

1 The Wild West meets the wives of Windsor

Shakespeare and music in the mythological American West

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Theatre historians have long recounted the ways in which Shakespeare's works were carried to and performed in American frontier towns: they were put on in saloons and in beautiful little opera houses, in crowded mining camps and military outposts, in hotels and brothels striving for elegance. As Jennifer Lee Carrell has written, 'In the frontier West, the fact that Shakespeare tells good stories, and that those stories should be told well in the West, was no surprise at all – at least not to Westerners' (Carrell 1998, 107). But what Carrell states can be read in multiple ways: in addition to being told *well* in the West, Shakespeare is also told well *in the West*. Shakespeare's legacy in the West is strong, demonstrated by the numerous Shakespeare festivals and companies spread throughout the region. Many recent productions that have adopted approaches to their adaptations that draw on this legacy and history, locating the action of the plays in a fictional Wild or Old West. Indeed, the stories of the American West and those of Shakespeare are often concerned with the same matters: self-determination, independence, the role of women in a male-dominated society, the pursuit of wealth and power, class issues, gender roles, and violence. *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Cymbeline*, and the *Henriad* have all been staged with settings in the nineteenth-century American West. In many of these, music plays an important role in signifying the West or representing particular aspects of it derived from popular culture and media.

It is important to note that these adaptations are not necessarily seeking to portray the frontier American West as historically accurate, and some plays – notably those in which the role or treatment of women is problematic – are favourite choices for re-locations to a deliberately fashioned quasi-mythical West because of the ways in which our historical understanding and/or creative construction of the period can account for such problems. Thus the imagined West that is seen and heard in these performances of Shakespeare is a highly variable one that often also calls on popular thinking about the Elizabethan period, nostalgia, mythologised accounts of the time and place, cinematic and televisual imaginings of the West, and alternate-reality scenarios. At the same time that these productions bring Shakespeare into the West, they also bring the West into Shakespeare,

offering coded narratives of independence and resilience and rebellion that frame early modern stories and help make them relatable to inexperienced audiences. Although the productions I discuss here costume their actors in cowboy hats and boots and add cactuses and a hitching post to the scenery, they are at their hearts Elizabethan works rather than Westerns with Shakespearean language. The plays influenced later aspects of popular culture, which in turn elucidates the plays in novel ways. The language and cruxes of the plays are not altered to fit the West, but the mythological West, with all of its trappings of music, costume, and scenery, which is transported to the Elizabethan, complete with its own attitudes and worldview. Not exactly mirror images, the fantasy West and Elizabethan eras are nonetheless often read as similar enough by the general public to create imperfect but useful and effective reflections of one another, particularly in explicating difficult material or historical social conventions.

Many productions rely on music to signify the psychogeographical space of the mythologised and/or fictionalised Western settings of such adaptations. Even on a bare stage, and without props or actors in noticeably geographically or historically influenced costuming, the mere hint of the traditional sounds of the Western – traditional diatonic harmony; open intervals; simple melodies based on folk music or hymn tunes; rhythms replicating trotting or galloping hooves; and/or the so-called ‘tom-tom’ rhythm (emphasising the first beat of every four crochets) – immediately transport audiences to desert landscapes, wide skies, and the hardships and conflicts of life on the frontier (Kalinak 2012). In this essay, I examine the use of musical tropes frequently categorised as ‘Western’ and their use and function in adaptations of Shakespeare that take place in the West. In these adaptations, the music of the West is not so much displaced in location as it is in time and culture, and often represents social constructions that cross boundaries between Shakespeare’s world, our mediated notion of the American West, and our own present.

In addition to the shared concerns of the American West and Elizabethan England, Western settings are popular re-locations for Shakespeare’s plays because of audience familiarity with the Western. Setting plays about patriarchy, re-inventing oneself, mistaken identities, revenge, the distribution of property, and family feuds in the Wild West – a place and time in which these things are accorded to be the norm of the day – makes many of Shakespeare’s plays more palatable or comprehensible to audiences who might otherwise dismiss them as too difficult, elite, or removed from contemporary experience. Countless reviews of Shakespeare-in-the-West productions cite ‘accessibility’ as a primary cause of shifting the action from Elizabethan or Jacobean England to the period of American westward expansion, but the fact is that the issues many of Shakespeare’s plays deal with are also recurring tropes in the search for American identity. Here I offer three case studies in Shakespearean plays re-located to the American West and analyse the music of each. I begin with the most minimalist example, found in a 2007 Bard on the Beach (Vancouver, B.C.) production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and progress to a production with songs added to the action – a 2013 production of *The Comedy of Errors* by Marin County (northern California)

Shakespeare – and finally to a 2004 full-fledged Broadway-style musical adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* called *Lone Star Love*.

