

The Muse

November, 2023



Newsletter of
The Worshipful Company
of
Bards, Troubadours and Jongleurs
of Lochac

Chronicler's Report

Well here we are again, thank you for all your support, I never knew how lost I would be without my little laptop...but soon I shall have a new one, better than that which was stolen and all shall be well. I apologise for any missed details in this issue, my resources have been stifled, not only due to my lack of laptop, but my lack of brain space due to exams. However, we do have a few wonderful articles for you to peruse, so have fun. Next issue is sounding brilliant, as all the teachers from Ascension day have promised to submit their notes to me! So keep a look out for that issue early next year.

The beautiful Lady Bella Lucia da Verona has designed our cover art and I'd like to personally thank her for her lovely work!

Yours in Service,
Laigen

Outgoing Guild Mistress' Word of Wisdom

Greetings All,

This is my outgoing message, so I'm going to keep it short and sweet. Thankyou all for your support and encouragement whilst establishing the guild. Blod's going to do a great job as the new mistress, she has a lot to offer and a lot to teach us. I think I speak for everyone when I say "Blod, I'm behind you all the way, Good luck!"

Apart from this, most of my energies have been spent on organising St Angelico's Day. I look forward to having some of you under my roof and having everyone together again. Thanks to Rhiannon, Damoclese, Kiriell, Crispin, Blod, Lowry and Steavean for helping to make my job easier by running collegium. It is certainly appreciated. We've got a couple of people playing their prize at S.A.D, good luck to Blod and Laigen (not that you'll need it cos we already know you're good!)

So that's it from me, I now hand you over to Blod so I can now enjoy a less administrative role in the guild.

In Service,
Finnabhair ni Binnech Mistress (only for a very short time now) Company of Bards, Troubadours and Jongleurs of Lochac

The Art Of Storytelling

A Practical 'How To' guide for performing

By Steavean die Gläubigen

The Following is a list of things to consider when performing in front of people. These principles apply to storytelling, acting, singing or any other 'out-front' type performance.

1. Know your story:

- i. The first key in being able to tell a story well is to know it inside and out. To be able to recite it, without reading it. Only by knowing a story this well are you then able to produce the maximum potential that the story can yield. Maybe you need to start small to build confidence.
- ii. Rehearse. This point cannot be stressed enough. No matter how well you think you know a story, you will need to practice. Find someone you can trust to give you an honest opinion, a friend or family member, tell them the story and ask them how they thought it sounded. Could they follow the sequence of the story? Did everything make sense? Could they understand what you were saying? Get feedback, then rehearse more then try again.

2. Be emotionally connected to your story:

- i. When you know your story well enough that you can competently recite it without having to read it, you can then delve into the emotional state of your characters throughout the story. By being able to SHOW their emotion while you are telling the story, your audience will be more captured by your tale.
- ii. At appropriate times this may allow you to 'Take on' one of the characters to deliver certain lines or plot points crucial to the story. Just as every parent becomes the wolf or the pig when telling the fable 'The 3 little Pigs', you too can do this in your own storytelling.
- iii. Use your entire body to tell the story. When we talk passionately about something our whole body becomes the mechanism to deliver the passion, we walk, we bend, we jump, our arms go wild at times. If someone is angry you don't need to hear what he or she is saying, you can usually tell by his or her body language. Keep this in mind when telling a story so that it is not just your head moving.

3. Use the space that you have:

- i. It is important if you are to be the focus, that you are where everyone can see you. Get in the middle of your audience. At

a feast or in a Bardic circle put yourself in the middle of the action and move around the space, at a pace that flows with the story's pace. Remember, every story has moments of tension and moments of peace, your movement should reflect these changes.

- ii. Along with this and very important, is YOUR Focus. While you are moving around the space ensure that you do not lose your focus. Engage people eye to eye can sometimes be distracting, so if it is, don't do it, people will still be captured as long as you present a strong focus. By this I mean clearly define your object or person through your movement and voice. Your focus will draw people further into what you are doing. Even if you are looking through or past people when facing them (the appearance of 'staring into space'), if you have a strong focus you will have your audience too.

4. Be loud:

- i. Ensure you are aware of your volume. It is imperative that you are heard by your entire audience especially when your back is to them. Do not be afraid to be what you think is too loud. You have put a lot of effort into preparing the piece so it is only fair on yourself that it is heard when performed. Also an audience will be very critical of a performance if it cannot be heard. A story told moderately well but heard by all, will be preferred to a story told well that could not be heard at all.

