Tracking the Sounds of Franco Zeffirelli’s  
*The Taming of the Shrew*

Though Shakespearean drama on the stage is largely an oral, and thus an aural, medium, and although certain film directors of Shakespeare, such as Welles and Kurosawa, are considered master manipulators of cinematic sound, until recently little attention was paid to sound in analyses of Shakespearean films. Given the ocu-lolocentric culture of America in the last century and the fact that film has traditionally been seen as a largely visual medium, this lack of attention is understandable. For most viewers or spectators (these synonyms for filmgoers suggest the bias), the soundtrack is a mere accompaniment to the images despite the fact that film sound is better than it ever has been by virtue of new digital stereo surround-sound systems in theaters and homes. Moreover, if one opens any college introduction to film, one finds that the obligatory chapter on sound almost without exception follows visual elements like *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, movement, moving camera, and editing, thereby suggesting its relative (lack of) importance. Analyses of sound as a technique are difficult to carry out as well; unlike visual clips, analysts cannot freeze individual sounds on video apparatus nor easily map their mixing and editing.

Of course, when Shakespeareans get around to talking about sound in films of the plays, their focus is usually on the number or percentage of the Bard’s lines that have been cut and the way the dialogue is delivered, thereby reflecting the continuing importance of Shakespeare’s text (despite recent attempts to destabilize it in textual studies and literary theory) and the primacy of fidelity as a principle in judging adaptations (see Pilkington). For example, Jack Jorgens distinguishes music and sound effects from the verse but only gives two pages out of thirty-five to sound in his introductory chapter to *Shakespeare on Film* (32-33). To be sure, analyses have mentioned a Shakespearean film’s musical score (or its absence), discussed it in general terms, or noted its effects in obviously manipulative scenes (for example, Branagh’s *Non Nobis* after Agincourt in *Henry the Fifth*), but again, only a few scholars have connected sound and music to elements of narrative, image, or character, or assessed the effectiveness in one film of such techniques and properties as sonic motifs, sound effects, volume, pitch, rhythm, and mixing.

Scholarly work on Franco Zeffirelli’s 1967 adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* reflects this neglect. From reviewers in 1967 to the latest academic commentators, there are only occasional fragments on dialogue, music, and other sounds, all minor accompaniments to much more expansive treatments of textual cuts and changes, casting, acting, and visual details. For example, the critical tradition generally approves of Nino Rota’s music (see Rothwell 131), though its sentimentality has also been noted: “the film is loaded with pleasant but syrupy melodies
in the best Hollywood tradition" (Jorgens 70). With regard to the verse, praise for Richard Burton's delivery sits alongside bilious attacks on Elizabeth Taylor's voice and the movie's high volume of noise, especially during farcical episodes. In a narrow-minded and largely disreputable survey of Shakespearean film, prolific movie maven Douglas Brode, for example, deplores Kate's "nasal thin whine of a voice," adding humorously but gratuitously that Taylor's "breasts performed beautifully, but her vocal chords proved disappointing" (23). Discussing the chase scenes, Brode also opines that "Shakespeare's dialogue, or what remains of it, can't be heard over the uproar" (23). This comment reiterates the critique of an early British reviewer named Gerald Kaufman in The Listener (9 March 1967), who contends that after "a couple of reels of this [high-volume soundtrack], the spectator's dearest wish is that, if only for a moment, everyone would stand still and shut up" (qtd. in Haring-Smith 164). Another early reviewer finds fault both with Taylor's "shrill performance" and Burton's decision to play Petruchio as a loud "drunken peasant," but he counts "verse from Burton" one of the film's successes (Harrison 159). As far as serious analysis (as opposed to unsubstantiated opinion) is concerned, Kenneth Rothwell perceptively points out that two of Rota's musical choices support Shakespeare's "'chiasmus' motif, in which Bianca and Kate gradually exchange roles" (131). Otherwise, the relevance of sound and music to the themes and effects of the film escapes critical attention.

Against this tradition of general critical neglect, evaluative one-liners, and only occasional fragments of serious criticism, I should like to argue that Zeffirelli, with help from Rota and others, artfully structures a complex mix of music, sound, and verbal silence in ways that underscore and even clarify the director's romantic yet progressive interpretation of the play. While it would be hyperbolic to say that patterns of sound are the key to the film's interpretive insights, Zeffirelli's manipulation of sound often does more than just accompany visual design and dialogue in a simple way. Rather, both diegetic and non-diegetic sound effects and music throughout the film demonstrate the director's attempt to provide a mix of realism and artifice that raises the question of artistic and human illusion, moving viewers to about the same comic distance at which Shakespeare's Induction, excised by Zeffirelli, meta-theatrically places stage audiences. Furthermore, Zeffirelli and Rota create and position a number of musical motifs, greatly varying their volume, rhythm, and tone, to advance the director's view that Kate, under Petruchio's tutelage, overcomes her childish inferiority and the defensive shrewishness that masks it, eventually working with her husband to achieve a marriage of mutual love and equality of wit unusual in such a patriarchal society and apparently sexist play. The heroine's achievement requires, however, that Petruchio's vulnerability also be clarified for an audience, which Zeffirelli accom-
The Film Induction