These three very different adaptations of Shakespeare use music to signify and depict the American West in radically different ways and through different lenses. To indicate its own ironic approach to the play, *The Taming of the Shrew* uses the musical motif from a film that mocked traditional Westerns; music for the adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* pays problematic homage to the music of the bourgeois 1960's white-produced Western; and finally, *Lone Star Love, or The Merry Wives of Windsor, Texas* applies the musical code of the fantasy fun-loving West as heard through the knowingly over-the-top Broadway Americana Westerns *Oklahoma!*, *Paint Your Wagon*, and *Annie Get Your Gun*.

Reframing *The Taming of the Shrew* as a Western is common in North American playhouses because it offers a setting in which the patriarchal values of the play and Katherina's desire for independence can be situated in a geographically close and historically recent context. While some Westernised productions of this play rely on a more involved score – music by Claude White for a 1990 Shakespeare in the Park production starring Morgan Freeman and Tracey Ullman was criticised as 'reeking of manifest destiny in the "Bonanza" key' (Rich 1990) – the 2007 Bard on the Beach production in Vancouver had a simpler approach in conjuring the atmosphere of the fictionalised American Old West while still retaining the play's early modern aesthetic. It used a single motif, whistled from off-stage when Katherina and Petruchio made their entrances for the first time.



Example 1.1 The whistle of the West: Ennio Morricone's iconic motif for Sergio Leone's 'Man with No Name' Westerns

This iconic motif, consisting of two semiquaver-note oscillations between A and D followed by a return to D, is in D minor and is, of course, borrowed from Ennio Morricone's score for Sergio Leone's 1966 film *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. This film, along with Leone's other works, is a 'spaghetti Western', made in Italy using an aesthetic that seeks to satirise and demythologise traditional American Westerns. Leone deliberately included what he felt was excessive violence and a number of duels to mock the gun battles that were centre stage in traditional American Westerns of the period. In the American release version of the film, three men cross and double-cross one another as they search for buried Confederate gold. Ultimately, the Good, played by Clint Eastwood as 'The Man With No Name', saves the Ugly from death twice, and kills the Bad. The film itself grapples with concepts of morality, how two individuals do and do not work as a team, and how self-reliance and independence are a man's most valuable attributes. In

a number of ways, parallels between the film and the play make the choice of the film's motif a clever choice with multiple layers of signification.

If we are to believe Kristopher Spencer, this motif – originally assigned to the Eastwood character – is 'among the most quoted in film history' (Spencer 2008). It was certainly immediately recognised by nearly everyone in the audience as a musical marker for the production's place and time. *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* takes place during the Civil War in a nearly abandoned town in the desert West. Through the use of this motif, it was immediately apparent that the Bard on the Beach production of *Shrew* was set in the same geographical and chronological locations. Bard on the Beach audiences familiar with the film in detail also understood the use of the motif on a second level: neither Katherina nor Petruchio are villains, despite their actions, but protagonists for whom the audience should cheer in their progress from fighters to lovers. The wry use of the motif also indicated that this particular interpretation of *Shrew* was ironic: notwithstanding their complaints and fighting, Katherina and Petruchio were having a grand time of things, and that in the end, they were in on the bet about women's subservience together. Throughout, the pair's delight in the wordplay and bantering dialogue of the play was obvious and infectious, and the actors' performances were full of honest laughter.

