

'Our Children Made Enterluders': Choristers, Actors, and Students in St Paul's Cathedral Precinct

ROZE F. HENTSCHELL

Early Theatre 19.2 (2016), 179–196
<http://dx.doi.org/10.12745/et.19.2.2837>

This essay explores the relationship between theatre and neighbourhood in early modern England with a focus on St Paul's Cathedral precinct, demonstrating that the boys who performed as the Children of Paul's were necessarily shaped by their time there in multiple ways. The seemingly discrete places of the cathedral that the boys inhabited, such as their singing school, the residence hall, the cathedral choir, the churchyard, and the grammar school, were as porous as the activities that took place there. We cannot, then, disentangle the boys' lives as actors from their lives as denizens of Paul's.

In John Marston's *What You Will*, performed by the Children of Paul's ca 1600, the master of a grammar school tells one of his pupils to 'stand forth: repeat your lesson without book' (2.2.705).¹ While the scene goes on to lampoon the boys, the pedant, and the lesson itself, the master's simple command to his student signifies an array of metatheatrical elements. He urges his pupil to recite his memorized 'lesson', a typical exercise in Latin rote learning in the early modern grammar school.² The master also exposes what the *actor* playing the part of the pupil must do: utter lines without the aid of a written script, while simultaneously indicating that he, the master, is doing the same. The injunction to 'stand forth' is at once a directive to the student to step forward from his form while reciting his lesson but also a stage direction to the actor who must move through stage space to speak his lines to the audience. The line further points to the particularities of the actors themselves: they were the boy choristers of St Paul's Cathedral who — while occasionally performing in stage plays — stood forth as singers during church service. The choirboy actors, who were also part-time pupils at Paul's School, additionally would recite their grammar lessons and stand forth in the schoolroom. In the period, 'stand forth' could mean 'to come boldly or resolutely to the front or centre', and the headmaster's command reminds us of the boys' public and multivalent position in the cathedral precinct, a position that reflected the complexity of the very space of Paul's.³

In this essay, I consider St Paul's Cathedral precinct, where so many Londoners lived, worked, worshipped, shopped, were educated, and sought entertainment

Roze F. Hentschell (roze.hentschell@colostate.edu) is a professor in the English Department at Colorado State University.

to explore the relationship between theatre and neighbourhood in early modern England.⁴ While we do not naturally consider the cathedral or even the surrounding area as a 'neighbourhood', possibly because we may think of St Paul's as an amalgamation of structures rather than people, the dynamic and complex spaces and activities of the precinct liken it to other London wards with their residences, businesses, parish churches, and venues of recreation in both its diversity of spaces and its complexity of urban liveliness. In particular, I aim to demonstrate that the boys who performed as the Children of Paul's were part of the constitution of the precinct and were necessarily shaped by their time there in multiple and surprising ways. The church precinct and its enterprises informed the expectations placed on the child actors as choirboys and students subordinate to male authority. Their bailiwick — the seeming discrete places of the cathedral such as their singing school, the residence hall, the cathedral choir, the churchyard, the grammar school — was as porous as the activities that took place there. The choristers' involvement in plays at Paul's suggests no one considered acting to be in conflict with their religious education or their singing duties, but rather an expansion of these activities.

Paul's Boys as Choirboys

Known nationally for the high quality of their voices, the ten boy choristers of London's St Paul's Cathedral had the primary role of singing three quotidian services, for special occasions at the cathedral, and at court.⁵ As Roger Bowers reminds us, 'this was their job of work; it was absolute'.⁶ The choirboys also comprised the Children of Paul's and, as such, served as unpaid actors in occasional plays. In the twenty-one-year period between 1568–1589, the boys performed in only twenty-four distinct works, primarily at court.⁷ Sebastian Westcott, choir-master during this period, sometimes opened rehearsals for court entertainments to a paying audience⁸ but did not see the boys as a professional theatre company in their own right, understanding that their primary function at the cathedral was to sing. In the second incarnation of the company, 1599–1606, the children acted in twenty-one known plays (though we do not know how many times each was performed) in a space in St Paul's precinct. With an average of four performances a year, the latter version of the Children of Paul's was a more robust enterprise and played a greater role in the choirboys' lives. Plays, however, still never supplanted choir singing as their principal activity.