The first notable manipulation of sound occurs at the beginning of the film and is intended to support a number of visual methods by which Zeffirelli presents a setting at once realistic and artificial. Scholars have long noted that the film is "painterly"; it opens with painted backdrops of natural landscapes topped with a depiction of Padua as a renaissance city (Haring-Smith 162; and repeated with attribution in Holderness 60-63). Yet this set of opening establishment shots is complicated by the appearance of a roaring fire in a hut, real sheep, realistic trees, driving rain, and real horses ridden by Lucentio and Tranio. Moreover, when the riders enter the city, the verisimilitude of what one might expect of a medieval or early modern Italian city is quite astonishing: criminals lie in stocks and a cage; a cart with a heavy load passes the riders on cobblestones; the buildings, one with a straw overhang and window-bars, look authentic; and the street is peopled with well-costumed lower-class folk and workers. Yet even here, there is a sense of visual artifice. The criminals are labeled "wife-stealer" and "drunkard" in gold letters, an artisan in the right foreground is putting the finishing touches on a dark marble statue of a bare-breasted woman, and the lack of sky or natural light suggests that the city has been built in a studio, which is accurate (Zeffirelli 213). Indeed, the director liked Dino de Laurendis's new studio because it provided "an air of unreality which matched the remoteness of the language" (214). Furthermore, Brode contends that the film has a sepia or ochre tint virtually throughout, created by pre-exposing color film (22). This coloring may also underscore painterly artificiality.

Though Jorgens claims that "Zeffirelli has little use for realism in the play" (70), seeing only "touches of vivid realistic detail" (71) in what is otherwise just an artificial mise-en-scène built for farce and romance, others suggest that Zeffirelli tries to blend reality and artifice as a substitute for the Induction, the opening by which Shakespeare creates a play within a play, thereby engaging the audience in issues of illusion regarding the Paduan adventures (Pursell 210-12; Haring-Smith 162). The survey of visual elements above supports this claim, as does Zeffirelli's sound track, which accompanies both sides of this commonplace dichotomy. On the side of artifice, for example, Zeffirelli and Rota underscore the opening painted visuals with a high-volume orchestral rendition of what will become the musical theme associated with the Bianca subplot; thus painterly backdrops are accompanied by non-diegetic heavy violins as Lucentio shows his excitement at the prospect of "A course of learning and ingenious studies" (Shakespeare 1.1.9). 3

On the realistic side, however, Zeffirelli insists that we hear the hoof beats of the approaching horses and the sound of the heavy rain, though these sounds are only fully perceptible when the musical volume is decreased in favor of Lucentio's opening speech. The music is kept relatively low in the ensuing shots as, after a dissolve moves us from the countryside to Padua's gates, we see Lucentio and Tranio enter the city and tie up their horses. At their entrance to Padua, however, the diegetic sounds of the city are turned up to almost equal the volume of the
dialogue. Sounds of hooves on cobblestones, of the passing wagon, of children teasing the criminals, of the sculptor’s chisel against the dark stone, and of various farm animals on- and off-screen support the realism of many visual elements in the shots. Then, as Tranio spies a giant blonde whore and speaks of not completely abjuring love for philosophy, the violin music returns, especially in the spaces between the dialogue. In addition, well-placed single notes, clearly non-diegetic and meta-cinematic, add comic touches to the exaggerated figure of the unnamed prostitute and the farcical bumbling of Tranio, calling into question the realism of the Paduan setting. Thus, from the very beginning of the film, sound effects and music support both the theme of appearance versus reality and whatever medial position in the continuum between disbelief and its suspension the film audience, lacking Shakespeare’s Induction, is influenced to take by visual means.

This pattern continues throughout the film (as the play’s Induction does not). Of course, realistic sound effects and artificial music tracks are staples of almost any cinema, conventions so well established that we do not often attend to them. But Zeffirelli draws attention to the music and sounds in this film by yoking them to overt visual artifice and cinematic verisimilitude early on and by modulating their volume, pace, and mood enough to make us notice. Examples of memorable realistic sounds in the first third of the movie include the cannon shot, the crowd noises during the university carnival, the broken glass that punctuates Kate’s anger at her father’s protection of Bianca, the sounds of objects that Petruchio knocks over in Hortensio’s house, an off-screen crowing cock, and the rose-water poured for Petruchio by Hortensio’s servants.

These realistic noises are artfully leavened, however, by even louder musical motifs, especially when these repeated tunes cross the diegetic divide. The first instance of this tactic occurs after the credits sequence during the carnival parade out of the university. The scene begins as youths seem to be playing renaissance instruments while dancing down a narrow street; at the same time, we hear a male chorus sing “la, la, la” to a new tune. The singing and backup instrumentals appear to be part of the story, but neither source, the singers or the instruments, can be located with certainty in the visuals Zeffirelli provides. So far, however, I take the scene to be largely realistic, though marred by the assumptions of Italian dubbing practices. Then, during a shot in which Tranio discovers Lucentio staring at Bianca, the musical theme heard at the beginning of the film is played again, this time on what sounds like renaissance instruments, though only fragmentary visual evidence of those instruments, which are simply carried rather than played, is shown. At this point, I think that at least a few in the audience may recognize meta-cinematic manipulation. This variant is soon followed by a different male choral song, off-screen but received as diegetic, which accompanies the lifting of Bianca’s veil. Here, I believe, the audience re-suspends disbelief. Finally, the original non-
diegetic theme is reprised on-screen, sung by youths who have surrounded Bianca, who laughs coquettishly as one youth sings of doing “what Adam did for Eve” and then other males join in the chorus, bragging “I’ll do it well, gentle maid, I’ll do it well.” This theme song, identified henceforth by its first line, “Let me tell, gentle maiden” though called by some the “Bianca theme” even though it is first attached to Lucentio’s arrival at Padua, is sung diegetically here; however, attentive viewers may recognize its earlier non-diegetic version and thus its status as a meta-cinematic intervention, or artifice, though Sanders mistakenly thinks that this “carnivalesque procession” marks the theme’s first appearance (140). Along with Bianca’s coquetry, her veil, the slightly gauzy look of some close-ups in the sequence, and Lucentio’s “love-at-first-sight” gazes, then, the musical interlude associates this pair of lovers with appearances and artifice. As the Induction does for the early scenes of the Bianca subplot in Shakespeare’s play, so Zeffirelli’s presentation of “Let me tell, gentle maiden” brings critical doubts about the “love” of Lucento and Bianca. Indeed, if we remember the giant blond whore (in the procession just before Bianca appears) and think about the lyrics to the tune as well, the recognition of both deceptive artifice in Bianca and a connection between her apparently romantic love at first sight and mere bodily exchange is inescapable.

