The Production of Musical Meanings in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*

Claudia GRIGORE
Ovidius University of Constanta

Abstract: *This essay analyses the production of musical meanings in Shakespeare's* Julius Caesar *and* Antony and Cleopatra. *In* Julius Caesar*, the action takes place during the Roman festivals of the Ides of March and Anna Perenna. After a formal sacrifice and public prayers to secure a healthy year, people spend the day socializing, drinking, singing popular songs, and dancing. However, instead of the social and political harmony suggested by the Roman festival, the dramatic exchange involving music indicates political disorder, dissolution, and even death. It is not insignificant that Julius Caesar is deaf in one ear, so he is probably tone deaf as well, and deaf to public requests, self-ensconced in his globe of political power.* In Antony and Cleopatra*, on the other hand, there are individual drunken songs, which typify the broken harmony of the political and social milieu. In both plays, Roman history is used to allude to Elizabethan or early Jacobean political situations, while collective scenes of music, involving many people, refer to the power of the human voice (in harmony or disharmony) to disrupt political arguments. I argue that the false or broken music in the two Roman plays suggests the instability of the political world, with contemporary reverberations in Shakespeare's time.*

Keywords: *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, music, Shakespeare, early Jacobean politics

Discussions of Shakespeare's use of music have preoccupied critics in various periods, but I will focus on recent critical commentaries. Julie Sanders, for instance, in *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings*, discusses the musical responses to Shakespeare that have taken place from the seventeenth century onwards—the musical afterlife in opera, ballet and classical symphony. In "Shakespeare and Early Modern Music" (2011), Christopher R. Wilson pursues an archaeology of emotions, situations, and materials, pinpointing when songs were sung, and how, in Shakespeare's plays. Wilson identifies the instruments used, and the meanings attached to them, in a way that singles out for comment vocal forms (the madrigal and the ayre), composers and genres, as well as the part played by musical references in theatrical production. As Wilson rightly observes, "[m]usic for Shakespeare meant performed songs and instrumental cues, and musical terms were used as symbolic reference and metaphor" (121). While very little music survives that can be identified with a first or early production, dramatic context and descriptors usually provide sufficient information on the type of music required. As for the meanings of the musical passages or the contextual references to the harmony/disharmony of music, these elements require a more sophisticated interpretation, in tune with each play's context. It is my intention in this essay to decodify some of these meanings—based on the lays' script—and to argue that

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

Shakespeare's sophisticated use of music in the two Roman plays goes beyond the musical arias or any other aural involvement with music. My contention is that there is a symbolic resonance and an emotional perspectivism triggered in the audiences' imagination, which is related to a particular scene in which music or allusions to music are used. As a result, music is activated as political allusion and the jarring, false or broken music suggests instability in the political world. Music is in close dialogue with the action on stage and forms an inextricable part of the dramatic interaction.

In *Julius Caesar* music is represented as having political reference, especially since Shakespeare used Roman times to allude to contemporary Elizabethan political uncertainties, provoked by the unclear 1599 situation,[1] when Elizabeth was old and without heirs. In the play, music marks important political events during and after Caesar's rule. Music is used as an emotional background against which issues of imminent conflict and death are being played. Disharmony and broken musical instruments are metaphors of the disordered political world represented by the civil war, triggered by Caesar's assassination. In Act four, scene two, in the camp near Sardis, in front of Brutus' tent and before the final battle, Brutus, Lucilius, Pindarus and Titinius discuss the situation on the battlefield. Lucilius brings the news that Cassius is near and Pindarus (Cassius's servant) brings salutation from his master (4.2.3-5).[2] By this time, Brutus has misgivings about the whole situation and wishes "Things done undone" (4.2.9), as he perceives Cassius is backing off before danger: "A hot friend cooling" (4.2.19). In the next scene (3.3), in Brutus' tent, Cassius and Brutus quarrel, a fact mentioned in Plutarch's *Life of Brutus* (134-135). The problem of contention and disharmony is quite strong in this scene, and Brutus discusses "threats" (4.3.66), "indirection" (4.3.75), Cassius's "faults" (4.3.88) and money matters. At this moment of uncertainty, a Poet enters, followed by Lucillius, Titinus, and Lucius. While Lucillius (Lucius Pella) is mentioned in Plutarch as a defamed person that had been Praetor of the Romans and was accused and convicted of corruption in his office (Plutarch, *Life of Brutus* 135), the servant Lucius and the Poet are characters invented by Shakespeare. This is not insignificant, considering that the Poet's presence suggests the harmony of language, while Lucius plays music. Yet Brutus dismisses the Poet ("Away, away, be gone" 4.3.137) and includes him among the "jiggling fools" (4.3.136). What would the Poet have to say to Brutus on the eve of the fatal battle? Brutus will never know, and we will never know.

