

Symphonic Shakespeare

By [Paul Schuyler Phillips](#)

On a Wednesday evening twenty-five years ago in Iowa City, Iowa, one of the most exciting events in Anthony Burgess's life took place: the premiere of his Third Symphony. In *The New York Times*

, he succinctly described the thrill of the performance: "I had written over 30 books, but this was the truly great artistic moment."

[Note 1](#)

Performed on October 22, 1975 by the University Symphony Orchestra of The University of Iowa School of Music under the direction of conductor James Dixon, the symphony's premiere marked the first time that any of Burgess's orchestral compositions had ever been played in the Western hemisphere

[Note 2](#)

. Burgess had desired such an opportunity for decades and despite the imperfections of a performance by a student orchestra, he found the experience exhilarating. "Some things went wrong, of course... But it worked. The work worked. I was, and remain, overwhelmed. I had written those noises.

That was me, that great web of sonorities being discoursed by those hundred handsome kids under that big man on the rostrum."

[Note 3](#)

The sense of accomplishment resulting from the performance caused Burgess's musical confidence to surge, leading him to compose a vast amount of music during his remaining eighteen years.

Burgess's life was a balancing act between his passions for literature and music, and setting words to music was a vital way for him to bind together the two halves of his creative self. He

set texts by many writers he esteemed, including John Dryden, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Hardy, Wilfred Owen, D. H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, but the two authors with whom his identity was most closely connected were Joyce and Shakespeare. Burgess composed small- and large-scale works based on both their works, including song settings of verses by both authors. He composed a musical, *Blooms of Dublin*, based on Joyce's *Ulysses*, and made Shakespeare's life the subject of his ballet

Mr W. S.

He wrote the script and music for a never-made film called

Will!

(originally

The Bawdy Bard

) about the amorous adventures of the great playwright, a project that was abandoned by Hollywood once the studio concluded that a film about Shakespeare in love could never be successful. His books about both of these writers address many subjects, including the relationship of music and literature.

Shakespeare

, a sumptuous biography by Burgess published in 1970, includes these remarks on Shakespeare and music:

I feel that in the last years he took music more seriously than he had been able to in his working days. He had known musicians like Thomas Morley, who had set some of his play-lyrics and, indeed, been his near neighbour in Bishopsgate, but that craft so close to his own had been something of a mystery. Now was the time to learn more about it.

He had, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, composed a musical theme of six notes and given it to Holofernes. Curiously, no musician has ever taken that theme up and developed it. C D G A E F - it is suitable for a ground bass; it can be extended into a fugal subject. If we repeat it a tritone higher or lower, we have a perfect twelve-tone *Grundstimmung* for a serial composition. We are still waiting for Variations on a Theme by William Shakespeare.

[Note 4](#)

Five years later, Burgess took up his own challenge, basing the finale of his Third Symphony on this musical theme [Note 5](#). With the addition of vocal soloists in the last movement, he set texts from *Love's Labour's Lost*, including the speech by Holofernes in which the theme is quoted. The aim of this essay is to examine these texts, but first, a general overview of the symphony is in order.

The commission for the Third Symphony came about as a result of *Napoleon Symphony*. James Dixon had read the book and was deeply impressed by Burgess's attempt to create a synthesis of music and literature by basing the structure of the novel on a symphony, Beethoven's *Eroica*

. Knowing that Burgess was a composer, Dixon took action to nurture an idea that he strongly supported, that an artist could excel in more than one field, and so in 1974 he wrote to Burgess asking if he had any compositions that Dixon's orchestra could perform. The University of Iowa would see to the copying of the orchestra parts and all other details related to the preparation of the performance; all Burgess has to do was write the score.

This was the opportunity that Burgess had long desired but never been offered - to have one of his orchestral compositions played by a full symphony orchestra - and he declared that it "seemed too good to be true."

[Note 6](#)

He promptly accepted, promising to compose a symphony for Maestro Dixon and his orchestra.