Additionally, the motif functioned as a signifier for both characters individually, tying them to specific elements from *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. For Petruchio, the motif indicated his role as the Eastwood character, the man who arrives without warning in a new town and promptly disrupts the order of things. It suggested that Petruchio too brought with him his own code of behaviour and morality when he, like the Man with No Name, sought a fortune in a desert town. However, unlike the Man with No Name, who rescues the helpless women caught in the middle of his treasure hunting and revenge plots and re-locates them to other venues without becoming emotionally involved, Petruchio falls for his rich bride, and realises that he has the capability to give her the independence and equality she cannot achieve on her own in their patriarchal culture. Thus the simple musical phrase that heralded the coming of change and a 'good' bandit in Leone's film also represented the embodiment of independence – Petruchio – in Katharina's life.

For Katharina, or Kate, the motif also functioned as a way of calling up the reasons that she is so angry at the beginning of the show. She lives in a small, desolate town much like the one featured in the film, where her natural intelligence and wit is derided and repressed, and she chafes at the patriarchal rules that prevent her from living a more independent life. The whistle motif can be read as music for Kate's true nature: self-reliant and even solitary, capable of self-defence and of seeing through the machinations of others, particularly those who would use her as a tool for other means, such as wedding her for her money or using her as a way to access her more conventionally desirable sister.

In using this motif, the Bard on the Beach *Shrew* cannily channelled the atmosphere of the American West in a singularly unique way. It brought up resonances with the time and place as depicted through a well-known myth-making film,

gestured towards the social codes and restrictions in place in that setting, and suggested character attributes that fit with the production's ethos. In doing so, the company created what Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe call a 'citational environment' in which the words and actions of *The Taming of the Shrew* made sense to a present day North American audience (Cartelli and Rowe 2007, 28–29).

Few productions, however, can rely on just one musical reference to establish the setting or to speak to the other, more complex concerns Shakespeare's plays often contain. In fact, most adaptations lean the other way, employing multiple musical works in a show. Marin County Shakespeare (MCS) staged *The Comedy of Errors* (retitled *A Comedy of Errors* to signal its status as an adaptation) in 2013, giving it an Old West/ Old Texan setting. *The Comedy of Errors*, like *Shrew*, is one of Shakespeare's earlier plays, and is a farce built around mistaken identities. The play features two sets of identical twins separated at birth; when they arrive in the same city for the first time, hilarity ensues. It has been adapted several times as a musical, most famously as Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart's 1938 *The Boys from Syracuse*; a clever 2001 hip-hop version called *The Bomb-itty of Errors* was also widely hailed as a success.

For this production, the MCS used both pre-existing Western music and new tunes in the style of 1990s country music written for the show, and both principal actors and those playing smaller roles were assigned musical material. The intent of this music was quite different from that of the Bard on the Beach *Shrew*: where that music mitigated and contextualised serious issues in the playtext and established the interpretation of the playtext as an ironic one, the music for MCS's *Comedy* cited popular, mid-century, middle-class, white, suburban stereotypes of stock Western characters through the use of pre-existing songs, and recreated that musical soundscape through the music written for the show in the same style as the music from the 1950s and 60s. Despite their similar styles, these two kinds of music – the old and the new – functioned in radically different ways. *Comedy* used pre-existing songs to comment on the action as the play was in progress. The inclusion of Lyle Lovett's 'Long Tall Texan' (1996) and Terry Stafford's 'Amarillo by Morning' (1973), both of which trade on Texas stereotypes in a slightly wry way that acknowledges their use of highly homogenised genres, established the presence of such typecast roles: the cowboy (Antipholus), the lawman (Solinus), the rodeo clown (Dromio), and the saloon dancer (the Courtesan) (Anon. 2015e). The pre-existing pieces of music chosen for this commentary were in and of themselves highly cognisant of the stereotypes they employ, and they confront and use the mythologies of the West and the Western loner to express concepts that go against received wisdom or common thinking about such characters. In referencing these very generalised character tropes, the songs indicated that this particular Western setting was an amalgamated, mythological place populated by characters whose outward appearances and manners might cast them as clichéd, but in fact establish Antipholus, Solinus, Dromio, and the others as being removed from their original context and shoehorned into roles that would not be typical or expected in Shakespeare, but would be probable in the American Western movie or television show. To put it simply, the vintage songs functioned in a tongue-in-cheek manner

to describe the basic, one-dimensional characters of a standard Western, rather than serving to add familiarity or flavour to the text.