[1] According to T. S. Dorsch, the play's date of composition was 1599, because from 18 September to 20 October 1599 the Swiss doctor and traveler Thomas Platter documented that he saw two plays in London, of which one was *Julius Caesar* (vii).

[2] All references to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* are to *The Arden Shakespeare*, edited by T. S. Dorsch, 5th ed. (1988). References to acts, scene, and line numbers are keyed to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

The meaning of the Poet's presence, as I see it, is to provide, with poetic prescience, some warning concerning the outcome of the battle but also to suggest the harmony of language, which is disrupted by political inequity and conflict. Brutus asks his servant Lucius for a bowl of wine (4.3.141), which intensifies the confusion of the senses brought by drunkenness. After Brutus finds out about Portia's death, the boy (Lucius) enters with wine and tapers. The boy's presence is significant because he takes care of the material needs in life. These are set in opposition to the men's lofty political ideals, which do not seem to be so lofty after all because they are marred by mistrust and uncertainty. The social company increases in Brutus' tent with the arrival of Titinus and Messala, who want to discuss Portia's death, but Brutus dismisses the subject. Instead, they "call in question" their "necessities" (4.3.164), which consist in some letters Brutus has received, according to which young Octavius and Mark Antony are directing their expedition towards Philippi (4.3.166-170). There is a strategic discussion about the advisability of marching the troupes towards Philippi and then everybody says "good night" (4.3.228). Even saying "good night" can be interpreted as some sort of musical refrain which repeatedly suggests linguistically the confusion of the senses brought by the night of reason.

The peaceful atmosphere in Brutus' tent during the night, when Brutus summons Lucius to bring him his night gown—which means comfort and homeliness—prepares the scene for the musical moment. Brutus asks Lucius "Where is thy instrument?" (4.3.238) The double-meaning word refers to Lucius' musical instrument (probably a lute or a lyre) but in the complex political context this might also mean that Brutus had been an instrument in the hands of Cassius, during the political manoeuvres, and now Brutus is beginning to realize that he had been manipulated and his good will had been played upon. Despite his grief and political uncertainty, however, Brutus is not blind to other people's emotions, even if this person is his apparently insignificant servant, Lucius. Brutus notices that Lucius is sleepy: "What, thou speakst drowsily?" (4.3.239) This sleep of reason—represented by the humble Lucius' drowsiness—foreshadows the political and military actions, which are just as inconsistent and misguided. Brutus begins to lose confidence in his former friends, especially Cassius, so he invites Varro and Claudius to lie down in his tent, probably to guard him. While everybody is preparing to take a rest, Brutus invites Lucius to play the lute: "Canst thou hold thy heavy eyes awhile, / And touch thy instrument a strain or two?" (4.3.254-255), and Lucius accepts. The metaphor of the musical instrument is taken over in several instances in this scene and all the time it is linked with the political world.

