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MUSIC IN DRAMA AND PROCESSIONS

Introduction

In the various events in medieval life which might be called "spectacular entertainment" – drama of different types, processions, and so on – music played a large part. The minstrelsy of tumblers, bearwards and such is not the concern of this thesis, however: nor shall I deal with the Morality Play, a *genre* for which I have found no musical references dating from the period under discussion. Discussion of domestic disguisings belongs to the sections on household music, and appears in the appropriate place.⁹²

The three principal spectacles to be discussed here are therefore the Liturgical Drama,⁹³ the Miracle Play and the Religious Procession (the most important of which was the feast of Corpus Christi). For various reasons these three cannot always be separated. Household and town accounts rarely indicate whether a play was of the first or second type: in many towns, too, the miracle plays and the processions took place during the same holiday, [39] so that minstrels were paid for minstrelsy both on the pageant⁹⁴ and in the procession. Nevertheless, it is vital that the three types should be distinguished, and I shall consider them separately.

Liturgical Drama

It is not necessary to give here the history of liturgical drama:⁹⁵ it will be sufficient to say that after three centuries of development from its beginnings as an

This chapter was originally part of Chapter I, and the old numbering has been retained for the footnotes.

⁹² See below, pp. 91 f and 210.

⁹³ "Liturgical" is not strictly accurate: see Smoldon/*MMLCD*, p. 476. I have preferred to use it partly because it is the accepted term, but mainly to avoid confusion with vernacular spoken plays performed in church by costumed lay actors. The latter type comes under my heading of Miracle Plays.

⁹⁴ See Appendix E, *passim*. The *pageant* was the carriage on which the mobile production travelled.

⁹⁵ For the history, see Smoldon/*Sepulchre* and Smoldon/*MMLCD*.

antiphonally-sung "Quem quaeritis" trope at the Easter Mass, it had grown, by the late thirteenth century, into two series of plays, of which one was acted at Christmas and the other at Easter. It is with this developed form that we are concerned.

In its essential characteristics, liturgical drama never changed. It was sung in its entirety, in Latin, and acted by clerics⁹⁶ robed in such liturgical vestments as would distinguish symbolically the parts they played. Surprisingly, in view of the enormous expansion of this drama, it seems to have retained its non-didactic [40] character:⁹⁷ it was originally part of the service, and so it remained, despite its removal to the end of Matins early in its history,⁹⁸ the expansion into several plays, and the use of "stations", with different scenes being enacted in different parts of the church.

The music was a mixture of existing church music and new compositions very much in the style of Gregorian Chant.⁹⁹ Tropes, sequences, hymns and antiphons were normally sung to their own music: but as the drama developed more tropes and other material in rhyming Latin verse were added, and the music for these was newly-composed. After the removal of the Sepulchre drama to the end of Matins, it became usual to sing the *Te Deum* with which Matins ended immediately after the drama. It is possible that from the twelfth century onwards the sequence *Victimae Paschali Laudes* sometimes took the place of the *Te Deum* here, and that by the end of the thirteenth [41] century, the *Gloria* (at Christmas) and the *Magnificat* could also be used, thus giving a choice of choral items with which to end the drama.¹⁰⁰

In his consideration of the methods of musical performance, Smoldon came to the conclusion that no form of harmony was used, the singing being entirely monodic and in general unaccompanied. He examined the opposing views of Bowles and Donington on the question of instrumental participation in the liturgy,¹⁰¹ and concluded that instruments other than those given by Bowles were

⁹⁶ Possibly lay singers at a late stage: see below, p. 44.

⁹⁷ At a popular level, the use of Latin was an effective barrier to any form of teaching through drama. It is notable that the vernacular plays, although not essentially didactic, include not only commentaries on the action but whole plays dealing with elementary Christology in a dramatic form: see, for example, Christ's opening speech from the York "Harrowing of Hell", Smith/*York Plays*, p. 372. Systematic and concentrated teaching were not, however, necessary: the common man could believe in Salvation or the pains of Hell without intellectual proof - the pictorial or dramatic representation of such things was enough. C.f. Huizinga/*WMA*, p. 165.

⁹⁸ In the late tenth century: Smoldon/*Sepulchre*, p. 2.

⁹⁹ The following discussion of the music is based on Smoldon's articles (n. 95, above) unless otherwise stated.