The master (in the pre-Reformation period usually called the almoner) selected children to be choristers; his prerogative was to 'take up' boys who were singers

in collegiate churches, bring them to London, and train them as choirboys.⁹ Such was the fate of Thomas Tusser, who describes how he came to sing at Paul's in the 1530s:

Thence for my voice, I must (no choice)
 Away of force, like posting horse,
 For sundry men, had placards then,
 Such child to take:
 But mark the chance, myself to [ad]vance,
 By friendships lot, to Paul's I got,
 So found I grace, a certain space,
 Still to remain:
 With Redford there, and like no where,
 For cunning such, and virtue much
 By whom some part of Music are
 So did I gain.¹⁰

Tusser reminds us that his impressment occurred when he was but a 'child'; choristers were typically between the ages of seven and sixteen.¹¹ Promising singers had little say in whether they wanted to join the choir, and Tusser's coercive induction by 'sundry' strange 'men' confirms this. But while Tusser describes how his 'voice' caused him to be taken by 'force' from his home, he also seems to express gratitude that his 'lot' was to go to Paul's. This privilege was likely a relief to the families of the boys, freeing them of the financial burden of raising their sons. After serving as choirboys who boarded in the cathedral precinct, some for many years, the children would then have more opportunities for schooling and service.¹² Tusser further recognizes the choir of St Paul's, under the direction of the choirmaster Redford, as unmatched in 'cunning', or knowledge of a skill, but also in 'virtue', which suggests that the choristers were known for their moral rectitude. In his service at Paul's, Tusser finds 'grace'.

The recruited choirboy would have left his family's home to enter into an established choral community at London's cathedral. Post-Reformation, many churchmen attached to Paul's worked with the choir: the minor canons (or 'petty canons'), ordained clergy chosen for their singing voices; six lay vicars (the 'vicars choral'); and ten boy choristers. The first minor canon, a sub-dean, had the principal responsibility of directing the boys' musical and religious training as well as providing them with room and board. The second and third minor canons were responsible for catechizing the choristers, for monitoring their attendance, and disciplining them when necessary.¹³ And of course, all members of the choir had

to rehearse their liturgical songs and attend service with the children. Since the adult choristers also lived in Paul's precinct, often with their families, the boys would necessarily have known them beyond their interactions in the cathedral.

The choirmaster was the boys' main guardian during their time of residency at Paul's. The indenture document of Edward Pearce, the choirmaster from 1599–1612, gives insight into the responsibilities of the choirmaster to his pupils and his financial obligations:

The said Edward shall teach the said children ... in the principles and grounds of Christian religion contained in the little Catechism ... and in writing, and also in the art and knowledge of music, that they may be able, thereby to serve as Choristers in the said Church, and shall see them to be brought up in all virtue, civility and honest manners ... the said Edward Pearse ... shall of his own proper cost and Charges, provide as well convenient and clean choice of surplusses and also all other manner of apparel ... wholesome and sufficient diet, wholesome and clean bedding, with all things needful for them and in their sickness, shall see them well looked unto and cherished and procure the advice and help of Physicians or Surgeons (if need so require) of his own cost and charges.¹⁴

We learn here that the boys were instructed in their catechism in English and needed to be skilled in reading, writing, and music before becoming full-fledged choristers. The choirmaster or his staff would also see that the boys had adequate instruction in protocol and manners. Aside from having the responsibility for the boys' spiritual and musical instruction, the choirmaster served as a pseudo-parent. That the master must keep the boys clean, appropriately dressed, and well fed suggests that they were part of a household in all its operations. The master must 'look unto' the boys, which indicates many varieties of oversight; but he is also directed to 'cherish' the pupils, which in the period had several connotations, all implying affective ties. The choirmaster might 'hold dear, treat with tenderness and affection' or 'make much of' his charges. He might 'treat with fostering care', 'tend', 'take affectionate care of' and 'keep or guard carefully', or simply 'keep warm'.¹⁵

While early modern schoolmasters do not have the reputation of being emotionally bonded to their charges, the special role that the boys played in the life of St Paul's may have rendered them more precious to the church leaders than the average schoolboy. In a sense the choristers of Paul's were doubly defined as children. They were sons to their own parents but, as residents of Paul's and part of the church choir, they were also subordinates of the choirmaster. They became

integrated into the church hierarchy whereby the choirmaster answered to the dean and chapter who answered to the bishop of London and so on. Amanda Bailey elucidates the legal status of children under the care of adults who were not their parents: 'The flexible underpinnings of property allowed for particular groups of people, such as live-in domestics, apprentices, indentured servants, slaves, women, and children to be categorized as persons over whom adult men claimed jurisdiction'.¹⁶ The importance placed on the financial arrangements for their care and the fact that the choirboys boarded at the cathedral suggests that they were perceived of as the responsibility, if not the property, of the choirmaster who had to answer for their well-being.