The peaceful atmosphere in Brutus' tent at night is meant to create calmness and a feeling of peace, showing the opposition between public and private space, but the music-making story is much more complex than that. Even if Brutus could have pulled rank and ordered Lucius to play the musical instrument, he says that it would

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

please him to have some music and he is even aware of the fact that he imposes on the boy's good will: "I trouble thee too much, but thou art willing" (4.3.258). Lucius does not respond to Brutus' newly-acquired softness and human sympathy when he says, "It is my duty, sir" (4.3.259). Lucius' response can be extended from menial duty to political duty, suggesting that, probably in Brutus' opinion, having killed Caesar was not disloyalty towards Caesar, but just part of his duty towards the endangered Roman republic. Regardless of the political meanings, the exchange between master and servant (probably a young slave) speaks not only about social hierarchy, according to which servants obey their masters, but also about political loyalty, when subjects obey their ruler. Brutus insists in his sympathetic comments to Lucius and accords him almost as much time in his apologies as he had given to the politicians, earlier, in his tent; as Brutus says to Lucius, "I should not urge thy duty past thy might / I know young bloods look for a time for rest" (4.3.260-261). Brutus' implication that young people need their rest at night is rendered more complex by using the metaphor of blood. The metaphor "Young bloods" (4.3.261) looks back to Caesar's blood-shed in front of Pompey's base and even earlier, to Pompey's blood, and also foreshadows the conspirators' blood lost after the battle of Philippi, including Brutus' own death.

In this complex context of metaphorical social and political disorder in *Julius Caesar*, prefigured by the metaphor of blood, music is called for to soothe troubled spirits and bring the desired harmony in the political world. As Lucius responds to Brutus' care for him with "I have slept, my lord, already" (4.3.262), Brutus concludes with a rather mysterious phrase: "It was well done, and thou shalt sleep again" (4.3.263). The metaphor of sleep as death is mingled with the metaphors of blood, as well as the harmony of music, to show that emotions can be mixed. As if Brutus foresees his own death, he promises Lucius: "I will not hold thee long. If I do live, / I will be good to thee" (4.3.264-265). In this way, though not acknowledged directly, the end of music means the end of life. Lucius' falling asleep while he is playing music marks the end of life and foreshadows Brutus' end, and Brutus is the only witness to this event. As Brutus observes when Lucius falls asleep while playing the lute,

> This is a sleepy tune: O murd'rous slumber!
> Layest thou thy leaden mace upon my boy,
> That plays thee music? (4.3.266-268)

The numbness of sleep is connected with murder and reminds of Hamlet's "sleep of death" (3.1.66), which is related to dreams. Lucius' falling asleep while playing music foreshadows Brutus' death but also the apparition of Caesar's ghost.

In the dramatic context of the silence of the military camp at night, which had been shortly perturbed by Lucius' brief music-playing, the harmony of music is just

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

as fleeting as human life and the sleep of death follows all. The metaphor of Brutus' "good night" (4.3.271) intensifies the idea of death and prepares for the ghost's apparition:

> Gentle knave, good night;
> I will not do thee so much wrong to wake thee.
> If thou dost nod, thou break'st thy instrument;
> I'll take it from thee; and, good boy, good night. (4.3.268-271)

Brutus' gentleness towards Lucius contradicts both his political and military persona and it may have been triggered by the news of Portia's death and the realization of the transitory human life. This musical scene also speaks for the materiality of the theatre, since Lucius' "nod" (4.3.270) while he is falling asleep is recorded in a gesture which has the same corporeality as the sound of music. Gestures and sounds are part of the theatre's visual and aural environment. Just as the repetition of "good night" (4.3.268; 271) suggests the oblivion of sleep and death, breaking the musical instrument represents the finality of death, which breaks human life. Brutus gently takes the fragile instrument from the sleeping boy's lap but, in doing so, he makes the frail young body look even more similar to the posture of death since he is prone to fall without the support of the musical instrument.