Earlier in his career, Burgess had written two symphonies, but regarded neither work (both lost) with much affection by the time he composed the third. Of his First Symphony, written in 1935 while in his teens and never played, he wrote, "I shudder at the memory of its Vaughan Williams folkiness;" [Note 7](#) it "is so 'English' as to make even me sick" [Note 8](#) . The Second Symphony, titled "Sinfoni Merdeka" and composed in Malaya in 1957 to celebrate that country's independence, received one performance -- a chaotic affair that ended in a brawl! Burgess dismissed the work with a curt remark, "the less said about that the better."

[Note 9](#)

The Third Symphony represented a fresh start, "an attempt to see if -- after 20 years spent on the strenuous manipulation of words -- I could compose something for large forces on a largish scale that should not be total musical nonsense."

[Note 10](#)

Burgess's method of composition was to proceed directly to full score, in ink, without benefit of sketches, rough drafts, or testing out the music at the piano. To compose without the aid of a piano is not unusual for composers who have absolute or "perfect" pitch, since they are able to hear the notes in their mind's ear. Burgess, however, did not possess absolute pitch, which makes his achievement in composing a symphony away from a keyboard exceptional. For any composer, with or without absolute pitch, going straight to the full score without first writing preliminary drafts is highly unusual. Most composers of orchestral music work out their ideas in short score (usually a stave of 2-4 lines of music written out for piano). They orchestrate from the short score, determining which instruments will play which parts, and subsequently write out the full score with complete instrumentation. As in his literary writing, Burgess preferred to bypass the middle steps, proceeding directly from conception to finished work. His method of writing orchestral music differed little from the way he wrote novels: produce a modest number of finished pages each day until the work, written in order from beginning to end, is complete.

The chapter titled "Let's Write a Symphony" from his book *This Man and Music* supplies a detailed musical analysis of Burgess's Third Symphony along with observations about

symphonic music by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Berlioz, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Sibelius and others. The curious thing about the analysis is that the musical examples, handwritten by Burgess, do not quite match the music in the score, the original of which remains in the collection of the University of Iowa Libraries.

Rhythms, meters, even the notes themselves, differ in significant ways from the music in the manuscript, indicating that Burgess did not keep a copy of the score after the Iowa performance or at least no longer had one at his disposal when writing

This Man and Music

in 1982. The fact that he misstates the number of bars in one of the movements and the number of pages of the score is further evidence that he penned the analysis without benefit of score, a remarkable though flawed achievement.

[Note 11](#)

Additional information about the Third Symphony is found in three writings by Burgess. His program note for the Iowa premiere includes a brief description of the music along with a summary of the compositional history of the Third Symphony, while his *The New York Times* article "How I Wrote My Third Symphony" contains information about the writing of the symphony plus comments about composers and music in general. An account of the symphony's genesis is also found in

You've Had Your Time,

the second part of Burgess's "confessions". These three accounts differ in some details but agree on the general outline of the symphony's creation.

In December 1974, Burgess bought himself a half-hundredweight of scoring paper and started composing the symphony. According to the Iowa program note, Burgess started writing the symphony in Siena, while the article in *The New York Times* asserts that he began it in Rome, then continued in Siena.

The Time

s
article indicates that he had written about half of the first movement by late December, judging by swear words in the score! Burgess recalls that the page with the Arabic obscenities "was evidently composed drunk, probably on Christmas Day," and since they appear on page 30 at bar 215, approximately halfway through the 412-bar, 53-page first movement, this indicates how far he had progressed by that date.

[Note 12](#)

But according to a passage in

You've Had Your Time

, Burgess was further along than that, having almost completed the first movement by Christmas, which he recollects as the day on which he ate rotten Brussels sprouts that gave him a near fatal case of food poisoning.

His response to not dying was to write a processional for the dead. "Recovered, I composed the slow movement, which was a funeral march...The scherzo was merely fast and noisy."