5. Be fully prepared:

- i. Be aware, the story is not the only aspect to your performance. Not only must you prepare your performance piece but you must also prepare yourself to perform. Ensure that you have enough energy for the performance. Nerves will eat away at your energy levels so you must be prepared. Ensure that you eat something during the day. Do not get into the trap of being busy doing this or that, not to eat. Even if your performance is only a five minute set in the evening, ensure that you will have given your body enough energy to get you through.
- ii. Drink water. Ensure that you keep your fluids up for the same reason that you need to eat. Also, slowly have a drink of water just before you perform. This will help to stop getting 'Dry-mouth' or if it does happen it will take a bit longer to set in.
- iii. Have a goblet of water handy. Do not be afraid to have a goblet of water on a table nearby. You can make your way back to the goblet for a drink when you need it. If you have to drink in the middle of a piece have only one or two mouthfuls. An audience hates to be kept waiting once you have started and you don't want to disrupt the flow of the story.
- iv. Go to the toilet as close to the beginning of your performance as you can, or guaranteed you will need to go right in the

middle of your piece. Nerves play havoc with us so don't let them win. Also, an expanding bladder can be hell on your concentration.

6. Make a costume:

- i. This is an optional extra that can sometimes lend greatly to the simplest of pieces. For example, doing Viking stories in Viking garb may help your audience to better visualise the tale.

And lastly, enjoy yourself. Performing is meant to be fun and exciting. Try to relax and have a good time while you perform, your audience will appreciate it.

The Composition of Rounds

I was at a medieval feast in Gloucestershire held by the Arthurian Society, discussing period music with a friend who was doing her PhD on the subject and I commented on how bloody awful to sing so many of the late period rounds sounded sung on their own. Trawl through "Pammelia" and you will find songs of uncomfortable range and bizarre structure. "Farewell To Portsmouth" was the one that jumped to mind. Each phrase seems to bare no resemblance to the next and the final phrase is an odd jaunty little piece that grates on my ear.

She laughed and said,

"Well, that's because of how they were written."

She then explained that in the late Elizabethan/early Stuart period, the writing and singing of rounds was a popular pastime, one no self-respecting gentleman of pretensions to education would not know. But as we all realise, music composition is not exactly an intellectually trained art. So they worked out a way of "kit-forming" rounds.

Take a first line. Then find a key that has chords that contain every note. Fit a chord to each note of your first line and randomly pick your note from the chord. Hey presto, the next line of your round, and the next and so on.

So because people tried to use as many notes as possible, attempting not to repeat notes and concerned very little with the "melody line" of the whole, we wound up with rounds that stretch across two octaves and more, rounds where each phrase grates against the next and so on. And because the collectors of rounds were more interested in quantity than quality, they didn't weed out the atrocious or simply weakly constructed rounds they found.

This all seemed perfectly plausible and would explain a lot. Except that she couldn't tell me which book, article or lecture she had gotten this piece of information from.

So I can't present it to you as a genuine "How They Did It" piece.

BUT! It does work. And if you bear a few rules in mind, you can avoid the worst of the problems I noted above.

So, to start...pick a line of a melody. I'll cheat –
Ma – ry had a lit – tle lamb

B A G A B B B

Now, to find a set of chords containing these notes. You can pick any chords, but the over all sound works better as a song, and not just a set of chords, if you stick to one key.

So, using the key of G...

Ma –	ry	had	a	lit –	tle	lamb
B	A	G	A	B	B	B
G	F#	B	F#	G	G	G
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

Or adding the C chord

Ma –	ry	had	a	lit –	tle	lamb
B	A	G	A	B	B	B
G	F#	E	F#	G	G	G
D	D	C	D	D	D	D

Just playing these chords, I prefer the sound of the first way, although each is pleasant. The simplest round to write is to simply use the three lines as they are – and there are numerous period examples of just that. But why be dull?

First, lets look at the “stretch” of the chords. At its lowest count, it runs only 7 notes from E up to D.

But you can make it stretch further.

So lets say lower case letters are in the high octave (running from b down to c) and upper case letters in the low octave.

B	A	G	A	B	B	B
G	F#	E	F#	G	G	G
D	D	C	D	D	D	D

But if we swap...

B	A	G	A	B	B	B
G	F#	E	F#	G	G	G
d	d	c	d	d	d	d

or perhaps,

B	A	G	A	B	B	B
g	f#	e	f#	G	G	G
d	d	c	d	D	D	D

Personally, I feel that the first works, the second doesn't. *But the chords haven't changed.*

Here's the first trap – *do not forget the melody!* As it is, it's just a collection of chords. If sung as we first saw it,

B	A	G	A	B	B	B
G	F#	E	F#	G	G	G
D	D	C	D	D	D	D

it's the same thing being repeated a set lower in the chords. So mix up the notes!

For pure melody, I quite like

G	A	c	d	B	A	G
B	A	G	A	B	d	B
G	F#	E	F#	G	B	G

Now the melody changes, but some of the chords do not have their full complements of notes, which affects the overall sound of the round.

However, you still have a repeating set of chords – and this easily makes for a poorly constructed round. When each line still has the same note lengths, what we get is a repeat of the same chords over and over, The *melody* changes, the *round* is still repetitive.

When we sing rounds, unconsciously we modify how we hear – we tend to select one “path” of the melody. But get a computer to play a round and you can hear it in an instant – the same phrase of chords repeating over and over. What you get is the “round” (i.e. the sounds of the chords) overriding the melody.