The original music written for the show, however, is neither ironic nor references period music, but instead embraces a sentimentalised, ableist, and gendered view of the West as depicted by mid-century television and film as a place for white expansion and exploitation. Songwriter Leslie Harlib explained that her musical ideas came from country-western songs and the musical film songs of the 1950s and 60s:

Some of the best storytelling comes from the Country-Western genre. So, I tried to create songs that had several elements. The songs reference classical musical theater structure, but have a country western feel. I used contemporary language. I saw the [directors'] desire for original music to be a bridge between Shakespeare and 20th century musical genres that the audience would know and appreciate. I love the way Allan Sherman in the 1960s always took familiar songs and wrote parodies to them that kept the same rhyme and pattern. Everyone knows 'Home on the Range'. With 'My Master's Deranged', the fit was fun, playing to the storyline yet also making it very clear to the audience that this is a parody of 'Home on the Range'. I thought of 'yee-haw' songs from films with western settings and themes like 'How the West Was Won' – when Debbie Reynolds sings 'Raise a Ruckus Tonight' or 'The Unsinkable Molly Brown' – when they all sing 'Belly Up to the Bar'. I wanted to capture that same kind of stomp your feet, clap your hands and 'have some fun' feeling for the audience.

(Anon. 2015d)

The musical and cinematic imagery cited here speaks to an ethos that comprises the myths of the white family building a new life on the plains, the dance hall girl with the heart of gold, the reformed professional gambler, the noble savage, and the morally ambiguous gunslinger taking down criminals and protecting law-abiders. There is no room here for the Native American, the non-English speaking settler, or others who do not fit the television-perfect Western community except as villains. Harlib's distillation of the culture of the American West into 'yee-haw' indicates that she thinks of the residents of the American West as unsophisticated but plucky, brave, and cute. This whitewashed and glorified image of the West results in a soundscape for the play that is situated not just in a fictional Old West, but an Old West as created and interpreted by particular audiences during a specific cultural period, that of the 1950s and 60s. The adoption of this construal from the world of American television by way of *Bonanza* and *Maverick* negates possible interpretations of the setting (including the music) as one that either reframes critical questions about the play's intent in a palatable manner or as one that merely seeks to make the material more accessible. The adaptation's setting reclaims the American West for madcap white folks and, as we shall see in the show's incredibly racist and antisemitic portrayal of a character as a Jew depicting a Native American, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants at that.

To understand the connotations of this music, it's important to know its background and earlier use. The 1960s traditional Western in American television and film was one of stock characters, plots, and morals. Race often determined social status, with whites at the top of the hierarchy. White sheriffs and lawmen were the heroes of *Lawman*, *Bonanza*, *The Virginian*, and *Gunsmoke*, with lawful cowboys trailing close behind. Pioneering families, former soldiers, and those who fought against 'savage Indians' were celebrated for their pursuit of happiness in formal tribal lands. White men travelling alone were also appealing to audiences, especially if they were mysterious, excellent shots, and moved between the camps of law-abiders and bandits, such as the Man with No Name.

The music of these shows was comprised of equally stagnant clichés. This Western sound of 1960s television, drawing on music for Hollywood Westerns, was shaped by Anglo-American folk songs, hymn tunes, and the plaintive atmospheric sounds of open fourths and fifths and simple melodies. The *Gunsmoke* theme, for example, is comprised of a languid, diatonic melodic line in the strings and then guitar played over a 'clip-clop' rhythmic motif and timbre signifying hooves. The theme for *Bonanza* was slightly more upbeat, but also used the same rhythmic signifier for horses. Both themes had lyrics that, although they went unsung on the television broadcasts, spoke of riding old trails, seeing travellers safe on their way, and searching for luck and lucre in the West.

