

# *Music and Lyrics by E.O.*

by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan

**M**y research into Edward de Vere's theatrical career at the British Library, the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, and the Senate House Library at the University of London led me to inquire into the significance of music as one aspect of his development as a playwright and theater maker, and further to compare his knowledge of music with the abundance of songs and musical references in the works of Shakespeare. Exploring the musical skills and knowledge possessed by the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford strengthens the case for his authorship of the Shakespeare canon.

Music was essential to the evolution of drama from the ancient Greeks to the development of stagecraft and storytelling from Sanskrit, Japanese, Chinese, and African cultures. I propose that Edward de Vere was not only the great innovator who changed Elizabeth theater, but also the first writer to integrate songs into his works so seamlessly that they provided the foundation for today's modern stage musical. To learn more, I surveyed the work of several scholars. Washington State University Professor Michael Delahoyde's work on Edward de Vere's madrigals, author Alexander Waugh's research into the music inherent in his poems, and musician Sally Mosher's exploration of the Oxford's relationship with composer William Byrd provide a foundation for inquiry. Additional sources for evidence about the music and lyrics written by Oxford include works by Coppin State University Professor Roger Stritmatter, English Renaissance poetry expert Steven W. May, *"Shakespeare" Identified* author J. Thomas Looney, Blackburn College Professor Emeritus Ren Draya, and composer Katharine Eggar.

## A Poet Possessed of Touches of the Singer

For some of the earliest evidence, we can begin by looking at Oxford's lyric poetry, much of which has been set to music. Thanks to the extensive work of Steven May, J. Thomas Looney, and most recently, Roger Stritmatter, many of us are familiar with the significance of Oxford's early poems.<sup>1</sup> These authors have provided ample evidence that Oxford's extant poetry was in fact written with an expert understanding of music and song. Oxford's poetry was the key to my discovery of Oxford as Shakespeare. In "*Shakespeare Identified*," Looney listed the traits and skills that the author of the works of Shakespeare must have possessed and then sought a match among 16<sup>th</sup>-century English writers. He recognized the importance of Shakespeare's long poems and *The Sonnets* as essential to discovering Edward de Vere as the author. He looked at evidence for Oxford as a lyric poet, analyzed his early poems, examined the early poems and plays of "Shakespeare," discovered parallels in form and content, then looked at the sonnets, specifically themes and structure, and concluded that the evidence demonstrates that Oxford wrote Shakespeare.

Carrying on the work begun by Looney, editors Stritmatter and Thomas Jefferson School of Law professor Bryan H. Wildenthal open their introduction to *Poems of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, Volume 1*, by referencing Alexander's Grosart's 1872 description of Oxford as "a poet possessed of touches of the 'singer'" (Stritmatter 1). Included in the second volume, *Songs and Poems of Edward de Vere*, are songs from the plays of John Lyly, as well as poems published anonymously, under pseudonyms, or attributed to other writers. The editors note that the works included in the entire two-volume collection "exhibit a range of common strategies and motifs," "rhythmic and lyrical fluency," and a practice of "testing the limits of lyric and narrative form" (Stritmatter 5).

While some orthodox academics dismiss it as mere juvenilia, documents show that his contemporaries considered Oxford's poetry to be innovative. Stritmatter and Wildenthal call our attention to the idea that "above all, the experimentation tends toward the musical dramatic," setting the stage for the later, more sophisticated works of "Shakespeare" (5). The first eight poems

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published in *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* in 1576 are followed by the initials “E.O.” signifying Edward Oxenford, and some scholars surmise the poems may have been written prior to “1566, when Richard Edwards, the volume’s purported editor, passed away” (Stritmatter 13). The connection to Edwards is significant as it relates to Oxford’s development as a dramatist and theater maker, which we will examine in detail with Katharine Eggar’s work.<sup>2</sup> In his analysis of *The Paradise of Dainty Devices*, Stritmatter emphasizes the importance of one poem, “My Mind to Me A Kingdom Is.” He explains that it was, “for over a century and a half, wrongly attributed to Edward Dyer, and only identified as Oxford’s by Steven May in 1975,” noting that the popular verse “first achieved anonymous publication in William Byrd’s 1588 collection *Songs and Sonnets*” (Stritmatter 14–15). That this poem first appeared in a collection of Byrd’s works highlights the close relationship between the poet and the renowned composer. Evidence of this relationship forms the basis of Sally Mosher’s analysis detailed below.