Not all rounds of this sort do this – some can be lovely. “White Sands and Grey Sands” is a good example. Each line has the same timing pattern (minim, crotchet, crotchet, minim, minim) and what you get is a simple repetition of chords. But it isn't always easy to do this

There are several ways to avoid this repetition and the simplest is to vary the length of the notes.

So let's look at the length of the notes. Let's take this pattern

B	A	G	A	B	B	B
G	F#	E	F#	D	D	G
D	D	C	D	G	B	G

By simply merging notes that repeat to create longer, two-beat notes (i.e. minims) we get

B	A	G	A	B	d	B
G	F#	E	F#	D - - - - -	- - - - -	G
D - - - - -	- - - - -	C	D	G	B	G

This little effort is simple and not very interesting. But think of one of the loveliest rounds I know – “Donna Nobis”. And this is exactly how it is constructed – repeating chords, with some notes drawn out to cover multiple chords. Of course, the reverse is also true – “cut” notes in half to get quavers. In this way you can get trills and “runs” in the music.

Of course, there’s no need to stick to three-note chords, or just three lines. The sky is the limit – add lines, take away lines. Use one low note, split across two or three lines as a drone. Find the melody line you like and split it across two or three lines. Repeat the melody but two notes lower, or higher, in one of the lines. All of these are techniques used in good period rounds.

In the end, it’s simple to create a round. What is hard is to create one that works as both a melody and as round. I can’t give you a simple solution to that one. I find the best way to write like this is on a keyboard, where it is easy to hear the sound of the round as it would be sung in parts, as well as playing the melody. I’ve enjoyed messing around and have come up with one or two I think worth sticking with as melodies, enough to actually write words for them. Have fun, enjoy, and remember – bad rounds are *definitely* period.

Lady Blodeuwedd y Gath
{mundanely Anwyn Davies}

Some Rounds...

These are a few rounds which will be taught on Ascension day, the websites from which they can be found are included (my thanks to Finn for this!).

The Crane

1
My Dame had a lame, tame crane, My

2
Dame had a crane that was lame, Oh, Pray gentle Jane: let my

3
Dame's lame, tame crane, Drink and come home a- gain.

4

The image shows four lines of musical notation in treble clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the notes. Line 1: 'My Dame had a lame, tame crane, My'. Line 2: 'Dame had a crane that was lame, Oh, Pray gentle Jane: let my'. Line 3: 'Dame's lame, tame crane, Drink and come home a- gain.'. Line 4: A single measure with a whole note G4.

Dona Nobis Pacem

1
Do-na no - bis pa - cem, pacem. Dona ----- no - bis pa - cem.

2
Do - na no - bis pa - cem. Do-na no-bis pa - cem.

3
Do - na no - bis pa-cem. Do-na no-bis pa - cem.

Translation: Give us peace.

Pronunciation: Don-na no-beece pah-chem.

The above two rounds (the crane and Dona nobis) are from

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~msmiller/rounds.html> sound clips of these can be found at this site.

Joan come kiss me now

Joan come kisse me now, once a- gaine for my loue, gen- tle

Joan come kisse me now

Joan, come kiss me now,
Once again, for my love, gentle
Joan come kiss me now!

Upcoming Events

Barony of Rowany Yule Feast

A truly magnificent event full of splendour and pageantry, Yule traditions, convivial company, music and dancing, and of course a spectacular menu of sumptuous delights from Renaissance Spain and Italy. Don't miss it!

December 7th, Imar Community Hall, 2a Fitzroy St, Croydon (opposite Croydon station)

Hall opens 6pm, feast commences 7pm

Cost: \$25 members, \$30 non-members booked
\$30 members, \$35 non-members at the door

All bookings to the Steward:
Giles de Laval (Mark Calderwood)
11 Cottle Rd, Bullaburra NSW 2784
Ph: (02) 4759 1651
email: mark-c@acay.com.au

Places are limited, so please book early. ***Bookings are confirmed upon payment, and are not transferable.*** Make cheques payable to "SCA Rowany". Please do not send cash through the mail. Hardship applications please contact the steward; none will be considered at the door.

Please notify the steward of special dietary requirements as soon as possible.

St Valentine's, Politarchopolis

Date: 15th February 2003

Time: Lists 1pm, Tournaments 2pm, Feast 6pm.

Where: St Johns Church Hall and grounds, Constitution Ave, Reid ACT.

Steward: Crispin Sexi (Jaysen Ollerenshaw)

Cost: Booking with payment by 10/2/2003: \$20 for members. Add \$2 for non-members. Add \$3 if paying at the door. Children under 16 half price. Family rates available.

Bookings to steward:

E-mail: jaysen@au1.ibm.com

Make cheques payable to "SCA Politarchopolis"

A celebration of St Valentines day with 16th C Venetian style; a rapier tournament, the Baronesses' Championship heavy tournament, a feast of the finest Italian food, a play and diverse other entertainments.

A&S competition: Codpieces and Partlets.

Contact List

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