Even if Lucius' instrument in this scene is not mentioned directly, it is supposed to be a string instrument, so probably a lute or a lyre. Breaking a string, as breaking the musical instrument, symbolizes the finality of death. Directly in line with this dark atmosphere prefiguring death, the "monstrous apparition" (4.3.276) of Caesar's ghost calls for a meeting at Philippi, which would mean Brutus' death. When Brutus calls all the people present in his tent to wake up – "Boy! Lucius! Varro! Claudius! Sirs, awake!" (4.3.289) – , in the hope of having witnesses for the ghostly apparition, the sleepy boy mutters to Brutus, "The strings, my lord, are false" (4.3.290). This kind of "false" or broken music suggests the instability of the political world and the inevitability of death. Brutus continues the broken music metaphor by interpreting Lucius' reply, when he has just woken from his sleep, as a continuation of sleepy talk: "He thinks he still is at his instrument. / Lucius, awake!" (4.3.291-292). The boy's awakening from slumber, just as his broken music, shows the confusion of sleep and the fact that he did not know what he had said. At Brutus' insistent questions – "Didst thou dream, Lucius, that thou criedst out?" (4.3.294) and "Didst see anything?" (4.3.296) – Lucius replies "Nothing, my lord" (4.3.297). The nothingness of sleep indicates the nothingness of death and the broken harmony of music foreshadows these events.

Lucius' significant line about false or broken music, which discontinues the harmony of life, occurs just before act five scene one, representing the battle of Philippi. The participants are Octavius and Antony on one side and Brutus and

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

Cassius on the other. The metaphor of the "false" (4.3.290) strings, addressed to Brutus, may refer to the fact that he was made to believe that he was doing a good deed by killing Caesar for a better Rome. This metaphor is paired with Caesar's greeting to the senators before going to the Capitol, when he tells Decius that he will not come to the Senate: "And tell them that I will not come today / Cannot is false; and that I dare not falser; / I will not come today" (2.2.62-64). Caesar is imposing his will and tries to conceal his fear of death, while he is just as vulnerable as Brutus is on the eve of his death. Caesar is also in the privacy of his house, "in his nightgown" (SD 2.2.1), and trying to avoid thinking about death. Yet the strings of his own life would soon be broken because he goes to the Capitol, after all. The political strings of Caesar's murder were pulled by the senators. The idea of the untuned string is a fitting analogy for dysfunctional government but it is also represented as a real, physical manifestation of the universal principles of order. Lucius' "sleepy tune" (4.3.266) is symbolic for the forgetfulness of death, as well as the dysfunctional political situation before and after Caesar's murder. This instability may have been transferred to the play from Shakespeare's own time, when the expectations of political instability pending Elizabeth's death threatened to disrupt all manifestations of an ordered government, symbolized by harmonious music.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, the idea of music with political connotations is also staged in a disharmonic context suggesting that good politics is similar to the harmony of music, while disruptions and iniquities are paralleled with broken or false music, or the dissonance of the music interpreted by drunken people. Just as Lucius' music in *Julius Caesar* is broken by sleep and the ultimate suggestion of death, in *Antony and Cleopatra* the jarring sounds of military manoeuvres are paralleled with the cacophony of drunken song. In act two, scene six, in Misenum, which was the main harbour for the Roman navy, Pompey and Menas enter with "drum and trumpet" (SD 2.6.1),[3] while Caesar, Lepidus, Antony, Enobarbus, Maecenas and Agrippa are followed by soldiers marching. This kind of military show, including sounds of drums and trumpets, suggests aggressiveness and disruption of harmony. Pompey had his ships at anchor in the port of Misenum during the political crisis created by him. Now that the major political crisis created by Pompey is over, he and the triumvirs (Octavius Caesar, Antony and Lepidus) meet in conference. The crisis created by Pompey was one of the major reasons for Antony's decision to leave Cleopatra in Egypt and return to Rome (1.3.46-55). Because of Pompey's unexpected agreement to the terms offered him, the political crisis evaporates and turns into a celebration. Shakespeare reproduces the unpredictable quality of history and politics, as well as of human nature. However, the triumvirs are no longer united by a common cause and scene six of act two

[3] All references to Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* are to *The Arden Shakespeare*, third series, edited by John Wilders, 5th ed. (1995). References to acts, scene, and line numbers are keyed to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the text.