¹⁰⁰ Smoldon/*Sepulchre*, p. 8, and Smoldon/*MMLCD*, p. 480. The *Victimae Paschali Laudes* was not invariably placed at the end, however: Harrison/*MMB*, p. 98, quotes an instance of the *Victimae Paschali Laudes* being sung by the Marys and angels in the course of a fourteenth-century drama. The drama concluded with the *Te Deum*.

¹⁰¹ See below, pp. 67 ff.

not normally allowed, and that the various condemnations of the use of other instruments were the result of local abuses.¹⁰²

On the evidence of the music-drama manuscripts, Smoldon drew the same conclusion. He quoted the use of pipes and trumpets as interval-music in a sixteenth-century manuscript, and developed a convincing argument¹⁰³ to show that even the two *bas* instruments used by Philippe de Mézières to play during the removal of the actors from one station to another and to accompany a vernacular [42] cantilena were exceptional.¹⁰⁴

The instruments which Smoldon allowed were the organ and bells. Some versions of the Easter dramas contain rubrics which call for an organ accompaniment in the *Victimae Paschali*,¹⁰⁵ and Smoldon considered that the organ could be used to support any of the other three choral items as well (*Te Deum*, *Magnificat* and *Gloria*). This agrees with Harrison's view that the organ was normally the only instrument used liturgically,¹⁰⁶ except that Smoldon also allowed chime-bells as an occasional and infrequent addition in the choral items.

The role of chime-bells in medieval liturgy and liturgical drama is a difficult problem which is discussed elsewhere in this thesis:¹⁰⁷ but it will be appropriate here to summarise my conclusions on this question.

- 1 The symbolic significance of chimes is that of jubilant worship.

[43]

- 2 Chimes are especially connected in iconography with the positive organ.

- 3 The mention of bells in certain instances of liturgical jubilation – especially in the *Te Deum* – points towards a musical function, and therefore implies chime-bells. On this latter point, I must emphasise that the accepted view of medieval bells is based largely on an assumption which may turn out to be only partly accurate. Our picture of a medieval town resounding to the pealing of church bells at times of special rejoicing¹⁰⁸ depends entirely on the assumption (apparently made by Harrison) that mention of "bells" means "church bells" – i.e. a peal. The picture may often be accurate:¹⁰⁹ but I nevertheless feel that the assumption is a

¹⁰² See especially his quotation from the twelfth-century Franciscan Gilles de Zamore: Smoldon/*MMLCD*, p. 491.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 492. The play was the "Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary", performed at Avignon in 1372 and 1385. In drama, as in contemporary iconography, the musical resources used to honour the Virgin were particularly full: see Stevens/*Drama*, p. 93, also below, p. 66. We should therefore expect that here, if anywhere, instruments would be used, especially in the cantilena, which was in praise of the Virgin. That the musical resources were so small on this occasion argues strongly against the general use of instruments in liturgical drama – at least in France.

¹⁰⁵ Smoldon/*Sepulchre*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Harrison/*MMB*, p. xiv: see above, p. xvii. See also *ibid.*, pp. 205 f. and 214 ff.

¹⁰⁷ See below, pp. 168–76.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Harrison/*MMB*, p. 206.

¹⁰⁹ We have modern parallels in the ringing of a peal after a marriage service, at the New Year, and for more occasional celebrations such as a coronation.

doubtful one in certain cases.¹¹⁰ The conclusion I draw is that chime-bells may have been used in the choral items of liturgical drama more frequently than Smoldon allowed.

From the fourteenth century onwards, liturgical drama probably fought a losing battle against miracle plays. The former may have continued a precarious existence alongside disguisings, interludes, and other household entertainments well into the sixteenth century: but the fourteenth-, fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century [44] manuscripts are mainly re-workings of earlier examples, and contain little or no new material.

It is difficult to be sure of any specific occasions on which a liturgical drama was performed in the late Middle Ages. The question is complicated by the fact that lay actors do seem to have used churches sometimes for the presentation of vernacular plays. Those who performed in St Martin's Church at Dover in 1477 or 1478 are a case in point. and the disguisers who danced in the Abbey at Edinburgh on 3 February, 1504, are similarly unlikely to have been performing a liturgical drama.¹¹¹ A play given before the mayor "at the freers" at Sandwich in 1502 or 1503 was probably presented not in the church or even in the friary, but in the road outside.¹¹²

Among a number of ordinances for dramatic entertainments of various kinds, the Northumberland ordinances contain those for two dramas performed by the singers of the Earl's chapel if the Earl was at home.¹¹³ The singers were to receive 20/- as a gift for performing the play of the Nativity on Christmas morning in the chapel; and the play of the Resurrection given by the chapel and other servants on Easter morning (for which a gift of 20/- was again given) was no doubt performed in the chapel, although it [45] is not in this case so stated.