Oxford was not just a published poet but also a generous patron of an extended circle of playwrights and poets in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and author Alexander Waugh, in documenting this crucial period in Oxford’s career, has rightly called him “Phoebus Apollo” based on several contemporary references to the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl as such.<sup>3</sup> Apollo was the god of music, dance and poetry, so it is not surprising that Oxford supported composers as well as writers during his life. To learn more about Oxford’s relationship with these Elizabethan composers, we can look at the research presented by Sally Mosher—artist, pianist and composer—in her 1998 article for *The Oxfordian*, “William Byrd’s ‘Battle’ and the Earl of Oxford.”

## The Earl of Oxford’s March

She describes their professional relationship as follows: “William Byrd and the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford were both at the Court of Elizabeth I from about 1572 on, both were involved in activities that provided music for the Court, and during this period Oxford saved Byrd from possible bankruptcy by selling a certain property to Byrd’s brother” (Mosher 49). She believes that Oxford and Byrd worked together for a decade or more, and notes that Byrd “is considered the greatest composer of the English Renaissance” as well as being an accomplished keyboard player and singer (Mosher 43). She adds that, “Oxford was known for his musicianship. He was also a ranking Earl who would have had his own ‘tucket,’ or musical signature, to signal his arrival at tournaments and while travelling. The tune that lies at the heart of ‘The Earle of Oxford’s March’ has all the earmarks of such a tucket” (50). Mosher emphasizes that many of Shakespeare’s plays contain the use of tuckets and suggests that we might date their composition to coincide with Oxford’s military ambitions, acknowledging that we do not know if the patron commissioned the work or if the composer wrote it to honor his patron (44–45).<sup>4</sup>

## THE EARL OF OXFORD'S MARCH

William Byrd (1540-1623)

The musical score is for a brass ensemble. The first system includes five parts: Bb Trumpet 1, Bb Trumpet 2, Horn in F, Trombone, and Tuba. The tempo is marked 'Maestoso' with a quarter note equal to 70. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The first system starts with a forte (f) dynamic, and the second system starts with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The second system includes dynamics of mezzo-piano (mp) for the upper parts.

Moreover, a book of songs published by Anthony Munday in 1588 titled *A Banquet of Daintie Conceits* includes lyrics to accompany the “Earle of Oxenford’s March” (Mosher 43). Since Munday served as one of Oxford’s secretaries, we can infer that the Earl wrote his own verses for the “March” or “Maske” as it was alternately titled. Did Oxford work with Byrd as a film director like Steven Spielberg might work with his composer John Williams? The purported length of Oxford’s relationship with Byrd is quite similar.

Another composer whose praise for Oxford lends credibility to the argument that the poet and playwright was also a gifted musician is John Farmer, who wrote that “using this science [music] as a recreation, your Lordship has over-gone most of them that make it a profession” (Chiljan 95). To Mosher this implies that “Oxford himself may have written his own tucket, with Byrd later devising an elaborate march around it” (45). Mosher examines in detail Byrd’s *The Battle Suite*, in which the first song is identical to “The Earl Oxford’s March,” but has been given the new title, “The March Before the Battle” in *My Lady Nevell’s Book* in 1591 (49).<sup>5</sup> Mosher makes the analogy to music composed for silent films; the songs in the suite “seem intended



*Queen Elizabeth I's virginal, probably made by Benedictus Florianus. Venice, Italy, c.1570, courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

as accompaniment for some sort of theatrical piece portraying military action” (46).

However, Mosher explains that the only extant arrangements for “The Earl of Oxford’s March,” with one exception, are meant to be played on the virginal, an instrument not usually used in theatrical productions (47). Listen to “The Earl of Oxford’s March” played on the virginal, as opposed to by a full orchestra with drums and brass, and the difference is apparent. Queen Elizabeth was said to be an accomplished player of the virginal; the Italian virginal she owned is on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, in an exhibit which includes recordings of two Byrd compositions. Mosher, an accomplished pianist and harpsichord player, infers that Oxford was also a talented performer who could play both the virginal and the lute. Finally, Mosher notes that Byrd also composed music for Oxford’s poem “If Women Could Be Fair,” included in a 1588 collection of the composer’s vocal works, and believes we may yet uncover more manuscripts that reveal collaboration between Oxford and Byrd (50).

To understand the importance of the virginal in Elizabethan music, one need only look to the University of Cambridge University Fitzwilliam Museum website:

*The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* “is widely regarded as the most important surviving manuscript of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English music. Containing nearly three hundred works, it is certainly the largest” (“The Fitzwilliam”).

Most of the songs of the Elizabethan era were composed for the instrument, which is similar to the harpsichord.

