

Review

Shakespeare and *All Our Yesterdays*

¹Sidney Homan and ²David Homan

¹Department of English, 4008 Turlington Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611, USA. Corresponding author's email: shakes@ufl.edu; 352-378-9166.

²America Israel Cultural Foundation, 1140 Broadway, Suite 304, New York, New York 10001, USA. E-mail: david@homanmusic.com; 212-557-1600.

Accepted 24 June 2014

In the fourth of the five movements of the suite *All Our Yesterdays*, a piece for orchestra portraying the various dimensions of Alzheimer's, an actor comes onstage, an old man, suffering from the disease, who can recall his life only through quoting lines from Shakespeare. *All Our Yesterdays* is examined from five perspectives: two real life events that were the genesis of the piece; the use of Shakespeare's text in movement 4; a note on scoring the piece from the composer; the rehearsal process, the performance itself, and the larger issue of an actor's working with musicians; and some more general thoughts on the combination of words and music, or the collaboration between actor and musicians.

This essay charts the evolution of the collaboration among composer, musicians, and actor, and, along with an analysis of the performance itself, explores the interface between music and theatre. In this instance the composer (David Homan) and the actor (Sidney Homan, a Shakespearean scholar) are father and son.

Keywords: Shakespeare, performance, Macbeth, music

All Our Yesterdays, an original work for musical ensemble and actor exploring Alzheimer's from the perspective of both the caregiver and the patient, had its premier at the Merkin Concert Hall in New York on February 12, 2004 (*All Our Yesterdays*, 2004). Scored for flute, string quartet, oboe, clarinet, and piano, it has five movements, with an actor joining the ensemble in the fourth. Each movement expands on the line from *Macbeth*: "At the edge, it comes to you that despite our fears, all our yesterdays, have been resolved."

All Our Yesterdays presented the challenge of an actor's working with musicians, creating a character in collaboration with a score played live onstage, one that

was a coequal partner in establishing that character, rather than mere background music. Given the fact that my son wrote the score and conceived the character of the old man, there were also very personal challenges. Besides playing that old man, and having my son as my director, in consultation with him I selected and arranged the passages from Shakespeare.

After describing the basic structure and import of this work, I consider *All Our Yesterdays* from five perspectives: two real life events that were the genesis of the piece; the use of Shakespeare's text in movement 4; a note on scoring the piece from the

composer; the rehearsal process, the performance itself, and the larger issue of an actor's working with musicians; and some more general thoughts on the combination of words and music, or the collaboration between actor and musicians.

Movement 1 ("At the Edge") deals with the initial shock of the child whose parent has Alzheimer's, and the realization that he or she will have to take on the role of caregiver. In Movement Two ("That Despite Our Fears"), given the enormity of the task, the caregiver is tempted to retreat into the self, but later sees that the narrowly defined world of the loved one is, after all, not so overwhelming. In Movement Three ("That Despite Our Fears") reality sets in: the task may last a lifetime; nor is the Alzheimer's patient always pleasant or easy to live with. In the fourth movement ("All our Yesterdays") the musicians are joined by an old man who can recall his life only through lines remembered from Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. And in the final movement ("Have Been Resolved") the patient comes to peace with himself and his condition, while the caregiver finds a deceptively simple resolution: not to have any expectations.

The evolution of this work is a circuitous one and related to the challenges described above.

In the summer of 1984 while vacationing in St. Petersburg, Florida, I was happily watching my sons playing at the edge of the ocean. From the far end of the otherwise deserted beach I saw an old man making his labored way towards us. As he approached I realized he was talking to himself, babbling about "them" and "demons" and a host of other imaginary forces preying on him. In my heart of hearts, I hoped he would pass us by. But he didn't.

Curiously, once we began to exchange greetings and small talk, he was able to focus on our conversation. Oh, at times his thoughts would wander, and he was more detailed and coherent in speaking of the past than the present. Still, ours was in every sense a normal conversation, graced by the old man's sophisticated prose style. I soon found out the history of what was at present a sad, lonely life. He was in his nineties; his wife had died years earlier and now he lived alone in a tiny efficiency apartment near the beach. "A father, watching his children, you seemed a likely candidate, someone who wouldn't object to passing a few moments with a senior citizen," he said with a twinkle in his eyes. He had been a graduate student at Harvard--my own graduate school--in the 1920s, and the "favorite pupil" of the English Department's great Shakespearean scholar G. L. Kittredge. However, just before he was to begin work