Because the boys resided at Paul's during their tenure, their position as members of the choir rather than as actors defined their physical territory. We know that the boys as well as the choirmaster boarded in the almonry, which also served as the singing school. The almonry was adjacent to the west wall of the chapter house's cloister, in the southwest quadrant of the cathedral precinct. Most theatre historians agree that the Children of Paul's performed their plays inside a building within the precinct, probably attached to the cathedral proper, and possibly inside the hall of the almonry itself.¹⁷ In other words, there was likely not a dedicated playing space for the actors. More recently, Roger Bowers and Herbert Berry have separately argued that this space likely stood between the west wall of the chapter house cloister — that is, adjacent to the site of official cathedral business — and the foot path leading to the 'little south door' to the nave, the cathedral space dominated by secular London life. On the other side of the footpath was St Gregory's, the parish church that abutted the cathedral and the most populous parish in the immediate vicinity. Shops and stalls ran all along the footpath. The boys, then, spent much of their days and each night in a church building in the thick of the precinct's secular world. This exposed the boys to and indeed allowed for their participation in both spheres. This small, multi-use hall illustrates the boys' multiple roles, poised between church life and London life, between sacred and secular space, between devotional duties and commercial practices.

The ways the boys' lives were financed reflected this straddling of secular and sacred worlds. The economic burden fell to the choirmaster, who had to provide the boys' clothes, board, and medical care at his 'cost and charges'. While the dean and chapter paid the choirmaster fifty pounds a year for the support of the boys, the almoner would have had to supplement his income with other forms of revenue afforded him by virtue of his position, primarily rent collected from the various spaces he oversaw. For example, choirmaster Thomas Giles let out five small sheds to shopkeepers in the alley leading up to the little south door

of the nave. Giles also collected rent from residential tenements in Paternoster Row, a house at the west end of the chapter house, and a vault under the choir.¹⁸ The busy commercial activities in and around Paul's required the management of shops or sheds, storage space, and living quarters for shopkeepers. These structures, built against existing cathedral walls and even in the church itself, not only signaled the secular uses of the precinct but also the commingling of commercial and church business. The choirmaster's financial acuity in his supervision of these spaces directly served the solvency of the choirboys.

The choirboys themselves seem to have contributed to their own finances through the practice of collecting 'spur money', a curious but sanctioned scheme in which the boys assessed a fee on any person who entered the church wearing spurs. A fashionable accessory of the London gallant who may or may not have been riding a horse, spurs presumably jingled distractingly in the church, disturbing the religious services. The malefactors, who may have bought spurs in the shops on Creed Lane (known as 'spurrier's lane') off the southwest corner of the churchyard, would then enter the church to display them.¹⁹ Thomas Dekker provides a vivid image of this in *The Gull's Hornbook*, a send-up of the early modern conduct manual, as he advises the loiterers in the cathedral nave to

[b]e sure your silver spurs clog your heels, and then the boys will swarm about you like so many white butterflies; when you in the open quire, shall draw forth a perfumed embroidered purse — the glorious sight of which will entice many countrymen from their devotion to wondering — and quoit silver into the boys hands, that it may be heard above the first lesson, although it be read in a voice as big as one of the great organs.²⁰

Dekker here suggests that the paying of spur money was a desirable spectacle, one that allowed the gallant flamboyantly and publicly to show off his wealth (if indeed he had it). The boys, dressed in their white robes, abandon their post in the choir and bombard the offender to exact the fee. The boys move through the choir rather than sitting dutifully in their designated stall, indicating that even the church space used for service was not immune to secular infiltration and that the boys participated in both simultaneously. Bishop Richard Bancroft's visitation documents, written several years prior to Dekker's pamphlet, corroborate the spectacle. In a 'presentment', Thomas Harold, a member of the vicars choral, complains that 'the quoristers ... use moreover with great impudency to importune men to give them money for their spurs and without regard either of person or time or place do trouble them even in their prayers'.²¹ The collection of spur

money was certainly a distraction for the choirboys in the service, but the visitation records as well as Dekker's description point to the ritualistic, persistent, and performative nature of the activity. The act of collecting spur money evinces how the boys adroitly manipulated the cathedral space for their own financial gain, essentially in imitation of their choirmaster's commercial dexterity.

Paul's Boys as School Boys

The choirboys' relationship to Paul's School further demonstrates their complex position in the precinct. They attended required, daily lessons along with the matriculated students. Located in the east end of the churchyard approximately 200 meters from the almonry, the grammar school was a day school for religious and classical instruction. While there had been a school associated with the cathedral since at least the early twelfth century, in the 1520s Dean John Colet re-established the school for the children of London. The dean and chapter granted land to the Mercers' Company, the guild that oversaw the trade in luxury cloth, to build and run a school emphasising Christian humanist education. Erasmus influenced his friend Colet, who took a keen interest in the education of 'my countrymen, little Londoners especially'.²² 153 pupils, not including the choirboys, generally derived from London's merchant families and attended free of charge.²³ They were expected to be at school from seven to eleven a.m. and again from one to five p.m.; they paused for prayers at least three times a day.