The other meta-cinematic interventions of song belong to Petruchio. In the first instance, acting more like the drunken Christopher Sly at Hortensio’s house than a gentleman of Verona, he sings (a cappella) the final song of Feste the Clown in Twelfth Night, the same one reprised by the Fool in King Lear: “Heigh, ho, the wind and the rain.” For those in the audience familiar with Shakespeare, this intertextual insertion associates Petruchio with witty “naturals,” thus suggesting his playfulness, intelligence, and deep understanding of physical and psychological realities. Moreover, those viewers in the know will be lifted from the film’s story by this intertextual ploy to overtly ponder rather than unconsciously pass over these associations. A second meta-cinematic manipulation of music comes right after Petruchio’s night at Hortensio’s house. As the two friends, accompanied by Gremio, Tranio, Lucentio, Grumio, and Biondello, approach Baptista Minola’s manse, Kate attacks Bianca within, and the male group reacts with temporary and silent backpedaling at some of the loudest female shrieks. Thereupon, Petruchio laughs and delivers his “Fear boys with bugs” speech (1.2.195-207), after which Zeffirelli and Rota provide the entourage—mimicking Sousa-like march as they approach the Minola house jauntily (see Haring-Smith 163). The anachronistic change in style clearly provides comic distance, enabling the audience to question the reality of Petruchio’s manly braggadocio.

The final two instances of musical manipulation occur at Petruchio’s residence in Verona. Holderness points out that Petruchio and Grumio sing “a bawling song which actually joins in with the musical soundtrack” (65) and relates this diegetic crossover to the film’s “subversive approach to its own formal devices” (64). But the song, unidentified by Holderness, is the tune long associated with Petruchio and first heard at the start of the university carnival celebration during the credits early in the film. Thus, as Petruchio throws some of his gold coins from the dowry chest to his servants immediately after arriving, he and Grumio sing “diddly-dum” in tune with the non-diegetic music, and then Petruchio adds the lyrics: “Where is the life that late I led, ’tis gone, ’tis gone.” Since the moment
is celebratory and thus immediately reminiscent of the Saturnalian explosion at Padua, the song should remind us that Petruchio, even as he appears to be happily rejoining the moneyed class, is the avatar of festive comedy, the ruffian of release, and the counter to bourgeois social containment (see Jorgens 71-78). However, we might also remember that the film's Saturnalian carnival includes masks and costumes, signifying role-play. The issue paraded in this early event is not between role and real self, however, but between conventional role and playful, expressive role, between roles that curtail and those that express internal imperatives. All the world's a stage on which we strut and fret, but in more or less satisfying ways. Also, since the tune became Petruchio's theme long before (as I shall detail later), the novelty here is in crossing the diegetic line and thus simultaneously underscoring possible self-limiting artifice in Petruchio's character, the same kind of debilitating psychological role-play as Kate's shrewishness. Moreover, as before, Zeffirelli's playful musical ploy helps the audience develop a meta-cinematic distance from the diegesis and the character in order to actively consider, rather than pass over, what psychological masks he might share with Katarina.

Musical Motifs and Character

The supportive role of music in helping to supply the film with ideas and changes in dramatic response similar to those that Shakespeare's Induction provides to the play in the theater, however, is only a secondary function in Zeffirelli's movie. The primary function is to support the director's conceptions of the principal characters and ultimately his interpretation of Shakespeare's play. For Zeffirelli assigns musical motifs to Bianca and Lucentio, to Petruchio alone, and to Kate, sometimes alone and sometimes coupled with Petruchio, repeating the different tunes often when these characters are on-screen (some examples of which I have detailed earlier). To determine how these more important motifs affect an audience's understanding of character and theme, I must track each throughout Zeffirelli's film. I have already described how the "Let me tell, gentle maiden" melody opens the film as a non-diegetic orchestral version associated with Lucentio and is then sung after the unveiling of Bianca. It also appears a little later when Lucentio and Tranio devise their plan to mask themselves as Cambio and Lucentio respectively; thus, the motif continues to be associated with artifice and deceptive identity. However, perhaps because Zeffirelli devotes most of the middle section of the film to Petruchio and Katarina, this musical motif disappears in the middle acts even though Lucentio and Bianca appear on-screen in bits and pieces. "Let me tell, gentle maiden" then returns in a segment representing 5.1, as Bianca and Lucentio kiss outside a church before Biondello can tear them apart for their turn at the altar. The motif is finally reprised only in a fragmentary fashion moments later when Lucentio and Bianca kneel before the "real" Vincentio and ask forgiveness. After this brief segment quickly gives way to the wedding feast, we never hear the Lucentio-Bianca theme again. Why? My hunch is that, like the whole Lucentio-Bianca subplot in Zeffirelli's film, its music is insignificant next to the motifs of Kate and Petruchio that have dominated the middle of the film and will dominate the end of it as well. For Zeffirelli, Lucentio and Bianca count only as indices of life's appearances and conventional roles or as foils for the real jewels of the play.