on a doctoral dissertation, his father, who owned a watch manufacturing company in New York, died and the son had to take over the business, where he had remained until twenty years ago, before settling in Florida. The dissertation was never written, but as he proudly told me, "I've kept up with that Shakespeare all these years." When he found that I was a Shakespearean scholar at the University of Florida, he issued a challenge. To a background of my boys' splashing and romping in the surf, he suggested that we test each other's knowledge of "the master playwright--a sort of duel," each reciting lines for the other to identify by play, character, and, if possible, the specific moment in the plot. Then he added with a mock boast, "And make those lines as obscure as possible since I really know my stuff." I took up the challenge and promptly lost, identifying nine of the ten lines he offered, while he racked up a perfect score. At this point one of my boys came up and tugged at my arm, wanting me to play. With that, the old man excused himself with, "I must be off, and leave you to your youngsters, but not before we exchange addresses." As he made his way down the beach, I noticed that while he had been so vibrant during our contest, once again he seemed very old and decrepit, and that the voices had returned. I am not sure how much my son David, who was a mere thirty feet away during this conversation, heard of the encounter, but a few years later as a bedtime story I would tell him and his brother about this curious meeting. I like to imagine that in some subtle way the old man who could quote and identify Shakespeare so adroitly had made an impression on both my children. By the way, he and I continued to write each other, until his death seven years later, each letter beginning with an unidentified quote to challenge the other.

Another real-life event would lead directly to the creation of *All Our Yesterdays*. When David was in high school, several times a week he would go over to our neighbor's house to watch her husband while she went out on errands or business. Our neighbor had been a distinguished scientist at the university, as well as a gifted sculptor. His massive copper statues still dot the beautifully landscaped grounds around their house. He, however, was now in the final stage of Alzheimer's and it was a sad sight indeed to see this man, once so vivacious and brilliant, and talented, this marvelous soul who had moved easily between science and art, now reduced to glum old man, muttering incoherently, sometimes silent for hours and then suddenly bursting out in fits of unintelligible anger. With a special talent and patience in taking care of him, David soon discovered the salutary effects of his playing the piano for the old man, entertaining him with his own compositions, even trying out for him works in progress. On those increasingly rare moments when

our neighbor would speak, it was to comment on the music, and such comments would inevitably lead to a stream of conscious discourse on his life, especially events from years ago, when he was David's age. I believe my son's time with my neighbor had a profound effect on both of them, and I can still see them together, David at the piano, the old man motionless, propped up in an armchair and yet somehow feeling the music. Deep within that tortured brain and heart, I like to think that he was responding to it, in his own unique way.

In movement 4 of *All Our Yesterdays* Shakespeare's text, of course, carried with its centuries of performances and hence interpretations from directors, actors, and scholars. In this instance that text now served a new dramatic situation, that of the Alzheimer's patient speaking through Shakespeare. To some degree--but only to some degree since we could not distort the actual text--the lines would be recast. Here was the challenge: to be faithful to the playwright even as we transferred his text to a new situation. Music would not just complement the text, like that Greek chorus or "fellow actor," but be an equal partner. Indeed, the relationship may not have been *that* equal, for in performance the actor was "another one of the musicians," as the director reminded me. It is revealing, I think, that actors often adopt the musician's term in referring to their voice as an "instrument." I also confess to feeling inferior to the professional musicians with whom I would be performing. That none of them were actors was my sole saving grace. I was also to some degree playing myself--an old man, my son's "old man," given, I must admit, to moments of forgetfulness, a lecturer carrying onstage with him his black folder of notes as I greeted the audience, a situation that on campus I knew very well indeed.

There is an arc or "story" in Movement 4, though, in a parallel to the confused mind of the victim of Alzheimer's, that arc has many fits and starts, regressions, moments when the narration doubles back, or when lines from earlier in the movement return, often with radically new or different meanings. Dressed in a ratty old bathrobe, carrying a black folder under his arm as if he were some aged professor about to give a lecture, the old man takes the stage. At once disoriented and yet delighted to see the musicians, he commands them to "play on" ("If music be the food of love, play on," from *Twelfth Night*). He knows that "the man that hath no music in himself . . . is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils" (*The Merchant of Venice*). But

his pleasure in seeing both the musicians and the audience vanishes as he raises anguished questions: "Where have I been? Where am I? Is this a vision? Is this a dream?" (*The Comedy of Errors*). Fingering his bathrobe, he cries out, "What place is this? All the skill I have remembers not these garments" (*King Lear*). Latching on to the Elizabethan word "sad" or contemplative (from Antonio's opening line in *The Merchant of Venice*), he is depressed at the thought of his insignificance, of being, like Antipholus in *The Comedy of Errors*, "a drop of water that in the ocean seeks another drop"—a lost love perhaps, someone to share his grief. Touching his face, feeling the ravages of old age, he knows that those same "hours that with gentle work did frame the lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell will play the tyrant to the very same" ("Sonnet 5"). He speaks here not just to himself but, like a lecturer, shares what wisdom he has with his audience.