Boys generally began grammar school between the ages of eight and eleven, which aligned with the years choristers would have begun their engagement with the singing school. And like the choirboys, most grammar school students stayed six to seven years.²⁴ Just as the choirboys had to acquire their petty education prior to entering the grammar school, the students needed to recite their English catechism and 'read and write competently'.²⁵ The choristers, then, would necessarily begin their grammar schooling with the same academic skills as the grammar school boys, regardless of their age. Giles's indenture document explains the expectations of the choirboys' attendance at the school: 'When the children shall be skillful in music ... suffer them to resort to paul's ... that they may learn the principles of grammar, and after as they shall ... learn the said catechism in Latin w[hilch] before they learned in English and other good books taught in the said School'.²⁶ While we know that the choirboys attended lessons at Paul's School, this document suggests that the boys would not have begun their grammar instruction until they had reached some level of 'skill' in music, reminding us that their role as choirboys was paramount. How the choirboys' schedule integrated

with that of the grammar school boys is unclear, as is how quickly they proceeded through the forms, or how far anyone expected them to go with their education. We know, nevertheless, that the boys must have interacted with each other for two to three hours each day and that the choirboys got a taste of what the life of a fledgling scholar must be.

Much like the narrow multi-use almonry, Paul's School was small with many boys sharing the space. They sat on forms running alongside, rather than perpendicular to, the walls, with the headmaster at the front of the room. When the boys were released from the confines of the school, like the choristers, they often used the spaces of the cathedral precinct to run amok. While some accused the choirboys of indecorous behavior during services such as sleeping or talking,²⁷ the boys from the school also used the church and yard as their playground; they were given leave to play on Thursday afternoons, presumably in the churchyard.²⁸ In the 1598 visitation documents, a verger named John Howe complained that, as the result of the schoolmasters allowing the boys in the yard, 'windows are broken, and well-disposed people in the church disquieted at the time of divine service'.²⁹ Other complaints do not distinguish which group of boys is causing the chaos. The presentment of William Williams, petty canon, notes that there 'is such noise with children and boys at the steps coming into the choir and at the south door that many times the preacher is disturbed'.³⁰ John Ramsey, verger, grumbles about 'boys ... pissing upon stones in the Church by St Faiths door to slide upon as upon ice, and so by that means may hurt themselves'.³¹ For the churchmen attempting to exert control over the cathedral precinct, the choir and grammar school boys' activities evince impious disregard for consecrated areas. The boys' profane activities in the cathedral and yard, however, show the inventive and rather foul uses of Paul's precinct beyond those that were sanctioned. Sometimes it served as a place of prayer, song, and study and sometimes a playground and makeshift ice rink. For better or worse, the choir and grammar school boys affected both the aural and physical landscape of Paul's.

The two communities of children differed, however, in that the grammar school students would have lived outside of the cathedral precinct.³² They did not receive meals, nor could they bring food or drink to the school, but were given a two-hour break to eat dinner before returning for their afternoon lessons. The students needed to bring their own paper, pens, and candles and attend classes from seven to five with breaks for prayer. They had approximately seven weeks of vacation throughout the year. While the school in Paul's churchyard necessarily played an important part in their academic, religious, and social lives, the purpose of the school was instruction, and they still spent much of their time outside the

precinct in other parts of London and with their families. Their relationship to authority was likely distinct as well. Unlike the choirmaster, the headmaster at Paul's School had no personal or financial obligation to the students. Conversely, as members of the church community beholden to the quotidian church schedule, the choirboys did not have a life outside of the cathedral operations.

While the lives of the grammar school boys undoubtedly differed from those of the choristers, the ancillary instructional practices of music and acting at the school further indicate overlap between the two and suggest that song and drama became integrated into the lives of *all* the boys associated with the precinct. In 1596, Richard Mulcaster, the renowned headmaster of the Merchant-Tailors' school, was recruited to finish his career at Paul's. Well-known for his commitment to the schooling of the middling classes, Mulcaster also believed that grammar education should include instruction in music. Justifying musical instruction in the curriculum, Mulcaster noted, 'musick will prove a double principle both for the soule, by the name of learning, and for the body, by the way of exercise'.³³ Mulcaster had also taught acting as part of the curriculum at the Merchant-Tailors' School, and when he arrived at Paul's as a venerable old schoolmaster, he brought with him a desire to teach the dramatic arts.³⁴ The grammar school boys' aptitude in acting was such that occasionally they were recruited to be actors in the plays staged by Paul's Boys.³⁵ While taking lessons at Paul's School, the choristers possibly benefited from acting lessons. Early modern educators understood acting to be a specialized skill that could be taught and one that was not at odds with the institutional confines of either the grammar or singing school. As Darryl Grantley puts it, 'drama emerged very readily and naturally from the educational activities which took place in schools ... Apart from exemplifying an aspect of humanist pedagogical methodology, [humanist education] places an emphasis on eloquence and linguistic accomplishment as the goal of education, and puts drama at the centre of this endeavor'.³⁶

In Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News*, the character Censure bemoans the schoolmasters who 'make all their scholars play-boys'. She further muses, 'Is't not a fine sight to see all our children made Enterluders? Do we pay our money for this? We send them to learn their grammar and their Terence and they learne their play-bookes' (Third Intermean, 46–51).³⁷ Censure, a 'gossip', seems unaware that Terence's dialogues used to teach grammar were themselves 'play-books' used to introduce boys to role-playing techniques.³⁸ She also fails to acknowledge that acting and music were an important part of the grammar school curriculum. Censure's censure exposes the cross-pollination of activities in the school and reminds us of its inverse: that choirmasters also made all their play-boys scholars.

These ‘play-boys’, though, were first and foremost choirboys experiencing daily spatial and spiritual interactions defined by St Paul’s Cathedral and the surrounding areas as well as lives as varied, complex, and rich as the precinct itself.

The Children of Paul’s

We have almost no evidence of the specific details about the boys’ lives as actors, nor do we know how closely their rehearsal and staging practices paralleled those of actors at Blackfriars or the outdoor theatres. We also know precious little about the hall itself. Based on documentary and archaeological evidence, Bowers proposes that the footprint of the entire hall was possibly 23’ x 40’6”.³⁹ It is unlikely, then, that the hall could have held more than a few dozen audience members. While the size of the playing space might signal a more ‘exclusive’ audience, little else supports such a claim. Admission was likely two to six pence, a cost comparable with the galleries at the public theatre and not out of reach for most working people.⁴⁰

Much of what we can glean comes from the plays themselves. Marston’s early plays for Paul’s Boys in particular give us insight into the choristers as actors who understood their position as amateurs. In the induction of *Antonio and Melinda*, for example, the boys perform a scripted scene meant to appear spontaneous in which they express anxiety over their position as actors. The boy playing Piero reveals that ‘we can say our parts, but we are ignorant in what mould we must cast our characters’ (Ind. 2, 3–4). The boys, in other words, have rehearsed and can say their lines, but they are unprepared to act, demonstrating the distance between memorization and convincing personation of adults. Marston also reveals that, as with professional theatrical troupes, a single actor performed multiple parts and, of course, played the parts of women. The boy personating Alberto laments that ‘the necessity of the play forceth me to act two parts’, an old duke and a young courtier (21). Similarly, the actor playing Antonio laments that he has to disguise ‘Antonio’ under the Amazon, Florizel: ‘I was never worse fitted since the nativity of my actorship. I shall be hissed at, on my life now’ (67–8).⁴¹ Part of the comedy here is in the choirboy’s naiveté and inexperience with the theatrical enterprise.

Despite the boys’ status as amateur actors, we do know that their singing voices drew audience members to attend plays. Although the boys sang liturgical songs in the choir stalls during daily services, most Londoners — who weekly attended their parish churches — generally would not have heard the boys sing regularly.⁴² The performances at Paul’s afforded audience members the opportunity to experience the talents of the premier boy choir in the convenience of the cathedral

precinct. The boys' reputation as liturgical singers would have drawn the audience into the playing space and the boys' voices would have served as a reminder that the 'theatre' in which they viewed the play was also the boys' singing school. We do not have the music or lyrics for most of Marston's songs,⁴³ but it is clear from the context that they are not religious, but usually romantic or comedic in nature, providing the choristers with a respite from their specialized training and complex polyphonic choral singing. The role of music and song served a special purpose for plays at Paul's since there was no theatrical experience like it in London. While other plays certainly utilized music towards affect, Marston's plays for Paul's spoke to the special talents of the actors.

What You Will, likely the first play performed by the second incarnation of the Children of Paul's, contains several songs in which the boys' talents are showcased. The younger members of the choir, who often play children or pages in Marston's plays, serve as featured singers, suggesting that Marston showcases the voices in the higher range. The absence of the written lyrics or music forces the reader of the play to speculate on the song, which we can do through attending to the introduction of and reactions to the singing. For example, Jacomo asks his page, Phylus, to 'bring Celia's head out of the window with thy lute' (1.1.238–9):

PHYLUS Look Sir here's a ditty.

