

Music Transformed to Magic in *The Tempest*

『テンペスト』における魔法に変容する音楽

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Abstract: Shakespeare's *The Tempest* contains several scenes in which songs are sung. Ariel's songs, in particular, are songs of magic, and it is interesting to note that the practice of magic is accompanied by a song. According to Ficino's theory of magic, music under magic contributes to the harmony of the world (universe). However, magic and music are not necessarily synchronous. It can be supposed that combining magic and music in theatre was not a common practice in those days but a unique device of Shakespeare's art. In this presentation, I would like to confirm this supposition and examine what Shakespeare seeks by uniting magic and a song in the magical island.

シェイクスピアの『テンペスト』では歌が歌われる場面が何度も出てくる。特にエーリアルの歌は魔法の歌であり、魔法が歌と共に実行されるのは興味深い。フィッチーノの魔法の理論によれば、魔法の下での音楽は世界（宇宙）の調和に寄与する。しかしながら、魔法と音楽は必ずしも同時に行使されるべきものではない。演劇の舞台において魔法と音楽を結びつけることは当時は一般的ではなく、これはシェイクスピア独自の工夫であったと考えられる。本論文ではこの仮説について検証し、シェイクスピアが、魔法の島において魔法と音楽を統合することに何の意味を求めていたのかを考察したい。

Keywords: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, magic, music,
シェイクスピア、『テンペスト』、魔法、魔術、音楽

1 . Preface

While the words 'magic' and 'music' have similarities in spelling and pronunciation, they are completely different in meaning. The *Oxford English Dictionary*¹ does not show a definition of the word 'magic' as 'music' or 'song' and neither is the word 'music' described as 'magic'.

However, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), magic performed by the fairy Ariel is

often realized to the accompaniment of music and song. The affairs on Prospero's island are interpreted as a dream or magic in itself. The island is filled with music and song; magic is united with them.

Was it then a common idea at the time, that magic is realized to the accompaniment of music and/or song? Or was Shakespeare only using music and song as a stage effect?

This paper clarifies the meaning behind Shakespeare's use of music in Prospero's magical island.

2 . Song and music in *The Tempest*

Each of the five acts of *The Tempest* contains a scene that includes the singing of a song or the playing of music; moreover, the play contains more than ten scenes in which a song is sung. Here, Caliban's following speech "Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not" (*The Tempest*, 3.2.135–6)² clearly indicates that the island is full of delightful music.

While Caliban perceives the various sounds, songs and music only as a comfort, Prospero makes practical use of them as a magical art. In Act 5 Scene 1, Prospero speaks of music and magic as "when I have required / Some heavenly music (which even now I do) / To work mine end upon their senses that / This airy charm is for" (5.1.51–4)³. For Prospero, to play the solemn music of Heaven (heavenly music) is a means of magic to awaken people and to bring them to their senses. Furthermore, in Act 4 Scene 1, Prospero says, "Spirits, which by mine art / I have from their confines called to enact / My present fancies" (4.1.120–2)⁴. Here, 'art' may imply magic and 'fancies' may refer to Prospero's imagination. Prospero generates spirits such as Ariel and allows them to execute magic according to his imagination.

Prospero himself does not play a musical instrument or sing songs, but he allows the spirits in the play to do so instead of him. "Come unto these yellow sands..." (1.2.376–87)⁵ and "Full fathom five thy father lies..." (1.2.397–405)⁶ are magical songs that can be heard when Ariel leads Ferdinand to Prospero's place in Act 1 Scene 2.

Ferdinand, who hears the latter song and admires it, says "This is no mortal business nor no sound / That the earth owes" (1.2.407–8)⁷. He regards it not as a song of this world but of Heaven. As mentioned before, Ferdinand's words suggest that the two songs of Ariel are 'heavenly music'. In these scenes, Prospero's magic, which is exercised to the accompaniment of music and Ariel's song, acts on Ferdinand. Similarly, in Act 2 Scene 1, Ariel's magical song alerts Gonzalo to danger and awakens him when Alonso and Gonzalo

are in danger⁸.

Thus, *The Tempest* is full of music and realizes a world where spirits sing a song of magic.

3 . Contemporary plays of magic: Doctor Faustus etc.

In England, it has been claimed that “plays on magic suddenly became of vital concern in the 1580s” (Mebane, John S., *Renaissance Magic & the Return of the Golden Age*)⁹. Before *The Tempest* appeared, there were several famous plays on magic. One of the plays that influenced *The Tempest* was Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (1589)¹⁰. This is a story derived from the German tradition, and a magician and devils appear in it. While the play contains a chorus¹¹, its role is to narrate the story, and it does not accompany magic. In addition, three spirits appear in the play, but no one sings a song or utters a word. Scene 16, provides the stage direction ‘*Music sounds*¹² but contains no magic.

Both plays, *The Tempest* and *Doctor Faustus*, have a magician as a character. However, while *The Tempest* is full of songs and music, *Doctor Faustus* has hardly any. Since *Doctor Faustus* was well known in its day, it is supposed that in those days to have magic accompanied by music in a play was unique to Shakespeare.