While the tune representing artifice and false identity, the one whose lyrics suggest that mere lust, not love, lurks beneath the façade of a "gentle maiden,"
eventually gives way to triumphant opposites, it clearly serves to make Bianca her older sister's foil. Associated visually with the blonde whore and the rich blonde widow, both of whom openly link sex and marriage with money (and appear only briefly early in the film and at the final wedding banquet), Natasha Pyne's Bianca is a self-absorbed woman who uses conventional bourgeois means to attain goals more material (sex, money, power) than truly erotic or loving. Zeffirelli also makes the motif of superficial and deceptive appearance clear by Bianca's Petrarchan blonde hair (need I say more?) and the pastel colors of flowing dresses that cover her up to the neck. By contrast, Elizabeth Taylor's Kate exposes her bosom, dresses largely in deep greens and bright, rich burgundies most of the time, and is, of course, raven-haired. The same contrast is emphasized by the film's casting and costuming of Lucentio and Petruchio. The former (played by Michael York), a naïve, dreamy Petrarchan lover who aspires to be a philosopher but soon becomes a fake teacher of classical languages and who fails to see Bianca's true identity while deceptively scheming to have and hold her both in and before marriage, is also blond, dressed in pastels, and covered to the neck. Richard Burton's Petruchio, by contrast, is a brown-haired rogue dressed in deep or bright colors, and his hirsute chest is on display almost as much as Kate's cleavage. Burton and Taylor's costumes suggest that they are less apt to hide who they are or what they desire than Lucentio and Bianca. They play conscious and unconscious roles, to be sure, but the roles are less conventional, deceptive, and repressive.

This contrastive casting and costuming is echoed in the musical motif chosen for Petruchio. As noted earlier, he is associated with the "Where is the life that late I led, 'tis gone" tune, the one first introduced at the cannon shot that begins the carnival. This visual context and the expressive, fast-paced quality of the tune associate the motif with an exuberant release of human feelings long repressed by social conventions, but the release, as noted above, does not unmask all that is within. Its next appearance occurs when, en route to Baptista's house, Gremio asks Petruchio, "Will you woo this wildcat?" to which he responds with gusto, "Will I live?" (1.2.193). The non-diegetic motif then begins loudly and continues for some time over both Petruchio's purposeful strides and wordless comic business between the disguised Lucentio/Cambio and Tranio/Lucentio. The motif is then faintly heard as well in the Sousa-like variation discussed above, right after Petruchio's swaggering "Fear boys with bugs!" speech. As suggested above, the placement of this obviously comic version of the motif might cause the audience to doubt Petruchio's apparent confidence, to suggest his construction of a brave show despite the tune's previous connections with the release of repressed libidinal wishes by Paduan society. The main point here, however, is that this repeated melody is associated only with Petruchio.

With the exception of public, period music (discussed in the fourth endnote), the rest of the music track until 5.1 is an interweaving of largely non-diegetic
versions of this melody, played loudly and with upbeat pace when Petruchio is pictured, and a third musical motif that comes to be associated with Kate or with both Kate and Petruchio, usually played softly and slowly. The latter tune, oddly, is first heard very briefly when Petruchio sleeps in Hortensio's house and then is sounded more strongly inside Baptista's door as Kate, following her whipping of Bianca, suffers by watching how Baptista coddles her sister. The somewhat sad but clearly romantic melody begins as background music for these words from Kate: "Nay, now I see / She is your treasure" (2.1.31-32) and then increases abruptly in volume as the shrew, her diatribe over, hears Petruchio's bell and runs to the door to snatch it down. The motif is heard again in this scene right after Baptista farcically clears the room of all suitors save Petruchio (to a background variant of the latter's exuberant tune). As Kate's father approaches Petruchio on the subject of getting his daughter's love, the new motif hovers over the conversation and ends only when Petruchio passes through a door, saying with characteristic bravado, "Why, that is nothing!" (2.1.130). This extended introduction of a soft motif may be too subtle to be overtly recognizable, but there's no doubt that Zeffirelli and Rota intend it to underscore, at least unconsciously, both the cause and center of Kate's character—her need for love—and Petruchio's part in responding to that need. Moreover, Zeffirelli's *mise-en-scène* makes clear that Kate's shrewish revenge against her sibling stems from her perception that Baptista loves Bianca more, and the director retains (despite the patriarchal dowry settlement) Baptista's demand that the marriage contract hinges on Petruchio's attainment of Katarina's love: "for that is all in all" (2.1.129).

The interweaving of this romantic musical motif with Petruchio's more exuberant "Where is the life [...]" theme continues in the pair's first conversation. Petruchio, having in soliloquy thought out his strategy before mirroring windows, goes to the room in which Kate is breaking furniture in rage. As he says, "Good morrow, Kate" (2.1.182), his words are punctuated by a single cello playing his motif at the low end of its register. Then, while she sizes him up in silence and as both he and she speak a line or two, a clarinet plays their romantic motif octaves above. The same kind of mixed bass and treble interplay on these themes continues through the beginning of a long chase, the Hollywood staple into which Zeffirelli inserts their war of wit. But when Kate happily believes she has escaped Petruchio, first alongside apples and then lying in a virtual swimming pool of wool, the romantic theme, now with full orchestration, swells in volume. This moment represents the apogee of volume on this musical motif and clearly associates the music with Kate's private joy at outwitting her suitor in a playful competition (and also in having a suitor to play with).