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

concludes with Enobarbus' prediction of the split between Antony and Octavius, which will turn out to be the real crisis of the play.

The geographic and spatial characteristics of this political and carnivalesque scene (2.6) are evident when Pompey drinks "To you all three / The senators alone of this great world" (2.6.9-10). This is a drunken celebration of power but the ghost of Julius Caesar is invoked in the cheerful greeting. As Pompey drinks to the triumvirate's health, he says that Julius Caesar "ghosted" the "good Brutus" at Philippi (2.6.14). This reference to the musical scene in *Julius Caesar*—a play first performed eighteen years before—makes this musical and carousing scene in the Jacobean play *Antony and Cleopatra*[4] heavy with self-referentiality. The fact that this scene occurs in the enclosed space of a Roman ship, off the coast of Misenum, is symbolic for the political controversy among the triumvirs. Moreover, the ancient port of Misenum was literally in the shade of Mount Vesuvius, which was a threatening presence in ancient Italy and which erupted in AD 79, destroying the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Even if the action in the play occurs much earlier than the ancient eruption of Vesuvius, the suggestion of death and destruction looms large through the geographic location of this scene.

The musicality of other scenes in *Antony and Cleopatra*, apart from act two scene six, shows that the Jacobean play is based on an aural as well as visual experience. The initial entrance of Antony and Cleopatra in act one scene one is announced by a "flourish" of trumpets (SD 1.1.9), which proclaims that they are important political personages. Similarly, at the end of their conference in act two scene two, the triumvirs leave in the sound of trumpets (2.2.180), as well as at the end of the reunion between Caesar, Antony, Lepidus and Octavia (SD 3.2.67). Drums and trumpets are brought playing on to the stage after the initial flourish, which signals the arrival of Pompey, Menas and the triumvirs in SD 2.6.1. Music of a different kind—probably hautboys (ancestors of the modern oboe)—introduces the banquet on Pompey's galley (SD 2.7.1). Music and sounds of trumpets, therefore, can signal the height of political power but also political manipulation and deceit, as well as the lamentable fall of civil reason and the institution of confusion and disorder. What apparently is a show of power and political importance in *Antony and Cleopatra*, in the second act, turns out to be a cacophony of sounds during the drunken scene on Pompey's galley. The consequences of submerged conflict and political dissimulation are seen in the jarring sounds of music during the drunken party of the politicians.

The conversation between the servants before the arrival of the high guests in the scene on Pompey's galley suggests corruption and instability; the First Servant suggests that "Some o' their plants are ill-rooted already" (2.7.1), while the Second

[4] According to John Wilders, Shakespeare probably completed *Antony and Cleopatra* towards the end of 1606 or early in 1607 (1).

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

Servant implies that Lepidus is already "high-coloured" (2.7.4) with drink. The meaningful comments of the servants (2.7.1-6) prepare the entry of the distinguished guests and provide a different view from the one in 2.6, in which Pompey talks light-heartedly about "Egyptian cookery" (2.6.63) and the fact that Julius Caesar "Grew fat with feasting there" (2.6.65) when he was Cleopatra's guest in Alexandria. While Antony speaks convivially about the Nile and the pyramids (2.7.17-23) and Lepidus speaks about the "crocodile" in Egypt, who is supposedly bred in the mud by the operation of the sun (2.7.26-27), the cordiality of the scene is spurious because the audience is made privy to Menas' plot of killing the triumvirs and making Pompey master of "all the world" (2.7.65). While Pompey observes that "This is not yet an Alexandrian feast" (2.7.96), the carnivalesque atmosphere achieves grotesque proportions. Music at this Roman feast does not fulfil the expectation of harmony and enjoyment but it is associated with the dissolution of a ludicrous banquet in Alexandria, which is synonymous with lasciviousness and corruption.