Then, in an abrupt change of mood, he tries to find some virtue in old age. "So long as youth and thou [here he converts Shakespeare's young man to the woman he loves] are of one date" he feels "younger" ("Sonnet 22"). His "comfort" is "that of old age, that ill layer-up of beauty, can do no more spoil upon [his] face," as he reworks to his own purposes, consciously or not, Hal's romantic lines to the French princess. Thus comforted, he suddenly calls up memories of his love, but that love is mixed with death, as he imagines himself to be Juliet embracing her dead Romeo: "Eyes look your last! Arms, take your last embrace! And lips, O you the doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss a dateless bargain to engrossing death." Still, having confronted death, he now casts himself as a young lover, invoking the night, that "light and spirits . . . become . . . well" (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), or the moon Hippolyta imagines at the beginning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as she anticipates the consummation of her marriage to Theseus: "Then the moon, like to a silver bow new bent in heaven, shall behold the night of our solemnities." In the most affirmative section of Movement 4 he recalls his lover's voice, "ever soft, and low," though again he rips the line from its tragic context as King Lear struggles onstage with the dead body of his daughter Cordelia.

With the rapid, often unfathomable change of emotions to which the Alzheimer's patient is so often subject, he then gives sway to despair. His soul is "the center of [his] sinful earth" (*Sonnet 146*). Like Richard II he has "wasted time, and now doth time waste [him]." As so often happens in this movement, Lear's lines, his painful recognition of his own absurdity, return to haunt the old man: "I am a very foolish, fond old man, fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less" and, from later in the play, "I am old and foolish." Like Lear, he begs the god, if they "do love old men, [to] forgive

and forget.”

In the movement's third major change, the old man leaves the music stand and comes downstage to speak more directly to the audience. He sees himself as an actor, who “play[s] . . . in one person many people” (*Richard II*), a “poor player that struts and frets his hour” (*Macbeth*), or “an unperfect actor on the stage who with his fear is put besides his part” (“Sonnet 23”). This theatrical perspective is agonizing for he knows all he does is unreal, “actions that a man might play” (*Hamlet*), his life “a derision,” a “dream and fruitless vision” (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). But, no less, admitting how insubstantial his life is, how fleeting, aware that he himself is merely filling out a role already cast, he also gains the confidence to convey to the audience what he has learned from his experiences : “Love that well which thou must leave ere long” (*Sonnet 73*). Knowing now he is a fool, a “shadow” (from Puck's epilogue to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), he is also “rewarded” with a picture of his love, as in Leontes's miraculous vision of the supposedly dead Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*: “I saw her coral lips to move and with her hands she did perfume the air.” He knows now that “nothing in this wide universe [he can] call [his] own, save [his love], [his] rose” who is his “all” (“Sonnet 109”).

Through the lines from Shakespeare (the full script has almost 150 quotations), which allow him to speak to us even as they define in painful clarity his condition, his own growing awareness of time and disease and loss, he is now able to be affirmative, somewhat balancing his earlier despair. As he returns to the music stand, he remembers Portia's own optimistic “How far this little candle throws his beam. So shines a good deed in a naughty world.” And he now has a serenity like that of Hamlet entering the throne room for the fatal duel with Laertes: “If it [death, or any eventuality] be not now, it is to come; if it is to come, it be not now; if it be not now, yet it will come.” And when he revisits the lines from *Macbeth* giving the work its title—“Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day, and all our yesterdays have lighted fool the way to dusty death”—the sting is gone: he is resigned and, to some degree, serene. He combines the parallel lines from *King Lear* and *Hamlet*: “The ripeness is all” and “The readiness is all.” All that we can be is “ready,” prepared for death, ready psychologically, spiritually, emotionally. Just before he exits the stage, the old man quotes Lear's foolishly optimistic prediction to Cordelia that they “will sing like birds in i'th cage,” exchanging “blessing[s]” and “forgiveness,” and in the process taking upon themselves “the mystery of things.” Like the father and son who assembled the text have used, he has used Shakespeare for his own purposes, at times refashioning the lines to convey his mood, perhaps

even misinterpreting Shakespeare. But as with the old man on the beach, Shakespeare has become the organ through which he can speak, his lines, as Samuel Beckett has said of speech itself, a way of avoiding the abyss of silence (Beckett, 1965). His own voice has been one of the instruments on stage, in a suite of five movements that complements the actor, even as it envelops him.