The remainder of the wooing chase is accompanied by fragments of bass and treble music interspersed with dialogue until Petruchio catches Kate on the roof, at which point a version of his music is briefly played until the pair fall through the
tiles and back into the wool bin. Then, as Kate limps away, introductory notes of a sad nature punctuate Petruchio’s recognition of her pain and lead to another version of her/their romantic motif as Petruchio picks her up and supports her on their walk out of the room. The motif continues while, after a cross-cut to Baptista’s negotiations with Bianca’s suitors, Petruchio leads Kate along a second-floor hallway. Then, after depositing her in a room and locking the door, Petruchio announces his triumph to the other men while Katarina watches through a stained-glass transom window. At this point, when there is music, we hear fragments of both his tune and hers, or theirs, the volume of which grows slightly as she silently smiles, presumably musing happily about the upcoming nuptials. Thus the musical pattern helps suggest that at some level, despite appearances, Kate and Petruchio are in harmony and that Kate’s internal desires are as influential in their relationship as Petruchio’s libidinal energy and masking, male-oriented bravado.

Similar patterns of alternation continue throughout the rest of the taming sequences. Overall, however, except for the ride back to Verona in the rain and snow and the arrival of Petruchio and Grumio there (in which scenes Petruchio’s theme is heard at high volume), the romantic motif, though sounded more softly, gets more than equal time, especially after Kate starts cleaning his house. The growing dominance of this motif continues during the “First, kiss me, Kate” scene (5.1.116-27), next at the final banquet when, in silence, Kate smiles and gazes wistfully at the children playing in front of her table while exchanging uncertain silent glances with Petruchio, and lastly when music accompanies her words during the long “obedience” speech (5.2.136-79). Moreover, her/their tune finally crescendos when Petruchio asks for a kiss after their mutual triumph over the other couples in the wager. Meanwhile, his motif only reappears at the very end after he wishes all, including the audience, a “good night” (187) and fights his way through the women, chasing his wife again. But, with symbolic import, as he passes through a door that presumably leads eventually to their bedroom, the couple’s joint theme returns. Finally, as Grumio offers a gesture and expression that suggest either finality or uncertainty or both about what will happen in that bedroom, Petruchio’s theme takes over during the closing credits until, after a double-wipe blackout marking the end of the film proper, her/their theme returns during a still of Kate’s shrewish
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By mixing the two motifs and giving the more romantic one an edge in duration, the musical track clearly supports the idea that Petruchio and Kate develop an erotic mutuality that at least equals in interpretive power other thematic possibilities Zeffirelli includes. Furthermore, the interwoven quality of the two musical motifs and the temporal dominance of Kate’s tune, the romantic theme, through the middle of the film and at the movie’s end, including its presence during moments when Petruchio is pictured (the reverse is not true), suggests that love at some internal level has been achieved by both characters. Thus the musical track supports the idea, suggested visually as well by Zeffirelli, that Petruchio, using both physical and psychological manipulations, educates Kate out of her unconscious role as shrew so that she can consciously choose, perhaps by adoption of other roles, to satisfy her own desires. At the same time, however, Kate discovers and touches the vulnerable self beneath the carnivalesque and macho roles by which Petruchio supposedly “tamed” her, so that he also can satisfy his need to love and be loved.

**Silence and Laughter**

Petruchio's psychological complexity, his hidden need for love beneath the macho bluster of his apparent desire only for money and control, is developed by Zeffirelli through another manipulation of the sound track: laughter and verbal silence. The silences begin at our very first sight of Kate, which occurs in a silent extreme close-up of her eyes (masked by shutters, suggesting imprisonment). In the last ten years, several critics have noticed quiet, wordless moments that the film juxtaposes with loud uproarious farce, though much of that notice attends to camerawork more than sound. One critic, for example, suggests that in those quiet moments when the camera focuses on Kate’s eyes as they gaze on others, “viewers can meet their own voyeurism” and “share her fantasy” (Hodgdon 167). Another claims that Zeffirelli’s “tendency to empathize with the social outcast becomes the occasion for cross-gender identification with Kate, as the camera repeatedly adopts her perspective and adds private moments in which we see her thinking” (Henderson 157). In fact, “Zeffirelli allows these camera shots to establish Kate as the movie’s silent thinker” (160). These moments have, no doubt, led a few critics to see that Kate gains ever more control in her marriage as the film unwinds (Hapgood 91) and to believe that “Zeffirelli’s version actually tends to subvert the misogynist agenda of Shakespeare’s play” (Watson 315; see also Brode 24; and Hapgood 91).

To be accurate, however, Kate’s “eloquent silences” (Jackson 116) are often accompanied by greatly modulated versions of her musical motif, as noted above, so camerawork and verbal silence are not the only means by which Zeffirelli shows us Kate’s interiority or has us see from her point of view. More importantly, Kate is not the only character pictured briefly in silent moments. Henderson notes in passing how Zeffirelli’s camera “lingers on those who are emotionally isolated, unsure, or far from home” (157), and most of the time Petruchio is the other character upon whom the camera lingers, though usually without benefit of close-up. Although our introduction to Petruchio comes in a brief off-screen voiceover before his appearance in a long shot, and while he is usually the loudest speaker in the film, he is also granted moments similar to Kate’s private silences. From his
silent discomfort at Gremio’s bad breath, to his and others’ recoil at the shrieking of Bianca when Kate whips her, to nervous glances exchanged with Grumio at the sight of Hortensio’s smashed lute, to his concerned but silent reaction to Kate’s pain after the chase, to his hopeful silence when he undresses and then approaches her as she sits on his bed, to his quizzical look when Kate only gives him a peck on the nose outside Baptista’s feast, to his exchange of silent glances with Kate as she smiles at the children during Bianca’s wedding feast, to, finally, his silent relief at Kate’s response to his command during the wager, we are allowed, through Burton’s silent facial expressions, to see beneath the more typical bravado Petruchio displays. While Hodgdon notes only that Taylor’s attraction to Burton, made clear by the quality of her gaze, eroticizes his body (167-68), I think the audience gets a look at Petruchio’s interiority as well. Zeffirelli’s film shows us “the psychological ‘supposing’ within the minds of [both] Petruchio and Kate” as they negotiate with each other (Rothwell 131). Overall, then, as Russell Jackson suggests, despite the apparent farcical madness of Kate and Petruchio, “the film in fact claims sanity for the pair of them by placing moments of perception—quiet epiphanies among the hullabaloo” that proclaim their wisdom and “suggest stiller, deeper waters running silently beneath the surface behaviour of the pair” (114).