There is unfortunately no evidence that these plays were sung or given in Latin. We cannot use as evidence the payments of 6/8d to the children of the chapel for singing *Gloria in excelsis* on Christmas morning, for this was probably not part of the Nativity play. The children also received 6/8d for singing *Audivi* at Matins on All Hallows' Day, and it is precisely these responds that were generally given special treatment, being sung by boys alone.¹¹⁴

Our information on drama in the chapel of the Northumberland household therefore rests on the two payments of 20/- to the singers. No details of the performance are forthcoming. There is no mention of any instrumentalists,¹¹⁵ but this

¹¹⁰ See below, pp. 173 f.

¹¹¹ For Dover, see Dawson/*Kent*, p. 27: for Edinburgh, see Appendix D, below, under the relevant date.

¹¹² Dawson/*Kent*, p. 149: the friars at Sandwich were Carmelites. C.f. the pageants outside the friary at Coventry, p. 86, below.

¹¹³ Percy/*Northumberland*, p. 342.

¹¹⁴ See Harrison/*MMB*, pp. 99, 107 and 170. *Gloria in excelsis* is the verse of the first respond at Christmas Matins: *Audivi* is the eighth respond at Matins on All Saints' Day: *ibid.*, p. 107.

¹¹⁵ For the minstrels of the Earl, see below, p. 211.

is also the case for the various other entertainments listed in the ordinances, such as the play presented on Shrove Tuesday at night and the interludes arranged throughout the twelve days of Christmas. These latter would certainly have made use of the minstrels. The ordinances fail, in fact, to give even negative evidence on the question of instrumental participation.

It is quite clear, however, that the plays were not a protracted affair,¹¹⁶ since 20/- is not a large gift compared with the 6/8d [46] given to the children for singing a respond.¹¹⁷ If these plays were, in fact, sung and in Latin throughout there is no reason to doubt that they would have followed the tradition of liturgical drama as shown in the surviving sixteenth-century examples. The actors included laymen, however, and servants who were not of the chapel, so that it seems more likely that the plays were spoken and in the vernacular.

Miracle Plays

Medieval vernacular drama was very different from the liturgical drama. In the first quarter of the thirteenth century a play of the Resurrection was given in the churchyard of St John's, Beverley, by costumed actors,¹¹⁸ and we know that less than a century later dramatic performances were given in the street by lay actors wearing "realistic" costumes as opposed to the "symbolic" liturgical vestments worn for the liturgical dramas. Although the subject-matter was basically the same as that of the liturgical drama – but much expanded – the continuous singing of the latter was replaced by speech, and the vernacular was used for all but the few sung items.¹¹⁹

[47] An interesting (?)fourteenth-century example of vernacular drama survives in a manuscript at Shrewsbury.¹²⁰ It is a single actor's part for three dramas. The text is mainly vernacular and spoken, written in rhyming stanzas: but some familiar Latin items are included, and music is supplied for some of these in measured notation, apparently the third voice of three-part settings. Smoldon considered that this music was written down because it was a special effect,¹²¹ and we ought probably to assume that the other items would be sung to Gregorian chant.

Liturgical items played a part in miracle plays, usually sung by "angels". Thus in the Towneley cycle an angel sings *Gloria in excelsis* to the shepherds, and the

¹¹⁶ Nor was the "Resurrection" attended by Lord Howard at Easter, 1483: see Appendix C, below, under that date.

¹¹⁷ There were nine men and six children in the Northumberland chapel at Michaelmas, 3 Henry VIII: Percy/*Northumberland*, p. 43.

¹¹⁸ c. 1220: see Craig/*ERD*, p. 99.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96, deals with the differences between liturgical and vernacular drama. Craig believes that the liturgical drama gradually changed into the vernacular type, and so treats the Shrewsbury manuscript as a "transition-period" drama.

