see the spell performed as they do in *Macbeth* or *The Witch*. Instead, the audience has to rely on Syphax, the villain of the play, to tell them what is happening. The precise musical cues illustrate the deep thought behind each dramatic decision, so readers can tell that this scene took much energy to produce and execute. Because of this energy, this scene can invoke the most shock of the entire play. As a result, the infernal music is important to understanding this short scene with Erictho and the other themes that Marston wants to emphasize throughout the course of the play because the music represents the witch, her magical power, and her deceit.

Because the infernal music is lost and is one of the most interesting aspects of the play, I am recreating it ⁶² based on the musical directions Marston provides while drawing on other musical and theatrical sources. Before I describe my compositional method, I first want to postulate the original composer of this infernal music. One of the possible composers for *Sophonisba* is Nathaniel Giles (1558-1634) who was an English organist and composer (“Giles”). In 1596, he earned the position of Gentleman and Master of the Children where he was in charge of the boys’ choir, and he worked closely with Blackfriar playwrights, such as Ben Jonson from 1600 to 1602 (“Giles”). Giles⁶³ has experience working with boy musicians, and his working relationship with Jonson, a friend of Marston, makes Giles a good candidate to write the music for *Sophonisba* because he worked with child musicians often. Giles stopped working with the Blackfriars in 1602. He returned in 1604 but was quickly let go in 1606. Giles’s second time with the children’s theatre (1604-1606) is the time when Marston composed *Sophonisba*, again pointing to Giles as the composer. Most scholarship on Giles focuses on his madrigals and anthems, which is not helpful for reimagining the infernal music, but earlier works can provide us with a workable foundation.

Sophonisba is a great example of pre-opera in England, and Erictho’s entrance relies on dramatic and elaborate staging, pointing to an experimental approach to the stage. Even though this work may have been experimental, Giles still could have drawn musical ideas and compositional methods from previous composers, such as the English composer William Byrd (1543-1623). Byrd became the church organist for the Chapel Royal in London in 1572

⁶² I am focusing my analysis on 4.1.102-125 when Erictho is first introduced, but this music can also work for the other places later in the scene where infernal music plays again.

⁶³ He is a somewhat controversial character. He was accused by Henry Clifton of abducting his son “while on his way to school and forced to ‘exercyse the base trade of a mercynary enterlude player, to his utter losse of tyme, ruyne, and disparagement’” (Gurr 52).

(“Byrd”), so his music was performed at church services for the royals, just as the plays at the Blackfriars were performed for the royals. He was a prolific composer who wrote various types of music, such as church settings, fantasias, and dances (Brown 332). While Byrd’s music is technically polyphonic, he does use a strong melody (cantus firmus), so his compositions are “basically homophonic” while creating an “intricate texture in [the] music” (Brown 332). Because of this homophony, Byrd could be a good model for Early Baroque musicians seeking to move away from complex polyphony.

The infernal music would likely be in a minor key to remind the audience of the seriousness and gravity of Erictho’s maleficium. Byrd’s uses minor keys in his compositions that have lyrics that deal serious subjects, such as sin⁶⁴. However, before embarking on an analysis based on a harmonic structure for the infernal music, it is important to address other sources that imply that this infernal music is disharmonious, or atonal⁶⁵, because the witches were portrayed as women who could not create music. In *The Masque of Queens*, Jonson describes the “hollow and infernal music” as the result of “spindles, timbrels, rattles, or other venefical instruments making a confused noise with strange gestures” (321). Katrine Wong believes that “Their venefic instruments could be virtually any malignant-looking items that clang with each other” (116). The witches in *Masque* do not use instruments that can produce tones that emulate those from instruments⁶⁶, so there would be no chord progressions or melody. Instead, the music would be without the typical Baroque musical elements, such as the basso continuo or common chord progressions, that would guide the listener through the song. Atonal music would be a huge

⁶⁴ For example, his piece entitled “Lord in thy rage rebuke me not” is in the key d minor.

⁶⁵ Tonal refers to music that is harmonious, so it has a tonal center that determines the harmonic sequences. In contrast, atonal music has no tonal center and does not follow logical harmonic sequences.

⁶⁶ It is interesting that many of these objects are household items that were stereotypically used by women. This can highlight the negative view of women and the work they did at home during this time.

challenge for young musicians because there is no progression to guide their ears through the piece, and this introduces an element of the play that could go wrong very easily. This could mock the boys' talents instead of showcasing them. Even though the boy actors and musicians were trained, it difficult to believe that a composer would write music that is incredibly difficult because of their young ages. To properly showcase the young musicians' abilities, the music should still sound impressive without being harmonically difficult. So, a composer who works with young musicians often, such as Giles, would opt to use a technical rhythmic structure while still following a logical harmonic sequence.