[Note 13](#)

In the Iowa program notes, Burgess states that he composed "a good half of the work" during the tour, which included appearances in Florida, California, and British Columbia. This would mean that the last movement, which takes up slightly more than the final third of the full score, was written entirely in North America. I

In late February, Burgess embarked on a lecture tour of the US and Canada, continuing to work on the symphony in hotel rooms and airport waiting areas while working on a draft script for the James Bond film called

The Spy Who Loved Me.

[Note 14](#)

He completed the symphony in early April 1975 "in a Holiday Inn bedroom in a small town in Georgia (U.S.A.)" and sent the finished score to James Dixon from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, "without [his] having checked a note of it aurally (Holiday Inns have muzak but no pianos)."

[Note 15](#)

The symphony is mainly tonal, with keys, themes, and a traditional four-movement symphonic structure. The first movement is in sonata form with contrasting themes, including one that Burgess describes as "a very 'English' pendent theme which suggests a jig gone wrong." [Note](#)

[16](#)

The second movement is a lively

Scherzo

in G major whose jocund spirit is indicated by the tempo marking

Allegro molto giocoso

. Elegiac in spirit and modal in harmony, the slow third movement was dedicated by Burgess to the memory of the great Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich, who died on August 9, 1975, two and a half months before the premiere. In the finale, tenor and baritone soloists join the orchestra to sing the texts from

Love's Labour's Lost

which serve as literary and musical sources of the movement.

The play from which Burgess drew his texts is arguably Shakespeare's wittiest comedy -- a work whose "intense preoccupation with language" has given rise to numerous textual studies.

[Note 17](#)

Love's Labour's Lost

has been compared to music, for dialogue which "has always the controlled energy of fine musical phrasing," and conventions which, like opera, must be accepted "at the outset if we are not to be merely bewildered and antagonized by their apparent unreality..."

It is this musical quality, evident in both construction and language, that gives the play its buoyancy, its coherence, and its feeling of release."

[Note 18](#)

Disparaged for three centuries (for some 235 years, from 1604 to 1839, there were no known productions of the play!), i

ts reputation experienced a remarkable turnaround during the past century, with one scholar

declaring that one of the main achievements of twentieth-century stagings "has been to establish

Love's Labours Lost

as one of Shakespeare's major plays."

[Note 19](#)

Ironically, Burgess was not among its admirers. In his Shakespeare biography, he refers to it as "one suety comedy" and, comparing it to

The Taming of the Shrew

, had this to say about the play:

Another comedy, and a far inferior one, must certainly have been composed solely for a well-bred audience. This was *Love's Labours Lost*, which probably dates from late 1593. Shakespeare had been taking note of John Lyly's plays, written for the Children of the Chapel Royal and St Paul's - highly refined and rather charming comedies, full of euphuistic word-play (Lyly, with his novel *Euphues*, had already shown himself well-qualified to purvey that). These little dramas were not for the public playhouses: their delicate petals would wilt under the garlic blasts of the groundlings. They were performed before the Queen and in private houses. Southampton's circle probably liked them or affected to like them. In the 'nineties some of them were published -

Galatea, Midas, Campaspe, Endymion

: all good classical themes - and the honeyed language and ingenious conceits could be examined at leisure.

Shakespeare examined them, and then proceeded to a refined and courtly comedy of his own, full of witty quibbles, big words, and allusions to foreign travel.

Love's Labour's Lost

is almost painfully aristocratic."

[Note 20](#)

The plot concerns Ferdinand, King of Navarre, and his lords Berowne, Longaville, and Dumain, who take an oath to abstain from the company of women for three years in order to devote themselves to study. The arrival of the Princess of France, accompanied by her ladies Rosaline, Maria and Katharine, who have journeyed to the court of Navarre on a diplomatic mission, leads all four men to break their vows, as each falls in love with a different lady: Ferdinand with the princess, Berowne with Rosaline, Longaville with Maria, and Dumain with Katharine.