Furthermore, Petruchio’s silences, however briefly exposed, stand out in juxtaposition to his booming dialogue and to another sound motif—his laughter and the laughter of others. This motif has gone largely unnoticed in criticism of the film, and when noted, reactions have not been favorable. Haring-Smith, for example, paraphrases the view of a reviewer from the 3 March 1967 New Statesman that Burton “signaled both defeat and victory with a monotonous chuckle that disturbed and confused many spectators” (164); moreover, Jorgens opines that “one could do with less mindless baritone laughter from Richard Burton” (78), and Jackson suggests that Petruchio’s “over-hearty laughter” (115) works against Zeffirelli’s desire to present the lovers’ superiority to Paduan society.

Petruchio, however, is not the only one who laughs in Padua. Others’ laughter is first seen and partly heard in the celebratory crowd noise during the early carnival segment mentioned previously. It then reappears just before and during Petruchio’s
arrival at his wedding, continues during the wedding and later when Gremio cracks some jokes at the departure of the newlyweds from Baptista’s house, is occasionally heard at Petruchio’s house, and last reappears during the banquet scene. Much of this laughter signifies a public celebratory release at the breakdown of decorum and an implied, ironic jibe at conventional patriarchal authorities. At the end, for example, when their wives fail to show up on cue during the wager, the crowd laughs at Hortensio and Lucentio. One critic believes that, in this instance, “just as laughter has always been directed at men in this film, so civic laughter finally normalizes, and neutralizes, the husbands’ discomfiture” (Rutter 251), but they look rather discomfited to me.

Indeed, laughter is hardly an unalloyed positive outburst in Zeffirelli’s film. Among the women, for example, Bianca is shown laughing coquettishly before, during, and immediately after the smutty song, “Let me tell, gentle maiden.” Of course, some of her laughter seems akin to the celebratory explosion of the Saturnalian moment in which she finds herself. However, as noted above, a number of cinematic and dramatic elements suggest that artificiality is an issue in this introduction to Bianca, and the kind and quality of her laughter does nothing but add to this reading. Hers is the laughter of a woman who wants sexual attention but fake playful innocence to get it. By contrast, in a later scene discussed above, we first see Kate laugh happily in private, not when she is sought by numbers of men singing about great sex but when she thinks she has successfully foiled her first and only suitor. While Taylor’s buxom body rolling in soft white wool is certainly not an asexual event, she exudes the joy of a prepubescent girl at play. Thus, in this case as well, the laughter involves an undercutting of appearances, though here it is a genuine expression of positive emotion.

Petruchio, however, is the character most full of laughs, particularly when he is with other men. He may laugh too much, as some have opined, but I think Zeffirelli intended him to do so. For laughter is one of the keys to his complex character. When we first meet Petruchio before Hortensio’s house, there is a little laughter by both men, but nothing extraordinary. However, when Hortensio, disguised as Latio strumming a lute, appears the next morning in Petruchio’s room to introduce his plan to woo Bianca, Zeffirelli makes sure that laughter is eventually abundant. Before Hortensio’s arrival, Petruchio is silent for a long time as two servants fill a pan with rose-water; then he scowls, they leave, and he puts a small amount of water on his beard while he quietly reprises a line from “Heigh, ho, the wind and the rain.” Hortensio soon enters in a disguise of hat, black hair, beard, and thick glasses, strums three chords, and then shows his face beneath the disguise with a “ha, ha” (sounded like “ta-da!”). From this point on, Petruchio laughs aloud at both the disguise and Hortensio’s plans at least six times. He even tries on the disguise
himself and then puts it on Grumio. The quiet set-up, the contrasting number and volume of the laughter, and the causal connection to disguise suggest very strongly that laughter of this kind has something to do with masks, or false identity. Moreover, this scene is immediately followed by one previously described in which Petruchio and a male entourage are stopped in their tracks as they approach Baptista's house. When the whole group is taken aback and virtually silenced by women's shrieks and destructive noises from the house, Petruchio looks apprehensively at Grumio and then starts to laugh, after which he looks at Hortensio and laughs even louder. Here, the laughter is clearly a cover for initial fear at the challenge of facing Katarina. That is, laughter here is defensive in nature, a kind of reaction-formation or displacement for male anxiety in the face of a strong, unruly woman. Laughter is the male mask of confidence by which Petruchio and other men protect their fragile psyches.

Laughter continues to be Petruchio's trademark sound in his dowry business with Baptista, and similar laughter from Kate's father erupts when Petruchio offers him a deal as attractive as his own. Zeffirelli even shows Petruchio doing nothing but laugh during a reaction shot as Baptista clears the room for more discussions. Moreover, when Baptista says Petruchio must get Kate's love, Zeffirelli gives us a long laugh over a cut just before Petruchio says that accomplishing that objective is "nothing" to worry about. Then Petruchio continues to laugh as sounds of Hortensio's tribulations emanate from another room, but this laughter is subdued and then alternates with silent moments of apprehension when he sees Hortensio's difficulty. Though Petruchio laughs and, despite Hortensio's beating, tells Baptista that he longs "to have some chat with her" (2.1.162), fearful glances exchanged with Grumio tell a different story. As before, it is clear that laughter is a men's group signal that covers fears which are unbecoming in patriarchal or masculine roles.