Tis foully writ slight wit crossed here and there,
But where thy findst a blot, there fall a tear.

The Song

JACOMO Fie peace, peace, peace, it hath no passion int.

O melt thy breath in fluent softer tunes

That every note may seem to trickle down

Like sad distilling tears and make — O God! (239–46)

Phylus's initial comment draws attention to the poor composition or content of the song and lyrics (it is 'foully writ slight wit'), but nevertheless points to the potential emotional effect that singing may elicit (it can make one weep). Jacomo interrupts the song itself, likely a melodic ayre in which the boy accompanied himself on the lute, to point out the flawed delivery ('it hath no passion in'; it lacks 'softer tunes'). As the audience members understood that they were listening to one of England's accomplished choristers, Jacomo reveals himself to be a lovesick fool who has no ear for quality singing. Celia's failure to materialize, then, is a blot on the gallant rather than his page's song. If, though, the song is actually sung poorly or with insufficient emotion, this reminds us that when choirboys sing secular love songs they are doing something other than that which

they trained to do, much like their acting itself. Jacomo's criticism that the song lacks 'passion' reminds the audience that, while it is void of the strong emotion and suffering required to achieve the desired effect, its content is also far removed from the suffering or passion of Christ so central to liturgical music.

Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* also promotes the boy singers, in the roles of pageboys, while simultaneously hinting that the extensive training of the chorister is the play's draw. In a moment with little bearing on the play's action, Rosaline, Mellida's cousin, sets up a singing contest between two pages:

ROSALINE Good sweet Duke, first let their voices strain for music's prize.
Give me the golden harp. Faith, with your favour, I'll be umpiress.

PIERO Sweet niece, content. [*To pages*] Boys, clear your voice and sing.
[First Page] sings

ROSALINE By this gold, I had rather have a servant with a short nose and thin hair than have such a high-stretched minikin voice.

PIERO Fair niece, your reason?

ROSALINE By the sweets of love, I should fear extremely that he were an eunuch.

CASTILIO Spark spirit, how like you his voice?

ROSALINE 'Spark spirit, how like you his voice?' — So help me, youth, thy voice squeaks like a dry cork shoe. Come, come, let's hear the next.

PIERO Trust me, a good strong mean. Well sung my boy.

(Antonio and Mellida 5.2.5–20)

While the duke, Piero, compliments the boy's effort, Rosaline's objection to the song stems from the high range in which he sings. She criticizes his 'minnikin', or effeminate, voice and compares him to a eunuch. Of course, the actor playing the page would have been a prepubescent chorister, one of the younger members of the choir, and likely a soprano. Rosaline's critique, then, is less a jab at the boy's singing capabilities than a joke for the audience who knows that the sopranos were an integral part of the choir; the vain Rosaline does not appreciate quality singing when she hears it, is an unreliable 'umpiress', and cruelly mocks her suitor Castilio. The scene further gestures toward friendly competition between members of the choir. The actor playing Rosaline, after all, was also a choirboy.

The choirboys' primary talents as singers and their relationship to the grammar school appear in high relief in Marston's *What You Will*, especially in the schoolroom scene with which this essay began. While the Frenchman Laverdure

seeks the 'odd pedant' to arrange his secret nuptials to Celia, the scene exists in the play chiefly as a hilarious parody of the Latin lesson and the relationship of a master and his subordinates. The grammar exercise is littered with sexual innuendo (the singular and the plural are recited as '*Lapis* a Stone ... *Lapides* stones'), misogynistic commonplaces (the schoolmaster explains that '*Lingua*' is declined with '*Hec*' because it is 'resident under the roof of Womens mouths'), and displays of spectacular incompetence (2.2.715–16; 740–1):

NATHANIELL *Mascula dicuntur monosyllaba nomina quedam.*

SCHOOLMASTER Faster, faster.

NATHANIELL *Ut, sal, sol, ren & splen: car, ser, vir, vas, vadis, as, mas, bes, cres, pres & pes, glis, glirens habens genetivo, mos, flos, ros & tros, muns, dens, mons, pons.*

SCHOOLMASTER Rup, tup, snup, slup, bor, hor, cor, mor ... (743–8)