To test this supposition, I examined the presence of the chorus, music, singing and songs using descriptions of stage directions in the above plays and two other famous plays, Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist* (1610)¹³ and Pierre Corneille’s *L’illusion Comique* (1635)¹⁴. The results are as follows.

	<i>The Tempest</i>	<i>Dr. Faustus</i>	<i>The Alchemist</i>	<i>L’illusion Comique</i>
Chorus	×		×	×
Music/play			¹⁵	×
Song by an actor		×	×	×
Magic accompanied by song or music		×	×	×

Table 1. The presence of chorus, music, singing and songs in the plays

This table indicates that uniting music and magic was not common in the plays of the time; this was a unique characteristic of *The Tempest* and therefore is regarded as a unique trait of Shakespeare among the four famous plays.

4 . ‘Music of the Universe’ and magic

This section examines the relationship between magic and music using the magic theory of the times. The Arden edition of *The Tempest*¹⁶ comments that Prospero’s magic was influenced by Marsilio Ficino’s (1433–99) neo-Platonic theory¹⁷.

According to an explanatory note in a book of *The Tempest* by Taishukan (a Japanese publishing company)¹⁸, the relationship between magic and music is related to the understanding of the metaphysical meaning of music. Pythagoras developed a new concept of the philosophical theory of harmony: he argued that a harmonious order of the philosophical theory of harmony: he argued that a harmonious order of ‘cosmic music’ is created by the unification of mathematics and music. The idea was inherited by Plato and reached Britain during Shakespeare’s time¹⁹.

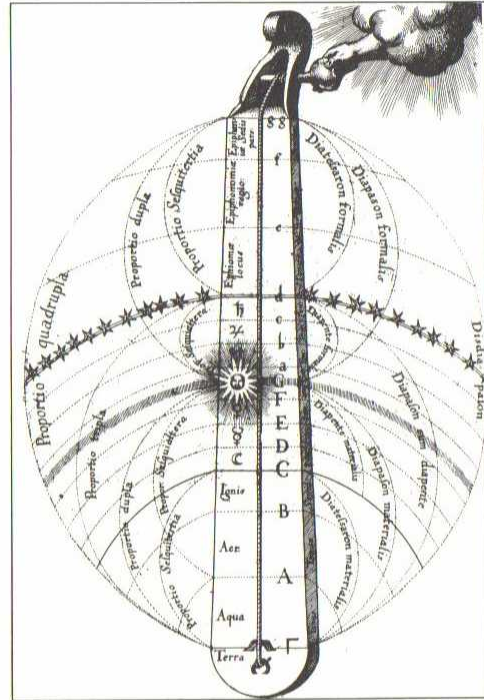


図2 <宇宙の音楽>を表現した一絃琴の図
(17世紀初頭、フラッド『両宇宙誌』より)

<宇宙の音楽>すなわち大宇宙の数的比例と音楽的調和の構造を表現した図。地・水・風・火の自然界から惑星の天界を経て至高天にまで張られた一本の弦は、神の手によって調律されている。

Fig. 1 ‘Cosmic music’²⁰

Figure 1 represents this ‘cosmic music’. It demonstrates that a one string set in space is tuned by the hand of God. Magic may be the skill required to bring about harmony.

Regarding this, Mebane also comments on Ficino’s theory in his book. He writes that “Harmonious sounds, accompanied with appropriate lyrics, are ideally suited to bring our entire being, body and soul, into perfect harmony.”²¹ This clearly indicates that the harmony of music is connected to the harmony of people and space.

Shakespeare allowed spirits to intervene and let them play musical instruments and sing songs to make magic. This may be a new technique to transform music into magic. Since the idea of magic accompanied by music does not contradict the theory of harmony, the people at the time could accept it easily.

5 . Hope for the future

Finally, let us consider what Prospero hopes to achieve through his magic. His speech in Act 5 Scene 1 mentions his purpose for using magic: “Yet with my nobler reason ‘gainst my fury / Do I take part. The rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent, / The sole drift of my purpose doth extend / Not a frown further” (5.1.26–30)²². For Prospero, virtue as a purpose is more important than vengeance.

The Tempest, on the other hand, is a play of a wish and a prayer. Prospero’s epilogue is the effusion of Shakespeare’s strong hope for the future. The destination Prospero seeks to reach is a world where magic is abandoned and human beings live by their own powers. Prospero’s decision to abandon magic does not necessarily imply a despair concerning magic because he overcame a number of difficulties using magic. I suppose that Prospero nurtures the hope that in the future, the world would have no need to use magic, based on the condition that the present world has become full of delightful harmony. Magic accompanied by music changed the human beings who came to the magical island into people who consider harmony extremely important. It changed individual and personal harmony, and this led to a reconciliation of all the people on the island. I believe that his magic achieved its purpose when people regained the heart to cherish harmony. I also perceived Shakespeare’s warm trust towards those seeking the reconciliation of people, harmony and peace in the world.