[Note 21](#) The secondary characters include Holofernes (schoolmaster), Sir Nathaniel (curate), Costard (clown), Dull (constable), Jaquenetta (dairymaid), Don Adriano de Armado ("a fantastical Spaniard") and Moth (Armado's page), all of whom contribute to the complexity of the plot and fanciful quality of the play's language. The suitors' efforts to woo their ladies fall short of matrimony, thus giving rise to the play's title:

Love's Labour's Lost

Fauste, pregonando a quarta
Ah, good old Mantuan! I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice:

Old Mantuan, old Mantuan! Who understandeth thee not, loves thee not.
Ut, re, sol, la, mi, fa.

Enough of this! Will you hear instead the dialogue that we two learned men have compiled in praise of the

This side is Hiems, Winter; this Ver, the Spring: the one maintained by the owl, the other by the cuckoo.

SPRING

When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white
And cuckoo buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he:
Cuckoo, cuckoo. O, word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,
When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,
And maidens bleach their summer smocks,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he:
Cuckoo, cuckoo. O, word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

WINTER

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl:
Tu-whit, tu-who. A merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl:
Tu-whit, tu-who. A merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo. You, that way; we, this.

(V.ii.875-76; 880-920)

What distinguishes *Love's Labour's Lost* from Shakespeare's other, generally more highly regarded plays is that it contains a tune, one written and perhaps even sung on stage by the bard himself, for which reason Burgess based the symphony on this particular work. The last of Holofernes' six set lines is the essential one: "Ut, re, sol, la, mi, fa", which presents a tune in solmization (solfeggio syllables that stand for specific musical pitches) and which Burgess believed was the only melody by Shakespeare in any of the plays.

"In Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, the pedant Holofernes, who was probably played by Shakespeare himself in the first presentation of the comedy, has a very interesting speech, in which he praises the old poet Mantuan, quotes a line from him, sings a snatch of Italian song - "*Venezia, Venezia, chi non ti vede non ti prezia*"

- and also warbles the notes

do re sol la mi fa

. This snatch is, I believe, the only tune that Shakespeare wrote, and it has been unaccountably neglected by Shakespeare scholars.

My finale pays homage to

Love's Labour's Lost

by basing itself on that brief Shakespeare motif - forward, backward, and upside down - and setting the

Venezia

words to an appropriate Adriatic- or Neapolitan-type melody, corny, full of schmalz, and with a mandoline tinkling away in the background."

[Note 22](#)

The six-note phrase is used very effectively by Burgess as a musical theme, although to demonstrate this musically is beyond the scope of this essay. He is mistaken, however, in accounting it the only example of Shakespearean solmization. In *King Lear*, Edmund utters a four-note phrase following his brother Edgar's entrance in Act I, scene ii:

My cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o'Bedlam. - O, these eclipses do portend these divisions. Fa, sol, la, mi. (I, ii, lines 131-133)

Holofernes' brief speech is a rumination that occurs while the parson Sir Nathaniel peruses a letter just handed to him by the illiterate dairymaid Jaquenetta. As Nathaniel silently studies the missive, which turns out to be a love letter from Berowne to Rosaline, Holofernes pretentiously prates on before asking the curate to inform him of the contents of the letter. Holofernes, a self-important bore based on the *commedia dell-arte* figure of the Pedant (and possibly named for Gangantua's tutor in Rabelais), incessantly fills his longwinded utterances with strings of redundant synonyms and snatches of Latin and Italian, impressing only the curate Nathaniel, whose pretensions to erudition are even more ludicrous than the schoolmaster's.

In these lines, Holofernes quotes in three Italianate languages - Latin, Italian, and musical solfeggio. He begins with the opening line of the first eclogue by Mantuan: "*Fauste, precor, gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra ruminat,*"

which George Turbervile's sixteenth-century translation rendered as, "Friend Faustus, pray thee, since our flock in shade and pleasaunt vale doth chewe the cudde."