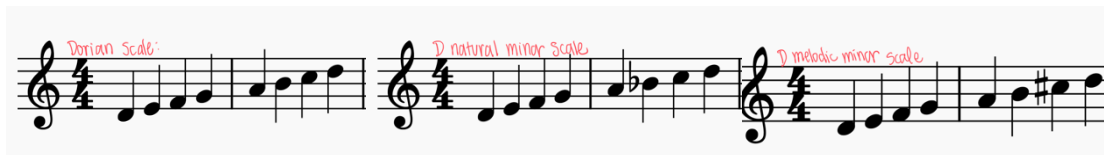
Even with the popular depiction of witches as women without any musical abilities, the theatrical directions in *Sophonisba* indicate that the infernal music is harmonic. During Erictho's spell, the infernal music transitions to music in which "*A treble viol, and a base lute, play softly within the canopy*" (4.1.198 stage directions). Syphax notes this change and observes, "Hark, hark! Now a softer melody strikes mute/ Disquiet Nature. O thou power of sound,/ How thou dost melt me!" (4.1.199-200). This music induces Syphax to "Prepare my appetite for love's strict gripes" (4.1.205). Syphax's passion is starkly different from the terror that he experienced while listening to the infernal music. While there is probably a rhythmic change between the infernal and the amorous music⁶⁷, this is not enough to cause a total change in the atmosphere. The infernal music accompanies a fearful witch, so it should be in a minor key to emphasize her evil power and capabilities. However, the amorous music would not cause a positive reaction from Syphax if it were in this same minor key; instead, this music would be most effective in a major key. Because the amorous music increases Syphax's lust, the music is most likely in the

⁶⁷ This rhythmic change would probably be influenced by the time signature, as we see in "Come away, Hecate."

mixolydian mode, specifically F major⁶⁸, since it is supposed to induce lasciviousness (Figure 2). As a result, the infernal music should be in a minor key that easily transitions to F Major so the boy musicians can easily follow the progression.

To make the transition from major to minor easier, a composer might use relative, or related keys. These keys have the same key signature, so the composer would have to change very little, mostly just the leading tone to the tonal center, making this the easiest transition. The relative minor of F Major is D minor, which, as my college music theory teacher says, is the saddest of all keys. Therefore, D minor is a likely key for the infernal music, and this hypothesis is strengthened by the ideas in *Musica Practica*. D minor is a version of the Dorian mode, and this mode is “suitable to all affects” (Figure 2).

Figure 9: D Dorian, D natural minor, and D melodic minor scales



So, if the infernal music is in D minor, it will adapt to the effect that the musicians and actors are trying to create. In the case of the infernal music, Marston and the composer want to produce terror, and the music would rouse the audience’s senses and heighten the maleficium presented on stage, increasing the horrifying atmosphere. Even though the music rouses the audience, the music is more effective with musical dynamics and rhythm.

Dynamics, volume, and rhythms are important elements of infernal music that was not usually emphasized in other compositions of this time. Byrd, and other Early Baroque

⁶⁸ “Come away, Hecate” is in F Major and is designed to cause the same effects as the amorous music in *Sophonisba*.

composers, use a straight-forward rhythmic structure with little musical dynamics as we see in the example.

Figure 10: Example of Byrd Using D minor



Musical instruments during this period were limited, and while these instruments could achieve some level of dynamic difference, such as loud versus soft, this difference would not be dramatic which negatively affects the overall impact. As a result, composers usually had more notes playing to achieve dramatic dynamic differences. However, the infernal music is typically chaotic which can be emphasized by repetitive and seemingly random, dynamic changes. In the *Masque of Queens*, while the witches are dancing to their infernal music, “on the sudden, was heard a sound of loud music, as if many instruments had given one blast” (Jonson 330). These loud sounds, stylized as sforzandos in modern notation, would be incredibly useful in the infernal music. The composer could have highlighted scary moments with these sudden notes and could heighten the tension with faster rhythms leading up to these notes. These elements together create a chaotic undertone in the music while also allowing the music to lend itself well to text painting, especially since Syphax’s narration is comprehensive with the music.

⁶⁹ This excerpt is from Sydney Grew’s essay. In this example, as we see in others, Byrd typically does not end on the minor tonic key and instead moves to the major key. This was a popular technique during the time.