We who live in the 21st century have a magic wand we call ‘science and technology’. However, this magic still lacks the power to lead the world to peace. There still exist serious problems such as terrorism and conflict. We need to wave the magic wand of ‘morals’ and ‘ethics’ for a better future.

Notes

¹ Oxford University Press, *Oxford English Dictionary (Second Edition)* on CD-ROM Version 3.1, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004

² Shakespeare, William, (ed.) Vaughan, Virginia Mason and Vaughan, Alden T., *The Tempest* (The Arden Shakespeare Third Series), first published by Thompson Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1999, reprinted by The Arden Shakespeare, London, 2000, p.232

³ *ibid* p.266

⁴ *ibid* p.251

⁵ *ibid* p.177 (1.2.376–87)

Enter FERDINAND [,] and ARIEL, invisible, playing and singing.

ARIEL [*Sings.*]

Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands;
Courtsied when you have, and kissed
The wild waves whist;
Foot it featly here and there, (380)
And sweet sprites bear
The burthen. (*burden dispersedly*)

SPIRITS Hark, hark! Bow-wow,
The watch dogs bark, bow-wow.

ARIEL Hark hark, I hear, (385)
The strain of strutting chanticleer
Cry cock a diddle dow.

⁶ *ibid* p.178 (1.2.397–405)

ARIEL [*Sings.*]

Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes,
Nothing of him that doth fade (400)
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell,

SPIRITS Ding-dong.

ARIEL Hark! now I hear them.

SPIRITS Ding dong, bell.

⁷ *ibid* p.178 (1.2.406–8)

FERDINAND

The ditty does remember my drowned father.
This is no mortal business nor no sound
That the earth owes. I hear it now above me.

⁸ *ibid* p.205 (2.1.301–6)

ARIEL *Sings in Gonzalo's ear.*

While you here do snoring lie,
Open-eyed conspiracy
His time doth take.
If of life you keep a care,
Shake off slumber and beware. (305)
Awake, Awake!

⁹ Mebane, John S., *Renaissance Magic & the Return of the Golden Age*, the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1989, p.6

Plays on magic suddenly became of vital concern in the 1580s and continued to be such a compelling subject on the stage until the 1620s, when interest in plays on sorcery and witchcraft gradually declined.

¹⁰ Marlowe, Christopher, (trans.) Danchin, Fernand-C., “La Tragique histoire du Docteur Faust” (*The Tragical History of D. Faustus*, London, 1604) (bilingual : in English and French), Les Belle Letters, Paris, 2004

¹¹ *ibid.* Chorus appears in Sc.1, 8, 10 and 17 (the final Sc.).

- ¹² *ibid* p.102, after line 25 in Sc.16
- ¹³ Jonson, Ben, *The Alchemist* (Vol. XLVII, Part 2. The Harvard Classics), New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14; Bartleby.com, 2001, <http://www.bartleby.com/47/2/>, [2005.08.17]
- ¹⁴ Corneille, Pierre, (ed.) Robert, Marc and Marguliew, Henri, (notes) Reguig-Noya, Delphine, *L'illusion comique*, 1639, Hatier, Paris, 2002,
Corneille, Pierre, (ed.) Cornud-Payron, Mireille, *L'illusion comique*, 1660, Hachette Livre, Paris, 1994
- ¹⁵ Jonson, Ben, *The Alchemist* (Vol. XLVII, Part 2. The Harvard Classics), New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14; Bartleby.com, 2001, <http://www.bartleby.com/47/2/>, [2005.08.17], Act 3 Sc. 5
FACE. Keep nothing that is transitory about you.
[*Aside to* SUBTLE.] Bid Dol play music.—Look, the elves are come.
[DOL. *plays on the cittern within.*]
- ¹⁶ Shakespeare, William, (ed.) Vaughan, Virginia Mason and Vaughan, Alden T., *The Tempest* (The Arden Shakespeare Third Series), first published by Thompson Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1999, reprinted by The Arden Shakespeare, London, 2000
- ¹⁷ *ibid* p.62
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- ¹⁸ Shakespeare, William, (ed., introduction and notes) Fujita, Minoru, *The Tempest* (The Taishukan Shakespeare) (English text and Japanese introduction and notes), Taishukan Publishing Co., Tokyo, 1990
- ¹⁹ *ibid* p.14
- ²⁰ *ibid* p.15
Original source: *Utriusque Cosmi Maioris scilicet et Minoris Metaphysica Physica Atque Technica Historia* (1617) of Robert Fludd (1574–1637).
Book's title of Fludd is cited from <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/fludd1.html> on [2005/08/20].
- ²¹ Mebane, John S., *Renaissance Magic & the Return of the Golden Age*, the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1989, p.31
- ²² Shakespeare, William, (ed.) Vaughan, Virginia Mason and Vaughan, Alden T., *The Tempest* (The Arden Shakespeare Third Series), first published by Thompson Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1999, reprinted by The Arden Shakespeare, London, 2000, p.264

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