There is some controversy as to the provenance of this collection since, according to the museum, “The transcriber of all this music is popularly believed to have been a Cornishman called Francis Tregian, who is said to

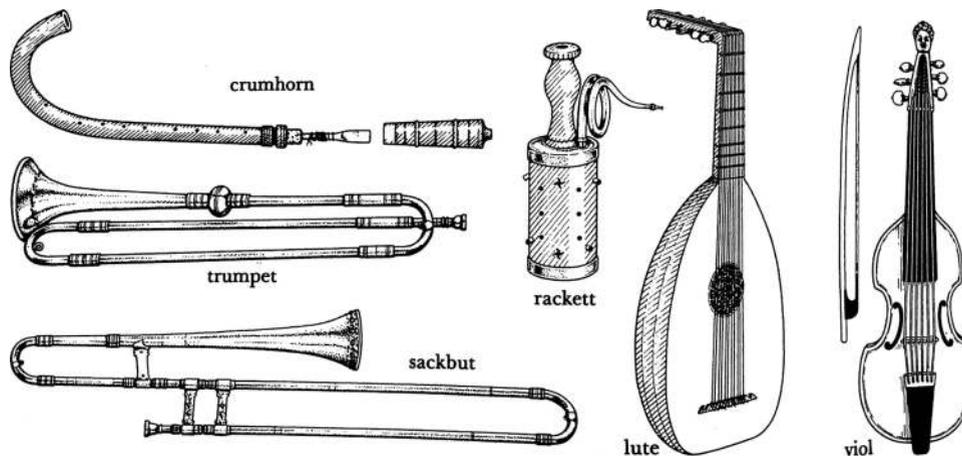
have compiled the book whilst imprisoned in Fleet Prison, London, for being a recusant.... He died in 1619, still a prisoner” (“The Fitzwilliam”). The story was subsequently called into question. “This romantic account of the manuscript’s origin, first formulated in the nineteenth century by Roman Catholic musicologists, has however recently been called into doubt. The Tregian family might in fact have had nothing to do with the production of the book, and it has been suggested that the manuscript was the product of a *scriptorium*—a scribes’ workshop—connected to the English court. Several hands seem to have worked on the transcriptions, but the same Swiss paper is used throughout. This is of a very high quality, and of the type used in English royal documents of the time” (“The Fitzwilliam”). A scriptorium, connected to the court? We know that Oxford had a scriptorium in the 1580s that included translators, and therefore, this story about the origins of the book bears further research.

At the British Library, I examined a book of songs in the Rare Books archive that was written “in a single, neat Italian hand” and elaborately annotated (“Edward de Vere”).<sup>6</sup> British Library manuscript number Add. MS31992, according to Francis Knights, is part of “the largest contemporary manuscript collection of William Byrd’s works, assembled by the Norfolk gentleman Edward Paston (1550–1630), whose library included at least 50 sets of part books, supplemented by around the same number of printed sets, from both Britain and the continent. The manuscript sets include masses, motets, Italian madrigals, French chansons, consort songs and instrumental pieces—almost everything but keyboard and solo lute music. The Byrd holdings contain a large number of otherwise unknown pieces, and early versions of works later published by the composer” (Knights 56). Included in this collection are the lyrics from Edward de Vere’s poem “If Women Could Be Fair and Yet Not Fond” set to music, once again demonstrating the close connection between Byrd and Oxford. As with *The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, the Paston compilation is thought to be the work of a scriptorium.

Since many of Byrd’s compositions were written for the lute, Alexander Waugh researched Oxford’s lyric poetry as it might have been played on the lute. In his presentation “Oxford’s Music and Poetry” for the De Vere Society originally broadcast on YouTube in Autumn 2021, he interviews lutenist Elizabeth Pallet about the instrument and its place in the world of Elizabethan England, the complexity of writing counterpoint music, and the relationship between dances such as the galliard and the volta and the tempo at which a piece



*A wood engraving showing dancers doing the galliard (1588).*



was played. Waugh notes that Oxford was known to be an excellent dancer; indeed, in August 1578 while on progress, the Queen twice requested Oxford to dance before visiting French ambassadors, an invitation that Oxford refused to comply with.

Waugh further quotes John Soowthern’s praise of Oxford’s musical skill, and notes that though we have no record of the instruments that Oxford played, he likely could play the most popular instruments—the lute, the virginal, and the recorder—since the plays and poems of Shakespeare “display intimate technical knowledge of the workings of each of these instruments” (Waugh). Musicians were employed by noble households as servants, and Waugh explains that Oxford chose those “who could play, sing, act, write poetry, or compose music.” Oxford, known for his generosity, in addition to providing William Byrd with the lease to and proceeds from the manor of Batayles in Essex, arranged an annuity of 20 pounds from his land and property in Essex for the lutenist Robert Hales. Waugh also points out that Oxford returned from his trip to Italy with a “young chorister, Oracio Cuoco, whom he had heard sing at the Church of Santa Maria Formosa” in Venice, so that he might “sing for the queen and the members of the court at Westminster” (Waugh).