¹²⁰ Shrewsbury School, MS Mus. iii. 42: see n. 119, above.

¹²¹ Smoldon/*MMLCD*, p. 490, n. 25.

angels sing also at Joseph's and Mary's entry into the temple in the *Purificacio Marie*, and at Christ's resurrection and ascension.¹²² But it was not only angels who sang: during the Harrowing of Hell "cantent omnes *Salvator mundi*, primum versum", and the Judgement play ends with everybody singing *Te Deum*.¹²³ The shepherds sang, too: as the third shepherd says at the end of the *Secunda Pastorum*, "To syng ar we bun".¹²⁴ It is hard to believe that the shepherds did not go off *cantantes*. There are no stage directions to that effect, however, [48] and we do not know what they would have sung.

Liturgical or scriptural passages could be adapted for dramatic purposes. The early fifteenth-century songs from the Weavers' pageant of the York cycle are of this type: they are in Latin, and remain close enough to the original texts for the connection to be understood by the audience.¹²⁵ The music is in gymel-like style with overlapping of parts: it is simple enough to be memorised without difficulty, and the mainly parallel movement would have been an aid to performance. The music does not seem to have been based on liturgical chant in this case, and the next example of dramatic music which has come down to us owes nothing to the liturgy, either textually or musically. The songs in the Coventry Taylors' and Shearmen's pageant are in English, set to music in an early sixteenth-century style.¹²⁶

[49] The appearance of part-music in the miracle plays is one characteristic difference between a "realistic" presentation by laymen and a ritual enactment during the liturgy. Another difference, and the one with which this thesis is primarily concerned, is the introduction of instrumental music and perhaps the use of instruments in the songs. The symbolic use of musical instruments which I have already mentioned in connection with the chronicles, poetry and iconography¹²⁷ is found also in drama. Thus in the Towneley *Purificacio Marie* the bells ring when the angels tell Simeon that he is to see the Christ.¹²⁸ The bells for this

¹²² Raine/*Towneley*, pp. 115, 157, 259 and 300.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 245 and 321.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹²⁵ See Smith/*York Plays*. The music was edited by W.H. Cummings from B.M. Add. MS 35290, ff. 235v-41v. Each of the three texts is set twice, all the settings being à 2. The three simpler settings are edited (*op. cit.*, pp. 517-21), while one of them is reproduced in facsimile (Frontispiece). Of the other - more elaborate - settings, two are reproduced (Plates II and III). See Stevens/*Drama*, p. 93. Cummings admittedly did not understand the notation, and his transcriptions are incorrect in basic respects. In the light of re-edition of these pieces, his adverse critical comments on them should also be revised (Dr John Stevens has edited these pieces for the forthcoming edition of the York Plays by Arthur Brown, to be published by the Early English Text Society).

¹²⁶ Stevens/*Drama*, p. 91. The songs, all à 3, are printed in Sharp/*Dissertation*, pp. 113-18. "Down from Heaven, from Heaven so high" is in fact the second verse of "As I out rode this enderes night": Stevens/*Drama*, p. 91. "Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child" is the so-called "Coventry Carol".

¹²⁷ See above, pp. xxvii-xxxv, *passim*.

¹²⁸ "Tunc pulsabant": Raine/*Towneley*, p. 156.

joyful occasion must have been portable, as they were presumably on the pageant. Either hand-bells or chime-bells would be possible: the latter are more likely, both on account of their symbolic significance and because they would require only one player.¹²⁹

Most often, however, instruments were used to symbolise Heaven. There was music at moments of divine intervention: minstrels played for such scenes as the Creation and the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Divine Order being established and re-established respectively in these cases).¹³⁰

The minstrelsy used on the pageants at the welcoming of Prince [50] Edward to Coventry on 28 April, 1474, was carefully selected for its precise symbolisms.¹³¹ It will be instructive to list these pageants with the music attached to them:

- 1 A station containing King Richard (II?) surrounded by Dukes, Marquesses, Earls, Viscounts, Barons and Lords, "wt mynstralcy of the Wayts of the Citie".
- 2 A station with three patriarchs and the twelve sons of Jacob, "wt mynstralcy of harpe and dowsemeris...".
- 3 A pageant of St Edward "wt mynstralcy of harpe and lute...".
- 4 A pageant of three prophets, with Children of Israel singing and casting out white oblems and flowers.
- 5 A pageant with the three Kings of Cologne, armed knights, etc., "wt mynstralsy of small pypis."
- 6 A pageant of St George, armed, rescuing a king's daughter, holding a lamb, from the dragon: the girl's parents watching from a tower above. "Mynstralcy of Orgon pleyinge."