Like the music of television Westerns, the music for many film Westerns of this period was uncomplicated in substance and meaning, and highly exclusionary. In film, singing cowboys – archetypal good guys (with the emphasis on *guys*; 'cowgirls' and other women were relegated to the role of sidekick or wife or, in a few cases, the sex worker with the heart of gold) in the Western films of the 1930s and 1940s – such as Bob Steele, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Tex Ritter, all kept to a repertoire of songs that were in simple metres, used rhythms like the ubiquitous quaver-and-two-semiquavers motif to represent the movement of horses, had uncomplicated melodies that rarely extended beyond an octave in range, and had lyrics that spoke of riding herds, Western trails, open skies, the dust of the desert and trails, river crossings, being free, and missing sweethearts at home. With the exception of African-American actor Herb Jeffries, the 'Bronze Buckaroo', who starred in all-black Westerns, singing cowboys were young, white, clean-shaven, Christian men. The two cultural objects Harlib cites – the films *How the West Was Won* and *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* – date from 1962 and 1964, respectively. Both films are paeans to Manifest Destiny, the Gold Rush, and the idea that East Coast whites from lower socioeconomic classes should use (and abuse) the expanding frontier as a method of climbing the social ladder. Both include episodes of women making their way as entertainers in questionable venues on their way to marrying well and reaching the ultimate goal of social respectability, and the ends of these epics see their protagonists elevated to the *nouveau riche* in Colorado, having made their money through railroad contracts and mining. The use of music from the 1850s (or even original music in a style outside of this particular and deliberately chosen context) to represent the time and place would have avoided an apparent endorsement of an idealistic view of white colonisation

of the West. However, this soundscape, created by paying homage to such cultural explications of white migration and, in the context of the white-controlled media of the 1960s, ‘white flight’ to the suburbs, can be interpreted as supporting views of white privilege, segregation, and expansionism.

At the same time, Harlib’s own comments on the nature of ‘yee-haw’ music insinuated that such music is of and for those described by the MSC’s own promotional materials referred to as ‘country hick[s]’ (Anon. 2015a). The production’s treatment of some of the more minor characters cast them as racially different and dismissed them as even less cultured than the other ‘hicks’: these included tobacco-spitting characters and a Barney Fife-type square dance caller, among others. The production also included what reviewers delicately called a ‘lengthy flatulence competition’, as an example of what the producers apparently thought would be amusing to the ‘hicks’ who populate the setting (Anon. 2015e). Finally, a long joke – critically deemed extremely offensive and unfunny – at the end of the show, in which the character Pinch was cast as an ‘Indian Medicine Man’ complete with war paint, braids, and a feathered headdress, and spoke with a heavy Yiddish accent in the style of Mel Brooks, unequivocally confirmed attitudes towards Otherness and the stereotyping of such Others present in the production. All of these elements testify to the production’s attitudes towards non-white and poorer denizens of the West (Anon. 2015c). This aesthetic – that upwardly mobile cowboys are noble and poorer ‘hicks’ are laughable because of their lack of education, fancy duds, and accents – is what Harlib tapped into with her 1960s-style country music for *Comedy*.

Harlib’s original music began with a square dance to open the show, broadly signifying the production’s setting and approach and indicating to audiences that the production would cite various theatrical and cinematic constructs of a fantasy madcap Wild West, including physical humour such as slapstick. The music buttressed the costuming, which included *Red River*-style chaps, boots, and ten-gallon hats for the men, cowgirl-pinup costumes consisting of bustiers, full skirts, and cowboy boots for the women, and an ‘Indian’ in a buckskin outfit with fringe, a feathered headdress, and face paint. As Harlib intended, the square dance and other upbeat numbers offered audience members opportunities to clap their hands and stomp their feet and revel in the nostalgic portrayal of the West that the music offered.

Harlib’s songs were performed as interpolations between blocks of dialogue. Harlib created contrafacta (new words for old tunes) for pre-existing songs associated with the West, and based new songs on hits from the 1960s, including Peggy Lee’s ‘I’m a Woman’. While the music was successful in evoking the West, it was also problematic in that, in doing so, it carried with it many of the attitudes and beliefs of both the actual period and that from which the music was based as well, such as the idea that mental illness is funny, and that women’s roles, abilities, and activities should be strictly correlated with gender. Harlib retexted ‘Home on the Range’ as ‘My Master’s Deranged’, and penned ‘Roundup the Loonies’, a reference to the play’s scene in which the Courtesan and Adriana believe that the twins from Ephesus are mad; Harlib seems to have missed the point that what’s funny

here in the playtext is the confusion and silliness of Pinch trying to exorcise the men, not the fact that they might be mentally ill. The song 'Texas Wife' attempts to take on the socially and legally limited position of women in rural Texas, but Harlib based it on the 1962 song 'I'm a Woman', made famous by Peggy Lee, and the refrain of that song is that a woman can do anything: anything *domestic* and stereotypically feminine, that is. Harlib's song may be intended to be ironic, but if this is the case, then it was a failure: it functioned to reify the ideal woman of the mid-century fantasy of the West – that she can shoot and ride, but at the end of the day wants to look good and feed her man.