The same use of laughter by Petruchio occurs throughout the chase and especially when he appears triumphantly with Kate (twisting her arm, of course) in the sight of Baptista and the suitors watching from below. Finally, Petruchio's laughter reaches its apex when he arrives for his wedding; laughter is at the center of his performance as a madcap who flouts religious conventions and good manners at the church and feast while taking what patriarchal conventions ordain—the dowry and wife. But once in Verona, Petruchio is not as full of laughter, probably because he needs no more bravado with male equals (Zeffirelli has cut Hortensio from the Verona scenes). Instead, he gives Kate a mirror-image of her shrewishness by abusing his servants, and then he tries to develop both public and private relationships with her. When his attempts fail, Kate elicits a different kind of laughter by working with and rewarding the servants, but the laughter motif dwindles and switches over to the Lucentio-Bianca plot at the end of the film. Indeed, Petruchio's lack of characteristic laughter may be a sign that he is a changed man when he returns to Padua. Only in response to Hortensio's joking claim that it is his office to lay the widow flat (5.2.35-36) do we hear male-bonding laughter from Petruchio. Instead, during the wager and outside the dialogue, Petruchio silently shows much more doubt than the other two. Of course, when their wives fail them, Lucentio and Hortensio are laughed at by all, and the crowd does laugh at Petruchio's struggle to follow Kate out at the end. But Petruchio does not laugh out loud. As the immediately preceding silent kiss between Kate and Petruchio suggests, he has found love and thus no longer needs the defense of laughter.
Conclusion

Finally, let me entertain briefly some debatable questions about the reception and significance of the sound patterns I have tracked. First, is it likely that these patterns will be heard at all and will have the kinds of effects on an audience's understanding that I have suggested above? After all, I am talking about patterns in mere musical "background," non-verbal sounds, and moments of little or no sound whatsoever. Skepticism here is perfectly understandable. Nevertheless, I believe that these patterns would be noticed or at least felt by many in the film's audience for several reasons: 1) the sounds (and silences) are often repeated; 2) when repeated, the musical sounds are often at high volume, or the volume is greatly modulated, and the moments of laughter or silence are often sustained for quite some time; 3) the sounds are often accompanied by visuals that call attention to them and sometimes by verbal notation (for example, when melodies are sung, thus crossing the diegetic divide); and 4) other critics have also noticed some of the patterns (such as Rothwell on music, Henderson and Jackson on silences).

Furthermore, film theorists, taking note of developments in the technology of sound, the practice of various auteurs, and post-structural cultural theory, have broken free of early views favoring the dominance of the image in the reception of cinema. For example, while acknowledging that sound in cinema is less easily identified with its source than visual elements, while admitting as well that sound requires a greater duration of screen time to be recognized, and while noting that feature films usually assign music to background roles less susceptible to direct rationalization into meaning, Claudia Gorbman argues that film sound (especially music but including silence) mediates and combines with images and narrative to influence the creation of film meaning quite forcefully. Film theorists now believe that sound plays a significant part, within the socially constructed but largely unconscious paradigms of film audiences, in sustaining the illusions of "natural" transparency and "reality" by which Hollywood cinema maintains American bourgeois values (see Doane and Belton). Indeed, these theorists are reassessing the degree to which the secondary status of film sound is appropriate, finding complex relations between sounds, voice, music, narration, images, and the film business (see, for example, books by Kalinak, Brown, and Smith, articles in Buhler, Flinn, and Neumeyer or in Kay Dickinson, and theoretical excursions on sound and voice in cinema by Michel Chion). All of the complex relations between film and the cultural, technological, and economic contexts that post-structural theory has emphasized, moreover, suggest that simplifying the role of sound to mere accompaniment and the creation of mood is at best reductive, at worst misleading (see Altman).

Nevertheless, given the constructed reception of sound, its normative ways of escaping notice in film, and our culture's ideology of the visible, it is unlikely that Zeffirelli's manipulations of sound in The Taming of the Shrew will be received and understood by all. Rather, different levels of sophisticated reception by individual viewers is more likely, not unlike our responses to the cinema's manipulations of cinematography, mise-en-scène, and editing, etc., visuals whose effects film analysts now accept without question. Those with musical or cinematic training will have a better chance of overtly recognizing formal patterns in film while others may simply be influenced in unconscious ways. Likewise, all viewers will not be affected equally by the three kinds of sound patterns I have outlined above. My suspicion is
that only a few in any movie audience will consciously recognize the sounds supporting the "film Induction," and that a few more might hear the musical motifs and develop notions of character and theme from them. A larger percentage, I think, will see and hear the repeated laughter or see and note the repeated silences, sensing in these repetitions some psychological significance. However, I have no idea what the numbers in these three groups might be.

Even if the reception numbers are small, though, the patterns of sound in the film can help the most sensitive of us to infer the director's interpretation of Shakespeare's comedy and more fully appreciate the sophistication of Zeffirelli's cinematic art. That is, patterns of sound can suggest what the director had in mind when he filmed The Taming of the Shrew. Overall, of course, the interpretive design of an adaptation is best determined by finding patterns in the cuts, additions, and changes that a film makes to the source text. Zeffirelli is well known for heavily cutting Shakespeare's texts and, in many cases, for substituting visuals to make up for the gist of what is excised (see Pilkington 163-65, 169, and 173). He is also well known for making changes in the language and the sequence of scenes (or parts thereof), sometimes underscoring his interpretation thereby (as in the first scenes of his Hamlet). He makes these adaptational moves in The Taming of the Shrew too, but the bulk of alterations that signify interpretively are additions (for example, the Saturnalian parade during the credits), among which should be counted the patterns of sound I have tracked in this essay.