Of these, numbers 2, 3 and 6 have *bas* music. Harp, psaltery (the dulcimer is a psaltery struck with hammers), and lute symbolised Heaven, and were therefore used for the symbolical representations of Heaven on Earth in pageants 2 and 3. More especially, Heaven was symbolised by the portative organ, and it is notable [51] that pageant 6, which used this instrument, was the most direct depiction of Heaven in action – the symbolical representation of a soul's rescue from the clutches of the Devil.¹³² Singing in pageants was usually by members of the Kingdom¹³³ – primarily by angels or Christ Himself,¹³⁴ but also, by extension, by certain chosen mortals such as the shepherds. The prophets and Children of Is-

¹²⁹ See below, pp. 171 f. Simeon refers to "bellys" in the plural and describes the sound as "hard" – i.e., powerful or harsh.

¹³⁰ Stevens/*Drama*, p. 83.

¹³¹ Sharp/*Antiquities*, pp. 231 f.

¹³² The viol also symbolised Heaven. Viol, harp, psaltery and lute were associated also with the figure of Christ, especially the psaltery and harp, which symbolised respectively the Body of Christ and the Cross: Bowles/*Drama*, p. 76, n. 44, and p. 77, nn. 46 and 47.

¹³³ Stevens/*Drama*, p. 84: singing by devils was exceptional.

¹³⁴ In the Towneley *Thomas Indie*, for example: Raine/*Towneley*, p. 282.

rael of pageant 4, representing the Chosen Race, are the Old Testament equivalent. The symbolisms of instruments and of singing could be combined, as when Prince Arthur was greeted with "angels sensyng and syngyng, with Orgayns and other melody" on his entry into Coventry on 17 October, 1498.¹³⁵

Pageants 1 and 5 were those using *haut* minstrelsy, both in contexts of secular authority and ceremonial. The city waits probably formed a shawm-and-trumpet band, and "small pipes" were, I think, the wayt, or small shawm.¹³⁶ In the miracle plays we could reasonably expect music where it would be in real life: more particularly, we should expect *haut* music for ceremonial occasions – for the entrance of Herod and perhaps of the Magi (the "Kings of [52] Cologne" of pageant 5), for instance. Herod's feast might be accompanied by *haut* and/or *bas* minstrelsy.¹³⁷

The possible range of instruments used in the miracle plays was therefore a wide one. Indeed, the musical resources used to honour the Virgin were particularly full,¹³⁸ and we can assume that for plays in which the Virgin appeared all available instruments – *bas* instruments, at least – would be used.

But what *would* be available? The financial limitations imposed by a guild on its production of a miracle play might be severe: it would be useless to speculate on a possible combination of instruments to accompany a particular scene if either the instrumentalists were not available or the guild producing the play was not prepared to pay the minstrels required.

The surviving accounts of the trade-gilds concerned should therefore be of great interest. A comprehensive comparison of relevant guild-accounts with the texts and stage directions of the miracle plays is outside the scope of the present work: it will nevertheless be valuable to discuss the extracts concerning minstrelsy taken from various Coventry guild-accounts.¹³⁹

The amount spent on minstrels each year by the Coventry Smiths' Company was far in excess of payments made by other guilds. In 1450, for example, the Smiths spent a total of 10/6d on the hire [53] and food of an unspecified number of minstrels in the two days of the Corpus Christi celebrations, compared with only 13d paid by the Carpenters for one minstrel.¹⁴⁰ The Smiths made a similar payment the following year, although in 1454 they seem only to have hired a single minstrel for the occasion.¹⁴¹ The large payments continued in 1463 with 9/- to

¹³⁵ Sharp/*Antiquities*, p. 233.

¹³⁶ See below, pp. 157 ff and 181.

¹³⁷ Stevens/*Drama*, p. 88.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93: see also below, p. 66.

¹³⁹ See Appendix E, below.