With this fourth movement, the text came first. By scoring a set piece of material, as its composer I was able to give the composition a new breath and vision in response to the words. The passages from Shakespeare served as guidelines for musical phrases and melodies, but the music itself did not follow the same guidelines. One purpose the music did serve was to signal to the actor when he was getting behind in his lines, or let him know he had delivered lines too quickly and needed to wait for the next musical change. In music the performance is set, each piece controlled by tempo, meter, and rhythm. Musicians vary this to bring life to the performance, of course, but they still adhere to basic principles of notation to guide them. Theatre has no such notation or discipline, and so variations in acting can be tremendous. The music was designed to give the actor specific cues to “hit” certain lines, to accent others in silence, or moments to speak more quickly, either with the rhythm or mood, or in contrast to the pace of the music. No performance on the actor's part should be the same, and the musicians and the conductor were prepared to vary their speed or even pauses based on the actor's intentions. With more rehearsal time, such variations would have become as regular as a standard piece of music, but given the time constraints, this more free-form version with give and take on the part of the ensemble and the actor was, I think, the best possible scenario.

Scoring text is difficult because one does not want to cover or “comment on” every moment; doing so would make the music too jagged and deprive it of an overall feel or flow. Yet one also has to avoid the tendency to put in too little and have the music drag the piece. The music is in support of the actor and the text. The actual balance between text and music varies according to the section. For example, though I would have liked the main melody to sound louder at the opening, I could not do so and still give the actor time to conclude his thought on “treasons, stratagems, and spoils.” This give and take works both ways. In many cases the actor had to speak up over big crescendos or moments

of loudness in the music, pushing his voice farther than he would have taken it if this were a straight piece of theatre.

The real key is the integration of the two. Both music and text must work off of each other, consistently, to achieve a greater effect than either would have alone. Music and the text, the musicians and the actor are a couple, with different feelings and moods, and approaches, but the same intention.

The actor, working with Shakespeare's text as scored by a composer, has at very least two collaborators. One, of course, is the playwright himself, with the situation complicated here in that lines were taken from all over Shakespeare to construct a character, the old man with Alzheimer's. The other collaborator is the composer, for in presenting me with a text already scored he was, inevitably, offering his interpretation, Shakespeare's text as filtered through his music, even as the text, created by these two authors, awaited my own interpretation. And there was a third collaborator, the conductor and the musicians, since the composer gave them a certain latitude for interpretation. Perhaps there was even a fourth collaborator, what in baseball would be called the "tenth man," for surely the audience at Merkin Hall did not come to Shakespeare as a "naïve spectator," to borrow Marvin Rosenberg's term for an audience unfamiliar with the play (Rosenberg, 1972). The passages from Shakespeare, almost all of them very well known, already had been subject to each spectator's personal experience.

I, the actor, formed the fifth member of this quintet of collaborators. With my son's serving as my director, I had such freedom as the director usually gives the actor in interpreting both the lines themselves and their relation to his music. That the actor was at once the director's father and a Shakespearean scholar enriched the collaboration in ways both obvious and subtle, but the original concept of the character was my son's so that I in turn consulted him as I selected and arranged the material from Shakespeare.

If the performance was successful, then, to borrow Hippolyta's lines, "all [our] minds [were] transfigur'd so together" that we were able to make it grow "to something of great constancy" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.24-26). On stage, of course, I was most aware of the ensemble's director and his musicians; the other three members of the quintet were "there," to be sure, but not in person. Our interaction, extending from rehearsals to the performance itself, was a dialogue. Any actor knows that his or her performance

in such situations is very much influenced by, indeed highly dependent on the ability of one's fellow actors.