## In Commendation of Music

Oxford’s enduring interest in music seems clear, but Waugh gives us yet another example of his passion for the art and its connection to the plays of Shakespeare. He refers to the song he identified as penned by the 16-year-old Oxford, titled “In Commendation of Music,” and points out that three lines of these same lyrics appear in Act IV, scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet*. Waugh explains that these lines precede “a comic conversation between three musicians with names associated with musical instruments.” It is interesting that the poem was incorrectly listed in the 1576 edition of *Paradise* as having been

written by “Master Edwards,” that is, Richard Edwards. Waugh stresses that the poem was removed from all subsequent editions of *Paradise* and cites as evidence for the attribution to Oxford not just “the unique ring of his voice” in the poem, but the existence of a manuscript copy ascribed “Ball,” a pseudonym used by Oxford on three other poems. This seems to be consistent with the fact that attribution to “Master Edwards” also occurs with early plays performed at universities.

Next Waugh provides detailed analysis of the Biblical references in Oxford’s poem “My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is” and its reflection of the Hermetic ideas to be found in Shakespeare’s works. He notes that the song is composed in accordance with the divine trinity, with “layered thematic motifs of three notes each, which are repeated three times, to form a set” (Waugh). He concludes his talk with an interpretation of a sonnet that “praises the combination of music and poetry, comparing it with his friendship with ‘R.L.’” (Waugh).<sup>7</sup> The poem, “To His Friend Master R.L. in Praise of Music and Poetry,” is significant because it was first published in *The Passionate Pilgrim* as being by William Shakespeare around 1596–97, but subsequently included in a pamphlet by Richard Barnfield titled *Poems in Diverse Humours*, published in 1598. Waugh suggests that Barnfield included “To His Friend...” in the collection of his own poems to hint at the true author, Oxford.<sup>8</sup>

## This Noble Science

Further examples of the importance of Oxford’s poetry in assessing his musical proficiency are included in the *De Vere Newsletter No. 18*, edited by Nina Green, which references the works of scholar and publisher Ruth Loyd Miller and Professor Emeritus of English Steven May. Green notes that the Earl of Oxford’s “musical accomplishments were praised by professional musicians” including John Soowthern and John Farmer, who “in his *Divers and Sundry Ways of Two Parts in One*, a treatise on counterpoint published in 1591, gave as his reason for dedicating the book to Oxford, ‘I was rather emboldened for your Lordship’s great affection to this noble science (music) hoping for the one you might pardon the other, and desirous to make known your inclination this way’” (Miller 491 and Green 2).

This contemporary praise for Oxford’s musicianship is corroborated by Steven May’s analysis of the poem “A Croune of Bayes” from the collection *A Paradise of Dainty Delights*. Green cites his deconstruction of the poem, “May notes that: ‘the first stanza of this poem is the second half of its variable refrain. The full refrain occurs as stanzas three and five, and the poem ends with the first half of the refrain’” (Green 1). From this structure, May surmises, “Oxford may have written the poem for the music, or the poem and music both” (Green 1). Based on the 1576 publication date of *The*

*Paradise of Dainty Devices*, the editor concludes, “If the entire collection was compiled by Richard Edwards, the lyrics in question were actually written before Oxford was sixteen years of age, since Edwards died in 1566.<sup>191</sup> Given this promising start, and the fact that the Earl’s interest and skill in music could still attract John Farmer’s notice as late as 1599, it seems reasonable to expect that Oxford wrote other music during his lifetime, and that his songs and instrumental pieces are to be found among the extant music of the Elizabethan period” (Green 2).

In support of this theory of Oxford as an accomplished musician whose abilities match the musical knowledge in Shakespeare’s plays, author Elisabeth Sears cites Cambridge University professor Dr. Edward Naylor in her presentation “Shakespeare, Oxford and Music.” In his 1896 book, *Shakespeare and Music*, Naylor argues that we can analyze Shakespeare’s knowledge of music through two lenses: the historical and the psychological, encompassing the emotional and spiritual aspects of the author’s use of music in the plays and poems (Sears 2). According to Sears, “Naylor also says that out of thirty-seven plays by Shakespeare, there are no less than 32 that contain interesting references to music and have musical matters in the text itself. He also says there are over 300 musical stage directions that occur in thirty-six of the 37 plays and he explains hundreds of musical quibbles in the plays and poems which are otherwise meaningless phrases” (3).