[Note 23](#)

Variously known as

Baptista Spagnolo, Battista Spagnoli, Battista Spagnuoli, Baptista Mantuanus, and Mantuanus, Mantuan was a poet and Carmelite monk who lived from 1448-1516.

[Note 24](#)

He was a respected philosopher and orator, a noted theologian learned in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and an extraordinarily prolific poet said to have published more than 55,000 verses! His eclogues (pastoral poems often in dialogue form), modeled on those of Vergil and Petrarch, were first published in 1498 and used as a Latin textbook in Italy, France, Germany and England for nearly two hundred years thereafter.

Shakespeare, like any well-educated person of his day, would have studied Latin by memorizing the eclogues of Mantuan along with Turbervile's translation.

[Note 25](#)

Holofernes then addresses an apostrophe to the poet he has just quoted: "Ah! good old Mantuan. I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice: "*Venetia, Venetia, chi non ti vede non ti pretia* ." The Italian

quotation is the first part of a familiar adage "

Venetia, chi non ti vede non ti pretia, ma chi ti vede ben gli costa

."

[Note 26](#)

This proverb appeared in

Firste Fruites

(1578) and

Second Frutes

(1591), books by John Florio which were popular bilingual texts for teaching Italian to Englishmen and English to Italians. Florio's books included popular phrases contained within dialogues about everyday activities, similar to many language textbooks today, and were regarded as combined manuals of polite conversation, handbooks for self-improvement, and digests of popular journalism. Florio, the son of an Italian emigrant to London, achieved distinction as the author of an Italian-English dictionary, translator of Montaigne's *Essais*

into English, secretary to the Earl of Southampton, and tutor to Prince Henry, the son of James I.

He may well have been an acquaintance of Shakespeare. William Warburton, an eighteenth-century literary scholar, proposed in 1747 that Florio may have been the prototype for the character of Holofernes

[Note 27](#)

. After quoting the beginning of the epigram, Holofernes goes on to complete his thought: "Old Mantuan! Old Mantuan! Who understandeth thee not, loves thee not," analogizing roughly with the proverb, which means "Who sees thee not, esteems thee not."

With his next utterance, "Ut, re, sol, la, mi, fa"(which, according to a stage direction, he sings), Holofernes displays his learning once more, this time with solfeggio. In Shakespeare's day, the instruction of children in singing was of prime importance, and a schoolmaster like Holofernes would likely have been a singing master as well. Initially the line seems not to refer to Mantuan, but it does, obliquely. The use of solfeggio syllables originated early in the eleventh century, when Guido d'Arezzo noted that each phrase of the hymn *Ut queant laxis* began on a successively higher tone of the scale, beginning with Ut on C:

UT queant laxis
REsonare fibris,
MIra gestorum
FAMuli tuorum:
SOLve polluti,
LABii reatum,
Sancte [John](#)nes.

The hymn, attributed to Paul the Deacon and dating from about 774, celebrates the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24), wherein lies the connection with Mantuan. The poet's full name was Johannes Baptista Spagnolo; the solfeggio syllables, even out of order, refer back to this important hymn for the saint whose name Mantuan bore. That Shakespeare intended this pun there can be little doubt, but whether Burgess was aware of it is unknown, although it seems likely that he would have mentioned it if he were. What is certain is that such a pun, however subtle, is entirely fitting in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Linguistic complexity abounds in this comedy to a greater degree than in virtually any other play by Shakespeare, with nearly every character continually engaging in his or her own particular kind of wordplay.

The sunny atmosphere of *Love's Labour's Lost* changes abruptly in Act V when the messenger Marcade arrives with the grim news that the King of France has died. Marcade's entrance

interrupts the pageant of the Nine Worthies, a theatrical entertainment presented by Don Armado for King Ferdinand and his court. Costard, Sir Nathaniel, Holofernes, Moth, and Don Armado portray Pompey the Great, Alexander, Judas Maccabeus, Hercules, and Hector of Troy, respectively, before the festivity is halted by Marcade's appearance. The Princess, now Queen, announces that she will return to France immediately with her entourage, causing the separation of the ladies from their suitors. In conventional Elizabethan comedies, lovers marry at the end of the play, but not in *Love's Labour's Lost*, leading Berowne to grumble, "Our wooing doth not end like an old play: Jack hath not Jill." For breaking their oaths, the suitors are assigned year-long acts of penance by their ladies, who agree to return in "a twelvemonth and a day," to which Berowne retorts, "That's too long for a play."