Music is both a symbol of gross dissolution and an outward key to political harmony/ disharmony. While Enobarbus invites Antony to "dance now the Egyptian Bacchanals /And celebrate our drink" (2.7.104-105), the implication is just the reverse. First, there are no Egyptian Bacchanals, just the Roman celebration of Bacchus, which is synonym with a wild and drunken celebration. Second, the scene of political harmony is false because of the Menas plot in the background. Third, Antony invites the politicians to a deadly dance of oblivion:

> Come, let's all take hands
> Till that the conquering wine hath steeped our sense
> In soft and delicate Lethe. (2.7.106-108)

While the scene appears to be a convivial reunion among friends, who also happen to be politicians, the issues are threatening because of the Menas plot and Antony's invitation to oblivion. In Greek mythology, Lethe was one of the five rivers of the underworld in Hades, whose water, when drunk, made the souls of the dead forget their life on earth. Therefore, Antony's invitation is to the oblivion of the rational soul and the immersion in drunken revelry, which foreshadows death.

In this particular context, Enobarbus acts as a kind of Master of Revels, inviting the guests to "All take hands" (2.7.108) and "Make battery to our ears with the loud music" (2.7.109). The "loud" and rhythmic music played in this scene is far from the harmony and contentment of the political treaty; this music has the jarring noises of discontent. Enobarbus arranges all the members of the company in a dancing position while the boy musician starts singing, as Enobarbus instructs:

> The while I'll place you; then the boy shall sing.
> The holding every man shall beat as loud

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

As his strong sides can volley. (2.7.110-112)

This organized arrangement in the dancing posture seemingly suggests a harmonious figure but, in reality, it is a drunken ring-dance in which the heated dancers stomp the ground with their feet and beat their sides with their hands. It is a wild dance of war, while the "battery" (2.7.109) and the "volley" (2.7.112) suggest firearms and artillery, not harmony and civil behaviour. The irrational dance of war replaces and belies the atmosphere of understanding that the guests pretend to invoke. Instead of bringing harmony to a warring world, songs and dancing in this dynamic scene suggest disruption of peace and dissolution of contentment, as in the Roman political world.

The boy musician sings a drinking song, "Come, thou monarch of the vine" (2.7.113), for which there is no surviving melody.

Come, thou monarch of the vine,
Plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne!
In thy vats our cares be drowned;
With thy grapes our hairs be crowned.
Cup us till the world go round!
Cup us till the world go round! (2.7.113-118)

The musician boy's drinking song praises "plumpy Bacchus" with pink eyes (2.7.114) and his crowns are replaced by "grapes" (2.7.116). The Roman festivals of Bacchanalia were based on the ecstatic elements of the Greek Dionysia and involved extremely colourful frenzied rites and sensuality. Yet the living image of the drunken god Bacchus in the scene is Antony himself, one of the three triumvirs. What is worse is that not only one of the three most powerful men of the Roman world enjoys the revelry of drunken dancing, but all of them. Even the grave Octavius Caesar admits that "mine own tongue / Splits what it speaks" (2.7.123-124), so he has the slurred speech of a drunkard, and he tries to break the party with a final "Good night" (2.7.125). Just as in Brutus' "good night" before the battle of Philippi in *Julius Caesar*, the songs and revelry in *Antony and Cleopatra* foreshadow death.