After closely examining the works of composers William Byrd, John Dowland, and Thomas Morley, Sears suggests that Oxford may have written several of the works ascribed to them, and notes that the differences in styles are apparent. She explains that “all three of these composers used the diatonic, or eight-note, scale...[while] Oxford’s music tends to be modal, due to his musical experience in Italy. In *King Lear*, there is another clue to the ancient shape notes and the gamut, or Hexichord” (Sears 2). The significance of Oxford’s travels in Italy was noted by Waugh earlier and is further supported by Delahoyde’s research. Sears analyzes in detail Act I, scene ii, of *King Lear*, which references *The Devil’s Interval* in a scene that echoes *Oedipus*, concluding that “the author was not only well trained in early Italian music, but was also familiar with Greek Tragedy” (8–9).

Sears then explores the conjecture that the popular tune “Greensleeves,” included in John Dowland’s manuscript housed at the Folger Shakespeare Library, may have been composed by Oxford. She explains that tune is derived from a Scottish jig combined with an English Morris dance that Oxford would have seen while serving in Scotland as an adjutant under the Earl of Sussex (Sears 9). She notes that Naylor has identified a song in *Twelfth Night* that references “Greensleeves” and that the song is also mentioned in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Sears 9). Most surprisingly, Sears states that National Public Radio classical music commentator Dr. Karl Haas revealed

“that an early Italian opera, *Turandot*, three hundred years earlier than Puccini’s *Turandot*, included ‘Greensleeves’ as an aria!” (10). Sears asserts that the preponderance of evidence “proves that Oxford knew the science of musical composition and theory.” She concludes that “Farmer’s statement verifies Oxford’s musicianship but it doesn’t tell all, because Oxford’s musical experience in Italy puts him in a different category. It changed his style and technique” (Sears 1).

To better determine the impact of Oxford’s travels in Italy, we turn next to archival research carried out by Michael Delahoyde in Italy for evidence of Oxford’s encounters in Venice and elsewhere during 1575–76. Delahoyde has also edited an Oxfordian edition of *Twelfth Night*, a play that features songs, several references to music, and the use of Italian sources. He contends that the song “Greensleeves” remains a mystery as to its composition. While Sears and others have “suggested that Oxford may have been the composer of this super-famous song, and thus it is a work-of-interest to Oxfordians,” he notes that, “though rumored to be connected with Anne Boleyn, the tradition that Henry VIII composed ‘Greensleeves’ is said to be unlikely due to the work’s Italian structure and style, not imported into England until after [Henry’s] death” (Delahoyde “Verte”). The song was registered in 1580. Delahoyde concludes that “If Shakespeare merely rhapsodized about the emotional and mystical effects of music, as he does through Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice* (5.1.79–82; cf. 5.1.71–79), or offered merely a scattered selection of puns as do Julia and Lucetta in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1.2.77ff), we might be impressed that a merchant-class playwright in London had also picked up, aside from his acquired knowledge of countless other fields, some of the vocabulary and concepts of an art sufficiently connected to theater not to be too surprising. But Shakespeare knows specialized technical matters in music: the ‘gamut’ in *The Taming of the Shrew* (3.1.67ff), the rhythm in ‘prick-song’ and the ‘minim rest’ in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.4.21–22), [and the] stops and instrumental fingering in *Hamlet* (3.2.364ff)” (Delahoyde, “Music, Monkeys,” 12).

## Shakespeare Knows...Madrigals

Delahoyde’s website is an excellent resource for those wishing to learn more about the importance of the madrigal in understanding Oxford’s knowledge of music. He informs us that “five sets of Italian madrigals were printed in England between 1588 and 1598,” and shares the dedication to the 1588 collection *Musica Transalpina*:

I had the hap to find in the hands of some of my good friends certaine Italian Madrigales translated most of them five yeeres agoe by a Gentleman for his private delight (as not long before certaine Napolitans had been englished by a verie honourable personage, and now a

Councillour of estate, whereof I have seene some, but never possessed any). I asked the gentleman if I might publish them, but he always refused, saying “That those trifles being but an idle man’s exercise, of an idle subject, written onely for private recreation, would blush to be seene otherwise than by twilight, much more to be brought into the common view of all men. (Delahoyde, “Oxford and Music”).