For two actors to "connect," to fashion something jointly, each must, as one director friend calls it, "feed" the other (Williams, 1933). The subtext, the delivery of the actor playing Beatrice, as she responds to Benedict's demand "Bid me do anything" with her "Kill Claudio," will influence, even in part determine Benedict's reaction "Not for the world," which in turn will color the anger, the passion in Beatrice's retort, "You kill me to deny it." In their first fiery meeting, Kate and Petruchio, both the characters themselves and the actors impersonating them, must be equal collaborators for the scene to work well. The brilliant encounter of wits, with perhaps their romantic feelings just beneath the surface of verbal insults and physical slaps, will suffer if one actor brings less energy to the role. In dialogue, performers need to "listen" to each other both as characters and as actors.

This is precisely the relationship I felt with the conductor and his musicians. Their interpretation of the music affected both my delivery and sense of the character, and I was, no less, what the composer called "a fellow musician," playing with the ensemble, my voice my instrument, and determining in part how they performed. In measures 8-9, for example, the somber melody in the violins and the agitated rhythm of the viola and cello invariably darkened the character's conclusion that the "man that hath no music in himself" is fit for "treasons, stratagems, and spoils." I had always taken that trinity as lighter, a bit sarcastic, a hyperbole to underscore Portia's example of a man too focused on business, lacking a cultured inner self. But the composer's and the director's take, evident in the score, altered my previous reading and rightly so since the person speaking is a depressed old man who has just called on music to awake the one happy memory of his now faded life—the woman he once loved. In stanza 24 my desperate searching all over the cosmos to locate myself—"Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?"—was complemented by three stark chords from the ensemble. Here actor and musicians were figuratively one voice.

At times the music provided me with what we would call a "beat" in the actor's delivery. In measure 109, for instance, the viola complemented the self-effacing humor of the old man's "That I am old, the more the pity; my white hairs do witness it," Falstaff's self-pitying response to the Prince's condemnation of him as an old man, the implication being that the past as represented by Falstaff is to be discarded by his young companion. Then the music itself changes pace, suggesting an actor's beat in measure 110; here I am reduced to repeating an earlier plea: "Forgive and forget." It is the music, not the actor, making the transition to new material in measure 111. There,

when the rolling melody returns, it is played by the cello, and this soulful instrument, lower in register, allows me to adjust from Falstaff's cynicism to Lear's pathetic, but also more serious and moving recognition that he is "a very foolish, fond old man."

With the passage from *Macbeth*, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow," which recurs frequently, not surprisingly given the work's title, *All Our Yesterdays*, the conductor was alert to my actor's need to play variations on the initial delivery, as the old man moves from depression, to a search for some meaning in his present life, a return to the past, then a partial acceptance of his state, before sinking back into the darkness of his illness, and at last regaining some measure of composure. In fact, in this passage's final appearance in measures 153-55 the conductor led the way, taking the passage in a slow, somber style, the volume low so that I could deliver the lines quietly, almost inwardly, as if qualifying for myself the somewhat more positive sentiments preceding it, where the old man claims to "hold the world but as the world, a stage where every man must play a part."

Perhaps the most involved (and varied) interaction between actor and musicians occurs in measures 93-108. There are seven major changes here in the actor's delivery and the ensemble's playing. As the old man, using Lear's words, recalls his love's voice ("Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low" [93-96]), the text itself thins out as if his grief, stirred up by the memory, robs him of speech. All this time, the music continues full, unabated. Then, as he moves from the memory of her voice to a contrast between their present states--"She is a soul in bliss," and he is "bound upon a wheel of fire"--his voice returns, the text, albeit delivered "slow," now matching the restrained tempo of the music (97-98). Next he begins what actors call a "build" as, recalling lines from sonnet 73, the old man abandons his grief, reminding himself that the very brevity of her life only enhances his love (99-101): "this thou perceivest which makes thy love more strong, to love that well which thou must leave 'ere long." But the comfort is short-lived and his perspective on time suddenly changes: he, "poor" in soul and "sinful," has wasted time and now time "doth waste" him (103-104). I spoke these lines just loud enough to be heard so that the music, unsettled, roiling, almost drowns out the old man's voice. Then, I returned to full volume indeed, the loudest I had yet employed in the performance--with his cry to the audience, "You must bear with me . . . I am old and foolish" (105). This plea made, the old man sinks back, apologizing that he is "not in [his] perfect mind." Once again, with this line I spoke at a low volume easily overshadowed by the music. But on "If you Gods do love old men, forgive and forget" (107-108) I again pulled out all the stops, screaming to some invisible gods at the back of the hall, my own voice,

rather than the music, now dominant.