Harlib's reference to 'Raise a Ruckus Tonight', a song made popular by the roots band Old Crow Medicine Show, indicates that she has some familiarity with American roots music in its modern-day incarnation, which often seeks to celebrate and preserve music actually from the frontier West rather than mock it, treat it as an object for scorn, or replace it with suburban simulacra. It is unclear why she didn't adopt this approach throughout. As a result, the musical approach to *Comedy* is a mixed bag of musical genres that contribute to a confused message about the kind of West being portrayed on stage. This confusion carried over into execution in performance as well: the music was criticised as 'cw [Country-Western] simplistic' by one reviewer who nonetheless loved the lyrics, but other critics found the music too difficult for the performers to bring off successfully ('Review: A Comedy of Errors at Marin Shakespeare'). Further critical concerns included the clash of language styles between the original text and the songs, and the integration of the music, especially the use of fragments of pre-existing songs as asides to comment briefly on the action.

Ultimately, what was intended to be an audience-friendly soundscape that resituated the action of the play in the Wild West was a fraught confabulation that instead suggested the whitewashed and folksy West of the televisual and cinematic American 1960s, complete with casual racism, sexism, classism, and anti-semitism. While it may have created a cohesive musical atmosphere for the play, it did so at the expense of reifying character stereotypes, many of them insulting.

In the musical *Lone Star Love*, authors John L. Haber and Robert Horn bring the character of post-Civil War Texas to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where a penniless and dishonourably discharged ex-Sergeant, John Falstaff, pulls up in the small town of Windsor, Texas, set on making a fortune by romancing the town's two wealthiest women. This adaptation of Shakespeare as a Western tale is more culturally sensitive and nuanced than *A Comedy of Errors*. The play itself offers equal roles to all of the genders present, and by setting the story in antebellum Texas, it is plausible to have characters who are free men and women of colour or Native Americans. Because the directors keep to the playtext, which focuses on the personal interactions of individuals in a very small town, without adding larger political or social issues, the musical easily avoids the more problematic issues of colonialism, genocide, and Manifest Destiny that Westerns often raise. While it is true that the men, described as cattle ranchers, are likely conceived of as white, the music lampoons their privilege and position in society just as the playtext itself does. This particular fictional West is firmly entrenched in the

madcap, low-violence, happy-ending world of the post-war American musical, with a score drawing on historical Americana roots and country music, played by an onstage band of fiddles, banjo, guitar, harmonica, and percussion.

The Merry Wives of Windsor can be read in both its original form and in this adaptation as a commentary of issues of class, wealth, and the role of women in society and the economy (Gajowski and Rackin 2004). The play has had a robust musical afterlife: it has been adapted as an opera by Antonio Salieri (1799), Henry Bishop (1824), Michael William Balfe (1838), Carl Otto von Nicolai (1849), Giuseppe Verdi (1893), and Ralph Vaughan Williams (1928). The music for *Lone Star Love* was composed by Jack Herrick, a member of The Red Clay Ramblers. During the show's 2004–2005 off-Broadway run, which was preparation for a transfer to a Broadway theatre that never happened, the Ramblers took on the roles of Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym and served as the house band, playing on stage throughout each performance.