While we can glean from the pupil that '*Mascula dicuntur monosyllaba nomina quedam*' signifies that 'certain monosyllabic masculine nouns are said',⁴⁴ only part of the pupil's response and none of the schoolmaster's is coherent. The humour derives from the aural hilarity of these words strung together, the knowledge that this rapid-fire exchange is bogus, and the recognition that both interlocutors are foolish. Part of the comedy also depends on the knowledge that the choirboys in reality were not scholars but were compelled to attend Latin grammar lessons at Paul's School. The scene probably does not reveal any accurate details of grammar instruction. After all, Mulcaster was no foolish pedant, nor would the boys have gotten away with such insolence. The play's most vocal critic of the scholar's life, moreover, is the ridiculous Lampatho, who asserts that there is 'none more vile, accursed, reprobate to bliss / Than man, and 'mong men a scholar most' (822–3). No evidence from the period suggests that either the choirboys or the choirmaster objected to the time the children spent at the grammar school. This scene rather, played in a space close to the school itself, exposes the many worlds the boys occupied in the precinct. After mayhem breaks out in the classroom, the pedant has one final command to a student: 'Sing, sing a treble, Holifernes: sing' (787–800). This order serves as a poignant reminder that underneath the costume of the grammar school boy is not only an unpaid child actor, but also and primarily a choirboy who must always be prepared to sing on command.

Rehearsing and performing plays undoubtedly distracted from the choirboys' liturgical singing lives; the conversion of their singing and residential hall to a performance space was likely disruptive; the financial and cultural profit that

would come of the plays was questionable. But the production of over twenty plays suggests that the plays performed by Paul's boys were popular enough to supply a steady but small audience. The church does not seem to have regarded the performance of stage plays as out of step with the boys' duties as choristers. The plays for the revived enterprise at Paul's demonstrate a negotiation with the particular talents of its actors, but also with the spatial context of the performance location. The actor's ability to slip in and out of the roles reminds us of the multiple ways they were expected to 'stand forth' in their neighbourhood of St Paul's Cathedral precinct.

Notes

I would like to thank the participants of the 2014 SAA seminar on Theatre and Neighbourhood, where I first presented an early version of this essay. Thanks especially to Christopher D'Addario and Lori Humphrey Newcomb for their feedback and Chris Highley, our seminar leader. I also wish to thank Catherine DiCesare for her insightful reading of the essay. Gratitude is also due to the Huntington Library for granting me a Fletcher Jones Foundation Fellowship in 2013, during which I carried out early research for this essay, and to Colorado State University for granting me a sabbatical, during which this essay was completed.

- 1 John Marston, *What You Will*, ed. M.R. Woodhead (Nottingham, 1980).
- 2 See Ursula Potter, 'Performing Arts in the Tudor Classroom', Lloyd Edward Kermode, Jason Scott-Warren, Martine Van Elk (eds), *Tudor Drama before Shakespeare, 1485–1590: New Directions for Research, Criticism, and Pedagogy* (New York, 2004), 143–65.
- 3 *OED*, s.v. 'stand forth, v'.
- 4 *OED*, s.v. 'precinct, n'.
- 5 See Roma Ball, 'The Choir-Boy Actors of St. Paul's Cathedral', *The Emporia State Research Studies* 10.4 (1962), 6.
- 6 Roger Bowers, 'The Playhouse of the Choristers of Paul's c. 1575–1608', *Theatre Notebook* 55.2 (2001), 70.
- 7 Most scholars agree that the boys stopped playing by 1590 due to the involvement of Lyly, then master and chief playwright for the boys, in the Marprelate controversy. See Enno Ruge, 'Preaching and Playing at Paul's: The Puritans, *The Puritane*, and the Closure of Paul's Playhouse', Beate Müller (ed.), *Censorship and Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age* (Amsterdam, 2004), 33–61.

- 8 John H. Astington, 'Why the Theatres Changed', Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim Cooper (eds), *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse* (Cambridge, 2014), 17, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139629195.003>.
- 9 Ian Spink, 'Music, 1540–1640', Derek Keene, Arthur Burns, Andrew Saint (eds), *St. Paul's: The Cathedral Church of London: 604–2004* (New Haven, 2004), 313.
- 10 Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandry*, W. Payne and Sidney J. Herrtag (eds), (London, 1878), 207. When quoting from original printed and manuscript texts, I have silently modernized spelling.
- 11 See Shen Lin, 'How Old Were the Children of Paul's?', *Theatre Notebook*, 45 (1991), 121–31.
- 12 Reavley Gair, *The Children of Paul's: The Story of a Theatre Company, 1553–1608* (Cambridge, 1982), 35; Walter L. Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles I* (Princeton, 1953), 145, 146.
- 13 Spink, 'Music', 312.
- 14 London Metropolitan Archives MS 25630/4 f 154 r–v. Transcriptions from the manuscript records at the LMA have not been double-checked for accuracy by the editors of *Early Theatre*; the materials have been deemed too fragile to be handled for photographic reproduction. I take responsibility for any errors.
- 15 *OED*, s.v. 'look, v'.
- 16 Amanda Bailey, "'Bought my Boye": The Boy as Accessory on the Early Modern Stage', Bella Mirabella (ed.), *Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories* (Ann Arbor, 2011), 310, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mpub.2056317>.
- 17 For the debate about the location of the playing space, see Harold Newcombe Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History* (New York, 1964), 112–14; Gair, *Children of Paul's*, esp. chapter 2; Ball, 'Choir-Boy', 5–16; and, more recently, Herbert Berry, 'Where Was the Playhouse in Which the Boy Choristers of St. Paul's Cathedral Performed Plays?', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 13 (2001), 101–16 and Bowers, 'Playhouse', 70–85. The latter two essays, published independently in the same year, both come to the convincing conclusion that the plays were performed in the almonry. In a private conversation with John Schofield, the official archeologist of Paul's, he concurred with the findings of Berry and Bowers. John Schofield, email message to author, 17 June 2014.
- 18 Gair, *Children of Paul's*, 41–2.
- 19 These and other London locales may be found on the *The Map of Early Modern London*, <https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca>.
- 20 Thomas Dekker, *The Gull's Horn-Book*, E.D. Pendry (ed.), *Thomas Dekker* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968), 90.