At this point, Don Armado proposes to King Ferdinand a resumption of their previous entertainment with two songs that "should have followed in the end of our show." He asks the King to "hear the dialogue that the two learned men have compiled in praise of the owl and the cuckoo." [Note 29](#) The masque replaces the wedding ceremony as a way of bringing merriment and closure to the play's conclusion.

The songs, deceptively simple on the surface, contain witty contradictions and multiple levels of meaning, like so much of what has come before. Spring is a time of warmth, color, and rejuvenation, as reflected in the list of brightly hued flowers that "paint the meadows with delight": "daisies pied," "violets blue," "lady-smocks all silver-white", and "cuckoo buds of yellow hue." It is a season of shepherds and farmers: the former "pipe on oaten straws", the latter rise at dawn each day with the larks, who "are ploughmen's clocks". To ready their warm weather clothing, "maidens bleach their summer smocks."

But spring has its negative side. A season of life, it is also a time of sexual activity that "mocks married men." It is the season "when turtles tread", i.e. when turtledoves (read "lovers") mate, and the cuckoo "on every tree" sings his "word of fear": "cuckoo, cuckoo". Married men are reminded of that fear not just by the sound of the cuckoo, but by the flowers in the field: "cuckoo buds", "lady-smocks" (synonym for cuckoo-flower), and "violets", since "blue had come in the Middle Ages to symbolize infidelity, cuckoldry and folly."

[Note 30](#)

Winter is the season of cold, discomfort, and illness, but also a time of merriment and wisdom. The song contains images of cold throughout the first stanza: "icicles hang by the wall," "Dick the shepherd blows his nail," (i.e., blows on his finger nails to warm his hands), "milk comes frozen home in pail." The cold causes discomfort: "blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul," while

"Marian's nose looks red and raw." It also causes illness which brings "coughing [that] drowns the parson's saw" (sermon). In winter's fierce weather, "all aloud (i.e. extremely loudly) the wind doth blow" and "birds sit brooding in the snow."

Yet winter has a positive side which inversely mirrors the negative aspect of spring. Fire brings warmth and the pleasure of hot food. To deliver fuel for the fire, "Tom bears logs into the hall." Mouths water "when roasted crabs (crab-apples) hiss in the bowl" and hot liquids cook properly "while greasy Joan doth keel the pot"(i.e. cool by stirring or some other method to keep from boiling over). Winter nights are serenaded by "the staring owl", a symbol of wisdom who sounds "a merry note," with sexual punning on "Tu-who" ("To who?") and "Tu-whit" ("To it!").

In Burgess's setting, the tenor begins, singing the first verse of Spring, followed by the baritone singing the first verse of Winter to a different melody in a new key and slower tempo. The second verse of Winter is given over to the tenor, who sings it as a variant of the tune used in the first verse of Spring. Before the tenor finishes his last two lines, the baritone enters with the second verse of Spring, singing it to the melody of the first verse of Winter. The last two lines of both verses are sung in counterpoint by the soloists, with the orchestra remaining silent until the singers reach their final notes. Burgess explains it this way:

They deliver the two songs that end *Love's Labour's Lost*, using the two main chunks of musical material already presented, and allow winter and spring, the owl and the cuckoo, to become mixed together, to appear - to use a Holofernian kind of pedanticism - synchronically instead of, what nature decrees, diachronically. Which is absurd. But the singers do not mind.

