

Stylistic Pastiche and Intertextuality in Musical Theatre: Practice and Theory

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Musical Theatre Practice

- *The Quest* (Chris Williams, 2017)—arranger
- *Artful Dodgers* (Ross MacLeod, 2018)—co-composer (with Jeremy Mayall) and arranger
- Frequent use of pastiche, drawing upon analytical work in academia (Braae 2014, 2015a, 2015b)
- Imitations of Menken's "Beauty in the Beast" (Dion/Bryson version) in "All I Want" [*The Quest*: modulation by a fourth through descending harmonic pattern with 3+3+3+3+4 rhythmic grouping]
- Imitation of "shout" gospel-blues in "And God Agrees" [*Artful Dodgers*: general arrangement, double-time transition, vocal stylings]
- Imitation of disco show-tune in "Everybody's Got a Little Twist" [*Artful Dodgers*: striding bass line, four-to-the-floor drums, horn stabs, expansive vocal arrangement]
- Plus other imitations of Sherman Brothers, Queen, Bruce Springsteen, Elton John, 1980s pop, Dixieland, big band, etc.

Research Purposes

- Reflect on the nature of stylistic borrowing and intertextuality as a *creative* and *compositional* device
- Contribute to an analytical vocabulary of musical theatre, which is lacking in popular music studies
- Understand, from a compositional perspective, how and why certain stylistic references may be appropriate and meaningful

Methodologies

- Musical theatre as stylistically omnivorous (historically and contemporaneously); focus on pastiche and imitation of styles outside “current” context (of show or composition)
- Style as a musical world evoked by certain characteristics (from Covach 1991, 1995; Spicer 2010, 2018; Moore, 2012)
- Stylistic world constrains and establishes expectations for interpretation (Moore 2012, Coach 2003)

Pastiche, Time, and Place

- *Sister Act* (Menken/Slater, 2005): horn/string arrangements plus rhythm section à la 1970s Philly disco
- “Eddie Gets the Girl” and Hall and Oates’ “Rich Girl” (harmonic gesture and melodic fragment)
- “Take Me to Heaven” and “The Sound of Philadelphia” (horn licks)
- “Spread the Love Around” and The Village People (textural growth, dominant pedal point, ascending semiquaver strings)
- Historical incongruities between “Take Me to Heaven” and “It’s Raining Men”

Pastiche and Emotional Tone



- “Shiksa Goddess” from *The Last Five Years* (Jason Robert Brown, 2003)
- Originally in Celtic-roots piano style (changed for legal purposes)
- Played as quasi-*son montuno* piano style (octave patterns between LH/RH; rhythmic figuration)
- *Son montuno* as “other” musical style (relative to Sondheim-esque tone of opening number)—mirrors the perceived exoticism of Jamie’s new girlfriend Cathy

Pastiche and Humour

- Pastiche and incongruity
- “Give Up Your Dreams” (*School of Rock*, Lloyd Webber/Slater)—in the style of Queen
- From “We are the Champions”: 6/8 groove, SRDC chorus phrasing, textural contrasts between verse and chorus, electric guitar doubling bass, triplet semiquaver fills on toms, guitar run into final chorus
- From “Somebody to Love”: descending bass line in chorus
- From “Barcelona”: lyrical reference to “bells ringing”; sustained vocal note over dominant pause before chorus
- Pastiche as caricature
- “Man Up” (*The Book of Mormon*, Lopez/Stone/Parker)—in a “heroic” stadium rock style (part “Live and Let Die”, part “Eye of the Tiger”, part Meat Loaf) associated with action films; such associations fully articulated to the point of cliché and parody by lyrics; *too much* congruity between words and music!

Catch Me If You Can

- *Catch Me If You Can*, Marc Shaiman; 1950s and 1960s swing (Sinatra/Martin) and lounge music
- Standardised arrangements: cocktail jazz verse—crooner's verse—stomp chorus (as per stylistic conventions)
- Individual song influences: 'Jet Set' and 'Come Fly With Me' (middle-class escapism); 'Little Boy, Be a Man' and 'One For My Baby' (confessional/personal song); 'Stuck Together' and 'King of the Road' (song about a traveller, irony of Frank being caught by Carl)
- Multiple levels of the model simultaneously: the tone of 'Little Boy' (i.e. confessional) within the style of 1950s big band (i.e. place); or, the characters of 'Stuck Together' (i.e. a traveller) in an ironic context (i.e. being caught) at a historical point (i.e. 1960s)
- References immediately establish interpretative tone, but have no direct influence thereafter...

Further Directions

- How do songwriters in musical theatre meld pastiche with individual compositional voices? (E.g. the C-D/C chord shuttle of Menken in different stylistic guises through *Sister Act*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Little Shop of Horrors*)
- The compositional tropes of musical theatre itself (e.g. triplet crotchet melodies; use of iii as bridge-opening harmonic gesture; bVII-V cadences)—and thus, pastiche of musicals
- The cultural implications and dynamics of style imitation (e.g. the more “pointed” references of *The Book of Mormon*, or the “reductive” references of *Miss Saigon*)