Described by the *New York Times* as 'sweet-tempered' and 'cheerfully hokey', the production presents a fantasy of the Wild West that sends up stereotypes of the men and empathises with the experiences of the women of the American West (Isherwood 2004). The plot is much like that of Shakespeare's play: Sgt. John Falstaff, a dishonourably discharged Confederate veteran from North Carolina, moseys into Windsor and goes about trying to seduce Aggie Ford and Margaret Anne Page, the clever wives of cattle ranchers. While he's up to his tricks and they're sending him down the river, young Miss Anne Page is trying to fix up her own romance with the yodelling cowboy Fenton. Thick Texas accents are used to turn some of the original language into jokes ('How dost thou?' Fenton asks Miss Quickly, who is posed with a feather duster), but most of the text is lightly rewritten in a jocularly country idiom full of dropped gs and phrases about 'doggies' and the prairie. Unlike *Comedy*, with its bawdy entertainments, *Lone Star Love* is 'pitched at a tween-friendly level' and is 'thoroughly innocuous' with 'an exuberance that skirts caricature or embraces it' (Isherwood).

The music for *Lone Star Love* is a mix of country, blues, Western, and Broadway ballads. The score serves more to comment on the action than to propel it, offering continual reification of the setting and approach that is broadly descriptive of the expected and familiar sounds of the West without being offensive or exclusionary. As Lynn Jacobson wrote in reviewing the show for *Variety*:

The show is filled with cowboy kitsch: yodelin' and ropin' and square-dancin' – even campy silent-movie footage of doggies stampedin' – all executed expertly. Clarke Thorell is plumb charming as a yodeling cowboy, and Chad Seib, Ryan Murray and Miguel A. Romero are a hoot as a trio of dancing ranch hands.

But the moments that are most affecting are sincere, not spoofy. Thorell, again, and ingenue Kara Lindsay share a heartfelt duet expressing love at first sight ('Prairie Moon') and Falstaff's musician pals rip into a bluesy *a capella* number ('Hard Times') that hits its emotional mark.

(Jacobson 2007)

The use of a Western musical language – one using pre-existing folk and cowboy songs and dance tunes, blues modes, four-part harmonies, an often nasal vocal timbre, and a rhythm section that emphasised a two-beat pattern with a strong backbeat – that largely disregards traditional associations of particular musical gestures with types of characters allows the score to offer a variety of opportunities of expression to all of the main characters. The one exception to this non-determinism – the pairing of archetypal French café music by accordion, clarinet, and violin with Caius – so perfectly captures Shakespeare’s original mocking of the French that it can, perhaps, be deemed homage to the playwright rather than nationalistic stereotyping: it is, in any account, a parody of most Broadway attempts to signify the French through music.

Female characters especially benefit from the non-gendered and unconventional uses of musical genre in the show. Just as Mistress Page and Mistress Ford wield the real power in *Wives*, Mrs Page and Mrs Ford of *Love* are the movers and shakers of Windsor, Texas. Their big number ‘World of Men’ is a Texas swing piece that references the independence women began to enjoy in the 1920s–1950s, when swing developed and became a North American phenomenon. ‘World of Men’ captures the instance in which the two women compare their letters from Falstaff and find that they are being used. The lyrics casually reference Shakespeare’s text, bringing together the worlds of antebellum Texas and Elizabethan England and finding accords between both worlds in that both historically often withheld giving full credit to women’s intellects. ‘World of Men’ borrows from the playtext, including calling Falstaff a ‘polecat’, as Ford does Falstaff when Ford finds Falstaff in women’s clothes in Act Four, Scene Two (4.2). The women quote directly from the play at the beginning of the title song, ‘Lone Star Love’: ‘We’ll leave a proof, by that which we will do,/Wives may be merry, and yet honest too’ (4.1.98–99). The full band and cast join together in a textual paraphrase in which the wives protest their innocence and rebuke the men for knowing nothing about the work they do and difficulties they face as women in Texas.

This vernacular music that cuts across class in popularity and performance also gives agency to characters with smaller roles. Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym are always around the edges of *Windsor*, doing Falstaff’s bidding and being abused by him. In *Love*, the trio has two ensemble numbers in which they voice their dissatisfaction with the dissolute Falstaff, and at the same time offer a glimpse as to why they stay with him. Their rollicking trio, accompanied by fiddle and drums, is a light two-step that references the non-stop pace of life on the frontier and the adventures that are possible for all of its residents as new technologies and customs develop there. Early in the show, Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym – played by members of the Ramblers – sing of their relationship with Falstaff:

Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym
 We’re not proper and prim
 We go ridin’ along
 Doin’ wrong, followin’ him.
 Who is this ramblin’ knight –

24 Kendra Preston Leonard

Runs away from a fight?
 Drunken, greedy, and mean,
 Too fat to be seen in natural light.