[Note 31](#)

The line that follows - "The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo" - can be interpreted in two ways. "The words of Mercury" can be taken to mean the "harsh" news of the French King's death as delivered by the messenger Marcade, while "The songs of Apollo" refer to the courtiers' sonnets of Act IV. The simpler and more convincing explanation is based on the association of Mercury, messenger of the gods, with sophistry, and of the Greek god Apollo with song. What Don Armado seems to be saying is, "No more clever talk! After the sweet song of Spring and Winter, speech would be discordant." The invocation of Mercury and Apollo is Shakespeare's way of saying that there is no need of further wordplay after song; in other words, the play is ended.

The play's final line - "You that way. We this way." - also has more than one possible meaning. Don Armado could be addressing the members of the audience, indicating that they exit in one direction, the actors in another. He might also be addressing the Princess and her ladies, who

are about to leave for France "that way" while he and the King's entourage go off "this way". (Burgess leaves off the final "way".) Armado could even mean both at once, but here there is no problem with ambiguity; all possibilities are equally valid. Burgess has the baritone speak these last two lines during a grand pause for orchestra in the penultimate bar. Once the baritone finishes his words, the orchestra blasts a final loud C major chord to end the symphony. One has to smile at Burgess's description:

Having sung, they wish to finish the proceedings as quickly as possible, so the movement ends as *Love's Labour's Lost* ends - with these spoken words: "The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo." The orchestra plays a single fortissimo chord of C major, and everybody goes off for a drink.

[Note 32](#)

A complete appreciation of the Third Symphony naturally requires study of the music, but to fully understand any work by Burgess that combines words with music, it is essential to look for the meaning in each and the relationship between the two. In the case of the Third Symphony, an excellent starting place is with the words, especially since they come from Shakespeare. The fruits of such a lovely labour will never be lost.

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Notes

1. Anthony Burgess, "How I Wrote My Third Symphony." *The New York Times*, December 28, 1975, Section 2 (Arts and Leisure), p. 19. In various writings and publications, the work is alternately referred to by Burgess as Symphony No. 3, Symphony in C, Symphony (No. 3) in C, and simply Symphony, but will be consistently called Third Symphony throughout this essay.

[Return to article](#)

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2. Burgess's Second Symphony was performed once in Malaya in 1957. See endnote 5. [Return to article](#)

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3. Burgess, "How I Wrote My Third Symphony." p. 19. [Return to article](#) .

4. Anthony Burgess, *Shakespeare*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970. p. 252. [Return to article](#) .

5. The title page of the work makes this explicit. It reads "SYMPHONY by Anthony Burgess (the last movement based on a theme by William Shakespeare)". [Return to article](#) .

6. Burgess, "How I Wrote My Third Symphony." p. 1. [Return to article](#) .

7. Burgess, "How I Wrote My Third Symphony." p. 1. [Return to article](#) .

8. Anthony Burgess. Note printed in the concert program of the University Symphony Orchestra, The University of Iowa School of Music, October 22, 1975. [Return to article](#) .

9. Burgess, "How I Wrote My Third Symphony." p. 1. In the Iowa program note, Burgess describes how the performance of the Second Symphony turned into a free-for-all: "In the last movement, as an infinitely extensible coda, the timpanist rolled indefinitely on C and the crowd was encouraged to shout "Merdeka!" which means freedom, liberty, the yoke of the tyrannical white man has dropped from us, etc. The crowd could not be dissuaded from turning this shout

into a free fight, so the timpanist stopped rolling and the whole orchestra went home in disgust. Thus, the symphony never really ended. It is still, in a kind of Platonic sense, waiting for its final chord." [Return to article](#) .

10. Burgess, "How I Wrote My Third Symphony." p. 1. [Return to article](#) .

11. Anthony Burgess, *This Man and Music*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1983. pp. 64, 71-72. He describes the slow movement as "an adagio of some 120 bars", when it really contains just 94, and firmly states that the written score of the Third Symphony is "200 pages, the precise length of my first and very juvenile symphony in E major," while the actual length of the score is 169 pages. (The pages in the score are numbered 1-171, but the page numbers skip from 129 to 132, omitting 130-131. No music is missing; it is merely an error in page numbering.