Most significant in the above dedication are the references to translations for private use, as opposed to publication, which reflects the stigma associated with print amongst the nobility at the time. Nicholas Yonge’s publication of these Italian madrigals created a demand for English madrigals, which was met by Thomas Morley who subsequently published 11 collections of madrigals in the 1590s. “Now is the Month of Maying” provides an example of what Delahoyde calls a typical, light, even trivial type of English madrigal (Delahoyde “Oxford and Music”). For comparison, he suggests the works of Thomas Weelkes. “Despite the general insistence that madrigalists did not set Shakespeare to music, Weelkes is credited with a piece titled ‘Kiss Me, Kate.’ And a 1597 collection of his madrigals includes as lyrics an uncredited poem, #17, from *The Passionate Pilgrim* about which some say there is no reason to doubt a Shakespearean authorship” (Chiljan 94 and Delahoyde, “Oxford and Music”). “The most lavish praise for Weelkes centers on ‘the most astonishing of madrigals’ (Whent. Para. 9) ‘Thule, the period of cosmography’” (Delahoyde, “Oxford and Music”). He notes that the “final phrases concerning freezing and frying also echo a bit in *The Taming of the Shrew* (2.1.338)” (Delahoyde, “Oxford and Music”). Delahoyde then speculates whether Weelkes could be another of Oxford’s pseudonyms. Delahoyde cites composer John Farmer’s dedication of *The First Set of English Madrigals* in 1599 to Oxford, and notes that “The accounts of the City Chamberlains record payments to travelling companies from 1584/85, when 6s. 8d. was paid to ‘the Erle of Oxfordes musytians’” (Boas 19; cf. Hanson 95), and wonders “what music were they supplied with?” (“Oxford and Music”). Could it have been written by Oxford? Delahoyde acknowledges the previous work of other scholars in this area, particularly Eric Altschuler and William Jansen, and Katharine Eggar, who wrote extensively about Oxford’s theatrical career.

In 1935, Eggar presented her research on Oxford’s music at a meeting of the Royal Musical Association in London, inspired by the publication of Looney’s 1920 book *“Shakespeare” Identified*. She introduced her subject by quoting Percival Golding: “he was a man in kind and body absolutely accomplished with honourable endowments” (Eggar 41).<sup>10</sup> She details Oxford’s involvement with the theater from an early age, beginning with his father’s influence as one of the few noblemen at the time who kept his own troupe of players, and speculates that after coming to London in 1562, “it is likely that Vere attended the Westminster Scholars Latin Play with Her Majesty” (Eggar 42).

In 1563, Westcott's Children of St. Paul's performance for the Christmas Revels at Court would also have been attended by Oxford, making the case for his continued exposure to theatrical productions.

Enter Richard Edwards, Master of the Chapel Royal, the obvious choice to serve as Oxford's instructor in both singing and counterpoint, the intertwining of two or more melodic lines of music. We have previously seen that Richard Edwards is closely connected to Oxford in many contexts. Eggar notes the need for new material for the boys' companies to provide the Queen's entertainment, "something shorter [than the Roman comedies], in simple English with rhymes to help the memory, something pretty and pathetic, to please the ladies, with songs sad and songs merry to show the power of music and give the children a chance to show off their voices" (Eggar 43). This demand, she suggests, was an opportunity for Oxford to work with Edwards on developing new plays.<sup>11</sup> This is an important theory about Oxford's career development as a theater maker, the Elizabethan term that encompasses many of the same responsibilities which 21<sup>st</sup>-century theater directors and producers have. I contend that Oxford worked like a modern auteur, writing and directing his own work, and that his patronage of writers and actors parallels the role of a producer in today's theatrical world, in stark contrast to William Shakspeare of Stratford's recorded business dealings with Elizabethan theater companies. The idea that Oxford collaborated with Edwards in producing musical theater for the Queen is critical to our understanding of his development as a dramatist who understood the synergy of combining theater and music.

Oxford, unlike Shakspeare, was exposed to productions that would inspire his own later work. Eggar describes the entertainments at Cambridge University during the Queen's progress in 1564, including a performance of *Dido*, which Oxford would have witnessed. The elaborate productions at Cambridge and the impression they would have made on the 14-year-old Oxford would be significant.<sup>12</sup> For Christmas 1565, Edwards' Children of the Chapel acted a classically inspired play based on the story of *Damon and Pythias*, which Eggar attributes to Oxford. She concedes that the play "is extant and has always been ascribed to Richard 'Edwards, the Master of the Chapel.'" However, she argues that while "Edwards wrote the music for the play (of which one song, "Awake, ye woful wights," survives)...the actual play, which is entered in the Revel accounts as 'Edwards Tragedye,' was by *Edward*—Edward de Vere—who was indeed, as one title page puts it, 'sometimes of H.M. Chapel'"(44). She further contends that the "alliterative rhyming lines" in the play clearly echo the extant poetry of the Earl of Oxford (Eggar 44). The play presented at Christ Church during the Queen's visit to Oxford University the next summer, in 1565, was *Palaemon and Aryste*, and Eggar notes that in the documentation there is "a reference to the Queen's calling for Mr. Edwards the author." Eggar concludes: "I for one, am inclined once more to

assign the music to the Master, Richard—and the play to the Lord, Edward” (46). She explains that Elizabeth had thwarted Oxford’s desire for military service abroad by putting him in charge of the Revels, and that the Christmas Revels presented in 1571, which coincided with his wedding celebrations, included five plays by four different companies, one of which appears to be a revival of *Palaemon and Arcyte* (Eggar 48). The implication is that the inclusion of this play again suggests Oxford’s authorship of the original.