In my version of the infernal music, the text painting manifests in a few different ways. For instance, the piece contains a descending bass line illustrating going down into hell in measures 1-6 and measures 24-28. I notated sforzandos on the words “thunder” (measure 13), “swells” (measure 22), “triumph” (measure 34), and “horror” (measure 47). I highlighted other words with faster rhythms, such as “winds” (measure 7), “quake” (measure 12), “dry gums” (measure 25), “black rites” (measure 26), “havoc” (measure 31), “wicked” (measure 32), “harm” (measure 49), and “trembling” (measure 50). As in “Come away, Hecate” the rhythm and melody work together to create their intended effect. In the infernal music, I utilized this technique on the words “bursts up” (measure 22) by including an ascending scale to indicate the upward motion of the action that Syphax describes. On the word “bites” (measure 40), I used a descending scale because the actions described—Erictho biting a dead man’s mouth and sticking her tongue down his throat—forms a terrifying picture. The descending scale somewhat prepares the audience since it indicates that something hell-like may occur. In the last line (measures 50-53), I included more rhythmic difference to anticipate Erictho’s arrival. With these varying rhythms, the music feels more chaotic, which is an appropriate atmosphere for Erictho’s arrival.

The most interesting element of the infernal music is the last measure. Marston indicates that the infernal music stops once Erictho speaks, and she actually cuts off Syphax to announce her arrival, implying that she is the source of the infernal music. Therefore, the infernal music are sounds that Erictho creates, and it functions as another aspect of Erictho’s voice, so it should act as a part of the harmonic sequence of the music. This initial instance of the infernal music is designed to lead up to Erictho which allows me to utilize the leading tone in an unusual way. I set Syphax’s last two words, “She is—,” to a chord that leads the ear to the tonic chord, which, in this case is D minor. This harmony makes the ear want to hear a D minor chord, and this is

emphasized by the leading tone, preceded by a descending scale. This descending scale intensifies the leading tone because it speeds towards the note. The tension caused by the harmonic structure is not resolved musically and is instead resolved by Erictho's "Here, Syphax, here" (4.1.125). This intensifies the connection between Erictho and the infernal music. However, since this tension is not resolved musically, it is still present while Syphax and Erictho plan her spell and does not resolve until the infernal music plays again, as long as the music begins with a D minor harmony.

With this analysis, here is my version of the infernal music⁷⁰:

⁷⁰ My score will be simplified and represented only on the piano. However, scholars such as Wong have postulated that the infernal music might have included organ, oboe, cornet, flute, viol, or recorder (117).

Figure 11: *My Imagining of the Infernal Music*

Infernal Music

The voice line only notates rhythm and does not indicate pitch since this line is spoken

Vo. (A) loath-some yel-low lean-ness spreads her face

Piano

3 Vo. (A) heav-y hell-like pale-ness loads her cheeks, Un-known to a clear heav-en. But if

Pno.

7 Vo. dark winds (Or) thick black clouds drive back the blind-ed stars. When her

Pno.

11 Vo. deep ma-gic makes for-ced heav-en quake (And) thun-der spite of

Pno. sfz

14

Vo. *Jove, E - ric - tho then (From) na-ked graves stalks out heaves her proud*

Pno.

17

Vo. *head With long un - kempt hair load - en and strives (to) snatch The*

Pno.

21

Vo. *night's quick sul-phur. Then she bursts up tombs, From half-rot cere-cloths then she*

Pno.

25

Vo. *scrapes dry gums For her black rites. But when she finds a corse New graved whose*

Pno.

29

Vo. en-trails yet not turn (To) slim-y filth with greed-y ha - voc then She

Pno.

32

Vo. makes fierce spoil and swells with wick - ed tri - umph To bu-ry her lean

Pno.

35

Vo. knuck-les in his eyes. Then doth she gnaw (the) pale and o'er-grown nails From his

Pno.

38

Vo. dry hand. But if she find some life Yet lurk-ing close, she bites his gel-id

Pno.

41

Vo. *3*
lips, And stick-ing her black tongue in his dry throat She

Pno.

44

Vo.
breathes dire mur-murs which en-force him bear Her bane-ful se-crets to the

Pno.

47

Vo. *3*
spir-its of hor-ror. To her first sound the gods yield an - y harm

Pno. *sfz*

50

Vo.
As tremb-ling once to hear a se-cond charm. She is—

Pno.

Conclusion:

Witches were portrayed in conflicting ways on the Jacobean stage, but there was one constant: music and its connection to witchcraft and lust. Because music and witchcraft were intertwined during the Early Modern era, musical elements are integrated into the witchcraft plays. The early 1600s were a time of innovation, not only in the theater, but also in music and literature which leads to new possibilities for the connection of these two disciplines. Even though most of the music from these plays are lost, we do know that the music was used to emphasize the sexual nature of the witch figure as we see in *The Witch* and *Sophonisba*. This music is designed not only to entertain the audience but to also heighten the emotions portrayed on stage, casting a spell on the audience. As a result, music is integral to our understanding of and experience with these witchcraft plays. While analyzing the dialogues, monologues, stage actions, etc. is important to analyze witchcraft plays, music is another discipline that we should add to our discussion of Early Modern theater. Including music in these discourses will hopefully introduce an interdisciplinary study that can further the connection between music and literature and the subsequent innovations that were first introduced in the Renaissance era.

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