¹⁴⁰ Only a procession was in fact required for the celebration of Corpus Christi, which is the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. Thirteenth-century evidence points towards the plays still being in the Christmas and Easter groupings: in southern England these groupings were retained (see Dawson/*Kent, passim*), but in the north the two groups were combined into a cycle and transferred during the fourteenth century to the eve of the feast of Corpus Christi. The feast had first been celebrated in England in 1318. See Craig/*ERD*, pp. 127 ff.

¹⁴¹ See below, n. 153.

four minstrels for playing in the pageant and procession (i.e., on both days again). These minstrels may have been the city waits, who numbered four at this time, and who had been hired by the Smiths for their annual dinner in 1452. The accounts for 1467, 1471 and 1477 specify that the Smiths hired the city waits for the Corpus Christi celebrations, and in 1481 the four waits, together with their wives, were admitted to the gild on condition that they should "serve the craft on corpus X'pi day."¹⁴²

It is therefore probable that for much of the second half of the fifteenth century the city waits provided the music for the Smiths' pageant on the eve of the feast of Corpus Christi. The payment of 1477 was made to the waits for "pyping": it seems to have been normal at Coventry for one of the waits to be a trumpeter, [54] however,¹⁴³ and they probably formed a shawms-and-trumpet band of the type that we recognise from other sources.¹⁴⁴

The scenes performed by the Smiths were as follows: Jesus before the High Priest, Peter's denial, Jesus before Pilate, Pilate's wife, Jesus before Herod, the second trial before Pilate, the repentance of Judas, the way to Calvary, the parting of the garments, Crucifixion.¹⁴⁵ There was plenty of scope for *haut* music here: loud ceremonial music would certainly be in order at Christ's appearances before the High Priest, Herod and Pilate. In the military scenes before the Crucifixion this is less certain. The Crucifixion itself would not include music, this being the most notable occasion on which Heaven did *not* intervene.¹⁴⁶

The accounts of the other Coventry trade-gilds do not include payments to minstrels for the pageants: and although the Corpus Christi payments by the Carpenters and Cappers may well cover minstrelsy in both pageant and procession, we cannot assume so. In Coventry, however, it was usual for the gilds to hire minstrels not only for the Corpus Christi procession but also for processions on Midsummer night and St Peter's night.¹⁴⁷ The accounts of the [55] Coventry gilds will therefore be considered further with respect to the processions.

The Corpus Christi and Other Processions

E.A. Bowles has shown that the variety of instruments used for the Corpus Christi processions during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a wide one, and included both *haut* and *bas* instruments.¹⁴⁸ In many of his examples both *haut*

¹⁴² Sharp/*Dissertation*, p. 213.

¹⁴³ Harris/*Coventry*, pp. 59 (1423), 189 (1439) and 200 (1442): see below, p. 181, n. 140.

¹⁴⁴ See below, pp. 178 f.

¹⁴⁵ Craig/*TCCCP*, p. xv.

¹⁴⁶ Stevens/*Drama*, p. 83.

¹⁴⁷ Midsummer day (also the feast of St John the Baptist) is on 24 June: St Peter is 29 June.

¹⁴⁸ Bowles/*Procession*, *passim*.

and *bas* consorts are in the same procession.¹⁴⁹ In general, it seems that the *haut* consort (usually trumpets: sometimes with shawms as well) led the procession, while the *bas* instruments (almost invariably stringed instruments) accompanied the Sacrament.¹⁵⁰ Most of Bowles' examples are continental, however, and although we shall find them sometimes paralleled by English examples, I shall not discuss them here.

We should expect that any guild organising a procession would wish to make a fine display, and therefore to have as much minstrelsy as possible. This was probably the intention when it was ordained that the Guild of St Helen and St Mary at Beverley should process to the church of the Minorites on the feast of St Helen "with much music".¹⁵¹

[56] The Coventry accounts show that more minstrels were employed for the Corpus Christi processions than for other processions in that town. The earliest of the Smiths' accounts do not specify the number of minstrels (1450 and 1451), but the payment of 8/- is comparable with those made to the waits from 1467 onwards and to four minstrels in 1463. Indeed, it seems probable that the minstrels employed in 1450, 1451 and 1463 *were* the waits. By 1498 the Smiths employed their own minstrel,¹⁵² but he does not appear in the accounts, just as the waits do not appear for Corpus Christi payments after their admission to the Smiths' Company. The luter who played at the Smiths' annual dinner in 1452 may have been in the company's regular employment, therefore:¹⁵³ in this case we can perhaps add a *bas* instrumentalist to the minstrels supplied by the Smiths for the processions from this date onwards.