As mentioned earlier, actors often speak of their voice as their "instrument," but surely the term refers as much to the physical organ of speech as it does to music and musicians. Using an actor in the 4th movement of *All That Fall* did more than just adding another instrument to the musicians onstage. Of course, the delivery of the lines from Shakespeare, the sub-text and coloring of those lines and hence the effect on the audience, was influenced by, indeed inseparable from the score. This said, the performance of the text from Shakespeare pushed the music, however abstract or even mathematical it may have been in the other four movements, towards the programmatic or thematic.

In those other four movements, the audience, knowing from the composer's program notes that the five movements of the piece offered a portrait of Alzheimer's, from various perspectives--the patient, the physician, the caregiver, the family--were at length left to their own individual, human and idiosyncratic "reading" of the music, the emotions, memories, thoughts, perhaps even personal experiences with Alzheimer's. Thus, the use of Shakespeare in the fourth movement 4 tended to focus those disparate responses, as the audience now shared a common text, and as that text's relation to the overall theme of *All Our Yesterdays* was to some degree shaped, even controlled by the actor.

Programmatic music has a long history, and we might think of Respighi's *Pines of Rome* or *Fountains of Rome*, or Grofé's *The Grand Canyon Suite*. And hence the subject of music is very broad, from the abstract compositions of Bartok or Schoenberg, to the emotional, but not so clearly thematic work of Beethoven (except perhaps his Sixth Symphony, "The Pastoral"), to music--again, like that of Respighi or Grofé--that is clearly linked to a situation or place.

The 4th movement of *All Our Yesterday* at once intensifies the audience's response to the work's general subject, making it more communal and hence less individual, even as it grows out of the score's programmatic nature elsewhere. The actor onstage became a link, even something a Greek chorus, between the listeners in the house and the onstage musicians. The character he enacted offered a life story, a specific example of an Alzheimer's victim, even as it was inseparable from whatever the musicians establish in the individual minds of the listeners up to that point. And surely the audience's more communal, more focused response to the actor influenced in turn their reception of the final movement.

If the audience's reception, then, ranged from the individual to something approaching the communal, the composer's inception of the piece and the performance of the actor, grew out of very personal experiences. To be sure, composers are most often influenced by events in their own lives, even at times from experiencing works by other composers, and actors, to a varying degrees, draw on their real life in creating a character. But in this instance, the composer was rethinking an earlier encounter playing music for a neighbor with Alzheimer's; the actor was influenced in his portrait of the old man in the 4th movement by memories of an old man on the beach who remembered little of his life except, with amazing clarity, lines from the playwright. No less, the actor couldn't help but reflect on his own status in life (I was sixty-eight at the time) and his profession as a Shakespearean scholar. Performance criticism centers on an actual production or productions in the theater; its basis (thought not its conclusions) is specific, not theoretical or abstract. But the performance criticism practiced in this essay merges from the present writers' roles, as composer and actor, in *All Our Yesterdays*, which in turn grew out of earlier real-life experiences.

Finally, the presence of Shakespeare himself complicates the audience's response, as well as the work's inception and performance. The playwright's works carry theatrical, cultural histories; he is already part of our vocabulary. And those lines, especially, that were familiar to the audiences would, in most cases, be associated with performances of the plays they had seen or texts they had read.

Perhaps out of self-pity or a self-centered despair, Macbeth invokes the "royal we" in his "all our yesterdays." Or, if he grows sentimental as death approaches, he identifies his individual plight with that of humanity in general, a step forward for this man otherwise obsessed with his own advancement to the crown. But the same lines in the title of the performance at the New York Hall might be taken as a sign that the musicians, as well as the actor who joined them, establish a link with those in the house, the listeners who with those onstage constitute the two halves of any performance.

REFERENCES

All Our Yesterdays (2004). A suite by David Homan for chamber orchestra (flute, oboe, clarinet, strings, and piano—and actor) premiered at Merkin Concert Hall in New York on February 12, 2004. For more about

All Our Yesterdays and details of the Merkin Hall premier see David Homan's website at: homanmusic.org.

Samuel Beckett (1965). From "Three Dialogues with George Duthuit," in Martin Esslin, ed., *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 21.

Marvin Rosenberg (1972). *The Masks of King Lear* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 311-21.

Judith Williams (1993). In a remark to the Theatre Department faculty and students at the University of Florida, 1993.