Music and harsh sounds mark another political event in *Antony and Cleopatra*: Antony's triumphal entry in Alexandria. Like a knight in a medieval romance, Antony returns in triumph to his lady, after the apparent reconciliation in Rome. Shakespeare makes the most of this noisy scene by showing Antony's exhilaration and Cleopatra's delight at his return. With characteristic liberality, which contrasts strongly with Octavius Caesar's parsimony (4.1.15-17), Antony wishes he could feast the entire army "And drink carouses to the next day's fate" (4.8.34). A scene that has begun with the alarum of battle concludes with the fanfare of triumph. As Antony orders,

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

> Trumpeters,
> With brazen din blast you the city's ear;
> Make mingle with our rattling taborins
> That heaven and earth may strike their sounds together
> Applauding our approach (4.8.35-39)

Antony's march through Alexandria after a victory is highly theatrical and involves rhythmic music and trumpets, as well as drums. This scene is metatheatrical because, in the theatre, the entrance of high political personages or royalty was accompanied by a flourish of trumpets and small drums. The metatheatrical allusion is also suggested by the applause that the audience produces at Antony's triumph, just as in a play. While the sounds of music in this section of the play are supposed to indicate a triumphal entry in a conquered city, the underlying hint is that Antony's power is limited and will soon wane.

The political echoes suggested by triumphal marches and military sounds of trumpets and drums mark Antony's last heroic moment in the play, only to be hushed by later and calmer scenes of betrayal and final death. The music indicates that all is not well with the political world of the play, in which Antony believed he could reign supreme. As Jacques Attali observes, triumphal music is all about show:

> Make people believe. The entire history of tonal music, like that of classical political economy, amounts to an attempt to make people believe in a consensual representation of the world. In order to replace the lost ritualization of the channelization of violence with the spectacle of the absence of violence. In order to stamp upon the spectators the faith that there is a harmony in order. In order to etch in their minds the image of the ultimate social cohesion, achieved through commercial exchange and the progress of rational knowledge. (Attali 46)

These lines from *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* by French economist Jacques Attali show that music is used as a convention, a consensual representation, a way of representing the order or disorder in the political world, but also its deception. It underlines the idea that, if perfect harmony can be achieved in music, it can be achieved in the political world too. This is just a metaphor, however; it is an illusion because perfect harmony will never be achieved in politics, therefore music is a form of propaganda.

The broken harmony of music survives in the tensioned political world, but only according to the tunes dictated by the political leaders involved in making the music. Yet not even their power can dictate the final outcome of events, as their tunes are often broken and in utter disharmony. The symbolic resonance of music in

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)

Shakespeare's Roman plays and the emotional perspectivism by which music is a catalyst of emotions in the audiences' imagination are related to the particular scene in which music or allusions to music are used. Rather than functioning as merely decorative elements in a particular scene, the musical passages or allusions to music suggest aspects of political propaganda, economic success, or interiority.

Works Cited

Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Foreword by Frederic Jameson. Afterword by Susan McClary. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Dorsch, T. S. "Introduction." *Julius Caesar*. *The Arden Shakespeare*. Ed. T. S. Dorsch, 5th ed. London and New York, Routledge, 1988. vii-lxxiv.

Plutarch. *Shakespeare's Plutarch: Being a Selection from the Lives in North's Plutarch which Illustrate Shakespeare's Plays*. Ed. Walter William Skeat. London: Macmillan & Co, 1875.

Sanders, Julie. *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2007.

Shakespeare, William. *Antony and Cleopatra*. *The Arden Shakespeare*, third series. Ed. John Wilders. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

———. *Hamlet*. *The Arden Shakespeare*. Ed. Harold Jenkins. 5th ed. London and New York: Routledge, 1993

———. *Julius Caesar*. *The Arden Shakespeare*. Ed. T. S. Dorsch, 5th ed. London and New York, Routledge, 1988.

Wilders, John. Introduction to *Antony and Cleopatra*. *The Arden Shakespeare*, third series. Ed. John Wilders. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 1-84.

Wilson, Christopher R. "Shakespeare and Early Modern Music." *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts*. Eds. Mark Thornton Burnett and Adrian Streete. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 121-142.

BDD-A31677 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.233 (2026-09-14 14:13:51 UTC)