Other guilds supplied fewer minstrels, even for the Corpus Christi procession. The Carpenters generally employed one (1450, 1453, 1456 and 1487), although it is possible that there were more in 1452.¹⁵⁴ The payment for 1456 shows that the minstrel supplied [57] by the Carpenters was a harper, perhaps in addition to Robert Crudworth, the Company's own harper.¹⁵⁵ The Cappers, too, supplied a single minstrel (1502).

¹⁴⁹ We should not take this as a sign of combined *haut* and *bas* performance, of course: the two consorts would be quite separate. In modern times we can have two or three brass bands in a procession without complete cacophony resulting.

¹⁵⁰ As we should expect: see above, n. 132.

¹⁵¹ Smith/*Gilds*, pp. 148 f. The feast is on 3 September.

¹⁵² See the payment for St Peter's night under this date.

¹⁵³ Note, too, that the expenses for the minstrel in 1454 are not a payment: it reads more like an account for food (c.f. 1450, "Payd ... for y^r hydr", but "spend on y^r bord": also 1451). These expenses were probably incurred in respect of the company's own minstrel.

¹⁵⁴ This payment is for several items on three occasions: the small payment certainly does not allow for minstrelsy on a large scale, and I suspect that the mention of "menstrells" indicates only that the company did not employ the same minstrel for all three occasions.

¹⁵⁵ Crudworth had been admitted to the Carpenters' company in 1453: I say "in addition to" only because of the discrepancy between the 14d given to Crudworth for Midsummer and St Peter's night and the 3d given to "j harp" for Corpus Christi. However, the

The minstrels which we have found in the Coventry Corpus Christi processions, then, are as follows: the waits (probably three shawms and a trumpet), plus perhaps a luter or other *bas* instrumentalist (Smiths); one, and sometimes two, harpers (Carpenters). A payment to a single minstrel by another company dates from the sixteenth century (Cappers). It is not possible to draw definite conclusions from this evidence. It does agree, however, with Bowles' continental findings on the Corpus Christi procession in general: and it also agrees with the "mynstralcy of the Wayts of the Cite" and "mynstralcy of harpe and lute" of the 1474 pageants already discussed.¹⁵⁶

The other processions in Coventry – those on St John's night and St Peter's night – gave employment to fewer minstrels than those at Corpus Christi: and often the minstrels were paid for the two processions together. The Smiths supplied one minstrel only, sometimes distinguished as a harper, in 1449 and 1451: in [58] the intervening year they paid two harpers. In 1469 they paid one minstrel for each occasion, but in 1471 they paid two: the increase probably became usual, for it was repeated at Midsummer, 1474, and again in 1477. The payment in 1498 was to a minstrel for St Peter's night in addition to the Smiths' own minstrel: as we have seen, we can perhaps add this minstrel to our list from 1452 onwards.¹⁵⁷

The number of minstrels supplied by the Carpenters also fluctuated between one and two on these occasions,¹⁵⁸ and after 1453 they had Robert Crudworth as their own harper. The payment to "metcalf and banbreke" in 1467 suggests that those two minstrels may have been in the regular service of the company: but although more than one minstrel was paid in 1478, the Carpenters had had only one minstrel apart from the waits at the annual dinner in the previous year – and that at a fee of a mere 2d. It therefore seems unlikely that the company employed two minstrels regularly; and the payment in 1485 is again to a single minstrel.

The Dyers paid two minstrels in 1482 and an unknown number – but more than one – in 1494.

The processions at Midsummer and St Peter's day did not, [59] apparently, make use of the waits. Harpers are again in evidence in these payments, but we cannot tell, unfortunately, if other minstrels were players of *haut* or *bas* instruments.

Carpenters' own minstrel received only 3d at the annual dinner in 1461: perhaps it was Crudworth who was paid at Corpus Christi, 1456.

¹⁵⁶ See above, pp. 49 ff. and n. 136.

¹⁵⁷ See above, p. 56 and n. 153.

¹⁵⁸ The entry for 1451 gives only "mynstrelles": however, the payment on this occasion was a mere 6d, which compares unfavourably with other payments even if only two minstrels were concerned. If the payment had to be divided amongst a greater number, then 6d was a very poor reward.