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12. Burgess, "How I Wrote My Third Symphony." p. 1: "Part of the first movement was evidently composed drunk, probably on Christmas Day, since there are obscenities written in Arabic script between the harp part and the first violins, though the music seems sober enough." Actually the writing appears above the first violin part on the same staves as the harp part, three bars before the harp makes its next entrance. He also may have been referring to bars 293-94 on page 38, where more Arabic script appears in the analogous location - above the first violins on the same stave as the harp part. [Return to article](#) .

13. Anthony Burgess. *You've Had Your Time*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990. p. 311. The order of the inner movements, both in terms of Burgess's comments and the traditional order of movements in a symphony, is here reversed. In Burgess's Third Symphony, the scherzo is the second movement and the slow movement is the third.

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14. Burgess's script was not used in the film. *The Spy Who Loved Me* opened in 1977 and was the tenth in the series of James Bond films based on the Ian Fleming novels. The film credits list the screenwriters as Christopher Wood and Richard Maibaum.

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15. Iowa program note. [Return to article](#) .

16. Iowa program note. [Return to article](#) .

17. William C. Carroll. *The Great Feast of Language in Love's Labour's Lost*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 11.

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18. Richard David, editor. *Love's Labours Lost*. The Arden Edition of the works of William Shakespeare. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1951. p. xv.

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19. Roger Warren. "Shakespeare on the Twentieth-Century Stage," *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*

, ed. by Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 257-272.

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20. Burgess, *Shakespeare*. pp. 129-130. [Return to article](#) .

21. Alternate spellings of some of the names - Biron, Longueville, Dumaine, and Katherine - are found in various editions of the play. [Return to article](#) .

22. Iowa program note. "Do re sol la mi fa" corresponds to the musical pitches C D G A E F. The terms "do" and "ut" are equivalent. Originally the syllable for C was "ut", which the French still retain. In the Italian solfeggio system, "ut" has long since been replaced with "do". [Return to article](#)

23. *The Eclogues of Baptista Mantuanus*. Wilfred P. Mustard, ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1911. p. 63. Baptista Spagnuoli. *The Eclogues of Mantuan*. Translated by George Turbervile (1567). New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1937. p. 1.
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24. Like Vergil (Publius Vergilius Maro), the Roman author of *The Aeneid*, who lived 70-19 BC, Baptista Spagnolo was a native of Mantua. Because Vergil was known in medieval times as The Mantuan, confusion between these two Latin poets has sometimes arisen, compounded by the fact that Vergil and Mantuan each wrote ten eclogues that are in both cases among their best known writings. During his lifetime, Mantuan was indeed hailed as a "Second Vergil".
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25. Spagnuoli. *The Eclogues of Mantuan*. pp. i-iii. [Return to article](#) .

26. "Who sees not Venice cannot esteeme it, But he that sees it payes well for it." John Florio. *Second Frutes* (1591). Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1953. pp. 106-7.
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27. See Felicia Hardison Londré, *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1997. p. 13, and Richard David, editor. *Love's Labours Lost*. The Arden Edition of the works of William Shakespeare. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1951. pp. xxxviii-xxxix.
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28. William Chappell. *Popular Music of the Olden Time*. New York: Dover Publications, 1965. pp. 14-15.
Liber Usualis. New York: Desclee, 1962. p. 1504. [Return to article](#) .

29. Presumably the "two learned men" are Sir Nathaniel and Holofernes, although not specified in the text of the play. [Return to article](#) .

30. Catherine M. McLay. "The Dialogues of Spring and Winter: A Key to the Unity of Love's Labour's Lost." pp. 213-223 in *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*. Edited by Felicia Hardison Londré. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997.

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31. Iowa program note. [Return to article](#) .

32. Iowa program note. [Return to article](#) .