The music references the men's trek from the Carolinas – where the players get in a few Appalachian fiddle licks – to Texas, where the tempo picks up and hurries along, the music becoming a little rougher and more country, and eventually to California, where a note of surfer rock creeps in, forecasting the future. The instrumentation is redolent of both the bands that would have performed in Texas saloons and camps at the time and of the scoring for cowboy films. Likewise, 'Hard Times' is Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym's recap of their attempts to undermine Falstaff's plans when he tries to cut them off financially. In this case, they sing in a plaintive *a cappella* that suggests the harmonies of four-part singing and the nasality popular in the West as well as the privations of which they sing: 'dried-up beans and salty bacon' and being 'broke and plum disgusted' with their sore bellies and aching bones.

Lone Star Love ends with a quintessentially Western piece that brings us back to the influence of the spaghetti Western and its scores as ironic reinterpretations of the romanticising of the West in American culture. The first is a ballad with a simple plucked melodic line and an atmospheric harmonica that references the period from the 1830s to about 1910 during which the instrument was highly popular in the American West because it was cheap, easy to learn, and portable. The harmonica was featured in the Western film *Once Upon in the West* (1968), scored by Ennio Morricone; the theme song for *Maverick*; and the popular Western song 'Red River Valley'. These works made the harmonica, like the whistle of the Man with No Name films, a fixture in the soundscape of the imaginary West. Here the sounds of the West signify not only the setting but also the philosophy of the musical and the original play: don't underestimate anyone. Indeed, 'don't underestimate anyone' might well be the shared thesis statement of Shakespearean plays and the Western.

Because the music for *Lone Star Love* by the Red Clay Ramblers is so deeply grounded in a multiplicity of American musics, it not only avoids the implicit pro-colonialism of 1960s television Western themes, but also mostly sidesteps the thick, homogenous, orchestral sound of the Broadway musical. Although the treatment of plot does emulate that of the post-war musical, as I mention previously, the music is a significant departure from the model in which a large orchestra (sometimes plus synthesiser or pre-recorded materials) accompanies a cast in a recognisable march through overture, ensemble number, solo ballad, duet, dance number, and so on. In using Western music derived from, influenced by, and in some cases preserved from several musical traditions from the historical, as opposed to fictional, American West, *Lone Star Love* pays homage to both facts and fictions of the West without being complicit in the racism and other problematic biases that mark the West of *A Comedy of Errors*.

By bringing the West and the music of the West into Shakespeare's plays and setting performances of the plays in the West, such productions demonstrate the

multitude of ways in which Shakespeare can be reframed or combined with more recent elements of popular culture in order to reach a wide variety of audiences. The use of Western musical tropes in the staging of early modern plays appears to function in one way, but with multiple diverse outcomes. Ultimately, the music of the American West creates a citational soundscape that provides audiences with familiar aural signifiers of a production's geo- and chronological locations. But these musical citations, as I have demonstrated, can create vastly different results in meaning. Just as visual or linguistic cues reveal intent and approach, so do the musical choices in a production. They can help define or reinscribe our understanding of Shakespeare's work, as the ironic whistle did in *Bard on the Beach's Shrew*, or they can regress us socially and intellectually and suggest that the most comprehensible elements of Shakespeare are crass and crude jokes and bigotry, as the music for *A Comedy of Errors* maintains. On Shakespeare's 'wide and universal theatre', the music of the American West allows for both, for better or worse. But with so many possibilities available for every production, I argue that it is just as easy to employ music in such a way as to illuminate the playtext and provide insight and entertainment for audiences as it is to denigrate cultural identities and communities. The mythologised West – and some of the real West, too – was a place of oppression and social complexities as well as new equalities and opportunities – conditions with which we still struggle. When we bring those aspects of the West to early modern texts that depict similar difficulties and prospects, we should make those connections and parallels clear, using all of the arts at our disposal. That's what truly makes Shakespeare relevant in any time and place.

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