- 21 LMA MS 9537/9 f 31. This transcription also appears in the following text and has been compared against it. *Registrum Statutorum et Consuetudinum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Sancti Pauli Londiniensis*, ed. W. Sparrow Simpson (London, 1873), *British History Online*, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/st-pauls-register>.
- 22 Quoted in Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1966), 73.
- 23 The school had nine forms with sixteen students plus a head boy in each form.
- 24 Helen M. Jewell, *Education in Early Modern England* (New York, 1998), 93, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27233-4>.
- 25 Quoted in Nicholas Carlisle, *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England and Wales* (London, 1818), 2.75.
- 26 Quoted in Spink, 'Music', 314 (brackets are Spink's).
- 27 From Thomas Harold's presentment, LMA MS 9537/9 f 31.
- 28 Donald Leman Clark, *John Milton at St. Paul's School: A Study of Ancient Rhetoric in English Renaissance Education* (New York, 1948. rpt 1964), 57. The original statutes indicated that there shall be 'no remedies' or play days, and warns that the master will be fined 40s for allowing them. See Carlisle, *Description*, 76.
- 29 LMA MS 25,175 f 42. I have compared this transcription against that in *Registrum Statutorum*.
- 30 LMA MS 9537/9 f 51v.
- 31 LMA MS 9537/9 f 45. I have compared this transcription against that in *Registrum Statutorum*. St Faith's, one of the parish 'churches' in St Paul's precinct was located under the cathedral's choir and was accessed through the exterior of the building.
- 32 Michael F.J. McDonnell notes that Gill, the headmaster who succeeded Mulcaster, took boarders to stay at Paul's school. *A History of St. Paul's School* (London, 1909), 161.
- 33 Quoted in David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music* (London, 2006), 82, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472555182>
- 34 Richard Lee De Molen, 'Richard Mulcaster and the Elizabethan Theatre', *Theatre Survey* 13.1 (1972), 35, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0040557400004828>, and McDonnell, *A History*, 148.
- 35 Some of the plays performed by the Children of Paul's needed more than ten actors; grammar school boys supplied extra actors. See Linda Phyllis Austern, *Music in Children's Drama of the Later Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 1992), 7.
- 36 Daryll Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage: Drama and the Social Impact of Education in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2000), 49.
- 37 Ben Jonson, *Staple of News*, ed. De Winter (New York, 1905).

- 38 Potter, 'Performing', 151.
- 39 Bowers, "The Playhouse," 80–1.
- 40 Gair, 'John Marston: A Theatrical Perspective', T.F. Wharton (ed.), *The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions* (Cambridge, 2000), 36, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511519680.004>.
- 41 Gair notes this line indicates that this is not the actor's first play, meaning (since this is likely the first play at Paul's) that he must have acted elsewhere. But, if he was experienced, 'he seems to have been an exception among this particular group of players' (*Antonio and Mellida*, Ind. 67–8 n 63).
- 42 See Walter L. Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles I* (Princeton, 1953), 135. Lindley also reminds us that church music in the post-Reformation period was minimal. *Shakespeare and Music*, 46.
- 43 For a discussion of the significance of these 'blank songs', see Tiffany Stern, "'I Have Both the Note, and Dittie About Me": Songs on the Early Modern Stage and Page,' *Common Knowledge* 17.2 (2011), 313, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/0961754x-1187995>.
- 44 This line is curious, and I would propose that it is meant to be a stage direction rather than an utterance.

