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Early Modern Songscapes, English ayres & their dynamic acoustic environments, website
The University of Toronto Scarborough Digital Scholarship Unit (UTSC Library) and The Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH)
https://ems.digital.utsc.utoronto.ca/
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The website *Early Modern Songscapes, English ayres & their dynamic acoustic environments*, maps the methodology and makes available the results of a project of the same name on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English song, directed by Katherine Larson (University of Toronto), Scott Trudell (University of Maryland), and Sarah Williams (University of South Carolina).
A series of drop-down menus, tabs, and clickable words available on the home page, give the visitor access to the material. The section titled 'Project Description', in the drop-down menu 'About the Project' is the first one the visitor should engage with, as it does an excellent job at presenting the rationale of the project as a whole, and its focus on 'ayres', whose specific characteristics and significance are clearly set out. In fact, the home page itself, while visually pleasing, does not contain much information in itself, and most of the introductory material is tucked away and only reachable through menus and links, that the as-yet-unacquainted visitor needs to find their way through. The organisation of the home page could be rethought, to offer more immediate access to preliminary material, and perhaps an overview or map of the website, to understand where to find what. The material accessible through the 'How to use the resource' link could also be brought to the forefront.

The website -currently in beta version- is presented as mostly dedicated to the works of Henry Lawes as the selected case study, but the frequent mention of a next phase of the project – to analyse ayres associated with Shakespeare's plays – suggests that this website could be updated in the future to include further explorations of this topic, and new audio and visual material. The methodology behind the subdivision of this project in independent but also interlinked stages, is explained convincingly, and the website – while working perfectly adequately as a standalone - is already intentionally organised in a flexible way that lends itself well to future changes, upgrades, and additions of material: extensive changes won't be needed.

The website illustrates and makes accessible what appears to be a methodologically sound (pun intended) project; the sections in the drop-down menus titled 'About the Project', and the section titled 'Why Henry Lawes', do a much necessary job in contextualising the decisions made by the editorial team regarding themes selected, conventions in transcribing and rendering historical material, and strengthen the scholarly value of the performances of songs and pieces of music. The website represents an excellent resource for those working on the topic of English ayres, and on Henry Lawes' work in particular, with a rich mixture of visual material, bibliographical information, and containing a rich collection of audio files with musical and sung performances. Once again, these are not necessarily easy to find (those related to the 2019 conference particularly so) and are accessible in a variety of ways – as uploaded files of different formats, as links to external repositories, as clickable titles – and in different locations within the website. This abundance is exciting and probably easy to navigate for those with direct knowledge of the topic, the events, and the performances, and it gives a real sense of the scholarly work and high-quality research behind the 2019 conference. However, choices such as to present material alphabetically rather than thematically, or not to provide more information regarding each clickable item beyond a succinct title, makes navigating between the various items and identifying them and their relationship to one another, rather laborious for the non-initiated. Somehow counterintuitively, the text that *is* present

has a colloquial, longwinded style, more suited for spoken conversations than an agile research tool and document repository. The material could be more accessible if organised around key words or bullet points, also using direct internal links to material available elsewhere in the website rather than explaining through text to the reader how to arrive to the necessary location. The search option in the dropdown menu could provide significant guidance in navigating the material in the website, allowing the visitor to find immediately what they are looking for. However, the limited options available (title and keyword) assume some knowledge or intent on the part of the user, who is performing a specific search for a known item. Broadening the search options and indexing the resources more fully – to chronological intervals, types of performances, song topics, instruments or voices just to name a few – would allow a casual visitor to browse broadly through the material available, maybe finding something they themselves didn't know existed.

The most important issue, in fact, is the intended audience of this website. As a scholarly resource, this would appeal to those already versed in the topic, and familiar with this project or projects of a similar kind, for whom it could prove invaluable. In its current configuration, it requires an effort from the curious member of the general public, or for a scholarly-minded but uninformed visitor. They would still no doubt enjoy the excellent renditions of musical pieces and songs, but would not be able to fully appreciate the relationship between the historical resources made available, and the performances. If the website was meant as an introduction to Henry Lawes' times and musical production meant for the general public, some additions could be made by providing context, such as an introductory biography for Lawes, or some information about the development of musical performances around this time both in England and abroad. Indeed, this might not be the case, and the resource might be intended for a specialised audience already involved in, or at very least aware of, the research group activities.

For informed scholars, the most significant section is probably the Ayres and Dialogues one, with its easy to access table of contents, and the direct link to the text itself. The 'full songbook' page and corresponding file did not seem to be working or to open properly – this might be due to the file format, or to a broken link in the page, or to the reviewer not having (been given?) enough information on what to do with the file, the page and file themselves working perfectly well.

From the point of view of those minded to use this resource to support their own research, it would be helpful to provide some more information on how to reference material from the website, and how the website creators advise users to approach copyright issues. Yes, it points towards the Creative Commons licence, but to fulfil its role as research tool in full, some further information could be provided given the extreme variety of material made available. The 'contact us' page is workable, but it would be useful for the enquirer to have different addresses or named contacts to send queries on specific topics. The option to have a copy of the query sent to the writer's own address for records would be helpful too.

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