## An Unprecedented Outburst of Theatrical Activity

Eggar traces the appointment of Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, as Lord Chamberlain, the establishment of his company of players, and Leicester’s Men reconvening, which preceded Oxford’s 1575 trip to Italy, and points out that when Oxford returned to London in the spring of 1576, there was an “outburst of plays” (49). She further speculates that Oxford was involved in the decision to lease space at Blackfriars Theater for a singing school in 1576 and its subsequent use as a space for rehearsals. At the same time, she notes, came the Privy Council’s order allowing Leicester’s Men and five other companies to practice inside the city limits (Eggar 49–50). In 1583, Oxford took over the lease for Blackfriars, the premiere venue for private entertainments for a wealthy clientele. He also reconciled with the Queen that year, and Eggar sees this moment as the catalyst for “an unprecedented outburst of theatrical achievements” (52). With the formation of the Queen’s Men, including the best actors from the companies of Oxford, Sussex, Leicester, and Warwick, she explains that Oxford now had a first-rate troupe, “his own school of Music and Acting for the juveniles and female parts, and—highly important—he had his own private rehearsal theatre” (Eggar 52).

As an example of a highly sophisticated production resulting from these developments, she cites *Arraignment of Paris*, with its “extensive musical references” (Eggar 52). This play is attributed to George Peele, one of the members of Oxford’s literary circle, which included Anthony Munday, John Lyly, and Thomas Watson. The Queen “had the satisfaction of knowing that all the increased expenses fell not on her, but on the Lord Great Chamberlain” (Eggar 53). In other words, Oxford bore the cost of these elaborate Revels. When Oxford complained that “he had toiled for thirteen years to carry out her command to ‘aim all his courses at the Revels’” and had received no compensation, Eggar concludes that the £1,000 annuity was the Queen’s answer (54). The author then tells her audience at the Royal Musical Association, “With this mysterious grant, another epoch in his career opens” (Eggar 54). There are various theories about this unprecedented and exceedingly generous annuity discovered by Oxford’s first biographer, B.M. Ward, for which no accounting was required, and which King James continued after Elizabeth’s death, most notably the research by Bonner Miller Cutting in *Necessary Mischief*.<sup>13</sup>

Eggar was asked about the reliability of the two dedications from Farmer as a basis for determining Oxford's musical ability, as they might be flattery or at best exaggerated praise. She replied that she hopes the three-part counterpoint Oxford is supposed to have written will be discovered (75). To that end I am currently researching Eggar's papers and annotated books at the Senate House Library in London to determine the source of her theory about this and other matters. In support of her argument, her colleague Dr. Fellowes stated that, "It was impossible that a man of Oxford's culture should *not* have been a musician" (Eggar 57) [emphasis mine]. When challenged by Fellowes to justify the assumption that because Oxford knew counterpoint, he must have been a composer, Eggar explained, "Lord Oxford did many things both anonymously and pseudonymously. He was very mysterious. He would never put his name to a thing if he could avoid doing so" (58).

If the name William Shakespeare is a pseudonym employed by Oxford for his poems and plays, it seems likely that, if he also composed music, he would have used a pen name, several different allonyms, or composed anonymously. To return to the argument that Oxford invented not just modern theater, but also what became the basis for the stage musical, I consulted Ren Draya's 2011 article "Singer and Song: The Music in *Twelfth Night*," which makes the direct analogy between *Twelfth Night* and a modern stage musical. Draya explains that "the songs in a Shakespeare play can be considered as intrinsic as the action or the dialogue; songs can convey plot, highlight character, or underscore a specific mood" (17). To support this view she analyzes several of the songs in *Twelfth Night*. The song "O Mistress Mine" is based on a popular melody found in Thomas Morley's 1599 collection, "with the lyrics being Shakespeare's invention" (Send 94 and Draya 19). Although the tune is melancholy, she notes that its message to Olivia is optimistic: to live for the moment and enjoy today because you never know what tomorrow will bring. This juxtaposition of music and lyrics is what made the Beatles' compositions so unique: an upbeat tempo or melody subverted by a sad story, or vice versa. Complexity is what characterizes great musical compositions such as symphonies, operas, and even film scores. Draya concludes that, "music is a key element" in the play (19). I contend that Oxford has given us a prototype for what will eventually become the Broadway musical. I remain optimistic and join with researchers Eggar, Sears, and Mosher in the hopes that the continued search for manuscripts will provide further evidence that Oxford was not just an extraordinary writer, but also a composer.

