

Use of noise and music in "the tempest" by william shakespeare essay sample

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



Many times throughout *The Tempest*, Shakespeare would couple his use of a bare stage with music and other various theatrical noises in order to create a deeper connection with his audience, whether they are reading the script, or watching the play being performed by a cast of actors. It is said that music is one of the defining elements to any production. With the right music and noises, the same exact scene can quickly turn from a happy scene, to one of complete horror. It all depends on the music that accompanies the actions being displayed. Music can also intensify the emotions or actions that we read or see in a book or movie. In *The Tempest*, Ariel, the mystical spirit summoned by Prospero, and his fellow spirits provide some eerie and wondrous musical sounds that play a part in making the emotion of any scene.

Painting pictures with their voices and controlling the outcome of what is happening in the play are both good examples of how the spirits voices are a vital part to Shakespeare's work. For example, when luring the spellbound Ferdinand towards his future wife, Miranda, Ariel and his fellow sprites caress the shipwrecked prince with harmonious notes which captivate him and usher him towards Miranda. If they would have had harsh voices full of contempt and anger, then Ferdinand would not have followed them. In contrast to Ferdinand hearing Ariel's delightful melodies, Sebastian, Alonso, Antonio, and Gonzalo receive a very different message. "Alonso: What harmony is this? My good friends, hark! Gonzalo: Marvellous sweet music!

Enter Prospero above, invisible. Enter several strange Shapes, bringing in a banquet; they dance about it with gentle actions of salutation; and, inviting the King, & c. to eat, they depart" (Shakespeare Scene 3)

When the four men attempt to feast on a luxurious banquet Prospero has designed for them, claps of thunder and lightning consume the stage and noises cry forth from Ariel and the spirits, disturbing the men and causing fear to come upon them while also scaring the spectators of the play.

With all of the various noises and uses of music throughout the play, it actually becomes easy to state that music is the vital center of *The Tempest* that cords together the play in its entirety. The music in *The Tempest* is always sounding and always affecting and shaping the lives of the characters and their surroundings. Often directionless and mysterious in its meaning, the music in the play provides a context for Prospero's magical powers and becomes, through the course of the play, a powerfully symbol of this magic. This is just one of the many uses of music throughout the play. In *The Tempest*, music also serves as the medium through which order emerges from chaos and vice-versa. It is the agent of portraying the emotions and actions of suffering, learning, growth, and freedom. *The Tempest* could not exist without its music, whether it is the strange and solemn notes that accompany the magic banquet, the springy melodic singing of Ariel, or the drunken ramblings and awkward sounds of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo. All of these bear an intimate relationship to each other and they all relate to Prospero's one significant action which is his effort to recover his dukedom

and to bring his enemies to recognition of their past and their errors. The first song of the play is Ariel's "Come unto these yellow sands" (I, ii), which he sings to a grieving Ferdinand that has washed up on the shore of the beach. The tempest has finally subsided, and Ariel's song celebrates the simplicity of the calm and safe earth into which Ferdinand has been transported to. The verse of the song that reads "then take hands," looks ahead to the moment at the end of the play when all of its characters are joined inside Prospero's magic circle. Music also brings people together in *The Tempest* while saving lives at the same time. The magic which Prospero had used to invoke the tempest in the beginning of the play now enchants Ferdinand after he crashes onto the island. It draws him further into the island and toward Miranda. This is the first crucial step toward their eventual marriage.

While this example of music shows how it can bring two people together in love and eventually a relationship, Shakespeare is also able to use it to threaten a character's life, showing the cornucopia of musical arts. Towards the beginning of Scene II act I Ariel enters playing a piece of "solemn music" (II, i,) that lulls Gonzalo and Alonso to sleep. Gonzalo, in his simplicity and warm-heartedness, submits most easily, but Alonso soon follows and both are put to sleep by Ariel's music. Even Caliban, who has been on the island much longer than the men is affected by Ariel's melodies.

"The isle is full of noises," he tells Stephano and Trinculo, "sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not" (III, ii) When Sebastian and Antonio plot to take the lives of Alonso and Gonzalo however, Prospero's music

urgently intervenes. Ariel comes in once again and sings a warning song, "While you here do snoring lie" (II, i), into Gonzalo's ear waking the sleeping man before his enemies take his life. The music that had induced their slumber becomes the agent of their deliverance saving Alonso and Gonzalo and helping them escape catastrophe. From these examples, we can see that music played a pivotal part in the making and delivery of *The Tempest*. Without music, no doubt the tempest would have still been an excellent play, but the addition of music allows the scenes to come to life and affect the audience in a deeper way than words alone.