These patterns must, however, be assessed alongside other additions, including patriarchal and misogynistic accretions, romantic admixtures, and additions that are interpretively ambiguous. While this is not the time for a full accounting, I believe that when the sound patterns are juxtaposed to 1) romantic additions like the visualized silent moments of the lovers previously noted, 2) somewhat ambiguous additions like the visualized housekeeping by Kate (that paradoxically expresses both a confining domesticity and an independently chosen productivity, in contrast to earlier shrewish destruction), and 3) patriarchal additions like the filmed misogynistic postnuptial trip back to Verona in rain and snow, Zeffirelli's complex romantic-progressive interpretation will become quite clear, especially when the narrative progression of the film is also given due consideration. That is, when the sound patterns described here are placed in a fair and balanced accounting of other cinematic evidence, the mutuality of the sexual politics in the play will clearly emerge, despite misogynistic and patriarchal appearances of which feminist critics have made much (see Cartmell, especially 213-14; and Christensen, especially 31-35).

Tracking the sounds of Zeffirelli's film, then, reveals that his interpretation of Shakespeare's early comedy focuses on notions of mutual love and mutual education
that allow mature lovers of both sexes to use the artifice of socially constructed patriarchal roles playfully in order to reach and satisfy their deepest needs, though not without tribulation, ambiguity, and uncertainty. Zeffirelli’s film offers a progressive-romantic reading of *The Taming of the Shrew*, suggesting, as do Shakespeare’s later romantic comedies, romances, and generically ambiguous plays like *Antony and Cleopatra*, that the renaissance dramatist was not rigidly bound by early modern patriarchal culture in developing his imaginative constructs. Though critics remain divided over the sexual politics of Shakespeare’s text in its early modern context (see Dolan), Zeffirelli represents the play in ways that warn against too easy an acceptance of patriarchal and Petrarchan appearances and that eventually clarify and promote Humanist and Protestant perspectives on the relations between men and women. In terms of his own time and circumstances, moreover, Zeffirelli has interpreted Shakespeare’s text in the direction of an idealized view of Burton and Taylor’s recent marriage, in the direction of his own conservative yet contemporary Catholicism, and perhaps even in the direction of an emerging respect for women (see Donaldson and Zeffirelli). He has done so, finally, in a way appropriate for a longtime director of classical opera, one for whom sound could never be merely a secondary accompaniment to images.

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**Notes**

1. The most recent attention to symphonic music can be found in Sanders, chapter seven, who criticizes Patrick Doyle’s work in Branagh’s films but also meanders briefly through the scores in Polanski’s *Macbeth*, Kurosawa’s Shakespeare adaptations, Brook’s *Lear* (for its lack of music), Taymor’s *Titus*, Kozintsev’s *King Lear*, Luhrmann’s *William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet*, and Blake Nelson’s film of *Othello*. Then, in chapter eight, Sanders presents more substantial analyses of the use of contemporary songs in Luhrmann, Blake Nelson, and Junger’s *10 Things I Hate about You*. Furthermore, although William Walton’s music in Olivier’s films received critical attention as far back as the 1970s by Manvell and Huntley, and sound in a few Shakespeare films was analyzed by Klimek in 1992, most scholarship on the soundtracks of cinematic adaptations of the Bard has been post-millennial and almost exclusively on music. See, for example, Friedman, Jones, Joyce, Loehlin, Marshall, Sheppard, Sneddon, Vaughan, and Walker. This study seeks to move beyond these articles by attending to both music and sound in a detailed and comprehensive manner.

2. Hickman, however, upset this hierarchy in 2006 with the first textbook devoted to cinematic music.

3. All quotations from *The Taming of the Shrew* follow Brian Morris’s edition of the play for the Arden Shakespeare.
Let me note, in passing, however, that while these motifs dominate the musical track, they are not at all the only repeated notes in the film. Of the twelve or so different melodies in Zeffirelli's *Taming*, there are at least three more that are repeated: 1) a “la, la, la” tune sung by a male chorus appears, as previously mentioned, before Bianca's unveiling in the street, then again as Kate and Baptista walk out of the Minola house en route the church, later at their arrival before the church, and finally at the beginning of the nuptial party for Bianca and Lucentio; 2) a “ring-a-ding, ring-a-ding, ding, dong, bell” song accompanied by renaissance recorders and other appropriate instruments is sung and played diegetically, first as the widow looks at Kate's wedding gifts just before Baptista arrives to take Kate to the church, then again as father and daughter walk up the street to the church, then again by organ and choir in the church, and finally also at the entrance to the nuptial party for Bianca and Lucentio; and 3) non-descript renaissance music from recorders and other instruments is heard at Baptista Minola's house before and after Kate's trip to the church and then again at the wedding party for Bianca and Lucentio as guests arrive and some dancing occurs. These three tunes, which are diegetic or quasi-diegetic (usually but not invariably connected to on-screen instruments and singers), are intended, I think, to bring a kind of moderate and decorous period verisimilitude to the public marriage scenes. They clearly contrast with the largely non-diegetic and more strikingly modulated orchestral motifs identified with the play's pairs of lovers.

**Works Cited**


Friedman, Michael D. “‘I won’t dance, don’t ask me’: Branagh’s Love’s Labour’s Lost and the American Film Musical.” Literature/Film Quarterly 32:2 (2004): 134-43.