## Endnotes

1. See Steven W. May's *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets: The Poems and Their Contexts*. University of Missouri Press, 1991 and J. Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* edited by Ruth Loyd Miller, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Kennikat Press, 1975.
2. Katherine Eggar (1874–1961) was a classically trained pianist and composer, a feminist, and Shakespeare archivist. Her talk presented to the Royal Musical Association in 1935 is a major source for this paper. She corresponded with J. Thomas Looney and Captain B.M. Ward, author of *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford (1550–1604) from Contemporary Documents*, London: John Murray, 1928.
3. Alexander Waugh is a musician and writer who has produced classical records, served as Chief Opera Critic for the *Mail on Sunday* and the *Evening Standard*, and has written books and articles on music and Shakespeare, as well as a stage musical. He currently serves as Chair of the De Vere Society. In his 2021 article “1591: A Watershed Year for Oxford and the English Theatre,” Waugh cites the poet Henry Lok as referring to Oxford as Phoebus-like in his patronage. The article is available on the De Vere Society website, De Vere Society - Promoting the life of Edward de Vere. <https://deveresociety.co.uk/>.
4. Professor Emeritus of Music Ross Duffin, of Case Western Reserve University, claims to have discovered Oxford's Galliard in a John Dowland lute manuscript at the Folger Library in Washington, D.C. (“Oxford's Galliard.” V.b.280, “A commonplace book of songs and dances for the lute.” Ca. 1600. John Dowland. The Folger Shakespeare Library.) He proposes that Oxford was not the composer but the patron who commissioned and paid for the work. He also said that he found no correspondence to or from Oxford in Byrd's archives. In his article “An Encore for Shakespeare's Rare Italian Master” for *The Elizabethan Review*, Duffin argues that the reference to Julio Romano in *The Winter's Tale* is a punning allusion to the Italian musician and composer Giulio Caccini (ca. 1545–1618), who was also known as Giulio Romano, in addition to being a reference to the sculptor, painter, and architect Giulio (Pippi) Romano (ca. 1499–1546). Duffin points to another musical allusion in the play, this one to “Rogerio,” a tune to which a popular ballad entitled “All such as lead a jealous life” was set, as an example of Shakespeare's use of music to enhance the theme and advance the plot of the play. See Duffin, Ross W. “An Encore for Shakespeare's Rare Italian Master,” *The Elizabethan Review*, Vol. 2, 1994.

5. Mosher argues that Byrd may have omitted Oxford's name in the title as a result of the Earl's fall from favor in the 1590s.
6. According to the British Library website listing of digitized music manuscripts (2017), the document is described as "A collection of miserere, anthems, motets and madrigals, in Italian lute notation." The British Library website was compromised by a cyberattack in October 2023, and the research resources have not yet been fully restored. As a result, one cannot currently access further information about Add. MS 31992 online. Francis Knights is Director of Studies in Music at Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge.
7. Waugh discovered that in 1595, William Covell in his work *Polymantia* had revealed that "R.L." was actually the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton. See "A Fair Youth, a Dark Lady and Shakespeare—the scandal exposed!" on Waugh's You Tube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN3ZOOonJQqk&t=755s>.
8. For additional information about Richard Barnfield, see Waugh's video "Richard Barnfield Knew..." *Alexander Waugh You Tube Channel* Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvfOnw-NixEM>.
9. Georgetown University professor and author Richard M. Waugaman suggested to me that because *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* was published in 1576, perhaps it was compiled and released by Oxford, as Edwards had died ten years earlier.
10. The quote from Percival Golding is taken from MS 4189 archived in the British Library's Harleian collection, which I viewed and translated, and about which I subsequently co-wrote an article with Bonner Cutting. See "Does the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford 'Lieth Buried in Westminster'?" *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Summer 2022.
11. Eggar argues that some plays performed at Cambridge University attributed to "Master Edwards" were actually written by Edward de Vere. See further discussion of this in subsequent paragraphs.
12. This is one of the subjects of the author's new documentary film project, *All the World's a Stage*.
13. See Miller Cutting's "A Sufficient Warrant: Examining Oxford's 1,000 Pound Annuity," in her book *Necessary Mischief*, 2018.

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